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SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DETERMINANTS OF DIABETES AND PREDIABETES IN ALGERIAN ADULTS ACCORDING TO STEPWISE 2016-2017 SURVEY DATA

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Abstract: *Diabetes mellitus is one of the world's greatest public health concerns particularly in developing countries. The aim of this study is to examine the association of risk factors with diabetes and prediabetes in the adult population in Algeria. This is a cross-sectional descriptive study of adults aged between 18 and 69 years listed in the database of the STEPwise Algeria Survey conducted in 2016-2017, i. e. 7450 adults across the national territory. Using a multivariate logistic regression model, we assessed the role of different socio-demographic, economic, geographical and behavioural factors in the glycemc status of adults. The prevalence of diabetes and prediabetes was 14.3% and 8.2% respectively. The main factors associated with a significantly higher risk for prediabetes and diabetes were advanced age, south-eastern region, general obesity and hypertension. Other factors such as urban area of residence, marital status, low level of education, abdominal obesity, high cholesterol and heart attacks appear to be associated with diabetes only. These factors are often avoidable through preventive interventions based on early diagnosis, screening of at-risk subjects and therapeutic education, which can be beneficial for the Algerian population, by taking into consideration the socio-economic and cultural particularities of each health region and even of each patient.*

Keywords: diabetes mellitus, prediabetic state, determinant, adult , Algeria.

1. Introduction

The fight against non-communicable diseases and their risk factors is one of the major challenges of sustainable development in the 21st century. They have become an enormous health burden, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (World Health Organization [WHO] et al., 2014). Most Arab countries, including Algeria, are confronting a growing trend of non-communicable diseases as a result of economic, demographic and geographical transitions. Premature mortality from these diseases reaches 20% in 33% of Arab countries (Maamri and Ben El Mostafa, 2020).

Among the main chronic diseases is diabetes mellitus. It is a real global health threat that does not depend on socio-economic status and knows no borders. The main types of diabetes are type 1, type 2 and gestational diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes (about 90% of cases) worldwide (International Diabetes Federation, 2011).

Currently, according to the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), there are an estimated 463 million people living with diabetes worldwide and this number is expected to rise to 578 million in 2030 and 700 million in 2045. 79.4% of them live in low- and middle-income countries according to estimates (IDF, 2019).

In the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), 54.8 million adults aged 20-79 years will be living with diabetes in 2019, representing 12.8% of the regional population in this age group. 24.5 million of all persons with diabetes are unaware that they are living with diabetes (undiagnosed diabetes). It is estimated that the number of people living with diabetes

in the region will increase by 38.8% by 2030 and 96.5% by 2045 (IDF, 2019). In addition, 35.5 million adults aged between 20 and 79, or 8.3% of the regional population in this age group, are prediabetics. The term "prediabetes" is often used to refer to people with glucose intolerance and/or impaired fasting glucose. This indicates a risk of future development of type 2 diabetes and diabetes-related complications (Nathan et al., 2007). Approximately 418,900 deaths in this region are due to diabetes and its complications in the 20-79 age group in 2019 (16.2% of all-cause mortality). About 53.3% of all these deaths occurred in people under 60 years of age. 86.7% of all diabetes-related deaths in the region occurred in middle-income countries (Meo et al., 2017; IDF, 2019).

Algeria is not exempt from this pandemic; the prevalence of this disease is constantly increasing. It increased from 2.1% in 1992 (Bezzaoucha, 1992) to 12.29% in 2005 (National Health Survey, 2005) and 14% in 2007 (Zaoui et al., 2007). Indeed, the demographic transition, which has affected Algeria for around half a century, has led to a decrease in infectious diseases and an increase in the incidence of chronic diseases such as diabetes. It should be noted that the phenomenon of "globalisation" over the last two decades, which has standardized lifestyles on a model favouring obesity and sedentary lifestyles, as well as longer life expectancy, have contributed to the proliferation of this disease (Belhadj, 2011).

To address this global health problem, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations (UN) have set global targets to encourage action to improve care and strengthen health systems. These measures include reducing premature deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including diabetes, by 30% until 2030, implementing national diabetes plans and achieving universal health coverage (WHO, 2018).

Risk factors such as high blood pressure, poor diet, smoking, obesity and physical inactivity are known to contribute to the growing trend of diabetes. On the other hand, diabetes education, support and a healthy lifestyle, combined with medication where appropriate, can effectively manage type 2 diabetes (Walker et al., 2014). However, several studies highlight action on the social determinants of health such as gender, economic status, education level, marital status, residence environment... which can reduce the burden of this disease (Gonzalez-Zacarias et al., 2016).

Few studies have focused on the analysis of the determinants related to diabetes and pre-diabetes in the overall population in Algeria. Most of the studies already carried out have been conducted at regional levels. Given that the Stepwise survey reports are limited to descriptive tables and the sociodemographic, economic, geographical and behavioural factors associated with the glycaemic status of adults are not clearly identified; the initiative was taken to examine the association of these factors with this phenomenon in order to provide information that can help the authorities to design appropriate prevention and control measures, and understand the determinants leading to an increase in the prevalence of diabetes in disparate regions of Algeria.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Study design

This is a cross-sectional descriptive study of adults aged between 18 and 69 years listed in the database of the STEPwise Algeria Survey conducted in 2016-2017 by the Ministry of Health, Population and Hospital Reform - Directorate General for Prevention and Health Promotion, in collaboration with the National Institute of Public Health with the support of WHO HQ-Geneva and the WHO-Algeria representative office.

The "STEPwise" approach is a standardised tool developed and recommended by the WHO for the surveillance of risk factors for Non-Communicable Diseases and their morbidity and mortality (Riley et al., 2016).

The main objective of the STEPwise Algeria survey was to estimate the frequency of these factors on a representative sample of 7450 people, aged between 18 and 69 years, drawn at random, within households across the national territory (48 wilayas), taking into account

geographical differences (coastline, highlands and southern region). Information on socio-demographic, behavioural and clinical characteristics was collected by using a three-step questionnaire. The first stage involves the collection of sociodemographic data and behavioural information, the second stage involves simple physical measurements (weight, height, waist and hip circumference), and the third stage is for biochemical testing (blood glucose testing) (Riley et al., 2016; Stepwise Algeria survey, 2016). A 3 stage cluster sampling design was used to produce representative data for this age group in Algeria. A sampling method where the target population is divided into clusters/groups and a subset of each cluster is selected instead of the entire cluster. The sampling modalities are described in detail in the survey report, which is available on the official WHO website (WHO, 2005; Stepwise Algeria survey, 2016). To obtain the survey database, the authors have systematically contacted and made a request on their official website (WHO microdata repository, 2016).

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the committee of the National Council for Health Sciences Ethics - Ministry of Health, Population and Hospital Reform. A written consent was obtained from each participant prior to enrollment in the study. The aim of the survey, their rights and how confidentiality will be handled was explained to all participants as well as health benefits of the research for the community.

2.2. Definitions of variables

The subject was considered a person with diabetes if he had a capillary blood glucose level greater than or equal to 1.26g/l (newly diagnosed diabetes), or if he declared that he was diagnosed by health personnel as such (known diabetes). When capillary blood glucose levels were between 1.10 and 1.25 g/l, the subject is considered a person with prediabetes according to WHO international standards (IDF, 2019). This allowed us to divide the adults at last in three groups : Normal, prediabetes and diabetes.

In order to better identify the factors associated with prediabetes and diabetes, sociodemographic variables were selected from the database such as sex, age, level of education, professional status, socio-economic level expressed as monthly salary, residence environment (rural or urban), geographical area. Behavioural variables such as smoking, eating behaviour, physical inactivity and clinical variables such as general obesity, abdominal obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and heart attacks.

The 48 wilayas registered were divided into five geographical regions according to the division adopted by the government in 1995. These are the regions: Centre, East, West, South-East and South-West (Brahmia, 2010).

A height/length measurement board and a portable scale were used to measure anthropometric parameters (weight and height) for each participant in order to calculate their body mass index (BMI) using standardised techniques by dividing weight in kilograms by the square of height in metres. A BMI below 18.5 was considered underweight, 18.5 to 24.9 normal weight, 25 to 29.9 overweight and over 29.9 was considered obese (WHO, 2018). Abdominal obesity has been defined by the WHO as a waist circumference of 94 cm or more in men and 80 cm or more in women (WHO, 2009).

Physical activity behaviour was assessed in three different aspects: work, transport and leisure. The activities are classified into two levels of intensity: vigorous and moderate. “Vigorous Intensity Activities” are activities that require a high level of physical effort and cause large increases in breathing or heart rate. “Moderate-intensity activities” are activities that require moderate physical effort and cause slight increases in breathing or heart rate. On this basis, an adult person should perform at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity work or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity work or 60 minutes of combined vigorous and moderate intensity work per week. If the reported physical activity did not meet the WHO recommendation, participants were classified as physically inactive (WHO, 2018).

Concerning the consumption of fruits and vegetables, two categories have been created. One category was created for those who reported consuming five or more servings of fruits and vegetables on a typical day, and the other for those who reported consuming less.

Blood pressure measurements were taken three times on the right arm of the survey participants in a sitting position, using digital automatic blood pressure monitor with a universal cuff. The mean of three measurements was taken for analysis. The measurements were taken after the participant had rested for 15 minutes, with three minutes of rest between the measurements. Raised blood pressure was defined as: systolic blood pressure (SBP) \geq 140 mmHg and/or diastolic blood pressure (DBP) \geq 90 mmHg or where the participant is currently on antihypertensive medication (American Diabetes Association, 2014).

Laboratory tests were performed for total cholesterol and High-Density Lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL) using Cardiocheck PA blood meter and using a capillary drop of blood from their fingers. Raised cholesterol was defined as having raised fasting TC \geq 200 mg/dl or currently on medication for raised cholesterol (Alberti et al., 2006).

For the subjective measurement of heart attacks, the following question was asked: "Have you ever had a heart attack?". On this basis, a dummy variable was created, which takes the value "yes" if the respondent answers "affirmatively" to the question and "no" for the opposite.

For the socio-economic level, the monthly income reported by the respondent was used. The categories are based on the guaranteed national minimum wage (GNMW). This allowed us to divide individuals into four groups from the least wealthy to the wealthiest.

2.3. Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 25 statistical software (IBM Corp). The measurement of associations between individuals' diabetic status and its potential predictors were evaluated using logistic regression tests. From the bivariable logistic regression test model, only those variables having a significant association with the dependent variable were entered into the final multivariable regression model. The magnitude of the association was expressed as odds ratios (OR) with its 95% confidence interval. P values less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant. Multicollinearity between variables was assessed using the multicollinearity diagram (variance inflation factor and tolerance test). The final multivariate logistic regression model was found to be consistent with the results of the Hosmer-Lemeshow fit test.

3. Results

Among the 7,450 subjects aged 18 to 69, 6,989 were surveyed, i.e. a response rate of 93.8%, 3,082 men and 3,907 women, i.e. a sex ratio of 0.78. 883 adults were excluded from the study due to missed fasting blood glucose values. Thus, the study finally included 6106 adults, 2652 men (43.4%) and 3454 women (56.6%). The age group (30-44) represents the largest group in the sample with 39.0% followed by the group (45-59) estimated at 28.0%, the youngest group (18-29) with 21.0% and finally the oldest group with 11.9%. Table 1 summarises the socio-demographic, behavioural and clinical characteristics of the participants.

Table 1. Socio-demographic, geographical and behavioural characteristics of the study participants

Variables	Subjects	
	N	%
Sex		
male	2652	43.4
Female	3454	56.6
Age		
18-29	1283	21.0

30-44	2384	39.0
45-59	1712	28.0
60-69	727	11.9
Residence		
Urban	4085	66.9
Rural	2021	33.1
Geographical region		
north-centre	2135	34.9
north-west	1405	23.0
north-east	1962	32.1
South-west	202	3.3
south-east	401	6.7
Marital statut		
Single	1456	23.8
Married	4245	69.5
separated	174	2.9
Widowed	221	3.7
Education level		
Illiterate	968	15.8
Elementary	1040	17.0
Middle	1437	23.6
Secondary	1405	23.2
university	1240	20.3
Professionnel statut		
unemployed	1486	24.3
Government employee	1046	17.1
Non-government employee	642	10.5
Self-employed	698	11.5
Home maker	1785	29.2
Retired	449	7.3
Salary category		
GNMW and less	1093	28.6
+ 1 to 2 times GNMW	1496	39.2
+ 2 times to 4 times GNMW	888	23.3
+ 4 fois GNMW	340	8.9

Table 1. Socio-demographic, geographical and behavioural characteristics of the study participants (continued)

Variables	Subjects	
	N	%
BMI		
normal	1755	29.7
underweight	133	2.2
overweight	2542	43.0
obesity	1485	25.1
Abdominal obesity		
Yes	4049	68.5
No	1860	31.5
Blood pressure		
Yes	1989	32.8
No	4058	67.1
Hypercholesterolemia		
Yes	1568	25.8
No	4508	74.1
Heart attack		
Yes	385	6.3
No	5709	93.5

Tobacco consumption		
Current smoker	703	11.5
Ex-smoker	688	11.3
Non-smoking	4715	77.2
Consumption of fruits and vegetables		
Less than 5 portions	5054	84.9
5 portions and more	901	15.1
Physical activity		
- 150 min/week	1585	26.0
150 and more min/week	4521	74.0

BMI: Body Mass Index; GNMW: guaranteed national minimum wage; min: minute.

The prevalence of diabetes mellitus in the study was estimated as 14.3%, of which 4.4% were newly diagnosed (30.53% of all diabetes) and 9.9% were previously diagnosed by health personnel (self-reported). The prevalence of prediabetes was estimated at 8.2%, while the prevalence of normoglycaemics was 77.6%. Details concerning the classification of the sample according to glycemic status are summarised in figure 1 (see Figure 1). **Figure 1. Flow chart of blood glucose status.**

The results of the multivariate logistic regression for prediabetes are presented in Table 2. After adjustment, the results show that the factors associated with prediabetes are mainly age, geographical region, weight status, hypertension and hypercholesterolemia. Indeed, the risk of having prediabetes increases two and a half times in the (45-59) age group (AOR=2.53; CI [1.66-4.00]; P<0.001), and more than four times in the (60-69) age group (AOR=4.14; CI [2.45-6.91]; P<0.001) compared to the younger age group (18-29). Adults living in the geographic region of the South-East have a risk of prediabetes estimated to be nearly five times higher than those in the North-Central region (AOR=4.80; CI [3.27-7.05]; P<0.001), whereas the North-East region appears to have less risk compared to the reference region (AOR=0.68; CI [0.50-0.92]; P<0.05). Obese people have a 1.38 higher risk of having prediabetes than normal people (AOR=1.38; CI [1.03-1.80]; P<0.05). On the other hand, hypertension and hypercholesterolemia in participants also appeared to increase the risk of prediabetes by 1.65 (CI [1.25-2.18]; P<0.001) and 1.45 (CI [1.08-1.95]; P<0.05) respectively.

Table 2. Multiple logistic regression analysis of studied risk factors for prediabetes versus non-diabetes

Variable	Normal		Pre-diabetes		COR (95 CI)	AOR (95 CI)	P-Value
	N	%	N	%			
Sex							
male	2087	90.46	220	9.54	1		
Female	2649	90.47	279	9.53	1.01 (0.84,1.23)		NS
Age							
18-29	1146	93.63	78	6.37	1	1	
30-44	2016	91.89	178	8.11	1.23 (0.91,1.60)	1.46 (0.97,1.85)	NS
45-59	1176	88.42	154	11.58	1.81 (1.38,2.45)	2.53 (1.66,4.00)	<0.001
60-69	390	81.42	89	18.58	2.92(2.08,4.04)	4.14 (2.45,6.91)	<0.001
Residence							
Urban	3076	90.10	338	9.90	1		
Rural	1660	91.16	161	8.84	0.85 (0.68,1.01)		NS
Geographical region							
north-centre	1674	92.03	145	7.97	1	1	
north-west	1043	89.45	123	10.55	1.37(1.03,1.67)	1.28(0.97,1.58)	NS
north-east	1582	93.61	108	6.39	0.79(0.62,1.01)	0.68(0.50,0.92)	<0.05
South-west	168	93.85	11	6.15	0.63(0.27,1.07)	0.53(0.21,1.35)	NS

south-east	259	70.19	110	29.81	4.87(3.91,6.62)	4.80(3.27,7.05)	<0.001
Marital statut							
Single	1272	92.64	101	7.36	1	1	
Married	3225	90.18	351	9.82	1.42(1.12,1.83)	0.78(0.53,1.05)	NS
separated	110	84.62	20	15.38	2.05(1.15,3.50)	0.89(0.42,1.98)	NS
Widowed	123	85.42	21	14.58	1.78(1.03,3.07)	0.65(0.34,1.26)	NS
Education level							
Illiterate	682	90.45	72	9.55	1.04 (0.75,1.39)		NS
Elementary	751	88.56	97	11.44	1.26 (0.98,1.73)		NS
Middle	1136	91.91	100	8.09	0.90 (0.69,1.17)		NS
Secondary	1114	90.20	121	9.80	1.12 (0.87,1.45)		NS
University	1037	90.96	103	9.04	1		
Professionnel statut							
unemployed	1204	91.98	105	8.02	1	1	
Government employee	834	90.55	87	9.45	1.18 (0.85,1.66)	1.15(0.81,1.63)	NS
Non-government employee	545	94.29	33	5.71	0.62 (0.43,0.98)	0.69 (0.42,1.14)	NS
Self-employed	563	90.66	58	9.34	1.15 (0.81,1.62)	1.10(0.72,1.68)	NS
Home maker	1306	89.03	161	10.97	1.40 (1.07,1.81)	1.52(0.94,2.40)	NS
Retired	269	83.54	53	16.46	2.17 (1.51,3.12)	1.19(0.76,1.88)	NS

BMI: Body Mass Index; GNMW: guaranteed national minimum wage; CI: Confidence Interval; COR: crude odds ratio; AOR: Adjusted odds ratio; P-Value: signification; NS: not significant.

Table 2. Multiple logistic regression analysis of studied risk factors for prediabetes versus non-diabetes (continued)

Variable	Normal		Pre-diabetes		COR (95 CI)	AOR (95 CI)	P-Value
	N	%	N	%			
Salary category (GNMW)							
GNMW and less	859	90.52	90	9.48	1		
+ 1 to 2 times	1163	91.07	114	8.93	0.98 (0.70,1.36)		NS
+ 2 to 4 times	676	90.13	74	9.87	1.20 (0.83,1.67)		NS
+ 4 times	257	90.18	28	9.82	0.99 (0.60,1.63)		NS
BMI							
normal	1753	91.88	155	8.12	1	1	
underweight	173	92.51	14	7.49	0.77 (0.38,1.55)	0.96 (0.37,2.50)	NS
overweight	1587	90.27	171	9.73	1.30 (1.02,1.64)	1.17(0.88,1.55)	NS
obesity	1163	89.74	133	10.26	1.52 (1.17,1.98)	1.38(1.03,1.80)	<0.05
Abdominal obesity							
Yes	3010	90.20	327	9.80	1.21(0.96,1.49)		
No	1570	91.76	141	8.24	1		
Tobacco consumption							
Current smoker	580	93.10	43	6.90	0.75 (0.50,0.98)		NS
Ex-smoker	481	87.77	67	12.23	1.33(1.00,1.76)		
Non-smoking	3682	90.73	376	9.27	1		
Blood pressure							
Yes	1260	87.1	187	12.90	1.82(1.49,2.21)	1.65(1.25,2.18)	<0.001
No	3446	92.50	281	7.50	1	1	
Cholesterolemia							
Yes	1059	88.90	132	11.11	1.33 (1.08,1.65)	1.45(1.08,1.95)	<0.05
No	3684	91.50	344	8.50	1	1	

Heart attack					
Yes	251	89.01	31	10.99	0.78 (0.47,1.26)
No	4495	90.90	450	9.10	1
Consumption of fruits and vegetables					
Less than 5 portions	3927	90.80	398	9.20	1.16 (0.87,1.55)
5 portions and more	701	91.28	67	8.72	1
Physical activity					
- 150 min/week	1179	90.14	129	9.86	1.12 (0.92,1.36)
150 and more min/week	3568	91.14	347	8.86	1

BMI: Body Mass Index; GNMW: guaranteed national minimum wage; CI: Confidence Interval; COR: crude odds ratio; AOR: Adjusted odds ratio; P-Value: signification; NS: not significant.

The factors associated with diabetes mellitus according to the multivariate logistic regression results presented in Table 3 are age, area of residence, geographical region, marital status, education level, weight status, abdominal obesity, smoking, hypertension, hypercholesterolaemia and heart attacks. The analysis revealed that the risk of developing diabetes in adults increased by 1.56 times in the (30-44) age group (AOR=1.56; CI [1.11-2.13]; P<0.05), almost five times in the (45-59) age group (AOR=4.82; CI [3.45-6.29]; P<0.001), and 8.53 times in the (60-69) age group (AOR=8.53; CI [5.92-12.24]; P<0.001) compared to the (18-29) age group. People living in rural areas are less likely to have diabetes compared to those living in urban areas with (AOR=0.62; [0.52-0.74]; P<0.001). Similar to prediabetes, the risk of diabetes appears to be increased in the South-East region by 2.81 times compared to the North-Central region (AOR=2.81; CI [2.12-3.74]; P<0.001). The risks of having diabetes among married, separated and widowed people are respectively 1.63 (CI [1.23-2.16]; P<0.01), 2.72 (CI [1.71-4.31]; P<0.001) and 2.13 (CI [1.42-3.22]; P<0.001) higher than that of single people. Regarding the level of education, those with middle and secondary level seem to have a higher risk of diabetes than those with university education (AOR=1.43; CI [1.08-1.88]; P<0.05); (AOR=1.41; CI [1.07-1.85]; P<0.05). The results also showed that general obesity and abdominal obesity can increase the risk of developing diabetes by 1.73 (CI [1.19-3.39]; P<0.05) and 1.51 (CI [1.05-2.18]; P<0.05) times respectively. Adults with co-morbidity such as hypertension had a 3.34 times greater risk of having diabetes (CI [2.69-4.14]; P<0.001), those with hypercholesterolemia had a 2.1 times greater risk (CI [1.66-2.64]; P<0.01), and those who reported having had a heart attack had a 1.5 (CI [1.06-2.10]; P<0.05) times greater risk of having diabetes than their peers. Concerning smoking, it appears that ex-smokers have a two times greater risk than non-smokers of developing diabetes (AOR=2.02; CI [1.56-2.60]; P<0.001). Thus, none of the factors such as gender, employment status, salary, fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity seem to influence the risk of developing diabetes.

Table 3. Multiple logistic regression analysis of studied risk factors for diabetes versus non-diabetes

Variable	Normal		Diabetes		COR (95 CI)	AOR (95 CI)	P-Value
	N	%	N	%			
Sex							
Male	2087	85.81	345	14.19	1	1	
Female	2649	83.43	526	16.57	1.20 (1.04,1.39)	1.05 (0.82,1.35)	NS
Age							
18-29	1146	95.10	59	4.90	1	1	
30-44	2016	91.39	190	8.61	1.82 (1.34,2.45)	1.56 (1.11,2.13)	<0.05
45-59	1176	75.87	374	24.13	6.28 (4.76,8.36)	4.82 (3.45,6.29)	<0.001

60-69	390	61.13	248	38.87	12.20(9.00,16.56)	8.53 (5.92,12.2)	<0.001
Residence							
Urban	3076	82.09	671	17.91	1	1	
Rural	1660	89.25	200	10.75	0.55(0.46,0.65)	0.62 (0.5,0.74)	<0.001
Geographical region							
north-centre	1674	85.06	294	14.94	1	1	
north-west	1043	83.44	207	16.56	1.13(0.93,1.37)	1.22(0.99,1.50)	NS
north-east	1582	86.31	251	13.69	0.96(0.80,1.09)	0.97(0.80,1.18)	NS
South-west	168	88.42	22	11.58	0.73(0.42,1.18)	1.08(0.62,1.62)	NS
south-east	259	70.38	109	29.62	2.38(1.84,3.07)	2.81(2.12,3.74)	<0.001
Marital statut							
Single	1272	94.01	81	5.99	1	1	
Married	3225	82.67	676	17.33	3.30(2.67,4.23)	1.63(1.23,2.16)	<0.01
separated	110	70.51	46	29.49	6.41(4.26,9.66)	2.72(1.71,4.31)	<0.001
Widowed	123	60.89	79	39.11	9.80(6.87,13.98)	2.13(1.42,3.22)	<0.001
Education level							
Illiterate	682	76.29	212	23.71	2.97 (2.32,3.80)	1.43(1.08,1.88)	<0.05
Elementary	751	80.58	181	19.42	2.31(1.80,2.97)	1.41(1.07,1.85)	<0.05
Middle	1136	85.22	197	14.78	1.65(1.25,2.05)	1.14 (0.83,1.5)	NS
Secondary	1114	85.96	182	14.04	1.55(1.20,2.00)	1.18(0.88,1.59)	NS
university	1037	90.49	109	9.51	1	1	
Professionnel statut							
unemployed	1204	88.59	155	11.41	1	1	
Government employee	834	86.42	131	13.58	1.16(0.90,1.49)	0.97(0.71,1.32)	NS
Non-government employee	545	90.98	54	9.02	0.83 (0.60,1.16)	0.76 (0.52,1.1)	NS
Self-employed	563	87.69	79	12.31	1.13(0.85,1.50)	0.87(0.62,1.24)	NS
Home maker	1306	79.54	336	20.46	2.11(1.72,2.60)	1.22(0.97,1.55)	NS
Retired	269	67.93	127	32.07	3.55(2.72,4.63)	1.12(0.80,1.58)	NS

BMI: Body Mass Index; GNMW: guaranteed national minimum wage; CI: Confidence Interval; COR: crude odds ratio; AOR: Adjusted odds ratio; P-Value: signification; NS: not significant.

Table 3. Multiple logistic regression analysis of studied risk factors for diabetes versus non-diabetes (continued)

Variable	Normal		Diabetes		COR (95 CI)	AOR (95 CI)	P-Value
	N	%	N	%			
Salary category (GNMW)							
GNMW and less	859	86.07	139	13.93	1		
+ 1 to 2 times	1163	85.45	198	14.55	1.069(0.85,1.35)		
+ 2 to 4 times	676	84.39	125	15.61	1.126(0.87,1.46)		
+ 4 times	257	83.17	52	16.83	1.229(0.87,1.73)		
BMI							
normal	1753	91.49	215	8.51	1	1	
underweight	173	96.11	11	3.89	0.55 (0.26,1.19)	1.88(0.59,6.38)	NS
overweight	1587	80.85	329	19.15	1.75 (1.44,2.13)	1.42(0.98,2.06)	NS
obesity	1163	79.55	307	20.45	2.53 (2.06,3.11)	1.73(1.19,3.39)	<0.05
Abdominal obesity							
Yes	3010	81.15	699	18.85	2.30 (1.91,2.75)	1.51 (1.1,2.18)	<0.05

No	1570	90.75	160	9.25	1	1	
Tobacco consumption							
Current smoker	580	91.19	56	8.81	0.54 (0.39,0.75)	1.21 (0.87,1.7)	NS
Ex-smoker	481	76.23	150	23.77	1.60 (1.30,1.95)	2.02 (1.56,2.6)	<0.001
Non-smoking	3682	84.47	677	15.53	1	1	
Blood pressure							
Yes	1260	69.90	542	30.10	4.48 (3.85,5.20)	3.34(2.69,4.14)	<0.001
No	3446	91.20	331	8.80	1	1	
Cholesterolemia							
Yes	1059	73.7	377	26.30	2.73 (2.34,3.17)	2.09(1.66,2.64)	<0.001
No	3684	88.50	480	11.50	1	1	
Heart attack							
Yes	251	70.70	104	29.30	2.36 (1.86,2.99)	1.49(1.06,2.10)	<0.05
No	4495	85.47	764	14.53	1	1	
Consumption of fruits and vegetables							
Less than 5 portions	3927	84.34	729	15.66	0.93 (0.76,1.14)		
5 portions and more	701	84.36	130	15.64	1		
Physical activity							
- 150 min/week	1179	80.98	277	19.02	1.42 (1.22,1.66)	1.09(0.85,1.39)	NS
150 and more min/week	3568	85.48	606	14.52	1	1	

BMI: Body Mass Index; GNMW: guaranteed national minimum wage; CI: Confidence Interval; COR: crude odds ratio; AOR: Adjusted odds ratio; P-Value: signification; NS: not significant.

4. Discussion

This study was conducted on a representative sample of 6106 adults using data from the national Stepwise survey 2016-2017. It allowed describing the socio-demographic determinants associated with the prevalence of diabetes and prediabetes in Algeria. The results indicated that 14.3 of the population had diabetes of which 4.4 were newly diagnosed (30.53 of all diabetes). This proportion is higher than in some previous studies. In 1992, a survey carried out in Algiers on 9384 inhabitants found a prevalence of known diabetes of 2.1 (Bezzaoucha, 1992). In 2003, the Stepwise survey conducted on 4050 people in two geographical areas, the East (Setif) and the West (Mostaganem) found an overall prevalence of 8.9 (Stepwise Algeria survey, 2003). In 2006, a survey conducted on a sample of 7656 individuals in Tlemcen found a prevalence of type 2 diabetes equal to 10.5 (Zaoui et al., 2007). On the other hand, 7.04 and 7.2 are respectively the rates of diabetes found by the international diabetes federation in 2011 and 2019 (IDF, 2019; IDF, 2011). The prevalence of diabetes found in results is also higher than the world prevalence which is about 9.3, the African region (3.9) and the MENA region (12.8) (IDF, 2019). It is also higher than the rate found in Morocco (12.4) (Chetoui et al., 2018), Kuwait (13.42) (Nikoloski, 2020), Indonesia (13.0) (Idris et al., 2013) and comparable to Iran's rate which is 14.1 (Mirzaei et al., 2020). However, it remains lower than found in Tunisia (15.1) (Maoui et al., 2019), Egypt (24.9) (Assad-khalil et al., 2018), Sudan (22.1) (IDF, 2019), Libya (18.8) (Meo et al., 2017) and China (15.5) (Liu et al., 2020).

About 5-10 of people with prediabetes develop diabetes each year, although the conversion rate varies depending on population characteristics and the definition of prediabetes (Nathan et al., 2007). The results showed an estimated prevalence of prediabetes of 8.2. This prevalence is higher than the world prevalence reported by IDF which is 7.5, and comparable to that of the MENA region which is 8.3 (IDF, 2019). Meanwhile, it is lower than that of Africa (9.0) (IDF, 2019), Blida (Central Algeria) (10.6) (Bachir-cherif et al., 2018), Oran (11.6) (Houti et al., 2016), Egypt (13.1) (WHO, 2018) and Iran (20.7) (Mirzaei et al., 2016).

30.53 of adults living with diabetes in the study did not know they had diabetes. Although this prevalence remains lower than the global prevalence which is reported by the IDF at 50.1, that of Africa (59.7) and the MENA region which is estimated at 44.7 (IDF, 2019), This figure is still alarming. If these adults were not included in this survey, it means that these cases of diabetes may run a higher risk of complications, which would be too late to reverse, causing more frequent use of care and higher costs. Therefore, early and rapid detection is essential for better detection of diabetes.

Nevertheless, all these comparisons should be interpreted with caution, given the variance in design, sampling, target population (general or hospital, etc.), inclusion age, definition of diabetes and undiagnosed cases, which makes direct comparisons more difficult.

The results showed that the prevalence of diabetes and prediabetes found in this survey are associated with several factors. The difference of this prevalence in both sexes has been investigated in several studies. Some have found that the rate of prediabetes and diabetes is higher in women (Chentli et al., 2014; Idris et al., 2017; Maoui et al., 2019) explaining this difference by the hormonal profile of women which is considered as a factor leading to obesity. While others have found that this rate is in favour of men (Belkacem and Semrouni, 2018; Eltom et al., 2018). Navarro and al explained in their study in 2015 that testosterone deficiency leads to metabolic dysfunction and predisposes to diabetes in older men (Navarro et al., 2015). In the results, although the proportion of diabetes in women is relatively higher than men, multiple regression showed that the prevalence of the two glycaemic states are comparable in both sexes. These results are in line with several studies (Belmokhtar et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2020;).

The prevalence of prediabetes and diabetes increases significantly with age. These results are consistent with reports from studies in Algeria (Houti et al., 2016; Bachir-Cherif et al., 2018), North Africa (Chetoui et al., 2018; Maoui et al., 2019) and worldwide (Eltom et al., 2018; Endris et al., 2019; Mirzari et al., 2020). Indeed, we note an ageing of the population in Algeria and everywhere in the world expressed by an increase in life expectancy which explains the high proportion of diabetes on one hand. On the other hand, some authors argue that in elderly people there is a decrease in insulin secretion and an increase in insulin resistance (Rcette et al., 2006; Endris et al., 2019;).

The high risk of diabetes prevalence in urban areas observed in the results is in agreement with the results of many studies (Animaw and Seyoum, 2017; Chetoui et al., 2018; Maoui et al., 2019). Most consider that this is probably due to the living conditions in these areas, where access to fast food, ready-made and frozen food rich in fat and energy is easier, not forgetting the availability of transport creating a sedentary environment. In contrast to rural areas, where people often have higher levels of physical activity due to the intense agricultural activities that are usually their main occupation.

The direct reasons of the positive association between prediabetes and diabetes with the South East region are unknown, but it is thought that it is probably due to the living conditions in this environment, such as poor potable water supply, accessibility of sanitary structures, lack of specialized medical coverage as well as the lack of various facilities found in the northern regions. In addition, variations in the level of urbanization and socio-economic status of specific sub-populations as well as differences in lifestyle and eating habits between the southern and northern regions of Algeria could be responsible for this difference. But as it is only speculation, it may be an incentive for further research (Maoui et al., 2019).

The association between diabetes and married, separated and widowed status observed in the results is found in several studies (Belmokhtar et al., 2011; Assad-Khalil et al., 2018). These studies argue that the socio-economic level decreases when the family grows. At the same time, several other studies highlight the protective effect of marriage compared to the situation of single or separated people (Idris et al., 2017; Yaghoubi et al., 2020).

Being married can provide diabetic patients with social support that can help reduce the stress due to affection between couples. Contrary to separated or single people who are prone to negative effects and depression due to their experiences (Yaghoubi et al., 2020).

The effect of education level on the prevalence of diabetes is highly controversial. It is true that educational level is one of several factors that determines a person's behavior. As it is linked to access and use of health services, it also influences families' choices about diet, personal care and disease prevention. In our results we found an association between diabetes and low level of education, a finding found in several studies (Belmokhtar et al., 2011; Assad-Khalil et al., 2018; Endris et al., 2019; Nikoloski, 2020). However, having a high level of education does not necessarily mean having knowledge of nutrition and dietetics, as several studies have found a positive relationship between diabetes and high education (Swasey et al., 2020; Seiglie et al., 2020).

In the study, socio-economic level and occupation of participants did not emerge as factors favoring the development of diabetes. These results corroborate the findings of several studies (Animaw and Seyoum, 2017; Idris et al., 2017; Maoui et al., 2019). The association of general and abdominal obesity with the high prevalence of diabetes observed in the results is in line with the results found in the literature in Algeria (Belmokhtar et al., 2011; Belkacem and Semrouni, 2018; Maoui et al., 2019) and worldwide (Endris et al., 2019; Lui et al., 2020; Swasey et al., 2020; Seiglie et al., 2020). This association is often found in females (Chetoui et al., 2018; Assad-Khalil et al., 2018; Mirzaei et al., 2020), usually due to their hormonal profiles, or, as some authors have explained, this may be considered in some regions as a cultural determinant of female beauty (Maoui et al., 2019; Chentli et al., 2020). The strong association of obesity with diabetes has imposed a new term to describe this linkage, which is "Diabesity". Obesity is capable of inducing or worsening insulin resistance and can also cause a range of metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular disease manifestations (Navarro et al., 2015).

Like many previous studies, hypertension and hypercholesterolaemia has been found to be associated with prediabetes and diabetes (Belmokhtar et al., 2011; Endris et al., 2019; Yu et al., 2020). The same results have been observed for hypercholesterolaemia, which corroborates several reports (Assad-Khalil et al., 2018; Endris et al., 2019; Lui et al., 2020), as well as heart attacks (Hills et al., 2018; Yaghoubi et al., 2020). This situation of comorbidity has often been attributed in part to poor adherence and long-standing diabetes.

The results showed a higher prevalence of diabetes in ex- smokers compared to current smokers, It should be noted that, according to some authors, smoking cessation can lead to weight gain and an increased risk of obesity which can lead to the development of diabetes (Maier et al., 2014). Although several studies have indicated that poor diet and lack of physical activity increase the risk of diabetes (Assad-Khalil et al., 2018; Nikoloski, 2020; Liu et al., 2020), the study did not show a significant association between these factors and the prevalence of glycemic status. Urbanization, mechanization of work and transport lead to an increasing sedentarisation resulting in a change in lifestyle with a strong increase of inactivity. For diabetes, reduced physical activity is responsible for a decrease in glucose uptake by the muscles and an increase in insulin resistance (Maamri and Benelmostafa, 2020). The non-association between glycemic status and daily portions of fruits and vegetables observed in the results can be explained by the Mediterranean diet which is described by several authors as beneficial in the management of type 2 diabetes and helps to improve blood sugar and cholesterol levels in metabolic syndrome and in the prevention of diabetes (O'Connor et al., 2020).

4.1. Limitations

It should be noted that this study has several limitations. First, the definition of biochemical diabetes in this survey was limited to a single glucose measurement. In addition, the real prevalence of diabetes may be imprecise either because of under- or over-reporting resulting from self-reporting of diabetes, or because of the use of capillary readings, which remain less accurate than other laboratory methods requiring sample dilution. The data collected on diabetes do not distinguish between different types of diabetes. Considering that type 1 diabetes and other types of diabetes generally account for 5 of the total adult population

with diabetes, this may suggest that the associations observed in the analysis are more pertinent to type 2 diabetes. In addition, HbA1c data (glycated haemoglobin) that are needed to correctly estimate diabetes prevalence and adherence were unavailable. Another limitation was that the study did not include people over 69 years of age, which may bias the overall prevalence of diabetes in the population. Finally, the variables examined in this study can only explain part of the determinants of diabetes mellitus, which is a complex disease to understand. Other socio-anthropological factors, more contextualized, can help us to better understand and define this phenomenon, without forgetting the genetic predispositions that have not been studied in this study.

5. Conclusion

Older age, Southeast region, general obesity, and hypertension appear to be related to the prevalence of prediabetes, while in addition to the factors mentioned above, urban area of residence, marital status, low level of education, abdominal obesity, hypercholesterolemia, and heart attacks seem to be related to diabetes. These factors are often preventable by preventive interventions based on early diagnosis through screening of at-risk individuals and therapeutic education, which may be more beneficial by considering the socio-economic and cultural particularities of each health region and even of each patient. These results should help measure progress towards the goals of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and will be very useful for the development, monitoring and evaluation of population policies and health programs, particularly prevention programs, which would help reduce the incidence of diabetes.

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Ethics approval and consent to participate

The World Health Organization noted in its report that the ethical approval was validated by the relevant Algerian authorities and informed consent was obtained from every survey participant before conducting the interviews

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Adel Sidi-Yakhlef was in charge of conceptualization and formal analysis. Abdellatif Moussouni was in charge of methodology. Meryem Boukhelif and Houari Hamdaoui contributed to writing of the first draft of the paper. Amaria Metri-Aouar provided a critical review of the data analysis and manuscript. All authors reviewed drafts of the manuscript, provided suggestions for refinement and provided approval for the version to be published.

Availability of data

The data supporting the findings of this study are available on request to the following address: <https://extranet.who.int/ncdsmicrodata/index.php/catalog/91>

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COVID-19 AND EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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Abstract: *The COVID-19 pandemic caused the largest disruption of education system in human history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. Closures of schools, institutions and other learning spaces have impacted more than 94% of the world's student population. This has brought far reaching changes in all aspects of our lives. Social distancing and restrictive movement policies have significantly disturbed traditional educational practices. Several schools, colleges and universities have discontinued face-to-face teachings. The need of the hour is to innovate and implement alternative educational system and assessment strategies. The COVID-19 has provided us with an opportunity to pave the way for introducing distance learning. This article makes a review of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the attendant lockdown on teaching and learning and general educational administration viz-a-viz impact of COVID-19 on education system, inequality in access to learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, approaches to distance learning during the pandemic, COVID-19 and education finance, challenges in teaching and learning to draw conclusion and make recommendations.*

Keywords: COVID-19, Pandemic, Lockdown, Distance learning, Educational Administration.

1. Introduction

School closure due to COVID-19 brought significant disruption to education across the world. Emerging evidence from some of the region's highest-income countries indicate that the pandemic is giving rise to learning losses and increases inequality and to reduce and reverse the long-term negative effect, Ukraine and other less affluent lower-middle income countries which are likely to be even harder hit, need to implement learning recovery programmes, protect educational budgets, and prepare for the future chocks (Robbin Donnelly-Patrinis, 2021).

As of April 21st, 2020, approximately 1.723 million learners have been affected with the sudden closures of school in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. UNESCO (2020b) notes that as of the above date, 191 countries have implemented nationwide closures and 5 have implemented local closures, imparting about 98.4 per cent of the world's student population. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the largest disruption of education system in human history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. Closures of schools, institutions and other learning spaces have impacted more than 94% of the world's student population (Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2021).

In Nigeria in 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 disrupted the socio-economic and educational system and caused serious concern for education stakeholders because of the prolong holiday because of the pandemic. Going to school is the best public policy to develop

skills and potentials of the learners and schooling increases the child's ability to become a useful and acceptable member of the society (FRN, 2013). However, efforts to curtail the spread of COVID-19 through non-medical interventions and preventive measures such as social distancing and self-isolation have prompted the wild-spread closure of primary, secondary and tertiary schooling in over 100 countries including Nigeria. This was done to prevent further spread of the deadly virus among learners and school personnel since it can easily be contacted through direct contact with the carrier of the virus.

The outbreak of the pandemic led to the suspension of many unified examinations like the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), the National Examinations Council (NECO), Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) in Nigeria and most countries of Africa and the world. Most of Africa's 54 countries are with confirmed cases and death tolls due to COVID-19, some closed their borders and banned international flights, local and international trades are declining at a drastic rate (Adelakun, 2020).

A lot of pandemics have occurred in human history, and affected human life, education system and economic development in the world, the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020) on March 11, 2020 has officially announced that corona virus (COVID-19) is a pandemic after it covers 114 countries in 3 months and infects more than 118,000 people in the world.

In many developing countries including Nigeria, the economic chock has come first as governments have locked down their economies to reduce the spread of infection. As a result, developing countries are suffering their greatest economic decline and closures of their education and transportation system. Consequently, distance learning solutions such as digital learning management system, massive open online courses and self-directed learning content are containing the platforms (UNESCO, 2020a). However, due to lack of internet connectivity, information technology, educational materials and digital technology skill, distance learning is difficult for teachers, students and families in developing countries (Mustafa, 2020). Some developing countries deliver classes through radio, television, and online platform. However, the poorest families have no radio, television and other devices to access the resources and to learn at their homes. Therefore, some developing countries provided resources such as textbooks, radios, equipment and study guides to the poorest students.

2. Corona-Virus (COVID-19)

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020), corona viruses are a family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). These viruses were originally transmitted from animals to people. SARS, for instance, was transmitted from civet cat to humans while MERS moved to human from a type of camel. Several known corona viruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans. The name corona virus comes from the Latin word corona, meaning crown or halo. Under an electron microscope, it looks like it is surrounded by a solar corona. The novel corona virus, identified by Chinese authorities on January 7, 2020 and since named SARS-CoV-2, is a new strain that had not been previously identified in humans. Little is known about it, although human-to-human transmission has become confirmed.

Chinese health authorities are still trying to determine the origin of the virus, which they say likely, came from a seafood market in Wuhan, China where wildlife was also traded illegally. On February 7, 2020, Chinese researchers said the virus could have spread from an infected animal species to humans through illegally trafficked pangolins, which are prized in Asia for food and medicine. Scientists have pointed to either bats or snakes as possible sources of the virus.

According to the WHO signs of infection include fever, cough, and shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, it can lead to pneumonia, multiple organ failure and even death. Current estimates of the incubation period-the time between infection and the onset of symptoms-range from one to 14 days. Most infected people show symptoms within

five to six days. However, infected patients can also be asymptomatic, meaning they do not display any symptoms despite have the virus in their systems.

On 27 February, 2020, Nigeria confirmed its first case in Lagos State, an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria had returned on 25 February from Milan, Italy through the Muritala Muhammed International Airport, fell ill on 26 February and was transferred to Lagos State Biosecurity Facilities for isolation and testing (Adelakun, 2020). He noted that to contain the spread of the virus in Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Education directed all educational institutions in Nigeria to shut down and allow students to go home as cases of reported COVID-19 increased to 13. From February 27 till May 10, the virus had infected over 434 people, spread to 34 out of 36 States of the federation. Over 600 have recovered from the COVID-19 and the fatalities rate was 95.

3. Impact of COVID-19 on education system

Outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the closure of child-cares, nursery, primary and secondary schools, college, universities and other tertiary institutions to control the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 not only affects the pupils and students but it also affects teachers and parents across the world. UNESCO reports that over 1.5 billion students in 195 countries are out of school in the world due to the school closures (UNESCO, 2020b). COVID-19 affects education system, examinations, and evaluation, starting from the new semester or term across the school year.

The pandemic is affecting schools, pupils, students, teachers and parents. The COVID-19 crisis increases social inequality in schools. Students from more advantaged parents attend schools with better digital infrastructure and teachers might have higher levels of digital technology skills. Some schools can be well equipped in digital technology and educational resources. Disadvantaged students are attending schools with lower ICT infrastructure and educational resources. With the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, more advantaged students are attending schools to adopt online learning since schools in disadvantaged and rural areas lack the appropriate digital infrastructure required to deliver teaching. Students have no equal access to digital technology and educational materials. In the (Woday et al, 2020) survey, the study finds during school closure the level of anxiety, depression, disorders, and stress are high among students.

Distance learning is a solution to continue the education system, but it is difficult in developing countries because many parents have not themselves been to school and there is lack of the necessary Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, computers, radio, and television to provide distance learning.

4. Inequality in access to learning during the Covid-19 pandemic

Despite best efforts to set up a supportive remote learning experience, evidence is emerging to show that the school closures have resulted in actual learning losses across the world. Research analyzing these outcomes is ongoing, but early result from Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Nigeria and other countries of Africa indicate both learning losses and increases in inequality (Robbin, Donnelly and Pastrinos, 2021 and Adelakun, 2020). Alarming, these losses are found to be much higher among students whose parents have less education, a finding reinforced by a study showing that children from socioeconomically advantaged families have received more parental support with their studies during the school closure period.

This emerging data, which provides insight into the region's highest-income countries, can also be used to predict outcome in middle-income countries. Despite their substantial technological capability, even Europe high-income countries have experienced learning losses and increased inequality as a result of the abrupt transition to visual learning (Robbin, Donnelly and Pastrinos (2021). These outcomes are likely to be even more acute in middle-and lower-

income countries, where there is much less technological capabilities and a larger share of family living (Adelakun, 2020).

The school closure due to COVID-19 may not affect students equally. Students from less advantaged backgrounds highly suffered during COVID-19 than advantaged students (Mekonnen and Muluye, 2020). To control the corona-virus spread, most countries have been working to encourage parents and schools to help students continue to learn at home through distance learning (UNESCO, 2020a). The governments advised students to learn from radio and television lessons that can be accessed at home. However, the radio and television lessons may work for some children and students in urban areas, but most parents in rural areas have no access to radio and television lessons. For example in Ethiopia, more than 80 per cent of the population lives in rural areas with limited or no access to electric power, so that it is challenging for students in rural areas to learn from radio and television lessons (Tiruneh, 2020). This situation is similar in Nigeria and other developing countries of Africa and even where there is electric power, the supply is epileptic and people live below the poverty line.

Robbin Donnelly & Pastrinos note that outside the classroom, learning losses may translate into even greater long-time challenges. It has long been known that decreases in test score are associated with future declines in employment. Conversely, increases in student achievement leads to significant increases in future income as do additional years of schooling which are associated with an 8-9 per cent gain in life time earnings. In the absence of any intervention, the learning losses arising from the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to have a long time compounding negative effect on many children's future well-being. These learning losses could translate into less access to higher education, lower labour market participation and lower future earnings.

5. Approaches to distance learning during the pandemic

There was a general appreciation in all countries that education was essential and had to continue even though the schools were closed. There was broad agreement that effective distance learning was necessary but how that would be achieved was more problematic. There were wide national and sectoral differences in what distance education might look like. Government advice varied between countries and between education sectors. In some cases, government responses were quick, appropriate and comprehensive. In another case, very little was done and decisions were left to teachers, schools and lower administrative levels.

WHO Regional Office for Africa (2020) notes that distance learning systems, a broad concept, requires a suite of materials design, a system for paper materials distribution, a system for returning tasks, and a system for monitoring learning management and mentoring skills, which are different from the skills required of a teacher with a class full of students. Distance learning, of any kind, also makes very different demands on students than attending a class does and, particularly for younger students, parents need to understand these different demands that distance learning places both on them and on their children.

At the University or college level, institutions could broadly decide for themselves how to approach continuity of education and many higher education institutions already had Virtual Learning Environment which, in principle, enabled them to continue teaching with little interruption. In practical terms, it was often not so straightforward. In other cases, institutions proposed mainly synchronous video conferencing lessons for their students, using zoom or something similar. Not all students were able to access these lessons.

At the school level, there were differences between the primary and secondary levels, but also a lot of commonality. At both levels, there was concern about the 'examination classes' (both taking the primary and secondary living examination) and many countries made particular provision for them. If provision for examination classes was not prompted at the national level, then at local and institutional levels, these classes were prioritized for action. However, particularly at the primary school level, and almost as much at the secondary school level, neither students nor teachers had any experience of teaching and learning outside the

classroom environment. The learning curve for both was, therefore, very steep and, in some cases, insurmountable. Government responses varied, with some very efficient, and others comparatively ineffectual.

Although, as one might expect, the response of wealthier, more advanced countries has generally been more noticeably effective in mitigating the effects on education, other, poorer countries have also often responded well too. Similarly, although one might expect poorer countries to have shown a slower, less adequate response, some wealthier countries also appear, on occasion, to have been less than adequate in their responses.

There were two broad types of responses from teachers. The first was those who wanted the government to provide them with training, as well as materials and technology etc. These may have been reasonable enough requests, but they were practical in the emergency situation that they found themselves in. The second group was those who recognised that external help was unlikely to be forthcoming in the short-term and decided they would have to find their own solutions to the problem they were facing. This divide did not really split along country lines-there were examples of both in many countries.

6. COVID-19 and education finance

The interruption of the education system in Nigeria as in other countries of the world due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has led all education stakeholders at various levels to have a shift in the plans to finance the education of the children and the education system at large. There is no doubt the pandemic will elongate academic calendar and this elongation will warrant extra payments at the various levels of education demanding adjustment in education financial strategy. Adelakun (2020) notes that during the lockdown some parents were forced to procure laptops, android phones, television cables and other means of ICT, to ensure their wards move with the new innovation of the online classes at the various levels designed for the teachers to reach out to their students.

Most of the middle-class private schools in Nigeria could not pay their staff's salaries in the era of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown because students were not in school and some have not paid their school fees before the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis. The expenses run during the period of lockdown by government who paid public school staff and few private school owners who managed to pay their staff are mere gifts and not payment for work done. This will have effect on the future educational finance because the working time does not tally with the staff payment. The development is nobody's fault however because no one could have predicted that the world will be faced with this challenge. Government tried to ensure the welfare of workers during the lockdown with the belief that they are the oil keeping the engine of the national economy running. But if the ugly development of lockdown persists, it may have serious impact on the commitment of governments towards the education system in the face of competing demands from the healthcare and other sectors serving vulnerable segments of the society.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has not only revealed the poor state of infrastructure and facilities in the health sector of Nigeria but also revealed the reality of the dilapidation and poor funding of the education sector. Aside from the health sector, no other area has suffered the impact of COVID-19 like education. While many countries have easily adapted and switched to virtual classes, in Nigeria, it is not only difficult but also impossible to open our schools virtually due to lack of facilities necessary to operate virtual classes, poor provision of the internet network, unstable power supply, high cost of mobile data and other challenges.

Okwuosa & Modibbo (2021) assert that many children were out of school even before the pandemic, and even more have dropped out due to the pandemic. The home teaching method introduced by the Nigerian Ministry of Education to teach through radio and television is not yielding the desired result as the electricity supply in the nation is below average and majority of Nigerians are living below the poverty line and cannot afford television or radio.

The need to protect education budgets has never been more urgent. Records show that for the past ten years, the Nigeria education sector allocation has not reached the UNESCO recommended 10 to 15% of the budget in developing countries. This has led to teachers' strikes at all levels of education in Nigeria, with other calamities that have reduced the once proud education sector into a complete laughing stock in international education rating standards.

In Nigeria, basic education is financed through concurrent financing from the three tiers of government-federal, state and local government authorities with distinct financing mandates and responsibilities for each tier. The federal government provides 50% and the state and local governments provide 30% and 20% respectively (Babalola, 2000). As a result, state investment in education is heavily reliant on the federal account allocation, making its educational goals susceptible to challenges of natural resource mobilization, COVID-19, international oil price fluctuation, and expenditure management.

The federal government of Nigeria allocated the sum of #568 billion (approx. USD 1.5 billion) to education in 2020. However, as a result of COVID, this allocation was reduced to 509 billion naira (approx. USD 1.34 billion). This has pressured public schools into dismissing hundreds of temporary staff members and skyrocketed students' school fees in various institutions thereby increasing inequality in education. In addition, the attacks on education facilities in North-East, Nigeria have destroyed infrastructure worth billions of naira and resulted in the deaths of countless students and teachers. This destruction requires funding to rebuild and employ more teachers, as well as strengthen the security to assure the safety of teachers and learners.

7. Challenges in online teaching and learning

With the availability of a sea of platforms and online educational tools, the users-both educators and learners-face frequent hiccups while using it or referring to these tools. Some of the challenges identified and highlighted by many researchers are summarized as follows:

Broadly identified challenges with e-learning are accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, life-long learning and educational policy (Murgatroid, 2020). Many countries have substantial issues with a reliable internet connection and access to digital devices. While, in many developing countries, the economically backward children are unable to afford online learning devices, the online education poses a risk of exposure to increased screen time for the learner. Therefore, it has become essential for students to engage in offline activities and self-exploratory learning. Lack of parental guidance, especially for young learners, is another challenge, as both parents are working. There are practical issues around physical workspaces conducive to different ways of learning (Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2021).

The innately motivated learners are relatively unaffected in their learning as they need minimum supervision and guidance, while the vulnerable group consisting of students who are weak in learning face difficulties. Some academically competent learners from economically disadvantaged background are unable to access and afford online learning. The level of academic performance of the students is likely to drop for the classes held for both year-end examination and internal examination due to reduced contact hour for learners and lack of consultation with teachers when facing difficulties in learning/understanding (Sintema, 2020).

Student assessments are carried out online, with a lot of trial and error, uncertainty and confusion among the teachers, students and parents. The approach adopted to conduct online examination varies as per the convenience and expertise among the educator and the compatibility of the learners. Appropriate measures to check plagiarism is yet to be put in place in many schools and institutions mainly due to the large number of student population. The lockdown of schools and colleges has not only affected internal assessments and examinations for the main public qualifications like General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), but A levels have also been cancelled for the entire cohort in the UK. Depending on the duration of the lockdown, postponement or cancellation of the entire examination assessment might be a grim possibility (United Nations, 2020).

Various state-level board exams, recruitment exams, university-level exams and entrance exams have been postponed across India due to the COVID-19 outbreak and national lockdown. Various entrance examinations such as (BITSAT 2020, NATA 2020, CLAT 2020, MAT 2020, ATMA 2020) have also been postponed/rescheduled. The education system in schools, colleges and universities across the country has been severely impacted due to the ongoing situation. It is also possible that some students' careers might benefit from the interruptions. For example, in Norway, it has been decided that all 10th grade students will be awarded a high-school degree. A study carried out in France shows that the 1968 abandoning of the normal examination procedures in France, following the student riots led to positive long term labour market consequences for the affected cohort (Maurin and McNally, 2008)

School time also raises social skills and awareness besides being fun for the children. There are economic, social and psychological repercussions on the life of students while they are away from the normal schedule of schools. Many of these students have taken online classes, spending additional time on virtual platforms, which have left children vulnerable to online exploitation. Increased and unstructured time spent on online learning has exposed children to potentially harmful and violent content as well as greater risk of cyber-bullying. School closures and strict containment measures mean more families have been relying on technology and digital solutions to keep children engaged in learning, entertainment and connected to the outside world, but not all children have the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to keep themselves safe online.

8. Conclusion

The outbreak of COVID-19 weighed down the socioeconomic and educational system and the attendant lockdown, the measure adopted to contain it, caused serious concern for education stakeholders because of the prolong holiday as a result of the pandemic. Going to school is the best public policy to develop skills and potentials of the learner as schooling increases the child's ability to become a useful and acceptable member of the society. However, school closure due to COVID-19 brought significant disruption to education in developing and developed countries of the world. The school closure brings difficulties for students, families and teachers. So, distance learning is a solution to continue the education system. However, distance learning is challenging in developing countries because many parents have not themselves been to school, lack of ICT infrastructure, computers, radio, and television. The poor and digitally illiterate families with low educational levels, children with poor learning motivation are more suffering in this situation and this increases inequality. The COVID-19 pandemic has made all schools across the world to adopt teaching and learning online so, government should scale network infrastructure and internet connectivity across urban and rural areas.

9. Recommendations

The followings are recommended to mitigate the challenges of pandemic and build a more resilient system that can withstand future crises and safe our education system:

E-learning requires not only electricity, but also access both to data connectivity and to the devices through which the e-learning materials can be accessed. All these are in short supply in our schools and in most cases the facilities required for easy transition to distance learning are not there. Government should therefore focus on developing new infrastructure to aid such adaptability in the future.

Government should prioritise by directing much of the funding and resources to support schools delivering remote instruction, particularly if those schools are serving high-poverty and high minority population.

Schools should be better prepared to switch easily between face-to-face and remote learning as needed to protect the education of students not only during future pandemics, but also during other shocks that might cause school closures.

Teachers need to be better equipped to manage a wide range of IT devices in the event of future school closures. Short training courses should be offered to teachers to improve their digital skills. Also, it is imperative to build a future education system that can make a better use of blended learning models to reach all learners at their levels and to provide more individualized approach to teaching.

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ROMANIAN EDUCATION IN AN EUROPEAN CONTEXT: STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, ELITE PERFORMANCES AND FUNCTIONAL DEFICIENCIES

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Abstract: *This article is structured in two parts: one approaching the education process in Romania from a theoretical and statistical perspective and another that is based on the results of an empirical research, performed among 423 students, in order to know the extent to which they are integrated in the present higher education environment. Our country has a Strategy for education and professional building for the period 2016-2020 that reflects the requirements of the national context and its links with the normative framework of the European Union. At the basis of this strategy, there is a certain vision that comprises specific objectives and action directions, costs estimations and monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of the strategic education programme. Our article underlines the main strategic objectives in the education field, which are being analysed through several administrative indicators. Moreover, it exposes the students' opinions and appraisals, their expectations concerning the teachers, some services of the academic administration, the higher education environment as a whole etc. The field research revealed their intentions about taking a job in the country or abroad, as well as their preferences towards certain professions.*

Keywords: strategic objectives in education, students' elite performances, Romania's depopulation, PISA, functional illiteracy, educated society.

1. Introduction

For a humanist thinker, with authentic axiological beliefs, education and health are special areas of activity and objectives of major interest in any society, so it is the case in Romania. This is because their quality depends specifically the people's lives and the future of territorial collectivities. For other thinkers other values could prevail, such as political power and parties, private economy and profits, beliefs and church, etc.

In our country, the process of education and, implicitly teacher training is organized and monitored by the Ministry of Education and Research, which has elaborated a strategy in this regard, called 'The strategy of education and professional training in Romania for the period between 2016-2020 (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016). Its purpose is to generate "the development of a professional training which is accessible, attractive, competitive and relevant for the requests of the labour market. The strategy approaches in an integrated manner the education and the initial and continuous vocational training and follow the cycle of public policies 2007-2013 in the domain of human resources development" the way it is mentioned in the Strategy of Minister of National Education (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016: 3). Such a document is according with the requirements, recommendations, principles and measurements laid down with the 'Europe Strategy 2020 of the European Committee' which promotes the smart growth, achievable through investments in education, research, sustainable innovation, inclusive growth, focusing on the development of working places and the reduction of poverty (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016: 3). To be noticed is the fact that, in this context, there are special studies in Romania which offer not only a theoretical vision, but also a pragmatic answer regarding the way a strategical profile of a community is built (Hințea, 2015).

This approach is based on the use of many methods of research, such as: literature review, statistical method, comparative analysis, functionalism analysis and the method of opinion inquest based on surveys. A pertinent and unique methodology on planning the strategy on local communities' level, both urban and rural, is met at some famous specialists from university (Hințea, 2015).

2. Main Strategical Objectives in Education

In the actual European context, the EFP Strategy responds to the global objective of Romania, to reduce the social and economic development discrepancies between Romania and the member states of the European Union. At the same time, it takes into consideration the national objective for the 2020 horizon from the Nation Strategy of Enduring Development 2013-2020-2030 on the achievement of its average level of performance of the EU in the domain of education and vocational training (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016: 3).

For the period between 2010-2020, the European Strategy 2020 took into consideration a number of 4 priority objectives, which are associated with corresponding targets, therefore:

1. The permanent growth of the employment rate of the population from the groups of age between 20 and 64, from the 62,9% in the moment of the adaption of the EFP Strategy, to the minimum of 75% at the end of the range in 2020, and in Romania the target is 70%, in the same year of reference.

2. The growth to 3% for the money funds of PIB with special destination for research and development.

3. The decrease with 20% of the greenhouse gas emissions simultaneously with the growth of 20% of the renewable energy consumption in the total energy consumed and with a 20% of energetic efficiency, as compared to the year 1990.

4. The diminishing rate of school dropouts (aged 18-24 years old), the target being maximum 10% in the EU, in 2020, comparative to the previous rate in Romania, of 19,3% IN 2010, of 18,1% in 2014, which are the highest rates of school dropout among the other European states. We note that the average rate in the EU 28, of temporarily leave, was at 11,1%, in 2014, and the set target is, as mentioned, of 10% in 2020.

In addition, it is also expected an increase in the share of those in tertiary education from the member states of the European Union, aged between 30 and 34 years old, to 40% in 2020, compared to 37,9%, which was in 2014. Romania registered an ascendent tendency regarding the evolution of this indicator. Therefore, "the share of tertiary education graduates registered a good progress towards the national target, of 26,7% for 2020, growing from 16,8% in 2009, to 25% in 2014. However, a significant gap is found between the values of the indicator on a national level and those at EU 28 level: the European average of 37,9% in 2014, the European target of 40% for 2020" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016: 7).

A relevant and synoptic image on the strategical objectives and evolution of the specific indicators in the education field and professional development in Romania, derived from the Europe Strategy 2020, we can form based on the data from the table below. These allow a comparative analysis on the 2005-2020 time period.

Table nr. 1: Strategic objectives and targets in the Romanian and EU system of education

Indicator	Unit	Romanian - period of reference							EU Median-28	Romanian target	EU target
		2005	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2014	2020	2020
The rate of early school dropouts	% (18-24 years)	19,6	16,6	19,3	18,1	17,8	17,3	18,1	11,1	11,3	10

The weight of graduation in the tertiary education	% (30-34 years)		11,4	16,8	18,3	20,3	21,7	22,9	25,0	37,9	26,7	40
The percentage rate of the people aged 15 with low reading, Maths and science competences	% (15 year olds)	Reading	-	40,4	-	-	37,3	-	-	17,8	-	15,0
		Mathematics	-	47,0	-	-	40,8	-	-	22,1	-	15,0
		Science	-	41,4	-	-	37,3	-	-	16,6	-	15,0
Adult participation in IPV	% (25-64 years)		1,6	1,5	1,2	1,4	1,2	1,8	1,5	10,6	10	15
Rate of graduate employment (ISCED 3-6)	% (20-34 years)	ISCED 3-8	72,0	77,7	71,2	70,8	70,1	67,2	66,2	76,2	-	82
		ISCED 3-4 6	62,7	69,1	60,8	58,9	59,3	55,0	57,2	70,6	-	-
		ISCED 5-8	84,7	85,9	82,4	81,3	79,0	77,1	74,2	80,9	-	-
Rate of occupation	% (20-64 ani)		63,6	63,5	64,8	63,8	64,8	64,7	65,7	69,2	70,0	75

Source: Eurostat database - update: 12th of October 2015

From the statistical data entered in the table, there is a disappointing conclusion released, that the results obtained by Romanian students, aged 15, to the P.I.S.A. tests, places our 8th grade education on double value compared to the European average regarding low skills, our country situating, from this point of view, on the first to last place among the 28 states of EU. After some assessments, formulated in the public space, Romania would have had in 2018 the weakest results in the last 9 years, to the mentioned evaluation.

The Programme for International Student Assessment, named P.I.S.A., does a standardized evaluation of skills of students aged 15 from the participant countries to this programme, which had been initiated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The first 5 cycles of testing on an international plan took place in the 2000's (in which participated 11 countries), 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2012.

Romania was involved in the International Project P.I.S.A. since September 2000, and the tests from 2012 registered an average of 445 points, while the OECD average was 494 points, and in report with the other 65 participant countries was situated on the 45th position. The applied tests view 3 education fields: reading a text of average length, understanding and discovering main ideas; use of simple elements of mathematical calculus in concrete circumstances and exact sciences – recognizing a correct explanation of a usual scientific phenomenon. The points obtained by the Romanian students indicates a rise in the functional illiteracy in the 2015-2019 time period. That is why their results are important for finding the evolution of accumulated competences and scientific substantiation of policies, on a national and global level, regarding students' education.

We keep in mind that, in essence, the strategic view on the process of education and professional development in Romania has as a general objective the development of a coherent system, flexible and dynamic in this field, permanently capable to adapt itself to the demands of the labour market and requirements of direct benefiteres. It is envisioned, in addition, that in the period of implementing the Strategy, the share of students enrolled in technical and professional education to grow with 10%, expecting a growth with 10% until 2020 in the rate of adult participation in education throughout life as well (compared to the 1,8% in the year

2013). The whole process of education and professional training from Romania is structured and detailed according to the next four strategic objectives:

1. "Improving the relevance of the training systems in the labour market", by reaching the target growth of rising the rate of youth employment, aged from 20 - 34 years old (outside the system of education) from 57.2% in 2014 to 63% until 2020;

Examining the statistic information leads us to the following conclusion: "The greatest opportunities of employment in Romania will need qualifications from an inferior level, that is ISCED 97 levels 1 and 2. Despite all these, there will be a significant number of employment opportunities which require higher qualifications, that is ISCED 97, level 5 and 6." (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016)

2. "The growth of participation and facilitation access to the professional training programs", having as strategic points: the growth of the students' GPA from technological and professional high school at 60%, in 2020, compared 49.8%, in the year 2014, as well as the rate of participation with 10 % of adults in the teacher's training programme;

3. "Enhancing the quality of professional training", first of all by touching the next strategic target: reducing the rate of school dropouts in the technological and professional high school from 4.2 % in 2014, at 2% in 2020 and the growth of those promoted in the Baccalaureat exam from the 45% in the year 2014 to 60% in the year 2020. Therefore, we can conclude that in order to achieve a high level of performance and efficiency in its activity, the teacher must develop during the initial psycho-pedagogical training a wide range of skills that would harmonize to every real pedagogical situation. In this direction, a responsible and effective teacher cannot go below the required standards imposed by the professionalism (Balaş and Bran, 2014).

4. "The developing of innovation and national cooperation in the teacher training area", achievable objective by assuming two strategic targets: a) increasing the number, from 40,000 in 2014, the 50,000 in 2020 - which would participate at different programs of innovation and training of antreprenorial spirit; b) by training the students in the programmes of international mobility - from 2,800 in the year 2014 to 4,600 in the year 2020 (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016: 21-22)

Each strategic objective is met by formulating some right directions of action to meet it, by specifying the specific actions, administrative indicators of performance, the institutions which are responsible or the deadline. It has also estimated a total cost of implementing EFP Strategies from the 2016 - 2020, which has risen to 1.8 billion lei, this being cut down in specific spendings for each direction of action. As the main sources of financing the following aspects were considered: Structural European Funds of Investment, Regional Operational Program (for construction, rehabilitation and modernization of the educational infrastructure), the National Program of Rural Development, Competitivity Operational Program and Administrative Capacity Operational Program.

Implementing the EFP Strategy has a monitoring mechanism which assures the control and permanent evaluation of the way in which the objectives are met and the directions of actions, the performance indicators which were met, etc.

3. Major aspirations and concrete performances of the Romanian students

The following questions are often asked when we talk about students during their school preparations. They are connected with: *What I know? How much I know? What can I do? Which place does it occupy in an international hierarchy?*

We will try to offer some immediate answers, taking into account the following indicator which we have in our analysis: 1. the results obtained by the Romanian students in the international competitions and evaluations; 2. the results of applying the P. I. S. A testing at the fifteen year old students and 3. the opinions and the students' appreciation about their professional career.

3.1. Olympiads and the students' elite performances

Despite the deficiencies and shortcomings they face at an institutional level, pre-university students participate at various national, regional, international and global Olympiads. These Olympiads mobilize them to learn as well as possible and help them adapt to the competitive environment, to know their potential value, to organize and direct their own intellectual, volitional and emotional resources. A special significance has the enrolment of young Romanian students at international Olympiads, where they have constantly obtained remarkable results.

The Romanian Olympians Gala, organized and held annually at an official level, proves that we have constant winners at various international competitions and awards that put our country on the world's map, which strengthens the fame of Romanian schools and trains students' creative intelligence. At the last edition of the Gala, on the 7th of December 2019, a top list of our Olympians stood out, registering a total number of 200 awards, for the exceptional results obtained by students at international and regional school Olympiads. They were trained by about 200 teachers from schools across the country. We note that 174 prizes were won at international Olympiads and competitions in various school subjects.

Romania's Government rewarded, through the Ministry of Education and Research, a number of 163 students who obtained 61 medals, awards and mentions at 14 international Olympiads, as well as another 37 students participating at the 26 regional inter-country competitions, in various school subjects, who won 139 medals, awards and mentions (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

Despite the results obtained by students in the P.I.S.A. standardized assessment, which were considered too weak or unsatisfactory, there are still countless cases of Romanian students enjoying international fame, due to their intelligence and brilliant results at competitions held in various parts of the world. Thus, for example, our students brought Romania to the leading places at the International Olympiad in Yakut, Russia, in July 2018. We note that a number of 12 Romanian high school students won as many gold and silver medals in mathematics, computer science, physics and chemistry competitions, where they had to face 200 students from 24 countries of the world. Also, the Romanian team at the XXIX edition of the International Biology Olympiad, which took place in Tehran, in the capital of Iran, between July 15-22 2018, was also on a leading place. They won a silver and three bronze medals, with over 280 competitors from 70 countries taking part in the competition. We emphasize that Romania has taken part in this biology Olympiad since 1997 and has been constantly on the podium of the laureates.

Elite students have, through their exceptional results, a considerable impact on the image of the school they come from, on the teaching staff and on the behaviour of other colleagues who can motivate or inspire them to perform better in school, as far as they consider teaching a priority and essential for their future development. Some Romanian Olympians have also received requests for collaboration with famous companies around the world, including certain NASA services in the US, who have intuited their creative and intellectual potential and the contribution they can make to scientific and technical progress.

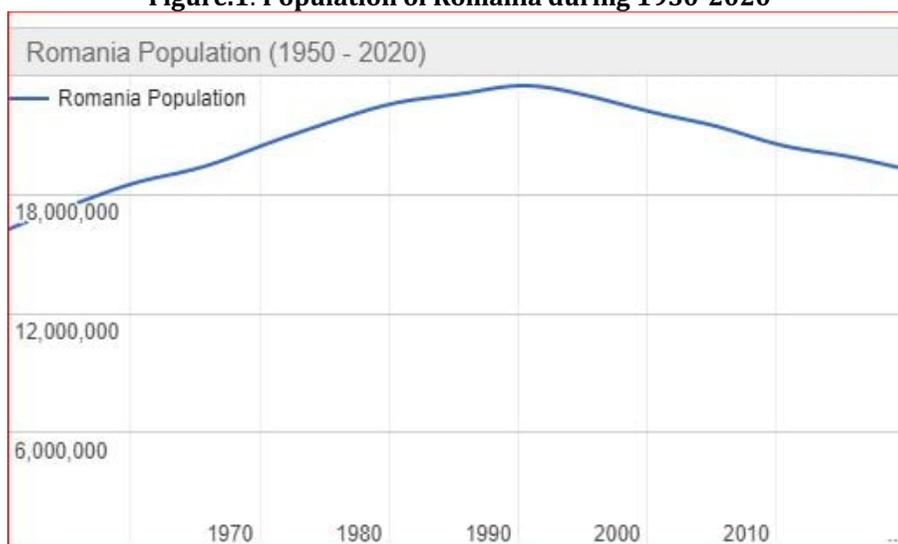
3.2. The Six Great Issues of Pre-university Education in Romania

The admirable learning results of some Romanian students and their international recognition coexist with the lacking and mediocre results of others, whose share is a considerable one, as the application of the P.I.S.A. tests proves, with the faults and disfunctionalities which are met on the scale of the entire education system. From the category of the above, we list the following, without the intention of ranking them:

1. The inability of self-reproduction with the same rhythm the scholar population. After 1990, the population of Romania entered in a process of permanent decline, which also left its mark on the amount of students. The continuous decline of scholar population and the closing of some

schools and didactic norms is a phenomenon which escalated especially in the rural area. Here, there was recorded in 2017, for instance, according to the National Statistics Institute's data, a population reduction to the total of 2.269 countryside localities, strongly affecting the perpetuation process of countryside communities. According to the latest statistics, registered with the support of the UN, the current population of Romania, on the 4th of March 2020, consisted of 19.237.691 people, representing 0.25% of the world population and having a medium age of 43,2 years. Over a half of these, which means 54,6%, were listed as living in urban communities, and 45,4% were living in the countryside.

Figure.1: Population of Romania during 1950-2020



Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/romania-population/>

In the last three decades, the population of Romania decreased with no less than 4.239.523 people, which means from 23.489.260 people, as there were in 1990, representing a demographic boom, down to 19.249.737 people in May 2020. Simultaneously with the general decrease of population, the number of teenagers has also decreased in Romania, thus reducing the number of school-aged population (6-18 years old), from year to year, a process which shall carry on in the following decades as well.

The information published by the National Statistics Institute and Eurostat shows us that along the period of 15 years (2002-2018), the educational system in Romania has lost approximately 1,3 million students, as a result of low fertility and birth rate, of mass departure across the border, which have produced a veritable demographic crisis in our country. If in 2015 scholar population aged between 6 and 18 years old was made out of 2.774.825 youngsters, later it came to decrease year after year, the prognosis made by the Eurostat highlighting a reduction of 831.091 youngsters by the year 2080. So, this equals a diminution of scholar population of 30% compared to 2015, a percentage which also reflects the degree of student number and labor force volume decrease.

The results of the calculations show that in 2015, all age groups had over 200.000 people each. The current demographic prognoses emphasize that in the period of 65 years, the number of people for each age group shall decrease under 150.000 people.

2. The inability of the Romanian state to provide to all schools in the country the comfortable, civilised material conditions of education. This deficiency generally leads to a not too attractive school vibe as well, where children do not come to learn because they enjoy it, which is the reason why there are recorded lacking study results and a high scale of school dropout. The "Education and Formation Monitor" for 2019 highlights that the early abandonment of school

(18-24 years old) indicates a percentage of 16.4% of young Romanians, compared to an average of UE students of 10.6%, and the number of superior study graduates (30-34 years old) is 24.6% for Romania, while the average on European scale is 40.7%.

3. The decrease in the quality of preparing students on a massive scale, which has led to the amplification of the functional illiteracy phenomenon. In the international Report of the Cooperation and Economic Development Organization (OECD), published on the 3rd of December 2019, the knowledge capacity and the intelligence resources of students from 170 countries of the world have been put to a test. As it is known, the aim is the discovery of some relevant data, based off of which the politics in the domain of education can be elaborated on a worldwide scale.

The results of Romanian students from 8th grade, at the P.I.S.A. assessment in 2018, have produced specific disappointing reactions among some specialists and some mass communication means. It is to be noted that the performance of students between 15-16 years old, from the compulsory education, were measured through report to a grid consisting of 6 levels of competence, which were applied in relation with 3 testing domains (reading/lecture, mathematics and science).

PISA evaluation from Romania was done in 170 schools and revealed that over half of the students met at level 2 of competence, it being one of the basic and necessary ones at all the three tests: reading - 59.2 % of applying calculus to a concrete situation - 53.4% and of recognising the concrete explanation of some usual scientific phenomenon - 56%.

According to some appreciation, the results obtained by the Romanian students are the weakest from 2009 backwards, although, in comparison, the statistic differences are not major, which situated our country on the 47th place from 79 countries and having a functional illiteracy rate among 44% of the students. Accordingly, such results are not “disastruous” as it has been said in the public space, but they are similar to those of the students from other countries such as Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro and the United Arab Emirates. Consequently, certain excessive critics and negative appreciation generalized at the Romanian system of education seem as unfounded and unrealistic.

A great system of education needs material, financial and human resources. But, as a man from Romania who has been living in the United States of America since 1985, person with great knowledge of the system of education from that country, the budget is important for the school but it is not decisive. According to the data which it offered, New York had a very high budget for education in the year 2017 of 25 billion dollars, that is, \$25.199 for each student (the national mean being \$12.021 for each student), but the results were not as the money invested because only 46.7% of the students from 3rd grade to the 8th grade in New York City passed English and only 42% in Maths. The scholar system of Baltimore is the third in the country for annual spending for each students with \$ 14.848. Despite all these, thirteen school from the city have reported 0 percent in passing grade at Maths for the students in the fifth to eighth grade. The lack of insufficient financial resources is disastrous.” (Pătrășconiu, 2020).

In the top of P.I.S.A ranking in Europe were the students in Estonia which took first place in Reading, Maths and Science. Worldwide, however, Estonia came 4th in science, 5th in Reading and 8th in Maths which clearly states the proficiency of the Estonian students and the efficiency of the system of education from this country. This is the result of some inspired educational policies, set up on the organic link between students, teachers and parents on fundamental values. In the top 10 ranking at P. I. S. A. there are countries like Canada, Finland, Iceland, South Korea, Poland, Sweden, New Zealand, The United States and Great Britain.

The analysis of the participating countries in the P.I.S.A test shows that neither the students from other states do not rise to the expected standards. Thus, it has been acknowledged that out of seventy- nine participating countries only twenty states have discovered top students of 10 %. This fact explains and reflects the difference from the results of the elite target group and the rest of the students.

4. The growth of illiteracy among the youth and in the society, in general, following the growth of the number of those early school dropouts and those forced to work for a living and the undervalue of the diploma given by the institutions of education. These only give the right to have a profession, not necessarily the right qualification for it, the competences which the graduate has.

The statistics given by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics for the year 2015 shows that in this year the number of illiteracy people rose to 245,487 people but the great population went through the four levels of education, according to the data of the National Institute of Statistics :

1. College– 2.263.978 people;
2. High school – 4.390.759 people;
3. Secondary– 4.868.213 people;
4. Primary – 2.556.286 people.

Romania is, next to Spain and Malta in the category of countries which early school dropouts for the youth aged between 18 and 24 years old is the highest while the European mean is 10.7%. The degree of instruction of youth aged between 20 to 24 is 79.9% which is well below the European mean which is 83.1%. The weigh of people with superior education is 25.6% which is well below the European mean which is 39.1%.

5. The escalating of violence in education, together with the weakening of the teacher's moral and social values who cannot control the daredevil attitude and the aggressive behaviour of some students or their swear language.

6. Perpetuating the mechanic methods of teaching and learning which place emphasis on memorizing and reproducing the things they have studied not on thinking and creativity. Thus, it is encouraged the traditional models of interaction between the teachers and the students, based on teaching and not on understanding, on cohesion and dependence, not on association and free cooperation, on volunteer motivation of teaching the students. The style of learning is based on memorisation, and it is often associated with the theoretical character of the secondary education and especially the highschool education which is found in college, too. The excess of abstract and irrelevant information, in practice, the exaggerated numbers of classes, the students' difficulty in valuing their skills in certain subjects fuels their lack of interest for the study. This is often translated with many absences and, in the end, drop-outs.

5. Opinions and appreciations of students about their own professional career

The examination and appreciation of students was made from information gathered after sociologic research which took place in 12 universities of Universities from Craiova, in the summer of 2019. The investigation looked into an opinion poll that was delivered to 423 students from a bachelor's degree, from all studying ages. The result showed a sample of 3 and the poll was filled face to face from universities with technic profile, economic, juridical, social science and science, agriculture, horticultural, theological etc. (Otovescu and Otovescu, 2019)

The resulted data shows that students are preoccupied, in most cases, about reading texts in books (57,2% form the total), on the internet (33,2%) and from other sources (6,6%). Books are read frequently by 25% of students, 11,3% only read in weekends and 22,1% read "rarely". The majority of those interviewed, 58,5% prefer physical books, meanwhile 41,3% prefer electronic format, this option will be kept in the future, they say. To remember that 76,6% of students read at home and 14,3% read at a library (Otovescu and Otovescu, 2019).

Most of the students, about 58%, are happy about the student life and the overall environment they live in, but they would like the learning areas to be better equipped and restored (9%), the schedule to not be so full (7,1%), information at some classes to be better summarised (4%) and to have more practising hours over theory learning (Otovescu and Otovescu, 2019).

The relationship between students is characterised trough "being close to each other and cooperating" (82,6%) same as the interactions with the teachers, in general, a psychosocial

climate of communication (66,5%), but over a quarter of students, told us that for some teachers there are relationships of “coldness and indifference” (26,5%), and wishing that teachers would be closer to them and adopt a more attractive style of teaching (11,3%), to be less “exigent” (5,3%) etc. Other sociological research show us that teachers also engage with the “lack of interest” of students, with “bad preparation for exams and seminars” (16,4%). The principles and values that guide the teachers in their relation with students are, from what they say, “Fairness and objectivity”, “seriousness” and “moral values” (Otovescu and Otovescu, 2019).

For the university community, the expectations of the students are tightly related to getting more practice in their professional training program, (21,4% of students), laboratories being better equipped (5,2%), a not so overfilled schedule (4,9%), in order to have more free time for individual learning. Secretarial services of universities were positive appreciated, in general and 21,1% of students rated them with 8,9 and 10 marks.

So, we can talk about an active and responsible integration of students in the university environment from Craiova and in the local community, shown by the high interest in studying and improvement of the educational program, functional relationships that they have with the classmates, the teachers and the administrative team from the institution, the intention of perusing the profession in their home city – 49,3%

On the other side, from a recently transitional study, coordinated by a team from Universitatea de Vest from Timișoara named Wellness-Skills for a true well-being, shows that teachers who works with adult population, the majority of students, are confronting multiple stressful situations. Among other things, teachers complained about the difficulty of coping with negative emotions and the lack of effective methods of coping with stress (Goian, 2014).

The same project aims to equip both teachers and students with the necessary skills to be able to monitor their level of well-being, stress level, and its causes, and then learn to better manage them through the skills offered by workshops specially designed for this purpose (Vintilă and Vintilă, 2013).

About 19% of the students participating in the opinion poll stated that, after graduating they expect to find a job outside Romania. Indicating the following countries: Germany, Italy, Spain, Great Britain, France, USA, etc. . The desired jobs are related to the acquired professional skills: engineer, teacher, software expert, biologist, entrepreneur, archeologist, chemist coach, politician, geographer, manager in economics, etc. (Otovescu and Otovescu, 2019)

It is very important for young students, the emerging social media context awareness competency refers to a new emerging skill regarding the trust load people give to a specific social media context they encounter. Since it is an emergent competence, it cannot be understood as standalone. If the digital context would not be available, we would not develop such a competence. Being a competence, it must be defined by three core elements: Knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Rad et al, 2020).

6. Conclusions

The education system is designed to run unitary and extended throughout society, at the national level. Therefore, the quality and effectiveness of any national education system looks like a society as a whole, it is a true mirror of the level of development and organization of society. After 1990, Romanian education underwent continuous reforms, as did the whole society, which led to innovative changes, favourable to the synchronization with the requirements of European general education, but also to certain undesirable consequences, certain imbalances and dysfunctions, which could be prevented by elaboration of impact studies. The excessive pace of change could be observed from the series of ministers and school unit managers to compulsory education programs and disciplines, student assessment systems, school year organization, national and baccalaureate exams, etc. If we consider the ministers of national education, we find that there was almost one, on average, each year, from 1990 to 2020, each with their own ideas, more or less controversial, advancing their own measures or

their own vision of the school. Romanian. In the last year alone, 2019, there were 3 ministers of education.

Under this sign, of changes at any cost and not always well enough prepared, was also the National Education Law of 2011, which was subject to numerous amendments, so that it does not even resemble the original version voted in Parliament, evading even some principles of democratization of the national public education system. Education in a society always needs unity and stability, for the instruction and education of pupils and students, it takes place in successive and organically related stages, it needs fundamental knowledge for the knowledge of the world and the formation of professional culture.

Despite the actual deficiencies and operating limits, the pre-university education in our country represents, on its assembly, not only an indispensable training framework for qualified staff or professional skills, but also a recognized one for the functioning of economic activities in Romania and in other countries, especially in Europe. This can be explained why Romanian Olympic women won 200 awards and distinguished at international competitions in 2019, why more than 5 million Romanians managed to find work abroad, most of them being 20-50 years old. Their basic school education received in Romania, their learned professions and higher education completed in their mother country provided them with the skills needed to engage in a free and competitive labour market, from Europe and other continents of the world. In the USA and Canada alone there are currently about 1,2 million Romanians working in various fields of activity. Italy absorbed more than 1,3 million Romanian immigrants, Spain – over 1 million, Britain – around 800.000 (Otovescu, 2017).

The experience of the last year, the pandemic, shows us imported to the involvement of parents in the educational process of children and has evoked how little they are equipped with the ability to help their children. In this respect, the results of a 2019 study show the usefulness of parents' advisers to increase their ability to decide and actively intervene in meeting the needs of the child (Goian, 2019). The values which the students take into account when referring to the educational process are: respect for the work of others, honesty and equal opportunities, personal involvement and accountability. In this respect, university teachers must ensure a teaching process defined by cooperation and value-based approach to activities, as a basis for training future citizens and professionals on the labour market (Țîru, 2014: 342).

Higher education needs to spend more hours on professional practice, specialized student experience and adapt it to the formation of high-class specialists in multiple fields capable of technical and social innovation, controlling national and global economic processes. A curriculum sizing is justified both by the evolution of scientific and technical knowledge and by changing labor market needs, and this can be done in line with employers' feedback, which is a very serious rebuchant of new aspects of the labor market (Trancă, 2015). For example the students of Craiova are fully integrated into the university and local Community, with almost half of them wanting to work in their hometown after they have completed their studies. They appreciate both their teachers' moral qualities (goodness, kindness, humor, patience, sincerity, fairness, etc. - 26,1%), as well as intellectual and pedagogical qualities (intelligence, level of knowledge or competence, talent in teaching, elevated language, interactive style, etc. – 10,2%). At the same time, they reject the teachers' indifference toward students, the severe attitude in assessment at exams, the obsolete and monotonous teaching style, arrogance and excessively high expectations (Otovescu and Otovescu, 2019: 18-20). As for teachers, the Welnes-skills for a true well-being project highlighted the usefulness of workshops in the following directions: Stress and health, self-esteem and self-presentation, communication and relationship. These have proven the directions in which teachers feel the greatest need for support and which, once addressed, would increase the ability of teachers to cope with the results of working with students (Vintilă and Vintilă, 2013).

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CHILD CARE THROUGH THE INVOLVEMENT OF NGOs – AN INTERNAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: *Child protection is a major point of interest not only for the competent institutions in the field, but also for the NGOs that have extended their activity, embracing this category of beneficiaries, too. The vulnerability of the children coming from underprivileged environments, often caused by the precarious conditions existing in the natural families, is the object of several NGOs, which evolved after the 1990s. Democracy restored the civil societies' freedom and courage to pool their resources for non-profit purposes, aiming at increasing the quality of the lives of the children who are in risk situations. This paper grasps, from an internal perspective, the manner in which an association intervenes for preventing situations of child abuse, neglect and even abandoning. The research methodology used a qualitative method, i.e. the interview, in order to observe the impact of the provided social services, from a triple perspective (the associations' president, the association's beneficiaries and the association's volunteers).*

Keywords: child protection, social services, risk situations, prevention, NGO.

1. Introduction

The concepts „civil society” or „tertiary sector” widely refer to the totality of the volunteer associations (whether it be district committees or philanthropic institutions), which operated independently from government and were considered an essential ingredient in the democracy welfare by some authors (Foley and Edwards, 1996: 38). Friedrich Hegel considers that the civil society is the historical product of economic modernization and comprises all the social actors who are not dependent on the state apparatus (Spurk, 2010: 7).

According to Fukuyama (2001: 7), the content of the civil society can be described as an interest group trying to direct the public sources to their favorite causes. In detail, the civil society includes the non-governmental organizations, the private volunteer organizations, the community organizations, the civic clubs, the unions, the cultural and religious groups, charity centers, sports and social clubs, professional associations, academies, consumers and media organizations (Essia and Yearoo, 2009: 368).

Thus, it is important to make the distinction between civil society and non-governmental organizations, as an integral part thereof, although many times these terms are mistaken for each other. According to (2010: 186), non-governmental organizations are „institutionalized, apolitical and non-profit private structures, independent of any public authority, which carry out activities of public interest”. They can be active in any field, such as science, education, social protection, economy, environment, child protection, etc.

The subject of this paper is the non-governmental organizations acting in the field of child protection. In Spârleanu's opinion (2010: 186), they expanded after the fall of communism, adhering to the international model. This field aroused the interest of that time because of the large number of unwanted and abandoned children and the poor conditions in orphanages. The neo-protestant organizations had a special involvement in the social service system centered on the children's welfare, intensely financing this field. The international media campaigns presented the desolating situation of the Romanian institutionalized children,

raising funds from donations. Consequently, if at the beginning the messages were humanitarian and charitable, they became professional over time (Cojocaru et. al., 2011: 66). In Romania, the phrase child protection refers to a wide range of services, such as socialization, hosting, informing, counseling, medical assistance, rehabilitation, education (Spârleanu, 2010: 186).

Cojocaru et. al. (2011: 67) consider that non-governmental organizations are the motors of change of the social system, with implications both at the structural level and at the functional one, in particular. Moreover, the social practices and the pilot projects that non-governmental organizations have promoted in the field of child protection have subsequently been replicated by the governmental system. Additionally, the international non-governmental organizations constituted influence factors in the public policy-making related to child protection.

Although non-governmental organizations in Romanian had numerous classifications along time, the first law in the filed regulating them in the terms of associations and foundations, was the Law no. 21 of 1924, also known as the Mârzescu Law. This law provided a reference framework regarding the stages of setting up civil entities, their entrance in legality and the organization methodologies. Unlike an association, for which the law stipulated that it must have at least 20 members to obtain legal personality, for a foundation no minimum number was foreseen so that it could operate.

In the context of the ordinance nr. 26/2000 with regard to associations and foundations, „The association is the subject of law established by three or more individuals, who, based on an agreement, put together their material contribution, knowledge or work contribution without the right to restitution, in fulfilling activities in general community interest, or in their personal non-economic interest, as applicable”; on the other side, the foundation is defined as follows: „the subject of law set up by one or more individuals by virtue of a legal document concluded between the living ones and upon death, constitutes a permanently and irrevocably affected patrimony for a general or community interest purpose, as applicable”.

This study aims to grasp the impact that the associations acting in the field of child protection have on the prevention of abuse, neglect or even the child’s separation from the natural family.

2. The design and methodology of research

The present paper sets out to analyze the impact that the social and philanthropic services provided by a non-governmental organization have (the Association „Children without Childhood from Vâlcea County”), by supporting the vulnerable families with the aim to prevent poverty, the children’s abandoning and neglect, starting from the following general goals: observing the target group and the social problems that make the subject of the association’s activity; identify the services provided by the association; grasp the impact that the services offered have on the beneficiaries.

The research methodology uses a qualitative method, namely the interview-based survey, being an exploratory research. The interviews were semi-directed in order to encourage the free flow of thoughts and opinions and their reasoning.

The sampling used was a non-probability, availability one. Hence, 8 people were interviewed, as follows: the association’s president, 3 volunteers of the association and 4 parents of the children, beneficiaries of the association.

The data collection was performed on the basis of three interview guides, adapted in accordance with the respondents’ category. The interviews unfolded in a room of the association, in a private environment. In order to maintain the confidentiality required by the interviewed people, their names were coded with their initials in the results section. First, the interview with the association’s president included questions on the following themes: the

association's financing, its main activities, its human resources, the accessibility of the services provided, the categories of beneficiaries of the association, and, consequently, their needs.

The interviews addressed to the volunteers of the association aimed at collecting data regarding their motivation, the activities they carry out and also the limits or difficulties they faced when doing volunteer work.

The interviewed beneficiaries talked about the matters related to the way or moment when they caught the attention of the NGO, the changes that occurred with the association's intervention and other matters that they considered relevant.

3.Results

In a foreword of the interview, the president of the Association described the profile of the NGO and presented its brief history. In detail, the Association „Children without Childhood from Vâlcea County” started its activity in 2019 by setting up a place where they collected clothing and footwear items, medicines and other goods (furniture, electronics and home appliances) necessary for the improvement of the supported people's quality of life: *„we started our activity in a garage, then we continued in a former garbage room”* (S.I. – the president of the association). At present, the Association carries out its activity in two rented warehouses: one in which food, clothing, footwear and household objects are collected and the other one where recyclable waste is stored, separated and handled. The waste is collected by our own means from all the localities in the county, with the volunteers' support.

The questions regarding the beneficiaries' profile have revealed over 1000 poor or sick children in Vâlcea county, which represent pressing social cases, in the light of the poverty or medical problems they are facing: *„together with the big-hearted people in the county, we make up an unstoppable force against the shortcomings of the children around us, forgotten by all, except us.”* (S.I. – the association's president). The cases are referred by the local authorities, teachers, by the church, by the neighbors or by the beneficiaries themselves, who are aware of their problems and limits and ask for help: *„they see the posts on facebook or hear about us from friends or neighbors and come to us full of hope, they pour their heart out and it's impossible to stay indifferent”* (S.I. – the association's president). In addition, institutions, such as the school or the church get involved actively and support the actions performed in their localities by the association, which resulted in a trustful relationship, not only with respect to the referral of the cases, but also with respect to their monitoring: *„we keep in touch with the priests and teachers from the county, who notify us about the urgent needs and help us be as close as possible to our beneficiaries”* (S.I. – the association's president).

As for the financing, apart from donations and sponsorship, the association also supports itself by capitalizing on the recyclable materials, which are first collected and sorted: *„we enjoy trust, initiative and constant support by the selective collection of waste from over 20 localities in the county and its capitalization, always to the benefit of our children”* (S.I.– the association's president). These efforts were joined by the partners and collaborators represented by school establishments, parishes, economic agents, the Horeca system, hospitals etc., who supply recyclable materials, such as: bottles, jars, cans, cartons, wastepaper, scrap, defective electronics and home appliances. Taking into account that the association started to operate a little earlier than the start of the Covid 19 pandemic, one of the questions was relating to the activity carried out in that particular period: *„it was indeed a hard period, because poverty and disease never take a break”* (S.I. – the association's president). A major impact was exerted by the measures imposed for social distancing, as the volunteers' presence decreased, as well as the number of donations and sponsorship: *„people lost their jobs, many of them turned from donors into beneficiaries overnight”* (S.I. – the association's president). The services rendered to the beneficiaries were affected to the same extent, as they suffered setbacks due to the situation set forth above.

The questions on the main activities performed by the association highlighted several large campaigns for the whole county, including: Our Lord's Resurrection in the Houses of the

Children without Childhood, The Sad Mărțișor, The Merry Little Schoolbag, The Magic Pantry, Our Lord's Birth in the Houses of the Children without Childhood, Each Girl Matters, greening campaigns, fund raising campaigns for medical cases: „*our children don't eat only on Easter and on Christmas*” (S.I.- the association's president). Following such campaign, many children in the county received holiday specific food, schoolbags and school supplies absolutely necessary for pupils, garments and shoes suitable for each season depending on everyone's age and characteristics, canned food for winter, hygiene products, toys and even medical services against payment, settled by the association : „*the key driver of our motivation is deeply rooted in our being, in the thirst for helping, for changing some destinies*” (S.I.- the association's president).

Another important aspect tackled in the interview was the fact that many beneficiaries kept in touch with the association even after their social situation was alleviated or solved, as the case may be, and they carried out volunteer work in their turn in order to help others: „*they say that if they have been helped, it's their turn now to help the others, because generosity is the path to blessing*” (S.I. – the association's president). Therefore, under the title of volunteers, they sort the waste, they select the clothing items according to the age and even distribute the requested products to the families on the ground.

The interviews addressed to the volunteers started with questions regarding the reason or the moment that prompted them to get involved in the activities carried out by the association: „*I have followed their posts on facebook from behind, so to speak, I praised their initiatives, then I began to sort the home waste and I took the plastic bottles and cartons to the center every week*” (O.I.- volunteer), „*my daughter received a large package within a campaign conducted by them, and ever since I've begun to follow them and that's how I became a volunteer; I don't know how they found out about us, not even now*” (A.L.- volunteer), „*at the beginning I used donate money, clothes or whatever I had in my house, then I lost my job and I thought it was appropriate to do something useful; I really like it!*” (M.R.- volunteer). One of the volunteers' motivation comes precisely from the fact that she experienced a miserable childhood and knows the associated risks: „*I lived without parents, too, and I know what it means no to have and if I can help, I'll do it with all my heart; I don't have money to donate, but God made me fit for work*” (A.L. -volunteer).

The activities carried out by the volunteers are various, depending on the requests or the material donations made on the relevant day/ week, which can be under the shape of garments they must sort, or recyclable materials, which they must handle and separate, too. Moreover, each campaign is prepared in advance, in tandem with the regular activities: „*by Christmas I stayed up until midnight to finish packing the presents on time for the little children*” (M.R. – volunteer), „*in the evening, when the vehicle with recyclables arrives, we start sorting; if we let them pile up, it will be hard for us*” (A.L. – volunteer).

As regards the volunteers' satisfactions, they unanimously claimed that the help they give make them feel valued: „*nothing is more satisfactory in the world, than when you see tears of joy in a child's eyes*” (A.L.- volunteer), „*I ask for nothing in return, I go home with a smile on my face thinking that at least one child won't go to bed hungry*” (O.I.- volunteer). On the other hand, the difficulties faced are related to overload and exhaustion: „*it's not easy to juggle a job and volunteering, you've also got things to solve at home, but which one should you renounce?!*” (M.R.- volunteer), to which excessive affective involvement adds up: „*when you see a barefoot child in the rain, who gobbles up anything you would hand him, that picture lingers in your mind over a long period of time; you can't get over it too easily*” (A.L. – volunteer).

The questions for the beneficiaries started by pointing out the event or situations that required the association's intervention in each case. The social situations are quite diverse: „*last winter, because of the chimney, our house got burnt and we became homeless with 3 small children and no income*” (B.S. – beneficiary), „*my little daughter was born blind, she needed crystalline lens implant in both eyes, and we had no incomes, only the children's allowances*” (D.M. – beneficiary), „*when I got pregnant with my third child, my husband left me; being scared that I would have nothing to give them to eat, I thought of abandoning him in the maternity hospital ...*”

If it hadn't been for these people, I would have made the biggest mistake of my life" (V.O.-beneficiary). Thus, the association provided them with construction materials and workforce, where necessary, in order to rebuild or consolidate their houses, settled medical services which could not be postponed and for which their own funds would not suffice and also supplied food, milk and other products (non-perishable food, medicines, garments, baby bottles, diapers, prams, cradles) with the aim to prevent the newborn's separation from the mother.

The beneficiaries unanimously admitted that the support from the association, be it material or financial, helped them overcome the difficult moments in their life: *„ever since I have felt that I am not alone in my life anymore and some strangers could love you more than the close ones"* (V.O. – beneficiary). Moreover, besides the individual problems they faced, they received support on the occasion of each campaign, because they were in a data base of the Association.

Many of them became volunteers themselves over time or began to collect the waste separately in their household, understanding the utility of its capitalization for helping other children or families in need: *„in the past I used to burn all the cartons and plastics, now I gather and take them to the Association"* (B.S. – beneficiary), *„I haven't had the possibility to donate, instead I can give up at least an hour of my time for other children; they did that for me too at a certain moment"* (T.P. – beneficiary).

4. Discussions

Grasping the activity of the NGO from three different perspectives emphasized by the three interviewed categories, namely the association's president, the association's volunteers and the association's beneficiaries, allows us to depict a comprehensive picture. According to the results, the association particularly addresses the children from underprivileged environments and, hence their families, who are experiencing tragic events (fires, urgent medical problems), or need additional help in order to improve the quality of their life (material and financial support for the purpose of preventing the children's separation from their family).

Jianxiu (2006: 16) considers that NGOs are actually constituted as a bond between population and authorities, having as strong points cost-effectiveness, the capacity to serve the population in the poorly accessible, rural areas and the involvement of the local communities. Also, the positions of NGOs gives them the possibility to communicate both vertically (from beneficiaries to authorities and vice versa), and horizontally (to other organizations providing similar services). The results of this research paper illustrate the fact that the association collaborates with the local authorities and other institutions, too, such as the school, the church, social centers knowing or closely observing the people's needs. Very often, the latter are not sufficiently aware of their rights or do not know whom to turn to. Such collaborations facilitate the beneficiaries' access to the services that are addressed to them.

In terms of financing, the association has developed a community network of recyclable waste collection and sorting, which became the main source of income alongside donations or sponsorship. Such initiatives tend to increase the visibility of the non-governmental sector in Romania for the people and for the society. The financial support is the main preoccupation of NGOs in the absence of consistency, taking into account that the sources are in general donations, fund raising and governmental ones. If during the 1990s, non-governmental organizations in the social field were intensely supported from international funds, only after this period have public-private partnerships been achieved, materialized in internal funds (Lambriu, 2011: 172). Because NGOs are largely based on external income sources, any economic decline influences their activity directly and proportionally. Basically, NGOs have to restrict their activity due to the lack of funds, paradoxically right in the moments when new vulnerable groups, needing help appear (Ceptureanu et al., 2017: 2). In the case of this research, the Covid 19 pandemic caused, as expected, a significant reduction of income and, hence, the limitation of activity. In contrast, the number of requests rose, given the families' economic destabilization and the impossibility to provide the basic needs.

By their answers, the association's volunteers have stressed an increased preoccupation for philanthropic activities, which is actually their motivation in work and the steps they take. Borgaza și Tortia (2006: 226) consider that the workers in the non-profit sector have a greater satisfaction than the workers in other organizations, even if the wages are small or there is no remuneration at all. Although, most often the workload is bigger and the resources are limited, the motivation is bigger and hence the satisfaction, too. This makes them become loyal to the organization, on the principle that the work performed is a kind of donation. That is why, in order to understand the volunteers' behavior, we must first identify the reasons for which they devote their work and time to a cause. Basically, in spite of the difficulties they faced and which they admitted, the volunteers have built resources from the purpose of the work they have done.

Furthermore, I have noticed that many of the association's volunteers come from families who have benefitted or are still benefitting from support for their children, being satisfied by the services they have received and eager to support the future actions. Such characteristic of the volunteers is particularly an evidentiary effect of the efficiency of the services provided by the association; not only did they attain their goal, but they also succeeded in building models of good practice and even change mentalities.

The beneficiaries' answers have revealed a wide range of services intended for the children from underprivileged environments, materialized in the financial or material support. They can be directed to a situation or a single moment, as necessary, or they can extend over an indefinite period, should the social situation so warrant. Additionally, the association's campaigns occur throughout the year, marking the holidays and other equally important moments of the year. On such occasions, the beneficiaries are visited by the association's volunteers who know the needs on the ground and intervene in accordance with each specific situation. In conclusion, the social services represent the activity or the set of activities centered on social needs as well as on the individual, family or group needs. They aim at overcoming hardships or preventing social exclusion, as applicable, by raising the quality of life. (Androniceanu and Tvaronavičienė, 2019: 106). To sum up, the services offered by the association pursue the increase in the quality of the children's lives and hence, of their families, in order to prevent all forms of abuse and promote social inclusion.

5. Conclusions

Children are a category that has aroused the interest of the specialists in the social field since the earliest times. Both age and its related characteristics facilitate the premises of their vulnerability. Moreover, the family environment plays a key role in the children's development, therefore its functionalities or, on the contrary, dysfunctionalities are reflected on the children's welfare. Consequently, in the results section I ascertained the fact that the lack of material and financial sources in a family definitely influences the quality of the children's lives, making them vulnerable.

Alongside the services that the state institutions render to the children in risk situations, non-governmental organizations have developed a complementary network, pursuing an increase in the quality of life and currently they manage to meet a large proportion of the needs in this field. Considered an important component of the social system, the non-governmental organizations in the field of child protection are on the rise, making real progress in regard to infrastructure and the range of services provided.

Through this study I grasped a part of the social problems that the children from underprivileged environments experience, from the perspective of a non-governmental organization, in the present case an association, which serves specifically this category of beneficiaries. Whether we speak about single moments, such as, for instance, a house burning, or indefinite periods of vulnerability, in particular the prevention of a newborn's separation from the mother, the services provided by the association proved their efficiency.

The association also runs campaigns with various themes throughout the year, which allows the widening of the scope of action in the sense that the support is constant and is intended for more beneficiaries. At the same time, the communication between the association's representatives and the people sent on the ground facilitate the beneficiaries' access to the services intended for them. In the small communities, the risk situations are known not only by the local authorities, but also by the church and the school. Thus, this tacit partnership of the association with the priests or teachers helps to increase the visibility of the association's activity in the disadvantaged, poorly-accessible areas.

The volunteers' involvement in all the actions of the association, including those implying direct contact with the beneficiaries is constituted as the motivation for the work they perform. Thus, I noticed a high degree of satisfaction among volunteers, driven by the purpose of their actions. In addition, the selection of the volunteers from the former or even current beneficiaries is an evidentiary effect of the efficiency of the services provided by the association. In relation to the moral considerations, they perceive their own work as a donation on the one hand, and a return of the help received, on the other hand.

All in all, the organizations' activity tends to become more and more visible and accessible even among beneficiaries from disadvantaged environments. The aim of such steps is to prevent situations of child abuse, neglect or abandoning, as outlined in the results section.

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WINE HERITAGE AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT. CONSTRUCTED IMAGES AND REPRESENTATIONS. THE CASE OF BURGUNDY WINE TOURISM

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Abstract: *What does wine tourism do to territories? Starting with the transformation of the image of Burgundy, we will examine how the development of wine tourism transforms the social representations of a territory and how heritage becomes a tool of reputation. Wine tourism is developing in the world and in France, in various ways that have variable impacts depending on the area. The image of a wine-producing region like Burgundy appears to us today as anchored in our representations for several centuries. However, it is necessary to go back to the socio-historical process that allows this transformation and the passage of an image of the vineyards as simple dull agricultural landscapes into a much more patrimonialized and valued vision. It is in response to strong economic crises that the actors of the region will seek to change the image of the region and make it more attractive to consumers and tourists. It is on these bases that wine tourism develops. Subsequently, in reaction to the market of reputations that sees the European vineyards have the best places, tourism develops in the new vineyards, allowing them to build a real image and identity in the wine industry. On the model of what the European vineyards have known, the vineyards of the new world develop a complete tourist offer that benefits from globalization and faster exchanges to bring consumers to the place and position themselves as new competitors. This will then lead to the development of a more modern wine tourism in Europe, following the example of American success stories.*

Keywords: Tourism, Burgundy, 20th century, wine, reputation, territories, heritage

1. Introduction

Wine has long been at the heart of representations, exchanges and consumption patterns (Dion, 1990). Already in antiquity, numerous sculptures depict Dionysus, the Greek god of the vine, wine and excess. Wine is therefore an object of fascination, exchange and ancient consumption. Wine production is an old activity, dating back more than 7,000 years (according to Institut Supérieur du Vin) and which developed in France, and particularly in Burgundy, during the Roman conquest. The French vineyard, which enjoys a great international reputation, is however very diversified, divided into various wine-producing regions and appellations. The prices of some French wines have been soaring for the past few years and wine seems to be becoming more and more a luxury product for a (minimal) part of its production. Many investors are interested in wine, speculating on the product or investing in famous estates in the most prestigious appellations. Nevertheless, wine remains a widespread consumer product and seems to be consumed by various social categories, with different habits, behaviours and fashions.

By drinking wine, we ingest a foodstuff as much as we assimilate its symbolic characteristics (Fischler, 1999).

Great winegrowing figures are portrayed on the local scale of territories, but also in more global social representations. Wine is intimately linked to history, a guarantee, we are told, of quality, authenticity and a vector of tradition. Thus, there are many ways of presenting it, and they allow us to construct images and imaginaries that contribute to the identity of wine-producing areas. It is also an important product for the producing countries and territories. The

market share is rarely negligible on a national or regional scale and the weight of wine growing in the economy remains important. Wine is also an object of power, speculation is on the rise, investments too, and it is becoming, in part, a luxury item. This only concerns a small part of the production, the so-called fine wine, which despite its low representation on an international scale, is becoming the model and the showcase of world viticulture, a sort of standard-bearer of local heritages.

However, wine tourism has not always existed. Moreover, the vineyard has not always been a tourist asset. The regional image of Burgundy has only recently been built around its wines and the landscapes associated with them. This construction is done to cope with a succession of severe crises that affect the wine industry. Following these processes, wine tourism developed, first in the "new vineyards" before emerging in Europe. These tourist activities do not have the same territorial realities, due to their heterogeneous reputations, implying different actions according to the contexts but also to the actors involved.

2. The emergence of a wine image

If wine has always been an object of consumption with a high symbolic value, drawing territories and nourishing myths, it has not always been this attractive object for vineyards. This shift in image and representations is particularly interesting for understanding how wine tourism subsequently became an essential tool for territories and the development of heritage.

2.1. The vineyard as a repellent

The implantation of the vine in Burgundy dates back to the Roman colonization. The legionnaires, after their victory over the Gauls, imported the vine and began cultivating it on the slopes of the "Côte", which stretches from Dijon to the south of Beaune (around Santenay, see map). The Romans passed on the cultivation of the vine to the Gauls and it never left the territory (Gadille, 1967; Gautier, 1992). After the fall of the Roman Empire, wine growing was controlled by the Church. In Burgundy, powerful abbeys shared the vineyards and controlled production. The abbeys of Bèze, Saint-Bénigne, Saint-Vivant, Cluny, Cîteaux, etc., organised winegrowing, prioritised the locations and carefully delimited the plots (Lachiver, 1988). The impact of these decisions will be crucial for contemporary viticulture and is today one of the foundations of the Burgundian wine image, which still feeds many fantasies of this period when man would have known how to delimit (by simple experience, it is said) plots and places with singular characteristics.

Until the French Revolution, the Church kept control of most of the Burgundy vineyards, especially the "hauts-lieux" (plots of land considered by producers and consumers alike, in a consensus on possible qualities and specificities, the veracity of which we cannot judge here, nor any hierarchy, apart from that resulting from the history of Burgundy vineyards).

A local story, often quoted by those involved in the vineyard, is that the Cistercian monks (one of the most influential orders in Burgundy in the Middle Ages, particularly in the field of winegrowing) used to taste the soil in order to delimit a plot. It is an allegory of the work done by the monks to delimit the different crus, which is certainly the fruit of experience through cultivation and tasting. Above all, this story allows us to express the ancestral character that Burgundy's winegrowing industry seeks to claim through a set of heritages that draw on the past. Despite this history and the social representations that it can convey, the vineyard is not a factor of attraction for the consumer and even less for the tourist, before the 20th century.

Until then, particularly since the end of the 19th century and the beginnings of tourism, the tourist image of Burgundy has focused on its natural heritage (Jacquet and Laferté, 2014: 425-444). Following the Alpine model, it is the coombs and nature reserves that are promoted. Influenced by the precepts of the regionalist doctrine, the local actors, politicians and notables, sought to enhance the region's cultural, historical and architectural heritage.

Until then, the vineyards and gastronomy were not factors in attracting tourists. There is no more interest in visiting the vineyards than there is in visiting the beetroot fields. As for discovering the local gastronomy, for tourists at that time, it did not yet enjoy an interesting place in their social representations and was not an element of distinction (Bourdieu, 1979).

It was not until the beginning of the 20th century that a transformation in these representations occurred. Wine, at first a repellent for tourists, was then valued as a cultural object, worthy of interest and even a factor of attractiveness. The consumption of "fine", prestigious wine is a lever of distinction. It also becomes an element of curiosity and growing interest for consumers, amateurs and tourists. Gastronomy is being totally rethought by political actors and gastronomy professionals, in the construction of representations and its valorisation.

Attracting consumers and selling them an experience through which they will acquire knowledge or anecdotes are all additional elements to add to their cultural capital. This passage is crucial in understanding the modification of the image of the region and the vineyard: a social object is constructed from an object of consumption, which is valid for wine as it is for gastronomy or heritage. By seeking to attract consumers to the area¹, the actors are thus staging their territory. This process of image transformation is not the result of a "natural" evolution, but rather the result of the actors' desire to respond to a critical situation.

2.2. Crises and the construction of a valued image

During the 19th century, cryptogamic diseases of the vine, coming from America, among which mildew and black-rot, appeared in Europe. It was discovered that they came from America with the introduction of American plants intended for the experimentation of more productive vines. These new diseases (which did not only affect vines, mildew being perhaps at the origin of the diseases affecting potatoes, partly causing the great famine in Ireland²) were unknown to winegrowers at the time, and there was no trace of these pathologies in the history of French vineyards until then. They were the first thorn in the side of the country's wine industry.

Indeed, the respite was short-lived. In 1868, Jules-Émile Planchon, a professor at the Montpellier School of Pharmacy, discovered an insect on a property in the Bouches-du-Rhône region where the vines were mysteriously "dead". This was the first observation of *phylloxera vastatrix*, the name given to this parasite that attacks the roots of vines. From the 1870s onwards, the disaster became more widespread and the French vineyard was ravaged in just a few years, falling from 85 million hectolitres produced annually before the epidemic to less than 30 million at the end of the century (Lachivier, 1988). It was not until the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th that a solution was found and became widespread: the grafting of vine plants onto American vines, adapted to the parasite.

However, not everything was settled, as new crises followed at the beginning of the 20th century: crises of over-consumption following phylloxera (producers were trying to make up for lost production by producing more, but the market had changed in the meantime); the First World War; the 1929 crisis and the disappearance of certain important markets (Russia, United States, Germany, etc.). Also, in the inter-war period, wine sales were poor and the main producing countries (France, Spain and Italy in the lead) tried to find a solution. The succession of different crises profoundly modified French and European wine production. Diseases that have decimated vineyards, changes in consumer habits, overproduction and wars have weakened the economies of wine-producing regions. Burgundy has not been spared and has embarked on a process of building an image, a regional identity, with the aim of attracting consumers to the region and benefiting from the emerging tourism (Cousin and Réau, 2016). It is not the only region to do this. The global context is difficult for all the vineyards and it is therefore necessary to find solutions to reposition itself on the wine market. Thus, Burgundy is trying to build an image around regional characteristics that will bring consumers to the region.

¹ We are talking more about consumers at first, as tourism is still emerging and wine tourism does not yet exist.

² An explanatory document on this subject: https://pub.epsilon.slu.se/2210/1/widmark_ak_100111.pdf

Wine and gastronomy are very quickly targeted by the political actors but also by the professionals of the sector themselves, as real assets for the whole territory. This particular context is essential to understand the changes that took place during this period and whose effects are still visible today. The image of the Burgundy vineyard is not as old as the social preconceptions and representations might lead one to believe. It was essentially forged in the first half of the 20th century, in particular between the wars. The tradition is built and inscribed in a long time and allows to acquire a certain prestige (Ichikawa, 2012).

It was also during this period that the Appellations d'Origine Contrôlées (AOC) were created in 1935 (Jacquet, 2009). This new regional image is still relevant and effective: it is also conveyed by wine tourism practices and their actors. From now on, the image of Burgundy is wine, its landscapes, its culture and its heritage. The territory is reinvented, rethought, it becomes enhanced and the actors take over emblematic places to make them symbols of a culture, in the broadest sense of the term. Whereas a few decades earlier, vines were no better considered than beet fields, they became landscapes and were no longer considered as "crops" or farmland. The great sites of regional viticulture became a must-see. The Hospices de Beaune, the Château du Clos Vougeot, but also the Clos de la Romanée Conti (i.e. the vineyard itself) are now must-see places for the visitor and the wine lover. Today, the landscapes are still valued according to criteria defined at that time. The walls, the castles, the churches and even the plots of land are valued when the "climats de Bourgogne" are classified by UNESCO in 2015.

Burgundy's wine-growing territory has become the emblem of a region, even though not all the departments produce wine and wine-growing represents only 1.2% of the exploited agricultural land (BIVB figures for 2019). Despite the construction of a regional image and the desire to bring consumers to the region, Burgundy is not really one of the first regions to see the development of wine tourism.

3. Tourism development

After the Second World War, the wine market became global, on the one hand through the greater and easier circulation of production, and on the other hand through the arrival of new producing countries, those that we will call "new vineyards" (Lignon-Darmaillac, 2014: 30-46). This new competition is reflected in the effects on both the wine trade and on tourism and its development in new wine-producing areas.

3.1. The new world versus the old world

To understand how these "new vineyards" manage to define their own conception of the quality of their wines, it is necessary to understand how they have defined their own identity, how they have built themselves as vineyards in their own right, in the face of the European model. The Californian example is very interesting in this sense, as it shows how a vineyard that was not very prominent in the middle of the 20th century has become highly attractive and has completely transformed its image. If wine tourism emerges in its contemporary form first in South Africa (Lignon-Darmaillac, 2018), it is the American model that is often presented as the example to follow, the one that has spread the most throughout the world. The equation is simple: California, the driving force behind American winegrowing, is seeking to position itself on the market in the second half of the 20th century. Not benefiting from the historical representations commonly associated with Europe, the region's players had to find an original way to define themselves as a vineyard. Just like France between the wars, whose wine-growing areas sought to attract consumers to the region, the "new vineyards" also followed the same logic. California's strategy for attracting consumers, however, is quite different. Not having a multi-century history of wine production, California plays a different card, using iconic family figures to build a history that is certainly recent, but omnipresent.

In California, it is especially the Napa Valley that is the model. It is not only the most famous vineyard in the United States but also the one that attracts the most tourists. In 2018,

the valley attracted 3.85 million visitors¹. This model is all the more interesting because it is being built up as California wineries develop (Castaldi, Cholette and Frederick, 2005). From less than 200 wineries at the beginning of the 20th century to around 1,700 according to the latest figures published by the Alcoholic Beverage Control of California, the Napa Valley is now a heavyweight in American and world viticulture, both in terms of production and reputation. To compensate for the lack of historical weight in comparison with Europe, which has been producing wine for thousands of years, Californian players refer to a more contemporary history, centred around emblematic figures and family dynasties (Lignon-Darmaillac, 2018, Wozniak, 2007: 203-219; Mondavi and Chutkow, 1999). This is the case, for example, of Robert Mondavi, who is often cited as one of the first to develop the Californian wine tourism model.

Robert Mondavi's idea was simple. Born into a family of wine producers, which he left to develop his own business (Hira and Swartz, 2014: 37-53), he built a winery in 1966, based on the model of the Spanish missions of the 18th century, close to the main axis that links the town of Napa and the valley floor (as far as the town of Calistoga). The allusion to the missions is not insignificant, it recalls a past, admittedly close, but which allows to anchor the Californian viticulture in an era. Mondavi quickly wanted to attract consumers to his winery and make it a "*pleasant and welcoming*" place (Mondavi and Chutkow, 1999:60). He was also one of the first to use large billboards along the road to attract customers. The great innovation proposed by Mondavi was that he was one of the first to offer a variety of activities. Thus, the tourist can choose between various activities (gastronomic, entertainment, workshops ...) that are centered around the wine without necessarily being directly related and allow to attract the whole family group. Many initiatives were quickly created and inspired by the Mondavi model.

Nowadays, Californian wineries are real attractions, the owners call on renowned architects to create buildings that are in themselves a curiosity, and tourists enter them to taste, admire the architecture, participate in activities, etc. It doesn't matter how coherent the buildings are, it's the uniqueness of the buildings that takes precedence and is presented as the wineries' own identity. This is in contrast to Europe, where the models are defined and rather homogeneous (châteaux in Bordeaux, small estates in Burgundy etc.). The model is therefore that of the "*winescape*" (Gravari-Barbas, 2014: 238-245), a "*set of landscaped elements that combine contemporary architectural wineries, vineyards dotted with works of art, and spaces that are always open to visitors, designed to provide multiple experiences around wine*" (Lignon-Darmaillac, 2007: 5). If the vineyards of the "new world" have been inspired by Europe to build a wine tourism with historical references, especially concerning the European origins of wine growing, the architectural dimension (especially contemporary), its use and its place in the visits, has inspired the old continent. But above all, the development of mass tourism, centred around wine, of which California is the most famous showcase, has profoundly changed the world wine market. By building a tourist destination (Amirou, 2013), California has been able to identify itself as a vineyard in its own right.

3.2. The emergence of wine tourism in Burgundy

Seeing the beneficial effects of wine tourism for the world's vineyards but also to meet a new consumer demand, Europe will in turn see the development of tourism initiatives within its vineyards. France is not to be outdone, especially as its wine industry is going through a new consumer crisis at the beginning of the 21st century, suffering from the new competition. Indeed, France's privileged position is being called into question and sales are declining (due to competition from wines from the new world, tensions between France and the United States following France's refusal to get involved in the war in Iraq, the appearance of the Euro and its monetary value, etc.). Wine tourism developed in France from this time onwards, initially in response to difficulties for producers. But wine tourism also allows the sector to relay a

¹ According to figures released by "Napa Valley," the equivalent of the Napa County tourism board, titled "Napa Valley Visitor Profile Study and Economic Impact Report" in 2018.

The map shows a hierarchy of wine reputations, and therefore wine tourism, with five destinations dominating visits: Bordeaux (18%); Champagne (17.2%); Alsace (16.9%); Burgundy (16.2%) and the Loire Valley (13%). It is worth noting that Alsace is the first French wine region to have invested in wine tourism initiatives. Bordeaux dominates this distribution thanks to the reputation of its wines on the international market and its geographical location which favours strong tourist development (Lignon-Darmaillac, 2009). On the other hand, other tourist destinations are struggling to develop a wine and wine tourism identity.

Despite a clear delay in development compared to the vineyards of the new world, wine tourism is now an unavoidable fact for the French vineyards. In Burgundy, it is not developing in a homogeneous way, but it now exists everywhere, in various forms and covers different realities (Rigaux, 2021).

Above all, its visibility has been strengthened, with the State, local authorities, inter-professional organisations and stakeholders wanting to provide a framework for activities. Thus in 2009, Atout France¹ created a "Vignobles et Découvertes" label which gives institutional and legitimate recognition (since it is awarded by a state body) to service providers who respect the specifications. In Burgundy, all the vineyards have now been awarded the "Vignobles et Découvertes" label, which confirms the strong development of wine tourism in recent years. In total, more than 800 service providers have been awarded the label for the whole of the Burgundy Franche-Comté region.

Wine tourism is also developing in many ways. Wine tourism is not only centred on wine, it also includes gastronomy, which has been closely linked to the wine sector since the beginning of the 20th century (Laferté, 2006) and which is an important component of tourism in general. It is a fact, as we have seen previously, that gastronomy is not only an asset for the vineyards (and vice versa) but it is also an essential element in tourist stays in territories that have built up their own regional identity during the 20th century. "*Regional cuisine and food specialities are gradually emerging as a distinctive sign of the locality and the region, and the idea is gaining ground that there are regional cuisines in France that are worthy of interest*" (Bessière, Poulain, and Tibère, 2013: 73). Above all, wine tourism is not going to develop in a homogeneous way across the territories, leading to inequalities and geographical and social differences.

3. Competing territories

Wine tourism develops in specific territories, valorising singular heritages, staging them according to varied empirical realities. Through this observation, we can see differences in reputations, i.e. shared representations, based on criteria combining product quality, symbolic importance of certain heritages, notoriety, etc.

In international representations, French wines enjoy anteriority over other European productions - anteriority that is not historically attested since other Europeans (Greece, Hungary, etc.) are older (Dion, 1990). Wines from France have a history, an imagination, which makes them part of an ancient tradition, a symbol of quality.

The Burgundy vineyard already holds a place of choice in the world hierarchy, just like Bordeaux, even if the latter is even more important from a volume point of view and is widely distributed on a national and European scale (Dion, 1990). It is in this perspective that the actors will forge a territorial wine identity, by appropriating and staging concepts such as authenticity or heritage. Faced with what Chauvin calls the "*market of reputations*" (Chauvin, 2010), other vineyards find themselves in less enviable positions in terms of reputation, as is the case for American or Australian vineyards for example.

After having largely encouraged the production of fine wines, and therefore at high prices, many actors, first and foremost the Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin, promote these products by using a wine folklore, by organizing commercial events with a national or even international scope. With the rise of fine wines, often built around quality criteria related to the

¹ Atout France is the name of the national tourism development agency

place, markets of singularities (Karpik, 2007) are emerging. It is no longer economic bases that serve as a foundation but quality judgements. The price is irrelevant, it is something else that governs these transactions. This logic is similar to that of the market of reputations (Chauvin, 2010) which can be applied to the wine world whatever it is. This social construction that hierarchizes the world's vineyards (or at least reflects a certain more or less unofficial and instituted hierarchy), clearly shows an over-representation of European vineyards. These vineyards are those that would be considered the most qualitative: a subjective judgement, the result of multiple social processes by which the actors have forged the image of the region whose wine character is now global and inseparable from the territory and representations. The older the history (this criterion is sometimes validated by the work of historians, but its representation remains the result of social constructions), the more it corresponds in the representations to a qualitative vineyard. In the case of Burgundy, the promotion of historical and cultural heritage has aimed since the 1920s to strengthen the image of the vineyard, to develop its attractiveness and to create a whole regional image that draws on viticulture, gastronomy and the cultural, architectural and natural heritage. History would be the guarantor of quality: since (reputed) wine has been produced on the territory for centuries, this production is qualitative because it is validated by human experience and the work of the "elders".

If we can admit that the wines have their own particularities, which change from one village to another for example, we can also notice that the image of the vineyard (even if it adapts according to the different territories within it) is built on a global scale.

Taking advantage of the reputation of the vineyards of the Côte d'Or mainly (32 of the 33 grands crus are present in the department¹⁴⁰ as well as many symbolic places for the regional viticulture), Burgundy builds its image through the representations that are attached to the most famous crus. The region's emblematic sites (the Château du Clos Vougeot, the Abbey of Cluny or the Hospices de Beaune, for example), traces of a rich winegrowing past, are held up as guarantors of the image. And it is indeed this image that takes precedence over all the representations, this reference to history, which is first conveyed by the events created or rehabilitated in the inter-war period. A cohesive identification (Lhuillier, 2005:73-98) of the object with its criteria of quality and authenticity. The territories are therefore building wine tourism around heritages that convey positive representations, which echo the criteria for building quality. This is one of the explanations for the development of wine tourism, first of all in the "new vineyards", which are lacking in heritage and are seeking to define and create it. But this also explains the geographical differences, on the scale of the Burgundy region for example, where all the vineyards are not equal. Some are particularly well endowed with a reputation, partly thanks to the development of particularly strong and famous historical, cultural, architectural or natural heritages.

Conclusion

The image of Burgundy has undergone many changes since the French Revolution. Wine and gastronomy, as well as the heritage associated with them, have become representations with a high symbolic value. So, when wine tourism develops in the regional wine territories, it is logical that it should be based on these images and imaginaries.

However, since not all territories are equal in terms of reputation, and even if the regional image serves as a reference for all, we notice many local specificities that show us how the actors seize representations and heritages. Depending on the reputation that a vineyard enjoys, on an international, national or local scale, the actors will not promote the same heritage elements. And wine tourism will not have the same vocation, nor the same interest.

¹ According to BIVB figures published in 2017.

For the most famous vineyards, wine tourism is a tool that allows them to spread and maintain prestigious and positive images. It is thus a good way to maintain a reputation. For the less reputable vineyards, on the other hand, it is an opportunity to build their own identity, to establish themselves as a wine region in their own right. Professional practices, tourist activities, wine images, are then specific to these effects of reputation and what they do to the territories. Wine tourism is thus interesting for the vineyards in different ways and according to territorial criteria. The importance of heritage is considerable since it is diluted in all representations, both by the actors in the sector and by the tourists themselves.

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SOCIAL CHANGES AND FEMALE MOBILITY IN THE CITY FROM ABONG-MBANG TO EAST CAMEROON

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Abstract: *Thanks to a set of institutional mechanisms, changes in mentalities and mores and changes in socio-economic realities, women have burst onto the Cameroonian labor market. It is undeniable that today there are strong disparities in the labor market. Aka Kouame, notes in this regard that women are less represented in rewarding professions and more present in the subsistence sector. However, what interests us here is less discrimination, but the massive increase in female activity and the process of gender inversion underway in the labor market. This diversity at work through the feminization of male professions on the one hand and the masculinization of female professions is an expression of the modification of patriarchal values and practices, but above all the delegitimization of what Luc Sindjoun called phallogocratic civilization following the perceptible changes in African society since colonization. We are more tempted to speak exclusively of female mobility in analyzes of the evolution of the labor market, whereas this process of change in traditional social roles is the opposite, that is to say that it affects both male and female statuses.*

Keywords: Social Changes, Mobility, Feminine, Abong-Mbang, East-Cameroon

The social changes that occurred in Africa with colonization, in particular the monetarization of the economy, industrialization and above all urbanization, caused major upheavals on the economic level, and also on the part of economic agents, strategies for adapting to the new environment resulting from this context. The phenomenon of urbanization will bring change for women. Indeed, the city appears as the crucible of new social dynamics. It must be remembered, in fact, that in Africa as well as in Europe, traditional rural societies are essentially homogeneous, closed in on themselves. Social control is strong and change is very slow. On the other hand, urban societies are characterized by the heterogeneity of their population, and therefore innovate more willingly.

Among these changes is the accession of women to “in an outside hitherto taboo and reserved for men” to quote Alya Baffoun. The city thus appears as a place that offers women several possibilities, including that of carrying out an activity that generates monetary income. They do not hesitate, moreover, to invest in these areas which were closed to them until then. Therese Locoh speaks of a “silent revolution” in this regard. In fact, there is a massive increase in female activity which, for about two decades, has been a structural trend in the Cameroonian labor market. More and more, women are taking over fields of extra-domestic activities traditionally reserved for men in Abong-Mbang.

We can note in passing that: A real discrimination seems to be exercised against them since from 1990 to 1993; more than 80% of the rare public jobs created were attributed to men, which justifies their massive recourse to the informal sector. This downsizing pushes many women to engage in informal activities, because their husbands find themselves unemployed and can no longer really take care of their families. Furthermore, the concentration of female jobs in a limited number of occupations and sectors of activity remains a major characteristic of the world of work. However, the persistence of these mechanisms of concentration and segregation according to sex goes hand in hand with the mixing of a certain number of professional groups. This situation therefore raises questions about the transgression of

discriminatory practices which is manifested by an influx of women into certain traditionally male occupations. In other words, it is a question of questioning the diversity at work, through the prism of the feminization of certain traditionally male professional groups. Therefore, the question arises: What are the determinants of the dynamics of "gender inversion" observed in professional choices and how does such an influx of women towards traditionally male occupations affect social relations? of gender in Abong-Mbang? through the prism of the feminization of certain traditionally male professional groups. Therefore, the question arises : What are the determinants of the dynamics of "gender inversion" observed in professional choices and how does such an influx of women towards traditionally male occupations affect social relations ? of gender in Abong-Mbang? Through the prism of the feminization of certain traditionally male professional groups. Therefore, the question arises: What are the determinants of the dynamics of "gender inversion" observed in professional choices and how does such an influx of women towards traditionally male occupations affect social relations? Of gender in Abong-Mbang?

1. Urbanization and schooling

Urbanization and schooling have been, since colonization, the causes of important dynamics in the traditional social organization. These phenomena have introduced the African into wage labor and capitalism, an expression of individual autonomy.

1.1. Urbanization and the breakdown of social transformations

Urbanization is a relatively recent phenomenon in Africa. According to Valentin Nga Ndongo, the current agglomerations only date from the colonial period, from which they are moreover the emanations (Nga Ndongo, 1999, p.11.). Urbanization involves ruptures and transformations that affect lifestyles, mentalities, behaviors and activities. By its speed and magnitude, it is aggravating the economic problems of global society. According to Jean-Marc Ela: It seems difficult to approach the problems of daily life in Africa without taking into account the impact of the city (Ela, 1983:14). Because, the city constitutes the mound, the crucible where the civilization of tomorrow is worked out, and appears according to Valentin Nga Ndongo (Nga Ndongo, 1975:4), like: cause of the degradation of the structures and traditional values. Thereby, 1960 brought about change for women. City life with its multiple constraints has called into question, in many areas, patriarchal systems based on unequal relations between the sexes. "Urbanization leads to a decline in traditional systems" as Dominique Tabutin points out (Agbessi-Dos Santos, 1981: 116). Similarly, in the city, the exercise of a liberal profession or not, of an economic activity by a woman is taking precedence over marriage, hitherto defined as the main condition for the integration of women into the society. By giving her more independence, work today makes it possible to compensate for the failure of a union and also gives women the opportunity to flourish, to play a publicly recognized role, to be useful to society. ,

1.2. Urbanization and the emergence of a new type of relationship between men and women in Abong-Mbang

Urbanization has been accompanied by the emergence of a new type of relationship between men and women. Formerly considered as "ministers of the interior" and confined to their traditional roles as mothers and wives, women in the urban context are led to carry out activities outside the domestic sphere (Kouame, 2000: 4). Because indeed, the changes which followed the phenomenon of urbanization, in particular the rise in the cost of living in town, the woman is brought to leave her hearth in order to carry out an activity generating monetary incomes. With the economic crisis and the application by the government of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP), with its multiple socio-economic consequences, when the man lost his job or experienced a significant reduction in his salary, the economic support of the housekeeping is provided, in town, by the woman. This is how Simon David Yana points out: When times are hard, necessity rules, women are allowed out of their usual space, whereas in

the past some men feared that their wives would carry out an activity outside the household that could expose them to lust for other men (Locoh, 1996: 469).

Similarly, with the crisis, men and women engage in unfair competition in various areas of economic activity without taking into account the sexist stereotypes traditionally assigned to each sex in social life either by presupposed human nature or by habits and customs, religious values. It is this desexualization of identities at work that accompanies the process of urbanization. More than in the past, we find men in sewing, catering, etc. It is sometimes surprising to note that women prefer to seek benefits from men in areas which were traditionally granted exclusively to them.

By way of illustration, the women are dressed by the men; feeds on the roadside or in restaurants run by men. Conversely, women assume command and are gradually breaking into sectors of economic and political life that were once reserved for men. This is particularly the case in the armed forces and the police, transport, administration, etc. Moreover, the city appears according to Gerti Hesselting and Therese Locoh, as: A privileged place for learning new family, professional and social roles. The city gives women opportunities (...) and girls have a better chance of going to school. We can therefore think that urbanization has called into question previous relations between men and women, and even, in certain cases,

1.3. Education: a factor of change

Like urbanization, schooling has been a factor of change and above all of promotion for women. According to Therese Locoh, schooling was one of the factors favoring female autonomy (Locoh, 1996: 469). Indeed, the massive increase in schooling following independence has contributed to a large extent to the erosion of sexist prejudices which constituted an obstacle to the advancement of women. Although these prejudices are still prevalent in African societies, it should be noted that women who have benefited from schooling have been able to evolve in society, to enter the traditional strongholds of men. It is thus the relationships between men and women that have been modified thanks to this schooling movement. The massive education of women produced a very large female workforce after independence. Similarly, it has been at the heart of the changes observed in gender mores. The new education introduced with colonization has given rise to the emergence of gendered values that are often contradictory with previous ideologies. It follows a change in behavior, mental representations, as well as a redefinition of values around female identities which contributes to the advancement of women. In this regard, Simon David Yana writes: The new education introduced with colonization has given rise to the emergence of gendered values that are often contradictory with previous ideologies. It follows a change in behavior, mental representations, as well as a redefinition of values around female identities which contributes to the advancement of women. In this regard, Simon David Yana writes: The new education introduced with colonization has given rise to the emergence of gendered values that are often contradictory with previous ideologies. It follows a change in behavior, mental representations, as well as a redefinition of values around female identities which contributes to the advancement of women. In this regard, Simon David Yana writes:

The education of girls structurally influences their age at marriage, but this effect is also accompanied by a change in the perception of female roles, with less priority given to the role of wife: in Cameroon, the age at first union is 20 years for women who have completed secondary education or more, 15 years for those with no schooling and 17.6 years for those with primary education (Yana, 1997: 37).

Similarly, with the education of women, we can note the progress of voluntary control of procreation, through the increase in the levels of knowledge and practice of modern methods of contraception. Moreover, under the effect of schooling, the autonomy of women in the choice of their spouse is in progress. All these changes lead to greater autonomy for women, just as they open up the labor market to them (Muel-Dreyfus, 1996: 7). Regardless of when the professions were opened up to women, the mode of recruitment appears to be decisive in their

effective entry into higher professions. The transition from recruitment by profession to recruitment based on school performance favors the entry of girls. This is for example the case of the judiciary,

When in 1958 a school was created which was accessed by competition; magistrates, a minority until the 1960s, now make up half of the workforce. In another profession, journalism, formerly open to women, the renewal of the profession combines significant feminization and the holding of a university degree among the younger generations, a characteristic that is even more accentuated among women than among men. Engineers, a profession still largely male, the opening of the most prestigious schools to girls did not take place until nearly two centuries after their foundation, ranging from the 1960s to the 1970s, 1972 for the *École Polytechnique*. The proportion of girls has increased in these “*grandes écoles*” streams, but modestly girls represented 14% of entrants to Polytechnique in 1999 (Martin, 1998: 4). On the other hand, they have benefited from the development of engineering schools within universities, more mixed and less selective, but leading to recognized and not devalued diplomas. Compared to other countries, the existence in France of an education based on the primacy of general scientific knowledge over technical knowledge has favored the access of girls to fields long reserved for men. The idea that the entry of women into a profession rhymes with its social depreciation is strongly rooted in mentalities. they have benefited from the development of engineering schools within universities, more mixed and less selective, but leading to recognized and not devalued diplomas. Compared to other countries, the existence in France of an education based on the primacy of general scientific knowledge over technical knowledge has favored the access of girls to fields long reserved for men. The idea that the entry of women into a profession rhymes with its social depreciation is strongly rooted in mentalities. they have benefited from the development of engineering schools within universities, more mixed and less selective, but leading to recognized and not devalued diplomas. Compared to other countries, the existence in France of an education based on the primacy of general scientific knowledge over technical knowledge has favored the access of girls to fields long reserved for men. The idea that the entry of women into a profession rhymes with its social depreciation is strongly rooted in mentalities.

More than a reality, it manifests the resistance opposed by men to the opening up to the other sex of prestigious sectors of activity that they alone dominate. Less than their professional skills, it is characteristics specific to the female sex that are invoked: emotionality, lack of self-control, inability to exercise authority... Also, the pioneers imposed themselves with difficulty and often at the cost of neutralizing their femininity. Shaking up the habits of a male environment, the presence of women contributes to desacralizing professions based on virile virtues, incorporated during training and reinforced during the exercise of the profession. The significant presence of women in certain professions, such as that of teacher or magistrate, invalidates the rhetoric about women's abilities. But there continues to be a specific discourse on feminization, deemed excessive with regard to public service, should the teaching function or judicial exercise be mainly in the hands of women (Guillemot, 1996: 17).

The mixing of professions, however, tends to be accepted and even desired. But it is far from signifying lack of differentiation between trades and functions. While men “reserve” professional spaces for themselves, women occupy niches within the professions, where their presence is tolerated, even encouraged in the name of skills which they would by nature possess. They perform functions where they remain in the shadows while enhancing their capital of knowledge. Thus, women engineers are concentrated in study and research functions and invest in IT. The magistrates mainly occupy functions of the so-called pure seat where they implement their theoretical legal knowledge.

They are also overrepresented among children's judges where the social side, mobilizing the real or supposed skills of women in the field of the family and childhood, supplants the purely legal side. A logic that can also be seen at work in the choice of specialties by female doctors, or even in the most feminine sections of newspapers, centered on social

problems or practical and domestic life, emphasizing ordinary lives. These few examples. Show the joint action of two social mechanisms: on the one hand, the assignment of women to determined spheres of social action testifies to the internalization during the process of socialization of cultural models, of habitus which translate in terms of taste and choice; but these choices also come true, in a specific professional environment, based on the exclusion of other positions or the high price to be paid to occupy positions monopolized by men. In the professions mentioned, these are functions where relationships of power or authority are exercised in the first place, requiring great availability. What magistrates designate as the sacerdotal aspect of the profession, the dedication and investment it requires, or journalists the militant aspect of the profession. The concentration of women in office functions means that the public prosecutor's office, involving numerous contacts with litigants as well as with justice partners and the implementation of a criminal policy, remains closed to them. In journalism, and in another way among executives, access to the highest hierarchical positions is barred to women by the organization of the most daily late-hour work, travel. The male model of competitive professional success that requires ever more investment excludes a majority of women, who jointly manage their careers and the lives of their families.

1.4. The education of women and the increase in the level of knowledge

The differentiated socialization of girls and boys gives rise to stereotypes about the education of children. These stereotypes are widely shared by parents, early childhood professionals and by society in general. One of the major problems is the absence of the issue of the gendered socialization of children in the training of early childhood and education professionals despite the many institutional and legal texts that condemn and combat inequalities due to gender stereotypes. The accent is however placed on the development of the child's autonomy, but almost no training questions issues related to gender and stereotypes. The fight against stereotypes is a fight for equality but also contributes to the well-being of the child in his quest to explore the possible. Once we look at the question of stereotypes in society, their significance appears to be so strong that opposing them seems impossible. It therefore seems important to take this dimension into account from early childhood. Education is one of the fields where the weight of stereotypes is most profound, but other sectors also suffer from gendered strategies that bring about inequalities: urban planning policies and even the algorithms of the major search engines contribute to the propagation of these prejudices which undermine the evolution of society by categorizing and prioritizing individuals. Otherwise, the notion of hidden curriculum is central to understanding the processes of reproduction of gender stereotypes in primary school: girls and boys grasp what is expected of them throughout their schooling. The example of mathematics is characteristic of the way in which a discipline associated with skills can lead girls to depreciate and gradually disappear in sectors with high professional prestige. Mathematics is not made accessible or valued equally depending on whether you are a girl or a boy. Differences do not appear as inequalities, as long as they are not hierarchized in a value system, which defines everything that refers to the masculine as systematically superior. Girls move towards sectors that are less valued socially and economically on the labor market. The modes of transmission, the values, the behaviors implicitly transmitted at school contribute to the reproduction of unequal gender relations, which are reflected first in the orientation of girls and later in the job market. Some courses appear to girls as incompatible with the idea they have and have been given of the place and role of women in society, and in particular the fact of becoming a mother.

The academic results of girls and boys would be correlated to their position in relation to stereotyped models of femininity and masculinity, according to a Quebec survey: the more they adhere to the ideas conveyed by these models, the lower their results. Those who, on the contrary, do not join the codes linked to these stereotypes obtain better results. It would seem that boys are more conformist in relation to these gendered models who advocate male dominance, which would explain their greater school failure. It is the boys from the most

disadvantaged backgrounds and whose parents have a low level of education, which are strongly affected by the consequences of these stereotypes. They are kept out of the school system, are more likely to drop out and have difficulty finding work. There are combinations of the dominated/dominant model depending on the social origin of the pupils which complicates the construction of masculine identity and intensifies the academic failure of boys from the working classes. Young girls from underprivileged backgrounds are also affected, and even more devalued in the labor market. In short, it is their socialization based on gender that traps boys (and some girls too) in these classes in academic failure. Several studies have shown how much the family, the media, the social environment as a whole and therefore the school participates in the construction and reproduction of gender norms and roles, because they themselves are impregnated and shaped by the separation of roles and competences according to biological sex. Taking gender into account has led to a re-examination of all the data from sociology and mainly those on schooling, focusing in particular on the progression and success of female and male schooling in a mixed universe.

2-Social mobility and status of women in Abong-Mbang

In African societies, relations between men and women have entered a phase of rapid transformation, due to the rise of women in extra-domestic spheres formerly reserved for men. Quietly, the "social cadets" have burst into an "outside" traditionally reserved for men. Therese Locoh wrote on this subject that: The women themselves, aware of what they were questioning, preferred to advance quietly in the new areas they were investing (Locoh: 28).

2.1. The acquisition of a new status by women: the edifice of relations between men and women in mutation

Following the upheavals caused by the rapid evolution of the phenomena of urbanization and schooling, the whole edifice of relations between men and women is changing. Indeed, the acquired positions are shaken. According to Therese Locoh, the statuses traditionally devolved to men and women according to their age, their family position, come into contradiction with the real situations. The status of men is questioned. The rights and obligations of each sex, prescribed status are questioned openly or not. This situation generates a confrontation between prescribed statuses and acquired statuses. Because, better educated than their mothers and living in town for some as Therese Locoh points out, women have acquired a new status, which leads them to openly or not openly question, the rights and obligations of each sex. Therese Locoh speaks of a "silent revolution" in this regard. The First World War did not upset the relationship between the sexes, but the disruption of the marriage market, the erosion of fortunes and the erosion of rents encouraged the families of the petty, even of the upper middle class, to provide their daughter of a school background allowing them to possibly exercise a professional activity. The education of girls is mainly in higher primary schools, but an increase in aspirations is emerging, concretized by the Bérard decree of 1924, authorizing girls to prepare for the baccalaureate in the same way as boys and the increase in the number of female students. . With the opening of sectors of activity to women, more compatible than working-class conditions with the bourgeois image of femininity, few young girls then remained without professional experience. Most stop working when they start a family, but this change is notable because it is an indication that work is now part of the horizon of possibilities for a majority of women.

Assistance to families is subject to two criteria: the professional activity or inactivity of the mother and the progressiveness of benefits from the second child. This policy had a certain effect of encouraging the withdrawal of the labor market on mothers; it also contributed to crystallize a social norm that of the mother at home. What has been perceived as a specificity of the female workforce, its discontinuity, thus appears as the product of a social construction.

Paradoxically, this "specificity" of the female labor force is dissolving as the employment crisis begins to make itself felt: in the generations born during the 1950s, who

enter the labor market in the 1970, the increase in female activity rates continues at all ages, resulting in an increasingly significant contribution of women to the active population: almost half of active workers are now active and, between 25 and 50 years old, 80% of women are present on the labor market. As if progressive evolutions engendered a shift in social norms, a model of behavior is thus imposed which implies the accumulation of professional activity and family activity. The strength of this model is confirmed when we disaggregate the category of inactive or students, nor retirees in which women largely dominate. If the position of "houseman" does not exist, can we consider the inactive as "housewives", having cut all ties with the labor market and exercising their activity within the domestic sphere? For the family? Activity, inactivity, unemployment represent so many categories of classification of the population which have their history and their conventions. With the development of precariousness and mass unemployment, the boundaries between these categories tend to blur and are formed at the margins of gray areas, particularly occupied by women. These margins are all the greater in that the definition of unemployment most frequently used in State statistics is particularly restrictive. The population of inactive people thus feeds on those of discouraged unemployed women who have suspended their unsuccessful efforts to find a job and on that of unemployed women found to be inactive wishing to work but unavailable at short notice, mainly for family reasons. They are in fact constrained inactive workers or, in other words, potentially active workers, ready to look for a job if the situation improves or if their living conditions allow it (Maruani, 2000:18).

Since 1994, social policies such as the parental education allowance, encouraging mothers of two children to withdraw from the labor market, have contributed to inflating the number of inactive women to the detriment of active and unemployed women. Looking closely at the beneficiaries of this measure, we see that a large proportion of them have experienced professional trajectories particularly marked by precariousness and unemployment. In the name of universalism, in Cameroon there are no employment policies specially intended for women; these are in fact family policies which, regulating women's access to the labor market, function as employment policies. But, if these women are temporarily unavailable for employment, have abandoned costly but unsuccessful procedures, seized the opportunity of parental leave, they most often want to "go back to work", and their connection to employment remains strong. Not considering their future "at home", they cannot be purely and simply assimilated to the housewives of past generations. Also, more and more, inactivity ceases to describe the situation of women who devote themselves to their household to encompass various situations at the margins of activity, inactivity and unemployment, resulting from various forms of eviction part of the labor market population. they cannot be purely and simply equated with the housewives of past generations. Also, more and more, inactivity ceases to describe the situation of women who devote themselves to their household to encompass various situations at the margins of activity, inactivity and unemployment, resulting from various forms of eviction part of the labor market population. they cannot be purely and simply equated with the housewives of past generations. Also, more and more, inactivity ceases to describe the situation of women who devote themselves to their household to encompass various situations at the margins of activity, inactivity and unemployment, resulting from various forms of eviction part of the labor market population.

The link between women and professional activity is rooted in the long trends of salarization of the female population (Cacouault-Bitaud, 2001:115) in an expanding tertiary sector. Raising the level of education has played an essential role in this movement: in all European countries, the activity rates of women are correlated with their level of education. However, since the end of the 1960s, girls have outperformed boys, whether in obtaining the baccalaureate or pursuing higher education, even if the school courses taken remain differentiated according to sex. More than ever, the possession of a diploma constitutes a sesame for employment and career. Professional trajectories (Boigeol, 1996, p. 107-129). Women who have pursued studies beyond the baccalaureate tend to approach those of their

male counterparts. Conversely, women with few qualifications are the most exposed to the forms of job insecurity that are developing in favor of unemployment and changes in the forms of labor management.

The woman, by her mobility, is the instigator of new social relationships. They now appear, to quote Jean Claude Barbier, as : Free women, leading women whom men easily treat as rebels simply because they no longer obey them, because they no longer control (Barbier, 1985: 18) . Thus it is not uncommon to meet more and more women who find themselves in fact head of their family, in the broad sense of the term. Indeed, the economic situation helping, women thanks to their purchasing power, result of their accession to paid employment, are sometimes the main purveyors of economic resources, of the family. This situation is not without generating misunderstandings between men and women. For many men still, the woman remains a social cadet,

2.2. Profound changes in the relationship between men and women: the social cadets and the economic sphere

The entry of the "social cadets" into the extra-domestic economic sphere generating monetary income has led to a redefinition of roles. Therese Locoh speaks of a rapid, but not very apparent, change in gender status and roles. Indeed, as Jean Claude Barbier points out, where traditional societies have not provided for the advancement of women, they have taken the initiative (Barbier: 18). Fatherhood responsibilities are increasingly assumed by women. Because carrying out income-generating activities, women in Abong-Mbang are increasingly required to supplement their husbands. This situation is not without consequences for men. Writes in this regard that: The paternal status is seriously undermined since the children are increasingly dependent on the mothers who assume the costs of schooling and health, two traditional responsibilities of fathers. Although theoretically the holders of power, men play an increasingly sporadic role when their wives carry out an activity that generates monetary income. This situation has the consequence of leading to conflicts between "prescribed statuses", that is to say what was traditionally reserved, and the role actually played. Moreover, the exercise of a monetary income-generating activity by women frees the man from some of his obligations as head of the family, without necessarily resulting in a reversal of the relationship between men and women. Even if working women are more often listened to by their husbands, it remains according to Velghe-Scherpereel and Van de Wouwer-Leunda that:

2.3. Evolution of the discourse on women and the rise of movements of thought on women

The upward mobility of women which led to their irruption on the labor market, and consequently to changes in their traditional roles, cannot be understood and explained independently of the international environment which favored it. The movement of thought on women finds its expression in what is called "feminism". Feminism dates from the 19th century. According to Madeleine Grawitz, feminism is: A social and political movement which claims for women the same freedoms and the same political rights, "economic, cultural and social etc.

Feminism is a doctrine that advocates the extension of rights, of the role of women in society. This movement was accompanied by demands such as equal rights between men and women, recognition of women's rights to education, employment and equal status with men. Feminism has contributed to denouncing certain facts, in particular, the distinction of power between men and women. Because, considered as the "weaker sex", women were excluded from decision-making spheres. Feminist struggles have led to the visibility of women's work that was invisible until then. This evolution of the discourse on women has been concretized through international conventions directly affecting the status of women and aimed at improving the status of women throughout the world.

2.4. National policy for the advancement of women in Cameroon

Defined according to MINCOF as being: The creation of an incentive environment aimed at integrating women into the socio-economic and cultural development of Cameroon through: the improvement and facilitation of their status; the implementation of mechanisms for self-made women and a better humanization of their living conditions. The national policy for the promotion of women in Cameroon is underpinned by the will of the Head of State and the Cameroonian government to work for the increased promotion of Cameroonian women. Indeed, as Luc Sindjoun and Mathias-Eric Owona Nguini point out: Before 1975, it appears that no specific place was offered to women in the development process and only a few dispersed actions were carried out in different ministries. It is in this context that the field of intervention of the policy in favor of women will be the subject of new regulations with the advent of the Ministry for the Status of Women (MINCOF) as a new mechanism for coordinating actions relating to the situation of women; as an autonomous ministerial department created in 1984. The objectives targeted by the Cameroonian State in creating this ministry are clearly reflected in the reference document on government planning: The creation of a ministry in charge of the status of women materializes the firm will of the public authorities to emphasize and implement the concept of the advancement of women. It is indeed a question of promoting and applying the measures intended to ensure respect for the rights of Cameroonian women in society,

In this perspective, structures will be put in place across the country, in particular the PMI (Maternal and Infant Promotion) ... This will of the Cameroonian State to work for the promotion of women was reaffirmed by the head of the State in March 1997 in these terms: As for Cameroonian women, enterprising, they know the esteem that I have for them. They must occupy a more important place in our society, whether in politics, administration or business. I have a special thought for those millions of women who; in rural areas ensure the daily subsistence of their families. I affirm that I will continue to work tirelessly for the emancipation of women, as well as the improvement of their working and living conditions. This desire of the Head of State to facilitate the advancement of women is clearly reflected in the new strong evocative name (Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the Family) of the ministerial department in charge of women's specific issues. Alongside these institutional mechanisms set up by the Cameroonian State to facilitate the advancement of women, many conventions directly affecting the status of women and aimed at improving the status of women throughout the world have been ratified. Through these mechanisms, the Cameroonian State has undoubtedly favored the accession of Cameroonian women to the extra-domestic sphere.

3. Female work: changes and permanence in the labor market in Abong-Mbang

Certain spheres of social, family and community life have long been considered 'the undisputed domain of women', notably those relating to reproductive life and education. This is underlined by Simon David Yana, when he writes: Everything related to procreation and the biological reproduction of the group is the reserved domain of women. This is what makes Christine Opong say that African women are essentially "wives and mothers", that is to say confined to the roles of marriage and reproduction, childbirth, breastfeeding and education of children. On the other hand, extra-domestic activities fell under the exclusive competence of men.

3.1. Changes

Thanks to a set of factors of social change that have modified gender mores and the traditional division of labor within families, a dynamic of gender inversion is occurring. Beyond the growing importance of women's contribution to family life (Boserup, 1983: 2), it is in public life that we have been experiencing for about two decades this "silent revolution" characterized by a massive increase in female activity on the labor market. The activity rate of women outside their labor force is increasing, despite the permanence of male domination. If on the statistical

level, this revolution is sometimes not significant, on the sociological level, it is a phenomenon of precious symbolism at the level of social gender relations, because it is above all a revolution in sexual and gender mores, in the trajectories of schooling - socialization of children within families; especially since it is through the triptych socialization-education-schooling that reproduces on the labor market what Aka Kouame called "masculine exclusivity". This co-presence of the sexes is also marked by the mobility of women, to the point where "we no longer only find men in certain major positions" to quote our interlocutor.

There are more and more women in transport (bus and taxi driving), the judiciary, the army, the high ranks of medicine, construction and public works, engineering, higher education, technical education... Thus patiently and without beating drums, women have seen the opening up to them of several fields of activity hitherto reserved for men.

3.2. The permanence of segregation despite everything with segregated sectors

Inequalities between men and women in the labor market persist despite everything, and this in practically all areas. The unequal situation observed between men and women is the result of a long process built up by male domination. The analysis of families' educational strategies shows that the sex of the child still influences educational orientation and the professional choices of parents (Mimche, 2005: 258). Rachel-Claire Okani opportunely points out that: The place of women in the labor market is still largely dependent on a certain traditional vision which has repercussions on the division of labor (Okani: 286). Moreover, women are still victims of the "deskilling of their work" to quote Robert Cabanes (Cabanes, 1995, pp. 103-119), resulting from the persistence of some sexist prejudices among employers and employees. Despite this mixing of the labor market, it is common to find an abundant female labor force in certain spheres of economic life such as nursing, social security, primary and nursery education. We can, in this sense, understand why women remain secretaries and receptionists in the services. Similarly, sewing, nursing, social security remains the preserve of women. These inequalities are also found in public administration. By way of illustration writes Suzanne-Beatrice Etoga Eyili: In the Cameroonian public service, the percentage of women working in the civil engineering, mining or IT sectors is respectively 1.8%, 4.5%, and 18%.

Even in areas where the vast majority of women work on a daily basis, strong disparities persists. This is particularly the case of agriculture, which made Rachel Efova Zengue say that we are witnessing in Cameroon: % of women work on a daily basis, only 03.44% of women occupying positions of responsibility.

In view of the above and with reference to the percentages from the table above, we note a low female representation in the technical fields. On the other hand, women are better represented in areas related to social and health affairs. This situation is partly due to the low percentage of female graduates in technical fields. Because, writes Albertine Tshibilondi Ngoyi: "For a long time, girls who went to higher education were mainly oriented towards literary careers, science and technology were then fields reserved for the male sex. This explains the low percentage of girls in science schools" (Tshibilondi Ngoyi, 120-121).

These inequalities also appear at the level of the categories of civil servants. In the private sector, it appears that the feminization of certain bodies remains underpinned by logic of marketing. In the opinion of our interlocutor, companies whose activities are reputed to be "masculine" and which do not hesitate to call on women, do so with a view to attracting the attention of users or better still of the population. on their business.

3.3. A tendency for women to be confined to certain sectors in large numbers

The feminization of certain strata is remarkable. Despite female mobility, certain spheres of public life have hitherto been dominated by women, with a tendency to find them in the majority in certain grades, steps, etc. Kindergarten teachers, servants in snack bars and restaurants, managers of cybercafés, midwives, cashiers in services and commerce, social workers, infirmaries and social services of the armies and the police, secretarial services in the

administration, marketing agent social worker, program assistant, etc. This trend towards the feminization of certain sectors of professional groups is justified by the permanence in the collective imagination of biological differences reproducing the inequalities between men and women. The entry of women into the world of work is accompanied by a reproduction of sexually segregated sectors, due to the fact that certain sexual stereotypes have been modeled and made normal in professional life. The words of our interlocutor suggest this, when she declares, speaking of her case, that she expected to work everywhere as a security guard, but she found herself performing office tasks in the company guard who employs him (Songue, et al, 1997: 3). We are still tempted to find it normal for a woman to adopt as a profession the profession of teacher, nurse, seamstress, as well as the insertion of men in the sector of command or their maintenance in positions of responsibility. It is this attitude that Paulette Beat Songue notes when she states: It is a question of mentality in Cameroonian society, the idea of a woman evolving in a workshop or between the machines of a factory does not pass yet. At a pinch, it is accepted in front of a sewing machine in a clothing company (Cabbre: 12).

Similarly, female occupations still influence matrimonial choices, which inversely influence women's behavior in the labor market. As Brigitte Cabbre observed, the female strata and the stereotypes assigned to them acquire a normative dimension and take on the value of a model, of examples to imitate. On the other hand, when a woman decides to make the command, she sometimes ceases to be considered as such, but is perceived under the image of the man.

The sexualization of work is a process that changes over time and adapts to the circumstances that arise. By way of illustration, the entry of women into the army was accompanied by a reproduction of biological differences. They still dominate the sectors requiring great maternal skills: nursing, social service, and also accounting, secretarial work, where they tend to orient themselves much more. On the other hand, the sectors subject to harsh physical conditions are the exclusive property of men (artillery, infantry, transmission, military engineering, etc.). During our interview with a senior member of the armed forces, he said that it was very difficult to admit women into certain strategic areas. Even when they enter areas considered masculine, gender reversal is not always accompanied by gender equality since inequalities are observed in accessing and maintaining positions of responsibility. This is what can also be observed for women working in security companies. They appear as second secretaries or receptionists in the places where they work. "...they are only security guards in name" to quote our interlocutor. Distinctions between men and women and social gender relations still organize the division of labor between men and women. They appear as second secretaries or receptionists in the places where they work. "...they are only security guards in name" to quote our interlocutor. Distinctions between men and women and social gender relations still organize the division of labor between men and women. They appear as second secretaries or receptionists in the places where they work. "...they are only security guards in name" to quote our interlocutor. Distinctions between men and women and social gender relations still organize the division of labor between men and women.

Ultimately, many women still believe that certain jobs are for men. This is what emerges from the words of our interlocutor, when she declares: The army is a profession for men; I cannot join this profession because you have to be strong. Similarly, in the distribution of tasks, there is always the idea that we are facing a woman or a man. Thus, the distribution of tasks will be done according to sex, as evidenced by these words of a respondent: when you have a difficult job, for example a very delicate operation to be carried out which will last, you cannot entrust it to a woman. Besides, in surgery you only have men, because that requires prolonged standing. Which is not good for a woman who still has maternity wards to do?

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LEGISLATIVE PARTICULARITIES OF THE 2000 LOCAL AND GENERAL ROMANIAN ELECTIONS. SOCIOGRAPHY OF THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE ROMANIAN ELECTORAL SYSTEM: A RECENT HISTORY

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Abstract: *The study herein approaches the process of consolidation of the Romanian electoral system from a sociographical perspective – that level and branch of the sociological knowledge consisting in the collection of raw data on objects, phenomena, relations and social processes, in their description as objectively as possible, in their measurement and in the creation of statistics of the social phenomena observed. If the abstract sociology can be elaborated following a rather deductive path, the concrete one is inductive by excellence. Thus, sociography is related to concrete sociology, to which it provides a significant part of the empirical material (Zamfir; Vlăsceanu, 1998, 554-556), as a first step of the sociological knowledge. The analysis of the consolidation of the Romanian electoral system was carried out without taking into consideration a certain theoretical position or a position towards a particular principle, but only based on the objectivity defined by the norms of observation specific to concrete sociology, applied or practical, which analyses the way in which the general logic of society works. The data presented has been collected, over time, from the communications of the public institutions, media etc., being data of recent history, still current and active, rich in content as it has not yet been covered by oblivion and some of the persons involved are still alive. The support of recent history is the recent memory, the living document (still applicable), the oral history completing the written document. As such, the material was elaborated as an acknowledging description of some fragments of the concrete social reality, based on detailed information on the historical, social and political context in which the electoral legislation in Romania was reformed in 2000, without formulating laws and elaborating causal scientific explanations¹.*

Keywords: elections, electoral system, political parties, uninominal vote.

1. The ascent of the Romanian electoral system

1.1. The battle of the political parties for the electoral thresholds (1990-2000)

In the 1990-2000 period, a main feature of the Romanian political spectrum was the excessive fragmentation, which, according to analysts, was creating unpredictable difficulties in achieving a coherent and forward-oriented state policy.

Thus, following the first free parliamentary elections held on the 20 May 1990, 17 political forces, parties, coalitions, or ethnic unions won legislative seats, as no electoral threshold had been set.

The legislative and presidential elections on September 27, 1992 were held on the basis of a new electoral law - Law no. 68/1992 on the election of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, an absolute novelty of this law being the regulation on coalitions. Thus, coalitions could be formed only at national level and the parties and other political formations could be part of only one coalition, participating in the elections only on the lists of that specific coalition.

¹ The data herein represents personal analysis and processing from electoral statistics, election results from the 1990-2000 period as presented by the Central Electoral Bureau, electoral legislation and media sources.

The parliamentary elections were organized based on lists of candidates, according to Law no. 68/1992, which also established the 3% electoral threshold - the minimum required number of valid votes cast throughout the country for the parliamentary representation of the parties (Law no. 68 from the July 15, 1992). In the case of the electoral coalitions, to this 3% threshold a single percent of the total valid votes cast throughout the country was added for each member of the coalition, starting with the second party or political formation, but without exceeding 8%. Thus, of the 84 parties, political formations, coalitions or ethnic unions that submitted lists for the 1992 parliamentary elections, only eight entered the new Parliament: the Democratic National Salvation Front (FDSN), the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR), the National Salvation Front (FSN), the Party of Romanian National Unity (PUNR), the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR), the Great Romania Party (PRM), the Socialist Party of Labour (PSM), the Agrarian Democratic Party of Romania (PDAR).

On the 3rd of November 1996, Romania held parliamentary elections for the third time after the Revolution in December 1989. These elections were also held based on Law no. 68 from July 15, 1992 on the election of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, published in the Official Gazette no. 164 on July 16, 1992 - the same as four years ago, and following these elections things radically changed: PDSR became the opposition party and the former opposition took over the reins of power (Iliescu, 1999, 183-187). After the collection and calculation of the results from all electoral districts, the Central Electoral Bureau released, on November 7, 1996, the final results of the parliamentary elections held on November 3 and, according to them, out of the approximately 50 political forces that had engaged in the electoral race, only six entered the Parliament, represented by two coalitions, four political parties: the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR), the Social Democratic Union (USD), the Party of Social Democracy of Romania (PDSR), the Great Romania Party (PRM), the Party of Romanian National Unity (PUNR) and the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR). The Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR) included the National Christian Democratic Peasants' Party (PNȚCD), the National Liberal Party (PNL), the Romanian Ecological Party (PER), the National Liberal Party-the Democratic Convention (PNL-CD), the Romanian Alternative Party (PAR), the Romanian Ecological Federation (FER), and the Social Democratic Union included the Democratic Party (PD) and the Romanian Social Democratic Party (PSDR).

The parliamentary elections from November 26, 2000 were held on the basis of Law no. 68/1992 on the election of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, subsequently amended by Law no. 115/1996 for the 1996 elections and the Emergency Ordinances no. 63/2000, no. 129/2000 and no. 154/2000 for the 2000 elections.

The major difference between all these normative acts consisted in the establishment of the electoral threshold. Thus, unlike the Law-Decree from 1990, which did not condition the accession to the Parliament on obtaining a certain percentage of the total valid votes cast at national level, the 1992 electoral law established an electoral threshold of 3%, which was applied for the 1992 and 1996 elections.

For the 2000 elections, the Emergency Ordinance no. 129/2000 imposed a threshold of 5% for parties and a special threshold for coalitions of minimum 8% and maximum 10%. The main legislative feature of the 2000 parliamentary elections was the 5% threshold imposed for parties. Of the 88 political formations, parties, alliances and organisations of the national minorities that submitted electoral lists, only five entered the parliament after the vote on November 26. For the second time in the post-December history, Romania experienced governance alternation, with the election being won by the Democratic Social Pole in Romania, comprising the PDSR, the PSDR and PUR.

About two months before the date set for the local elections in Romania in 2000, the Parliament had not yet adopted the amendments to the electoral laws, namely the Laws no. 68, 69, 70/1992 on the local, parliamentary and presidential elections.

The prime minister at the time, Mugur Isărescu, in March 2000, requested the Permanent Bureau of the Chamber of Deputies to debate, "as a matter of extreme urgency", the

draft of the law for completing and amending Law no. 70/1991 on Local Elections, underlining that this election must take place within the deadline agreed with the parliamentary parties. At the same time, the prime minister confirmed that the Government agreed that the amendments to the above-mentioned law should focus on: reducing the number of rounds of voting for local elections to maximum two, reducing the number of local and county councillors by at least 20 percent, as well as establishing a variable electoral coefficient applicable to political parties and alliances. The Chamber decided that the leaders of the parliamentary groups should participate in a discussion for the introduction of this normative act on the agenda.

Contrary to the Prime Minister's position, PNTCD leaders announced that the Government will promote the amendment of the Law on Local Elections through an emergency ordinance, although the head of the Government had repeatedly expressed his distrust in such a procedure, as the Parliament could have modified the normative act on the eve of elections, which would have caused dysfunctions in the electoral process.

1.2. The uninominal vote

As far as the amendments proposed for the modification of the legislation on parliamentary elections are concerned, the main focus was on raising the electoral threshold from three to five percent, on introducing the uninominal vote and restructuring the Parliament, in the sense of reducing the number of senators and deputies and increasing the norm of representativeness.

According to the analysts and the representatives of the political spectrum, the division of the left and right in Romania imposed, in 2000, the reformation of the Electoral Law. In the opinion of the PDSR senator Ioan Predescu, "raising the electoral threshold is absolutely necessary, thus achieving a crystallization of the political environment through a triage of significant parties from those that have a reduced representation".

Another consequence of raising the electoral threshold was, in the opinion of political analysts, the concentration of the political spectrum through the polarization of the existing currents (left, right), but dissipated in numerous parties having programs if not identical, at least similar.

Considered beneficial only for the parties with a significant weight among the electorate, raising the electoral threshold was important also for the orientation of the satellite parties, "constrained", in this way, to conclude alliances or to merge with the large representative parties for a certain socio-political current, but also for the orientation of the citizen, who would have had the opportunity to exercise their right to vote in a more efficient and conscious way, and not randomly or emotionally-driven as before, thus giving consistency to the orientation of the parliamentary and state activity.

The introduction of the uninominal vote, even in a mixed system, according to the German model - combining the uninominal vote with the vote on lists - had as immediate consequence the possibility of revoking the parliamentary mandate and, therefore, the consolidation of the responsibility and representativeness of the parliamentarian towards his voters, as well as a stronger anchorage in the party and parliamentary life of the person involved, as analysts revealed. The Minister of Civil Service, Vlad Roșca, speaking as vice-president of PNTCD, also claimed that "the adoption of a normative act regulating the voter-parliamentary relation so that the latter can be held responsible in some way if they leave the party on whose lists they ran and, implicitly, won in the elections, is a matter kept in the attention of the leaders of the parliamentary parties, both those governing and those of the Opposition".

At the same time, it was considered that the uninominal vote would determine the largest electoral segment - the undecided (30-40 percent), whose number was higher than that of those with a clear option for a particular party, to be able to exercise their individual right to vote, granted by the Constitution, but also to apply the "tactical vote". It basically meant that in the regions where a candidate had little chance to succeed, the voter would vote the party closest to his political options - a party with a relatively high weight in that area, in this way

also strengthening the representativeness of the parties in the regions. So, the voter would be placed in front of two lists, applying the 'Voted' stamp either on the one with the candidates' names or on the one with the parties. At the same time, the voter would be aware to a greater extent both of his power to decide on the organization of political decision centres and of the validity of the principle of equal opportunities, said political analysts.

The introduction of the uninominal vote would also have been necessary to accelerate the reformation and adjustment of parties, which, in 2000, according to observers, were going through identity crises: they were parties for leaders or parties for the country. Overcoming this crisis would have made it possible to move from party-democracy to public-democracy.

1.3. Political trends and the relations of the parties and electoral alliances

The analysts noted that, until then, the voters' commitment was only a secondary utility, the parties being, in their turn, victims, either of the leaders or of the lately emerged social, ideological and political factions.

The working-class electorate fell apart, both from the point of view of the social and material condition and from the political point of view, a significant part voting for the left, in the context of a growing sense of insecurity.

The threshold effect was considered to be discouraging for those presenting small lists (promotion of a limited number of candidates or of a single candidate) and, on the other hand, would have been favourable to alliances, thus preventing the ascension of small parties of orientation, sometimes considered extremist, with insufficient representation at global level.

As far as the local, general and presidential elections in 2000 are concerned, the amendment of the electoral law generated, both at governmental and at parliamentary level, distress and controversies with extensive reverberations in the media. The most controversial topic was represented by the proposed amendments to the normative acts regulating the way in which the local, general and presidential elections were organised and carried out.

A first step in the legislative amendment was taken on June 22, 1998, when the deputies adopted a draft law for amending and supplementing some provisions of Law no. 70/1991 on Local Elections. The draft law regulated the establishment of an Electoral Bureau in the case of partial local elections in Bucharest also.

At the same time, the characteristics of the identity card did not allow the application, in practice, of art. 64 of the old law, according to which 'after voting, the identity card of each voter shall be stamped with the mention <voted> and <date>'. For these reasons, the new draft provided for the possibility of printing the stamp on a sticker, applied on the back of the identity card.

The draft for the modification of the Law on Local Elections was initiated by the Government for the partial elections for the City Hall of the Capital, which were to take place on October 12, 1998.

One year later, on November 4, 1999, the Government submitted to the Romanian Parliament a draft law for the amendment and supplementation of Law no. 68/1992 on the Election of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, of Law no. 69/1992 for the Election of the President of Romania and of Law no. 70/1992 on Local Elections. The draft was adopted by the Government on October 28, 1999 and was going to be discussed and approved by the Chamber of Deputies.

The discussions were long and contradictory. On March 1, 2000, the deputies of the Legal Commission started debating on the modification of the normative acts regulating the election of the Parliament, of the President of Romania, as well as the local elections.

Together with the draft of the Government, the members of the commission also analysed the amendments of the political parties for the modification of the Law on Elections. The Minister of Civil Service, Vlad Roșca, participated, on behalf of the Government - as initiator, in the works of the Commission, explaining that the draft of the Executive aims, in particular, to

regulate the technical aspects necessary for the proper conduct of the elections, without proposing to change the provisions with political connotation.

The Ministry of Civil Service drafted three Government Decisions on organizational measures for the local elections in June, namely the draft decision on the establishment of the measures for the organisation and conduct of the local elections of 2000, the draft decision on the expenses for the preparation and conduct of the local elections of 2000 and the draft decision on the design of the stickers and the conditions for their printing, administration and use.

The initiator of the drafts, the Minister of Civil Service, Vlad Roșca, warned that the Government could resort to an emergency ordinance if the Parliament delayed the modification of these laws.

The members of the Executive adopted, on April 6, at the Government meeting, an Emergency Ordinance for amending and supplementing Law no. 70/1991 on Local Elections, republished, amended and supplemented by Law no. 164/1998, based on the protocol signed by the representatives of all parties in the Parliament.

In order to eliminate some dysfunctions or discrepancies discovered in the application of the law on local elections, the organisation of polling places in the villages with low population (less than 500 inhabitants) and isolated villages (more than 3 km away from the polling centre) was stipulated. The conscript soldiers could vote in their place of residence, regardless of the moment of their conscription, within the limits of the military regulations. For the conscription soldiers, polling places could also be organised around the military units, if there were at least 50 voters.

According to the text of the ordinance, "the electoral threshold is established to the limit of 5%, if the electoral coefficient is higher than the limit of 5% and equal to the electoral coefficient, if it is lower than the limit of 5%".

The elections in the second round were considered valid regardless of the number of voters who participated in the vote, and in the second round of elections the candidate who obtained the largest number of valid votes was declared winner.

For the distribution of the mandates of councillors, the Constituency Electoral Bureau established an electoral coefficient, set by dividing the total number of valid votes for all lists and independent candidates by the total number of councillors in the constituency, as well as a limit of 5% of the total number of valid votes.

If no party, political formation, political alliance or electoral alliance or independent candidate reached the electoral threshold, a mandate was distributed to each of them, in the descending order of the number of valid votes in their favour, until the distribution of all mandates established according to the law.

It was decided to keep the electoral campaign period of 45 days. For the good conduct of the elections, it was also decided that the amounts necessary to cover the expenses should be provided to the local councils, county councils and the General Council of Bucharest from the reserve fund available to the Government.

2. The sociography of the electoral campaign for the 2000 parliamentary elections

The electoral campaign for the local elections of June 4 (the first round of elections) officially started on April 20, with the publication in the Official Gazette of the Government Decision setting the election date.

100 parties, political formations, political alliances and 8,644 independent candidates participated in the electoral race.

Following the local elections of June 4 and 18, for mayors, the PDSR obtained 1,051 mandates (337 mandates on June 4 and 714 on June 18), PD - 482 (96+386), ApR - 283 (30+253), PNL - 251 (39+212), Independents - 159 (33+126), UDMR - 148 (38+ 110), CDR - 147 (22+125), PRM - 66 (5+61), PSDR - 62 (8+54), PNR - 55 (3+52), PSM - 51 (4+47), PUNR - 47 (5+42), PUR - 32 (3+29), UFD - 29 (1+28), PS - 19 (1+18), FER - 15 (1+14), PPDR - 9 (2+7).

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The lists for the Chamber of Deputies included 9,828 candidates, and those of the Senate included more than 4,000, candidates from 88 parties, political alliances and electoral alliances, minorities' organizations and independent candidates.

At the elections for the Chamber of Deputies, out of the 17,699,727 voters on the electoral lists, 11,559,458 went to the polls, representing 65.31%. The total number of valid votes was 10,839,424, i.e. 93.77%, while those cancelled were 706,761, representing 6.11% of the total votes cast.

Following the collection and calculation of all the results, it turned out that the Social Democratic Pole of Romania (PDSR) obtained 3,968,464 votes (36.61%), PRM obtained 2,112,027 votes (19.48%), PD obtained 762,365 votes (7.03%), PNL obtained 747,263 votes (6.89%), UDMR obtained 736,863 votes (6.80%), the Romanian Democratic Convention - 2000 - 546,135 votes (5.04%), the Alliance for Romania - 441,228 votes (4.07%), the National Liberal Party - Câmpeanu - 151,518 votes (1.40%), the National Alliance Party (PUNR-PNR) - 149,525 votes (1.38%), independent candidates - 137,561 votes (1.27%).

Following these results, PDSR won 155 seats (44.93%), PRM got 84 seats (24.35%), PD got 31 seats (8.99%), PNL got 30 seats (8.70%), UDMR got 27 seats (7.83%), and the minorities got 18 seats (5.22%).

At the elections for the Senate, out of the 17,699,727 voters on the electoral lists, 11,559,458 participated in the elections, representing 65.31% of the total. The total number of valid votes cast was 10,891,910, representing 94.23%, the cancelled votes being 653 834, representing 5.6% of the total votes cast.

After the collection and calculation of the results, it turned out that PDSR obtained 4,040 212 votes (37.09%), PRM got 2,288,483 votes (21.01%), PD got 825,437 votes (7.58%), PNL got 814,381 votes (7.48%), UDMR got 751,310 votes (6.90%), the Romanian Democratic Convention - 2000 - 575,706 votes (5.29%), the Alliance for Romania - 465,535 votes (4.27%), the National Alliance Party (PUNR-PNR) - 154,761 votes (1.42%), the National Liberal Party - Câmpeanu - 133,018 votes (1.22%).

Following these results, the PDSR obtained 65 mandates, representing 46.43% of the total of 140 mandates, PRM obtained 37 mandates (26.43%), PD obtained 13 mandates (9.29%), PNL obtained 13 mandates (9.29%) and UDMR - 12 mandates (8.57%).

The Parliament, elected on 26 November 2000, had 345 deputies (327 elected and 18 appointed by the organizations of the national minorities, other than the Hungarian one) and 140 senators, the norm of representation being one deputy per 70,000 inhabitants and one senator per 160,000 inhabitants.

During the four-year mandate, the leaders of the two Chambers of the Parliament were Nicolae Văcăroiu (PDSR) - for Senate, elected on December 18, 2000, and Valer Dorneanu (PDSR) - for the Chamber of Deputies, elected on December 15, 2000.

For the second time in the post-December history, Romania experienced governance alternation. The Democratic Social Pole of Romania, including PDSR, PSDR and PUR, has appointed its prime minister in the new Executive.

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MONTESSORI EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Abstract: *The study investigated the operation of Montessori schools in the South Western part of Nigeria with due attention to Lagos and Osun State. A total of three hundred (300) teachers were selected from thirty (30) Montessori schools in the two states. Three research questions were answered in the study. A self-developed questionnaire titled “Montessori School Assessment Questionnaire” was used for data collection while the data were analysed using frequency count and percentage aspect of descriptive statistics. The study revealed that the Montessori school curriculum are not in line with the ideal one, the school and classroom environments have a semblance of Montessori schools while the teachers’ roles differ from the stipulations of what a Montessori teacher is expected to do. Premised on these, the researchers recommend that appropriate policy and curriculum should be designed for Montessori schools, Montessori school teachers should be exposed to relevant seminars and workshops.*

Keywords: Montessori Curriculum, Montessori Education, School Environment, Theory and Practice.

1. Introduction

The idea of Montessori school system has become popular premised on the view as one of the major ways through which compete citizens needed for the social, economic and political advancement of a country can be nurtured. Montessori school became profound through Maria Montessori (1870-1952) who believed that a person cannot be educated by another person as education should be based on the interest and ability of the learner anchored on the personal analytical curiosity and love for knowledge. Maria Montessori viewed education as a continuous activity which goes beyond the regimented classroom environment. Learning according to her is intrinsically motivated and the goal of early childhood education should be to cultivate this natural desire in children. According to the scholar, the most sensitive age of learning for a child is from birth to age six and the use of child-centred approach should be adopted.

The Montessori school is different from other school system in terms of curriculum in use, the role of teachers in the classroom interaction and class composition. According to Dawson (2018), a Montessori school is imbued with the following qualities;

- i. A prepared environment in term of relevant materials that are interesting and challenging to the learner.
- ii. Availability of Montessori materials. This refers to the provision of materials that are unique and beautiful based on natural quality and scientific design that could stimulate the curiosity of the learner.
- iii. Acquisition of life skills. This entails exposing the children to various activities that are needed in their day to day living. Children should be exposed to activities such as; scooping, folding and clearing amongst others.
- iv. Provision of work cycles. This involves allowing children to participate in an uninterrupted work cycle each morning in accordance with their age.

- v. Multiple age classroom. This implies grouping the learners on an average age interval of 1-3 years in order to promote the acquisition of leadership and mentoring by allowing the younger ones in a group to imitate the older ones.
- vi. Freedom of movement. This has to do with encouraging the learners to be independent and self-directed. The learners should be given the freedom to move and engage in any activity of their choice within the class.
- vii. Learners are guided to be intrinsically motivated to imbibe the principle of self-discipline.
- viii. Individualized instruction. Learners should be exposed to lessons and materials in accordance with their individual interest and development.
- ix. Teacher training. The teachers should be trained on how to facilitate learning and guide each learner premised on the need and interest.
- x. Record keeping. The teacher should keep the record of each child's activities.

The above attributes of Montessori school are in line with that of Rambush (1992). Rambush in addition, emphasizes hand-on-learning, cooperative and collaborative learning which places premium on the involvement of the learners in practical activities, children treating themselves with kindness and respect coupled with non-comparison of learners against one another as each child progresses at his or her pace. The scholar also identifies the inculcation of the spirit of universal values such as self-respect, acknowledgement of the uniqueness and dignity of every individual, compassion, empathy, peaceful co-existence amongst others in the learners. The specifications of the above authors are also attested to by the Montessori Children's Centre (2020).

Aside from the aforementioned attributes of a Montessori school, Farmiloe (2019) differentiated Montessori school curriculum from conventional school curricula premised on the following.

- i. Encouragement of independence. That is, the children are allowed to perform tasks that are of interest to them without any confinement to specific class lesson.
- ii. The curriculum does not encourage memorization of information but hand-on activities.
- iii. Cultural approach entailing the learning of valuable life lesson in all their learning activities such as treating others with respect and appreciating their opinions.
- iv. Children are opportune to direct their learning process. They are free to acquire new skills after acquiring the prerequisite one without age consideration.
- v. The curriculum emphasizes early childhood development covering the formative years which occurs before the age of six years.

In the view of Spur (2019), Montessori's method exposes children to real-life situation through rigorous training and significant emotional support. Importance is laid on creative expression and child's own interest rather than a regimented school curriculum. The curriculum of Montessori also eliminates stress related with test and examination with opportunity for children to unlock their full potentials. The curriculum also focuses on preparing the learners for later educational environment as well as work place. Children work based on their interest and happiness. The scholar asserts that Montessori's method reinforces teacher-learner relationship and the development of qualities that will make them relevant in later life.

Dahunsi (2014) posited that teachers in Montessori school require special training on how to carry out the tasks entail in Montessori school. The authors when looking into Montessori schools in Nigeria asserted that the teachers lack the skills and knowledge required of Montessori school teacher. In the finding of Kennedy (2019), many schools that claimed to be Montessori are not, in the real sense. Looking into what operate in United State, the scholars found that out of about four thousand acclaimed Montessori school in the country, only one thousand and one hundred are registered members of American Montessori Society which ensures compliance with the ethics and principles of Montessori school thereby implying that

more than half of the acclaimed schools are not regulated and therefore could fall below the specifications for the operation of a Montessori school.

Mshelbila (2015) while acknowledging the importance of Montessori education stated that the system of education is both a philosophy of child development and the rationale for guiding such growth. According to the scholar, the two edges of Montessori education are the need for freedom within limit and a carefully prepared environment which promotes exposure to materials and experiences required for overall development of a child. The scholar found positive effects of Montessori's method on the performance of children's artistic development in primary school. Somorin (2016) comparative analysis of pupils' performance in Montessori and Non-Montessori schools in vocational studies revealed significant difference in students' performance with Montessori school on the higher side.

The above postulations in relation to Montessori school have shown that it is a special school that requires special learning environment, special curriculum and teachers with some prerequisite knowledge and skills.

2.Statement of the Problem

Montessori education exposes learners to basic life skills that will allow them to become citizens that are responsible and responsive. It inculcates the skills of global citizenship in learners thereby making them to be relevant in all climes. The nature of Montessori education also requires special curriculum, teachers and school environment which are quite different from what operates in traditional classroom environment. Montessori education has also been found to be more effective in terms of inculcating necessary knowledge, skills, attitude and values in the learners thereby making its adoption attractive to those who might be interested in establishing school particularly at pre-primary and primary school levels. However, the compliance with the stipulations for the operation in terms of human, material, curriculum and environmental requirements have not been given due attention as the general curricular in operation in many countries including Nigeria have no specification for the establishment of Montessori school thereby making the adoption of the name 'Montessori' without actually complying with the specifications. This study therefore assesses the operation of Montessori school in terms of curriculum provision, environmental condition, instructional strategies and the roles of the teachers.

3.Research Questions

1. Does the school curriculum in Montessori schools in Nigeria operate in line with the requirements of Montessori school curriculum?
2. How relevant is the school environment of Montessori schools in Nigeria to the stipulations of Montessori school environment?
3. Do the classroom activities of Montessori school teachers in Nigeria go in line with the expected roles of teachers in a Montessori school?

4. Research Method

The study is a descriptive survey research design since it involves the selection of some respondents from the population in order to assess their opinions without manipulating any of the variables involved. The population is made up of all teachers in schools that claimed to operate Montessori school in Osun and Lagos States. A total of 300 teachers were selected from 30 acclaimed Montessori schools in the study area.

The instrument used for data collection is a self-developed questionnaire titled "Montessori School Assessment Questionnaire". The instrument is made up of three sections focusing on Montessori school curriculum, school/classroom environment and the role of teachers in curriculum implementation. The sections contain twelve, fifteen and twelve items respectively based on their relevance to the subject matter of each section. The items in sections 'A' and 'B' were presented on a four Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly

disagree. However, the responses of the respondents were collapsed into two, denoted by ‘Agreed’ and ‘Disagreed’ under data analysis while the responses to section ‘C’ were placed on Likert scale of always, often, rarely and never.

To ascertain the validity of the instrument, the initial draft of the instrument was given to two lecturers in the field of early childhood education to assess the suitability of the instrument in relation to the research topic. Comments and observations made by them were taken into consideration in the final draft of the instrument.

The instrument was also administered to 20 Montessori school teachers in two schools that are not part of the study. Their responses were analysed using Cronbach alpha analysis and a reliability coefficient of 0.72 was obtained. The instrument was thereafter, administered to 300 teachers in 30 selected schools that claimed to operate Montessori school system with the help of two research assistants. 299 of the questionnaire were returned while an average of 286 responded to each of the items on the questionnaire. Data collected were analysed using frequency count and percentage aspects of descriptive statistics.

5.Results

Research question 1: Does the school curriculum in Montessori schools in Nigeria operate in line with the requirements of a Montessori school curriculum?

Table 1: Analysis of the Montessori school curriculum in Nigeria

S/ N	ITEMS	RESPONSE			
		AGREE		DISAGREE	
		F	%	f	%
1	The curriculum stipulates what a child should learn	232	77.2	61	20.8
2	Children in the same class are exposed to the same learning experiences	194	65.5	102	34.5
3	Objectives to be achieved for lesson are stipulated in the curriculum	256	86.8	39	13.2
4	There is rigid allocation of time for each classroom activity	213	73.7	76	26.3
5	Children are graded based on the achievement of the stipulated objectives in the curriculum	240	81.9	53	18.1
6	The curriculum stipulates the grading system	252	85.1	44	14.9
7	The curriculum allows the learner to progress at their own pace	207	72.4	79	27.6
8	There are recommended textbooks and workbooks that must be used by the teacher and the learner	266	89.9	30	10.1
9	The curriculum allows each child to decide what to learn based on his or her own interest	168	59.2	116	40.8
10	The school derives her curriculum from the general curriculum prepared by the Ministry of Education	260	89.7	30	10.3
11	The curriculum has no specific limit for class activities	204	71.1	83	28.9
12	The curriculum promotes hands-on activities	224	77.8	64	22.2

The respondents posited that; the curriculum stipulates what a child should learn (77.2%); children in the same class are exposed to the same learning experiences (65.5%); objectives to be achieved for lesson are stipulated in the curriculum (86.8%); there is rigid allocation of time for each classroom activity (73.7%), children are graded based on the achievement of the stipulated objectives in the curriculum (81.9%), the curriculum stipulates the grading system (85.1%), the curriculum allows the learner to progress at their own pace (72.4.0%), there are recommended textbooks and workbooks that must be used by the teacher and the learner (89.9%), the curriculum allows each child to decide what to learn based on his or her own interest (59.2%), the school derives her curriculum from the general curriculum prepared by the Ministry of Education (89.7%), the curriculum has no specific limit for class activities (71.1%), the curriculum promotes hands-on activities (77.8%). It can be deduce from

the above analysis that there is no much difference between the Montessori’s school curriculum in Nigeria and that of the conventional school system thereby implying that the ideal Montessori’s school curriculum is not actually in operation in most of the acclaimed Montessori schools.

Research question 2: How relevant is the school environment of Montessori schools in Nigeria to the stipulations of Montessori school environment?

Table 2: Analysis of the Montessori’s school environment in Nigeria.

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSE			
		AGREE		DISAGREE	
		F	%	f	%
1	The children are from different cultural background	232	80.6	56	19.4
2	The children are from different religious background	260	88.7	33	11.3
3	The compositions of the learners reflect global community	209	72.8	78	27.2
4	Classroom are arranged in such a way that different activities can be done at the same time	203	67.9	96	32.1
5	Learners work on individual or small group based on their interest	196	67.6	94	32.4
6	The teacher delivers the curriculum content for the children to learn	215	73.4	78	26.6
7	The teacher introduces the task to be learnt or concept to be discussed	184	62.2	112	37.8
8	Each classroom contains children of the same age range.	238	79.9	60	20.1
9	Children are expected to spend an average of 3 years together in a class	195	68.4	90	31.6
10	Children are involved in simple tasks e.g. wetting plants, washing dishes	225	76.5	69	23.5
11	Children in the same class serve as mentors to themselves	228	77.3	67	22.7
12	Resolution of conflict of interests among the children is the responsibility of the teacher	270	90.9	27	9.1
13	Children display values such as patience, tolerance and cooperation	242	83.7	47	16.3
14	A lot of activities take place in the classroom at the same time	173	60.7	112	39.3
15	There are natural objects within the school environment that allow learners to explore their natural environment	254	88.2	34	11.8

The respondents agreed that; the children are from different cultural background (80.6%), the children are from different religious background (88.7%), the compositions of the learners reflect global community (72.8%), the classrooms are arranged in such a way that different activities can be done at the same time (67.9%), the learners work on individual or small group based on their interest (67.6%), the teacher delivers the curriculum content for the children to learn (73.4%), the teacher introduces the tasks to be learnt or concept to be discussed (62.2%), each classroom contains children of the same age range (79.9%), children

are expected to spend an average of 3 years together in a class (68.4%), children are involved in simple tasks e.g. wetting plants, washing dishes (76.5%), children in the same class serve as mentors to themselves (77.3%), resolution of conflict of interests among the children is the responsibility of the teacher (90.9%), children display values such as patience, tolerance and cooperation (83.7%), a lot of activities take place in the classroom at the same time (60.7%), there are natural objects within the school environment that allow learners to explore their natural environment (88.2%). The responses reflect that the school/classroom environment of many of the schools has a semblance of Montessori school however, the teacher still plays prominent role in term of curriculum implementation and conflict resolution among the children which do not go in line with the ideal Montessori school system.

Research question 3: Do the classroom activities of Montessori school teachers in Nigeria go in line with the expected roles of teachers in a Montessori school

Table 3: Analysis of classroom activities of Montessori school teachers in Nigeria

S/ N	ITEMS	RESPONSE							
		ALWAYS		OFTEN		RARELY		NEVER	
		F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
1	I teach the curriculum content	262	88.2%	34	11.4%	1	0.3%	Nil	
2	I prepare my note of lesson for class instruction	219	75.8%	66	22.8%	3	1.0%	1	0.3%
3	I monitor and guide the learners	239	82.1%	50	17.2%	2	0.7%	Nil	
4	I give instruction on the task to be carried out by the learners	246	83.7%	44	15.0%	1	0.3%	3	1.0%
5	I grade the learners based on their performance in test and examination	208	72.5%	73	25.4%	3	1.0%	3	1.0%
6	I observe the children as they carry out their tasks and keep record of their progress	233	81.2%	50	17.4%	Nil		4	1.4%
7	I decide what the learner will learn	207	72.6%	72	25.3%	5	1.8%	1	0.3%
8	I motivate the children to learn	214	78.4%	53	19.4%	5	1.8%	1	0.4%
9	I expose the children to the same task at a time	242	83.7%	42	14.5%	4	1.4%	1	0.3%
10	I allow each child to engage in activities that suit his/her interest	197	67.9%	68	23.4%	15	5.2%	10	3.4%
11	I consider myself a facilitator rather than teacher	204	73.1%	56	20.1%	6	2.2%	13	4.7%
12	I resolve conflict among the learners when it occurs	222	77.6%	46	16.1%	9	3.1%	9	3.1%

The respondents agreed that the teachers always, teaches the curriculum content (88.2%); prepares their note of lesson for classroom instruction (75.8%); monitors and guides the learners (82.1%); gives instruction on the task to be carried out by the learners (83.7%); grades the learners based on their performance in test and examination (72.5%); observes the children as they carry out their tasks and keeps record of their progress (81.2%); decides what the learner will learn (72.6.0%); motivates the children to learn (78.4%); exposes the children to the same task at a time (83.7%); allows each child to engage in activities that suit his/her

interest (67.9%); considers himself a facilitator rather than teacher (73.1%); resolves conflict among the learners when it occurs(77.6%).

The analysis of the responses shows that the classroom activities of Montessori school teachers in Nigeria do not differ from that of the conventional school teachers. This implies that the expected role of a teacher in a Montessori school system is not actually implemented in the Montessori schools in Nigeria.

6. Discussion

The study reveals that the curriculum of Montessori schools in Nigeria does not operate in line with the Montessori school curriculum. This is attested to by the fact that the topics and content to be learnt are clearly stipulated in the curriculum and are religiously followed. The learning objectives are also defined and learners' achievement is assessed through tests and examinations. There are also textbooks and workbooks for class activities there reducing the acclaimed Montessori school to the conventional school system.

The study shows a semblance of Montessori school system in term of the school environment. This is reflected in the admission of children from diverse socio-cultural environment which could be attributed to the heterogeneous nature of the country since it is made up of people with different ethnic and religion background however, the teacher is responsibility for instructional delivery based on the stipulations in the school curriculum that has no difference from that of conventional school system thereby preventing the self-pace learning attribute of a real Montessori school.

The study also reveals that teachers in Montessori schools in the country prepare lesson note, determine what the children will engage in, give instructions to the children and motivate them to learn. These do not go with the expectations of a Montessori school teacher. The teacher supposed to serve as facilitator, monitor the activities of each child and allow them to be intrinsically motivated.

The findings reveal a sort of divergence in the operation of Montessori schools in Nigeria from the stipulations of Maria Montessori who was the mother of Montessori and those of scholars such as Rambush (1992), Dawson (2018), Farmiloe (2019), Spur (2019) and Montessori Children's Centre (2020). The study corroborated non-compliance of many acclaimed Montessori schools with the ideal Montessori school as revealed by Dahunsi (2014) and Kennedy (2019).

The non-compliance could be attributed to lack of enough knowledge on the part of the school owners on what constitute a Montessori school and absence of appropriate government policy to regulate the operation.

7. Recommendations

Premised on the findings, it is hereby recommended that;

- owners of Montessori schools need to acquire relevant knowledge on how to operate a Montessori school.
- there should be appropriate regulations to guide the operation of Montessori schools.
- special curriculum should be designed by government for the operation of Montessori schools.
- teachers in Montessori schools should be exposed to seminars and workshops that could enhance their performance as teachers in Montessori schools.

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LIVING IN A SMART WORLD. A STUDY OVER EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS ON THE USAGE OF INTELLIGENT DEVICES

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Abstract: *Technological developments, fostered by scientific discoveries, have always contributed to changes concerning the work domain, business models, communication, peoples' interactions, in one word reshaping the world. Taking into account the rapid spread of new, smart technologies in several domains and their usage at a large scale, both in industrial context and by individual users also, we aimed in the present study to explore employees' perceptions regarding the usage of intelligent devices and platforms. Results showed different patterns among respondents, concerning their previous experience or the amount of time spent using each kind of technology. Answers varied, depending on the type of interaction questioned, from experienced users regarding smartphones, to basic users when it comes to laptop/desktop usage and no experience in interacting with assistive systems and platforms using virtual reality.*

Keywords: artificial intelligence, work, human centricity, training, virtual reality.

1. Introduction

The contemporary society is unquestionably defined and shaped by artificial intelligence (AI) and the development of new technologies. AI is visible in many domains, impacting industry, economy and society. A working definition for artificial intelligence could be provided by the Oxford Dictionary, according to which we can understand AI as the "theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making and translation between languages" (Oxford Dictionary (online) available at https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/artificial_intelligence). Artificial intelligence is embodied in different apparatus around us, gadgets, applications that we use, both at work, at home or during our leisure time. People manage nowadays to accomplish several tasks and activities faster, easier, cheaper and less risky than twenty years ago due to the smart devices that surround us – smartphones, smart cars, autonomous guiding systems, searching engines or chatbots.

The benefits of artificial intelligence are unquestionable when analyzing them from the perspective of now-a-days consumers' society, as shopping, finding a destination, communicating a message become easier than ever before and our desires are fulfilled in a blink of an eye. Nevertheless, questions, worries and skepticism also find their place in this equation. Thus, employees worry about their jobs, consumers feel insecure about the personal data they share to a voice assistant and there also are voices that see the development of autonomous, intelligent technologies as dangerous for humanity itself, discussing about the "crisis of the anthropological project" (Kravchenko and Kyzymenko, 2019: 120). Other authors (Yilma, Panetto and Naudet 2019: 12) draw attention upon the importance of the human factor in this equation. They consider mandatory a cognitive interaction, besides the task execution part and notice the necessity of merging the social and technical part. Furthermore, they acknowledge the complexity of this challenge, given the unicity of each human being. Taking into consideration both the benefits and the challenges that accompany the spread of technology

and artificial intelligence, in the following lines we will address the main concepts of the domain from a theoretical perspective, followed by an empirical approach also.

2. Conceptual Framework

Humanity, in its never-ending movement, has always tried to conquer new frontiers and technological developments are the ones that sustain this permanent process of change. Theory distinguishes between four industrial revolutions, seen as steps in developing mass production, automatization or smart devices that portray industry as we know it today (Xu, David & Kim, 2018; Pogan, 2019; Hirschi, 2018: 193). Thus, back in the 18th century, the steam power engine revolutionized production, attracting people from farms and small villages to flourishing bigger settlements (ACATECH, 2013). This early technological turning point is seen as the first industrial revolution. Electricity use fostered these trends towards industrial development and manufacturing increased. Industrial cities developed across the western world, as production moved outside the houses and communities, in the factories, at the beginning of the 1900's. The use of electricity at a large scale, sustaining thus mass production is considered to be the motor of the second industrial revolution, that contributed to a greater independence of mankind from nature.

New steps towards faster and more efficient industrial production chains were possible starting from the 1970's, as information technology used at a large scale in factories allowed automatization. This is considered to be the third industrial revolution, that brought affordable goods for large categories of consumers, eliminated risky jobs, made communication easier, transportation faster and replaced humans with machines for those routine, repetitive tasks, in the production chains.

The fourth industrial revolution, firstly described by the founder of the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab (2018), is seen as continuing the third industrial revolution. What differentiates these two stages, the third and the fourth revolution, is the fact that the machines, or robots that replace human beings will be able to act, decide, communicate, interact, learn, adapt to various situations on their own, independent from a human decider. Until this late stage intelligence was a specific feature only for human beings. But the last industrial revolution managed to embody intelligence in objects, devices, or other virtual entities. Thus, the Internet was built by people, was developed by people, content was added by people until a few years ago. Nowadays, we are using in fact IoT, the Internet of Things, as the contribution of human beings has been replaced by the contribution of smart things that can provide information. These smart things can be virtual machines, smart watches, searching engines, localization systems, guidance assistants or other types of bots that can send, receive and process information. Although at a first glance each industrial revolution affected the way work was performed, production units or transportation chains, as new technologies were firstly implemented in the industrial domain, each of these developments had strong social echoes, transforming the lives of individuals, families, communities and countries. The globalization context fosters the spread of novelty in any domain and the technological support improved through each industrial revolution contributed to a greater coverage of every discovery. These transformations made jobs easier and less dangerous for some professionals, but also brought lay-offs, as certain tasks were better or cheaper accomplished by machines. Each time employees had to adapt, reorientate, learn how to use new technologies or change their job or even domain. The actual context, defined by rapid transformations, recalls flexibility and adaptivity more than ever before, as the contemporary changes will fundamentally reshape "the nature of work, business, and society in the coming decades" (Hirschi, 2018: 192). The same author draws attention to the possibility that plenty of the existing jobs will no longer exist in the upcoming future, while others will be seriously reconfigured, without neglecting the emergence of new occupations, professions and even entire work domains (Hirschi, 2018: 193).

Another trend analyzed by the scholar literature is the polarization of jobs, seen as a phenomenon characterized by a greater gap between lower-skilled jobs, in the service domain

especially, as cleaning or care, for instance and higher-skilled jobs - teachers, managers, for example. Middle skilled professions, specific for domains as administration, financial services, customer care, that imply repetitive tasks, easily predictable, can be quickly undertaken by virtual machines or other intelligent apparatus, as clear procedures can be built for automatization and functional systems that integrate several operations are easy to put into functioning, due to the actual technology.

No matter the activity sector, current technological developments are implemented, to a greater or lesser extent, in order to facilitate workers` adaptation, training, remote communication, increasing productivity or avoiding accidents. Research analyzes assistive working systems that can be used in industry (Bertram et. al., 2018: 172-174), showing that human intervention and interaction are still needed, as the studied projects and prototypes are only in their first stages of usage. Besides such working stations, that aim to integrate artificial intelligence, facilitating thus human productivity, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are already used in organizational area (Pogan & Popa, 2020: 35). Virtual reality can be understood as “an interactive, participatory environment that could sustain many remote users sharing a virtual place” (Gigante, 1993: 3), relying on “three-dimensional, stereoscopic, head-tracked displays, hand/body tracking, and binaural sound” (Gigante, 1993: 3). The usage of VR is not possible without external equipment meant to create the virtual environment and augmented reality could be understood as a “softer” form of virtual reality. They are both used in organizational or military training, education, medicine, game industry or even therapy. Previous studies showed that the main domains where VR is used or where research was conducted are represented by the automotive industry, aerospace industry, industrial plants, followed by energy and military industry (Zhu, Fan and Zhang, 2019).

3. Methods

Taking into consideration the above mentioned characteristics of the industrial transformations affecting the work domain, the empirical part of the present study aims to focus on the experience and usage of smart devices (tablet, laptop, smart TV), intelligent working systems, VR, AR and AI that employees report. We developed our research in the automotive domain, as this is considered to be among the areas that use smart, new technologies (assistive working stations, VR, AR, AI) to a greater extent than other sectors (Zhu, Fan & Zhang, 2019: 563).

The main research questions targeted through this study focus on:

- a. What are the main smart devices in terms of preferences to be used in daily life in the case of employees?
- b. What is the level of expertise that employees consider having when working with smart devices?
- c. What is the usage level in the case of intelligent training systems at work from employees' perception?
- d. What is the level of expertise in the case of intelligent training systems at work from employees' perception?

Our exploratory study followed an online survey using a Google Forms platform, conducted in the automotive industry domain. Initial data was collected from 120 participants, after correcting and applying filters to data, results from 100 responses were analysed and processed. In terms of sample features, participants' age ranged from 19 to 56 years of age (M=31.96), divided into equal numbers of female and male subjects, 73% indicating an urban residency at the moment of the study.

4. Results

Data showed that the telecommunication devices (e.g. smartphones) occupy the highest percentage of time usage (49% use the phone between 1-3 hours; 34% use the phone

over 3 hours) and respondents self-evaluate their experience level as between advanced users (35%) or experienced (34%) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Levels of experience in terms of communication devices usage

	Basic user	Intermediate user	Advanced user	Experienced user	No answer
%	13	17	35	34	1

Following close, results also underlined that the usage of entertainment devices with focus on the smart tv, reserve another high level of time (27% between 1-3 hours; 25% over 3 hours), 37% of respondents considering they are advanced users and 18% experienced users. A high percentage of the participants do not use the tablet (38%) as a smart device in their daily life, while on the opposite side their experience level self-evaluation for computer (60%) or laptop (61%) utilization, consists of experienced or advanced user profiles. Results also showed some interesting features, 31% of employees not using the computer daily while 29% using it over 3 hours, while 49% using the laptop over 3 hours (see Table 2).

Table 2. Levels of time usage percentage concerning calculations devices

%	Never using	Not using daily	Over 3 hours
Tablet	38	44	1
Computer	26	31	29
Laptop	12	20	49

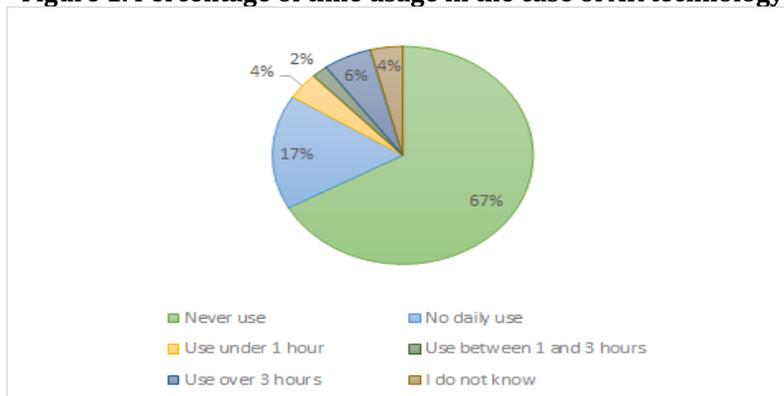
From another perspective, results showed another trend concerning other intelligent devices in terms of low levels of experience and time spent working with them.

Table 3. Levels of experience with intelligent devices

%	Never using	Basic user
Game console	59	11
AR technology	59	14
VR technology	60	15

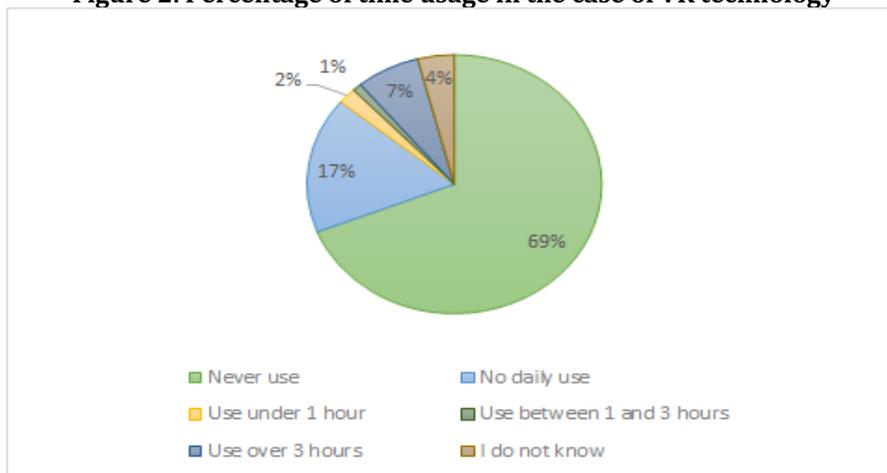
In this direction, 59% of the participants state they have no experience with game interactive consoles, 59% have no experience with augmented reality (AR), while 60% have no experience with virtual reality (VR), in Table 3. In terms of time spent on using the intelligent devices with focus on AR technologies, results show very low levels of utilization or none (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percentage of time usage in the case of AR technology



When analyzing the amount of time spent on using the intelligent devices with focus on VR technologies, results show very low levels of utilization or none (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentage of time usage in the case of VR technology



In terms of experience with intelligent training stations at work, 55% declare they never used this type of system, 60% never experienced working with an automated simulator or with a virtual simulator (68%), in Table 4.

Table 4. Levels of experience with intelligent training stations

%	Never using	Basic user
Training station	55	23
Automated simulator	60	21
Virtual simulator	68	13

The same low levels of experience are also reported in the case of augmented (69%) or virtual (73%) reality devices. A high percentage of participants (78%) declare they never used or have no experience with AI assisted training systems (see Table 5).

Table 5. Levels of experience with smart reality training stations

%	Never using	Basic user
Augmented reality	69	12
Virtual reality	73	12
Artificial Intelligence	78	9

5. Discussion

As seen in previous research articles and academic papers, the use of smart devices in everyday life has become an ascending trend, importing a wide variety of challenges to the daily user, work environment, company development, performance and adaptation to a new technology market. As a special sector in this domain, the intelligent systems start to cover a wider application platform.

Systems such as the AR, VR or AI platforms require a higher level of training, concept understanding and experience at work, in order for the employee to fully use their optimal applications and outcomes. On one hand, results showed that employees are now quite familiar with smartphones or smart television, and they reserve an important time from their daily activities using them, while being at advanced or experienced level. On the other hand, the same employees report low levels of familiarity when dealing with AR, VR or AI systems at work, with

little or no experience to report. The same goes for their practice with intelligent training stations, automated or virtual simulators, where the levels are low or non-existent in the organizational environment or training practices. From this perspective, the research and company level management should consider for the future the implementation and development of intelligent device management systems, while supporting human centrality at work.

Structural modeling would be a must, just as in the case of mobile device management systems, where also other variables are monitored among which: system features and technical background analysis, threat agents and definitions, values and assets, vulnerabilities and actions (Rhee, Won & Jang, 2013). Moreover, productivity evaluation is required to be analyzed in detail when dealing with intelligent devices at work, following in comparison the case of mobile communication usage inside the organisation, with potential implications for work-life balance, increasing or decreasing performance and ethical guidelines for employee monitoring (Muhammad et al., 2013). Also, other literature works suggest the need for information systems evaluation not only in terms of usage but also on the work-performance impact and perception of employees (Sundarraaj & Vuong, 2004). In addition, the level of experience and time usage must be associated in future studies with the work-life balance concept and interactions. Adisa, Gbadamosi and Osabutey (2017) described also that concepts such as “boundaryless” or “borderless” work domains solicit a new re-examination with focus on the work-life theory in the future.

The intelligent platforms for training require a detailed attention from the research sector in terms of perceived usefulness from employees, reserved attitudes and fears of the unknown new technologies, lack of experience or direct contact with such devices, human centrality and ethical principles. Kim and Gatling (2017), outlined that a platform should provide useful functions to the user, in order to ensure engagement, alongside information recognition and posting, data sharing and distribution, alerts and notifications, recognizing achievements, all concurring to the job performance target. Moreover, smart devices and applications development should take into account topics regarding personal freedoms, data protection and privacy (Cambon, 2017), ensuring that the human user remains at the core concept, with respect to ethical, moral and relevant grounds.

6. Conclusions

The industrial sector is among the domains mostly impacted by the usage of new technologies. Work in such areas is transforming rapidly, as efficiency, productivity or cost reduction are targeted by any management. Therefore, new, performant systems, innovative solutions, autonomous devices are quickly implemented, and many times tested in the organizational domain. As shown before, human-centrality remains a core-concept, even though assistive, intelligent systems are steadily introduced, trying to help human operators and facilitate their work, contributing thus to better results for the entire organization.

Besides the practical use of such new technologies, the human factor also has a great contribution to the adherence to these new systems, devices, intelligent platforms or even totally innovative ways of work. Therefore, in the present paper we aimed to analyze the perceptions of employees from the automotive industry (considered to be one of the leading domains regarding the implementation of new, smart technologies) regarding such innovative aspects.

In the present study, data outlined the shift and polarised perceptions among employees between higher levels of usage and experience when it comes to specific communication and entertainment smart devices in contrast with low levels of usage and experience all the way to none when it comes to AR, VR and AI technologies and platforms.

The above mentioned perceptions of employees show the need for further research in this field, doubled by organizational programs and strategies aiming to foster human workers`

adaptability to new technology, as the smart world we already live in makes everything surrounding us intelligent.

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THE PRISON AND FAMILY MEDIATION. MEANS OF REINTEGRATING PERSONS DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY INTO SOCIETY

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Abstract: *This article's aim is to discuss the relationship between the prisoner and the family during the deprivation of liberty of one of the conjugal partners. Thus, the article highlights the maintenance of the prisoner-family relationship during the execution of a custodial sentence of one of the conjugal partners. To maintain the above-mentioned relationship during the execution of the sentence, the prison resorts to a series of strategies to prevent the notion of family from disappearing and the family from dissolving. It often happens that this objective of the prison is not achieved, and the family breaks up because a spouse is deprived of liberty. In addition to maintaining the prisoner-family relationship, the penitentiary must prepare each person deprived of liberty for reintegration into society, which is why this aspect is critical within the total institution, the penitentiary. Therefore, this article is a reflection on the maintenance of the prisoner-family relationship and the reintegration of prisoners into society after serving a custodial sentence.*

Keywords: prisoner, family, prison strategies, prisoner - family relationship, reintegration.

1. Reintegration of prisoners into society

According to the National Strategy for the Social Reintegration of Detainees 2015 - 2019, the social reintegration of detainees is "a process that begins in the penal execution phase" (National Strategy for the Social Reintegration of Detainees, 2015 - 2019: 12), which is why the need for the reintegration process to exist as part of the period of detention is extremely important for detainees. "An essential role of the prison service is to prepare persons deprived of their liberty for the post-detention period (ibid.)". To achieve the proposed objective, it was necessary to link the needs that prisoners have with the educational, psychological and social assistance programs and the approach to reintegrating prisoners into society.

Research on the impact of prison punishment on recidivism suggests the need to study possible individual-level mechanisms that influence prisoners' perceptions of life after release from prison. In particular, a better understanding of the role of prison experiences in offending patterns necessarily requires attention to individuals' perceptions and lived experiences. Recidivism is a "return to delinquent behavior for which the person was convicted and which is presumed to have been corrected" (Maltz, 2001 apud Țica, 2014).

In a recent review of the evidence on the impact of imprisonment on recidivism and resilience, Nagin, Cullen and Jonson conclude that incarceration has no or a mildly criminogenic effect on future criminal behavior. However, they acknowledge serious gaps in the accumulated evidence and have called for a program of research in specific areas to illuminate our understanding of how experiences in prison affect future behavior. Most importantly, and unlike much existing research on the impact of prison, research on the 'black box' of prison, including prisoners' perceptions of their risk of reoffending and how they perceive their life chances on re-entry, is sorely needed (Nagin, Cullen and Jonson, 2009 apud Visher and O'Connell, 2012).

It is also necessary to identify the specific mechanisms that influence the impact of imprisonment. A study by two researchers adopts a new concept - the 'black box' - to understand the impact of prison sentences on recidivism, with few studies actually focusing on

the underlying individual-level mechanisms. These mechanisms can be quite diverse, including personal characteristics, the environment, connections to the outside world, and day-to-day activities such as engaging in rehabilitation programming. For example, a central point is that people without family support have more difficulty adjusting to prison life. Other recent research on the role of family support explores the impact of family relationships on individuals' perceptions of self as they prepare to leave prison and return to the community because family plays a crucial role in reintegrating prisoners into society (Visher and O'Connell, 2012).

Looking at the policy of several European countries developed in a project on the National Strategy for the Social Reintegration of Detainees for 2020 - 2024, many European countries are developing very well thought out policies on this issue because the aim is to minimize recidivism and make it easier for former prisoners reintegrate into society. Prisoners have thus to work in prison or attend vocational training courses. In Poland, for example, most prisoners receive 10% of the money they earn and 35% of the money goes to a special fund to create more jobs for prisoners.

In Denmark, prisoners must be active daily, either through work or by participating in vocational or educational activities (e.g. music, painting). Prisoners with health problems are exempt from this rule. If they refuse to work, the amount allocated for food is reduced, but not below a set minimum amount. Prisoners are also involved in communal activities (meal preparation, cleaning) or vocational training and apprenticeships. Some of them can even obtain diplomas and prison staff are actively involved in these activities, being a role model for all prisoners.

In France, the effectiveness of social reintegration programs for prisoners has been achieved through the numerous activities for the professional reintegration of prisoners carried out by the ACTA VISTA organization. Prisoners have access to this program from the time of their detention. ACTA VISTA is an NGO, which runs a worksite where prisoners are involved in the restoration of Marseille's cultural heritage. Prisoners are recruited during their last year of detention. Simultaneously, Belgium is also a country that has focused its attention on training and retraining of prisoners and former prisoners to avoid the problem of their social exclusion.

As far as the measures adopted in Germany are concerned, the primary aim is to ensure that prisoners can lead a socially responsible life without committing offences once they are released, and for this to happen, the Germans consider that detention must be similar to life in freedom. Prisoners are given the opportunity to work and those deemed unfit for work can engage in therapeutic activities so that every prisoner can have a job after detention. Prisoners are also given the opportunity to attend school.

Spain is also one of the European countries that have focused on the issue of reintegrating prisoners into society. Although there are many non-governmental associations working toward this goal, there are many areas of interest, but the focus is on vocational integration. The Spanish state is making a considerable financial contribution. Simultaneously, the Spanish state provides prisoners without family support with social housing to go to at the end of their period of detention.

Last but not least, other countries include Poland, which wants prisoners to be able to reintegrate into society and make a decent living through work. Prisoners can gain vocational qualifications in Polish prisons and receive 14 days paid leave/year and some prisoners' rights are supplemented during this period.

So France and Spain are among the European countries where the focus is on the issue of reintegrating prisoners into society and actively participate in achieving this goal. At European level, these countries are among those where the workforce in the social economy accounts for 9%-10% of the total working population, but in countries such as Slovenia, Romania, Malta, Lithuania, Croatia, Cyprus and Slovakia, the social economy is a small sector,

with less than 2% of the working population (National Strategy for the Social Reintegration of Detainees, 2020 - 2024).

According to sociologist Robert Cosmin Popescu, among the most advantageous solutions for the reintegration of prisoners into society is reprofessionalisation (Toma, 2016: 5 apud Popescu, 2020: 10), but it also contributes to the financial sustainability of prisons (Bruno, 2006: 194 apud Popescu, 2020: 10). Thus, training programs for qualification are implemented, which are unfortunately underfunded and funds are not accessed rigorously. Looking from a non-European perspective, prisoners in Texas preparing for release have also had significant employment deficits because the focus in this country is not on reintegrating prisoners into society (La Vigne and Kachnowski, 2005: 1).

Although there are many programs for the reintegration of prisoners based on vocational qualifications, most of the time, once out of prison, the prisoner is forced to find a job by himself. There are several NGOs that can offer assistance to people just released from prison walls because ex-prisoners are a disadvantaged group, but their funding is insufficient and the state is not involved. There is the happy situation where the ex-prisoner is supported by their family and their integration into the community is easier, or at least the cracks created are smaller and stigmatization is reduced. The lack of financial resources, but especially of family support, increases recidivism (Popescu, 2020: 14).

A study conducted by researchers Sandu Mihaela Luminița, Călin Mariana Floricica, and Constantin Marius (2021: 369) supports the fact that inmates believe that social support can help an ex-convict successfully reintegrate into society, with 86.4% of the respondents included in the study supporting its importance to a great and very great extent. The remaining 14.6% opted for moderate importance of social support in the successful social reintegration of an ex-prisoner. People consider that the support provided by the state should cover the following aspects: offering individual and group psychological counseling programs, providing retraining courses, providing a job, organizing cultural and sports activities, carried out in special reintegration centres created to support these people.

As most prisoners will be released back to their community, their community and family ties must be maintained and encouraged while in prison. The family and community each are critical for welcoming the inmate back into the community, normalizing them after their prison institutionalization experience, providing shelter and food, and offering support while the ex-offender attempts to obtain gainful employment. Incarceration, however, often serves to break or damage these important relationships. Although prisons in most of the countries surveyed provided for regular visits to prisoners, the duration of these visits were often too short and visits were allowed arbitrarily. In many places, it was clear that prisoners could not receive visits unless bribes were paid to correctional officials. Many prisoners do not receive visits because relatives live some distance from prisons and travel is expensive and time-consuming. To make it easier for distant relatives visit, Namibian authorities have relaxed regulations to allow for longer visits, which can occur less frequently. Despite this, prisoners have complained that this relaxation has not always been applied correctly. In one prison, staff shortages were cited as a reason why visits were sometimes restricted (Dissel, n.a: 169).

A study in Mauritius argues that prisoners should have access to religious practitioners of their choice, that they should be able to participate in that person's services, and that they should be able to meet the needs of religious life. Religious workers also are critical to the spiritual and moral development of prisoners, as well as providing ongoing guidance and support. In some countries, religious organizations provide support and materials for education, training and employment opportunities. They can also provide an important link between family and prisoner. The role of meditation and yoga as spiritual practices are beneficial in countries such as Mauritius. Religious ministries and bodies are as prolific in Africa as they are in other parts of the world. They are often more visible in prisons and have greater access than non-faith-based service providers. While they provide much-needed contact with the outside world, as well as several services, supplies and support, they come with a particular

religious agenda. Their acceptance by prison authorities indicates greater reliance on rehabilitation as measured by religious conversion rather than addressing many of the other risk factors associated with offending (*ibid.*).

Some countries recognize the importance of civil society involvement in prison. In South Africa corrections is seen as a societal responsibility, where the involvement of other government departments, social institutions, civil society organizations and private individuals is considered essential. Even here, however, NGOs still complain about the difficulty of gaining access to prisons. Some organizations form a partnership with a particular prison, while others have more extensive provincial or national programs. Many civil society interventions are led by faith-based organizations. Some organizations are involved in human rights work - monitoring, educating and providing direct assistance or legal advice to prisoners. Others are involved in rehabilitation and reintegration work with offenders. However, there are still few organizations in Africa providing services to prisoners. Rehabilitation services offered by NGOs include education and training of prisoners, counseling, social services, religious care and services, awareness programs, handicraft making, life skills, sports, arts and cultural activities, and assistance with the relocation of offenders after release. Services are often targeted to a sector of the prison population - often women or children and young prisoners (*ibid.*).

Increasingly, NGOs are trying to strengthen the impact and effectiveness of their interventions. A recent conference attended by prison administrations and NGOs in Africa, held in Nairobi, Kenya, identified good practices in the reintegration of offenders. These practices included

- Better coordination of activities between civil society service providers to avoid duplication and encourage information sharing;
- provision of industry-standard training and certification that is independent of the prison administration;
- encouraging restorative justice practices, including victim compensation;
- preparing prisoners for release;
- involving local organizations (churches, traditional leaders) in welcoming prisoners on release and thus helping alleviate prison stigma;
- assisting offenders with job opportunities and finding housing;
- civil society organizations working to promote alternatives to prison to reduce levels of overcrowding (Rhodes, 2004 apud Dissel: 172).

Imprisonment is something meant for "the others", those who act against the law, and therefore it frees us from them and at the same time frees us from the responsibility of having to think about the real problems of society - those that lead to individuals being arrested every day (Ferreira, 2020: 245). However, prisons have not proven to be a factor in reducing anti-social activity. In contrast: in some cases they encourage its increase. Prisons are a system of deprivation of liberty that does not rehabilitate prisoners and makes them less and less fit for social life; that is, it is a system that does not achieve its intended goals (Kropotikin, 2012 apud Ferreira, 2020: 246).

In support of the idea that the prison is an institution that only formally fulfills its purpose of reintegrating inmates into society, researcher Helena Ferreira states that although Portuguese legislation provides for creating employment programs for inmates in various fields, the reality is that most of the work available is institutional cleaning. Employment opportunities are insufficient, which means that prisoners spend their days without any purpose and cannot acquire the necessary skills for future integration into the labor market (Dores, 2013 apud Ferreira, 2020: 247). We observe how Portugal is a country that fails to actively and considerably participate in the reintegration of prisoners in society.

The researcher's study focuses on the situation of female criminals, the vast majority of whom, in situations of extreme poverty and discrimination, are subjected to precarious work, in poor conditions, with wages that do not cover their basic needs. To try to escape from these situations, they enter the world of crime, which leads them to prisons. We can see how the

Portuguese state disadvantages female people, as they often resort to actions aimed at criminal life to survive (Ferreira, 2020: 249). To find an alternative for the reintegration of female prisoners into society, given the fact that many women end up in prisons, Portugal has found an alternative of holding female prisoners in ecosate, conventional prisons, a movement developed by feminist movements. Eco-schools are the most favorable social contexts for putting into practice the ecological principles of the ecofeminist movement. They presuppose relations of equality that respect differences, as opposed to gender domination, and the principles of environmental sustainability. These spaces aim to: decentralize power and create a non-hierarchical and democratic system; support a green and solidarity economy and fair trade (Flores și Trevisan, 2015 apud Ferreira, 2020: 252). This alternative is not meant as a definitive answer; it is merely a path toward the goal of replacing the outdated prison and, simultaneously, building a more equitable and sustainable society, especially for women - who, over the years, have been the main target of patriarchy and, in turn, capitalism.

2. Prisoner and family. Prison strategies for mediating the prisoner-family relationship

When we talk about deprivation of liberty, we are talking about the transposition of people from their everyday life into a totally closed environment where links with the outside world are extremely restricted. Inside the prison the individual learns how to reintegrate back into society and adapt to the rules it imposes. Inside the prison there are rules and norms, including mechanisms to encourage, to some extent, contact with the outside world. The family is one of the most important relationships from which an individual deprived of liberty is distanced, and to ensure that family relationships are not completely severed, prisons allow, to a certain extent, family visits. The right to visit a prisoner is present in Article 68 of Law 254/2013 concerning the execution of sentences and measures of deprivation of liberty whereby the penitentiary encourages family ties of the institutionalized person. According to the article, a prisoner has the right to receive visits in specially arranged spaces by the institution under visual supervision.

The right to private access is one of the most important rights a prisoner has. It is set out in Article 69 of that law, and to benefit from this right prisoner must meet several conditions: there is a marriage relationship, proven by a certified copy of the marriage certificate or, where applicable, a partnership relationship similar to the relationship established between spouses; they have not been disciplined for 6 months before the request for intimate visits, or the sanction has been lifted; they actively participate in educational, psychological and social assistance programs or work, etc. All these conditions are restrictive to the individual to receive the right to intimate visitation, how the individual communicates best in a space arranged by the institution with the person with whom he or she has established a family because the convicted married person can only benefit from intimate visitation with his or her spouse, and through this right a function of the family is ensured to a certain extent. Another mechanism by which the total institution tries keeping the relationship between prisoner and family close is the right to marry, also specified in the same law. Paragraph 3 specifies that after the conclusion of the marriage, spouses may be granted intimate visits for 48 h. The State thus encourages family relations despite the deprivation of liberty of a partner. In addition to the conclusion of the marriage, the relationship with the outside world is facilitated for the individual in prison through the right to petition and correspond, the right to telephone calls and online communications. All these rights encourage the institutionalized person's links with the outside world so that the frustrations created by deprivation of liberty are to some extent removed.

When they hear about visitation, inmates can't help enjoy this right they have because it's a way to partially transpose them into the world outside the prison walls. After a long research of the prison environment, Lucian Rotariu (2016a: 38) states that the visit is the space that separates two social worlds separated by the prison. Through this right individual

deprived of liberty have the possibility of exposure to outside information provided by their social proximity, and visitors benefit from maintaining a palpable relationship with the inmates. Among the main roles of visiting listed by Lucian Rotariu (2016a, p. 39–40) are maintaining a direct form of interaction with the family, providing economic support, building loyalty and emphasizing the roles assigned before institutionalization in prison, creating a momentary link with the outside environment through the exchange of information, managing and ensuring a social organization of the family or group of origin. A negative role of visiting can be represented by the creation of weak links between visitors and visited because the person deprived of liberty is in a state of vulnerability.

An important aspect captured through the prism of the visit was the relationship between visitation and recidivism. In their paper "Inmate Social Ties and the Transition to Society: Does Visitation Reduce Recidivism?", William D. Bales și Daniel P. Mears identified numerous relationships between visitation (frequency and social status of the visitor) and the degree of recidivism associated with an inmate. Hirschi's theory of social ties identifies that visitation compels the individual to commit certain illicit actions through relatives, friends and the community. Thus, it is concluded: the more intense the interaction between visitors and visited individuals, the greater the likelihood of engaging in prosocial actions and facing the challenges of readjustment and reentry into society (Bales and Mears, 2008, p: 291 apud Rotariu, 2016: 57). What the system wants is that through the interaction between prisoners and visitors the degree of recidivism is reduced because the support group - the family - establishes and orient part of the behavioral make-up of an inmate after the transition period from the prison to the everyday world, so that the individual can resume the former social role he or she had before institutionalization, individuals being surrounded by stimuli unfavorable to prosocial behavior.

However, we can take an opposite view of visitation and understand it as a factor that favors a relapse, which is supported by the process of differential association advocated by Sutherland. If prisoners are visited by people who engage in illicit and lawless behavior, they are more likely to be lawless after release, with recidivism increasing in this sense through desirous behavior (Bales and Mears, 2008: 293). The frequency of visits is also considered an important predictor in explaining the post-incarceration illicit behavior of individuals because the number of visits received by an inmate in prison can downwardly influence recidivism or at least postpone the moment of committing a new crime (Rotariu, 2016b: 59). William Bales and Daniel Mears (2008: 305) through research conducted, conclude that an inmate visited 10 times (the average number of visits received by an inmate) will have a probability of recidivism of 32.3%, a lower rate than prisoners who have not been visited, frequency also being an important factor explaining the relationship between visitation and recidivism, but this number is true for male respondents, among female respondents recidivism decreased with frequency of visits.

Another important aspect captured by L. Rotariu (2016b: 53) is the complexity of conjugal visits, which is a way to encourage the bond between prisoner and family and is a mechanism to prevent marital dysfunction within the prison. Conjugal visitation is also a possibility through which the previously formed roles of the individuals are emphasized, and the closer the bond between the partners was appreciated, the more the visit is valued. Some prisoners consider it excellent, but others as unhelpful because of the shame created by the looks of other prisoners. The sociologist finds that, simultaneously, the conjugal visit contributes to the continuity of the relationship between the two people, where continuity expresses either the stability of the couple or the ability to provide motivation.

Regarding the family, it represents for a prisoner "everything", being the main form to which the prisoner relates and creates a connection with the outside (ibid, 2016: 59). The discussions captured during the visit also capture aspects related to the behavioral components that partners suggest prisoners, giving them advice on conduct. The family makes the greatest sacrifices for a prisoner, and the family is almost the only economic, but also emotional or moral

support (ibid, 2016b: 60). The sociologist concludes that without the family connection, the possibility of reintegration of the institutionalized would be very low in the absence of other alternatives.

3. From prison to family dissolution

The problem of family dissolution due to the deprivation of liberty of a partner has been studied by many scholars. Nothing is more important than freedom, which is also the only thing given to us without being subjected to certain financial expenses, freedom being considered free. Because of certain actions that violate social norms, some social actors end up curtailing this right for some time, many of them curtailing their freedom for good and ending up behind prison walls.

With imprisonment comes the severance of social relations that individuals had formed before the moment of deprivation of liberty. The main bond that contributes to the stability of prosocial relationships between the individuals - the family - is in a state of decay, and in many cases of deprivation of liberty of a partner, it may even disappear.

To underline the importance of the family in a society, researchers Alexander (2010) and Clearer (2007) concluded that an incarcerated body inevitably contributes in the long run not only to the deterioration of the family, but also of the whole community (Alexander, 2010 and Clearer, 2007: 460 apud Tasca M., Mulvey P. and Rodriguez N., 2016: 460). We see, therefore, how important the family is, its role contributing to the well-being and functioning of society. At the same time, prison reduces the likelihood of marriage, despite the right of prisoners to marry in prison, and leads to the degradation of the relationship between partners which is followed by an effect that predisposes to the instability of the whole family (Geller, 2011, Lopoo and Western, 2005: 460 apud ibid.). Incarceration greatly reduces the likelihood that men and women will marry. Analysis of data from a study by 3 scholars in the United States shows that men with a history of incarceration are much less likely to marry compared to men with no history of incarceration (Western, Lopoo and McLanahan, 2004: 13 apud Herman-Stahl și Kan and McKay, 2008: 13). Incarceration in men is also strongly correlated with a lower likelihood of marriage and dissolution of existing marriages, says Robert Apel (Apel, 2016: 104).

However, the deprivation of an individual's liberty creates other consequences for the almost broken family. Incarceration can lead to economic exacerbation for economically disadvantaged families, and the only contributors to the education and upbringing of minor family members, of children, remain the non-incarcerated, upon whom a very high degree of deprivation is exerted (Hanlon, 2007: 460 apud Tasca M., Mulvey P. and Rodriguez N., 2016: 460), and in addition to this, partners of prisoners serve as the primary source of monetary support for the incarcerated (Braman, 2004: 460 apud ibid.). In addition, parental incarceration has led to poor outcomes for children, including mental health difficulties, problems in school, and delinquency - which can perpetuate an intergenerational cycle of family imprisonment (Cho, 2009, Murray, 2012 and Tasca, 2014: 460 apud ibid.).

On the other hand, an eminent way to keep the family as close as possible at the time of deprivation of liberty of one of the partners is visiting. This becomes the only mode of interaction for the family. Visitation allows families to communicate face to face about various issues, society and family welfare (Arditti, 2005 and Christian and Kennedy, 2011, p. 460 apud ibid.). Also, meetings held in prison allow for a maintenance or repair of relationships interrupted by incarceration (Comfort, 2008 and Einat, 2013, p. 460 apud Tasca M. et al., 2016: 461). There are many families who reunite during visitation, these families highlight their commitment to maintaining or rebuilding family ties during detention (Christian, 2005 and Maruna and Toch, 2005, p. 462 apud Tasca M. et al., 2016: 462). In addition to this, caregivers want to keep the family together and live with the hope that the incarcerated person will correct their behaviour while deprived of liberty (Cecil, 2008: 462 apud ibid.). Through visitation rights, prisoners, their caregivers and children can work towards these goals and establish a

sense of normalcy in family relationships despite incarceration and other stressors (e.g. addiction, unemployment) (Arditti, 2005 and Snyder, 2009, p. 462 apud Tasca M. et al., 2016: 463). What I can also add regarding prisoner visitation as a possible way of maintaining family relationships between prisoners and their families is that many prisoners are not incarcerated all the time in an institution that is in close proximity to their family, and visitation from the family becomes very difficult, thus leading to marital instability between prisoners and their partners (Wildelman, Turney and Yi, 2016: 81-82).

In addition to this, there is also the situation where a prisoner is in a closed regime of incarceration and the visit is mediated by a glass that separates the two worlds: the free society and the closed community within the walls. In many cases prisoners become frustrated by this separation and their children embrace the glass that separates the two worlds. We see how the prison does not favour the relationship between parents and children in some situations, which does not contribute to maintaining stable marital and family relationships. In a study looking at the relationship between prisoners and their families, researcher Johnna Christian finds that before being incarcerated, most prisoners had minor children and lived with them in their homes. When the male parent is incarcerated, in 90% of the cases researched by the author, the children's caregiver is the mother, with minor exceptions, and when the mother is incarcerated or both parents, the caregivers remain the children's grandparents. Children without family members to care for them are placed in foster care, children's homes and orphanages, their whole lives disrupted (Christian, 2005: 32).

However, more than half of the male prisoners never had personal visits with their children, but the contact between them took place by phone or e-mail. These figures indicate that the majority of male prisoners are not connected to their children at the highest level. Such contact could be a good starting point for developing closer bonds and attachments that facilitate the prisoner's integration into the family unit while incarcerated, which provides the basis for a strong support system for successful reintegration into the family and community upon release (Casey-Acevedo, Bakken, 2002 and Petersilia, 2003: 32 apud Christian, 2005: 32).

On the other hand, Carlson and Cervera (1992) found that wives of incarcerated men experience a great deal of the incarceration experience, including feelings of guilt and stress due to the pressure to fulfill the multiple roles of the incarcerated man (Carlson și Cervera, 1992: 33 apud Christian, 2005: 33). The literature suggests that the prison experience becomes an integral part of life for both spouses and that incarceration affects the family on many levels. At the same time, it has been concluded that incarceration is also negative in that it leads to consequences that reach beyond the prisoner, with the prisoner's family suffering greatly because the stigma attached to incarceration is so great that many families have isolated themselves from the people in their lives who could have helped them by providing the necessary support (Carlson și Cervera, 1992: 33 apud *ibid.*).

So these are many consequences of the effect of incarceration on the relationship between prisoner and family. We see how many of these relationships change, even to the point of family breakdown. These consequences lead to a malfunctioning of society, created by a poorly functioning prison system.

Conclusions

As we have seen, deprivation of liberty is a social phenomenon that entails the emergence of other social phenomena that generate effects on the notion of family. The family is the main link of the whole society, which is why the maintenance of the relationship between prisoner and family has become for the total institution, the penitentiary, an objective of rigorous importance. With the help of the family, inmates can feel the effects of detention more easily and adjust to the status of "prisoner" more quickly. The family is the prisoner's main carer and the only connection to the world outside the prison walls, which is why it is very important that the prison's strategies are really successful in order to avoid family breakdown.

At the same time, the family contributes to the reintegration of the prisoner into society after the period of detention. The prison provides a number of strategies and methods to prepare the prisoner for the world outside the prison walls. It happens that the existing strategies are not always guaranteed to be successful or that they exist in too small a number, which is why the existence of these strategies is of rigorous importance for prison life, they are important reasons why the prisoner can accept his condition of being deprived of liberty and wishes to correct his behaviour, thus being prepared for release.

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CASE MANAGEMENT IN CHILD ABUSE

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Abstract: *In this paper we approached a case study of child abuse and neglect from the case management perspective. The objective was to describe the development of a case of child special protection, starting from the evaluation and the intervention steps, until its completion, following the stages of case management. The responsible institutions and the normative acts that were the basis of the protection measures taken were highlighted and analyzed from a critical perspective. Here we consider relevant the possibility of effectively coordinating the efforts and work of the specialists from the various institutions responsible for the special protection measures for children, respectively what shortcomings they had encountered in order to make social work intervention more efficient in the future.*

Keywords: child abuse, child protection, family placement, residential care, case management.

1. Introduction

Child protection in Romania is ensured by the state through several laws and regulations, the most relevant of which being Law no. 18/1991 for the ratification of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and Child Law (272/2004). In addition to the Child Law, in cases of ill-treatment, Order no. 288 of July 6, 2006, for the approval of the Minimum Mandatory Standards regarding case management in the field of child rights protection that gives the general framework for intervention is of special relevance.

In the case of children maltreated in their own family, specialists are looking, first of all, for a supportive parent with whom to collaborate in the idea of keeping the child in the family and counselling and monitoring its members (through a service plan SP), all actions being taken according to the principle of the best interest of the child. Preserving the family and preventing separation of children from parents or caregivers comes along with the UNCRC recommendation of key steps in intervention, as long as it is feasible in a specific case. This implies that assistance procedures do not involve, encourage deliberate separation from parents unless necessary. When the child is endangered in his own family, emergency placement is ordered according to the principle of the best interest of the child in social assistance (article no. 2(1), Child Law) and an individual protection plan (IPP) is developed.

According to Child Law (L72/2004 updated) emergency child placement is proposed by the case manager and approved by the director of the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection (GDSACP) from the county level if there is no opposition from the parents, and from the Court of Justice if the parents don't agree with the proposed measure. Concerning regular child placement, the decision is taken by the Child Protection Committee or by the Court, the latter being necessary if parents oppose the decision.

In "World Report on Violence and Health", from Geneva, violence is defined as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (WHO, 2002:5). Child maltreatment includes various forms of abuse and neglect. Maltreatment can take the form of physical, emotional or sexual abuse. It can occur separately or in more than one form at once.

If we are referring to physical harm, child physical abuse is defined by the World Health Organization as consisting in “acts of commission by a caregiver that cause actual physical harm or have the potential for harm” (WHO, 2002:60).

Estimates of physical abuse in high-income countries range from 4–16% (Lane, Bair-Merritt, Dubowitz, 2011:264). Worrying data shows that abused children, compared to children with accidental injuries, have elevated risks of morbidity and mortality. Physically abused children are more likely than children with accidental injuries to have severe injuries, to be admitted to intensive care, and to die (DiScala et al, 2000:16).

If we look at the statistical data published by the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption (NAPCRA) for 2021, we notice that a number of 15,925 cases of ill-treatment were reported, of which 51.6% took place in rural areas. The cases of sexual abuse recorded an even greater difference between urban and rural areas, with those from rural areas covering 62.78% of the total. It is worrying that most of them took place inside the family (89.4%), which is the environment that must ensure, foremost, the protection of the child. Regarding the nature of ill-treatment by age group, we find that both physical and sexual abuse have the highest frequency in the age group between 14 and 17 years old, respectively 34.46% for physical abuse and 58.93% in the case of sexual abuse. Emotional abuse occurs most frequently in the 10 to 13 years old age group, followed by the 14 to 17 age group (<https://copii.gov.ro/1/date-statistice-copii-si-adoptii/>).

2. Method

The problem addressed in the present paper is that of the ill-treatment applied to children, the direction of action being that of the emergency placement measure followed by family placement. We will illustrate, in what follows, using the case study method, a case of maltreatment committed by parents, for which emergency institutional placement was the first measure taken, followed by family placement.

We aim to explore social reality through an inductive type of approach which, by studying the details of the case, will bring more consistency to the knowledge of the manifestation of some social phenomena. If the quantitative approach aims to highlight how much, how often, etc. a social fact is manifested, through our approach, we will try to provide pertinent explanations beyond the descriptive level.

The case study is an excellent qualitative method in which the approach of a social entity is attempted "with the aim of reaching the most complete (holistic) image" of it (Ilut, 1997:105). Robson (2002) considers the case study as a "well-established research strategy, focused on a concrete case (...) taking into account all its contextual peculiarities" (Robson, 2002:180).

We consider case study to be one of the approaches of the qualitative method in research which allows us to highlight the way in which the theoretical-methodological aspects in the field of assisting vulnerable people to interact with the pragmatic aspects, the realities of a specific case. From the typology of case studies, we have chosen to illustrate, in the current approach, the individual case study that will detail the stages of case management in children's rights protection. We consider case management to be the way to approach a social assistance intervention through which the resources and issues of the client system are evaluated in direct relation with its beneficiaries and through which a direct action is elaborated, coordinated, implemented and monitored. Case management is regulated by Order no. 288 of July 6, 2006 for the approval of the Minimum Mandatory Standards regarding case management in the field of child rights protection.

3. Elements of research ethics

For the processing and presentation of the case data, the anonymization procedure of personal information was respected by real names being withheld, the case manager having the consent of the beneficiaries for the collection and use of data within the case management

and the agreement of GDSACP from the county level, for their use for scientific purposes.

4. Case presentation

Ana N., a 14-year-old teenager, is the daughter of Marc N. and Aura N. By Civil Sentence no. xx/2016 of the G. Court the dissolution of the marriage of the minor's parents, the exercise of a joint parental authority over the two children and the establishment of Ana's domicile at the mother's address in E. village, M. County were ordered. For Ana's brother, Patrik, aged 16, the Court established the domicile at the father's address, in C. County, J. village.

Case history. In February 2017, during the mid-semester vacation, Ana informs her father of sexual abuse from her mother's partner, which led her father to file a report at the E. Police Station, in whose administrative area the alleged abuse happened, and brings Ana to J. village to live with him. A criminal case is opened on the name of the alleged aggressor, who is being investigated for the crime of rape. A few days later, the father submits a request to the G. town Court requesting custody of his minor daughter. The girl tells the father that the mother's partner abused her emotionally (insults, swearing) and physically (beating), both before and after the sexual abuse.

A few months after Ana came to live with her father and older brother, she was hospitalized at the C. Child Psychiatry Clinic, following a suicide attempt (she swallowed an entire box of pills), being diagnosed, at that time, with depressive episode, mixed disorders of scholastic abilities, and personal history of sexual abuse. The suspicion of abuse in the case of a child with depression was also consistent with research results, among them a recent investigation that shows that there is important evidence of the association between higher children ill-treatment scores and depression (Humphreys et al, 2020). Given the depressive episode and the suspicion of sexual abuse, the case was referred to GDSACP C. in March 2017.

Evaluation of the beneficiary's situation. The social worker responsible for the case, from GDSACP C. County, started the procedure to assess the minor's situation, requesting a social investigation by the J. Public Social Assistance Service (PSAS) and from E. village Police, from M. County, where the mother's residence is located, information regarding the criminal file in which the mother's concubine is accused of the crime of rape against the minor (Ana). As Child Law stipulates at art. 4(f), a service plan has to be drawn up in order to carry out services and benefits, based on the child's psychosocial assessment and family assessment, in order to prevent abuse, neglect, exploitation, of any form of violence against the child, as well as the separation of the child from their family. If this is not recommended for the child safety, an individualized protection plan (IPP) has to be elaborated in order to plan services, benefits and special protection measures, based on their psychosocial evaluation and their family, regarding the integration of the child who was separated from their family into a stable family environment permanently, in the shortest possible time (L272/2004, art. 4e). At first, the social worker from GDSACP proceeded with a general evaluation of the case and drafted a complex evaluation report that included recommendations. An official paper was sent with the summary of the evaluation results and recommendations to PSAS from J. village.

L272/2004 art. 58

1) The general directorate of social assistance and child protection has the obligation to draw up the individualized protection plan, within 30 days after receiving the request for the establishment of a special protection measure or immediately after the director of the general directorate of social assistance and protection ordered the placement of the child in an emergency regime.

After the teenager was discharged from the Psychiatric Clinic, a first visit of the GDSACP Cluj social worker was arranged at the family's home in J. and a preliminary discussion took place with Ana, in the presence of the social worker from the PSAS in J., at the end of March. Given the fact that the family no longer lives at the home address, but at a sheepfold where the father works, this discussion took place at the social worker's office from the City Hall. An

attempt was made to contact the father, who was not at home. Given that Ana had answered the phone, she was invited to a meeting with GDSACP representatives at J. City Hall in the presence of the local social worker. Ana reported that their home was broken into by neighbors, devastated and various things were stolen. The teenager had a neat physical appearance, but her jacket and boots were dirty with mud. Dad couldn't make it to the meeting at City Hall because he had to stay with the sheep.

From what Ana reported, it was noted that the father is the one who carried out the formalities for her to be transferred from the school in E. village to C. town at Samus High School where her brother is also a student. Ana asked to stay at boarding school during the week and come home only on weekends. Also, she told the fact that at the previous school, her colleagues laughed at her and called her "stupid". During the time she lived with her mother, she repeated the fifth grade, and at the moment she seemed very eager to start attending school to avoid failing school again.

Regarding the relationship between her and her father, Ana stated that she gets along well with him and that, although he sometimes consumes alcohol, he does not become violent with her and her brother, and even behaves nicely with them.

As for the relationship with the mother, it appears that she had not tried to act for her daughter regarding the alleged rape committed by her concubine.

Given that Ana was not feeling very well when the case manager from GDSACP C. met her at J. PSAS it was not possible for them to have a more in-depth discussion. Their meeting took place a few days after her discharge from the hospital due to her suicide attempt. The case manager from GDSACP C. could not make a visit to the family's makeshift home at the sheepfold because Ana's father was not at home. However, the social worker from the J. Public Social Assistance Service (PSAS) confirmed the unsanitary conditions in which the family lived, the insufficient space as well as the lack of utilities (gas, running water and sewage). Ana was restrained in her statements and did not provide much information to the social worker regarding the relationship she has with her father and the responsibilities she has in the family.

At that time, the only data about the case were obtained from the information received from the Child Psychiatry Clinic, from Ana, from the E. Police Station, M. County, and from the reports of the social worker from J. The social survey from J. Public Social Assistance Service from City Hall had not yet been received, it was requested in mid-March and received at the end of the same month.

While the evaluation of this case was ongoing, six days after the meeting between the case manager and the minor, GDSACP C. was informed that Ana was admitted to the Emergency Medical Unit (EMU) in a nearby town. She presented multiple cuts, hematomas, edema, as well as a wound at the level of the left arch, multiple bruises on the trunk and limbs, the wounds being caused by a beating from the father. From the EMU, Ana was transferred again to the Child Psychiatry Clinic. She was diagnosed with acute reaction to stress, mild depressive episode, and polytraumatic due to physical aggression.

The assessment of the situation continues, this time with meetings between the case manager, Ana, the medical staff and the Clinic's social worker.

The case manager of the GDSACP, corroborating the information obtained, concluded that two days before hospitalization, Ana left the house late in the evening under the pretext of going to the toilet in the yard and did not return for approximately 2 hours. Her father, being worried, started looking for his daughter, and at one point he saw her coming into the yard and they both entered the house. Ana failed to explain to him where she was all this time. At one point, she began to speak incoherently, according to the father's statements, and he says that he lost his patience and began to hit his daughter with a stick which he used on sheep (the father is a shepherd), with fists and feet, and then threw a jar of pickles in her face, which caused her multiple cuts. Following this incident, the teenager ran away from the house, met a neighbor who called the Emergency Medical Unit (EMU) and, in this way, Ana arrived at the EMU in a nearby town that night. Here the doctor sutured the frontal wound, and she was later

transported to the aggressor's home address (the father's home) without reporting the abuse. L272/2004 art. 89(3) stipulates that "employees of public or private institutions who, by the nature of their profession, come into contact with the child and have suspicions about a possible case of abuse, neglect or ill-treatment have the obligation to notify the general direction of social assistance and child protection urgently".

The next day, Ana entered a state of psychomotor agitation with crying, tremors, the feeling that she was being followed by someone, which is why the father's employer requested the intervention of the ambulance service. Afterwards Ana was transferred to the C. Child Psychiatry Clinic which notified the GDSACP again.

Following this new situation, it was obvious that the minor could no longer be left in the father's care and another solution had to be identified for her. Thus, several steps were started in parallel:

1. Evaluation of the mother's situation to appreciate the possibility of establishing the minor's domicile with the mother; in this regard, a social investigation was requested at the mother's home in M. County, and several telephone discussions and meetings with the mother took place.

2. Requesting information from the E. village Police Station regarding the steps taken in the criminal case of committing the crime of rape against Ana, the accused person being the mother's concubine.

3. Evaluation of the father's situation by requesting information from the J. village Police Station about the complaints/reports registered at this Police Station regarding the father's person, and through the social investigation that had already been requested from the City Hall and, respectively, the discussions with him.

After Ana's admission to the Child Psychiatry Clinic, she was accompanied by the case manager to the Institute of Forensic Medicine for a medical evaluation and the issuance of a Medico-Legal Certificate. At the same time, the psychological evaluation of the minor and the counseling sessions for processing the traumas she went through began. The social worker consistently maintained contact with Ana, with the specialists from the Psychiatry Clinic and with the minor's parents.

During the hospitalization, Ana presents ideas of uselessness and devaluation, a pessimistic view of the future and suicidal ideation, feelings of discouragement and shame. She states that she has seen "a black figure" several times only in the evening, both in the room and outside, which she says, "I know is not true", but which causes her fear. She painfully remembers events from her childhood, relives these events with dissatisfaction and anger.

From further information obtained, the history of the teenager was better outlined: Ana grew up in a conflictual family environment, marked by alcohol consumption and the aggressive behavior of the father, as well as the extramarital relations of the mother. In 2014, the girl's father went to work in Italy, from where he periodically sent money to the family. Throughout this period, Ana had a rough time, her mother had relationships with several men, relationships to which Ana was a witness. When her father returned to the country, the divorce of the two parents occurred. Ana agreed to go with her mother to M. County, where she settled, and Patrik stayed with his father. In this way none of the parents had to pay alimony to the other.

The problem-solving process. Intervention. Considering the fact that the girl could not be discharged to the father's residence -due to the physical and emotional abuse committed by him-, but also not to the mother's residence because she lived with her concubine who allegedly sexually assaulted Ana and because social services did not identify, in such a short time, any relatives willing to take on the girl's upbringing and care, the only solution was an emergency placement in an residential center in C.

Given the girl's age (14 years old), it was explained to her why she cannot be left in the care of her parents for the time being and what the measure of protection through residential placement means, obtaining her consent for the proposed measure.

She was told about the residential center where she was going to go and was given some details about the other children in this center and the daily schedule and activities from there. Thus, an attempt was made to prepare the minor for the change that was to occur in her life.

The emergency placement decision was carried out on the basis of the Emergency Placement Provision of the general manager (director) of GDSACP C. no. xx/14.04.2017. According to art. 69(1) of Law 272/2004, the placement decision when there is no opposition from the parent or legal guardian, can be taken by the GDSACP general manager.

L272/2004 art. 69

(1) The emergency placement measure is established by the director of the general directorate of social assistance and child protection in the administrative-territorial unit where the child is located (...) if there is no opposition from the representatives of legal entities, as well as persons who have in care or ensures the protection of the respective child.

From the hospital, Ana went to the Emergency Placement Center. The discharge from the Clinic took place in the presence of the case manager within the GDSACP who presented the emergency placement decision papers to the attending physician. In this situation, the presence/agreement of the parents was not required for the discharge because during the emergency placement, the parental rights and obligations are suspended, and these rest with the Head of the Center where the placement of the child is established.

Ana spent the following months in the Center, together with the other 6 children from here. The accommodation took place relatively quickly, with the mention that she would have liked not to stay alone in the room, because, she declared, she was bored. Also, she would have liked to be visited more often by her mother, her brother and the M. family from J. village, a family with which she had developed attachment relationships. During the time she lived here, contact was made with the school where Ana was enrolled so that she could continue to attend. An educator was assigned to accompany her to school daily, the psychological counseling sessions continued, and the girl tried to comply with the Center's daily schedule.

Ana's favorite leisure activity was walking or playing games with the other children in the parks that were close to the Center. She enjoyed a trip that was organized on the Black Sea coast in the summer of 2017, a trip in which the other children from the Center also participated. Since Ana stayed in this unit for a long time (3 months) and was involved in various enjoyable activities, at one point she mentioned the fact that she no longer wants to leave. It was explained to her that the Center is one for emergency situations, and that children can live here only until a long-term solution is found for them. At the Center, Ana was visited by her brother and the M. family.

L272/2004 art. 68

(5) During the entire duration of the emergency placement, the exercise of parental rights is legally suspended, until the court decides on the maintenance or replacement of this measure and on the exercise of parental rights. During the period of suspension, the parental rights and obligations regarding the child are exercised and fulfilled, respectively, by the person, the family, the maternal assistant or the head of the residential service who received the child in emergency foster care, and those regarding the child's assets are exercised and, respectively, fulfilled by the director of the general directorate of social assistance and child protection.

The girl's psychological counseling process began at the Child Hospital and continued during the period in which she was in the center. The psychologist who worked with Ana found that she shows self-rejection beliefs stating that her parents "don't want me in their family" and "don't care" about her. Ana was told by the case manager from GDSACP that her parents do not have the right to visit her at the center. She continues to show ambivalence, saying that "only my mother didn't let me down" but she refuses to live with her, and her Dad is "bad" but immediately states that she wants to live with him and has unrealistic expectations about the

father's drinking problem and how he would act in the future. Furthermore, it justifies and normalizes the abusive behavior of the father. These manifestations of ambivalent attachment are specific to children who have gone through situations of abuse and neglect.

While her staying at the Center, Ana engaged in self-aggressive/suicidal behaviors: she voluntarily ingested a large amount of shampoo and cut her wrists. The psychologist noted the presence of suicidal ideation and recommended increased monitoring of the girl. The psychological counseling took place with great difficulty, Ana did not cooperate and refused to communicate with the psychologist, according to the data recorded by the specialist. At the end of one of the counseling reports, the psychologist recommended the appointment of another specialist to work with the child, but no other specialist was appointed.

During the period in which emergency placement was being established for the girl, her father expressed his concern that his daughter had started a relationship with R. (a former colleague of the father), with whom she wanted to run away from the Center. Mr. M. confirmed that on Ana's phone there is an exchange of messages with R. in which they planned to leave together. A question arose here: how come M. family had access to Ana's phone and messages? The case manager further explored this information and drew the conclusion that Ana was confident with M. family and confessed to them often about her life. From the official research undertaken, it was found out that R. is employed as a caretaker at a cow farm, has psychiatric problems, but they are kept under control by medication. R. is a young adult who was previously employed by the M. family, whom they say received him out of pity 4 years ago because he was beaten and abused in his own family.

According to the provisions of Child Law, art. 70 par. (1), within 5 days from the establishment of emergency placement, the proposal regarding the placement of the child (to a person or family/professional maternal assistant/residential type service) or its reintegration in family must be submitted to the Court.

Therefore, the two opportunities offered by the law for establishing Ana's future situation were analyzed. For family reintegration Chil Law, art. 58(4) stipulates that "child reintegration into the family, as an objective of the individualized protection plan, is established with the mandatory consultation of the parents and extended family members who could be found". When considering the possible reintegration into the mother's family, it was taken into account that the mother had visited Ana at the hospital several times, and the teenager enjoyed each time and wished that the mother would come to visit her more often. The mother, however, remained constant in her wish for a protective measure to be instituted for her daughter. She also gave a written statement to this effect from the time when Ana was hospitalized at the Child Psychiatry Clinic. She also stated that she does not believe her daughter was sexually assaulted. The mother was informed by the case manager that Ana will be able to return to live with her under one condition: the alleged aggressor of the girl leaves the mother's residence (a reintegration into the family cannot be achieved when the child-victim will live together with the alleged abuser). The mother has firmly stated that she does not want to separate from her cohabitant, even if this means that her daughter will end up in the child protection system and will no longer be able to exercise her parental rights and obligations towards her. In the discussions she had with the case manager, Ana's mother, always maintained the idea that her daughter was not sexually abused. She expressed her belief that if there were sexual relations between Ana and the alleged aggressor, they took place "on the initiative" and "with the consent of the minor". At one point, the mother claimed that Ana would have received money for having sex with her concubine. From the discussions with the girl's mother, the case manager was able to notice the detachment, almost indifference, the lack of empathy that she showed when talking about the alleged sexual abuse to which her daughter had been subjected, a fact recorded by the case manager in the mother's psycho-social evaluation report.

Question risen: At that time, was the mother advised on how to break away from the relationship with the allegedly abusive adult if she so wanted? In 2017 she was living with her

concubine and had no job. Case manager reported several direct counselling meetings and discussions over the phone with her. During these meetings, one of the topics was the financial, material, emotional etc. support that she can receive if she decides to become independent. At the time, the PSAS in E. did not make any attempt of counselling the mother because a possible Service Plan (SP) was excluded due to the Individual Protection Plan (IPP) from the GDSACP that had already been developed because of the ill-treatment suffered from her father and the suspicion of sexual abuse at the mother's home.

From the discussions with the mother, it was found out that the history of sexual assault is older in Ana's case. Her mother stated that two years ago (when Ana was 12 years old) Ana ran away from home with a boy and was allegedly raped by him. There are reasons to believe that the event happened because her father provided the information that while he was working in Italy, Ana became pregnant and asked for money from the M. family to terminate the pregnancy. Question risen: Why is the mother willing to consider her daughter's sexual relationship with a boy as rape and the sexual relationship with her concubine as a consensual relationship? Is this a signal of the fact that she is financially, but not only, dependent on him?

Her mother requested the establishment of a protective measure for Ana and she did not change her decision even though she was told that, in this way, she was willingly renouncing her parental rights towards her daughter.

Regarding the sexual abuse that Ana claims she suffered, a response to GDASCP C. was received from the E. village Police Station according to which the criminal case was still being judged, not having been finalized at that time. We used the term "abuse she claims to have suffered" because there were no data to officially confirm it at that time, and not because the girl's testimony was not believed. Later, when the case was taken over by GDSACP M., and Ana was already living at her aunt's home, the sexual abuse was officially confirmed.

When considering the possibility of reintegration into the father's family, the fact that the girl's father did not express a clear position regarding his daughter was considered: he had periods when he requested that Ana return to his residence, but also times in which he recognized the fact that he cannot manage the tense relationship he has with her. He admitted that he is an impulsive person who cannot control his anger and is aware that episodes like the one in which he physically assaulted Ana could be repeated at any time, possibly much worse than the one that happened the first time. Moreover, from the address received from the Police Station in J. village, it appears that the father is registered here with several reports regarding the violation of public order and violent behavior in the community and in the family, facts for which he was fined. For the aggression against his daughter, Mr. N. was charged with the crime of domestic violence. For her part, Ana's mother described him as being a violent person with an excessive alcohol consumption, also stating that during the period when he was consuming alcohol, the father used to beat his children.

The severity of the last two abuses to which Ana was subjected: in the father's family, physical and emotional abuse and physical neglect, and - in the mother's family - sexual and emotional abuse, to list only the obvious ones, as well as the parents' lack of willingness to try to offer Ana a secure living environment, led the specialists from GDSACP to the conclusion that it is not possible to reintegrate the girl into her biological family.

During the discussions with the case manager, Ana stated at one point that she has three cousins institutionalized at a family-type home/center (FTC) in C. County and she would like to go and stay with them. In this situation, a request was made to the family-type houses within the GDSACP C. for the identification of the girl's cousins. From the response received from the FTC it appears that two of the cousins indicated by Ana "have no knowledge of the minor N. Ana and have no data regarding the degree of kinship with this child", and the third declares that "Ana is a cousin of hers, spending part of her early childhood with her, but for about ten years she had no contact with her. About a week ago, Ana identified her on a social network, thus resuming contact". The official answer received ends with the mention that, at the present moment, all the places in their family-type house are occupied.

In this situation, Ana's placement in the extended or substitute family was taken into account and the girl's relatives were searched for. Initially, the M. family was taken into account, the family that had employed the girl's father at the sheepfold where he worked. Ana stated that she is very attached to this family, she learned many useful things from them, the M. couple are reference persons for her and she would like to stay in their family. The M. family visited Ana several times when she was at the Emergency Placement Center. The social worker got in touch with the M. couple, but they had declared that even though they will continue to support Ana's family materially/financially, they cannot take on the upbringing and care of the girl. Another impediment for Ana's placement in this family is the proximity of the residence of the two families (Ana's father lives in the courtyard of the M. family).

Since no relatives of the N. family were identified within C. County, with whom Ana's placement could be established, the case manager took into account the possibility of a placement in M. County, since the minor's permanent residence is in this county and from the social investigation carried out at the mother's home, it turned out that Ana has an aunt in the town of R., M. County.

The PSAS from R. City Hall was officially requested to contact the minor's aunt and evaluate the possibility of a placement in this family. The response received was a favorable one, the maternal aunt agreeing with the placement of the niece in her family. In this situation, GDSACP M. was contacted and the evaluation of the maternal aunt's family as a foster family was requested. The evaluation procedure lasted approximately one month, during which the following steps were taken by GDSACP M.: social evaluation - visits to the family to evaluate the housing situation, the family environment, the space that will be intended for Ana to live in and so on -, the financial assessment - the request for income documents for the two spouses -, the psychological assessment of the maternal aunt's family - medical documents were solicited. Documents related to the level of education for the two spouses and their criminal records were also asked for. Later, the GDSACP from M. County received the situation report regarding the evaluation of the maternal aunt's family, a report by which the GDSACP states that this family meets the conditions to receive a minor in foster care. The next action carried out by the social worker was the request to change the emergency placement from the C. city Emergency Placement Center to placement in the maternal aunt's family residing in R. township, M. County.

According to art. 65(2a), the placement measure "is established by the court, at the request of the GDSACP" if it is "necessary to replace the emergency placement ordered by the GDSACP". The request was submitted to the C. city Court, which issued a Civil Sentence in this regard. Ana, Ana's parents, maternal aunt's family, GDSACP C. and GDSACP M. were summoned to the Court. All the cited parties were heard by the judge, and they were asked for their opinion regarding the establishment of this protective measure. All those present agreed with the placement measure, except for Ana and her father: father remained undecided, and Ana stated that she got used to the Center where she lives now, she likes it a lot in C. city and no longer wants to leave here. It should be mentioned the fact that during the emergency placement, the girl constantly affirmed that she agrees with the placement in her aunt's family, and there are written statements of hers in the file.

However, Ana changed her mind in the meantime and expressed her new option in front of the judge. Faced with this situation, the judge requested a separate hearing of the minor, in order to find out the reasons why she does not agree with the placement. According to the Child Law, the minor is heard in Court from the age of 10, and if his/her degree of maturity allows, even sooner than this age. Ana is 14 years old, so her consent was necessary.

L272/2004 art 57

(2) Special protection measures for children who have reached the age of 14 are established only with their consent. In the situation where the child refuses to give his consent, the protective measures are established only by the court, which, in well-reasoned situations, can override his refusal to express his consent to the proposed measure.

After the hearing of all parties presented at the trial, a second trial term was not given, the Court ruling within 2 weeks. The Judge concluded for family placement within the maternal aunt family despite the prior refusal of the girl, because art. 57 (Child Law) stipulates that the court can override the refusal to express consent in “well-reasoned situations”. The judge considered that the girl's motivation was not strong enough and, as an alternative, institutional placement was not a priority over family placement.

The Civil Sentence issued by the C. Court established the placement of Ana in the maternal aunt's family, the payment of the placement allowance in the name of the maternal aunt, the delegation of parental rights and obligations to the General Director of GDSACP M., as well as the obligation of the 2 parents to provide a number of 40 hours/monthly for actions/work of local interest throughout the maintenance of the special protection measure in the administrative-territorial area where they have their domicile or residence. The last part of the sentence was possible because art. 67(1) from Child Law provides for the right of the court to request from the parents, in case of placement, a monthly contribution to the maintenance of the child, under the conditions established by the Civil Code, and art. 67(2), stipulates that if the payment of the child maintenance contribution is not possible, “the court obliges the able-bodied parent to provide between 20 and 40 hours a month for each child, actions or works of local interest, during the application of the special protection measure”.

After the issuance of the Civil Sentence, Ana was moved from the Center to the foster family, the minor's file was transferred from GDSACP C. to GDSACP M., as well as the appointment of a case manager for Ana within GDSACP M. The case manager from M. has the task of further monitoring the adaptation and evolution of the child in the foster family. The case manager is also the one who supported the foster family in carrying out the steps to transfer the teenage girl to one of the schools in the municipality of R. town and to a family doctor, the state allowance and the request for the foster allowance.

Institutions involved in the process of instrumenting this case, where the establishment of a special protection measure of placement was required, were:

GDSACP: GDSACP C. - through the social worker in charge of the case - coordinated all the steps taken. The emergency placement center provided accommodation for the minor during the emergency placement period; GDSACP M. for the evaluation of the maternal aunt's family in view of the agreement for her to become a foster person, for taking over the case of the minor N. Ana following the issuance of the Civil Sentence

PSAS: PSAS J. for the evaluation/social investigation carried out at the father's residence, *PSAS E.* for the evaluation/social investigation carried out at the mother's residence, and *PSAS R.* for evaluating the possibility of a placement within the maternal aunt's family. R. City Hall was requested, through an official request, to contact the minor's aunt and evaluate the possibility of a placement in this family.

Police: J. Police Station and *E. Police Station* provided information regarding the reports/criminal files in the name of Ana's father, respectively of the girl's sexual abuser and accompanied the social worker and the minor for the Institute of Forensic Medicine expertise

Medical units: Institute of Forensic Medicine for the medico-legal expertise required in the Court; *Child Psychiatry Clinic C.* for medical examination and treatment of Ana, referral of the case to GDSACP C., provision of information on Ana's state of health, and collaboration in the social assessment of the family; *Emergency Medical Unit (EMU)* from G. town and C. Town who provided emergency medical services; *Family doctors* from J. village and R. town: for transferring Ana from the family doctor in J. village to a family medicine office in R. municipality

School units: for the transfer of the girl from the school she attended in C., to one of the schools in R. municipality

Law Court: G. Court: for the custody of the children during the divorce and the girl's change of residence, and *C. Court:* for the replacement of the emergency placement measure with the extended family placement measure (maternal aunt).

5. Discussions

This paper tries to illustrate, through the case management method, how a situation of ill-treatment of a minor was and can be solved. The steps taken, the institutions empowered to intervene, the resources involved and the final protection solution that was taken, were included here. As the law stipulates, the first step is trying to reintegrate the child into the natural family and unless possible, integration into the extended family will be attempted, the last resort being a permanent measure in the form of adoption. For this reason, Ana was integrated into the extended family (art. 58(3), Child Law). There are, obviously, some questions that can arise in such situations which can constitute topics for consideration. For instance, how can we effectively prevent such cases of maltreatment? What can be done in practice in order to strengthen primary prevention? For what reason was the 5-days deadline provided by law for emergency placement not respected? How can we improve the intervention so that this term is respected? Alternatively, are the deadlines unrealistic, and should they be changed? Would it be necessary to amend the law so that these terms vary? Under what circumstances and how? Emergency placement lasted 3 months. What is the usefulness of specifying the length of an emergency placement if it may not be respected? Are there legal measures taken when a professional does not notify GDSACP of a case of possible ill-treatment?

Lane, Bair-Merritt & Dubowitz (2011) underlined the importance of surgeons in identification and management of child physical abuse due to the fact that child maltreatment may be associated with higher rates of morbidity and mortality (2011, p.264). Why didn't the doctors at the EMU report Ana's case when they treated her? Ana's mother claims that, before the age of 14, her daughter suffered a medical termination of pregnancy. How did the doctors record this aspect? Why was it not reported? Child protection rights may not be well known or respected even by professionals that are directly collaborating with social workers (such as doctors, teachers etc.). How can we reinforce children rights if there are no direct consequences of non-compliance with the law?

6. Final considerations

In 2017, the Ministry of Labor and Social Justice, through the National Authority for the Protection of Child Rights and Adoption, in collaboration with UNICEF Romania and the Camino Association, published a report entitled «Summative Evaluation of the Model "First priority: No 'invisible' child!"» which reviewed the results of a model of good practices in intervention, called *Aurora*. The project proposed drawing a unified approach in the identification and complex evaluation of the cases of vulnerable children in difficulty and their families. *Aurora* had two components. The first involved the recording of data in electronic format directly on the spot with the help of a tablet, starting from a pre-existing interview guide. After recording the data, a diagnosis regarding the vulnerabilities of children and women in the household and a package of basic services were generated. The second component aimed at a local, county and national unified data registration platform starting in 2014. Among the situations of vulnerable children, according to the project, there are adolescents who have risky behaviors regarding sexual activity, pregnant adolescents, children at risk of violence or neglect in the natural family, children who live in unhealthy living conditions (Summative evaluation of "First Priority: No More 'Invisible' Children!" modeling project in Romania, 2017:p.3). "Hidden in plain sight. A statistical analysis on violence against children" (UNICEF, 2014, p.17) highlighted the idea that states should improve specific data collection and the national information system in order to identify vulnerable children and develop a system of tracking progress over time, to which the Romanian project presented above was congruent.

Despite all the legislative efforts and the establishment of good practice models, there are still many "invisible" children. What else needs to be done to detect maltreatment effectively or to have a fluid, coherent case management, with a good coordination of inter-institutional relations? The World Report on Child Violence (Pinheiro, 2006:21) gives us a

partial answer, recommending a friendlier and more accessible system, both for children and for the adults around them to report cases of ill-treatment of children.

Appendix A

The timeline of the intervention

2016 - Parents' divorce, the girl moves to her mother's home

09.02.2017 – Request from the father to the court G. for changing the minor's domicile at the father's address for reasons of abuse and neglect while she was entrusted to the mother. She did not end up being entrusted to her father due to the abuse committed by him before the court ruling

09.03.2017 – The girl was hospitalized to the Pediatric Psychiatry Clinic (PPC) for depressive states.

15.03.2017 - An official letter was sent from the Pediatric Psychiatry Clinic to GDSACP for the case to be recorded. The girl's depression, the suspicion of sexual abuse and attempted suicide, the father's alcoholism are cited here.

21.03.2017 - The GDSACP's case manager goes to the PSAS J. for the child's psychosocial assessment, on the basis of which a complex assessment report was drawn up, with specific recommendations to the PSAS J.

2.04.2017 – Ana is physically abused by her father, arrives at EMU G. from where she is discharged and taken to her father's house.

4.04.2017 - Ana went into a state of psychomotor agitation, Mr. M. called emergency services, and an ambulance took her to EMU C. then to the Pediatric Psychiatry Clinic.

5.04.2017 – An official letter was sent from the Pediatric Psychiatry Clinic to GDSACP. Ana was hospitalized for 10 days after the physical abuse

14.04.2017- Emergency placement occurs because of her father's physical abuse at the request of the GDSACP director

24.04.2017 - An individual protection plan for placement was started

18.07.2017- Placement measure decision with the aunt

Appendix B:

Abbreviations

SP service plan

IPP individual protection plan

GDSACP General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection

NAPCRA National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption

UNCRC The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

PSAS Public Social Assistance Service

FTC Family-type Center

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2. Ordinul nr. 288 din 6 iulie 2006 pentru aprobarea Standardelor minime obligatorii privind managementul de caz în domeniul protecției drepturilor copilului, Monitorul Oficial nr. 637 din 24 iulie 2006

ONLINE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION-PERSPECTIVES FOR ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract: *Non-formal education has a special role, integrated at the level of the educational system, gained normative and theoretical outlines in the second half of the twentieth century. The crisis of classical education in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic has contributed to the creation of means, resources, including the creation of non-formal education institutions, to complement, replace or replace some forms of conventional education. Non-formal education puts the student at the center of the educational process, contributing to the identification and development of his personal talents and abilities and to the completion with new ones in a continuous learning process. The main objective of this study is to determine the results regarding the perception of teachers in pre-university education regarding the ways of conducting non-formal online education. The research occurred in February-May 2021 and was carried out through the socio-pedagogical survey, using as a research tool the questionnaire designed through the google forms platform and distributed to a sample of 251 pre-university teachers in the South Muntenia region by whatsapp and mail. Through the results of this study, we want to obtain information on the knowledge and use of methods and platforms that facilitate online non-formal education, even if non-formal education is largely based on human interactions.*

Keywords: non-formal education, methods, platforms, educational process.

1. Introduction

The 21st century is considered a century of knowledge, especially non-formal knowledge, with an emphasis on self-learning, relevant, and conscious learning. “Non-formal education (non-curricular education, but certified education) is an organized and systematic educational activity, carried out outside the official framework of the school, to facilitate the learning of both children and adults.” (Coombs, 2006: 14)

Compared to formal education, the content and methodology of non-formal education is characterized by more flexibility and openness in the process of design-organization-evaluation of teaching: “a) informal pedagogical design, with programs open to interdisciplinarity and continuing education - in general human, professional, sports, aesthetic, etc. ; b) the organization, optional, non-formalized, with profiling dependent on the options of students and of the school and local communities, with special openings to experiment and innovation; c) the optional, non-formalized evaluation, with psychological accents, priority stimulants, without official grades or qualifications.” (Postan, 2019: 17)

The value of learning experiences for students in non-formal education contexts (from a learning perspective) is more motivational in the first place: “They feel valued, they gain confidence, they learn to communicate better with others, about a certain topic, if they find that there is an interest on the part of the teacher or the class toward their experiences outside school and thus have the opportunity to learn from several perspectives.” (Căpiță, 2011: 7)

Globalization and computerization, the dominant features of the contemporary society in which we live, have constantly generated new educational paradigms and challenges that load the work agenda in the field of education and implicitly require the school and teachers, from all pre-university education cycles, openness and adaptability. The extension of experimentation and the use of technology in conducting non-formal education activities is beneficial and welcome for Romanian education. Education must be rethought in relation to the

evolution of technologies on the one hand, and according to the requirements of society, on the other.

The results of research in the field of online education provide important clues in relation to several dimensions: the importance and state of the technical infrastructure in which the online learning formula is built, the skills of use or exploitation for the benefit of learning, from the perspective of teachers, these equipment, the position and involvement of education factors in the development of this way of activating education (teachers, students, parents, decision makers, etc.), the degree of coverage of the purposes of education through the new technical framework. (Botnaciuc et al., 2020: 47) Also, conducting non-formal education activities in an online environment with students requires more responsibility, initiative and effort than in the case of face-to-face activities.

Against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic, which has led to the closure of several schools around the world for quite some time, teachers have been challenged to adapt quickly and send an important message to students: formal and non-formal education activities in and out of school. or other organizational frameworks, but with online realization tools accessible to all. These have been achieved effectively only with great determination, and significant progress has been made.

2. Problem statement

In the context of the Covid 19 pandemic, school activities have been carried out for the most part and for long periods in the online environment in pre-university education. Thus, the teaching-learning-assessment methods had to be adapted for developing teaching activities carried out in accordance with the curriculum, but also with the specific online learning environment. However, school activities and school life are not limited to the organization and development of curricular teaching activities. Non-formal education and specific activities contribute to the development of students' knowledge, attitudes and skills alongside formal education, playing an important role in the development of their specific skills. It would be interesting to know whether effective means and strategies of work have been found and used for non-formal education activities in the online environment, and pre-university education units could continue to use them.

3. Research questions

Non-formal education can be conceived as a set of actions that are carried out outside the school and through which bridges are made between the knowledge taught by teachers in school and their implementation. Through this type of education, a new approach to learning is achieved through pleasant or motivating activities. The key question is whether non-formal education can be achieved by online educational platforms. Then, we would like to investigate the teachers' perception of this aspect and whether they know and use educational platforms in conducting non-formal education activities; if they have information on the use of IT programs for conducting educational activities; if they consider that the online environment is difficult for non-formal education and consider that it would be an advantage of conducting non-formal education activities for students and teachers online. We also considered it necessary to determine the opinion of teachers about the interest shown by students and the skills they can develop or develop in them non-formal online education activities.

4. Purpose of the study

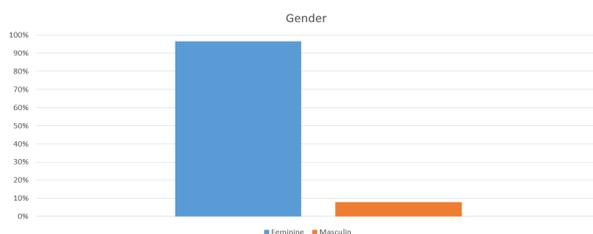
The study determines whether non-formal education has successfully accompanied formal education in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic, both forms of education being necessary to occur in certain periods, during the more than two years of a pandemic, the online environment and whether optimal options have been found. We also investigate if, in general, certain ways of achieving non-formal online education could be preserved. Specific to non-formal education is the fact that students can participate voluntarily and involve more the

practical component of learning. Even if this form of activity occurs in an organized setting, students can participate voluntarily, without waiting for the specific rewards of formal education, grades and grades. Also, absence may not apply to students who do not participate. However, even in non-formal education activities, there are clear learning objectives set for the types of school activities that occur in a non-formal setting, the only difference is that the achievement of these objectives is achieved differently from teaching-learning-assessment. formal. The crisis in education caused by the Covid 19 pandemic greatly influenced both the organization and method of conducting teaching activities and contributed to the development of attitudes and skills in both teachers and students. Thus, by using mobile devices, a way of collaborative learning was found. Of course, non-formal online education activities and online education platforms should not be used exclusively, but in certain sequences of an activity or in activities that offer the opportunity “learning by doing” it would be good to retain it. These working tools encourage participation, collaboration and provide immediate feedback on the achievement of the objectives set in non-formal school activities.

5. Research methods

Through the socio-pedagogical survey, we used the questionnaire as a research tool using the google forms platform. Because in a pandemic context, its distribution and completion could not be done otherwise, we distributed them via WhatsApp in groups consisting of teachers in pre-university education, on e-mail addresses, or with the help of social networks. Numerous 251 teachers, primary, secondary and high school teachers from the South Muntenia region, Romania, expressed their interest in the topic of the questionnaire, and the answers were confidential. Using the questions in the questionnaire, we obtained answers regarding the possibility of conducting non-formal school activities in an online environment, the educational platforms they use, the IT programs used in these activities, the difficulties and advantages of non-formal online education, the students’ interest and attitudes. types of activities, assessments of methods that would be effective for online non-formal education, the role of non-formal education in the training of skills in students. 96.4% of respondents are female. It is obvious that in the Romanian pre-university system more women work as it results from the data obtained from previous research conducted at the country level. According to them, “At the levels of education, most female teachers work in preschool education, where they have a share of 99.6% and mass primary 88.6% as well as in special primary and special secondary education (89.6%, respectively 82.4%). In primary, high school and post-secondary education, women represent about 70% of the total teaching staff. The lowest share is registered in vocational education 63.4% In the case of post-secondary education we notice a slight increase in the share of female staff, up to the value of 76.4%.” (Otilia Apostu end al. 2015: 14-15).

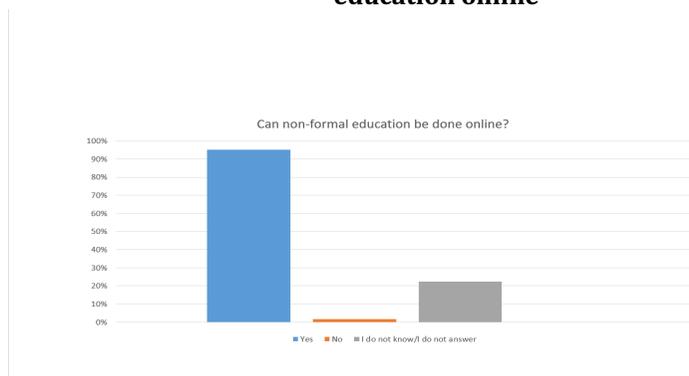
Figure 1. Students representation related to gender



Other research shows that in 2020, at the levels of education, most female teachers work in preschool (99.7%) and primary education (91.1%). In secondary education, in general,

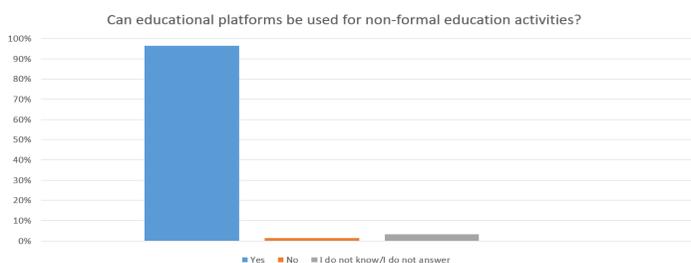
73.5% of teachers are women... . . . In high school, the number of female teachers is higher in urban schools (72.3%) than in schools rural (67.8%).” (ME, 2021: 49). A special advantage of non-formal education is that it is possible to choose how students can learn. Non-formal education can considerably use diverse, dynamic and interactive activities that also play a role in developing creativity. With the help of innovative methods and means, a flexible learning environment can be facilitated. Although apparently non-formal education is largely based on human interactions and is more difficult to achieve online, 95.2% of teachers appreciated that non-formal school activities can be carried out online.

Figure 2. Perception of teachers regarding the possibility of completing non-formal education online



Educational platforms support the learning process and can be accessed by sources of information or online media on various topics. The use of educational platforms and portals, new generation technologies and applications of the Internet, social media networks and social media creates new environments for formal or non-formal learning. 96.4% of the teachers participating in this study positively appreciated these aspects. Educational platforms improve the quality of non-formal activities, contribute to the acquisition of active and autonomous learning processes, individually and in groups. In this regard, the computer skills of students can be used constructively, especially since the current generation are accustomed to using the computer frequently and thus can spend their free time with specific non-formal education activities.

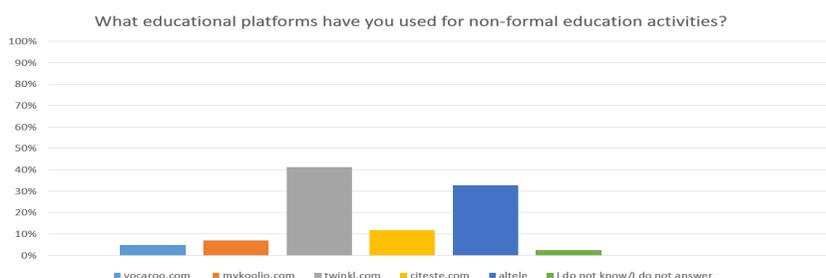
Figure 3. Graphic representation of the use of educational platforms in non-formal education activities



An educational platform must meet numerous requirements, the most important of which would be: to use a friendly interface adaptable to the dynamics of the educational process, to use a logical support of synchronous and asynchronous communication,

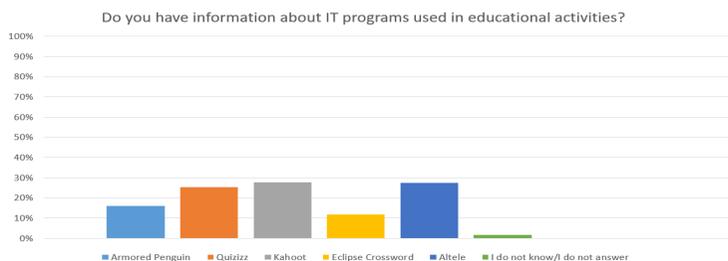
information must be monitored, to provide the possibility of management accessible content of the educational content, to use educational content editing modules, to may record feedback on the quality of the educational services offered, as well as the quality of the educational platform, etc. Educational platforms used for both non-formal and formal education school activities are diverse and are used depending on the specifics of the activity carried out, at a certain time (organization, planning, development). I chose to examine the use of some of them by teachers: vocaroo.com (for making audio recordings), mykoolio.com (for interactive educational games), twinkl.com (for teaching materials), citeste.ro. 41.2% of respondents used the educational platform twinkl.com (for teaching materials), 32.8% use other educational platforms than those mentioned in the question, 11.6% use citeste.ro (for ebooks or audiobooks in Romanian).

Figure 4. Graphic representation of the use of educational platforms by teachers



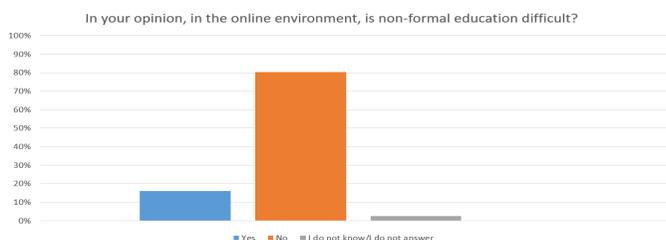
The digital transformation has changed society, with an increasing impact on everyday life. However, before the COVID-19 pandemic, its impact on education and training was much more limited. The pandemic has shown that it is essential to have an education and training system ready for the digital age. Creative, useful and safe use of the internet by students is essential. Attention, critical thinking, discrimination, desire, will, creativity, identification, expression and management of true feelings or needs are severely affected and affect his or her entire life, including how he or she will behave as a teenager or adult. Given the opportunities that the Internet offers in accessing knowledge, communication and participation, the benefits that accessing it can have in developing the skills needed for the 21st century, but also the wide range of risks and dangers to which children can be exposed, we consider it essential that decisions that we take for the younger generation to be based on real needs and current data. Among the IT programs that can be used to conduct non-formal education activities, the respondent teachers know Kahoot (27.8%), 27.4% know various other programs that were not specified in the question, Quizizz (25.4%), 16.1% are unaware of this type of program.

Figure 5. Graphic representation regarding the knowledge of some IT programs that can be used in educational activities



Regarding the difficulties of conducting non-formal education activities in the online environment, these could be determined by the impossibility of some teachers to use the technology, the lack of the necessary skills, or the lack of concerns in this regard. There are also issues related to the habits that children acquire in the family regarding the use of the Internet, the need for child safety, the latter process being part of the responsibility of educational institutions. It is also essential to find the most appropriate implementation strategies and to use appropriate methods to achieve non-formal education in an online environment. 80.4% of the teachers who answered the questions the questionnaire considered that it is not difficult to conduct non-formal education in the online environment while 16% considered it difficult, the others not being ready to answer. Among the advantages of non-formal education we can list the following: it is focused on the learning process, not in the teaching process, demands students differently; has a curriculum of choice, flexible and varied for diverse and attractive activities, depending on the interests of students, special skills and their aspirations; contributes to the broadening and enrichment of the general and specialized culture of the students, offering activities to complete the knowledge; ensures a quick updating of information in various fields, being interested in maintaining the interest of the public, offering flexible alternatives emphasizing the immediate applicability of knowledge and not their memorization, etc. In the opinion of teachers, the online environment is advantageous for non-formal education, 79.6% answered in the affirmative based on these general characteristics of non-formal education. 14% considered the online environment to be unfavorable for this type of education.

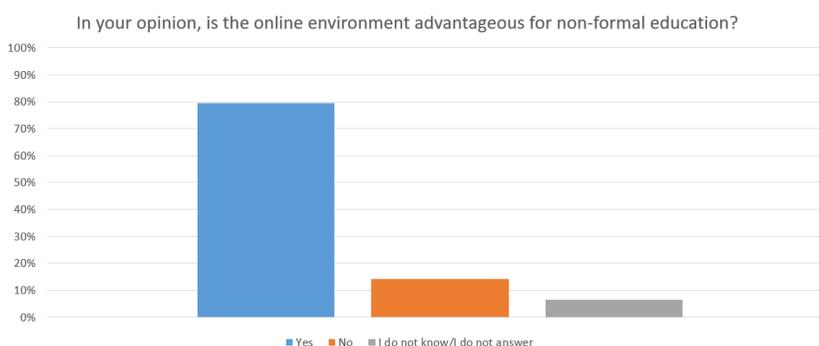
Figure 6. Graphic representation of the online environment as advantageous for non-formal education



59.6% of teachers considered that students participate with more interest in non-formal education activities online than on site, 30.5% denied the existence of this interest of

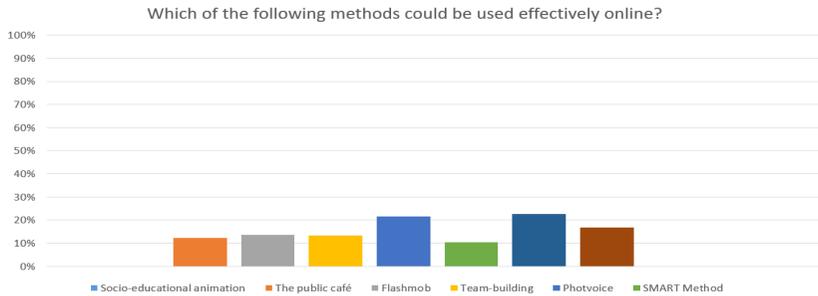
students, and 10.4% did not respond. As the information from outside the school is organized on criteria other than academic and/or didactic, the teacher must be prepared to reorganize his own approach according to what is beyond the school gate and textbooks, so that students participate curiously. It must adapt to an informational and organizational universe according to other rules that it does not establish in the activity of designing formal education activities. The teacher must identify ways to integrate all learning opportunities outside the school into his own teaching approach to provide both a maximum educational offer, unified logic of what is to be explored and the interest and motivation of students to participate.

Figure 7. Opinion on students' interest in participating in online or on site non-formal education activities



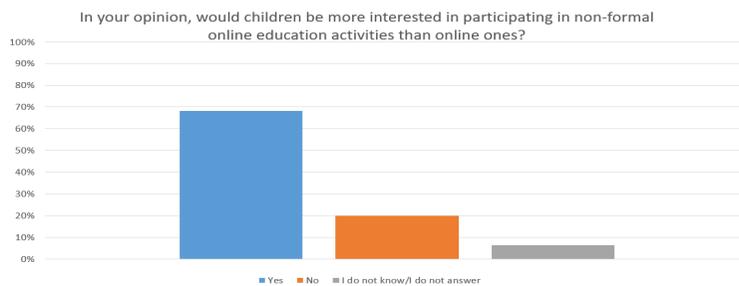
In the context of a modern school, the role of the teacher is to design and organize non-formal education activities to contribute to the development of skills needed in students, skills that overlap and intertwine to form their profile anchored in the social and cultural reality of which they are part. The purpose of integrating technology into non-formal education activities determines the methods and techniques of working with students. Unlike previous generations, current generations of students are much more independent in their thinking. Students use digital resources and relate differently to society. Teachers must create a stimulating learning environment, based on the development of skills, abilities and attitudes that consider both their personal interests and the demands of the society in which they live. Regarding the methods used effectively in non-formal online education, we first listed several methods: socio-educational animation, public cafe, flashmob, team-building, photovoce, SMART method, open space technology-OST, educational theater. From these methods, they had a choice that they can use in the non-formal education activities carried out online. Among the most appreciated methods that can be used were socio-educational animation (45.4%), 16.9% chose open space technology-OST, team-building (13.3%), SMART method (10.4 %).

Figure 8. Graphic representation of the use of efficient methods in non-formal education activities online



Non-formal education provides students with a better understanding of society and the environment. The social competence of non-formal education includes the ability to judge and act in various social situations. It is based on the ability and willingness to relate to an empathic and responsible manner and the formation of student behavior in this way is based on relationships and values. It is done to train students in the ability to cooperate and communicate, the ability to work in a team and manage conflicts, as well as to understand the concepts of democracy and interculturality. 68.2% of teachers positively appreciate these values of non-formal education.

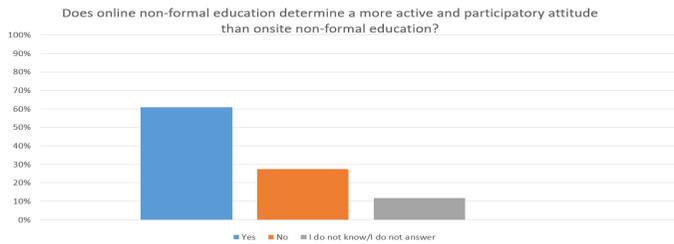
Figure 9. Graphic representation on the role of non-formal education in understanding society and the environment



The online environment must not be devoid of non-formal education, it helps students learn how to be present online safely and be able to identify sources of danger, how to use their own knowledge gained from math, computer and online classes. In addition, how to capitalize on their passion for photo-video in a world dominated by visuals, and the traditional setting offers limited opportunities to explore these talents. They can learn how to film, edit, even use a green screen for spectacular results, etc. Non-formal education provides an environment in which the student can discover new things about himself and the world around him, live unique experiences, develop new skills and outline a set of values that will help him evolve personally and professionally. The advantages of online non-formal education activities were appreciated

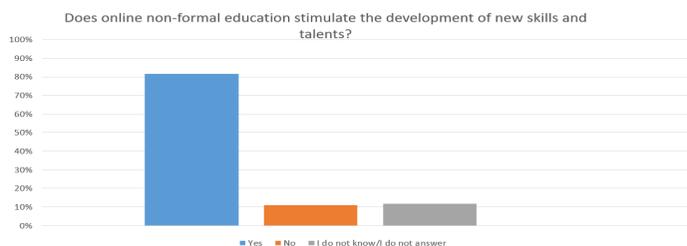
by 61% of the teachers, who considered that the activities carried out in this way help form a more active and participatory attitude than those carried out on site.

Figure 10. Graphic representation of the teachers’ perception of active and participatory attitude forming through non-formal educational activities online



Through non-formal education programs, students can get to know each other better and explore and share their experiences with others, based on their own learning needs. Students are the center of the learning process, a process through which they shape their attitudes, develop new skills, cultivate their own value system. All online non-formal education programs invite reflection, self-analysis, processes through which personal qualities are revealed, all through interaction and knowledge sharing. Driving new communication technologies, considering the technical-scientific progress, capitalizing on the opportunities offered by the Internet, television, computers, and non-formal education carried out in the online environment is, continues, meeting the requirements and needs of lifelong learning. Generally, non-formal education provides a set of necessary experiences, useful for each student, complements the other forms of education through the practice and cultivation of different inclinations, skills and abilities, the manifestation of talents in art, culture, music, sports, painting, IT etc. 81.5% of teachers appreciate that online non-formal education develops new skills and talents.

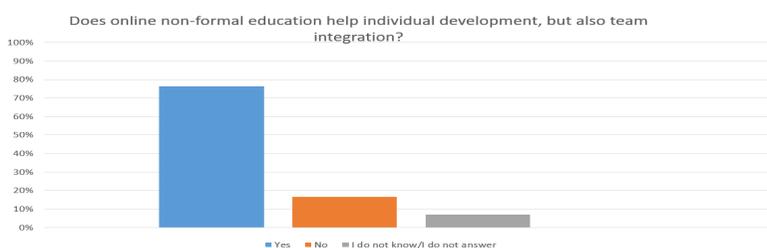
Figure11. Teachers’ perception of the role of non-formal online education in the development of new skills and talents



Teamwork in non-formal education activities generally provides an opportunity to learn new things through collaboration. It involves cooperation, negotiation, active listening and understanding the needs of the other members of the team, with a common goal: success! In the team, each member has his role clearly and none of is less important than the others. The

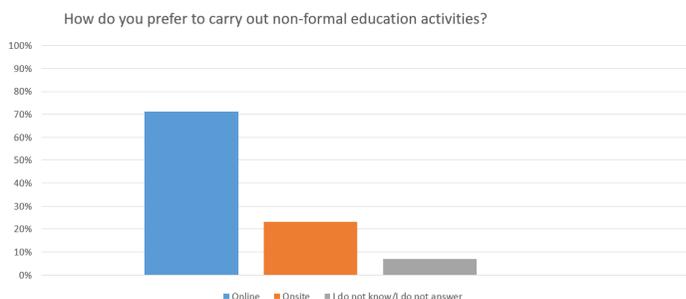
qualities of each one lead to the success of the team and of each one. Teamwork has a formidable opponent, namely, competitiveness. Competing with others is not always beneficial and should not become a goal of the child’s activity. Constructive competition is with itself, trying with each new project to push its limits, to learn new things and, finally, to have the satisfaction of doing well with its own strengths and its evolution. 76.4% of respondents consider that the online environment for conducting non-formal education activities offers opportunities for students to develop individually, but also to integrate into the team, and 16.8% believe that conducting these types of activities does not create skills this kind.

Figure 11. Teachers’ perception of non-formal education, intellectual development and teamwork



71.2% of teachers prefer to conduct non-formal education activities online, and 23.2% online. The pandemic coronavirus has fundamentally changed the way we live. In the context of significant social transformations, life imposes the need for involving new knowledge, skills and/or additional skills for all individuals. The common problem of teachers in Romania is to capture the student's attention using digital material during non-formal education activities. In recent decades, humans have discovered new methods of communication and information, such as the telephone, television, and the Internet. So communication came to a hard line 100 years ago. No matter how much we want non-formal online education to work in the same way for all students, we must consider the different ways in which students can best acquire knowledge and develop attitudes and skills.

Figure 12. Graphic representation regarding teachers’ objection on the conduct of non-formal education activities online or on site



6. Findings

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a major shift in the use of “digital” technologies in education, and the main question is whether this change is only temporary or whether it will be perpetuated and further developed in formal and non-formal education activities. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on digitalization in education has been significant. The response to the changes caused by the pandemic has been generally positive on the part of teachers, accepting the change and considering that certain practices of conducting activities in the online environment should be maintained or refined. Digital tools have been little used in face-to-face non-formal education, being only partially used in teaching and learning practices or in the assessment processes related to the formal learning process. Generally, it seems that teachers are more willing to use digital tools. However, teachers do not have fully extended digital skills, and this aspect would require a more in-depth analysis. This analysis would also consider aspects related to the use of certain platforms, IT programs, teaching strategies that can be used in the online environment. We live in an age where digitization continues, and online education is a consequence of digitization. This may be the beginning of the change in the education system we are used to, and the involvement of teachers could ensure the stimulation and guidance of students for sustainable education and through the non-formal education activities thus carried out.

7. Conclusions

In the case of non-formal education, the emphasis is on action-based learning, peer learning and voluntary work. “The skills and attitudes developed by students in non-formal learning include interpersonal skills, teamwork, self-confidence, discipline, responsibility, planning skills, coordination and organization/project management skills, the ability to solve practical problems.” (Costea et al., 2009: 53)

The activities of non-formal education must be based on a methodology focused on action, operation, so on the promotion of interactive methods that require the mechanisms of thinking, intelligence, imagination and creativity. The framework, space and time of learning is characterized by diversity and flexibility, involves the identification of learning needs, thus ensuring the appropriate adaptation to the learning process and are characterized by setting learning objectives, being well structured, resources being organized efficiently. Of course, learning through non-formal education involves acquiring new knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as learning through the other two types of education. Personal development is essential in the context of non-formal education. Non-formal education is carried out through and for personal development, ie for improving one's own skills.

A modern education system must be open to accepting, promoting and improving digitization and combining different teaching methods so that it can give the student, as a future citizen, the ability to understand the world. Thus, by analyzing certain aspects of the realization of non-formal education and digital tools for organizing online learning, it was shown that the traditional education system should be radically reset, being largely too rigid. During the quarantine, if we look at the effectiveness of non-formal education, it was a real challenge. Teachers have started to get involved in various activities, webinars, online exchange of good practices, have studied new ways of organizing interactive activities of non-formal education, have developed various methodological guides, etc. Thus, the students' intelligence was better used, the skills were developed. Most teachers expressed the opinion that the ability to adapt to the new is essential, showing creativity and originality.

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CLANDESTINE MIGRATION AND CHILD TRAFFICKING IN THE GULF OF GUINEA IN THE 21ST CENTURY: INVENTORY, CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: *Imagining new possibilities for liberating the planet from these multiple impasses in progress and from the criminal society at the dawn of this new century is a necessity for the community of existing people" to make a "reasonable humanity" with a view to fulfilling our mission to be in the world. In reality, the planet is a gift from everyone and every living being has rights no matter how small. However, the nursery of humanity, namely children, faces an illicit and criminal trade that violates their rights and their well-being through the phenomenon of illegal migration and their trafficking. It is in this perspective that the Gulf of Guinea constitutes a hub of this heavy tendency which until now remains weakly analyzed in this center of interest. Many circulation routes for this traffic are set up between West and Central Africa through a pyramid drawn up by investors, recruiters, transporters, and recruiters. These children, once they arrive in the different countries of destination, are exploited for domestic work, field work, shops, etc. This is an international violation of the rights and welfare of children. Because children deserve national and international protection. They are the future of humanity. Hence, local, and global order strategies are put in place to prevent and combat this alarming phenomenon of modern slavery. Nevertheless, local and international normative and security policies must reinvent themselves for effective and efficient international protection of children's rights and welfare.*

Keywords: Clandestine migrations, Child trafficking, Gulf of Guinea, Rights and Welfare of the Child, African Union, United Nations.

1. Introduction

The act of thinking about our contemporaneity invites us to reflect on the great upheavals and vulnerabilities that have rearticulated the international scene since the end of the Cold War in 1989 and its corollaries such as the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dislocation of the superpower of the former USSR. In this perspective, he also encourages us to mobilize all the threads of the imagination as a "community of existing" and a "reasonable humanity" (Nancy, 2002) with a view to producing new intelligences and imagining new possibilities of liberating the planet from these multiple shifts in progress and precisely at the dawn of this new century. In an international context marked essentially by globalization and its geopolitical effects, both positive and negative; old risks have worsened, and transnational and multi-faceted threats have emerged in the international system. Among these post-bipolar security tensions and disorders that upset the interdependence between security, sovereignty, economy, democracy, and human rights. We can cite, without claiming to be exhaustive, the illicit trade in drugs and narcotics, illegal migration, pandemics, the Anthropocene, maritime piracy, Islamist terrorism, armed rebellions, civil wars, cross-border banditry, the phenomenon of child soldiers, human trafficking, etc. Among these major trends that weigh on the present and the future of the African continent, the major trend but until now poorly analyzed that emerges from the observation of these new transnational threats is that of illegal migration and child trafficking. It is a phenomenon in full expansion since the 20th century (Dush, 2002) and

consequently has consolidated itself as a form of international crime at the beginning of the 21st century.

The Gulf of Guinea, due to its geostrategic position and its permeable international borders, is a space of movements and circulations where clandestine migrations openly take place and children are trafficked silently. The aim of this study is to show, from an ethnographic and mainly socio-historical perspective, the various metamorphoses of illegal migration in the Gulf of Guinea and how the international networks of child traffickers have become professionalized in this geopolitical environment. It also aims to indicate the places of supply, transit of these children but also to attract the public authorities, the international organizations, NGOs and donors involved in issues of protection and well-being of children to develop a security, legal, economic and social architecture for the total protection of this social category. To better understand this thorny question, we will initially focus attention on theoretical discussions and a review of the international literature devoted to the phenomenon.

Next, we will shed light on the games and the challenges of the entrepreneurs of this criminal network which runs counter to the doctors' children's lives, emphasizing their places of transit, of destination, their interactions with the recruiters of these children. Finally, we will indicate the mechanisms for combating and preventing this international crime at the intersection of the local, sub-regional, continental and international.

2.State of play of the question, definitions and foundations of the establishment and circulation of this criminal and transnational network

Due to its geopolitical and geostrategic position, the Gulf of Guinea has always been an epistemological object that attracts the observation of many analysts in international research. Internationalist, legal, societal, historical, anthropological, culturalist and political issues have always been treated with great consideration to the detriment of certain issues that have remained marginal, little studied and therefore constitute blind spots in international research. on this geo-historical space. In reality, the issue of international migration in the Gulf of Guinea has been the subject of serious studies in West Africa, however, Central Africa is still a place of investigation to be cleared in this area, although some authors have distinguished themselves on the issue. Nevertheless, the issue of illegal migration connected to human trafficking and particularly of children in the Gulf of Guinea deserves special attention. What about the analytical and thematic tendencies of our predecessors who got involved in this discussion?

3.Conceptual approaches and inventory of the issue

Several apprehensions jostle and complement each other about the notion of trafficking in human beings. It is necessary to clarify what is called child trafficking in the context of clandestine migration and to know what is meant by trafficking or smuggling of children. Without claiming to be exhaustive, we will throw a beam of light to have a conceptual light on these different concepts in order to avoid any confusion.

Trafficking and smuggling, two terms often confused to refer to the problem of the movement of children for the purpose of exploitation. The concept of trafficking refers to the illicit trade, usually of goods across a border, often in reference to the illegal transfer of arms (arms trafficking) and more recently drug smuggling. However, since the year 2000, in international law the consecrated term is that of "traffic" of children, not that of "trafficking". The latter refers to the illegal transfer of migrants across borders as "smuggling of migrants" (Dottridge, 2004: 17). The phrase "child trafficking" emphasizes how children are moved. But the trafficking of children or adults is closely associated with their subsequent exploitation by others in ways that violate their basic rights, usually by being forced to earn money by working, but in the case of trafficked babies for adoption or young women for marriage, to satisfy the demand of those who gain control over them (Dottridge, 2004: 17). To understand what this implies, it is necessary to observe the forms of exploitation to which children are subjected. Children are used in different ways depending on their age and gender. Older children between

the ages of 15 and 17 are treated much like the exploitation of young adults and the degree of coercion required to keep them under control is identical.

Trafficking was first defined in international law by the Additional Protocol to the United Nations Organized Crime Convention to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000). Known as the “Palermo Protocol” or the “Trafficking Protocol”, it gives the most widely accepted definition of trafficking and lays the groundwork for reform of national law (The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 2000).

In the Palermo Protocol, the term “trafficking in persons” means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, through the threat of or use of force or other forms of constraint, by removing, fraud, deception, abuse of authority or position of vulnerability, or by offering or accepting payments or benefits to obtain the consent of a person having authority over another for the purpose of operation. Exploitation includes, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or organ removal. The provisions emphasize that the trafficking of a child for the purpose of exploitation, by whatever means, must be considered an offense (The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 2000).

Thus defined these epistemological prerequisites, it should be said that in the aftermath of the 1980s, the planet experienced several geopolitical shifts which profoundly upset its political and socio-economic balances which accentuated the intensity of the flow of movements, displacements and the circulation of people, goods, ideas and finances. It is this cultural phenomenon that the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy called the “creation of the world” or globalization (Nancy, 2002). Contemporary African societies have not been on the margins of these many upheavals which have reshaped new configurations on the international chessboard (Foga Konefon, 2020: 34-49) and particularly the Gulf of Guinea. In terms of travel, it should be noted that African international mobility is mainly intracontinental. 21 million out of the 39.4 million migrants born in Africa (53.2%) lived on the continent in 2019 (Tsion Kebede Abebe, Mugabo: 151-160). These advanced figures are those of regular migration, however data on irregular international migration on the continent are almost impossible to find and even extremely rare. It is in this perspective that the largest volume of African international mobility in the continent and of course the criminal dynamics and mafia networks in the African international borders that escape state logics. The reasons that explain this illegality are the permeability of international borders and the failure of the African state to “supervise and “punish” to quote Michel Foucault. Many authors have focused on African international peripheries and the transactions that take place there (Igue, 1983: 29-51; 1995; Sindjoun, 2002; 2004; Bennafla, 2002; 2012); Dizambou, 2002; Foga Konefon, 2015: 145-162; Sournu, 2020; Minfegue, 2020).

In terms of clandestine circulation and trafficking of children, we note that the international scientific literature has devoted attention to this issue, however Africa and mainly the Gulf of Guinea, which are a hub of this bargaining and criminal network, occupies a marginal place. in empirical research on this phenomenon of our contemporaneity. To this end, it is important to specify that this is not a new phenomenon, it is a planetary and also African question. In the current state of our knowledge, some trends emerge in the production of work on the dynamics of clandestine immigration and the trafficking of children in the world. Initially, research already carried out is based on reports from international organizations and institutions (Report of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990; Report of the General Assembly of Interpol, 2001; UNICEF Innocenti Research Center Report, 2004; Report of the West and Central Africa Regional Office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020 THB LIBERI Project Report, 2021; African Union Report, 2021) to name them are

certainly edifying, but they do not take into consideration the different spatial scales in their analyses. The absence of serious local monographs constitute the handicap of the results of their observations and consequently do not allow to have precise ideas on the state of the situation in the chronological evolution.

Secondly, and without claiming to be exhaustive, certain works resulting from empirical research have addressed this questioning and its related problems in Africa and in certain countries of the Gulf of Guinea (Chevallier-Govers, 1999; Dush, 2002; Dizambou, 2002; Goudjo, 2004; Bimboudza, 2004; Abagha Megnet, 2006; Guardiola Lago, 2008: 405-436; Loungou, 2011: 485-505; Bamba Ladj, 2017: 187-202; Peyroux, 2020: 35-42). These works question the socio-history of the implementation of this clandestine and criminal network throughout the world, Africa and certain countries of the Gulf of Guinea. They indicate the repressive means put in place to stop this criminal market. It also emerges from this work that globalization, poverty, the absence of means of control and the weakening of the State in certain border peripheries are at the origin of the expansion of this phenomenon in the world. Their limits lie at the level where the destinations, the circuits of this traffic are evoked in a fragmented way and figures in data are absent to seize the fluctuations.

Overall, the finding that emerges from this modest literature review is that for all living things, this practice is shameful and requires political, philosophical, and humanitarian questioning. Therefore, it is urgent to think about the foundations of a policy of anticipation and reparation for the nursery of humanity which is in the nets of this transnational criminal market. What about the political economy of this traffic in the Gulf of Guinea?

4. The political economy of the establishment of illegal migration and child trafficking in the Gulf of Guinea: foundations, international networks and traffickers' circuits

In an international context accentuated by the proliferation of goods, services, exchanges and people linked to globalization and the evolution of technologies and means of communication, clandestine migration and child trafficking have intensified in the entire planet and particularly in the Gulf of Guinea. In this new environment, the "uncivil society" has professionalized itself by using all sorts of stratagems and logics of circumventing the barriers of State agents to set up, the trafficking of children, a "trade" which brings shame to Africa (Mfi, 1998: 4). Faced with such a tragedy, one is entitled to ask the question what is at the origin of such a practice? What are the grounds that justify the organizers and recruiters of such criminal activities?

5. The socio-cultural and economic foundations of illegal migration and child trafficking in human societies in the geopolitical space of the Gulf of Guinea

Culturally, the involvement of children for labor purposes in Africa is not a new reality. It predates colonial and even contemporary history. She was participating in a kind of initiation, training and learning about life. Among ancient Africans, the idea of making children work was a way of instilling in them that nothing is acquired, nothing is given, nothing is easy and that everything was acquired through work. It is in this perspective that in the process of formation and the transition from the stage of childhood to adulthood, the primary and secondary socialization of the child was done in a social category of work, namely: field work, household activities, etc. So, it was out of the question to consider a child who left his family nucleus with his consent to go to an uncle, an aunt, or a family in the perspective of helping them with domestic tasks as a form of slavery because the child had all its rights and duties. This participated in the African in his way of making humanity, his education but also in capitalizing inputs in terms of experience in the different cultural environments he would cross (Almeida Topor, 1992: 73; Loungou, 2011: 485- 505; Hodonou, 2001, p. 44-45). This philosophy quickly deteriorated with the advent of colonial mercantilism which had established a new social order to the point of upsetting the cultural and economic logic of traditional African societies.

With the setting up of major construction sites for public buildings and the development of agricultural land, the exploitation of children began to be visible, but it grew from of the 1960s, a period during which the first examples of child trafficking were observed, thus showing that their exploitation for economic purposes was becoming the main motive behind the operation. In Benin, we spoke of vidomégon in Benin, amegbonovi in Togo, year doom in Senegal or garibou in Burkina Faso (Loungou, 2011: 485-505). This phenomenon has been accentuated by material scarcity or poverty, which is a gangrene that is eating away at many societies on a continental and planetary scale. Many social strata are idle and plagued by unemployment in most Gulf of Guinea countries. They are at the mercy of calls from criminal entrepreneurs and traffic engineers. Another determining factor is the particular vulnerability of girls, which makes them easy prey for traffickers. In particular instability, oppression and discrimination increase the risks for women and children, and social and cultural prejudices as well as the prevalence of gender-based violence have added to the difficulty of protecting them from trafficking (Report from the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004). It is following this situation of socio-economic vulnerability that many children transited clandestinely via networks of smugglers, criminal organizations from international borders to work for the purposes of economic and sexual exploitation. What are these clandestine, criminal migrant networks and what are the countries of origin and arrival of these children?

6. Clandestine migrant networks and criminal trafficking of children in the Gulf of Guinea: Profile of traffickers, operating methods and circulation routes of child trafficking

In view of certain works which have carried out studies on the cartography of clandestine migration and the trafficking of children in the world, the information coming from the Gulf of Guinea is very fragmentary and yet it constitutes a serious hub in the trafficking of children. and their operations. According to serious investigations on the issue, countries such as the Ivory Coast, Benin, Togo, Nigeria, Gabon, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, to name a few, are part of the circulation routes of this illicit trade. What should be remembered from this migratory traffic is that it is based on several organizational entities, namely: the organizers who are at the top of the pyramid; recruiters who serve as matchmakers between organizers and clients;(Dush, 2002). Like the chain of traffickers, child recruitment techniques are highly complex. This begins in the countries of origin with an effort to canvass target families and approach the children. The recruitment phase follows using two techniques: one direct, the other indirect. In the first case, the recruiting agents deal with the parents using in particular persuasion and deception. They thus succeed in persuading the families that they will ensure the education and training of the children, that they will find them well-paid work, and even, in the case of young girls, that they will marry them off to wealthy personalities as soon as they arrive. in Gabon (Adihou et al., 1999,:28-30). In order to remove the assent of the parents, it even happens that the recruiter pays them a sum of money, possibly accompanied by a few presents. However, it seems that deception is the basic principle of recruitment by playing on the ignorance, naivety and extreme poverty of parents. In the second case, recruiters prefer to make direct contact with children or sometimes kidnap them in peri-urban areas or even in the streets of the main cities of the country (Loungou, 2011: 485-505). After this step, another strong link in the chain that can be mentioned here: these are the carriers. They are actually the ones who generally take care of getting the children out of the territory. Generally, they do it by boats, canoes and less and less by cars and other means of transport. The reason given is that they fear being arrested by the police and prefer to take the dangerous sea routes. This is why they prefer to go through creeks, mangroves and of course through places of transit where vigilance is less rigorous. To this end, the Gabonese teacher-researcher illustrates the mechanisms for transferring children from West Africa to Gabon by writing this:

Travel first takes children from rural areas of origin, which are very poor, to the large coastal urban centres, political or economic capitals, which are relatively prosperous; or for

people from Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo, the cities of Cotonou/Porto Novo, Accra, Lagos and Lomé where the "standardization" of identity papers and other documents takes place travel documents (...) From these coastal towns, two routes are possible. The first takes the children, embarked on ships, directly to Gabon where, after at least a week of travel, they are dropped off at sites near the city of Libreville (Cap Esterias, Cap Santa Clara, port of Owendo) where conniving Nigerian, Ghanaian, Togolese or Beninese fisherman take it upon themselves to lead them to agreed points on the coast where the traffickers come to take them over. (...) These then have the task of transporting them by cabotage, using ocean canoes equipped with outboard motors, approximately 15 to 20 m long and with a minimum carrying capacity of 100 people, as far as the Gabonese coast via strategic stopovers in Cameroon (Kribi) and/or Equatorial Guinea (Corisco and Elobey islands). It is there, in fact, that we can refuel the passengers, while inquiring about the weather conditions and the movements of the Gabonese coast guard. We then progress from block to block to the points landing sites that are the villages and other fishing camps scattered along the northern coast of Gabon where the traffickers come to take them in charge, before placing them in safe places (Lougou, 2011: 485-505).

At the occurrence of these means of transport, one still remembers the Nigerian boat Etireno, flying the Beninese flag which had transported 167 in April 2001 which had shown the complexity of this traffic (Boukougou, 2006: 97-108; Union, 2001: 3). In these writings, we notice that the last links in the chain are the smugglers who are the most violent members of the organization. They are involved in the dimension of negotiation procedures between recruiters, carriers and customers in the countries of departure and arrival. It is also observed that with regard to the traffic routes of trafficking of these children, the mode of transfer is quite complex. In reality, there are child-providing countries and child-receiving countries. Generally, child-providing countries are generally found in West Africa like Benin, Nigeria, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and in Central Africa, we can cite the Central African Republic, Chad and Cameroon according to several concordant sources. Like the receiving countries, we can mention Gabon, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast and other countries outside the continent.

Once they arrive in their various countries of destination, these children are exploited for domestic work, in plantations, shops, hardware stores, spare parts shops, etc. This very often in conditions of abuse and what constitutes a crime, a violation of the rights and well-being of children. Hence alternative strategies have been put in place to combat this traffic in the Gulf of Guinea.

7. National, sub-regional, continental, and international response strategies to combat child trafficking in the Gulf of Guinea

As we have indicated in our previous analyses, African issues are planetary and planetary issues are African. This is to say that the issue of illegal migration and the phenomenon of child trafficking is closely linked and therefore is a crime and a violation of international law. Because children are not only the nursery of humanity and the "creators of the future". Thus, faced with the scale and progression of this phenomenon, strategies developed by state actors and multilateral actors have been put in place to combat this continuing scourge. They are local and global in the Gulf of Guinea.

8. The United Nations, INTERPOL and the African Union in the face of child trafficking

Several initiatives have been undertaken by state and especially multilateral actors to combat this global scourge. In this case, the United Nations through several international and regional legal instruments are committed to taking measures to prevent and suppress child trafficking based on several conventions. To this end, one can mention the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. Well before that date, they had organized a World Summit for Children in 1990. In the series of conventions, we can add the ILO Convention on

the Worst Forms child labor in 1999; a United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in 2000 and the United Nations General Assembly Special Session in 2002 devoted to children on the theme: "A world fit for children". which was adopted by the United Nations at the beginning of the millennium in relation to child trafficking was the United Nations convention against transnational crime which was held in Palermo (Italy) in December 2000. The international community has shown its political will to address a global challenge through a global initiative. Thus Koffi Anan, the Secretary General of the United Nations at that time clearly gave the emphasis of the United Nations Organizations by indicating that:

...crime crosses borders, repression must cross them. If the rule of law is undermined not in one, but in many countries, then those who defend it cannot limit themselves to purely national means. If the enemies of progress and human rights seek to exploit the openness and opportunities offered by globalization for their own ends, then we must exploit those same opportunities to defend human rights and defeat the forces crime, corruption and human trafficking. One of the most striking contrasts in today's world is the chasm that separates the civil from the uncivil. By "civil", I mean civilisation: long centuries of learning on which we base our progress. By "civil", I also mean tolerance: pluralism and respect for the diversity of the peoples of the world, from which we draw our strength. And finally, I mean civil society: groups of citizens, companies, trade unions, teachers, journalists, political parties and so many others, which have an essential role to play in the conduct of any society. However, deployed against these constructive forces, in ever greater numbers and armed with ever more powerful weapons, are the forces of what I call "uncivil society". It is, among others, terrorists, criminals, drug traffickers, human traffickers, who are undoing the good work of civil society. They take advantage of open borders, free markets and technical advances that bring so many benefits to mankind. They thrive in countries with weak institutions and show no qualms about using intimidation or violence. Ruthless, they are the very antithesis of anything we consider civil. They are powerful, represent entrenched interests and have a global enterprise behind them worth billions of dollars, but they are not invincible (Koffi Anan, 2004: 4).

The signing of the Convention in Palermo, in December 2000, marked a turning point in the strengthening of the fight against this trafficking. The international institutions of a technical nature of the United Nations which were involved in the questions of migration and children, namely the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNICEF, the International Labor Organization (ILO), the International Commission Human Rights, United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention; INTERPOL, EUROPOL, EUROPOL, the Committee of Central African Police Chiefs (CCPAC), the West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO) and other security actors and deployed strongly in all spaces and terrains to stem this phenomenon. It is in this perspective that international police cooperation led by INTERPOL and its related partners have played a strategic and considerable role against this "uncivil society". 76 children in Côte d'Ivoire believed to have been trafficked to West Africa for the purpose of illegal labor (Interpol International Report, 2014). In the same vein, in 2015 the Akoma operation of INTERPOL saved 48 children and arrested at the end of this operation 22 people involved in the exploitation of children. (Interpol International Report, 2015). In 2016, Operation Adwenpa II, a border security operation in West Africa resulted in the arrest of human traffickers, migrant smugglers as well as the seizure of drugs, stolen vehicles, money and counterfeit goods. More than 100 frontline police officers used INTERPOL's global policing capabilities to identify criminals, victims and illicit goods at 28 key border crossings in 14 countries (Interpol International Report, 2016). In 2017, an INTERPOL intervention named Operation Epervier 2017 made an arrest of nearly 500 victims of human trafficking, including 236 minors, were simultaneously rescued in Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal (Interpol International Report, 2017).

In the regime of thought of the defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU), she was aware that in the black continent, children were prey to violence and abuse many that fit into economic, socio-cultural and political contexts. The physical, sexual and psychological aggression suffered by children in situations of peace or war, in their family or community environment, constituted obstacles to their survival and harmonious development (Boukongou, 2006: 97-108). It is in this register that it adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child at the Twenty-Sixth Conference of Heads of State and Government of the OAU in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) in July 1990. By this charter, The African States members of the Organization of African Unity parties to this Charter entitled "African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child" considered that the Charter of the Organization of African Unity recognized the paramount importance of human rights and that the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights had proclaimed and agreed that everyone could avail himself of all the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in the said Charter, without any distinction of race, ethnic group, color, sex, language, religion, political affiliation or other opinion, national and social origin, property, birth or other status (African Charter on the Rights and -being of the Child, 1990).

At the community level Economic Community of West African States, and the Economic Community of Central African States, strategies to fight against child trafficking have also been taken into consideration to eradicate this transnational and criminal commercial network.

9. ECOWAS and CEMAC in the fight against child trafficking

Given that these two sub-regions of the continent are aware that this trade in modern-day "slave traders" is active in these areas, they have mobilized through several sub-regional consultation forums, workshops and seminars on trafficking. cross-border movement of children for the purposes, essentially, of labor exploitation. Given the complexity and sensitivity of the issue, several ministerial departments, namely that of justice, the interior, the army, foreign affairs, the advancement of women and the family, social affairs and many also leaders of non-governmental and international organizations have always been involved in this work of reflection at the national level as well as at the sub-regional level reaffirming their commitment to international and regional legal instruments, in particular:

- Convention No. 29 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) concerning forced labour, 1930;
- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948;
- the United Nations Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, 1956;
- Convention No. 105 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) on the abolition of forced labour, 1957;
- Convention No. 138 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) relating to the minimum age for admission to employment, 1973;
- the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on the Free Movement of Persons and Goods, 1975;
- the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979;
- the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1981;
- the Treaty establishing the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), 1983;
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, and its optional protocol relating to the sale of children, child prostitution, child pornography, 1989;
- the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990; - the Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance between West African States adopted in Dakar, 1992;
- the Treaty of the Community of West African States (ECOWAS), revised in 1993 and the Protocol relating to the freedom of movement of goods and persons;
- the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, 1993;

- the Convention on extradition between West African States adopted in Abuja, 1994; - Convention No. 182 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) on the worst forms of child labor and the action with a view to their elimination, 1999; - the Cooperation Agreement on Criminal Police between the States of Central Africa, 1999;
- the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 2000 (Palermo Protocol);
- the Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2000;
- the Cooperation Agreement on Criminal Police among the Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), 2003;
- the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (known as the Maputo Protocol) 2003;
- the Multilateral Cooperation Agreement in the fight against child trafficking in West Africa West, 2005.

And falling within the framework of the common action platform of Libreville 1 (2000) directives for the elaboration of a convention on child trafficking in West and Central Africa of Libreville 2 (2002) and the Libreville Declaration 3 (2003) relating to the harmonization of national legislation; the various countries belonging to these spaces have tied themselves to these various international legal instruments to take technical, normative, security, police and judicial training measures to prosecute and punish traffickers and their accomplices in this trade. However, their actions remain limited and therefore the African system for the protection of the rights of the child remains to be built. The access roads to this system can appear steep for many victims who will try to borrow them. Still, the system has the merit of existing. It is gradually contributing to the emergence and consolidation of regional protection of children's rights in Africa. The limitations and imperfections of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children can be overcome with a real will from the Member States of the African Union. Arguments once made about African cultures should be abandoned, because the universality of children's rights is not an obstacle to the diversity of cultures. But there are universal values on which no regression can be tolerated (Boukongou, 2006: 97-108).

10. Conclusion

Moreover, it was a question of diagnosing within the framework of this study, the inventory of fixtures of clandestine migrations and the trafficking of children in the Gulf of Guinea. It has to be noted at first that the sociology of contemporary migrations in Africa is quite complex, particularly clandestine migrations. With regard to migratory dynamics in the Gulf of Guinea, they are generally varied and characterized by the stamp of illegality, clandestinely and this is due to the porosity of international borders in land, lake, river and maritime spaces. These clandestine migrations contribute to defeating, to a certain extent, the state in its dream of "monitoring" the borders, of "punishing" outlaw migrants (Sindjoun, 2004: 5-15). In this perspective of infringement, many illicit transactions of a criminal nature have been structured, such as the trafficking of children, particularly in West Africa, the ramifications of which extend in several directions of the planet. It is a practical reality, and it is an international crime. If, according to the official reports of certain international organizations and certain police investigations, more than two million children in the world are tamed in these transnational criminal networks and the Gulf of Guinea is part of a plate turning point of this criminal network on the planet since the 1990s, as we mentioned in the previous analyses. Beyond, socio-cultural factors as explanatory data for this phenomenon in certain communities in West Africa, it should be emphasized that material scarcity or the accentuated impoverishment of social strata, wars, the growing market of crime and anarchic violence due to political instability; the absence of meticulous controls at the level of the national borders of the countries of destination of these children by the security services without forgetting the logics of corruption of the agents of the State to circumvent these controls and the lack of penalties and real and

practical sanctions against these entrepreneurs of this child trafficking market who promote the rise of these criminal and mercantilist networks which have found fertile ground for this illicit trade in the Gulf of Guinea. the Abidjan-Lagos trade corridor which crosses five countries namely Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria has been identified as an important route for these traffics in West Africa. In Africa Central, Gabon is also a pole and even one of the most important and least known of the clandestine trafficking of children from West African countries originally organized from Benin and Togo (Loungou, 2011: 485-505; Bimboudza, 2004; Abagha Megnet, 2006). These children sold on the black market are exploited for domestic work; to forms of forced labour; prostitution; to sexual slavery, etc.

Faced with the violation of international law and particularly of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of 1990, and the main positions of the Regional Economic Communities, namely the Action Plan adopted in Libreville in December 2000 on behalf of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and the Plan of action adopted by the Economic Community of the States of West Africa (ECOWAS) in December 2001, and the Action Plan adopted in Libreville on strategies to combat child trafficking for the purpose of exploitation, The States of West and Central Africa who are in the Gulf of Guinea in collaboration with NGOs, international organizations and those of the United Nations involved in migration and childhood issues are making remarkable progress on the ground to curb this organized crime and criminal mafia networks of this heinous traffic.

Given the contemporaneity of this questioning in the Gulf of Guinea and in the whole of the planet, the big discussion is that of mutuality: what to do and how to do with others? Thereby, the "community of existing" must bring together its imagination, its security, normative interbreeding, preventive measures, strategies and concrete practices likely to allow the effective creation of conditions which fall within the crossroads of the local and the global, the national and the international community and which covers all aspects of social life, in particular the viability of national politico-economic frameworks, material and security safety, the proper institutional framework of fundamental freedoms for the protection of the well-being of children. To do so, it will have accomplished its mission to be in the world, to make the world and to be "a reasonable humanity" as indicated by the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (Nancy, 2002: 73).

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON: THE CASE OF THE BUEA AND DOUALA COUNCILS, 1961-1972

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Abstract: *The study investigates local governance in the Buea and Douala IV councils in Federal Republic of Cameroon. Emphasis is laid on the changes that were manifested in local government from 1961 to 1972 because of the union between British and French Cameroons respectively. Focusing on the objectives of local governance in Cameroon, the article argues that it has been unable to meet the development needs of the local population. The study further argues that the socio-economic progress made by local government in the Buea and Douala municipalities were insufficient. The study attribute local government's failures to attain their goal to persistent lack of resources and the inability of local people to participate in decision making processes. Findings also confirm that the legal nature of local government maintains an afferent and a centripetal state. For local governance to succeed in the study areas and Cameroon in general, there must be total transfer of devolved political-administrative powers and resources to the local authorities. The realization of the aim of this article is based on a thematic and chronological approach making inferences to diverse documentation. Main sources include interviews from actors and participants in local government activities and archival materials from the national archival Buea (NAB), the Buea and Douala councils, not leaving out academic research. The analysis of these sources has produced data based on facts presenting local government activities in Buea and Douala areas.*

Keywords: Buea and Douala Municipalities, Local Government, Federal Republic of Cameroon, British and French Cameroon, Development

1. Introduction

The foundation of local government in Cameroon in general and in Buea and Douala in particular was laid by the colonial Masters. First, the German used the natural Rulers in Local governance and later made them agents of administration. These Natural Rulers administered justice, collected taxes, recruited and initiated community projects. When the First World War started in 1914 in Europe, Britain and France extended it into their colonies. At the end of the war in 1918, Germany was defeated and sent out of Cameroon by Britain and France. Unable to administer Cameroon together, they came into a consensus to partition it into two, France taking the bigger share of the territory. The French share became French Cameroon and the British share was named British Southern and Northern Cameroons. They administered their spheres separately by instituting local government. Between 1922 and 1945, they both implemented separate policies in Cameroon. The British implemented the policy of Indirect Rule, which transformed the chiefs and traditional councils into Native Authorities. It was through these Native Authorities that they controlled the people of British Cameroons. In the 1920s and 1930s, they established Native Authorities in all areas of jurisdiction especially in the Victoria Division. They maintained law and order, collected taxes to fill native treasuries, recruited labour and took charge of public health and economic development. In French Cameroon, France introduced the policy of Direct Rule and Assimilation. They divided the territory into administrative units, which were made up of divisions and sub-divisions controlled by civil servants as administrators. In 1923, they established the Council of Notables made of chiefs who had only advisory powers contrary to Native Authorities in the British section. They also created district councils in rural and urban areas, for instance, the Douala

Urban District which became known as the Mixed Urban Council on 25th June 1941. The period 1945-1961 was characterised by nationalism on both sides of Cameroon. It saw the formation of political parties and credit unions that fought for the independence of the territory. French Cameroon gained independence on 1st January 1960 and in 1961, British Southern Cameroon voted to join French Cameroon while British Northern Cameroon joined Nigeria. Cameroon became a federation in a union between Southern Cameroon which was named West Cameroon and La Republique du Cameroon called East Cameroon. After the independence and unification of the two Cameroons, the elites who had attained a certain level of education, mostly in the West took over from the traditional rulers. Local government areas were created and elections became a new system of selecting council representatives. Chiefs had less influence as the power vested on them to manage their resources and affairs was transferred to local government. The central government implemented French policies whereby the local elites had no say in any project that directly and indirectly affected their lives, thereby undermining local government. During this period, the central government was the sole decision-making body with the influence of the French who still had a grip on the country. This system did not change until 1972.

2. The geographical setting of the Buea and Douala

The Buea Municipal Council is located in the sub-divisional headquarters of Buea and the South West regional head quarter of Cameroon. Buea is a renowned town, which served as the capital of Kamerun during German colonial era from 1901 to 1909. It also served as the capital of the United Nations (UN) Trust Territory of Southern Cameroon from 1919 to 1961. It served as the capital of the seat of government of West Cameroon from 1961 to 1972, when the organizational structure changed from a federal state to a unitary system of government (Evelyn, 2007:66). The Buea Municipality has a surface area of 870sq km. It is located at the foot of Mount Cameroon (4095m) which is the highest mountain in West and Central Africa and one of the most active volcanoes in Africa. It is bounded to the north by tropical forest on the slope of Mount Cameroon (Fako) that rises to 4100m above sea level. To the south-west by the city of Limbe, to the south-east by the Tiko municipality and to the west and east by Idenau district and Muyuka municipality. The Buea Council area has a total of about 82 villages under four districts namely Buea Station, Soppo, Molyko/mile 17 and Muea (see Map 2).

With an equatorial climate, the temperature is moderate with a slight seasonal variation (rainy and dry seasons). The Buea Council has a moderate economy with agricultural administration, business, tourism and the financial sector which were greatly exploited by local government. Each village is headed by a chief who takes care of the affairs of the village. Thus they became agents of local government during the colonial period. Buea has an estimated population of above 200,000 inhabitants which consists essentially of the Bakweris (the indigenes) and a highly cosmopolitan population within the urban space. The Buea people speak 'Mokpwe' which constitute part of the family of Duala language in the Bantu group of the Niger-Congo family. The people of Buea are said to be closely related to Cameroon's coastal peoples (the Sawa), particularly the Dualas in the littoral Region of Cameroon. Under the British and French colonial rules, they were split, one part (the Duala) falling under the French administration and the other (the Bakweri) under British administration (Ngoh, 1987:5).

The Douala IV council is one of the six councils of the Division that makes up the city of Douala. It is related to the city council. The Douala IV Council was created by decree No89/1360 setting up the Douala City Council (Yeluma, 2020). The Douala IV Council has a surface area of 890km. It is made up of a total of about 10 villages and their adjoining quarters. The Douala IV Council is situated on the western part of Douala City precisely at Bonassama and located in the coastal plain of the Wouri estuary.

The Douala IV Council is bounded to the north by the Moundou Division, to the south by the River Wouri, to the west by the Fako Division (Tiko council to be precise) and to the east by the River Wouri again and the council of Manoka (Yeluma, 2020). (See map) It is a home of

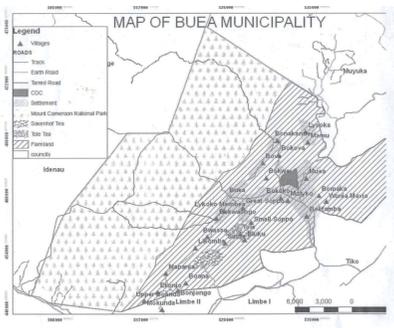
about 600.000 inhabitants of various origins and has an equatorial climate with four seasons. The Douala IV council area with its sandy soils has low retention capacity that has practically no drainage system to evacuate run off. Disposal of domestic waste causes a problem in such areas. The hydrographic network of the Douala IV council is quite dense and dominated by two rivers, the Wouri and the Mungo. These rivers are extremely polluted and drain a considerable amount of waste which is supposed to be exploited by local government.

Locating Buea XE "Buea" and Douala XE "Douala" IV Councils



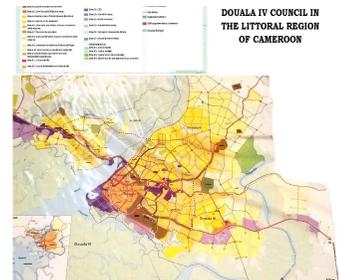
Source: Adapted from New Administrative Map of Cameroon 1996

Buea XE "Buea" Municipality in the South West Region



Source: Adapted from E.M. Evelyn, Local Government and Rural Development: A Case Study of Buea in Cameroon" (Master of Philosophy, University of Oslo, Blindern, Norway, 2007, p.43

Douala XE "Douala" IV council XE "council" in the littoral region of Cameroon



Source: Douala IV Council Chart, 19/06/2020

2.1. Bases of the new

Several reasons accounted for the new local government policy. They were first to set up new structures of local government. Second, to bring the local government administration closer to the people of Buea and Douala. Third, to unit two local systems that was first instituted by the British and French. Fourth, to generally manage the economy of Cameroon. Fifth, to educate council officials to have one focus and finally to transfer new revenue to councils.

2.2. Political consideration

The change of administration from collective local or traditional chiefs who presided over the native courts and acted as chairmen to local councils to executive secretaries. The new local government policy was also instituted in order to put an end to the boundary between Buea and Douala as well as boundary between Buea and Nigeria. Note should be taken that there was a historical link which existed between the local people of Douala of French Cameroon and the Bakweri chiefdom of the British Cameroon. The British Southern Cameroonians particularly the Buea hated the fact that local governance in their area was handled by Nigerians not the British. This angered them and they decided to go in for a new local government policy that will reunite them with the French Cameroonians" (Eyondetah, 1987:56). The new local government policy was also to re-establish the two local government systems into one as it was under the German rule. The Germans administered Cameroon through their Chiefs, devolved power to them to institute justice, peace and maintain law and order and became veritable institutions of local government. Hence in 1961, British and French

Cameroons through their leaders Ahidjo and Foncha thought of going back to the German era where local government was one (Ngoh, 1987: 41-43).

2.3 Socio-Economic impetuses

The lack of substantial socio-economic development in British Southern Cameroons (Buea) provoked the institution of the new local government policy. The British through local government neglected the development of Southern Cameroon (especially Buea) as compared to French Cameroon (Douala). Local government in Buea was poorly equipped since they were not being administered by the British but governors from Nigeria. For this reason, development projects in Buea were poorly constructed as compared to those in the Douala (Fanso, 1989: 236). Southern Cameroon (Buea) was ruled in an of hand and indirect fashion through Native Authorities who did little to expose its inhabitants to modern political and economic institutions. The locals of Buea complained that the administration in Lagos starved them of development funds and educational opportunities (Ngoh, 1987: 255). The Nigerians, particularly the Ibos and others like the Ijaws and the Ibibios dominated British Cameroon's social and economic life. This was especially so after the construction of the Kumba-Mamfe road via Buea, because it facilitated the large-scale movement of Nigerians in to British Cameroons (Buea). This hampered the socio-economic development of the people as most of the development would be carried to Nigeria. The Buea natives were not happy with the increasing number of Nigerians in their local government activities. The removal of custom duties between Buea and Douala made trade easier between them (Fanso, 1989: 242).

3. Constitutional Provisions

The constitution provided important modifications, for instance, citizens of both Southern Cameroon and la Republique du Cameroun had a single nationality that of Cameroonian. English and French were adopted as the official languages in both East and West Cameroon local government. Article 47 of the constitution was intended to enable local government in Southern Cameroon to have an equal voice in decision-making if accurately applied. According to the article 47 (Ngoh, 1987: 163):

... The revision of the constitution shall be voted by a simple majority of all members of the Federal Assembly with the provision that such majority shall comprise a majority of the representation to the Federal Assembly of each Federated state.

On September 30, 1961, the British Authorities constitutionally transferred the sovereignty of Southern Cameroon local government to la Republique du Cameroun. On October 1, Southern Cameroons' Local government was proclaimed an independent government and reunited with the republic of Cameroon to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon (Peter Ndeh, 2019).

3.1. Local government in Buea (West Cameroon) 1961-1972

In 1961, the system of local government was introduced in West Cameroon. As a result, collective local administration passed from the traditional chiefs who presided over the native courts and acted as chairmen of native authorities to local councils which were controlled by Executives secretaries (NAB, 1948-1967: 2). It was noticed that the Native Authorities in British Cameroon had failed to satisfy the war-time middle class people and thus there was the need for urgent reforms and reorganizations. When the British left their part of Cameroon, they hadn't established a well-organized system of local government. However, the State of West Cameroon continued to search for ways of rendering local government more efficient. Hence, local government was implanted in West Cameroon. With the reunification of British Southern Cameroons and la Republique du Cameroun in 1961, the local community elected their councilors. The Bakweri council notice of June 16, 1962 reformed the Bakweri Council to include non-indigenes (strangers) as councilors and elections into the council were on political party lines.

The non-indigenes were drawn from quarters, such as Buea Strangers quarters East, Buea Strangers quarters west, Buea Station and Great Soppo quarters, Ekona Mbenge East among others. These quarters had one representative each, but for Ekona Mbenge East, Molyko and Lysoka plantations, both had two council representatives each in the council. This was due to their population size and all council representatives were elected. (NAB, 1948-1967: 2). Unfortunately, the Bakweris were not in favour of the specification of composition notice of 1962, which gave the privilege to non-indigenes to become members of the Bakweri council. To demonstrate that they were not in favour of the notice they petitioned it because of the following reasons: first, they thought their interest was not protected. Second, they saw the non-indigene representation as intrusion into their interest. Third, they argued that none consultations were held with them before the decision was taken to include non-indigenes in their affairs. The issue was resolved by the Secretary of State for local government, west Cameroon, who called on the Bakweris not to yield to wild and ill-informed options pushed through by certain persons whose main aim was to distract honest people. The authority called the move of the persons distracting honest people as a “disgrace to democracy”. The authority also told the Bakweris that the speculations were judicious and fair (NAB, 1962:5). With regards to elections, councillors were elected in the inaugural meeting held on the 18th August, 1962 at the native Authority Court hall, Buea at 10:30am. After the elections, the Hon. Secretary of State for local government, Buea, read a masterpiece of this welcome address to the new councillors where he congratulated them and wished the Bakweri District Council to be a model to all other councils in the Victoria Division. He also warned councillors to abide by the Native Authority staff rules in Matters of staff discipline and promotions. They applauded him for that wonderful speech and advised themselves to look on one another as countrymen and work hard for the success of the council (NAB, 1962:5). In his explanatory speech Hon. J.M Lafon said.

“My speech is like a home work I am happy because responsible men have been elected in the new council. The council requires nothing but hard work. I will do all I can for the staff condition of service to be attractive as to be equal to that of government. The council is not a gambling house, therefore, I am appealing to you all for hard work. Your work will be seen through your minutes as I will want to see changes that will take place in Buea within this period of three years. I shall be visiting your council from time to time as I would not like to see irresponsible councillors bringing up unnecessary reports to me against their staff. I am appealing for justice to be your ward-strict in the council. I will fear no-body and I will treat things as they come. God bless you all”.

This speech opened the way for many changes in the Bakweri Council. Illiteracy and unexperienced persons were put aside. In 1963, the presidential decree n°63/DF/250 of 26th July, 1963, created the Muyuka sub-district. But it was until December 1963, that presidential decree n°63/DF/436 included some Bakweri villages into the newly created Muyuka sub-district. These villages included Ekona, Liola, Ndui, Masuma, Matangu I and II, Ikata Balong, Babenga, Bafia, Efote, Munyenge, Musone, Owe and Ekona Lelu. These villages all had councillors who regularly converged in Buea for council meetings. The transfer of these villages from Bakweri council to Muyuka sub-district meant that the councillors had to automatically switch their area of operation to the new council and court. The reasons of the transfer of the above villages from Bakweri council to Muyuka sub-district were first, difficulties faced by councillors travelling to Buea for council meeting. Second, the need to have a proximity administrative set up. This transfer brought down representation in the Bakweri council and sealed down its geographical space. The specification of composition notice in respect of the Bakweri Council was once again worked out in consultation with the people of the various groups. It was decided to retain the old name Bakweri rather than the name Buea in order to give a bathers sense of continuity in the new council (NAB, 1962:5).

In 1966, the Bakweri District council was transformed into the Bakweri Care Taker council and in 1968, it was renamed Bakweri Area Council. The local authority (constitution) ordinance passed by the Prime Minister of West Cameroon reorganized local councils. The

ordinance created some 21 councils in the Victoria division. Among them was the Bakweri council made up of four village group areas namely, Buea, Bonjongo, Lysoka and Muea. There was the joy of living together and national unity prevailed. There was peaceful co-existence among the Bakweris and the strangers. However, there were some challenges such as stealing, tribalism, nepotism, tax evasion, patches of trade and land disputes, especially with the strangers, et cetera. The council's evolution resulted to socio-economic development of the Buea area.

Economically, the Bakweri council maintained some roads during this era. They maintained the short road from Muea to Lysoka which was a corporation road running through one of its plantations. The Buea-Bokwai road was maintained with 13 Labourers plus one headman and one yardman. Bonjongo-Ekonjo road with 13 labourers plus one headman and one yardman. Tole-Molyko road 11 Labourers plus one headman only. Lysoka road, 9 Labourers plus one headman and 2 yard men. In 1963, a Land Rover and 5 tons tipper were bought for the council to facilitate work. (Lyonga John Nganele, 2020). Under building construction, with an amount of fifty million Francs, the Bakweri Council constructed the Buea town market and the motor park. The Buea native authority court hall and office were repaired and maintained. The Bakweri council chambers and offices were constructed with the sum of 4 million Francs. Two stores and two offices were built in Muea needed by the market master and the health overseer. With regards to employment, drivers like Mr. Philip Dinga were employed as the Bakweri council driver for the tipper and Mr. John Ndive, driver of the council land over. Mr. P.L. Mondo was employed as a tax messenger. Mr Mathias Kange was employed as the tax collector of Bwitingi village and Mr. Kota Fonde as tax collector of Bonyamavio village all in the 1963/1964 financial year. 2 000 000 Francs was allocated for the construction of the Buea new market. This sum as indicated by the administrative secretary was meant to finance the cost of hiring caterpillars and bull dozers for levelling of the new market site only. There was no sufficient money at that time to finance the actual construction of a good market for Buea town Lyonga (NAB, 1962: 5).

As concerns water supply, the sum of 3 ½ million francs was included and approved in 1963/64 estimates for the Lysoka water supply. Water was supplied to Muea town on an amount of 1920 000 francs (NAB, 1964: 2). Buea town, the native authority offices, native court hall and staff quarters were electrified in Buea town and Great Soppo by the electricity corporation at the expense of the council (NAB, 1964: 2).

Table 1: The Bakweri Draft Estimate for capital work in 1963/1964

n°	Capital work	Amount
1	Lysoka water supply	3500 000 francs
2	Council chamber and offices	4000 000 francs
3	Levelling of Buea new market site	2000 000 francs
4	Staff quarters for administrative secretary type B and treasurer type C	2 076 000 francs
5	Messengers, market master, health overseer	500 997 francs
6	Bafia native court and C.D.C	366 423 francs

Source: Ja/e (1964)2 Minutes of the Bakweri Council meeting of 18th February, 1964 P.5.

In 1965, presidential election was held in the country and the Bakweri council participated fully in this election. All the councilors in the Bakweri council sensitized the masses in their respective areas on the modalities of election. Education rating was introduced in the Bakweri council area where children from class one to four were given free education.

3.2. Local government in Douala (East Cameroon) 1961-1972

The move towards the federation of West and East Cameroon Local Government was cemented by president Ahidjo on September 1, 1961, when he signed the Federal constitution. The constitution took effect on October 1, 1961. According to the constitution, the president

was both head of state and Head of Government. He exercised complete control over the courts, the magistracy, the civil service and he was empowered to exercise emergency powers without control from either the legislative or council of Ministers and Local Government. Local Government in East Cameroon had no power of its own as compared to the local Government in West Cameroon. The colonial high commissioner supervised local government because he insisted on having authority over them in order to keep the natives under control. The central government was the sole decision making body with the influence of the French. But the 1958 and 1959 laws governing Local government remained in force as well as the mandate of current municipal councilors (NAB, 1964: 2).

On the national political scene, multiparty politics was abandoned in favor of one-party system. In November 1961, President Ahmadou Ahidjo launched an appeal for the creation of a unified national party. After the work of the commission composed of the Cameroon Union (CU) and the Kamerun National Democratic Party of John Ngu Foncha (KNDP), the political parties of East and West Cameroon merged to form the Cameroon National Union (CNU) on September 1, 1966. It was during this period of monopolyism that all municipal elections were held from 1965 to 1987 (Willard, 1982, 245). During this period the electoral laws were modified as well as the municipal system. The Mixed Rural Councils created in 1952 and the Full-Function councils created in 1958 remained the same. In addition, their different mandates of councilors did not change. In Douala in particular and Cameroon in general, electoral laws although were not repealed in their entirety, they were modified in some of their provisions. These changes were in line with the authorities concerned to make the councils more accessible and more adaptable to the Cameroon context. The laws n°59/44 of June 17, 1959 and n°60/83 of December 31, 1960 created and extended the rural communal movement of average councils. Changes were however made at the level of the municipal councils in the mode of designation of its members. The composition of these councils in Douala corresponded more precisely to the concern of the legislator who has to associate the ruling class made up of chiefs and Notables to these councils. He justified his statement by claiming that, the sub-divisional councils which are superior in the scale of values, must also be composed of Notables. It seemed paradoxically in a country where we want to establish democracy but I believe absolutely necessary (Willard, 1982, 245).

On the contrary, the laws of July 7, 1966 modified provision of the Act of 17 June, 1959. In the old article, the Municipal Councils were elected for six years and the renewal of their mandate was to take place the same year without regarding the month of election. On the other hand, the new article maintained the six-year term but specified that the advisers should be renewed in full on the same date. This decision was intended to put an end to the ambiguous situations and violations of the law that stemmed from the vagueness of the previous election laws. Unlike the 1959 Act, the mayor was henceforth to be appointed by the Secretary of State for the interior, no longer by the Minister even the deputies were chosen from the members of the municipal councils (Willard, 1982, 245). The law of 1 March 1967 that was concerned particularly with councils in Douala got rid of any colonial character in the councils. Municipal councilors remained elected for a six-year term by direct universal suffrage. They were re-eligible and their number varied according to the importance of each municipality. Each council was divided into an electoral section, which was to elect a number of councilors proportional to the number of its inhabitants. The type of ballot provided for by the said law was a single-list ballot. Eligibility concerned citizens of both sexes aged 21 and above. But candidate exercising certain administrative functions could not run for office or be elected. These included Federal inspectors of administration, magistrates and state inspectors (NAB, 1964: 2).

As a matter of fact, the period between 1961 to 1972 in East Cameroon was characterized by Municipal elections and appointment. In the Douala area, councils were created and the names of others were changed. The ministerial decree n°108 of 27 February 1961 repealed the presidential decree n°150 of 27 June 1960 amending the polling stations of the district of Douala. In article 24 of the law of 1 March 1967, the Secretary of State could refuse

to register titles or signs that would have a subversive meaning. This provision placed them at the heart of a rather tense period governed by exceptional laws. Moreover, the expression 'subversion' had deeply muted people in a one party system where electoral competition had disappeared. But the socio-economic development of the council, the undeniable role that it played in the political development of the populations, the advent of the unitary state of Cameroon in 1972 brought the public authorities and council authorities in Douala and East Cameroon in general to take a new electoral law, which repealed the one of 1st March the law of 5th December 1974, reorganizing councils in Cameroon (Arrete, n°123 du Mars 1961: 373).

3.3. Social-economic development of the Douala municipality

Despite the changes and elections that were carried out during this period in East Cameroon, development activities were not left out in the Douala municipality.

3.4. Economic development

The population in the local areas in Douala maintained commercial relation between them with yielded revenue. Trade concerned two inspects. The sale of agricultural and manufacture products, which included cocoa, fruit, food and oil. The sale of cocoa supervised by SOCODER was done in cooperative centers scattered all over the municipality. Despite the existence of these markets, commercialization was slowed down by lack of roads in most localities. The state of affairs made the transport of sellers and their goods quit difficult (Arrete, n°123 du Mars 1961: 373). In the domain of Agriculture, the contribution of these local councils in Douala was on the development or exploitation of fire wood and charcoal, forestry and the building of agricultural methods for the production of firewood and charcoal which brought in revenue for rural development. In 1962, Mr Maneng Issac, residing in Douala was given or issued a license of exploitation of firewood and charcoal bearing on a portion of forest of 50 hectares, located in the department of Wouri (District of Douala) and thus demarcated. The authorization for this exploitation was valid for a period of one year (Willard, 1982, 245). Still under agriculture, agricultural schools were created in order to educate agricultural personnel who could better manage the agricultural sector. In these schools, deputy heads, agricultural engineers were trained. Mr. Voundi Mbila Stone was trained as an agricultural engineer.

As concerns roads and bridges, some roads and bridges were improved and constructed during this era in Douala. Most of these roads were financed by the road investment department of the councils. The transportation of people and goods between cities, towns and villages was facilitated at least by one main road. For instance, Douala trip to Yaounde and development of the road laboratory. Local councils during this era did not have enough means, financial, material and human that could enable them to engage in major projects such as construction of bridges and maintenance of roads. Other economic development included the maintenance of air field of the city of Douala, the Municipal stadium, the building of communal housing services and the urbanization plans of towns and cities (Arrete, n°123 du Mars 1961: 373).

3.5. Socio-cultural development

Educational facilities in Douala Local government were left mostly in the hands of missionary societies while the councils only supervised the smooth running of the schools. These missionary societies included the catholic, protestant and the advent of Islam. They constructed a lot of schools from primary to secondary and professional schools. For instance, especially in Bonajo and Bonamoussadi, Catholic missionaries created primary schools which encouraged the people of the area to send their children to school. As time went on the Douala government and councils also created several rural and regional primary schools, professional schools, professional health schools and agricultural schools (MINATD Archives, Journal official federal : 456-457). Local government also helped the government in carrying out vaccination against diseases. Nurses were trained in local health schools in Douala and Ayos and an institute

of hygiene was spared by local government to prevent diseases. With the help of wood, many artists made various objects drums, statues, traditional guitars, local language, motar boards, balafons spoons and plates. Many of such artists in Douala composed songs that were sold to local musicians and councils sponsored them. Craftsmen made baskets and chairs, bamboo beds, raffia mats that served as roofs. All these helped the councils to raise revenue since these cultural things were sold around and out of the various municipalities in Douala. The councils also encouraged games like football. Tournaments were organized where every locality participated. Such activities were generally limited during this era because of a lot of politics in councils (Ngoh, 1987:255).

3.6. Federal government influence on local government

The Federal government of Cameroon had both negative and positive influence on Local government during this period. Positively on October 10, 1965 Ahidjo inaugurated work on the modern Douala-Tiko road which was also extended to Victoria. The construction of the road was partly financed by France and work started on both ends. It was scheduled to be completed at a cost of 800 000 000 CFA Francs. The Douala-Tiko road literally wiped out the physical barrier between East and West Cameroon. The Federal Government brought the North into greatest contact with the south by extending the Douala-Yaounde road to the North (Carlos, 2000: 123-128). Several kilometers of secondary roads were constructed in the North. The North was also provided with a railway line which linked Douala to Ngaoundere via Yaounde. In 1961, the Federal government received about 33 million in loans and grants on the first phase of the construction of the railway. All this was just to promote Local governance in these areas. After 1963, the Federal government launched the construction of a railway line between West Cameroon and East Cameroon and in December 1965 the first passenger and goods railway line reached Ediki in Kumba via Buea West Cameroon which eased local government activities in the area. Furthermore, the Federal government provided a deep-water port for the exportation and importation of goods which helped local government to increase their search for revenue. It constructed a natural harbor at Victoria and its linkage with Douala via Tiko by road (Ngoh, 1987:255).

Negatively, the National party was to centralize local government at the detriment of the autonomy that local government enjoyed in colonial days. Even though the Federal Government described the party as one that will prevail democracy, Freedom of expression and where several tendencies would co-exist, it had a different intention that of controlling all the affairs locally and nationally. This explains why Charles Assale, the prime Minister of East Cameroon rejected the principle of national party by recalling the fascist experiences in Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia (Ngoh, 1987:255). Administratively, the Federal Government influence Local government negatively in the area where the Divisional officers in Victoria Division were to perform the role of the Prefect. Strictly speaking, they were going to perform both state and Federal government functions. In addition to this, there were only very few of the Cameroonian staff in the district administration who were acquainted with the local government system as was practiced during the colonial period. This threw a lot of difficulties in the control of local government finance and staff. It became necessary to use only local authority staff available and they were granted additional responsibilities, for instance, the control of expenditure (Bayart, 1980: 70). As a result of this, Administrative secretaries were appointed authorizing officers for the councils. But this was just for a short time as such powers were later given back to Divisional Officers (Bayart, 1980: 70).

The reorganization and reforms of Local government system was governed by the Federal Government, resulting from the new division, sub-divisions and districts not the councils themselves. The prefects appeared to be the central point of administration taking into accounts both Federal and state set-ups. The prefects were not only authorizing officers but they were also advisers to councils. As advisers, they involved and participated in council affairs. They attended all council meetings in order to ensure that the decisions arrived at by

the councilors favoured the Federal government activities (Nghoh, 1987:255). Federal governments influence on local government greatly hampered development projects in the various municipalities during this era and ever when councils in west and East Cameroun were harmonized in 1974, the situation become worse. Councils completely lost their autonomy and everything was central. Council's finances became centralized not leaving out the economic and social progress of council areas.

Between 1961 and 1972, British southern Cameroon became West Cameroon and former French Cameroon named East Cameroon. Local government systems in the Buea and Douala areas were still administered separately. The State of West Cameroon gave many localities the opportunity to decide their own development by reorganizing some councils. The Victoria Divisional Council underwent changes where other councils were created like the Bakweri District Council which later became the Buea Council. The Federated State of East Cameroon did not change their municipal system although their electoral laws had changes that led to series of elections in council areas especially in the Communes of Douala. The Buea and Douala councils both encountered problems which needed solutions. Their revenue sources which did not change enabled them to carry out some development activities. The revenue came from taxes, grants, subvention, and loans. The Federal Government also helped the councils by constructing roads, railways and supervising their projects through the Prefects and Divisional Officers at the detriment of council autonomy. Councils completely lost their autonomy and everything became central. Councils finances were centralized not leaving out the economic and social progress of council areas. The incompetence of some local council officials, the fact that councils self-financed themselves and depended on the workers they trained made the government to adopt a radical reform in 1974. One may think that at this juncture, council's problems were solved but no the government only wanted to have a firm grip over the whole territory by harmonizing the Federated states of West and East Cameroons. President Ahmadou Ahidjo decree of 24 July 1972 concerning the administrative organization marked the beginning of the harmonization process. Local government was harmonized by law n°74/23 of 5 December 1974 and by legal texts, which completed the fundamental stage by putting in place institutional structures.

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THE HIV/AIDS PHENOMENON IN ROMANIA DURING 2007-2022

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Abstract: *The HIV epidemic in Romania started and evolved as a pediatric type issue and back in the early 90s it represented half of all European AIDS cases in children, over 1000 cases detected out of a total of 2000. In response to this problem, the implementation of a free, universal access program of highly active antiretroviral therapy - HAART became a priority. The purpose of the research is to identify the dynamics of HIV-AIDS in post-December Romania highlighting the moment zero of the infection before 1989, following a comparative analysis in the period 2007-2022. Research methods: The study was carried out using the comparative analysis of existing statistical data. To highlight the phenomenon, we took into account analysis parameters used in the Regional Centers for Evaluation and Monitoring the HIV/AIDS infection. Following the analysis, the transmission paths of HIV infection in Romania were identified, along with the behaviors considered risky that contribute to maintaining an upward slope of newly detected cases. Conclusions: the evolution of the HIV infection in Romania continues to be on an upward slope which, although it has slowed down compared to the 1990-2000 period due to the implementation of a diagnosis and treatment mechanism, it cannot be stopped. Behaviors considered risky along with the use of injectable drugs continue to increase the incidence of new cases detected despite the means of population education by information campaigns, media spots, or information accessing from informed sources.*

Keywords: HIV infection, epidemiological evolution, risk groups, pandemic, Romania.

1. Introduction

1.1 General aspects of the HIV- AIDS phenomenon

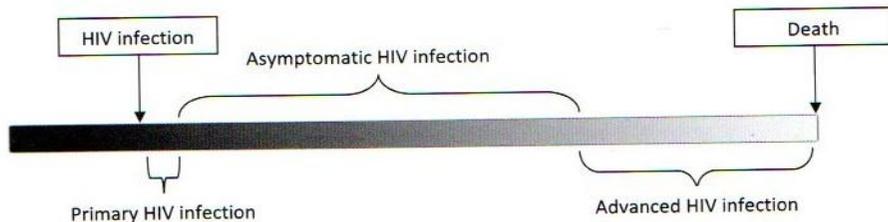
Viruses are very small-sized infectious agents with a primitive structure incapable of multiplying except by parasitizing living cells. Through multiplication, the parasitized cell ends up being eliminated. The role of the human immune system is to defend against infectious agents entering the body. In this case, the target cell of HIV infection is T4 helper responsible for shaping the individual's immunity. HIV infection originates from the virus of the same name which is part of the family called Retroviridae subfamily, Lentivirinae genus, Lentivirus, HIV species. Once multiplied, it ends up compromising the immune system of the infected person. The virus does not kill by direct action, it only disarms the parasitized host, being in the end a safe target in front of bacteria, infections, viruses.

The HIV person infected becomes contagious and can transmit the virus from the beginning even if the HIV test is apparently negative due to the seroconversion period. Since the 1985s, we have been able to detect the presence of anti-HIV antibodies by laboratory tests. This is possible, however, only after the period called "immunological window" or seroconversion, a period that reaches on the average 3 to 6 weeks after infection. Before this term, all tests will show false negative results. The incubation period of this virus can reach up to 10 years, during which the person may not show any alarming symptoms. (Ciufecu 1998:5-15).

The infection is characterized by often non-specific signs and symptoms such as fever, muscle pain and lymph node enlargement. The body's weakness and clinical degradation with

associated symptoms and diseases are generally due to the evolution of the infection in the absence of treatment, reaching the final clinical stage called AIDS as shown in figure 1. HIV can be transmitted from the infected person through unprotected sexual contacts, the shared use of syringes from injecting drugs, natural breastfeeding of children from HIV-positive mothers, blood transfusions from unsafe sources. Risk behaviors play an important role in the spread of HIV infection, found especially in groups considered at risk, such as drug users, prostitutes, migrants, people on the verge of poverty. (Fyson H, 2011:3-4).

Figure no. 1. Key HIV stages



Source: Fyson, 2011

From the medical point of view, AIDS represents a set of clinical symptoms and signs (a syndrome), a disease that slowly attacks and destroys the body's immune system, making it vulnerable to serious and often fatal illnesses. The AIDS disease, already installed, defines a number of different conditions that can cause serious illness or even death. Current treatments allow avoiding (or postponing) opportunistic infections and slow down the evolution of the disease. It is important that a person infected with HIV avoid re-infection with HIV or contact with other infections that can accelerate the onset of AIDS.

If the evolution of HIV infection may last up to 10-12 years, death occurs, as a rule, in 2-3 years after the appearance of the last phase of the AIDS disease in the absence of antiretroviral medical treatment. The implementation of interventions in these situations include therapy, counselling, psychosocial assistance, which help both in order to rebalance the emotional balance of the infected persons and in limiting the spread of the infection in the community of which they are a part. (Schmidt, 2008: 21-22).

The AIDS pandemic began in 1981 with an epidemiological wave with specific manifestations of skin cancer (Kaposi's Sarcoma) in American gay men, the defining element being the immune deficiency. Retrospective studies revealed similar cases in tropical Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. The first cases of AIDS in children were reported in 1982 in New York (Mătușa, 1994: 9). Kaposi's sarcoma is caused in the context of severe immunodeficiency triggered by AIDS by the abnormal development of cells in the blood vessels of the skin (Mănescu, 1990: 28). The HIV/AIDS pandemic has tremendously spread at a global level with serious implications upon population (Andrioni, 2018). Society's response to the HIV infection can be seen as a permanent oscillation between supporting and rejecting people living with HIV (Sicrea and Andrioni, 2021:4).

The dynamics of current HIV infection is influenced by the mode of transmission, the risk groups (homosexuals, injecting drug users, heterosexuals with multiple partners) playing an important role in this respect. Aspects of sexual behaviour, age, other existing infections, but also the geographical region intervene in shaping the evolution of the disease. Epidemiologically and clinically, the regions of the USA and Western Europe can easily be distinguished from Africa in clinical particularities, especially in the case of newborns who have an unfavourable evolution in this region (Păun, 1998: 59-61).

1.2 History of HIV-AIDS in Romania

The HIV infection and AIDS became almost "non-existent" during the communist regime, as the first cases were hidden from the eyes of the medical world precisely to deny the existence of this disease on the territory of our country. In mid-1989, the National Reference Center for Human Retrovirus Infection issued a "commentary" announcing the presence of HIV in 153 people from 10 counties and the city of Bucharest, most cases being confirmed in the Constanța and Giurgiu regions. However, the figures expressed were far from real, being camouflaged and politically controlled. The approach of the first persons officially diagnosed with HIV in Romania was the following: they were hospitalized in pavilions with bars on the doors and windows, the disease being associated with the plague or leprosy highlighted in figure 2. The cases detected predominantly in children arouse heated discussions among the members of the commissions formed at the Ministry of Health. Experts from the ministry ended up being reluctant in mass testing of children and the population for fear of detecting new cases of HIV/AIDS on the territory of our country. The strong argument was *"This is the worst thing that can happen! To advertise we have AIDS in Romania"*. Practically it was a cover-up before the Western world by masking the epidemiological situation identified in our country. (Pătrașcu, 2002: 211-214)

Romania was the first country in Central and Eastern Europe to report a case of AIDS to the AIDS Surveillance Center of the World Health Organization (WHO) of Paris in 1985. No public health surveillance system was available regarding HIV/AIDS, and the order of the Romanian Minister of Health no. 200 issued on June 22, 1987 stipulated that the notification of the detected cases should be carried out only within the "Prof. Dr. Victor Babeș" Hospital of Bucharest.

The later reports confirmed the existence of the epidemiological accident from the period 1986-1991, which determined the transmission of HIV to about 10,000 children, cases confirmed after the mentioned periods.

Starting from 1990, the data analysis was done both at the national and the regional level and in the City of Bucharest quarterly in order to be able to compare the trend of the disease in different stages of time, space and interpersonal interactions.

The procedures are expanded with Minister of Health Order 1243 issued on September 29, 1993 establishing HIV testing for patients diagnosed with TB. Two years later, as a result of the Order of the Minister of Health no. 544 people with STIs (sexually transmitted infections) should also be tested for HIV.

Figure no. 2. HIV children in Romanian Hospital in 1990



Source: Pătrașcu, 2002: 443

Even in the presence of the new regulations, HIV testing for all persons considered as contacts at risk was not possible due to logistical means (National Institute of Infectious Diseases Dr. Matei Bals).

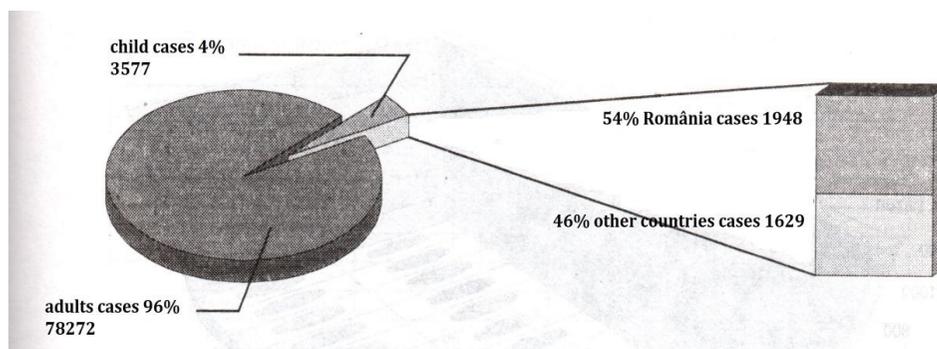
The year 1990 was the year when there were discussions about the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Romania. In March 1990, an HIV/AIDS surveillance and reporting system was implemented with the support of experts from the World Health Organization and the Romanian Ministry of Health. Later it established the way in which the future control mechanisms of the epidemic in Romania are supervised. More and more cases of children infected with HIV or AIDS in state hospitals and orphanages are coming to light. In fact, as the authorities began to report accurate data to the WHO for the first time, it became clear that over half of European children infected with HIV are in Romania (HIV outcomes).

According to the European Epidemiological Surveillance Center for AIDS, on September 30, 1992, 3577 cases were registered in Europe, 1948 (54%) were found on the territory of our country according to figure no. 3 (Pleşca, 1998:16-17).

People affected by HIV/AIDS induced a much greater fear than in the case of other diseases at least as serious but much more contagious. The image created by the mass media with descriptions that frighten civil society has induced a disproportionate fear. Among Romania's vulnerabilities are illegal drug use and HIV/AIDS (Corman, 2015a; Corman 2015b). Seropositive people often end up being excluded, being associated with marginalized people due to belonging to degrading social conditions such as homosexuals, intravenous drug addicts or prostitutes (Ciufecu 1996:68).

According to Dr. Pătraşcu's reports, in the 1989-1990 period, out of a total of 1025 tests performed on children admitted to hospitals or orphanages in Romania, 367 cases were found to be HIV positive, approximately 35.8% of the children. These results come in contrast with a frequency of only 3% positive tests detected in the tested mothers, which suggests that the infection of the children occurred nosocomially (during hospitalization).

Figure no. 3. Cumulative paediatric cases of AIDS, 1992



Source: Pleşca, 1998: 17

More than 60% of the children tested already had clinical forms of AIDS. The situation in Romania reported at that time did not include the development of epidemiological studies for HIV infection, the blood used in transfusions was not tested, and the lack of disposable materials (needles, syringes, gloves) could significantly contribute to the spread of the infection (Pătraşcu, Constantinescu, Dublanche, 1990).

Thus, in most cases of pediatric HIV/AIDS, children were horizontally infected with the F1 subtype virus from the adult population, which entered health care facilities and was then disseminated using contaminated needles and syringes and/or blood transfusions or undetected blood products, according to phylogenetic and epidemiological evidence (Preda, Manolescu, 2022).

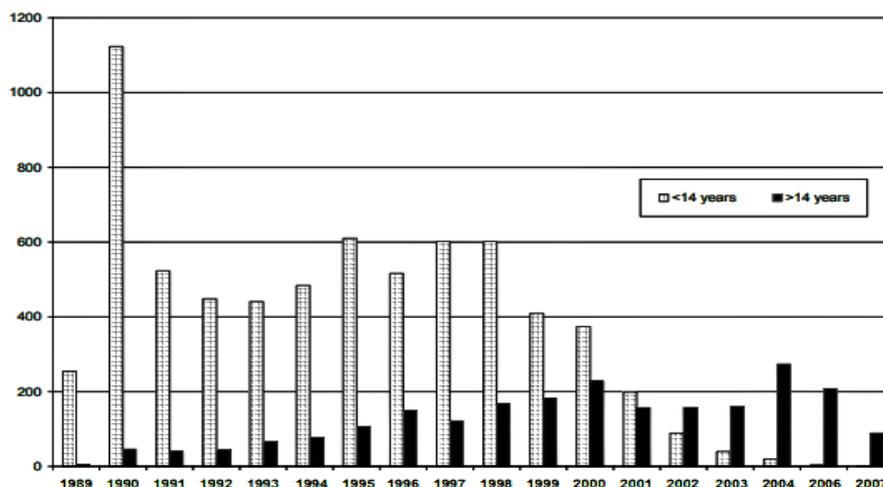
Starting with the year 1991, on September 25, Romania ratified the WHO Convention on the rights of the child from 1989 and mandatory testing of blood donors was introduced in Romania.

With the help of WHO and several non-governmental organizations, a short-term emergency HIV/AIDS prevention and control plan has been implemented to stop the transmission of infection through the administration of injections, differential treatment of HIV cases, and education of the general population. In this context, the Ministry of Health is developing a series of measures regarding blood transfusion, especially for infants and young children. For the first time, people at high risk of HIV infection are excluded from the blood donor program. Blood HIV test kits are becoming available at blood transfusion centres. Both doctors and other medical personnel are encouraged to administer oral drugs instead of injectable treatments (Popovici, 1991).

The pediatric HIV epidemic in Romania was very different from that in the US, with rare early diagnosis of infection and unavailable antiretroviral drug therapy until the late 1990s. In the absence of adequate antiretroviral treatment, perinatal transmission was increasing, which increasingly supported the need for HIV education and intervention in Eastern Europe (Kozinetz, Mătuşa, Cazacu, 2000).

In order to be able to understand more easily the dynamics of newly detected cases of pediatric HIV infection in Romania, we have highlighted in figure no. 4 their distribution in the period 1989-2007 (Rută, Cernescu 2008).

Figure no. 4. Evolution of the HIV epidemic in Romania (1989-2007)



Source: Rută, Cernescu, 2008

We can see that the highest number of detected cases is recorded in the 1990-2000 period, followed by a so-called plateau period until 2007.

There is no doubt that all that happened left a negative mark on our country in relation to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, a fact that will later influence the evolution of existing cases in Romania.

2. Research methodology. Data analysis and interpretation.

The research methods used in this study were based on the comparative analysis of statistical data, being a descriptive analysis. In order to highlight the HIV/AIDS phenomenon in Romania, we took into account analysis parameters already used by the Regional Centers for Evaluation and Monitoring of HIV/AIDS infection. These parameters are centralized within the HIV/AIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Department. in Romania at the National Institute of Infectious Diseases "Prof. Dr. Matei Balş" - Bucharest. The monitored parameters were those related to the trends regarding the way of transmission of the infection on the territory of

Romania according to the behaviours considered risky which and which can influence the dynamics of the evolution of the cases in the period 2007-2022.

The study started from the following research hypothesis: "the increasing dynamics of HIV infection is determined by the transmission of the infection through inappropriate behaviours related to unprotected heterosexual and homosexual sexual contacts, on the one hand, but also to the use of injectable drugs."

One of the major goals of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) is to limit discrimination against people affected by HIV-AIDS to zero by the year 2030 while reducing the number of new infections due to increased adherence to treatment for over 95 % of the population affected by HIV-AIDS.

Figure no.5. Fast-Track strategy to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030



Source: UNAIDS

Currently in Romania we find in the records of the National Institute of Infectious Diseases Dr. Matei Balș - Bucharest a total recorded number of 17,536 people affected by HIV-AIDS alive, out of a cumulative total of 26,554 people registered in the time interval 1985-2022 (table no. 1).

Table no. 1. General HIV/AIDS date in Romania at 30 June 2022

Total HIV/AIDS (CUMULATIVE 1985-2022) FROM WHICH:	26.554
TOTAL AIDS (CUMULATIVE 1985-2022)	17.664
TOTAL HIV (CUMULATIVE 1992-2022)	8890
LOST FROM EVIDENCE HIV-AIDS CHILDREN+ADULTS	794
TOTAL DEATHS AIDS (1985-2022)	8224
NUMBER HIV PATIENTS/AIDS IN LIFE FROM WHICH:	17.536
0-14 Years	157
15-19 Years	131
≥ 20 Years	17.248
HIV NEW CASES /AIDS, DURING 01.01-30.06.2022	264
HIV NEW CASES NOTIFIER	154
AIDS NEW CASES NOTIFIER	110
DEATH 01.01-30.06.2022 through the case confirmation sheets HIV/AIDS	62

Source: Ministry of Health National Institute of Infectious Diseases "Prof. dr. Matei Balș", 2022

In the first half of 2022, we note that 264 new cases were detected following laboratory tests, of which 154 were in the HIV infection and 110 in the AIDS stage.

An aspect that cannot be overlooked is that of the cases of the disease detected in children between the ages of 0 and 14. If we think about the evolution of the infection over time,

we can see how the literature of the 90s considered the phenomenon of HIV-AIDS in relation to seropositive mothers as a common mechanism for transmitting the infection to the child. At the time it was believed that about 40% of newborns of infected mothers were infected themselves, mothers from so-called risk groups bringing the highest percentage of perinatally infected newborns. The evolution of HIV infection among children in the 90s was much faster, explaining the high mortality in the 0-5 age group (Ciufecu 1998:33).

The introduction of triple combination therapy (HAART) shows good results, greatly reducing mortality in our country. Thus, in the first half of the current year, a number of 62 deaths confirmed through the HIV/AIDS diagnosis form were recorded.

Romania is one of the few countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe with a significant number of HIV cases, patients diagnosed with HIV-AIDS have the highest survival rate in Central and Eastern Europe. More than half of the patients diagnosed in the 1990s are alive grace to the access to modern treatment schemes, while in the 1990s the life expectancy was only three months.

The National Commission for the Fight Against AIDS (CNLAS) within the Romanian Ministry of Health has been developing a new National HIV-AIDS Program since 1997 when triple therapies and monitoring began to be introduced in university centres. Starting from May 1998, the First Anti-HIV Therapy Guide, elaborated by CNLAS, is adopted, recommending a prophylaxis scheme for the transmission of infection from mother to foetus (vertical route). So the Ministry of Health issues Order 889 on November 5, 1998 regarding the regulation of HIV pre- and post-testing testing and counselling (Şerban, 2013).

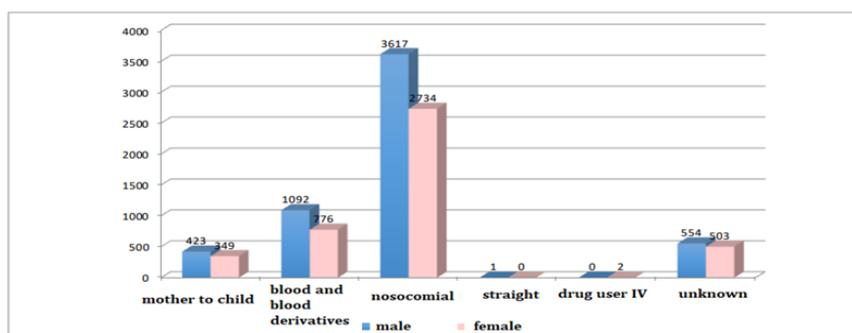
The cumulative distribution of pediatric HIV/AIDS cases from the beginning of the pandemic in Romania until now for the age group 0-14 years at the time of diagnosis according to the route of transmission may be seen in figure 6. Thus, the transmission by nosocomial infection is the main cause of HIV infection, with over 6,300 detected cases, plus over 1,800 cases due to transfusion of blood or blood derivatives.

The route of HIV infection transmission remains an important indicator in monitoring its evolution over a certain period of time.

In the figure 7, we have highlighted the path of transmission of the infection in the 2007-2022 period based on the results centralized by the Department for Monitoring and Evaluation of HIV/AIDS Infection in Romania - INBI "Prof. Dr. Matei Balş.

The main way of transmission remains heterosexual because the non-use of condoms. According to the data in the figure, we can observe a plateau trend, maintaining the total number of diagnosed cases within the 50-75% range over the period of one year. Compared to 2007, there is a decrease in confirmed cases following unprotected heterosexual intercourse.

Figure no. 6. Distribution of HIV/AIDS infection cases among children (0-14 years of age at the time of diagnosis), by the likely route of transmission (cumulative total 1985-2022)

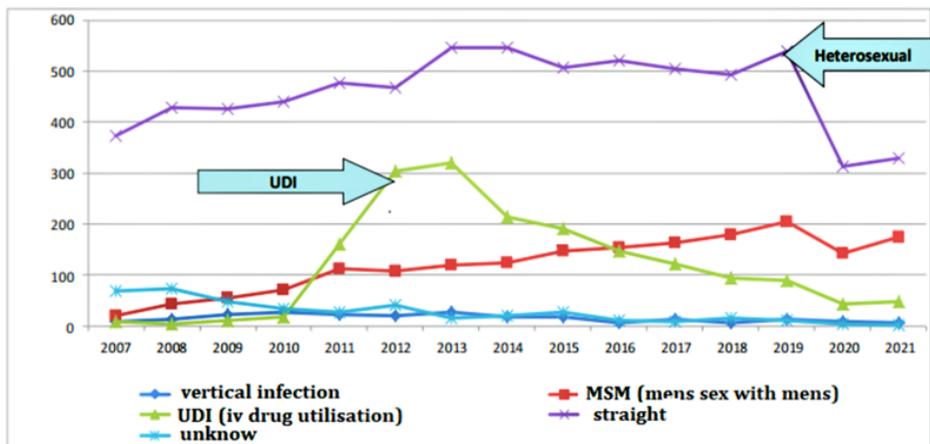


Source: Ministry of Health National Institute of Infectious Diseases "Prof. dr. Matei Balş", 2022

From the viewpoint of the total number of reported cases, we note the difference between 2013, when more than 1000 new cases of infection were registered, and 2021, when the cases dropped by half, below 560.

In this directive, based on the recommendations of specialists who stipulated that marital relations, especially within newly formed couples, should be in the form of protected sexual contacts until the serological status of the partners is revealed (both partners should be tested for HIV).

Figure no. 7. Trends in transmission in Romania, 2007-2021 (number)



Source: Ministry of Health National Institute of Infectious Diseases "Prof. dr. Matei Bals", 2022

In addition to the condom, the adoption of antiretroviral treatment by the people already diagnosed as HIV-positive plays a particularly important role. In the presence of a correctly administered treatment, we can talk about an increased adherence to the treatment and implicitly a considerable decrease in the amount of virus in the circulating blood of the person. The concept of an undetectable viral load ≤ 20 copies / ml cube of blood is being increasingly discussed.

In 2016, through a campaign to prevent and combat HIV / AIDS, and the stigma related to HIV, the phrase Undetectable-Non-Transmissible was publicly launched based on scientific evidence but also on the behavioural, social and legal implications associated with accepting the N=N concept.

In certain situations, studies were conducted on serodiscordant couples in which one partner was HIV positive while the other was uninfected when HIV transmission from multiple unprotected sexual contacts was not reported. These studies were carried out in serodiscordant couples where the seropositive partner had a viral load below 200 copies per cm³ of circulating blood (Eisinger, Dieffenbach, Fauci 2019). In one of the studies on the risks of N=N transmission reported by the National Union of Organizations of People Affected by HIV-AIDS (UNOPA), 1166 couples who had unprotected sex more than 58,000 times were included. The studies looked at couples where one partner is HIV positive but on ARV treatment and the other partner is HIV negative. One of the eligibility criteria was that the partners were already having unprotected sex. Both gay and straight couples were enrolled, and their average age was 40. During these studies, no person became infected from the seropositive partner.

Serodiscordant couples who wish to conceive a child no longer have to resort to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) or other methods used in the past such as the sperm washing procedure. Reducing the fear associated with HIV transmission can reduce the stigma and

rejection of HIV-positive people when they meet new partners and want to form a couple (UNOPA, N=N). This N=N theory will influence in the future how HIV infection can be kept as low as possible so that in the coming years we see a decrease in cases due to sexual transmission of HIV (both heterosexual and homosexual).

If in the case of serodiscordant couples we already have the N=N concept, to prevent the transmission of HIV and other infections among injecting drug users until 2020, the Romanian Anti-AIDS Association (ARAS) through a social ambulance, distributed in the Bucharest Municipality free sterile syringes, a service that had to be stopped because of the lack of financial resources and the non-involvement of state institutions, according to an article for the hotnews.ro news site published in February 2021: *"The Romanian Anti-AIDS Association announced through a press release, that, due to lack of funds, the ARAS mobile team, which for over 20 years has offered prevention services to people with increased vulnerability, no longer intervenes on the streets of Bucharest from the end of December 2020 [...]ARAS accuses the authorities for not allocating funds to support activities meant to reduce the risks of HIV and hepatitis B and C infection for the persons in the key groups."* (Hotnews.ro, 2021).

The need to prevent parenterally transmitted infections, implicitly HIV infection, is vital for the community of injecting drug users. In Europe, the concept of monitored drug use in sterile injection rooms has existed for over 30 years. The facilities provided by a secure environment, where illicit drugs can be used under the supervision of trained personnel, primarily mean the reduction of acute risks of disease transmission through unhygienic injection, preventing overdose deaths and referring drug users to health and social services.

Drug users' rooms typically provide drug users with: sterile injecting equipment as well as counselling services before, during and after drug use, emergency overdose care and addiction support.

With the emergence and rapid spread of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and injection drug use in the 1980s, a number of measures aimed at reducing the negative impact associated with intravenous drug use were imposed.

These measures included awareness campaigns, peer education, health promotion, provision of sterile injection equipment and substitution treatment.

Drug rooms originally evolved as a response to health and public order issues related to public drug use. As for the historical development of injection rooms, the first supervised room for intravenous drug use was opened in Bern, Switzerland in June 1986. Other facilities of this type were established in the following years in Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Norway, Luxembourg, Denmark, Greece and France. A total of 78 official drug use units are currently operating in seven reporting countries to the ¹European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), following the opening of the first two drug use units in a 6-year study in France in 2016. There are also 12 units in Switzerland.

The Drug Use with Supervised Injection Facilities Act was passed in 2017 to allow the creation of these monitored locations. Within a month of the adoption of the law, two fixed locations and one mobile monitored drug injection location were created. Lisbon has developed similar services since 2019; other data are available in a feasibility study on drug consumption facilities in five major cities in Belgium. (European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2018).

The Carousel Association in collaboration with the Romanian Angel Appeal Foundation (RAA) in a feasibility study on drug consumption rooms drew the attention to the importance of developing such rooms in Romania as well. The authors of the study exemplified what could be the benefits of such rooms that can operate both in a fixed location and in mobile units, both

¹The European Observatory on Drugs and Drug Addiction provides the EU and its member states with objective, reliable and comparable information at European level on the phenomenon of drugs and drug addiction and their consequences. Its purpose is to support policy-making and guide initiatives to combat drug use.

-serving the same target group: drug users from vulnerable groups who take them in the street, in visible places. These rooms have two major objectives:

- to reduce the risks associated with drug use by improving access for vulnerable groups
- to provide a safe environment for drug use and adapted health services (including prevention of HIV infection)
- to contribute to the increase of the safety and quality of life in communities affected by drug use through
- to reduce the impact of public area consumption on different categories of the population (Ursan, 2015).

The use of injectable drugs remains one of the ways of HIV transmission, which in the absence of programs aimed at limiting transmission in the case of CDI will be in a position to expose themselves to infections with parenteral transmission (HIV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C) .

The long-term objectives in the sphere of prevention must aim at the creation of legal mechanisms capable of supporting social and medical policies aimed at responding to the needs of people affected by HIV-AIDS, with the aim of facilitating social inclusion, but also a series of instruments that contribute to reduction of new cases of HIV infection. This in the conditions in which the number of people living with HIV in Europe is increasing.

3. Conclusions

The HIV infection continues to put pressure on the public health system. Although we have come to witness a decrease in the number of new illnesses compared to the early years of the pandemic, this condition remains one of the current challenges of our country.

Following the analysis, the transmission trends of HIV infection in Romania were identified, along with the behaviors considered risky that contribute to maintaining an upward slope of newly detected cases.

From the point of view of the infection transmission, the main route remains the heterosexual one, accounting for an average of 60% of all cases detected in the 2007-2022 period. Romania has the most long-term survivors of HIV infection from the 85-90 cohort, who are now in adulthood.

The lack of programs for injecting drug users (IDUs) make them sure targets for both HIV infection and B and C hepatitis. In the absence of sterile injection rooms, or sterile street injecting equipment, injecting drug users can transmit the infection further by sharing needles.

The importance of adherence to antiretroviral therapy remains the main "instrument" by which we can keep the infection under control for the people already diagnosed, while also reducing the risk of HIV transmission to other sexual partners.

Assessing, monitoring and treating the existing HIV/AIDS cases reduces the risks of new outbreaks. The management of this infection must be approached multidisciplinary, including in the social sphere.

Primary prevention and education of the general population through information and avoidance of behaviors considered risky represent a means that cannot be ignored by the authorities.

Thanks to the new treatments, the HIV infection or AIDS disease becomes a chronic, long-lasting one with a low mortality rate, which puts pressure on the budgets allocated to the health sector in Romania.

Since 1985 to the present in Romania more than 8,200 people have lost the battle with the disease, and globally another 40 million have lost their lives.

HIV/AIDS essentially represents by far the longest-lasting pandemic ever to exist on a planetary level, a pandemic that generates very high annual costs for each individual country and requires appropriate interventions.

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PROPOSITIONS FOR AN UNDERSTANDING OF URBAN SHRINKAGE UNDER PLANETARY URBANIZATION

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Abstract: *This theoretical essay reflects on the conceptual underpinnings of research in the literature of urban shrinkage. It builds upon criticisms of the literature, mainly on the lack of urban theoretical reasoning, and it argues for a recalibration of both theoretical and empirical urban shrinkage literature based on advancements in the literature of planetary urbanization. Problems associated with the city-centric vision dominant within the literature of urban shrinkage or its usage mainly of demographic indicators, which also represent some of the common criticism employed within the planetary urbanization and critical urban theory, are debated for a reconsideration. Three propositions underpinned by theoretical and empirical developments in planetary urbanization are put forth: geohistorical contextualized urban shrinkage; urban shrinkage through moments of urbanization; multidimensional socio-spatial urban shrinkage.*

Keywords: critical urban theory, geohistorical urbanization, planetary urbanization, socio-spatial, urban shrinkage.

1. Introduction

One solid body of works developed over the last two decades, is dedicated to the causes, conditions and socio-political implications of contemporary declining cities. The incentives of this scholarship spurred in early 21st century as it became evident that many cities of Europe and North America experienced sharp economical, material or demographic decline after deindustrialisation. Despite some evident merits in understanding material declining cities, rising awareness to the phenomenon of urban population loss and conceptual and methodological advancements, as Mathias Bernt (2016) argued in an influential essay, the field suffers from conceptual limitations and pitfalls that hinders both theoretical and methodological further developments. We argue that this problem of conceptualization still persists in the field, and its importance becomes more salient and requires urgent fixing as cities continue to decline. Building on the direction proposed by Bernt, for a reconceptualization at the very heart of urban shrinkage through a solid conceptual understanding of the urban mainly as multirelational process, in this short essay we propose some conceptual orientations for both theoretical and empirical aims drawing on works developed within the school of planetary urbanization. One particular aim is to bring together debates from two fields of the urban that until now were separated and lacked intellectual communication.

Planetary urbanization represents an orientation within urban studies that gained traction during the 2010s, by expanding on past studies of Henri Lefebvre about the planetary totality of contemporary urbanization processes. Much of this tradition, theoretical and empirical, is underpinned on an essay by Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid (2015), but there are also other earlier or parallel works that build upon Lefebvre (Merrifield, 2013; Diener et al., 2006). Planetary urbanization represents a strand of contemporary critical urban theory attuned to questions of differentiation, contextualization, alternative urban spaces and political struggle (Roy, 2015; Brenner, 2009). At its core, planetary urbanization proposes a conceptualization of the urban as a geohistorical, uneven developed processes, socio-political contested, that is internally multirelational and is multidimensional in its socio-spatiality and

spans the planetary landscape. This scholarship received some criticisms because of its allegedly devaluation of urban agglomeration economics (Storper and Scott, 2016) and its central argument of theoretical and empirical totalizing by negating differences (Angelo and Goh, 2020).

This essay proceeds with the following structure. The following section proposes a presentation of the main debates and critiques within urban shrinkage literature. Afterwards, the remaining three sections discuss some propositions for theoretical and empirical recalibration within urban shrinkage building upon main arguments from the field of planetary urbanization.

2. Theoretical imperative: critiques of urban shrinkage

The field of urban shrinkage developed as a robust literature only in the past two decades and includes also studies that don't use the term shrinkage but employ other related concepts, such as decay or decline. The field has developed as mostly dominated by empirical case studies dealing extensively with:

1. trajectories and classes of urban shrinkage (Turok and Mykhnenko, 2008; Wolff and Wiechmann, 2018; Haase et al., 2016)
2. causes, conditions and effects of urban shrinkage and their mutual relationships (Reckien and Martinez-Fernandez, 2011; Szafrńska, Coudroy de Lille and Kazimierczak, 2019; Wang, Yang and Qian 2020)
3. policies and planning response to urban shrinkage (Pallagst, Fleschurz and Said, 2017; Nelle et al., 2017; Hattori, Kaido and Matsuyuki, 2017; Joo and Seo, 2018)

Aside from the empirical endeavours, a group of papers have addressed critical questions of conceptual refinement (Bernt, 2016; Haase et al., 2014; Grossman et al., 2013).

However, there are major concerns expressed within the field in relation to a list of problems associated both with empirical and theoretical aspects. Firstly, although there is general consensus on using the concept of urban shrinkage, the field generally lacks a consensual understanding on what urban shrinkage is and how it should be correctly identified. Bernt (2016) pointed towards three main approaches employed in understanding urban shrinkage: one that is demographical, related to population loss, another one using factors such as macro-economic and social crisis, and a blended approach that underscores causes and conditions of outmigration, ageing, fiscality or housing vacancy. One common criticism comes from the over usage of demographic factors (Doringer et al., 2020). In his programmatic paper Bernt argues for a differentiated picture of shrinkage, one that takes into account the many dimensions of urban space, as some studies have done in the recent years (Elzerman and Bontje, 2015; Pallagst, Fleschurz and Said, 2017; Haase et al. 2020). Secondly, the field was criticized for its strong focus on national or single city case studies. To overcome this shortcoming, scholars have proposed deciphering urban shrinkage contingent on national comparison (Doringer et al. 2020; Wolff and Wiechmann, 2018). Thirdly, another shortcoming of the field was identified in its non-relational perspective (Doringer et al., 2020; Bernt, 2016; Wolff and Wiechmann, 2017) that understands shrinkage as an in-situ event or process detached from contextual, adjacent and networked factors, in which, as Bernt (2016) argued, cities are considered merely containers emptied out of population.

In order for the urban shrinkage to overcome the shortcomings identified in these criticisms, the present paper argues that studies should truthfully follow recommendations proposed by scholars for a more urban-theory informed field. In this regard, the paper proposes theoretical reconceptualization, methodological and empirical orientations built upon developments in planetary urbanization, a strand of urban studies underscoring critical inquiries into urban and cities.

3. Geohistorical contextualized urban shrinkage

Although there is no real consensus within the literature on a definition of urban shrinkage, there is however a recurrent practice on transposing some empirical indicators and their reading on almost all case studies of shrinkage. The most common form is the use of demographic indicators of population loss. It is argued that urban shrinkage unfolds to similar extents as a matter of similar metrics of population loss, thus equalling urban shrinkage in one place and time to shrinkage in another place and time only as a function of similar population loss. This symptom is present in some attempts to formulate a general demographic threshold for considering a city that is undergoing shrinkage (Hollander et al., 2009; Pallagst, 2017). In this view, urban shrinkage and urbanization are considered transgeohistorical and even not necessarily urban since the shrinkage is presented only as a matter of demographic decline often without regard to the urban landscapes and processes. Building on the theoretical framework of planetary urbanization and more generally critical urban theory, we argue such an approach represents a misjudgement since urbanization is geohistorical contextual specific and depictions of shrinkage should be attuned to a contextual analysis. Overlooking geohistorical contexts of urbanization hinders the chances of developing meaningful generalizations of real urban shrinkage, not only of non-geohistorical demographic phenomena, and bringing forward new indicators of urban symptoms attuned to the current rounds of urbanization. In terms of urban landscape and life, the urban shrinkage indicated by a loss of 20,000 inhabitants in a former mono-industrial post-socialist city does not represent the same urban shrinkage as a similar population loss generates shrinkage in the context of postwar American suburbs boom. Differences of contextual shrinkage are both in terms of causes and conditions. Indeed, for the variegated actually existing technocratic capitalist or state socialist urbanizations, for the past two centuries the demography as manpower and city size represents a major indicator of a city's capacities to engage in industrial development, but technological advancements and reshufflings of international division of labour have transformed the demographic calculus of industrialization and its subsequent imprint on urban landscape. The paper argues for a contextual understanding of urban shrinkage attuned to geohistorical patterns of urbanization. Exploring patterns of demographic decline, infrastructural destruction or housing vacancy rates, that are highly common in the literature, can truly expand research when they are explained in relation to the urban landscape of geohistorical rounds of urbanization.

Since urbanization is generated by a multitude of processes associated with the urban landscape, dimensions of urbanization, such as demographics, or infrastructure, which are not urban per se up until they become crossed with urban socio-spatiality, should be analyzed through a metric that acknowledges the weight each dimension and its underlying conditions has on the overall geohistorical round of urbanization. Foremost this conceptual and operational intellectual exercise requires us to think how much demographic decline or other change in variables of urbanization is needed in each geohistorical urban context for us to identify a process of significant urban shrinkage. Intellectual efforts might be placed here in developing a framework of geohistorical metrics of urban shrinkage patterns.

Another main pursuit driven by the thesis of geohistorical urban shrinkage is to relate the phenomenon of urban shrinkage beyond the demographic or material infrastructure to other aspects related and important to different rounds of urbanization. However, the matter of shrinkage specific to urbanization rounds together with the strong temporal dimension opens the question of whether some aspects of urban shrinkage might indeed be considered parts of urban decline or they are associated with decline only in their own materiality. Over the course of history, infrastructural and technological materialities decline, shrink or disappear but they are not necessarily signs of urban shrinkage but of technological and social change within the same domain. As urban infrastructure of postal services declined across the globe in past decades, these were replaced by similar extended or concentrated urbanization of social communication, logistical or technological communication fuelled by the

generalization of telephonic services and rise of internet. In this case, elementary aspects of urbanization might still be present and continue to develop at similar rates, while the former materiality transforms into ruins and may become a part of urban landscape without necessarily triggering shranked urbanization.

The recognition of urban shrinkage attuned to geohistorical contexts of urbanization might move attention to other spaces of urbanization than the North-Atlantic which largely dominates the literature. In the Chinese urban system strongly driven by state authorities, Li and Mykhnenko (2018) have identified processes and causes of shrinkage different than those experienced on European grounds. The recent decade has answered strongly to the call expressed by post-colonial critiques that urged for embracing new geographies of theorizing (Roy, 2009; Robinson, 2011). It can be the best of times for urban shrinkage literature to overcome or enrich models of areal units with categories of analysis developed on the actual urbanization processes developed in different places of the globe.

Opening research of today's shrinking urbanities to theoretical reconceptualization of contextual urbanization helps and requires us to expand the list of indicators. Such is the case with the urbanization of nature, a process that is not transgeohistorical and has particularities through the evolution of capitalist relationships between the social, technological and ecological (Swyngedouw and Heynen, 2003). In the current era of *Capitalocene* issues as pollution or waste are important indicators for grasping the pace and extent of urbanization. Slowing rhythms of urbanization were visible during the COVID-19 pandemic as cities went into lockdown and experienced decrease in air pollution (He, Pan and Tanaka, 2020).

4. Shrinkage through moments of urbanization

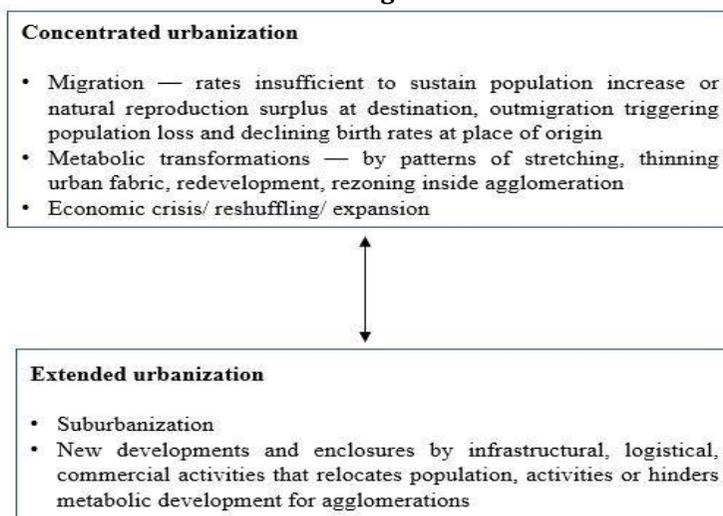
Urban shrinkage is mostly analyzed, identified and described as a condition of territorially-administrative circumscribed municipal units and by employing quantitative data collected at this tier. However, converging with the critique mentioned in the first section, we argue this methodological cityism (Angelo and Wachsmuth, 2015) hinders some important advancements in terms of a fully grasp understanding of relational urban shrinkage. This is more important as the literature identifies two main variables causing urban shrinkage that are located outside the empirically analyzed urban shranked core — suburbanization (Haase et al., 2016; Bartholomae, Woon Nam and Schoenberg, 2017; Wiechmann and Pallagst 2012) and outmigration (Turok and Mykhnenko, 2007; Haase et al., 2016). Unfortunately, we believe that the literature does not provide a fully comprehension on these variables and their importance for shrinkage mostly because it neglects their inherited complex relationality specific to the contemporary capitalist urbanization.

The framework of planetary urbanization proposes an understanding of urbanization as a complex process generated by a dialectic between two mutually constitutive relational moments of extended and concentrated urbanization (Brenner and Schmid, 2015; Brenner 2019; Arboleda, 2020). As the urban is not limited to the bounded universal form of settlement, and instead is conceived as a multifaceted process of both extended and concentrated urbanizations, one complex reading of urban shrinkage should take into account processes in regard to their actual existence as moments of urbanization. The process of concentrated urbanization is associated with patterns of clusterization, agglomeration and urban economies of scale which in the past rounds of preindustrial capitalist urbanization generated the dominant form of urbanization. Through moments of extended urbanization, the current planetary urbanization generates urban developments that are not bounded to the city form and unit. However, these developments represented by the material network of logistics, infrastructure, resource extraction, land enclosure, exclusions, commodified wilderness, sprawling that spawn and densify across landscape are deeply connected to the urban agglomerations as they are vital to the urban reproduction both inside and outside these latter spaces. The operationalization of landscape in the form of extended urbanization represents a departure from former hinterlands of ecological model of settlements, as the new areas serve

and are not necessarily and only connected with the adjacent agglomeration but also with other distant spaces of both concentrated and extended forms of urbanization (Katsikis, 2018).

In this regard, Figure 1 proposes a useful distinction within the two moments of urbanization of the processes that act as causes and conditions of urban shrinkage in capitalist societies. This graphic construction helps to identify processes in each of the two moments and offers an understanding of their intrinsic highly-entangled dialectic which scholars of urban shrinkage could decipher for a complex reading of the relational urban shrinkage phenomenon. Each process mentioned in Figure 1 is associated with urban shrinkage by itself but also in relation with other processes from both concentrated and extended urbanization. As such, in the case of suburbanization, this process generates shrinkage in spaces of agglomerations but it is also related to developments in the operationalized landscape and economic crises and developments in the agglomerations, and may also contribute to shrinkage in other extended urbanities (Keil, 2018). It is important to note that this discussion here revolves around processes and not about sites created by these moments, as some of the processes can belong mostly to one moment but they can be present also in urban sites generated by the other moment. For example, economic crisis and outmigration may appear also in suburbs, in spaces that are generated firstly by extended urbanization but also develop subsequently as agglomeration economies. In this regard, understanding shrinkage in a suburb necessitates a complex reading of agglomeration developments within the suburb, the associated outside agglomeration and the processes of extended urbanization that created and sustain the suburb.

Figure 1. Processes of urban shrinkage within moments of urbanization



Issues of methodological cityism in understanding urban shrinkage could also be analyzed in relation to the many policy responses that appeared during the last decade. Studies that deal with these policies attempt mostly to provide explanatory arguments and understanding on the actual strategies employed for tackling shrinkage, such as regenerative growth or smart decline, and to decipher the intricate patterns of institutional and territorial alliances arrangements deployed in policies or to account for the impact of the policies on the shrinkage process. However, we believe emphasis should be placed also into the critical inquiry of how ideas of cityness affect the development of such policies in terms of both shrinkage diagnosis and solutions and matters of interlocality policy financing and competitiveness.

In this section, we explored the idea of relationality within urban shrinkage in terms of its existence during constitutive moments of urbanization. The following section, continues on

the path of relationality by elaborating avenues for research in the relationality of socio-spatiality.

5. Shrinkage in the multidimensional urban socio-spatial

Avenues of research for the socio-spatiality complex multidimensional existence and how it matters for urban shrinkage are mainly absent from the literature. Although such concerns partially exist in the scholarship, as Wolff and Wiechmann (2018) in their comparative study of European shrinkage point to the necessity of a multiscale scaffolding framework, studies mostly portray shrinkage through a city place-based analysis often incorporating issues of national comparison (Doring et al., 2020) and at many times neglecting the conceptual and empirical advancements made on understanding socio-spatiality during the various past rounds of spatial turns. We argue that this present state approach overlooks the potential for understanding urban shrinkage through its intrinsic multidimensional socio-spatiality. In this regard, we build upon a theoretical paper of Jessop, Brenner and Jones (2008) that synthesises and conceptualizes progresses on the conceptual and empirical existence of dimensional socio-spatiality as a potential territorial, placed, scalar and networked issue and proposes a framework for understanding the complex mutually constitutive multidimensional relationality of socio-spatiality.

Under contemporary round of planetary urbanization, the urban landscape is portrayed as a complex system of entangled socio-spatial relations generated by mutually mutating scalar and territorial regulations, planetary span of urban processes, complex practices of everyday urban life, global networked economies and other urban associated processes that span through the multidimensionality of the socio-spatial (Brenner and Schmid, 2015; Brenner, 2019). The framework developed by Jessop and his colleagues offers directions for a bidimensional study of the territory, place, scale and network (TPSN framework) which represent mutually constitutive, relationally and intertwined dimensions of the socio-spatial. The central ideas of the TPSN framework underpin much of the work done in recent theoretical and empirical writings on planetary urbanization (Brenner, 2019; Arboleda, 2020; Fenton, 2020; Keil, 2018). Basically, the TPSN framework gives bidimensional conceptual orientations for the study of socio-spatial dimensions. While this approach does not fully grasp the complexity of the mutually constitutiveness and relationality of the multidimensional socio-spatial it represents nevertheless and intellectual effort deployed for overcoming one-dimensional centrism in social sciences.

The TPSN bidimensional framework we adapt and propose for the study of urban shrinkage is depicted in Figure 2. We closely follow the structure of the illustration constructed by Jessop and his colleagues and we generated sixteen cells by crosstabulating each of the four socio-spatial dimensions considered a structuring principle with each dimension, including itself, considered as field of operation for the structuring principle. The figure has a heuristic purpose of identifying potential urban shrinkage by socio-spatial dimensions in three situations: 1) for each dimension in itself, 2) for each dimension as structuring principle for the other dimensions and 3) for each dimension as a structured field impacted by the other three dimensions.

Figure 2. Bidimensional socio-spatial relations of urban shrinkage

Structuring principle	Field of operation			
	Territory	Place	Scale	Network
Territory	Enclosures for demolition, redevelopment, persistent decaying, bordering within cities or between different territorial administrative units, borders of social, cultural and demographic behaviors, housing regulation or infrastructure development	Clusters of destruction or mutating local, regional, national, global sites of economic activity, social-demographic, cultural values and behaviors, politico-institutional constructions, housing regulation in a given territory	Politico-institutional decisions of demolition, redevelopment, destruction, construction by multilevel governance	Interlocalities, interstates policies and strategies
Place	Urban shrinkage at borderlands, core or peripheral places within territorial bounds of nation-states, regions, localities	Clusters of destruction or mutating local, regional, national, global sites of economic activity, social-demographic, cultural values and behaviors, politico-institutional constructions, housing regulation	Destruction or mutating clusters of economic activity, social-demographic values and behaviors linked to differently scalar decisions of statal institutions or companies	Actions by local governance, partnerships of private/public actors, actions by networks of demographic reproduction, mutating place-based division of labour by networks of firms, workforce
Scale	Governmental economic and development policies and plans (aimed towards favoured territorial spaces – counties, regions, cities), hindered or enabled economic developments by entangled scalarities of companies and territorial statal spaces	Vertical decisions for relocation, development, destruction of clusters, sites, milieux of economic activity, social-demographic, cultural values and behaviors, politico-institutional constructions, housing	Hierarchies, vertical ontology in firms, politico-institutional actors, housing regulation, demographic, social, cultural organizations or behaviors	Networks of migration or firms with scalar points determined by power laden hierarchies, politico-institutional scaffoldings
Network	Networks, spaces of flows of people, economic activities enabled and hindered by territories	Networks of global cities, networks of clusters of division of labour, networks of migration and social ties with nodal points of clusters	Networks, spaces of flows of migration, firms, social, demographic, cultural values, infrastructural design and maintenance, operations on housing market with ascalar entry points	Networks, spaces of flows of migration, firms, social, demographic, cultural values, infrastructural design and maintenance, operations on housing market

The conceptual orientations in each cell are not exhaustive. They represent some research avenues for an urban shrinkage scholarship attuned to the multidimensionality of present-day socio-spatiality. Most of the processes presented here are built upon the current state of urban shrinkage literature while others are derived from the recommendations put forth in the section of geohistorical urban shrinkage. Readers are invited to further complement, expand and criticize on these orientations.

6. Conclusion

Our paper proposed some strategies for a theoretical reconceptualization of urban shrinkage. As the current literature is frequently criticized for its rather weak engagement with the relationality of urban spaces and for weak its conceptualization of urban shrinkage, we argued for a dialogue between the scholarships on urban shrinkage and the planetary urbanization. In this regard, three major propositions were put forth. Firstly, we argued that an urban shrinkage literature attuned to the planetary urbanization can reconceptualize shrinkage as a process that enfolds with particular geohistorical aspects within different rounds of urbanization. Urban shrinkage can be defined and conceptualized according to the specificities of different geohistorical eras of urbanization. Secondly, as the urban space should be understood beyond the mere territorial boundaries of cities, as most of the critical literature on shrinkage argues, we presented a case for understanding the relationality of shrinkage through

the two constituent moments of planetary urbanization — extended and concentrated urbanization. Thirdly, we presented a framework for understanding the relationality of urban shrinkage through the multidimensionality of urban socio-spatiality. Further studies could engage in a more empirically way our theoretical propositions presented here.

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NATIONALIST WAR OF LIBERATION, BORDER CONTROL AND TRACKING OF LIGHT WEAPONS IN CAMEROON A THREAT TO PEACE AND SECURITY (1955-1972)

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Abstract: *The purpose of this historical study is to analyze the control of small arms and ammunition in Cameroon during the nationalist war of liberation between 1955 and 1972. This disarmament policy was not an easy task for the military authorities. The territory of Cameroon was divided into two territorial entities, one British and the other French, and it was therefore urgent to combat the illicit circulation of arms. All of this was done through an exploitation and critical analysis of two types of sources: primary sources (reports from the military, gendarmes, administrative authorities) available in the National Archives of Buea (NAB) and the National Archives of Yaoundé (ANY), and secondary sources (theses, memoirs, articles, official journals). It should be noted that: The issue of smuggling and counterfeiting of SALW was a matter of public security. The neighborhood with Nigeria, during the Biafran crisis between 1967 and 1970, made it difficult to control arms. However, the smuggling and counterfeiting of small arms and ammunition from Nigeria and the mobbing of the population have increased transnational crime. The defense and security forces, despite several daily seizures on both sides of the Mounjo River, had difficulty putting an end to this criminal economy. To this end, Cameroon, CAR, Nigeria and Chad must reduce the illegal circulation of arms and ammunition in Central Africa.*

Keywords: Cameroon, Nigerian-Biafran, small arms, ammunition, smuggling.

1. Introduction

The current situation with regard to border control and the illicit circulation of small arms and ammunition remains a worrying security issue for states and defense and security forces. These deadly devices cause enormous damage to communities, increase cross-border crime and the illegal possession of SALW. This is why it became important to regulate and even control the non-legal quantities of these weapons in circulation in Cameroon during the war of independence, by the two Franco-British colonial administrations. In a context, where the nationalist leaders of the Union of the People (UPC), had taken up arms to claim the independence and the reunification of Cameroon in 1955. The Cameroonian authorities were obliged to institute a control on the flow of arms and ammunition that circulated between the land and maritime borders of Cameroon. The danger came essentially from the neighboring territories that were subject to some security problems such as Nigeria. The porous border with the (British) colony, neighboring Nigeria, itself in the grip of a civil war (Biafra 1967-1970), did not make it easy for the gendarmerie and police of the creeks of Bamusso, Mamfé, Ekondo-Titi to get their hands on these smugglers and reduce the fraudulent stocks of SALW that were in transit from Nigeria to the former British rule in West Cameroon (1946-1961) This situation raises the issue of border control of arms and ammunition in the context of the war of independence in Cameroon. Better, it is a question of analyzing the question of the defense strategy and the protection of the territorial integrity of Cameroon against security threats in Cameroon between 1955 and 1972. This being said, what are the security threats that the Minister of the Armed Forces (MINFA) Sadou Daoudou, his counterpart Keeper of the Seals, Arouna Njoya through the army, the police and the national gendarmerie wanted to solve by instituting a border control on the SALW in Cameroon between 1955 and 1972? What is the

legal and legislative framework that framed this battle against the smuggling and counterfeiting of SALW in Cameroon? What are the different stocks seized, stored in the armories of the Gendarmerie Legion of Western Cameroon from 1966 onwards? Did the Nigerian-Biafran war of secession weaken the defense and security of Western Cameroon through the illicit dissemination of increased flows of SALW in Cameroon between 1967 and 1970? Two theoretical considerations are called upon to better analyze the question. The first is transnationalism or the "Copenhagen school", a theory defended by researchers such as Nina Click Schiller and Linda Basch. They analyze the mobility of rebel groups, mercenaries and warlords who export violence to all the states of the Chadian Basin in order to accentuate transnational crime, war crimes, the decimation of wildlife (Waza-Bouba Djida-Lobécké parks), the illicit exploitation of precious stones (CAR) and the smuggling of SALW (Chadian Basin). The second theory focuses on public security policies advocated by (Keith Kraus, Mvié Méka, Ole Waeve 1995, Thierry Balzac 2018, William 2011). These scholars argue for state responsibility in the process of securing states and gray areas against all security threats. It is important to note that many works have addressed the issue in one way or another. It is the place here to mention some of the authors who densely addressed (A.R. Sumo Tayo: 2017 and M. J. Danga: 2021). This study aims at three fundamental objectives : first, to show the strategies of the Cameroonian colonial army in collaboration with the French troops in the defense of the territorial integrity of Cameroon ; second, to analyze and evaluate the security threats in Cameroon in the midst of the nationalist war of liberation ; and finally, to bring out the Cameroonian doctrine of the fight against the Biafran secessionist conflict that took place in Nigeria between 1967 and 1970 and its security repercussions in British Cameroon.

2. Cameroonian armed Forces and the Fight against the supply of Weapons on the Cameroonian coast

The Cameroonian military and administrative authorities were setting up controls on the circulation of stocks of arms and ammunition in the context of armed dissidence. The aim was to reduce the stocks in circulation. From that moment on, the borders were under surveillance by the men of the Minister of the Armed Forces, Sadou Daoudou. This section analyzes the context of the implementation of this arms control in 1955, followed by the surveillance of the Wouri River estuary to put arms shipments from the British side out of harm's way from the Mounjo River.

2.1. The tutelary France formalized the control of SALW in Cameroon in 1955

With a view to maintaining order and following the bloody events of 1955, several measures were adopted by the authorities in order to maintain peace and restrict the possession and circulation of weapons of various calibres, essentially through the marking and tracing of weapons (ANY, 2AC 1054, Circulaire contrôle d'armes à feu, 1955). This is the case of Order No. 159 of April 5, 1955, which establishes measures relating to security and control of arms stocks (ANY, Order signed by the Secretary General, Spinale in Yaoundé on April 5, 1955). And the circular n°2/163/CF/APA/2 of August 12, 1955 (ANY, 2AC 1054, Circulaire contrôle d'armes à feu, 1955).

In this circular n°2/163/CF/APA/2 of August 12, 1955 (ANY, 2AC1054, Circulaire contrôle d'armes à feu, 1955), the High Commissioner Pré took particular care in the control of firearms and their ammunition, in accordance with article 11 on weapons held by the civilian population. This fact justifies the following classification of these prohibited small arms by the circular of High Commissioner Pré. In this regard, the architecture of the regulated weapons was as follows: rifled shotguns of medium and large calibres, 5m/m long rifle, living room rifles, revolvers and automatic pistols (ANY, Confidential report of the chief of the Regional Brigade: 1955). A colonial desire to better control these weapons and ammunition.

It must be admitted that the agent placed in this circular a total embargo on the possibility for any individual to possess the above-mentioned weapon. In addition, the delicate

security context was marked by a nationalist crisis in Cameroon. This justified the nationalists' frustration with the French colonial administration, which considered it inconceivable to see the country fall into violence. It (the administrative authority) always wanted to keep its hold on Cameroon by the will of power. This new circular of the High Commissioner Roland Pré clearly showed the fear of seeing these hunting rifles, revolvers and automatic pistols fall into the hands of the nationalists (NAB, PC/i 1966/19, Arms and ammunitions, 1966-1971). France was afraid of experiencing the nightmare of its heavy defeat at Dien Bien Phu in French Indochina by General Giap's military and the challenge to its power in Algeria through a long war of independence that began in November 1954

The control of arms and ammunition became a secondary issue. The security situation in Cameroon was that of a territory marked by violence. This spiral of violence motivated the High Commissioner who imposed a particular restriction on the operations of providing various weapons and ammunition to civilians, former riflemen, or "rebels", all of them demobilized from the Second World War, who had returned and settled in Cameroon, ready to take up arms again to demand independence and the departure of the French. The rigorous surveillance of their weapons was a matter of public security at a time of nationalist demands. Disarmament was a practical necessity to prevent murderous violence, since small arms were at the root of all the killings orchestrated by the demonstrators. It was therefore necessary to stop this upsurge in violence caused by the weapons held by the rebels. To this end, Article 3 of the 1955 Circular on Firearms in Cameroon required "the withdrawal of authorizations to carry arms (ANY, 2AC 1054, Circular on Firearms Control 1955)" from undeserving people and to deposit them at the district office for a probable public auction. Public safety became a categorical imperative for the survival of French colonial authority. The nationalists decided to take on the French colonial army. On this subject, the Cameroonian historian Abwa maintains that: for the nationalists of the UPC, there is no doubt that they took up arms to wage a war for national liberation. These nationalists took up the objectives of their political party (UPC), independence, immediate reunification and the immediate departure of France from Cameroon, which they considered a military occupation force.

Nevertheless, the armament of these fighters should be put into perspective. Indeed, these small stocks of guns have the following characteristics: very heterogeneous, rudimentary and unsophisticated machetes, spears, daggers and shotguns. The balance of power in terms of weapons was totally in the disadvantage of the Cameroonian nationalists (Ibid.). The maintenance of order became a topical issue applicable to the entire Cameroonian territory. Advanced weapons were prohibited by decree n°159 of April 5, 1955, fixing measures relating to public security and the control of arms stocks (ANY, Journal officiel, n°1059, May 4, 1959, p. 689.). The colonial administration, through this decree of the High Commissioner Pré, neutralized the various sources of supply of firearms of Cameroonian trade unionists and politicians in order to proceed to their total disarmament, when they held various weapons and cartridges. Gunsmiths who had weapons storage facilities were required to comply with the following administrative maneuvers, such as putting these weapons temporarily out of immediate use. They should remove an essential part indispensable for their functioning and store them in a separate room not accessible to the public (ANY, Official Gazette, no. 1059, 04 May 1959, p. 689). The gunsmiths obeyed on pain of having their warehouses closed by the High Commissioner, Pré.

The fear of a civilian armed with a pistol by the French authorities led them to adopt subtle strategies to dismantle the guns and deny access to the nationalists. The warehouse owners obeyed the instructions of the hierarchy (Tamekamta Zozime Alphonse, 43, teacher-researcher, Ecole Normale Supérieure de l'Université de Yaoundé I, Yaoundé, 28 June 2022), in an effort to preserve public tranquility. Faced with the demands of trade unionists and anti-state nationalists, the regulation of firearms and ammunition was in line with the requirements of this climate of insecurity. Faced with this regulation on the quotas of arms in Cameroon, the

central problem of the sources of supply of these SALW between Cameroon under British administration and French tutelage at the level of the Wouri River estuary. Fundamental.

2.2. The Wouri River estuary: the epicenter of stocks of arms and ammunition from Western Cameroon

The question of the origin of arms and ammunition in Cameroon during the war of independence has been the subject of several works, some of which can be cited here (A. Mbembé: 1996 and Th. Deltombe: 2016). To better analyze this situation, it is important to identify the historical data shown on the following map. It certainly retraces the path followed by the arms and ammunition to reach the Cameroonian coast and to feed the fighters and accentuate the cracking of the guns.

This observation shows a high degree of porosity between the land and maritime borders of the two banks of the Moungo. This border permeability allows us to conclude that the shipments came from Western Cameroon, entering via Bonabéri, the two banks of the Moungo, Sodiko, to end up in the estuary of the Wouri River, the Bassa area in the French part of the tutelage. These supplies of arms passed through the Moungo, transported via Bonabéri. The rest was carried by boat to enter Douala (Masso Ndong, 2011: p.52). These were essentially five routes for the transport of arms. This document deserves to be questioned, however, when we know that these weapons did not always cross the river to the territory of French Cameroon, essentially to Douala. This was not a reality, because transportation at the time was not cheap, especially when one observes the small makeshift pirogues that could hardly carry heavy cargoes of goods (Koufan Menkéné: 2021). The next mission of the Cameroonian army was to combat the illicit entry of arms and ammunition into Western Cameroon in the face of the ongoing secession war in Nigeria.

3. Border Zone: Biafran Secession and smuggling of Arms and Ammunition across the nigerian-cameroonian border

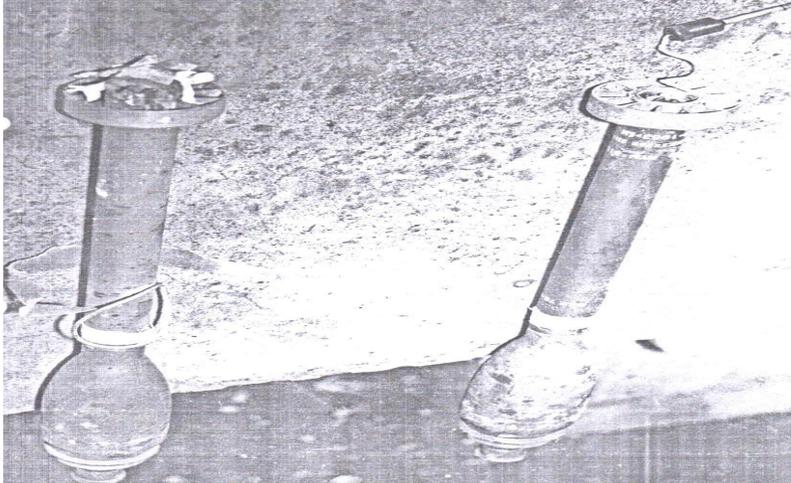
The context of the independence war in the Biafran region of Nigeria will have notable consequences for defense and security in Western Cameroon on the one hand and in Cameroon as a whole on the other (Interview with Ndoum Simeon, about 55 years old, Yaoundé, June 26, 2022). From that moment on, considerable flows were channeled into Cameroon by Biafrans in collusion with crooked Cameroonians. The gendarmerie was forced to organize daily patrols to seize and store quotas of weapons, ammunition as evidence and the fruits of smuggling and counterfeiting.

3.1. West Cameroon's maritime creeks as gateways for arms and explosives

The fraudulent circulation between the maritime and land borders of Cameroon and Nigeria was a problem that the Ahmadou Ahidjo regime had to face. All in all, the Biafran war of secession accentuated cross-border crime between the two neighbouring states, and the Nigerians were the driving force behind this traffic, which was fuelled by Cameroonians: customs officers, gendarmes, traders, farmers and hunters, all of whom were crooked and driven by a taste for easy gain. This series linked to the Biafran secession war in Nigeria ended with the discovery of explosives 24 kilometers from Victoria in 1971 and later, two bombs found in the village of Batoké about 12 kilometers from the city of Victoria

The country's maritime borders became exposed to incursions by ex-combatants, Ibo and Ibibio secessionists who retreated to Cameroon to escape the firepower of the regular Nigerian army, which was determined to fight the Biafran insurgency (Akono Samuel, 48 years old, Gendarmerie Chief Warrant Officer, Yaoundé, June 20, 2002). These two explosives exposed the inability of Cameroonian customs to effectively stop maritime piracy and arms smuggling on the Cameroonian coast. To this end, these next two explosives found in the waters off Bakoté, near Victoria, show how these deadly devices were transiting from Nigeria to Cameroon.

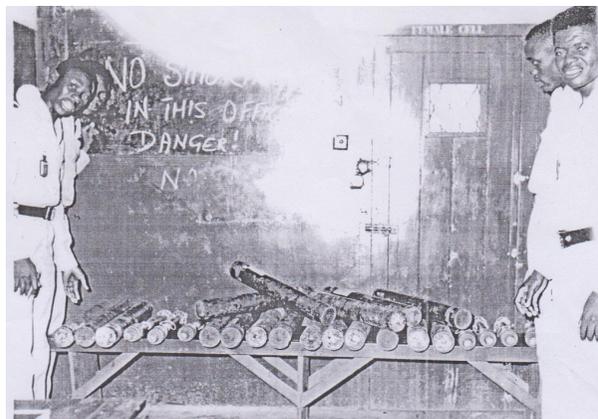
Photo 1: Seizure of explosives found in Bakoté by public security



Source: NAB, PC/i 1966/19, Arms and ammunitions, West Cameroon, Security reports on secret arms trafficking in West Cameroon, 1966-1971.

Two explosives, which were the fruits of maritime trafficking in firearms and weapons of war. The west coast of the country became a rear base, a symbol of violence or a retreat for ex-secessionists with their war machines. The Cameroonian Customs was thus implicated in its surveillance and tracking missions of illicit and undeclared goods (NAB, PC/i 1966/19, Arms and ammunitions, West Cameroon). these traffickers were to be arrested to answer for their crimes in Buea before the Federal Inspector of Administration, the head of the Regional Security of National Security in Buea. In the same vein, on July 6, 1971, the Victoria Special Police Station, following the claims of Koku Tobias, a Ghanaian fisherman residing at Bakingili, claimed to have found a sealed box placed on a stone (NAB: Ref. Victoria July 23, 1971). According to another report, a large cardboard box containing twenty-five dangerous mines with the following inscriptions was found in the customs store at Sanjé a month earlier. The following table lists this seizure of lethal devices. As a complement, here is a picture of these twenty-five (25) mines seized and sequestered in the premises of the public security in 1971.

Photo n°2: Twenty-five bombs seized by the federal police in 1971



Source: NAB, PC/L 1966/19, Arms and ammunitions West-Cameroon 1966-1971. Security reports on Secret arms trafficking in West Cameroon. 6th/October 1966.

Three analyses can be made of these archival documents on cross-border crime between Nigeria and West Cameroon. The first shows that the explosives are kept in a cell reserved for women, which constitutes a serious security limitation. The second reading presents the danger of these devices of death not only for the tenants of this public institution in charge of maintaining order (NAB: Ref. Victoria 23 July 1971). The third reading allows to know that the inscriptions in English language, prohibiting not to smoke in the premises carried at any time these devices could explode and cause damage of serious losses of human lives; to the example of the four gendarmes, little conscious of the dangers on this board. The Niger-Biafran war had after-effects on the defense and security of Cameroon. Border porosity was the fundamental cause of this insecurity between the land and maritime borders of Cameroon and neighboring Nigeria.

3.2. Gendarmerie patrols combed the country for SALW flows

The reunification of Cameroon and the independence of Nigeria on October 1, 1961 did not resolve the issue of the movement of people and their goods. This is the case for Cameroonians and the Ibos populations of Nigeria (Ndikum Azieh: pp.121-123). The Biafran civil war that took place between 1967 and 1970 was the main cause of this insecurity at the Niger-Cameroon borders, but whose populations live under the threshold of precariousness and, object of insurrectional crises, the case of the Biafran identity crisis (NAB:TC (1966)/1correspondence on the activities of Nigerian in Kumba). Security issues that had consequences in Cameroon.

During a sweep at this border of the Cameroonian coast, in the locality of Ayemedjock, the gendarmes discovered eighty-three 7.5m/m cartridges, four strips of one hundred and fifty 7.5m/m cartridges, i.e. 500 for 52. Then, a case of complete spare parts, a rifle branded SHE, with two magazines bearing the number M. 63832, caliber 7.5m/m, two hundred and twenty rounds of 9m/m, four P.M 49 hunters, twelve hunting cartridges, six locally made pistols (NAB, Ref. No.2705/CF, Commandant Compagnie Buea, I. Obama, September 5, 1967) This was a major blow to the traffickers at Ayemedjock on the Niger-Cameroon border. This seizure shows the intense traffic in arms and ammunition that was taking place in the Biafran zone (NAB, Ref. No.R.8/Vol.2/153/67, Activities of Smugglers in Ngie/Ngaw 20th February, 1967). This Niger-Cameroon border was the symbol of the illicit circulation of arms.

On the other hand, the gendarmerie tracked down Moleta and Emija in Bamenda on December 1, 1966, around 6:30 p.m., in an Ibo store: two hundred and nine 12-gauge hunting cartridges were seized from two well-known traffickers in Bamenda for years (NAB, Ref. No. 2705/CF, Commander of the Buea Company, I. Obama, of September 5, 1967). The latter were no longer hiding to sell their 12-gauge cartridges to hunters. They crossed the border and even managed to open arms and cartridge smuggling shops. What was the fate of these seizures made by the Ayemedjock and Bamenda gendarmerie? The uncontrolled circulation of considerable stocks of arms of all calibers, ammunition and gunpowder from Nigeria to Cameroon to be smuggled with the blessing of greedy and zealous Cameroonians who operated with impunity. The porous border and the context of the Biafran secession war accentuated this state of insecurity in Cameroon. Nevertheless, even if the gendarmerie tracked down these smugglers, the bloodletting continued (Tchakounté Pierre, 53 years old, police commissioner, Bertoua, 29 May 2022).

The B.M.M. of Kumba always went to war against the powder traffickers who carried out their illegal activities. This was the case of Mr. Tabit in 1965, who had been living in Widikum, not far from Mamfé, for five years and working in public and private enterprises. He was the owner of a rifle and gunpowder, which he easily obtained from a local shopkeeper (NAB: 1965: PV N°13/BMM/BDA).

During his hearing, he affirmed that he did not use this powder and that he was a former hunter. At the end of the investigation, one thousand five hundred grams of gunpowder were seized from this trafficker and deposited not only at Police Headquarters in Kumba but also at

the Registry of the Permanent Military Tribunal of Buea (NAB, PC/i 1964/22, Arms and ammunitions: 1964-1966). This gunpowder trafficking became a public security problem in Kumba and its surroundings. The ramifications of such unauthorized activity were far-reaching; the actors were also Nigerians. This was the case of Obi, an ethnic Ibo trader, who lived in Mbongué. He trafficked in gunpowder and pharmaceutical products (NAB, Ref.185/RG, N°657/CF: trafficking in ammunition, Manyemen, May 6, 1965) with the Cameroonians Lobé, E. Suh and Ijomah, who trafficked in ammunition and gunpowder between Ndom-Street Oron in Nigeria and Buea in West Cameroon (NAB, PV. The Cameroonian armed forces were on the move to seize and sequester these flows of arms and ammunition, despite some limitations related to smuggling and counterfeiting.

4. Cameroonian armed Forces and Management of sequestered arms flows

This section deals with the role and contribution of the gendarmerie in the seizure of arms and ammunition during the nationalist struggle between British Cameroon and the part under French administration.

4.1. The "two banks of the Moungo", the gendarmerie tracks down the illicit possession of light weapons

The following places were identified for receiving and recovering these military logistics: in a gendarmerie, following a seizure by units, an isolated soldier, or voluntarily surrendered, in the brigade, for individual seizures or surrenders; in the premises of a company, for seizures at the level of a sub-district or district; at the legion, at the level of the sector (NAB: 1965 Ministerial Instruction N°370/MINFA/400). The firm intention to transport arms and ammunition seized during the OMPs, by gendarmes and soldiers. Then, the absence of the police in this regalian mission disarming the Cameroonian armed forces. However, one might wonder about the measures of voluntary surrender of an army, a voluntary disarmament by the possessor according to the MINFA note.

This voluntary disarmament was then questionable for men who were themselves on the lookout for a pistol or a shotgun, which were almost impossible to find because of the arms embargo, carried out by means of a regulation in force in the Federal Republic of Cameroon. It is necessary to remember that only the gendarmerie, through the brigades, gendarmerie, company and legion, were authorized to seize, collect or destroy weapons. Why were the military not involved? It is not the case, it is the total silence information is not available in this section. The gendarmerie, certainly because it is in direct contact with the populations of a locality. In addition, in a district, a sub-district, a village, there is a unit of the Cameroonian gendarmerie: brigade, gendarmerie post, territorial brigade, gendarmerie company, at the level of a department and the Legion, which covers an entire Region. This is why MINFA, in agreement with the Head of State, gave priority to the gendarmes in this heavy mission of disarming the troops, nationalists active in the Bamiléké pacification zones, in Mungo in East Cameroon and in Anglophone Cameroon (the towns of Muyuka, Bamenda, Kumba).

The material seized (arms and ammunition) during PKOs (Peacekeeping Operations) was reported to an intelligence officer of the territorially competent brigade; the arms were then sequestered under the responsibility of the heads of gendarmerie units. These weapons were transported by the usual military means of transport to the Administration-Logistics Directorate (DAL) and then to the armoury of the Ministry of the Armed Forces (NAB:PC/(1968)12 report by federal security in West Cameroon). The fate reserved for these seized weapons was that which was inevitably led to the DAL armoury. The arms dealer classified these weapons according to the prescriptions of the military hierarchy. Four types of weapons came from these stocks.

"Good weapons" for the war front, those that could be used by the auxiliary forces, those that had to be repaired in the MINFA armoury workshops, or those that could be partially recovered or had suffered some damage. Finally, the quotas provided for destruction (NAB,

Ministerial Instruction N°370/MINFA/400), which could not be used for the various missions of the Cameroonian MFOs. The analysis is as follows: the Cameroonian army is born in a notorious unpreparedness, the Cameroonian military in the fight against subversives were essentially poor in war logistics. That is why they were forced to collect wrinkled stocks from the fighters of the ALNK, the SDNK and the CNO, recycle them and hope to provide them to the self-defense or auxiliaries. These unusable weapons were simply destroyed to prevent them from falling into the hands of the insurgents.

4.2. Cameroonian Armed Forces and the Management of Weapons Seized from the Maquis

This is a ministerial instruction from the Ministry of the Armed Forces (MINFA) headed by Sadou Daoudou, which specified the modalities for the control, conservation, transportation and certainly the destruction of arms and ammunition seized during PKOs in Cameroon (NAB, Ministerial Instruction N°0009/MINFA of 29-4-1961, Administrative Service Note 11.611/MINFA/SC/GC/3).

This 1966 note repealed the 1961 note (NAB: (BRH), period from July 1 to July 7, 1964). The unspoken message of this promulgation by MINFA in 1966 is the following: the country was subject to an avalanche of riots orchestrated by armed men who decided to undermine the governing order in 1955.

These nationalists, considered by themselves to be terrorists by the government forces of the ALNK EMG. They were armed with a few hunting rifles, agricultural equipment and some seized goods from the chiefdoms and brigades, and carried out raids against the FMO, killing all those who were sympathetic to the French administrators, who were considered traitors. In concrete terms, the weapons in question, and targeted by MINFA through its ministerial note, are classified in this archival document, which must be analyzed in order to understand their contours.

Table 1: Architecture of ammunition weapons implicated by the Minister of the Armed Forces

Order number	Characteristics of the weapons and ammunition covered by the ministerial note
1	Weapons of war and corresponding ammunition
2	Hunting weapons of European manufacture
3	Weapons of local manufacture or trade
4	Ammunition of hunting powder

Source: Table designed by the author following exploitation: NAB, ministerial N°370/MINFA/400, Yaoundé, November 2, 1966.

The first type of rifles being almost non-existent or almost unavailable from the respondents, because at this historical era 1966, the Cameroonian nationalists were poor parents in war logistics. They sometimes acted with agricultural tools, exposing their lives during confrontations with the FMO, who were better equipped (ANY, JOCF, No. 865, 19 December 1959, p.1889). It must be emphasized that this was a gross exaggeration by the MINFA, a strategy to show that they were dealing with real warriors, better equipped with war arsenals. This is not the case. In terms of the manipulation of the military high command, as far as advanced weapons are concerned, we could mention a few seizures, mainly of MAS 36, rifles from Czechoslovakia, old German Mauser rifles, and a few MAT49. These advanced rifles came from seizures orchestrated by armed men in the military barracks, as in the case of Mboppi, in Douala, or in the Bamiléké chiefdoms of West Cameroon (NAB, ministerial N°370/MINFA/400, Yaoundé, November 2, 1966). This is also negligible. It is essentially the last two (02) categories: trading weapons, ammunition and hunting powder, which were the essential armament of the warriors of the EMG of the ALNK. Forges were set up in the maquis to reproduce these weapons,

intended to rekindle the flame of the ideals of the UPC. This poses the problem of the local manufacture of weapons, in a context where the regulations in force totally prohibited this activity. The MINFA went to war against the artisanal manufacture of arms and to dismantle the military posts, places where local rifles were manufactured.

5. Conclusion

The issue of the illicit circulation of small arms, particularly small caliber weapons, and firearms in general, between the land and maritime borders of Cameroon and its neighboring countries goes back to the history of these States. It should be remembered that the Nigerian-Biafran civil war of 1967-1970 was the fundamental cause of the illicit circulation of arms and ammunition between the two border entities. It is therefore urgent nowadays that this smuggling and counterfeiting of arms and ammunition be reduced to its simplest form. Crime, organized crime and maritime piracy are scourges that plague the maritime coasts of Mamfe, Mundémba and Kombo Abédimo. The Atlantic coasts should set up real mechanisms to secure their spaces in order to reduce maritime crime, clandestine trafficking of firearms, ammunition, drugs, and the decimation of wildlife species towards Asian countries. The effective control of the continental margins is on the agenda, in the face of the rise of terrorism. The United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and the RECs are called upon to review the border management policies inherited from colonization. Mutualization between the member states of the African Union is essential to reduce the undesirable effects of serious crime and the unlawful dissemination of arms and ammunition.

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- Akono Samuel, 48 years old, Gendarmerie Chief Warrant Officer, Yaoundé, June 20, 2022.
 - Ndoum Siméon, about 55 years old Senior Police Commissioner, Yaoundé, June 26, 2022.
 - Tamekamta Zozime Alphonse, 44 years old, Teacher-researcher, Higher Teacher-s Training School of the University of Yaoundé I, Yaoundé, June 28, 2022.
 - Tchakounté Pierre, 53 years old, Police Commissioner, Public Security Police Station, 1st district of Bertoua, Bertoua May 29, 2022.

THE PHENOMENON OF ACCULTURATION

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Abstract: *Culture is an attitude in the public space, it is man's everyday life, his inner attitude, the way he relates to social and material reality. Culture is a set of accepted symbols and values that form a logical network and affirm desirable qualities, while having a normative and axiological character based on moral theories. What does culture do? Culture gives meaning to human existence, establishes norms of behaviour, social rules and sets values. What would happen to human society if there were no culture? Language, customs, moral values, tastes and standards, family structures, attitudes to gender, attitudes to self, self-boundaries, attitudes to community and civility would be out of balance and would lead to chaos. Culture is the basis of today's society, which has undergone major changes over time, and this is the main essence that can shape the popular mass, in the formation of man's personality. Under specific historical conditions, people have expressed their own vision of life and the world, of man, formulating a system of values, and have created forms of culture through which they have revealed their spiritual choices, ideals, expectations, disappointments, or rejections.*

Keywords: acculturation, community, globalization, cultural integration, dominant society

1. The emergence of acculturation

The phenomenon of acculturation, born as a result of a number of changes occurring in a community, of contact between social groups and cultures different from the original tradition and culture. This can occur at the level of the individual or at the level of society.

At the individual level, the term means the process of adaptation to a new culture, when the individual comes into direct contact with the new socio-cultural environment and begins to assimilate elements of the new culture (norms, values, symbols, even mores, etc.) and to change old cultural dimensions. The term is used particularly in cultural anthropology in connection with the contact between the cultures of primitive societies, and in sociology in conjunction with the phenomena of urbanisation of rural life through the migration of rural people to urban areas, but most significantly through the phenomenon of migration of people.

The first definition was given in 1935 by the "Social Science Research Council", after other terms had previously circulated: diffusion (Powell, 1880), disseminate (Boas, 1928).

In general, the term acculturation is the complex process of cultural contact through which entire social groups or societies assimilate traits of other groups or societies. The term was introduced by the culturalist movement and underlines anthropologists' retrospective interest in the consequences that colonial expansion brought with it in the cultural life of non-European communities. A classic definition of acculturation was advanced by the students of Franz Boas (1922): "acculturation encompasses phenomena resulting from the direct and continuous contact between groups of individuals of different cultures, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of one or both groups".

Until now, studies of acculturation have focused on societies with unequal power, one dominant, the other dominated. Most of the time, the dominant society being the European, Western, colonial society, acculturation has been studied in two main socio-political and cultural areas. Latin America, with its pre-Columbian cultures (Mayan, Aztec, Inca) and pre-colonial Africa. This gave rise to two complementary characters of acculturation: one internal, the heterogeneity of contemporary cultures, and the other external, the dominance of one

culture over another. Out of this imperialism of cultures has also arisen the unique sense of influence and contact, from superior to inferior, from dominant to dominated. But what is interesting is that these so-called inferior cultures have resisted the economic and social pressures by which Western cultures are trying to disintegrate their value systems. The resistance of the patterns of Eastern cultures to Western techno-scientific civilization demonstrates that we are dealing with a phenomenon deeper than the mere propagation of top technique and technology, i.e., industrial civilization, horizontally. Cultures are not abstract entities; they live only through the crystallization of values in a geographic environment.

In any kind of acculturation, we are talking about a power relationship, a dominant segment of influence. This phenomenon can be triggered by force, such as colonisation, or naturally, such as migration, and the population borrows the culture and cultural expression of the place to which it has migrated, even down to the language and language spoken in common. Another source of acculturation is globalization. To achieve this effect, the more powerful cultures impose their customs through the media, marketing products that did not previously exist, generating new ways and traditions that sometimes replace those originating in the regions, indigenous regions with less power, in a specific way of functioning in that environment. When we talk about these phenomena, we can classify them in several categories such as multiculturalism, assimilation, insertion or integration.

2. Characteristics of acculturation

From integration policy to acculturation was only a step. Cultural integration is the link between ethnic groups that differ in origin or values and represents the positive aspects of this social phenomenon.

Cultural integration occurs when individuals from one culture adopt the essence of another culture while retaining the values of the original culture, preferring to merge rather than preserve or lose their own culture or reject the new influence entirely. They adopt behaviours manifested in language, gastronomy, traditions, art or culture from neighbouring people without having travelled to specific geographical areas. Cultural integration is an important phenomenon because people retain their own culture or parts of their cultural identity that are essential to them, unlike the phenomenon of assimilation. Integration can also be driven by marriages between individuals from different cultures.

Cultural assimilation can be part of the process of losing one's original identity by borrowing the values of another group entirely. Assimilation is an unconscious, slow phenomenon that becomes permanent. It defines the changes that occur in beliefs, feelings, emotions, thinking and social behaviour through fusion with another group sharing experience and history and incorporating it into a common cultural life.

So, acculturation is a process of the mediation of cultural beliefs and customs of a community or individual by borrowing traits from another culture. It happens when a child is exposed to more than one culture and/or when contact with people from different cultures is over a long period of time. For example, people who travel to study for a period of time in a different country borrow behaviours specific to that country.

3. Globalisation a form of acculturation

When groups with different cultural backgrounds, through their individuals, intersect, collaborate or live together, the process of acculturation begins. Another process that integrates this phenomenon of intercultural contact leading to individual and cultural change is that of globalisation. These two processes induce several changes among non-dominant people and the result will be the loss of cultural and behavioural traits of the members of these communities, thus cultural absorption into a homogeneous society.

One of the most important dimensions of globalisation is the cultural dimension. Through this phenomenon the cultural map of the world has changed and human networks have crossed national and even continental borders, providing cultural links between countries

of origin and adoptive countries. Thus, several languages of international circulation are beginning to predominate around the world. Cultures can exist in increasingly isolated places where there is no information flow through the media or the internet, or tourist flow. The forces producing a global culture and developing the phenomenon of acculturation include television, the emergence of global cultural industries, global citizens (managers of large corporations who identify with a global, cosmopolitan culture through the diversity of the places in which they operate), a range of international organisations, and electronic communications.

It can be concluded, however, from studies of globalisation, on the specific characteristics of acculturation and not the elimination of traditional cultures by replacing them with new, radical cultural values. Although globalisation is often associated with changes within large systems, it is simply an 'inherent' phenomenon that affects our intimate and personal lives in different ways. Our lives have changed as globalizing forces have invaded us through impersonal sources - the internet, media, popular culture, homes and communities, and personal contact with individuals from other cultures, too. It fundamentally changes our everyday experiences, redefining personal and intimate aspects such as family, gender roles, personal identity and working relationships. The way we think and our connections with others are profoundly shaped by globalisation.

4. Conclusions

Acculturation or melting pot is the new current of cultural transformation. Instead of a people's traditions dissolving in favour of dominated nations, they blend and take the form of new, evolved cultural patterns. In a society, the different norms and values are those that are national and those that are brought in from outside, those with which individuals have resonated more, and diversity is created as ethnic groups adapt to the wider social environment.

In the history of different ethnic groups, different phases can be observed: as European societies extend their dominance in space, borders disappear and societies come under the direct control of the West. But if the general evolution leads from spontaneous acculturation to imposed acculturation, the opposite phenomenon often occurs. These forms of acculturation have a special relevance for the operationality of the relationship between cultural conflicts.

Cultural contact has a narrower scope of manifestation; contact can be established without mutual or univocal penetration of the two value systems. When two cultures meet without influencing and penetrating each other, it means that there is not yet true acculturation until the individuals' conception of life is transformed from the inside.

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ANALYSIS OF PENSION INCOME OF THE ELDERLY, BY GENDER, IN 2021

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Abstract: *The current study starts from a secondary data analysis (taken from the National Public Pension House) in order to highlight how the pension income of the elderly can influence their lives. Considering the previous aspects, the analysis is carried out on the basis of the comparison between elderly men and women to see what are the main income differences between them and focuses on the study of pension data for the year 2021, of three categories of pensioners that we consider relevant in the analysis, more precisely: pensioners with an old-age pension, pensioners with an early pension and pensioners with a survivor's pension. In general, the differences that can appear between the two sexes, female and male, come from anatomical characteristics, but they can also be generated by the socio-cultural environment of the respective country, some social rights and the positioning that people can have in the given society. Likewise, gender-based relationships (femininity and masculinity) influence the opinion of individuals about different health conditions and can affect the state of health, both mental and physical, people's susceptibility to different health conditions and affect their good mental, physical health.*

Keywords: Gender differences, the representation of masculinity and femininity, pensions, old people, poverty.

1. Introduction

The current research includes a secondary data analysis carried out on the statistical data of the existing National Public Pension House following two aspects: on the one hand, the analysis aims at the pension income of the elderly for the year 2021 (according to three of the important categories of). pensioners with an age limit pension, pensioners with an early pension, pensioners with a survivor's pension), intending to identify the main differences/similarities in percentage, from one quarter to another; I also want to demonstrate, as a hypothesis, that the post-pandemic period and inflation-induced repercussions have led or not to a stagnation in the increase of pensions and, implicitly, to a standard of living regarding the elderly population in Romania. On the other hand, they want to identify differences between elderly men and women, regarding incomes at the level of 2021.

Over the years, the social policies highlighted by the European Commission in order to evolve the collaborative relationship between the elderly and the competent authorities, intend to combat some of the shortcomings of the elderly everywhere. The growth of the age segment of 65 years and over calls for the reform of social policies, which means that from a demographic point of view, the phenomenon of population aging is growing significantly.

At the Romanian level, pensions are the main source of income for the elderly and mostly come from redistributive public systems. At the European level, pensioners are a significant part of the population of the European Union (approximately 124 million people, i.e. a quarter of the total population (according to the European Commission, "European Semester - Adequacy and Sustainability of Pensions", s.a.).

Over the years, we have been able to observe how demographic developments manifest themselves, with all their implications and the situation of the elderly causing the interest of the European Communities, since the 80s, a fact found in several resolutions of the European Parliament, as well as in the Charter of Rights to man. social (1989). It is important to state that the phenomenon of population aging is an important factor in raising awareness

of the level of social protection that any elderly person must benefit from. We can recall the impact of the decisions taken by the European Council in 1991 and 1992 in favor of the elderly by declaring the "European Year of the Elderly" (1993), thus confirming the important role that the Community must play in addressing the long-term challenges of the aging population.

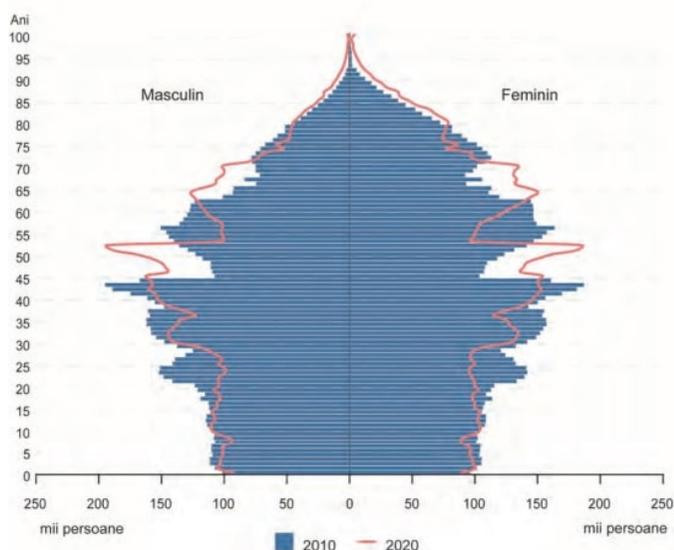
2. Demographic aging and life expectancy for the elderly

In the period between 1995 and 1997 (Bălașa, A., 2005), the European Commission elaborates two demographic reports and a report on the modernization of social protection in which it assesses the political impact of the demographic changes registered within the European Union. In 1998, other initiatives were launched to deepen the analyzes and discussions on this topic. In 1999, the Commission organized a European colloquium, with the aim of exploring in depth the economic, social and political problems raised by demographic developments in Europe.

The social protection systems put into practice by the member states aim to ensure everyone's access to quality care, and their development has contributed to the considerable improvement of the health status of the European population during the last decades. They represent an important element of the social model.

Like most European countries, Romania also faces the complex economic and social consequences of a population in a slow but continuous aging process.

Figure no. 1. The resident population in Romania by age and sex ("age pyramid") - Comparative data - January 1, 2010 and January 1, 2020-



Source: INS, Demographic Statistics, 2020.

The "age pyramid" reflects the long-term trends of fertility and mortality, but also the short-term effects of migrations, demographic policies or the changes that took place in a century of demographic history. (INS, 2020).

Considering the above, we can deduce the fact that the problem of population aging is not, therefore, only a demographic problem, at the level of Romania, but above all an economic, social, cultural, medical-sanitary, moral one, which requires the study of this phenomenon in a multidisciplinary vision.

As we know, a good state of health is an essential element of human well-being, representing a value in itself of a nation, especially for the elderly.

The health status of the population can be analyzed, in general, with the help of indicators related to mortality and morbidity, but also based on synthetic indicators. (INS, 2020)

Life expectancy, calculated for certain ages, is a relevant indicator in the field of health statistics, being a benchmark for the configuration of social policies that take into account the life cycle of women and men, such as: employment policies, in the field of pensions, care health, long-term care, etc. For example, based on the value of the "life expectancy at 60 years" indicator, one can appreciate the longevity of a population, especially when it is marked by the aging phenomenon.

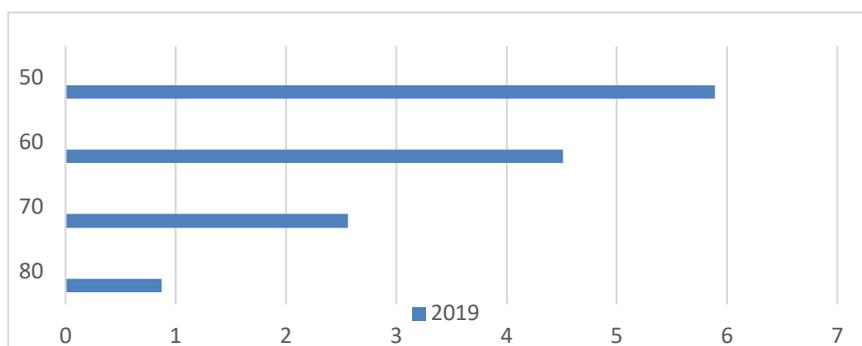
Table no. 1 The difference between women and men in life expectancy at certain ages (years), 2020

Vârsta	2008	2012	2014	2015	2016 ¹⁾	2017	2018	2019 ²⁾
0	7,06	6,96	6,87	6,92	6,99	6,95	7,01	7,08
10	6,91	6,83	6,75	6,85	6,86	6,87	6,93	7,00
20	6,77	6,73	6,64	6,74	6,76	6,78	6,83	6,93
30	6,52	6,50	6,42	6,51	6,53	6,56	6,63	6,73
40	6,19	6,20	6,14	6,24	6,28	6,32	6,41	6,50
50	5,36	5,50	5,50	5,61	5,67	5,71	5,80	5,89
60	3,86	4,05	4,10	4,22	4,31	4,33	4,42	4,51
70	2,12	2,32	2,38	2,47	2,50	2,52	2,54	2,56
80	0,74	0,80	0,87	0,91	0,93	0,94	0,91	0,87

Source: INS, demographic analysis, 2020.

On the one hand, in our country, according to the National Institute of Statistics (Table no. 1) we can compare, for example, for the age of 60, the year 2016 (4.31 %) with the year 2019 (4.51 %) or for the age of 70, the year 2015 (2.47 %) with the year 2018 (2.56 %), noting that life expectancy increases with the passing of the years. On the other hand, gender differences remain higher in women throughout life. At older ages, the gap between the two sexes decreases, reaching less than a year at the age of 80. More precisely, if in 2016 we observe a percentage of 0.93% as an increase in life expectancy at 80 years old, with the passing of the years, for example, in 2019 we identify a percentage of 0.27% of life expectancy which denotes a decrease in it at an advanced age.

Figure no. 2. Life expectancy chart - age 50+ - year 2019



Source: According to INS 2019 data.

Older people are known to have poorer health and higher mortality compared to younger age groups.

The growth of the age group of 80 years and over is the one that poses, in particular, the problem of health and care. This age group is of particular importance for social policies and those regarding public health and the care of dependent people. It involves new demands, regarding housing, travel possibilities and other public infrastructures. Very old people need health and care services that are much more numerous and essentially different from those needed by the younger population. The morbidity of very old people is characterized by a higher rate (the tendency to be sick more often).

The fact that women have a longer life expectancy translates, at the level of their pensions, into a stronger negative impact of the long-term consequences of the incomplete indexation of pensions to wages in most Member States. Also, women are more at risk of poverty in old age (16.8% in 2016) than men (12.1% in 2016) because they generally outlive their partners, becoming widows and reaching to live in one-person households.

3. Methodology

This study is based on a secondary data analysis in which three categories of pensioners were selected according to the pension they benefit from, in order to identify the gender differences between them.

More precisely, the categories of pensioners are the following: pensioners with an age limit pension, pensioners with an early pension, pensioners with a survivor's pension.

First of all, according to Law 263/2010 on the unitary system of public pensions, the old-age pension is due to people who meet, cumulatively, on the date of retirement, the conditions regarding the standard retirement age and the minimum period of contribution provided by the present law. The standard retirement age is 65 years for men and 63 years for women.

Secondly, according to Law 263/2010 on the unitary public pension system, the early pension is due, at most 5 years before reaching the standard retirement age, to people who have contributed at least 8 years more than the full contribution period provided by the present law.

The assimilated periods are not taken into account when determining the contribution period necessary to grant the early pension. The amount of the anticipated pension is determined under the same conditions as the old-age pension.

Thirdly, according to Law 263/2010 on the unitary public pension system, the survivor's pension is due to the children and the surviving spouse, if the deceased supporter was a pensioner or met the conditions for obtaining a pension.

*The surviving spouse has the right to survivor's pension for the rest of his life, upon reaching the standard retirement age, if the duration of the marriage was at least 15 years (Law 263/2010 on the unitary public pension system).

If the duration of the marriage is less than 15 years, but at least 10 years, the amount of the survivor's pension due to the surviving spouse is reduced by 0.5% for each month, respectively by 6.0% for each year of marriage in minus.

The surviving spouse has the right to survivor's pension, regardless of age, during the period in which he is disabled of the first or second degree, if the duration of the marriage was at least one year.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

In the framework of the analysis, it is intended to identify the way in which the pension income of the elderly generates repercussions on this segment of the population. Also, the study is carried out with the help of pension data (taken from the National Public Pension House) in a post-pandemic year (2021) in which inflation and economic instability made their presence felt.

4.1 Indicators of state social insurance pensions - Average pension at the level of the four trimesters of 2021

Table no. 2 STATE SOCIAL INSURANCE PENSION INDICATORS QUARTER I - 2021

Pensioners category	Average pension for the first quarter of 2021 -lions-
1 Age limit	1.795
of which WOMEN	1.563
2 Early retirement	2.125
of which WOMEN	1.527
3 Followers	828

Source: According to CNPP statistical data, Pillar I statistical indicators, 2021.

Table no. 3 STATE SOCIAL INSURANCE PENSION INDICATORS QUARTER II - 2021

Pensioners category	Average pension for the second quarter of 2021 -lions-
1 Age limit	1798
of which WOMEN	1567
2 Early retirement	2164
of which WOMEN	2086
3 Followers	831

Source: According to CNPP statistical data, Pillar I statistical indicators, 2021.

Table no. 4. STATE SOCIAL INSURANCE PENSION INDICATORS QUARTER III - 2021

Pensioners category	Average pension for the third quarter of 2021 -lions-
1 Age limit	1800
of which WOMEN	1568
2 Pensia anticipata	2178
of which WOMEN	2108
3 Followers	833

Source: According to CNPP statistical data, Pillar I statistical indicators, 2021.

Table no. 5. STATE SOCIAL INSURANCE PENSION INDICATORS QUARTER IV - 2021

Pensioners category	Average pension for the fourth quarter of 2021 -lions-
1 Age limit	1802
of which WOMEN	1571
2 Early retirement	2219
of which WOMEN	2156
3 Followers	834

Source: According to CNPP statistical data, Pillar I statistical indicators, 2021.

Taking into account the tables above, we can identify the following comparative aspects that help us to form an overall opinion, at the level of 2021, about pensions for the elderly (by gender: men and women), according to the three categories of pensioners chosen for this analysis, namely: pensioners on the age limit, pensioners with early retirement and descendants. On the one hand, I consider an analysis of each category of pensioners to be of interest in order to identify the main differences. Regarding the average pension calculated for the year 2021, of the elderly pensioners on the age limit, for each quarter, we can learn that the average pension increased from 1795 lei (in quarters I and II) to 1802 lei (quarters III and IV). The increase is not a significant one considering that 2021 was a post-pandemic year, with inflation and poverty being the main effects of this global problem among the elderly. In the case of women retired on the age limit, the pension does not show major changes at the level of 2021, taking into account the data presented by the National Public Pension House. On the other hand, the early pension increased from the first quarter of 2021 by approximately 100 lei, more precisely, if in the first quarter we found an early pension in the amount of 2125 lei, at the end of 2021, in the 4th quarter, we identified a early pension of 2219 lei.

*We can compare the two categories of retirees (retirees with an age limit and retirees with early retirement) in that the main difference appears with this increase in the case of those with early retirement. The increase of approximately 100 lei can be a help if we observe the inflation that has appeared since 2021, for the most necessary services (food, medical, social services, medicines, treatments, etc.), but it is not enough for a decent living, in the case many of the pensioners. Poverty can be a fairly common phenomenon in Romania, in the case of elderly people, which leads to the idea of considering new strategies and representative projects for reducing prices, medicines, capping energy and gas bills, analysis of the factors favoring the emergence of poverty and the reduction of the effects that may occur on the elderly. The respective effects can be represented by loneliness, depression, lack of mobility; the latter, can lead to injuries or death (in the case of elderly people who live alone and cannot afford a nursing home or a qualified person to take care of them).

To the same extent, in the case of the category of pensioners represented by those who benefit from survivor's pension, I do not identify a significant increase, the average pension at the level of 2021 being in the amount of 832 lei, as an average of the 4 quarters. Thus, in the first quarter we identify an average pension of 828 lei, in the second a pension of 831 lei, in the third a pension of 833 lei, and in the fourth a pension of 834 lei.

4.2 The average number of pensioners in 2021, depending on the type of pension they

**Figure no. 3 The average number of pensioners with an old-age pension in 2021
-Comparison between women and men-**



Source: According to CNPP statistical data, the average number of pensioners with an old-age pension, in 2021.

Looking at figure no. 3, we note the fact that regarding old-age pensions, for the year 2021, the number of male pensioners (42%) is lower than that of women (58%), taking into account the average number of pensioners identified for this year .

**Figure no. 4 The average number of retirees with early retirement, in 2021
-Comparison between women and men-**

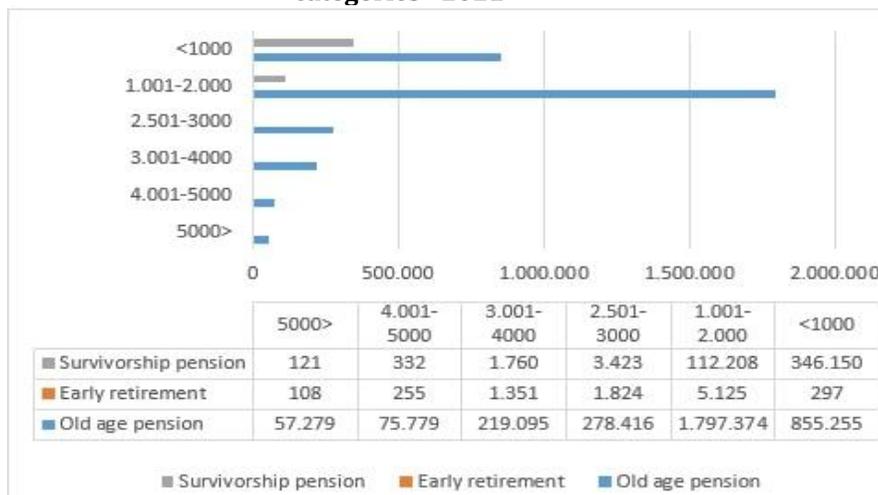


Source: According to CNPP statistical data, the average number of pensioners with old-age pension in 2021.

To the same extent, the average number of female pensioners is higher compared to that of male pensioners. Women hold a percentage of 60% and men a percentage of 40%, which means that women are more beneficiaries of early retirement.

4.3 Grouping of state social insurance pensioners by pension levels and categories, at the level of 2021

Figure no. 5 Grouping of state social insurance pensioners by pension levels and categories - 2021-



Source: According to CNPP statistical data, Grouping of state social insurance retirees by pension levels and categories, at the level of 2021.

In order to identify the main differences in pension levels and based on the three categories for the year 2021, the intervals between <1000 lei and 5000 lei were chosen as the tranche of the pension amount within the group of pensioners according to the data of the National Public Pension Fund. Thus, analyzing the values related to the mentioned intervals and in figure no. 4, the following aspects were observed:

At the level of the pension for the age limit, the highest number of insured persons is 1,797,374 in the pension range of 1001-2000 lei. Moreover, the number of insured persons with a pension of more than 2000 lei is decreasing if we approach the value of 5000+.

At the early retirement level, the highest number of insured persons is 5,125 in the pension range of 1001-2000 lei. This shows a similarity between the two types of pensions (retirement pension and early retirement, taking into account the fact that most insured

persons, beneficiaries of the two types of pensions, are in this range of pensions for the year 2021. Moreover, similar to the above case of the beneficiaries of old-age pensions, those with early retirement have a rather low number if we analyze the proximity of the pension range - 2000 lei-5000 lei.

At the survivor's pension level, we identify an increased number of insured persons (346,150) who benefit from this type of pension in the pension range of 912-1000 lei. Also, the number of insured persons who benefit from pensions over 3000 lei up to 5000+, being decreasing.

Table no. 6. STATE SOCIAL INSURANCE PENSION INDICATORS existing in 2011-2021

Pensioners category	Average number of retirees -2011-	Average number of retirees -2021-	Average pension -2011-	Average pension -2021-
1. AGE LIMIT	3.827.603	3.867.014	808	1.737
Of which WOMEN	2.220.137	2.230.741	677	1.488
2. EARLY RETIREMENT	9315	13.217	962	2.170
Of which WOMEN	5.836	7.982	934	2.095
3. FOLLOWERS	618.169	482.615	357	813

Source: According to CNPP statistical data, Pillar I statistical indicators 2021.

The average pension in 2011, for the category of pensioners with an age limit, was 808 lei, compared to the year 2021, in which the pension amount for these pensioners was 1737 lei. It is true that the difference is a big one, but the prices for services necessary for the living of an elderly person were different at that time; given the fact that pensions have increased in the last 10 years, due to inflation, unstable administrative problems and the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, economic power has decreased considerably, prices have increased, and the penny no longer has a high value based on which a citizen can satisfy his daily needs.

We also note from the calculations, the fact that there are more women than men in Romania, it being interesting that both for women and for men, the amount of pensions has increased, in the last 10 years, in similar limits, with no significant differences based on gender, if we refer to the three categories of pensioners that we analyzed during this secondary data analysis.

5. Conclusions

Following the analysis carried out on the statistical data from the existing National Public Pension House regarding the pension income of the elderly for the year 2021 (according to three of the representative categories of pensioners with an age limit pension; pensioners with an early pension; pensioners with survivor's pension) small percentage differences were identified from one quarter to another, which demonstrates that the post-pandemic period and the repercussions induced by inflation led to a stagnation of pension growth and, implicitly, to a low standard of living as regards the elderly.

Over the years, the social policies highlighted by the European Commission for the purpose of the evolution of collaborative relations between the elderly and the competent authorities, intend to combat some of the shortcomings of the elderly. The growth of the age segment of 65 years and over calls for the reform of social policies.

Maintaining a high degree of social protection, under these conditions, is an important challenge for the authorities. The need to adapt to an aging population implies the review and redevelopment of policies and strategies.

At the same time, the reforms will have to take into account that the transfer of resources to an increased number of elderly people does not create major economic or social tensions. On the other hand, the elderly population should not be allowed to fall into poverty. In one form or another, transfers have existed and will always exist.

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THE CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION FACING THE ISSUES OF DRUGS AND NARCOTICS IN CAMEROON: FIGHTING AGAINST A HARMFUL PHENOMENON IN OUR CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

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Abstract: *The consumption of narcotics is taking on worrying proportions in Cameroon. These substances circulate in several forms in young people, who are the main consumers. The social and health consequences of the consumption of these drugs are disastrous for the health of these young people but also for the sovereignty of States insofar as terrorists are in strategic connivance with the criminal and transnational networks of drug distributors. Its circulation is from trafficking networks in all the countries of West Africa and those of Central Africa. In this perspective, the customs administration whose missions oscillate between fiscal, economic and security missions, play a leading role in the fight against the dissemination of drugs in Cameroon through the establishment of the HALCOMI system. Nevertheless, it must be modernized to deal with the logic of bypassing smugglers and mafia and criminal networks selling drugs on Cameroonian territory.*

Keywords: Drugs, Customs Administration, Terrorism, World Customs Organization, Cameroon.

1. Introduction

The consumption of narcotics is taking on worrying proportions in Cameroon. These substances circulate in several forms in young people, who are the main consumers. Indeed, according to statistics from the National Drug Control Committee (CNLD) 21% of the Cameroonian population of school age has already used drugs. 15-year-olds are the most affected with a prevalence of 15%, higher in school settings. In the consumer community, 10% are regular consumers, while 60% are young people aged between 20 and 25 (Mambo, 1995). In addition to growing consumption, Cameroon is seen as a major importer and trans-shipment point for locally produced cannabis destined for other African countries, primarily Nigeria. In 2017, 1476 kg of cannabis and 05.256 kg of cocaine were seized by the police. The phenomenon of drugs and narcotics is therefore a matter of great concern. As much as its traffic is dangerous for society, as much as its consumption is harmful to the organism, which it weakens by destroying its immune system, but also it participates in the illicit enrichment of terrorist groups and criminal armed gangs which weaken the sovereignty of borders national and international states. In this context, one must ask the question what is the role played by the customs administration in the face of the drug phenomenon at the national and international borders of Cameroon? What are the causes of this growing harmful phenomenon in contemporary societies? Is the Cameroonian customs administration able to combat this phenomenon on its own? To resolve this thorny question,

2. Panoramic study of narcotics and drugs in circulation and their consequences in Cameroon

The world knows a variety of drugs and narcotics whose uses, abuses and trafficking have specific characteristics in each area. Thus Cameroon, due to its geographical position, is a crossroads where a panoply of narcotics circulates and whose consequences are numerous in its society.

2.1. Presentation of drugs and narcotics in Cameroon and its trafficking in its neighboring regions

These narcotics can be categorized into three main categories: central nervous system depressants, central nervous system stimulants and finally, central nervous system disruptive products. Among these drugs, there is the prevalence of cannabis which is the main product in Cameroon; psychotropic substances, heroin and cocaine (Mama Fouda, 2014).

a. Cannabis

Cannabis cultivation and consumption are widespread in Cameroon. It is the most consumed drug in Cameroon ahead of tramadol. Cannabis is none other than the Latin name for hemp (canapus), a plant belonging to the family of *Cannabaceae* and to the order of *Urticales*. For a very long time, several species of hemp have been distinguished: *Cannabis sativa* (textile hemp), *Cannabis indica* (Indian hemp), *Cannabis ruderalis*, *Cannabis sinensis*. In fact most botanists today agree that all of these strains are just different chemotypes of the *sativa* species. The differences observed in morphology and chemical composition are consecutive to adaptation to climatic conditions. *Cannabis sativa* is the textile hemp cultivated in Europe for its fibers (fabrics, ropes) and for its oilseeds or hemp seeds (Mambo, 1995). Still called Indian hemp in Cameroon, cannabis would be one of the oldest known plants for cultivation and use. The grass also called "hay" or "quack grass" is a mixture of flowering tops and leaves, dried and reduced to powder. It is the "kif" of Morocco, the "marijuana" in Canada or the United States, the "dagga" of South Africa, the "grifa" of Mexico or the "takrouri" of Tunisia.

The user may experience excitement and euphoria, mental confusion, sinking and depression leading to sleep. The physical effects are manifested by a loss of coordination, a feeling of increased visual acuity, sensory perceptions and sometimes greater sociability.

In the event of heavy consumption, cannabis can cause hallucinations, anxiety or panic, with the possibility of alteration of certain cells, disturbance of memory and estimation of time and distances, cardiovascular problems, impaired reproductive function, eye and bronchopulmonary conditions, reduced immune resistance. In adolescents, we can note a triple danger, namely: appearance of the amotivational syndrome that is to say that the young person shows passivity and demotivation. There are also adverse effects of insomnia, instability, loss of appetite, nausea and tremors. In terms of cannabis, there are very rare cases of tolerance. There is no physical dependence;

b. The heroine

The heroine has long been a stupefied very dangerous and widely used throughout the world. Heroin is taken in several ways, the most common: injected — you "prick" yourself either into a vein (intravenous injection or "shoot"), into a muscle (intramuscular injection) or under the skin (subcutaneous injection); inhaled through the nose or inhaled or smoked (dragon hunting). This method involves heating heroin on an aluminum foil, over a small flame, and breathing in the smoke and vapors released through a tube. In its purest form, heroin is a fine white crystalline powder with a bitter taste that dissolves in water. When sold on the street, its color and consistency vary depending on how it is made and the additives incorporated into it. Street heroin is sold as a white powder, a brownish sometimes gritty substance, or a sticky, dark brown gum, and its purity varies from batch to batch. Certain additives, such as sugar, starch or powdered milk, are used to increase weight for retail sale. Other drugs can be added to increase the effects (<https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/index-on-mental-health-and-addiction/heroin>). Injecting heroin immediately causes a sharp, sharp, intense reaction of pleasure, euphoria and well-being. It's the "flash". Then follows a phase of relaxation and relaxation, with psychomotor inhibitions and a feeling of withdrawal. It is the "planet" which lasts depending on the case from 2 to 6 hours. Snorted or smoked, these effects are much weaker. Heroin leads to tolerance, physical and psychological dependence. In the short term, the pupil of the eye shrinks, the heroin addict has nausea and presents with depression of the respiratory centers, with risk of coma and death, slowing of the heart rate, hyperthermia (Mambo, 1995).

c. Cocaine

Cocaine is undoubtedly, with the mobile phone, one of the commodities emblematic of the second economic globalization. Indeed, in the space of twenty years, its consumption, which mainly affected only the North of the American continent (United States, Canada), developed massively on a world scale, in a first time in Europe, then in certain emerging countries of Latin America, and of the African and Asian continents; its use in the middle classes generated by economic development constituting a symbolic marker of the entry into the society of mass consumption (Gandilhon, 2016: 34-49).

Cocaine is a stimulant that pushes back the limits of fatigue. In general, shortly after taking, it generates a state of euphoria, self-confidence and well-being suggesting greater activity of intellectual functions. However, the repeated use of cocaine quickly generates a state of agitation and instability, leads to impaired judgment and behavior. Physiologically, there is an increase in temperature, with dilation of the pupils and profuse sweating. Initially, the consumer's general condition deteriorates and, at high doses, convulsions appear with the possibility of death by cardiac arrest or respiratory arrest. In the long term, perforation of the nasal septum or chronic rhinitis (Mambo, 1995).

As with other illegal trafficking, the links between sub-Saharan Africa and drug trafficking are not new. The oldest evidence of the involvement of West Africa as a transit zone for the cocaine trade dates back to 1952: American agents identified mules used by Lebanese criminal organizations to transport heroin on commercial flights in departing from Kano (Nigeria) and Accra (Ghana) and bound for New York. Moreover, the first information on marijuana produced in Nigeria and destined for the European market dates back to the 1970s. During the following decade, these same Nigerian traffickers used pilgrims to transport cannabis to Saudi Arabia.

Faced with the growing phenomenon of these drugs in Cameroon, what is the security position of the customs administration which is supposed to monitor the international borders in Cameroon?

2.2. The Cameroonian customs administration faced with the phenomenon of drugs and narcotics

In the missions of the Cameroonian customs, the surveillance of the territory and the fight against narcotics are part of its sovereign missions.

a. Customs duties

Customs is an administration that is responsible for carrying out a large number of intertwined missions, a phenomenon that results from a historical accumulation as well as a strong sensitivity to economic developments. The Cameroonian institution, we realize that by scrutinizing the history of Cameroon, it has contributed to the policies of surveillance and control of the external borders but also to internal security. Customs work is also organized around "objects", sectors of intervention, considered central (Domingo, 1998 : 479-500). It specifically aims to fight against commercial fraud, the trafficking of various goods (animals and plants threatened with extinction, arms and ammunition, waste, narcotics and precursors, etc.), VAT fraud and other taxes, the illegal immigration, concealed employment, money laundering, etc. (Domingo, 2001: 213-232). constitute so many heterogeneous "customs missions" which make difficult any attempt to seek general coherence, a priori rationality, in the arrangement of the powers assigned to customs and the tasks performed daily by customs officers. The control of goods, which constitutes both a customs power and a customs mission, takes on particular significance when it is linked to the concept of "prohibited goods", or one of its logical equivalents ("fraudulent goods", "sensitive goods", "contraband goods", narcotics, counterfeits, etc.). It then serves as an interface between customs logic and internal security logic and acts as a "transition operator" between the two types of logic. It is on this logical structure that the

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With regard to contemporary Cameroonian customs, its missions oscillate between fiscal, economic and security missions. Specifically, these missions are broken down into four main points:

b. The tax mission

It is for the Administration to proceed with the determination, the liquidation and the fair and equitable recovery of the customs duties and taxes payable as well as any other deduction provided for by the regulations in force, the implementation of measures with a view to control of tax expenditure (control of the preferred destination), optimization of the collection of new revenue.

The Cameroon Customs Administration contributes to the mobilization of budget revenue to the tune of 33% of the State's non-oil revenue, or about 18% of the total budget. This trend has experienced a slight decline since 04 2016, the year of the implementation of the dismantling of tariffs between Cameroon and the EU

c. The economic mission

The Customs Administration plays a key role in the implementation of national economic policy. It is notably responsible for protecting the national economic space and improving the competitiveness of the economy. As such, it participates in:

- Trade facilitation;
- The implementation of economic regimes;
- The fight against fraud, smuggling, counterfeiting and illicit trade;
- The production of foreign trade statistics;
- The control of competition rules by the fight against compensatory measures;
- The mastery of the rules of origin of the goods.

d. The mission of protecting society

Due to its position at the land, sea and air borders, the Customs Administration participates in the protection of the economic area against flows that are harmful to the environment and the health of citizens. This mission is exercised through the controls carried out by the Customs Units present in the said borders. Specifically, these are:

- The fight against the trafficking of protected species, counterfeit drugs, psychotropic products and other dangerous products;
- The fight against the traffic of toxic waste and other products harmful to the environment and public health.

e. The security mission

In view of the national and international security context marked by the resurgence of conflicts, the Customs Administration is called upon to make its contribution in controlling the circulation of certain products used in conflicts (Essomo, 2014). These include in particular:

- The fight against organized cross-border crime;
- The fight against terrorism and the trafficking of Improvised Explosive Devices;
- The fight against financial crime and money laundering;
- The fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition;
- The fight against illicit trafficking of dual-use goods (Essomo, 2014).

In view of the foregoing, it is clear that Cameroonian customs has a role that lies at the interface between economic missions and security missions. Thus, we can try to show the intimate link on a diachronic perspective between the customs administration and the army in Cameroon.

3. The positioning of customs in the fight against drugs and narcotics in Cameroon

The problem of drugs as a whole remains today a complex subject of society which affects multiple fields as different as they are complementary, interconnected and therefore inseparable; prevention, information, communication, research, security, health, repression, and international action. Thanks to a complete marking of the territory, the Cameroonian Customs can ensure an effective positioning in the fight against drugs and psychotropic products. Between November 1993 and September 2018, various seizures reflect the resurgence of drug trafficking in Cameroon. Indeed, significant quantities of herbal cannabis in particular and other psychotropic substances were seized within the national territory, in the luggage of Cameroonians boarding at airports or landing abroad (Paris notably). These drugs are in most cases hidden in fresh food in order to thwart the vigilance of drug detection dogs, or agents responsible for checking packages.

At the national level, significant seizures are made throughout the territory. These seizures concern both narcotics and psychotropic substances. Between January 1993 and September 1994, 356,400 kg of cannabis and 41 psychotropic tablets were seized from 2nd) men and 2 women, i.e. 26 Cameroonians and 5 foreigners were seized. In Mora, for example, 41 tablets of psychotropic substances were seized. In Limbe, 400 kg of cannabis were seized from Cameroonian women leaving for Nigeria (Mambo, 1995). In Garoua, in December 1993, 6,300 kg of cannabis were seized. Between February and July 1994, 150 tablets of psychotropic substances in this case Mimifon were found on one hundred Nigerians, 4,600 kg of herbs and 1, as part of the celebrations marking International Customs Day in January 2012, a forum was held from January 25 to 27, 2012, which consisted of bringing together all the players from "Member countries and international and regional organizations" in charge of the fight against narcotics and chemical precursors and to exchange best practices and current experiences (Report of the World Customs Organization, 2011). It is in this perspective that the

Cameroonian customs administration has increased its commitment to the fight against drug and narcotics trafficking on its territory. In fact, since at the turn of the century, sub-Saharan Africa acquired an important role in international drug trafficking, becoming an intermediate stage for the transfer of various narcotic and illegal substances from producing countries to consuming countries. This mainly concerns heroin produced in Asia and consumed in Europe and North America, South American cocaine destined for Western Europe and cannabis derivatives produced in many African countries and consumed in the rest of the world (Report of Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies 2012; Military Institute for Evaluation and Prospective Documentation 2012). The most worrying of all these flows, by the receipts that represent, is that of cocaine. The integration of sub-Saharan Africa into the world drug market has been caused by various realities and events, some of them exogenous and others endogenous. Between the exogenous or external aspects of the African continent, the combination between the growing increase in the demand for drugs in North America and Europe and the pressure exerted by the authorities on drug trafficking activities, which obliges traffickers to explore new transit routes, including those crossing sub-Saharan Africa. The endogenous factors which have contributed to promoting drug trafficking activities in sub-Saharan Africa are varied and correspond to the political, economic and social problems and deficiencies which have traditionally affected this region (Report of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, 2012; Military Institute for Evaluation and Prospective Documentation 2012). The main problems are the fragility of government institutions and the scarcity of resources available to repress criminal activities: endemic corruption, the underdevelopment of most sub-Saharan countries, and porous borders. This combination of factors has encouraged the proliferation of local criminal groups and has attracted sub-Saharan Africa to transnational criminal organizations and the porosity of borders. This combination of factors has encouraged the proliferation of local criminal groups and has attracted sub-Saharan Africa to transnational criminal organizations and the porosity of borders. This combination of factors has encouraged the proliferation of local criminal groups and has attracted sub-Saharan Africa to transnational criminal organizations.

Photo 1: Seizure by elements of the Ekok Customs Mobile Brigade of 9,000 tramadol tablets from Nigeria on 08/06/2022



Source: Customs Review, n° 32, 2022.

Photo 2: Seizure by elements of the Ekok Customs Mobile Brigade of 9,000 tramadol tablets from Nigeria on 08/06/2022.



Source: Customs Review, n° 32, 2022.

Photo 3: Seizure of 7.9 kg of cocaine pellets at Yaoundé airport, on 06/07/2022



Source: Customs Review, n° 32, 2022.

Photo 4: Seizure of 7.9 kg of cocaine pellets at Yaoundé airport, on 06/07/2022



Source: Customs Review, n° 32, 2022.

Photo 5 : Seizure of 7.9 kg of cocaine pellets at Yaoundé airport, on 06/07/2022



Source: Customs Review, n° 32, 2022.

The fight against the trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic substances has been a real fact in Cameroon for several years. All the administrations concerned put a little of their goodwill into it to achieve satisfactory results; hence the increasingly large seizures made throughout the national territory. From this perspective, in April 2019, customs intercepted in Douala, the economic capital of Cameroon, a truck containing 200,000 tramol tablets and 7,000 liters of contraband fuel (Soustras and Charon, 2020). Last fall, a shipment of tramadol flown in from India at Douala airport lay abandoned in bonded warehouses... revealing that the recipient was impossible to identify. The import, apparently legal, was not.

Faced with the growing phenomenon of Islamist terrorism in the northern regions of Cameroon since 2013 with the terrorist movement Boko Haram, tramadol seizures are frequent there: 600,000 tablets were intercepted in April 2017, 36,000 in May 2018. fake drugs is part of the trafficking that fuels security crises, as it generates illicit funds to finance criminal actions, such as terrorism", explains Joseph Kpoumie, director in charge of the special customs intervention group. The years 2020-2022 can be considered as golden ages for this illicit trafficking. All the border points recorded significant seizures of drugs and psychotropic products. Among these major seizures, we have the seizure at Douala Nsimalen International Airport of a large stock of 7.9 kilograms of cocaine pellets which, coming from Nigeria, was about to embark on an Ethiopians flight bound for Asia (Custom Review of Cameroon, 2022). Likewise, on 05/22/2022, elements of Operation Halcomi (Stop Illicit Trade) intercepted a shipment of 100 kilograms of cannabis hidden in travel bags; it was about to be sold in the city of Douala. For the 2020-2022 period alone, Cameroon Customs seized approximately 2,000 shipments of drugs and psychotropic products (Custom Review of Cameroon, 2022 2022).

4. How to combat the phenomenon of drugs and narcotics in Cameroon and Sub-Saharan Africa: a collective pooling of national and international forces

The success of customs action in the fight against drug trafficking and its consumption depends on a certain number of measures that will have to be implemented or reconsidered. The question that can be asked on this point is whether the customs administration has the necessary means to enable it to act effectively. If these means exist, what are they? If not, what can this administration do to improve its work? In this chapter, we will try not only to propose strategies for the fight, but also to talk about money laundering which is a logical corollary of the phenomenon of drug is trafficking.

4.1-Strengthening drug control strategies in Cameroon

The fight against the trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic substances has been a real fact in Cameroon for several years. All the administrations concerned put a little of their goodwill into it to achieve satisfactory results; hence the increasingly large seizures made throughout the national territory. However, to the traditional methods generally used, more modern and simpler techniques could be added to improve the results already obtained.

4.2. Need to set up state-of-the-art infrastructure

The development of modern infrastructures allows for an increase in seizures. Thus, for example, in our international airports, modern search systems using X-rays or sophisticated devices must replace the manual search which is unfortunately still practiced in these airports. The development of these modern techniques responds to new methods of concealing drugs, especially so-called "in corpore" drugs. Airports must have drug screening security features. This equipment of our airports in materials or devices to fight against the illicit traffic of drugs will deter any attempt of trafficking especially if repressive measures come to support the preventive action. The material resources made available to customs services for greater efficiency can be diverse and varied. Thus, for example, Cameroon could adopt the narcotics detection methods used in several developed countries and which are bearing fruit (Mambo, 1995: 51-52).

Thus, the detector portal is a means intended to detect the presence of narcotics transported by travelers or containers. X-ray or Gamma devices are radiology devices that allow rapid checks to be carried out without opening luggage or packages. Endoscopies are devices allowing the control of means of transport. This equipment uses a lighting and visualization system using optical plugs and facilitates the exploration of parts that are difficult to access by vehicles. The detection of narcotics in the urine and in the blood makes it possible to discover the people transporting them incorporated or having ingested them. This process could involve the use of a double-beam photometer, equipped with a halogen quartz lamp and a microprocessor, a standard and control reagent diluter. For better use of these devices, customs officers must undergo special training to enable them to perform at their best. Training seminars should be organized from time to time on new narcotics screening techniques and on sensitizing agents and public opinion on the use and the perverse effects of drug consumption. Customs officers must also have product identification devices. This is how identification kits or boxes make it possible to carry out tests on the spot and to know the nature of suspect products.

4.3. Strengthening the powers of customs officers

It is desirable that an office in charge of narcotics be created within the customs department. This office would give more responsibility to customs officers in need of feeling or inclined to allow themselves to be corrupted by traffickers. The creation of this office would make it possible to recognize special powers for the services and agents responsible for the fight against drugs, not only in airports, but also throughout the national territory. Thus, for example, the customs officer in the fight against drug trafficking may well be a judicial police officer with special competence, have the possibility and authorization to practice controlled delivery and above all, have the right to control those who 'we call traditionally "Very Important Personality" (Mambo, 1995: 53).

In addition to national bodies and bilateral cooperation, generally between African countries and the United States or major European countries, the fight against cocaine trafficking and, more generally, illicit narcotics, also takes place within a multilateral and regional framework (Mambo, 1995: 53).

5. Conclusion

In less than a decade, West Africa has indeed become an important transit zone for South American cocaine. Because of its scale and the generous profit margins that the main players in this trade allow themselves, cocaine smuggling has certainly become the most destabilizing narcotics trade in the sub-region. Marked by a great capacity for adaptation, in particular by a constant change of routes and methods of transport, drug trafficking proves to be particularly difficult to combat. In terms of the fight against drug trafficking, we have to recognize the dominant role of the Defense and Security Forces, the major international agencies (UNODC, Interpol, etc.) and Western powers (The United States, EU, etc.).

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THE RISE OF TECHNOCRATIC GEOPOLITICS

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Abstract: *The contemporary world, generally speaking, the modern world including so-called post-modernity, is seen as an unprecedented age in the history of mankind. According to the official narrative, it is an era of Enlightenment, emancipation, and the flourishing of man that should do without religion and old ways of thinking and feeling. These are seen as remnant of the past that should disappear. They are both obsolete and an obstacle towards a better future. Pragmatism, science, and technology should reign and through them, a new world order should be brought about. A unified humanity. A globalized world without nation-states and the conflicts they engender, without private property. This should be the result of progress and technology. Technocracy will solve all problems. And man will be made anew. This view is an autocratic one, hostile to democracy and government by elected representatives. It is a rule by unelected and unaccountable people. A programmatic blueprint thereof can be found in Z. Brzezinski's *Between Two Ages. America's Role in the Technotronic Era*. The book revives some ideas that were presented in the thirties of the twentieth century. According to those views, technocracy meant a movement and the creation of a new system of government based on the measurement of energy, including the control, and transformation of all areas of society and private life. This happens right now, being known that such proposals are being made regarding the so-called carbon footprint.*

Keywords: technocracy, Brzezinsky, globalism, totalitarianism, utopia

1. Introduction

The age we are living in is defined by a permanent technical revolution and by a restructuring of the political and social structures within humanity that has lived for a long time. In the seventies, the Polish American security of President Jimmy Carter – Z. Brzezinski (1926-2017) penned a name for this era. He called it the Technotronic era. This era was seen as an era of world integration and of the emergence of a new planetary consciousness, an era that followed the third stage in the development of humankind, an age or a stage defined by the birth of Marxism. For him, Marxism was the best instrument to understand the modern world, but it failed to deliver because when applied it didn't fulfill its humanist (!) and internationalist promises, instead becoming sectarian and nationalistic (or worse) in the Third World. The new and fourth stage of humanity would fulfill these promises. The history of mankind is supposed to go in a progressive and integrative direction. Nationalism and the nation-state seem to be the target of his attacks. And in a sense, he can be considered a supporter of the slogan: „True Marxism (or Communism or Socialism) has never been tried”. Globalization and technocracy represent therefore the same narrative of relentless progress that plagues humanity at least from the Enlightenment onwards.

„Under the pressure of economics, science, and technology, mankind is moving steadily towards large-scale cooperation. Despite periodic reverses, all human history clearly indicates progress in that direction. The question is whether a spontaneous movement will suffice to counterbalance the dangers already noted. And since the answer is probably no, it follows that a realistic response calls for deliberate efforts to accelerate the process of international cooperation among the advanced nations”. (Brzezinski 1970: 296)

He states that this process cannot be accomplished if a kind of global state is built because this would be only the projection of a nationalistic point of view on a global scale, notes Brzezinski. Nevertheless, his positive and implicit acceptance of Marxism, whose endpoint is the abolishing of the state, still points toward a global state or worldwide government. Instead of trying to build a unified global state, he recommends a piecemeal indirect approach based on the already existing limitations of national sovereignty.

2. Two ways to understand technocracy

It can be understood or defined as the power (*kratos*) of technology. Beyond the etymological meaning, the same word can denote a movement that started in the US in the thirties, and also the totality of persons or groups that share a distinct view about the way to run the world. Technocracy, in this sense, is more than the power of technology. It is a particular view of the world bound to a particular time. The name 'Technocracy' was given to a new kind of economic system not based not on exchange and money, but on energy. Technocracy, in both its meanings, can't be divorced from the historical development that produced modernity, although it is rooted way back in West European history. Technocracy, both as a comprehensive worldview and as a specific way to govern and remodel society, has religious and magic roots. The wish to build/to regain paradise or to erect the heavenly city on Earth are some of those roots. It implies treating science and technology as a kind of religious dogma that can't be questioned or denied. It is a substitution of God, technology being the thing that will help mankind to attain transcendence.

As a movement, 'Technocracy' started in the thirties in the United States, presenting a program meant to transform economics, government, religion, and law. Governing by unelected experts is the magic formula it presents (Wood 20015-6: xiii). Later in the twentieth century, similar ideas are revived by Z. Brzezinski in *Between Two Ages* (1970), but in another form: as a supposed necessary development of history. If for Hegel the Spirit found its expression in the Prussian states, for Brzezinski, the United States replaces the Prussian state in the schema of the unfolding of the historical development/progress. According to him, the first country to embody the technocratic and globalist way of government is according to Brzezinski the United States. The term he uses is not technocracy but technotronic. The book is speaking about globalization and the Technotronic age that ushers it in. The US was the main disseminator of this Technocratic age (Brzezinski 1970: 24). The US exports this model, which differs from the old, classical imperial one. The US influence is scientific and technological, contends Brzezinski. And even if one should use the term empire, then it should be informally. America's influence is supposed to be something new – just like the Technotronic age is supposed to be. This influence that the US exerts upon the world is made up of: „the interpretation of economic institutions, the sympathetic harmony of political leaders and parties, the shared concepts of sophisticated intellectuals, the mating of bureaucratic interests. It is, in other words, something new in the world, and not yet well understood.” (Brzezinski 1970: 33). The US compels the other countries to imitate, to engage in a scientific and cultural revolution. It stimulates also the export of new techniques, methods, and skills from the more advanced countries to the least advanced. Or industrial espionage – an ever-present reality, one should add. The main tool to export this revolution and the worldview which come with it were and are the private or (less private) foundations (Brzezinski 1970: 34). The impact of this revolution is double-edged. On one side, it generates the need/wish in other countries to emulate the United States, while on the other side, it generates resentment by producing disruption, destroying existent institutions, undermining mores and modes of behavior, etc. It produces resentment and the need for policies that give birth to progress and material wealth. Also, it could be said that it destroys cultures in the long run. It does so because even if someone wants to resist the influence of the US, it must use the same means as the United States to resist it. Such a policy requires the establishment of a competitive market economy, an industry, and new institutions

that act according to the technotronic image of the world. It would require the re-education of the people, etc.

The term technocracy was used in 1919 in an article with the title *Industrial Management* by W. H. Smythe. The idea conveyed is that society should be governed by engineers, scientists, and technicians not by elected officials (Wood 2015-6: 2-3). The supporters of technocracy excluded other forms of government be they communism, fascism, liberalism, democracy, etc. although if it suited the occasion, they would accept a blending of ideas coming from these sources, too. The conception behind the technocracy movement is utopian, seeking to establish a system that replaces price-based economics with energy/resource base economics. Such a dreamed-up system could be rightfully seen as totalitarian since it requires permanent monitoring of the person and also decision-making made by unelected experts that decide what someone should or should not do.

The technological and scientific development and also the Great Depression helped the technocracy movement to gain speed. Capitalism seemed dead. The restructuring of society along scientific lines will save the world, making such events as the Great Depression obsolete and impossible to produce. This can't come true without the establishment of a new way of ordering society. A new comprehensive system of ordering human life needed to be set up regarding all facets of society and human behavior. Thus, a comprehensive monitoring system of the life of each member is needed. What happens in a section of society affects every other sector. All these domains have to be completely entangled with each other since society is a holistic structure. Total surveillance, control, and means of implementation of the decisions taken by the unelected experts are necessary to accomplish the goals that this new aristocracy set up. This kind of totalitarian management of life is what today is called governance. It is a holistic view of society. The idea behind it pertains to the whole earth, postulating an evolution towards a global state/society. Since the whole is more important than the particular members it is made of, people have to give up their rights and freedoms.

Another source of inspiration for this view is Taylor's scientific method of management whose tenet was based upon science, cooperation, and harmony, which should be fostered, and not on individualism and discord, which should be fought off (Wood 2015-6: 20-21). Such management would be efficient and would eliminate the use of arbitrary power. Even someone like the sociologist Thorstein Veblen railed himself to this point of view and began to call for a revolution of the engineers meant to replace the conventional way of doing politics. He alongside Howard Scott (leader of the Technocracy movement in the early 1920s) formed started a group called the Technical Alliance whose purpose was to build up a „soviets of engineers”. In 1921, Veblen clearly expressed its views on this subject matter. The whole economy of a country should be treated as a whole, managed only by competent technicians and not by individuals that seek only their private interests. Such a style of scientific management would, the sociologist believed, have exceeded by several hundred percents the output of the normal economical system (Veblen 1921 in Wood 2015-6: 22). As already stated, the technocratic view proposes the establishment of an economic system based on energy-value that would replace the profit as motivation. Thus, this technocratic view promises both utopia and economic freedom. Technology will free man from the unpleasant effort of labor (Wood 2015-6: 23). Of course, to get there one has to brush away all obstacles, including politicians, nation-states, and everyone that doesn't accept this new ideology. No square pegs for round holes.

The new economic and social system was exposed in the Technocracy Studies Course from 1934. Technocracy was, as afore-mentioned, the name of a movement and of organization – Technocracy Inc., which was organized in a para-military manner. The manuals stated it was a non-profit organization and neither a political party nor a financial racket. It entailed a comprehensive and totalitarian view of human existence as a whole, whatever interacted with human action. It was a blueprint for a new society and a new man. It precluded the accumulation of wealth and profit as motivation for action. The resemblance with the communist system is

not by happenstance, both are totalitarian and centralized ways of governing society. The same delusions and will to power are at play in both. The ideological grounding was found in the conviction that the problems which confront society are entirely the products of man's actions and they pertain to climate, biology, and natural resources. Without scientific dictatorship, mankind would suffer destruction. Mankind is the enemy. The assumptions upon which this view is based are the same assumptions that underly present UN programs such as Agenda 21/30, UN's Green Economy, etc. The proposal of Ali Baba Group's President J. Michael Evans about the development of a technology that will measure the carbon print of each individual being around the world could be taken directly from the Technocracy Manual. The idea is to develop technologies and systems able to monitor and translate individual activities into carbon (social credits) credits. Those are to be used to set up and develop lifestyles and communities that use low-carbon (**CTR Wire 2022). If the imagined economical system was to work, monitoring and measuring the goods and energy resources that are used would be mandatory. This control must be constant otherwise there would be no monitoring of society with the required scientific precision. The system would have to register 24 hours per day the net conversion of energy, utilizing the registration of the consumed and converted energy to make it possible to have a balanced load. It should provide a continuous inventory of all production and consumption. It should provide the type of all produced and used goods and services, where and when they are used, thereby furnishing specific information regarding the consumption of each person, along with a profile and a record of each individual (Wood 2015-6: 31). Every facet and aspect of individual activity must be monitored, recorded to build this new economic and social system. Another necessary requirement was the complete conditioning of the population and the creation of a centralized organ of control. There was no room for dissent since all the decisions were made by experts and science cannot be questioned. According to the manual of Technocracy Inc. the whole north American continent -including Canada and Mexico – was considered to be necessary for building this new society. There was no specification of the means that had to be used during this process. What comes out of the pages of the manual is the complete disdain toward the nation-state, national sovereignty, and normal citizens alike (the fact that many citizens if those countries might not accept the proposed new economical and governance system or might not accept the abolishment of the national borders didn't even cross the mind of the supporters of Technocracy Inc is very telling). Eradicating national sovereignty is also one of the conditions of building the new world and economic order that today the members of the World Economic Forum intend to impose against national sovereignties and the will of the different peoples. Abolishing national sovereignty and the nation-state are predicated as *sine qua non* conditions of the utopia. Another 'perk' of this system would be the disappearance of money. The money would be replaced by Energy Certificates that would be issued anew at the beginning of each new accounting period of energy. The function thereof would be to acquire goods and services, but only for a defined period. Their validity will vanish before the new period of accounting the energy. This precludes the existence of money, accumulating wealth, and the existence of private property. No accumulation of wealth, no private property? The communist dream becoming reality but through technological means. In the very words of Technocracy, Inc. the whole endeavor can be seen as social engineering.

„Technocracy is the science of social engineering, the scientific operation of the entire social mechanism to produce and distribute goods and services to the entire population of this continent. For the first time in human history, it will be done as a scientific, technical, engineering problem.” (The Technocrat, 1948 in Wood 2015-6: 33)

3. The rebirth of technocracy. Global dominance

Some parts of the program established by the supporters of the technocratic movement were adopted quietly by the Roosevelt administration (Wood 2015-6: 35). Though the movement wasn't successful in the thirties of the past century, the ideas, and the mindset were

living a rebirth after the second world war. One work that restates the same mindset is *Between Two Ages. America's Role in the Technotronic Era* by Zbigniew Brzezinski. This book made it possible for him to be selected by David Rockefeller to join the CFR. What is main message of Brzezinski's book? That the development of certain technologies furthers what we call now globalization and that the way the whole thing will be run will not be the conventional one. The global city will be run by a transnational elite, a technocratic elite. His essay is advocating globalization and technocracy, this time based on the development of mass media and communications – computers, for example. This new era is the fourth stage of a process that supposedly started at the beginning of humanity itself. This fourth age, the technotronic one represents a spatio-temporal revolution (Brzezinski 1970: 107). This stage expresses itself in the form of a new society born in the United States. The post-industrial society was meant to become the technotronic one. According to Brzezinski: „The post-industrial society is becoming a 'technotronic' society: a society that is shaped culturally, psychologically, socially, and economically by the impact of technology and electronics – particularly in the area of computers and communications” (Brzezinski 1970: 9). The scientific and technological revolution will spill over in all the areas of life. Not only that but the revolution that this age will bring about will be animated by the passion for equality, which becomes a self-conscious force. The development of the means of communication leads to a greater interconnection between different areas of the world, thus making it possible to go beyond the local or national level and combat inequality at a planetary level. This development leads to the increase of the potential magnitude of human control upon society, environment, etc., increasing the pressure of changing and imposing certain lines on the development of society (Brzezinski 1970: 10). A new society emerges from these changes and this new society will differ in many ways in its social, economic, or political dimensions from the previous one. The economic power will become inseparable from the political one (or indistinguishable), becoming more invisible. There will be a partnership between the public/governmental sectors and the private ones. On a more personal level, the social binds tend to fragment, the communities too and so do the ties between generations. On another level though, the individuals will be integrated into global structure. This would be the result of developing electronic communications and computer networks – global intimacy. The individual will be absorbed by this new global reality (Brzezinski 1970:18). But the final product is not the global village. It is a global city, a fragmented reality, a web of tense and nervous interdependent relationships that do not possess the stability, personal intimacy, or implicitly shared values that characterize life in a real village (Brzezinski 1970: 19). The way global/foreign affairs are considered will change. No one can remain non-affected by what happens on the planet. Distant events will impact life back home and give rise to new attitudes. The global access to information might engender a sentiment of deprivation and resentment in certain nations, and those might generate political or military action against the perceived source of the said deprivation – the United States, as already explained. On the other hand, the same interconnectivity might lead to global action against what the transnational elite/public might perceive as dangerous for the global city (due to long years of propaganda and brainwashing imposed on the public). Increased interconnectivity and access to information around the globe lead to the rise of a supposed planetary consciousness.

This new technocratic age is related to the rise of planetary consciousness, to the necessity of international cooperation above the national level; this would involve the integration of entire transnational regions or even continents (Brzezinski 1970: 55). This planetary consciousness is bound to the rise due to transnational elites made up of businessmen, scholars, etc. They are bonded to each other across national borders and their perspectives are therefore not limited by or to national tradition, having international interests at heart (Brzezinski 1970: 59). According to him, the national-state has ceased to be the principal creative force in the world. The state-nation is replaced by multinational corporations and banks, who are planning and acting in more advanced ways than the state (Brzezinski 1970: 56). According to the polish-American author, these new international elites will tend to see

things in terms of global magnitude and conform to their interest not conform to the views of the most citizens of the places where they live. The totalitarian approach can be clearly seen.

„More directly linked to the impact of technology, it involves the gradual appearance of a more controlled and directed society. Such a society would be dominated by an elite whose claim to political power would rest on allegedly superior scientific know-how. Unhindered by the restraints of traditional liberal values, this elite would not hesitate to achieve its political ends by using the latest modern techniques for influencing public behavior and keeping society under surveillance and control. Under such circumstances, the scientific and technological momentum of the country would not be reversed but would actually feed on the situation it exploits.” (Brzezinski 1970: 253)

This type of ruling a country, Brzezinski dubs technological managerialism. In this system, the distinctions between public and private bodies tend to become blurred. The tendency goes also in the direction of policy-making (Brzezinski 1970: 261). This is the result of the evolution of mankind, the establishment of a planetary consciousness being the result of the widening of man’s horizon. The planetary consciousness belongs to the aforementioned transnational elite made by businessmen, etc. They would perceive in a certain way the problems that confront humanity and tend to see them in terms of overcoming technological backwardness, eliminating poverty, the extension of international cooperation in education and health, preventing the so-called overpopulation (a problem born in the middle of the same elites), or – in today’s terms of global warming, etc. This consciousness would give rise to the feeling that one has to act. The problems could be solved by applying the accumulated social and scientific knowledge. The approach has to be global and planned, non-nationalistic, including transnational entities such as corporations. Corporate governance would thus be born. These developments and the significance Brzezinski grants them can be better understood when his view on Marxism comes into play.

Man’s history has, according to him, fourth stages. The third stage in the development of man was, in his view, the one that gave birth to Marxism. Marxism, surprise, surprise, is held in a high position by the supposed defender of the free world and former national security adviser. Marxism is a further creative stage in the process of attaining a universal vision of man, expressing at the same time the victory of external man over the inner man that is passive, the victory of reason over belief, etc. It also expressed the capacity of mankind to shape and control its material destiny. Marxism also states, according to the polish-American author, that man possesses an absolute capacity to understand reality and that this understanding is the starting point of his endeavor to mold reality at his will (Brzezinski 1970: 72). The whole struggle of human existence goes in a certain direction, human evolution has a goal, and Brzezinski quotes Teilhard du Chardin who developed an evolutionist account of man, completely anti-Christian – and affirms something that every Marxist would. That the goal of history is human emancipation, and equality – be it in the face of the supernatural as in supernatural religions is seen as a part of this process. But focusing on the inner man is the wrong way to do it. Taking control of the external conditions, and modifying them seems the way to achieve the aforementioned emancipation. Social change is an important part of this process. The problem with Christianity is in his eyes that the accent was put on the Kingdom of Heaven instead of taking control and changing the material and social condition of man.

As already said, Marxism is held in high regard by Brzezinski. Marxism offers „a unique intellectual tool for understanding and harnessing the fundamental forces of our time. As both a product and a response to a particularly traumatic phase of man’s history, it supplied the best available insight into contemporary reality” (Brzezinski 1970: 123). Marxism also raised the flag of internationalism in the age of national hatred, another good quality in his eyes. This squares, of course, with the view that supports and promotes globalization and rules by experts, a centralized undemocratic rule just like in the former Soviet bloc. What is the main failure of Marxism in his eyes? Concerning the former Soviet Union, he says that it succeeded in transforming Marxism into a „conservative bureaucratized doctrine” (Brzezinski 1970: 123).

His main accusation is that the USSR didn't succeed in remodeling human society as it purported to do. Contemporary Marxism gave up its Promethean commitments to universal humanism. The ideology that killed maybe 100 million people, and established some of the most totalitarian regimes on Earth are expressions of this universal humanism. The technocratic society does require more and more planning (Brzezinski 1970: 260). Communism arrived too early to be a source of true internationalism because it came to be in the era in which national self-awareness was born and because of the lack of technological communications. It came too late because the Western states had taken away its humanistic appeal with the help of the nation-state. If communism took despotic forms, that happened because it was applied in Russia and took oriental despotic features. It became de-Westernized. He thinks that there were valid alternatives to the brutal way in which Marxism was applied in the former empire. He quotes Trotsky to support his view because this he in 1930 that the physical liquidation of millions of kulaks was a moral monstrosity (although nothing about his conception of overman!). Moreover, Stalinism is considered to be even a blessing in disguise – not for the Soviet Union though, but for the world at large. The main sin of the Soviet Union, and of the communist parties in the former Eastern Bloc, was the fact that they were basically acting in a more or less nationalistic manner even if they thought of themselves as acting in an internationalist manner (Brzezinski 1970: 136). The Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc states have destroyed the revolutionary character of communism and ruined its appeal (Brzezinski 1970: 138). It has become sectarian thus intensifying the fragmentation of the world (Brzezinski 1970: 177). In his eye, Marxism is the representative of humanism. Humanism was a central Marxist concern (Brzezinski 1970:142). Communism was supposed to be an internationalizing and humanizing force, but at its best, says Brzezinski, had become a force for national modernization (Brzezinski 1970: 187; also 193). The virtues of Marxism come to light when it is not in power. When in power it tends to take extremely oppressive forms or intense nationalistic modes. In the East, communism became a force of stimulating nationalism. Observing that many communist parties in the Third World were driven by nationalism and racism, the Polish-American author states that this means that these parties capitulate in front of reality instead of shaping it (Brzezinski 1970: 192). His view on Marxism and therefore of highly centralized, dictatorial ideology is very appreciative:

„Thus, even if one is not a Marxist, it is not necessarily a cause for rejoicing to note that communism – which helped to enlarge the collective consciousness of mankind and to mobilize the masses for social progress -has failed in its original objective of linking humanism with internationalism.” (Brzezinski 1970: 192-3)

A new political and social framework has to be set up to confront the new socio-political realities, a framework that could deal with and integrate change. This new framework is not the government as an expression of the national will (Brzezinski 1970: 215); he speaks of the United States but the US was used as the paradigm of globalization and the technocratic age. The traditional government as an expression of national will is not able to answer the basic and strategic questions raised by modern society. It can give no direction. The new way of governing society has to find a way to adopt and integrate the ongoing technological change. This is paramount. The government has, therefore, to become technocratic. As such, among the main goals of politics in the global city should be– in order to be more humane – the definition of the conceptual frame in which humane and meaningful ends could be assigned to the rapid technological change, and also finding a way that would allow the application of technological success to the social realm plagued by different social problems that plague society, like poverty, discrimination, ecological problems, etc. If this new kind of society could be built, then it is necessary to produce a framework of meaning that would give coherence and solidarity to it, lest it not fall into dissolution (Brzezinski 1970: 241). This set of beliefs have to integrate the ongoing technological change.

The aforementioned transformations can't be attained by constitutional reform. The restructuring of society and the government thereof would be the result of covert actions and

it will take incrementally. Democratic processes are thus ignored or bypassed by this endeavor. This process can be far-reaching if the political process will assimilate the technological and scientific change, or, according to Jacques Ellul, if the political process becomes more and more restrained and ordered by the expansion of the technological system. Brzezinski states that through the implementation and expansion of information technology throughout the whole of society more responsibility could be transferred to the lower levels thereby increasing freedom – though it is plain to see that the development and implementation of information technology in the whole society does not increase freedom. The spread of information technology would make possible better coordination and national planning and, of course, can make it on a planetary scale. The technological development would require more and more planning though. Instead of a free democracy, one gets a society that will be increasingly planned, a society that will start to reassemble the countries from the former Eastern bloc, despites Brzezinski's nice words.

The planner will become the key legislative factor (Brzezinski 1970: 260). Defining and implementing goals to be achieved will gain in importance and thus the accent will be put on meeting goals. During this process, the legislator and society would become more self-conscious about social ends. Harmonizing personal freedom with planning will become the key dilemma. The implementation and development of information and communication technology will ease the way to this transformation of society. The expansion of the communication means, of computers, will lead to the birth of a participatory pluralism that does not function according to the way government works in liberal democracies. New systems of coordination will be set up, and in the United States, this would further the extant tradition of blurring distinctions between public and private institutions, or, as one might add, between corporations and government. This will lead to the increase the participation of businessmen in social problems, furthering the blurring of the distinction between private and public activity. It will be more or less a fusion between sectors, between public and private, a gradual fusion or synthesis between the institutions of society and of government (Brzezinski 1970: 263-4). The distinction between private and public bodies will be softened increasing the chances of giving birth to participatory democracy. This is the kind of rational humanism that the United States has to bequeath to the world. This new rational humanism – also named the third American revolution – promises to link liberty with equality. As previously stated, this new humanism and new reality require a new framework, one that does not accept national sovereignty. The mantra of novelty is all-present in the ideological framework of this so-called technotronic era (Brzezinski 1970: 274).

4. The roots of Technocracy

Though it might seem strange, this progressist view has some older roots than assumed. The basis of the religion of progress can be found as in the early Middle Ages, according to some authors such as Lynn White – despite the far-spread belief that the Middle Ages despised w technology and manual work. If what he says is correct, then technology gained even then the redemptive value that it is attributed to it nowadays by some people. It has seeded the roots of the idea that progress is unavoidable – at least in some version of the ideology of progress (Taguieff 2019: 336). It is an ideology or a set of ideologies that are bound to a certain kind of religious belief expressed in the idea of emancipation. As the French philosopher Pierre Andre Taguieff puts it, this is a messianic ideology, which makes man the agent of his own redemption, replacing God.

„L'«émancipation humaine», dans tous les récits idéologiques où elle est posée comme objectif final, est l'objet d'une promesse : l'horizon reste celui du messianisme et des doctrines, sécularisées ou non, de la rédemption universelle. Mais l'universel s'entend de diverses manières, selon les individus ou les groupes, les cultures ou les croyances.” (Taguieff 2019: 102 ways, according to the individual and the groups, to cultures and systems of beliefs.”)

This quest for self-emancipation leads to the idea of sovereignty and to the idea of abolishing limits, which are seen as a hindrance to this process. The limits can be seen as arbitrary, the expression of a will directed against humanity by hostile forces that are today known as reactionary, right wing-extremists, homophobe, transphobe, bigoted, or as enemies of the people, kulaks in the parlance of Marxism. This whole endeavor has as its target the conquest of creation and the setting up of man as the main ontological force in nature. Mankind must become the owner and master of nature and thus the only author of his destiny: „L'homme est sujet-auteur - de son propre destin” (Mairet, 1997: p. 207). Briefly expressed, the whole enterprise has - even if not stated explicitly - to replace God with man. The creation as such, nature and man's own nature are seen as enemies, as objectives that have to be conquered, subdued, and modified to satisfy man's wishes. From this point of view, it is understandable the former national security adviser of Jimmy Carter deemed Marxism or the application of Marxism in Eastern Europe and elsewhere as a failure. Its pretensions caved in in front of reality, a thing that can't be accepted by ideologues and technocrats alike. This view also redefines what humanity is and does. The way the human community is understood changes. According to Gerard Mairet this paradigmatic modern attitude, which he subsumes under the concept of sovereignty, implies a power relationship towards reality. What humanity is, is not given in advance. Humanity does not have an essence, but it defines what it wants to be. The foundation is completely unstable. Humanity and the political community are essentially a perpetual revolution and *Machtausübung*. What the nature and the definition of human existence is, is determined by power, that is by the people who held it. The sovereign establishes what humanity is. An expression of this fundamental modern worldview can be found in transhumanism, in the quasi-religious conviction that one can change his/her own gender since they are the master of their own body. To be a free person means in this framework that there is no nature or essence to man, that man can be whatever man wants - a reverberation of the idea or the Neoplatonic absolute divine simplicity doctrine that states the inexistence of any distinction in divinity and thus affirming the identity between essence, person, knowledge, will, etc. When transferred into the realm of anthropological understanding, this doctrine translates as the conviction that man has no essence. If someone wants to become something, then it will become that something. Thus, the conviction that man has an essence can be considered by some as being oppressive, an obstacle to attaining happiness or a hindrance to a further evolutionary step. If man has no fixed essence - and this is compatible with an evolutionary worldview, then he can become whatever he wants. Mankind can through technology transcend its bodily limits and maybe transcend time and space and become a kind of god. Transhumanism certainly thinks so. Within this framework, history can be considered to be the process of man's self-deification. The person is redefined as a kind of self-existing subject that is free and master of nature (even in the Marxist view this is something that is accomplished); this is, at least, a purpose that must be achieved (Mairet 1997: 215). So, the idea that the Fourth Industrial Revolution will change mankind is not really new. It is the expression of the same mindset that underlies modernity and the religion of progress/technology. Modernity is the age that emancipates man, the era of novelty with no parallel in the past (Gillespie 2008: 2).

This new paradigm is similar to a religious one that makes from novelty and change supreme values and that cuts history in half. What was before is bad, but what comes in modernity is fundamentally good. History is a relentless movement toward emancipation. This is the sense and meaning of history, its purpose that will be fulfilled in two ways: through human revolutionary or less revolutionary action and by the movement of history proper. Undergirding this whole concept is the idea of emancipation, as already mentioned (Taguieff 2019: 48). These ideas are very radical and change the way mankind regards its history and past.

„Tout attachement à une passe particulière une aliénation. L'histoire, la culture, la langue et la religion exercent une emprise insupportable sur l'individu. Ne parlons pas de l'ethnicité. Toute identité particulière est une prison.” (Taguieff 2019: 280)

5. Conclusion

Thinking of technology as redemptive and imbuing it with those qualities is a big departure from the traditional value attached to them. Nevertheless, during the Middle Ages, in the Augustinian West, things changed. The meaning of arts and technology shifted. Technology ceased to be seen as being in opposition to transcendence. Both liberal and mechanical arts became gradually associated with the lost perfection and lost Edenic condition and with the possibility of getting those back. (Noble 1997: 12). This situation might have been caused by some technological innovation such as the introduction of the heavy plow within the Frankish (White 1971). The advancement and technological improvement were seen as signs of the coming millennium, as evidence of salvation as a means to prepare for it. This agricultural innovation produced a fundamental change in the relationship between man and nature. It inverted the relationship and now nature became something that was there not to be respected but exploited. The modern relationship to nature was born. An important role in this ongoing process has been played by the Benedictine monasteries, the monastery being the place where was pioneered the use of things such as windmills, watermills, and agricultural innovations. According to David F. Noble, all these developments meant the elevation of man above nature. The growing importance and reevaluation of the role and worth of the so-called mechanical arts in society were based on the conviction that the lost likeness to God could be regained. But the agent of this action was not God. It was the man and his technology. For certain, the biblical incarnational view of the world had brought its own contribution to this new development. The world, despite the Fall, is neither an illusion nor something wicked. It was the contented creation of God. And the body was not a container of the soul, a container that could be discarded. It was seen as an essential part of man. Even such a thinker as Scotus Eriugena has held the mechanical arts in high esteem. He dubbed them mechanical arts, which were known until then under the name of useful arts. Though the mechanical arts were at a certain time despised, they began to gain in importance and they gained a positive meaning. For him, they held the same high status as the liberal arts (grammar, dialectics, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, harmony). The driving force that lent positive value to the former useful arts was the quest to retrieve the lost God-likeness, or in other words, to regain access to the knowledge that God imparted to Adam. The Irish theologian highlighted the role these arts play alongside the liberal ones in the effort to restore the lost God-likeness. Both kinds of arts were supposed to belong to the endowments that God bestowed upon Adam's true nature. Both kinds of arts were seen as a birthright that was lost, and they belong naturally to man. (Noble 1997: 17). Moreover, since they were seen as a real true link to God, cultivating them was a means of attaining redemption. Through technology, man can free himself from the bad consequences that followed his Fall. From the 12th century onwards, this view of the redemptive virtues of technology had become commonplace. Such an elevated view on technology can be seen even in such works as Th. Morus's *Utopia* (Noble 1997: 39). Technology acquires such a high value that it becomes the human medium of salvation. This process produces the conviction that mankind can restore paradise on Earth by its efforts, without any divine intervention. This would be possible by setting up a privileged class of wise men, a scientific elite, that will know how to plan so that this would be achieved. The rest of mankind had to obey these 'wise men'. The engineer became in the 19th century the latest incarnation of this figure of the redemptive wise man, of the enlightened one that could guide humanity to its new Eden (Noble 1997: 79). Science would restore man as the head of the living hierarchy of beings, wrote the father of modern sociology Auguste Comte (Noble 1997:84). The French thinker displays a clear religious perspective, leaving aside his ideas of a positive religion. His positivism, despite its anti-theological position, expresses an attitude that belongs to the realm of religion. He aimed at the attainment of perfect unity of the Great Being, that would bring humanity ultimate regeneration, happiness, etc. His efforts were also aimed at the reconstruction of man's nature. Such an endeavor was to be undertaken by people like A. Comte, savants, and scientific-minded

people which were occupied with the study. They were supposed to form a new kind of priesthood. Other thinkers like Robert Owen had expressed the conviction that technology should be seen as a means to achieve emancipation, of delivering man from his bad condition. Along these lines came Karl Marx who saw the technical development of the means of production not only as an instrument for wealth accumulation but for the revolution that would end exploitation and would transcend history (Noble 1997: 87). Despite being expressed in evolutionist and progressist terms, the core of the Western view remains bound to the other-worldly millenarism that was present from the beginning (Noble 1997: 104). But the agent of this enterprise is not God. It is mankind and therein lies the main difference. It fuels what might be called a politic of perfection and, just as the original millenarist expectations were shared by some groups and had no universal bearing, so is the present politic of perfection, of technocracy.

The reevaluation of technology that started in the Middle Ages is, despite some Christian roots, Gnostic. The idea that technology is redemptive implies that mankind doesn't need God to achieve this redemption. Regaining power through technology is not an entry ticket to Heaven. This project is still going at full speed both in the realm of hard technological development and in the socio-political one. Technology is not something pertaining only to the domains of physics, or building machines. It pertains to everything that implies a way to get something done efficiently, be it building a car, organizing a *coup de état*, or organizing successful revolutions. Technology means a procedure aimed at accomplishing something with the highest efficiency possible. Less efficient procedures are discarded during the selection process. The technological system, as J. Ellul describes it, doesn't tolerate opposition and other values than itself. The idea that through technology mankind become freer and emancipated is a delusion. Being permanent under surveillance so that the carbon footprint can be ascertained and getting a certain score in the social credit system which sets limits to what one can do, is not freedom. Especially when this will be bound to other monitoring systems in an overreaching network, with the abolishing of paper money, with the systems that monitor the speed of your car – if there would be still such a thing as a privately owned car. Eat too much meat, read a banned or political book, drove too fast or too far away from home and the social credit will be low and, afterward, the car won't start, access to the e-money won't be possible, etc. Technocracy is a total surveillance and control system, a tool of oppression, and run by totally unaccountable experts, dogmatically-minded that despise everything else.

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POPULATION'S PERCEPTION ON FAMILY POLICIES IN ROMANIA AND ON THEIR ROLE IN SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *In the context of recent crises (the economic crisis of 2007-2010, the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic), which had an overwhelming impact on all social subsystems (including the family), many states in the European Union concentrated their efforts and adopted a series of policies aimed at ensuring the good functioning of family structures, in order to overcome crisis situations. Such states have correlated subsidies and financial transfers with well-developed systems in terms of social services for children and their families, so they have adopted numerous programs related to socio-pedagogical support for children, have focused on programs to support future fathers, took measures for those parents who did not get their children admitted to municipal kindergartens, facilitated access to parental education during pregnancy or implemented flexible work schedules to allow parents to fulfill their family duties. All these measures had the main objectives of facilitating the formation of new families, strengthening the stability and well-being of the family, increasing the fertility rate, strengthening marriage and promoting its values. The present article presents, in a systematic manner, the results of a sociological research, the purpose of which was to see how the population relates to the family policies implemented in Romanian society.*

Keywords: family, social policy, social benefits for families, parental leave.

1. Introduction

The interest in defining family policies has been in the foreground for the European Union, since its foundation until the present moment, so this type of policies represents a sub-field of government policies in the social sphere whose main objective is the state of good of families, paying special attention to families with children.

The changes that have taken place over time on the institution of the family lead to the need for modernization of family policies that are in accordance with the specifics of each country. Considering these changes, the states of the European Union and beyond are faced with a drastic decrease in the birth rate, against the background of the aging of the population and with an inadequate approach to family policies, aimed at strengthening and improving the ties within the family.

According to M. Jean-Claude Barbier, family policies can be defined in 3 ways: a process of elaboration by the state of specific actions and programs intended for families and their members; the materialization and institutionalization of these actions (programs, budgets, specific administrative and management bodies, in the public framework); the existence of non-governmental social activities (Barbier, 1990; Racoceanu, Matei and Sanduleasa, 2012: 6).

Some institutions and organizations use the term "family policy" to refer to any policy that provides financial assistance to families with dependent children, such as exemption from paying taxes and fees for dependents. On the other hand, other family policies focus on reconciling family and professional life, by providing daycare services or parental leave regulations.

Some scholars have defined family policies as deliberate government actions taken in favor of the family. In other words, the family must be the main objective of the policies to merit the association of the family with politics (Daly and Clavero, 2002: 16; Daly, 2010; Daly and Ferragina, 2018).

Family policies usually include a variety of policies related to different aspects of the family. In general, these involve regulations of partnership and maternity, as well as how states recognize the obligations and responsibilities arising from these relationships.

Peter McDonald placed family policies into three broad categories:

a) Financial incentives: periodic cash payments, lump sum payments or loans, tax reductions and credits, free or subsidized services for products intended for children;

b) Initiatives regarding family and work: maternity and paternity leaves to raise and care for children, flexible working hours and short-term leaves to meet family needs, anti-discrimination initiatives and legislation regarding equity gender in employment practices;

c) Social changes aimed at supporting children and parents: initiatives and work opportunities, environments conducive to children's development, gender equality, support policies regarding family relationships and marriage, the development of positive social attitudes towards children and parents (McDonald, 2002: 335-340).

Pierre Bourdieu points out that since family policies are directed at the family, they also build the family. In his opinion, family policies are those activities of the state that aim to favor a certain type of family organizations and strengthen the position of those who conform to this form of organization" (Bourdieu, 1996: 19-20; Neyer and Andersson, 2007 : 5).

Today the states of the European Union are facing a major problem, namely the dramatic decrease in the birth rate against the background of the aging of the population, although in the first decades after the war we were witnessing a real baby boom.

Family policies have undergone changes in time and space, being different from one country to another, and women's access to the labor market and the principle of gender equality have been the main elements of the decrease in fertility. However, half a century ago, the main concern of family policies was centered on the patriarchal model in which the majority of women in many industrialized countries took care of the household while the man was the main breadwinner of the family (Basten and Frejka, 2015: 39).

In the last half of the 20th century, the more women were engaged in gainful activities and the more feminist movements took on a greater scope, the more the principle of gender equality gained greater importance, thus family policies were oriented towards supporting families where both spouses have a job.

From the point of view of the public policy documents developed at the European level, we can see that the typologies of family policies differ according to the criteria used as a basis for identifying problems, as well as according to the specifics, history and needs of each country.

2. Literature review

Ecological systems theory

One of the theories we can refer to when analyzing family policies, in general, and their impact on the development of communities, in particular, is the *ecological systems theory* (Dale et al. 2009: 31; Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This theory focuses on the individual, as an integrated part in other systems, and is based on the belief that people are in constant interaction with their environment, being surrounded by networks that can affect an individual or a group both positively and negatively. Thus, this theoretical perspective analyzes how the individual or family adapts to their environment, starting from the premise that when an individual or a group is connected and involved in an environment, its good functionality increases.

Ecological systems theory places a strong emphasis on existing social policies that serve and protect individuals, groups, the environment, and the interactions between them, and calls attention to the revision of such policies given that the population and its structures are in constant change, more chosen by the fact that the number of elderly people is growing rapidly.

"In order to improve the well-being and functionality of the family, programs are needed that involve the elderly in various activities that correspond to their individual needs, and more than that, finding ways for people to want to participate in such initiatives" (Reed Wilder, 2010: 23-24).

The life and decisions of a family are influenced by the economic, educational, religious, cultural and biological environment and this perspective draws attention to the risk factors that can cause changes in this institution. Currently, and not only in Romanian society, but many families also encounter problems in terms of the ability to support themselves, the education of their children, access to health services or access to housing that would provide them with safety and allow their children to develop in a way harmonious. Poverty is a real problem for many families and studies have shown that its presence since childhood directly affects the educational course, and not only, of the child (Ferguson, Bovaird and Mueller, 2007; Lacour and Tissington, 2011; Niță, Motoi and Goga 2021). Families whose children grow up in deprived areas or marginalized neighborhoods are at risk educationally, economically and healthily and are exposed to violent behaviour, low education or an environment where parents do not have a stable job and live on social benefits.

Ecological systems theory encourages family researchers and policymakers to create an environment that improves the quality of family life, develop programs that support marriage, fathers' involvement in the household, child rearing and education, and facilitate mothers' access alone in the labour market.

The sociological perspective of the theory of elites

This theory conveys the idea of ranking: individuals and groups rank higher or lower relative to one another in terms of influence, wealth, status, and power. The position that the elites occupy in the structure, but also the individual interests help to outline a perception in relation to family problems and how to solve them and because they differ, despite shared common values such as freedom, equality or opportunity, enter often in conflict. From the perspective of elite theory, those who implement social policies related to family issues pursue the interests and preferences of elites and not those of interest groups.

The fundamental assumptions underlying the theory of elites are: a) policies and programs reflect the values and interests of elites, in a hierarchical society; b) the elites share the same ideas regarding the institutional aspects and the values that underlie them; c) the complexity of modern society excludes the active and full participation of all in the political process, leading to the need for a division of force in this process; d) this division creates a class of elites who have the role of leading and governing. (Zimmerman, 2001: 264)

The functionalist perspective in sociology

From the functionalist perspective, normal society is built on harmony and consensus and on common values shared by members of society, without being dominated by conflict and riots. Functionalists believe that the state acts in the interest of society and social policies are made for the good of all and, more than that, they believe that policies intended exclusively for the family help this institution to perform its functions much more easily and provide its members with a lifestyle qualitative (Dermott and Fowler, 2020).

An example of this is the opinion of Ronald Fletcher (1962: 161) who argues that the introduction of health, education and housing policies in the years after the industrial revolution gradually led to the development of a welfare state which aimed to support the family in performing its functions more effectively. Also, the existence of a health sector implies that with the help of doctors, nurses, hospitals or medicines, today's family can take care of its members when they are sick. Also, Fletcher points out, with the growth of welfare services the function of the family in contemporary society has changed by adding more responsibility onto the family. For example: parents' supplement learning in schools by providing advice and help more effectively than in the past; an increased knowledge of diet and exercise means that the

family plays a greater role in health; the family must make certain their children are at school and if there's any sign of families neglecting children then social services intervene" (Fletcher, 1956: 31-46)

The New Right Theory

In the 1980s the followers of this theory argued that government policies weaken the institution of the family and therefore major changes are needed at this level, so that between 1979 and 1997 this perspective dominated the development of family policies (Taylor-Gooby, 1989: 432).

There are four main features of this theory: an emphasis on individual freedom and choice, reduced government spending, free markets that encourage competition, and the importance of traditional institutions and values.

This perspective refers to the family as "natural" and based on fundamental biological differences between men and women, with a clear division of labor between man, as provider of services and goods, and woman, as breadwinner of the household. It also supports the idea that children should have a stable family environment, where the parents are married and the wife only has household and child-rearing responsibilities (Abbott and Wallace, 1992)

Charles Murray (1988) argued that if welfare benefits were less generous, couples would stay together and preserve the nuclear family, which according to the New Right is 'the building block of society'. The views of these scholars are in line with those of the functionalists and consider the nuclear family to be the ideal type in society, opposing many changes in modern society, such as the decline of the nuclear family, the increase in the number of cohabiting couples or the number of marriages taking place ends in divorce.

3. Methods

The research method used was the opinion survey, based on a questionnaire that was made up of 32 identification, closed, open and matrix questions that focused on capturing people's perception of existing family policies in Romania and how they meet the needs and expectations of citizens.

The questionnaire was applied in Dolj county, Craiova city, to an exploratory group consisting of 152 people, 64.7% female and 35.3% male, of which 47.1% with higher education and 52.9% with high school graduates who worked in various fields of activity including: trade, security, healthcare, education, legal, construction, human resources, etc.

In the research undertaken by us, we set the following objectives: to capture the way in which people relate to the policies intended for the family and to establish the degree of satisfaction with them; capturing the citizens' perception regarding the degree of involvement of the leading institutions and the Romanian state in terms of family policies as a factor in the development of communities.

In order to achieve these objectives, we started from the formulation of three hypotheses:

- Citizens' trust in the family protection system and in the management institutions with attributions in this field is weak.
- Females tend to consider the costs of raising and educating a child as difficult to bear, to a greater extent than males.
- Graduates of higher education tend to claim that the 2-year period of parental leave is sufficient, to a greater extent than those with secondary education.

4. Results

More than half of the respondents (56.9%) claim that the policies centered on the institution of the family, in Romania, are insufficient, 34.3% choose the middle option according to which this type of policies are neither sufficient nor insufficient and 8.8 % say that in our country there are enough policies aimed at the family.

Table 1: Depending on your level of knowledge and informations, family policies currently existing in Romania are..... (%)

1.	Insufficient	56.9
2.	Neither sufficient nor insufficient	34.3
3.	Sufficient	8.8
	Total	100

Moreover, the results of the research undertaken by us are also in accordance with the results of other studies which highlight the fact that over 30 years after the anti-communist Revolution of 1989, it is not so easily understandable why the current national poverty rate is still close to 30%. Also during this whole period, social services, education, health and social work remained underfinanced, at a level far below that of other European countries” (Niță and Pârvu, 2020: 107). These factors are important factors to take into consideration when a decision to migrate abroad is to be taken. Studies are pointing out that “For middle-aged people, who have family and children, the education of children, health services, existing opportunities, etc. are important in the case of a decision to emigrate” (Pricină, 2020: 10).

Table 2: What is your opinion regarding the family protection system in Romania? (%)

1.	Bad	56.9
2.	Very bad	22.5
3.	Good	13.7
4.	Very good	2.9
5.	I don't know/I can't appreciate	3.9
	Total	100

The opinion of the respondents regarding the family protection system in Romania is as follows: 56.9% state that they have a bad opinion about this system, 22.5% a very bad opinion, 13.7% a good opinion and 2, 9% a very good opinion. 3.9% cannot decide on this aspect.

Table 3: On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest value and 5 the highest value, how important is family to you? (%)

1.	Very important	91.2
2.	Important	8.8
	Total	100

Asked how much importance respondents give to their families, 91.2% claim that family is very important and 8.8% important. And these results are important, if we are taking into consideration that It is known that „family, profession/occupation and job, social group represent that main factors on which the individual rely on, as a social being”. (Otovescu et al., 2015: 37)

Table 4: On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents the lowest value and 5 the highest value, how important is the family for the leading institutions of the Romanian state? (%)

1.	Little important	40.2
2.	Not important at all	24.5
3.	Important	20.6
4.	Very little important	11.8
5.	Very important	2.9
	Total	100

While the respondents attach great importance to the family, in their lives, the state, according to their statements, gives little importance (40.2%) to this institution. Also, a percentage of 24.5 are of the opinion that, for the Romanian state, the family is not important at all, 20.6% place the family as important for Romania, 11.8% as very unimportant and 2.9%

as being very important. 42.2% of respondents claim that the main aspect on which the state's efforts to support the family should be focused is the reduction of poverty among needy families. Financial benefits granted to newly formed families are second in the list of respondents' preferences, respondents placed high-quality child care services in third place, promotion of gender equality in fourth place, support for abandoned children, followed by increased birth rates, support for single mothers or fathers, aged care services or parenting support programs. The last two positions are occupied by psychological support for young mothers, respectively easy access to certain goods.

**Table 5: To what extent do you agree with the following statement:
*Family policies are a necessary factor for the development of society?***

1.	Largely	47.1
2.	To a great extent	44.1
3.	To a small extent	5.9
4.	Not at all	2.9
	Total	100

47.1% of the respondents state that family policies are necessary for the development of a society to a large extent, 44.1% to a very large extent, 5.9% are of the opinion that this type of policies contribute to the development of society to a small extent and 2, 9% not at all.

**Table 6: To what extent do you agree with the following statement:
*Family policies are a topic often discussed in the public space in Romania?***

1.	To a small extent	46.1
2.	To a very small extent	22.5
3.	Not at all	15.7
4.	Largely	11.8
5.	To a great extent	3.9
	Total	100

Asked to what extent they agree with the statement that family policies are a topic often discussed in the public space in Romania, most of the respondents, 46.1%, state that these policies are brought up to a small extent, 22.5% to a very small extent, 15.7% not at all. A percentage of 11.8 believe that in the public space in Romania family policies are discussed to a large extent and 3.9% to a very large extent.

Table 7: To meet the needs of citizens, the child allowance should be... (%)

1.	Much bigger	70.6
2.	Bigger	24.5
3.	The same as until now	4.9
	Total	100

Regarding the child allowance, 70.6% of the respondents believe that they would be satisfied if this allowance were much higher, 24.5% believe that the allowance should be higher and only 4.9% the same as so far. This opinion is overwhelmingly shared by people from rural areas, the area where financial possibilities are more limited „the living cost is expensive, the paid work is very rare, the unemployment has high rates and many people are dependent by welfare benefits, like social aid and family allowance” (Sorescu, 2015: 370-371).

**Table 8: Currently, parental leave is 2 years. To meet the needs of citizens,
parental leave should be..... (%)**

1.	The same as until now	59.8
2.	Bigger	26.5

3.	Much bigger	6.9
4.	I don't know/I can't appreciate	6.9
	Total	100

If with regard to the child allowance and the maternity allowance, the respondents argued that it is necessary for them to be much higher, respectively higher, regarding the maternity leave, most of the respondents are of the opinion that the 2-year period related of this leave is sufficient, so that: 59.8% opted for the "same as before" option, 26.5% chose the "bigger" option, 6.9% focused on the "much more" option higher" and 6.9% could not appreciate it.

Table 9: Perception on childcare allowance, by gender (crosstabs)

In order to meet the needs of citizens, the childcare allowance should be:		Gender		Total
		Masculin	Feminin	
1.	Much bigger	24.3%	75.7%	100%
2.	Bigger	39.3%	60.7%	100%
3.	The same as until now	55.6%	44.4%	100%
Total		35.3%	64.7%	100%

Regarding the opinion of the respondents regarding the increase or maintenance of the child-rearing allowance, women were oriented towards its increase to a greater extent than men, registering a percentage of 75.7 for the option "much higher" and 60.7 for the "higher" option, compared to men who recorded, for the same answer options, 24.3 and 39.3 percent respectively. The answer variant "same as before" was among the preferences of men to a greater extent than among women, 55.6% compared to 44.4%.

Table 10: Perception on parental leave, by level of education (crosstabs)

Currently, parental leave is 2 years. In order to meet the needs of citizens, parental leave should be..:		Level of education:		Total
		Higher education	Secondary school	
1.	Much bigger	28.6%	71.4%	100%
2.	Bigger	40.7%	59.3%	100%
3.	The same as until now	57.4%	42.6%	100%
4.	I don't know/I can't appreciate	-	100%	100%

One of the issues covered in the opinion survey refers to the increase or maintenance of parental leave. While respondents with secondary education register values of over 50% for the variants according to which this type of leave must be much longer (71.4%), respectively higher (59.3%), most of the respondents who have completed higher education are of the opinion that the 2 years of parental leave are sufficient.

Also, regarding the opinion of the respondents regarding the increase or maintenance of the child-rearing allowance, women were oriented towards its increase to a greater extent than men. The same aspect can be observed when we discuss about the costs of raising and educating children, with women experiencing these difficulties to a greater extent than men. These results can be explained by the fact that, in general, the involvement of women in family life and in raising and educating children is greater compared to that of men.

According to the research results, people who have followed a form of higher education tend to consider, to a greater extent than those with secondary education, that the period related to parental leave is sufficient. Given that those with higher education generally have jobs that provide them with a certain professional status and prestige they tend to want to re-enter the labour market earlier than those with secondary education who may have less jobs attractive, which do not give them the same satisfaction.

5. Conclusions

Against the background of the changes that have occurred within the family over the years, the modernization of societies and the crises present among many countries, there is a need to implement effective policies that are focused on increasing the quality of life in the family and ensuring protection against certain risks. For a better management and implementation of family policies, it is necessary to understand the needs of the citizens, to know their perception regarding the already existing family policies, to identify the difficulties they face or to know the expectations they have from the leading institutions whose main objective is the protection and support of families.

All these aspects, together with the current fragility and instability of the family, make this theme one that deserves to be addressed in order to know how the existence/non-existence of such policies affects people's lives and implicitly their families.

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ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF INFLATION IN TERMS OF THE QUALITY OF ACCOUNTING INFORMATION

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Abstract: *The reality of the current economic and social environment highlights the increasing manifestation of the inflationary phenomenon. Although inflation is essentially seen as an economic phenomenon, it should not be forgotten that its multiple effects also have a strong social impact as a result of the decline in general purchasing power. In this context, and given the social role of accounting, aimed at satisfying the public interest, our study will analyse the impact of inflation on the quality of accounting information and highlight the main social consequences of the negative influence on the quality of this information. In order to achieve this general objective, using the technique of critical reasoning, on the one hand, we will highlight, for each major component of the assets of an economic entity, the negative influences that the phenomenon under analysis induces in terms of information, and on the other hand, we will highlight the social consequences that this process generates. The conclusions of the research undertaken will highlight the fact that, in the absence of appropriate accounting techniques adapted to inflation, we are witnessing a dilution of the quality of the financial communication process, as well as an impairment of the contribution of accounting to human progress by providing the necessary prerequisites for the healthy development of the entities it serves.*

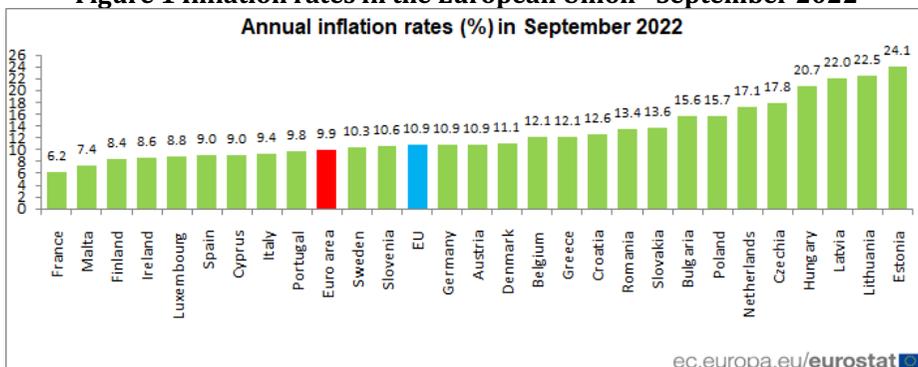
Keywords: inflation, social impact, public interest, quality of accounting information, sustainable development

1. Introduction

Over the last three years, human society has faced, and continues to face, a series of crises that have a profound social impact. In this context, we refer to the pandemic crisis, the economic crisis, the energy crisis and the crisis caused by the armed conflict in full swing in the immediate vicinity of our country. In addition to all these crises, as a result of them, we are also facing a crisis caused by the alarming spread of inflation.

We can see an alarming increase in the inflation rate, which is at its highest level for 20 years. (<https://www.bursa.ro/rata-inflatiei-la-cel-mai-ridicat-nivel-din-ultimii-20-de-ani-45010747>). This increase is generalised, in the sense that it is not just local, in certain national economies, but regional, even global. The rapid rise in inflation rates during 2022 can also be seen at EU level, with Member States facing the same phenomenon, even if the rates reported by each Member State differ.

Figure 1 Inflation rates in the European Union - September 2022



Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/15131946/2-19102022-AP-EN.pdf/92861d37-0275-8970-a0c1-89526c25f392>

Against this background, which highlights a deterioration in macroeconomic conditions, we will carry out an analysis of the social impact of inflation, but from a particular perspective, which aims to affect the quality of information provided by accounting as a social science.

Our analysis focuses on the social impact that inflation produces at the microeconomic level, as a result of the diminishing role that accounting plays as a social tool through the efficient distribution and use of economic resources.

Beyond the predominantly economic significance of the phenomenon that is the subject of our study, we believe it is also important to investigate the social effects that inflation can generate and, moreover, the way in which economic and social aspects are intertwined.

2. Objectives of the study

The literature highlights a number of shortcomings of historical cost accounting, whereby items shown in financial statements are reflected at their original value at the time of the transaction in which they are involved.

Thus Ebiaghan (2019) believes that fluctuations in general price levels, can present financial information in a false and misleading manner, thus calling into question its value relevance and decision usefulness.

On the other hand there are specialists (Olawejaju, Mbambo and Ngiba, 2020) who believe that high inflation prevents financial statements, based on historical cost requirements, from creating financial information that would be comparable and understandable to the business.

Another shortcoming that historical cost accounting generates is also captured by Thies & Sturrock (1987), who find that historical costing overstates profitability during a period of rising prices, and financial ratios based on historical costs often grossly misrepresent the relative financial strength of firms.

Other authors (Bello, 2010) consider that although historical cost accounting has proved reasonably satisfactory during periods of relative price stability, however, in the absence of price stability, which is often the case in many countries, the value of accounting information as a practical language of economics may be lost and its relevance to decision making impaired.

Also in this context, we believe that another point of view should be mentioned (Naim, 2022), which argues that financial statements are instruments of an enterprise that reflect the financial position and results of functions and, if prepared by enterprises in periods of high inflation, do not reflect the real financial position and results of operations. In addition, the capital of companies will be reduced because taxation will be levied on fictitious earnings in periods of high inflation.

Thus, using the views expressed in the literature as a starting point, we propose the following main objectives of our study:

1. to highlight in an analytical and critical manner the effects that inflation has on all asset structures represented from an accounting point of view through the balance sheet and to determine the impact it has from the perspective of affecting the quality of accounting information, which will allow us to validate or refute various opinions found in the literature;
2. to establish the social consequences of the reduction in the quality of accounting information in an inflationary context;
3. to give an argued view on how, in an inflationary environment, accounting can still perform its social function.

3. Research method

The research method used in our approach is based on several procedures, among which a decisive role is played by the technique of critical reasoning, aimed at analysing the impact that the historical cost principle, frequently used in accounting, has on the quality of accounting information in an inflationary environment.

In addition, in order to make our conclusions more relevant, we will supplement the methodological tools used with other methods, among which observation, analysis and comparison can be considered representative.

In order to achieve the proposed objectives, we will subject to a detailed critical analysis all the asset structures which are represented in the accounts by virtue of the historical cost principle, and we will highlight the negative or positive way in which inflation acts on the process of accounting representation of economic reality and financial communication.

The findings of this analysis will allow us to determine the influence of inflation on the quality of accounting information, the extent to which accounting still fulfils its social role, and the social impact of the process of reducing the quality of accounting information.

4. The significance of the social role of accounting

As society has evolved and economic activities have become increasingly complex, accounting has been given a role whose significance has also experienced an upward dynamic which has sought to keep pace with the evolving meaning of society as a whole.

Thus, the main roles assigned to accounting over time have been threefold, essentially presenting it as an activity aimed at reflecting the economic activity of the enterprise, a tool for informing and assisting decision-making and, more recently, as an instrument of social intermediation.

Approached from the point of view of its role as an instrument of social intermediation, we see that the other two roles, measuring economic activity and informing and assisting decision-making, are secondary, while the consequences that accounting information has on the social environment are highlighted in the foreground.

In practice, from this perspective, it is realised that the choice and application of a particular accounting policy has particularly important consequences for the redistribution of wealth and risks between the various participants in economic life.

In our opinion, the social role of accounting should be considered a priority, as it offers the possibility of establishing the criteria according to which the reality is reflected and the various categories of users are informed in order to achieve the desired economic and social effects.

We note, therefore, that the social role of accounting and the impact it has on the social environment is determined in a specific, particular way, by reference to the many beneficiaries of the information provided by accounting and not specifically in terms of a direct and immediate effect on the individual as a member of society.

The social role of accounting brings into question the direct interaction between it and the public, represented by all the parties interested in the information it produces (managers, investors, creditors, employees, the state, etc.), hence the role assumed by accounting aimed at satisfying the public interest.

5. The influence of inflation on the quality of accounting information

5.1. Quality of accounting information on enterprise assets under inflationary conditions

The historical costing of asset structures in inflation-dominated economies has a range of effects on the enterprise as an economic entity, both in terms of the actual conduct of operating activities and in terms of the quality of the accounting information relating to them.

For intangible assets, accounting and tax rules provide that they may be depreciated over a maximum period of three to five years or over the operating period, as appropriate, and are recorded in the accounts at their book value expressed in the purchasing power of the currency at the date of their acquisition. In this context, it should be noted that while, in the case of start-up costs and software, their value can be recovered through amortisation over a single financial year, the same cannot be said of development costs, concessions, licences, patents, etc. which, as a rule, have considerable values which have to be amortised over several financial years. We believe that this judgement can be extended to certain more complex IT applications which, especially for small and micro-enterprises, have a considerable value requiring amortisation over several financial years.

It can therefore be said that, in a context of galloping inflation, the recovery of the book value of intangible assets by means of amortisation over more than one financial year leads to an overstatement of profit as a result of the recording of depreciation which is eroded in value. At the same time, we note the influence of intangible assets on the quality of the information provided in the financial statements as a result of the non-recovery of the historical cost in a single financial year, since these items appear in the balance sheet at their residual value, which is expressed in historical purchasing power at the time of entry into the company.

As far as land is concerned, the influence of inflation can be summarised as follows:

- on the one hand, as the entry value can only be discounted on the basis of legal rules, there is a risk that for long periods of time the land owned by the company appears in the balance sheet at values that no longer express the current purchasing power, thus affecting the quality of financial reporting;

- on the other hand, the sale of the land at the market value at the date of transfer results in the recording of substantial favourable differences between the higher sale price and the lower entry value, but this difference is only the effect of inflation and not the result of a real increase in value, which is why recording it as income and not as equity artificially increases the tax base, leading to the payment of additional corporation tax.

One of the most exposed categories of items in terms of inflation is tangible fixed assets. Accounting for them under historical cost gives rise to a number of negative influences, which are mainly twofold:

- on the quality of the information presented in the financial statements;
- a drastic reduction in the role of depreciation.

With regard to the first category of consequences, it should be noted that if the book value is maintained as at the date of entry into operation, i.e. without being discounted, the total balance sheet value of fixed assets is obtained by the accumulation of heterogeneous values, expressed in purchasing power specific to different times. This has an impact, firstly, on the

balance sheet valuation carried out by taking into account the value of the remaining assets, which, on the one hand, is not discounted and, on the other, is very heterogeneous, and, secondly, on the quality of the structural analysis of the balance sheet, which has a direct impact on the formation and distribution of results.

In the case of own-account fixed assets, which take a longer period of time to complete, we consider that the values with which they are recorded in the accounts following completion and acceptance are also heterogeneous, since they are the result of consumption carried out in different periods, characterised/expressed in currency with different purchasing power, which would require the completed investment to be discounted to market price by making corrections to take account of the purchasing power at the date of acceptance.

With regard to the issue of depreciation of tangible fixed assets, we note the disadvantage resulting from the calculation and recording of undervalued depreciation, the consequences of which are that it is impossible to carry out simple and, even more so, extended depreciation, and that the tax base increases, which has a direct negative impact on equity. In the same context, we also note that the sale of tangible fixed assets, if they are not revalued, raises the issue of the differences between the higher selling price, represented by the market value, and the lower net book value, which leads to the same overvaluation of results due to the recording of these differences as income.

In analysing the result of the effect of inflation on fixed financial assets, we consider that both the influence of acquisition/disposal operations and those which have a certain influence on the balance sheet and profit and loss account should be taken into account.

Firstly, we believe that the phenomenon leading to the recording of similar values but expressed in different purchasing power should be highlighted, given that we are referring to the existence of organised markets. We believe that this phenomenon can be better illustrated by using the following example: suppose that on date "n" the company buys 3,500 "X" shares at a price of 1000 lei/share; on date "n+1" (considering the time interval between moments "n" and "n+1" to be at least of the order of several calendar months) the company buys another 10,000 "X" shares at the same price.

Thus, the company's accounts at time "n+1" will record the entry of shares acquired at the same price but expressing a reduced purchasing power, the greater the difference, the greater the time between the two points in time.

Secondly, the proceeds recorded on the disposal of assets are in fact realised on account of the failure to carry out the revaluation and in reality express a loss of purchasing power. In this respect, we assume that the company sells at time "n+2" shares "X" at a price of 1700 lei/share, in relation to which we note that the longer time elapsed until the date of sale leads to a greater loss of purchasing power, which leads us to state that there is a mismatch between the input values and the market prices. In this situation we consider that the transfer of the income from the disposal to the profit and loss account and not to the balance sheet negatively influences the correctness of the information on the results obtained by the company, resulting in a disadvantage for the company from a tax point of view.

A favourable influence can be seen in the case of payments to be made for financial fixed assets, since their value is affected by inflation, the greater the gain in purchasing power, the greater the time between the time of recording and the time of the actual payment.

In the opposite direction we mention fixed assets, since the loss of purchasing power of the currency over time influences the real value of the claims recovered, an eloquent example being long-term loans.

In the case of fixed assets in course of construction, particularly tangible fixed assets, it can be seen that, due to the incorporation, during the investment process, of values expressed in different purchasing powers into the cost of the asset, especially in the case of investments with a long period of completion, their receipt and recording in the accounts, following completion, are carried out at lower entry values. In other words, in our opinion, the amount of

the actual historical cost of investments does not give a true picture and does not correspond to the value at the time of acceptance of the objective.

For their part, current assets in the form of inventories and work in progress have certain particularities, which is why the analysis of the influence of inflation on them also requires greater attention. In our opinion, it should be pointed out at the outset that the turnover rate of stocks is a very important factor in inflationary conditions, as its increase, in the context of profitable activity, considerably reduces the negative effects of this phenomenon.

As far as stocks of raw materials, consumables and inventory items are concerned, supply and consumption are the two moments at which inflation can have an impact. The longer the interval between two supplies and two consumptions, the greater the influence of inflation, since:

- the final balance of the accounts tracking the movement of these items accumulates heterogeneous values and is significantly influenced by the method used for the valuation at the end of management;
- as supplies are made at different prices, costs will be affected by non-homogeneous values, which means that the results shown in the profit and loss account will be influenced;
- if the turnover rate is low and stocks are oversized, the information provided by the balance sheet on these structures reflects values expressed in terms of depreciated purchasing power, which leads, on the one hand, to low final costs and, on the other hand, makes it difficult to restart the production process;
- the influences of the valuation methods used for the exit from the estate lead us to state that none of them can be considered optimal under inflationary conditions. Thus, the application of the FIFO method leads to an overvalued result, since consumption is expressed in the "oldest" prices. On the other hand, by using it, final stocks are valued at the most recent prices, thus expressing a purchasing power closer to present reality. If we refer to the LIFO method, we note that using it gives a more accurate result, since consumption is valued in the most recent purchasing power, but the final stock of the enterprise is presented in the financial statements in a 'distant' purchasing power, which is no longer current;
- a new element is identified in the case of materials in the nature of inventory items, which under the current rules are treated as actual materials, which means that the negative influence of the gradual recording of wear and tear disappears when their consumption is recorded by allocating their full value to expenditure.

Finished products, semi-finished products and work in progress have certain peculiarities relating to the duration of the manufacturing process, the method of calculation and the method of valuation of stocks on leaving the undertaking, as follows:

- for entities with long manufacturing processes, the size of the final cost is influenced by the time elapsed between the purchase of stocks used in production and their consumption, this influence being accentuated by the valuation method used;
- the duration of the production process and the turnover rate of the stocks consumed influence the size of the production cost, which is lower the higher the value of these two elements;
- the actual cost, at which valuation is carried out in the balance sheet, contains values expressed in different purchasing power at different times, the heterogeneous nature of the values included in the cost being accentuated by the duration of the production process.

In the case of goods, if supplies and sales are rhythmic, the influence of inflation is not major. In this context we can see that frequent changes in supply prices require, at the same pace, adjustments in sales prices, which means that the valuation at actual supply cost reveals a final stock containing heterogeneous values. Negative aspects can be highlighted in the case of hard-to-sell or long-life goods, which result in the immobilization of financial resources or, if they are perishable, irreversible losses due to deterioration, expiry of shelf life, etc.

With regard to current assets in settlement there are notable inflationary influences on trade receivables, which can be summarised as follows:

- negative influences arise from the existence of long settlement periods, as there is a depreciation of the sources of receivables from debtors, such influences can be mitigated to a certain extent by the creation of debts to customers as a result of receiving advances from them;
- amounts advanced to suppliers on account of subsequent purchases imply the transfer of purchasing power to them, as delivery, and hence payment of the difference, will be made at a reduced purchasing power;
- foreign currency receivables positively affect the undertaking when the national currency depreciates against the currency in which these rights are denominated, especially as at the year-end the valuation is made at the exchange rate at that date.

Negative effects may also arise in the case of claims which the undertaking has on its shareholders or associates when the subscribed contributions are paid in several instalments or late, as follows:

- the fact that payments are made in several instalments may influence the outcome of the valuations carried out for the valuation of contributions in kind, the greater the effect, the greater the interval between two successive instalments;
- where contributions are in cash, the deposit of subsequent instalments or the delay in making payments increases the negative effects, which can be mitigated by the levying of penalties for late payment.

The impact of inflation on current cash assets is primarily reflected in the depreciation of cash held by the enterprise in cash or current accounts. The late collection of debts, the holding of any surplus financial resources without being invested, the existence in cash in excess of the firm's immediate cash requirements, all lead to a sharp fall in the purchasing power of money in conditions of high inflation. If the undertaking has cash in excess of its operating requirements, the managerial decision must seek to protect it as far as possible by investing it in term deposits, converting it into foreign currency, etc., taking account of the specific conditions of the economic environment and the return on each type of investment.

At the same time, we note that the following aspects should be taken into account when using letters of credit in inflationary conditions as a form of non-cash settlement:

- the creation of such letters of credit should be carried out when objective conditions exist which require the use of such a form of settlement, since the existence of letters of credit which have no purpose or which are not necessary leads to the immobilization of financial resources which, being unprotected, are subject to much greater depreciation;
- the amounts for which letters of credit are opened should be as close as possible in value to the debts which they are intended to discharge, and actual payment should be made as soon as possible after opening;
- In our view, the creation of letters of credit in national currency for contracts with currency discount clauses should be avoided.

Short-term financial investments, as treasury current asset structures, are also affected by the inflationary phenomenon, and the main directions in which these influences manifest themselves can be summarized as follows:

- if successive repurchases are made at different prices, the value of securities held is heterogeneous, as they contain/express different purchasing powers specific to different times;
- in the case of listed securities, the movement in the price may lead either to an accentuation of the depreciation, if it is falling, or to an appreciation in value, if it is rising;
- a favourable influence can be observed in the case of payments to be made for short-term financial investments which will be affected by inflation, leading to a gain as a result of transfers of depreciated currency, characterised by lower purchasing power.

5.2. Quality of accounting information on equity and debt under inflationary conditions

The enterprise's capital is a particularly important factor of production which, in its development, takes various forms, starting with cash in most cases and ending with stocks and fixed assets, allowing economic processes to resume under normal conditions. After the first cycle of activity, new elements are added to the initial value of capital, the profit/loss made and any reserves built up, and as a result of the continuity of this circuit their structure is constantly changing.

Conceptually, capital is the source of finance for the bulk of the assets available to the enterprise at any one time, and includes equity, long-term liabilities and provisions. From a financial point of view, the sum of these three components determines the permanent capital used for consumption and value creation.

Although permanent capital is an essential structure of liabilities, debts with a maturity of less than one year, known as current liabilities, should not be omitted, as they are a substantial and by no means negligible component.

Maintaining and increasing the initial value of an investment, as the main objective pursued by the managers of any enterprise, takes on special connotations in an economy dominated by inflation, since it is well known that the safety margin of an establishment is ensured by the existence of a positive working capital, which in fact represents the surplus of permanent capital over net fixed assets.

The analysis of liabilities in the context of inflation highlights a multitude of influences, which are summarised below.

- The effect of making successive cash injections without protection clauses, at different times of more than one year, is that the purchasing power of the amounts injected deteriorates, since the first instalments of the injection will have a past purchasing power, while only the last instalment will have a current purchasing power.
- In the case of an increase in share capital, several negative influences may arise, mainly concerning: the granting of advantages to the old shareholders; the increase carried out by internal operations leads to the capitalisation of values expressed in a depreciated currency, which means that the new size of the share capital does not reflect a real value; the conversion of debts at disadvantageous rates; the assumption of influences which may be positive or negative following merger operations.
- Reflecting share capital in the balance sheet at the nominal value at the time of its creation or increase contributes to the presentation by the accounts of outdated information of questionable quality.
- With regard to capital premiums, we note, on the one hand, a positive influence consisting of a certain protection of share capital and, on the other hand, negative influences which they give rise to, consisting of: the taking over by merger of negative influences from the merged unit; their non-use for a long period; in the event of their reduction or use, the transfer of all these influences to share capital or reserves, as the case may be.
- Revaluation reserves and reserves are those which can partially offset the negative influences on equity capital, but the accumulation and non-incorporation of revaluation differences in reserves or reserves in equity capital leads to their depreciation as a result of the reduction in the purchasing power of the currency in which they are denominated.
- Revaluation reserves can only be used periodically, every few years, as a result of revaluations carried out, and if they are not used they appear in the balance sheet expressed in the purchasing power of the currency at the time of the revaluation, and their accumulation over several years leads to continuous undervaluation as a result of depreciation under the influence of inflation.
- The current result, i.e. the result brought forward, takes over all the negative influences arising from the conduct of economic operations as reflected in the income and expenditure

accounts, and their non-allocation and non-utilisation results in a loss of substance due to the reduction in purchasing power over time.

- The financial results are presented in the balance sheet in an overstated amount, which leads to the calculation and payment of fictitious dividends on the one hand and higher taxes on the other, which leads to the phenomenon of decapitalisation of the company.
- Investment grants have a negative impact through the accumulation of values expressed in different purchasing power and the gradual inclusion in income of the depreciation part relating to the management period, which causes part of the value of the entry to be transferred to the profit and loss account, and last but not least the appearance in the balance sheet of their non-discounted balance not transferred to the profit and loss account.

The analysis of liabilities, as the structure of the enterprise's liabilities, under the impact of inflation, must be carried out in the light of the two components of this category, long-term liabilities and current liabilities. In general, debts, as a result of the action of inflation, generate positive influences, which in the case of long-term debts can be briefly presented as follows:

- borrowing from bond issues and long-term bank loans is done in a currency with greater purchasing power, while subsequent repayment is made in a depreciated currency, i.e. the same amount is repaid but less can be bought;
- long-term bank loans can have a negative impact if they are converted into shares, since this means that dividends, which express a current purchasing power, are subsequently paid to the current creditor or future shareholder, but may in time exceed the value of the loan;
- interest on loans and similar debts gives rise to an advantage if it is calculated without discounting and at interest rates below the rate of inflation, and to a disadvantage if interest is paid at a rate above the rate of inflation or the rate of financial return.

Within current liabilities, we can distinguish between commercial liabilities, liabilities to staff and tax liabilities, which, when studied in relation to inflation, reveal a number of influences which we shall try to summarise.

- The immediate payment of debts to suppliers entails giving up the advantages offered by the stable liabilities "technique" and reducing the gain from holding monetary liabilities, while the subsequent payment of these debts entails increasing the gain from holding monetary liabilities.
- Advances to suppliers are a negative influence because of the decrease in the purchasing power of the values advanced, under the conditions of mutual recognition of this loss by accepting settlement terms.
- Valuation at face value of debts is generally a gain when considering the repayment or payment obligation expressed in a declining purchasing power, but when considering the informational aspect we are faced with a disadvantage, materialised in the deterioration of the quality of the information provided by the financial statements.
- Liabilities in foreign currency, as a result of discounting at the year-end exchange rate, may generate positive or negative influences depending on exchange rate movements.
- Tax debts do not have a negative impact when paid on time, especially as for some debts the due date is in the month (quarter) following the calculation period, but in the event of late payment penalties or increases above the inflation rate for the period are charged.
- The obligations of companies to their members or shareholders in respect of dividends to be paid may have a negative impact if they are paid in advance, whereas leaving dividends at the disposal of the company may be an advantage if no interest is charged.

Provisions, which are a component of permanent capital, are also influenced by inflation, mainly in the form of: the accumulation of values expressed in currencies with different purchasing power in the event of their being increased, their being set up in the present for future events which will be expressed in much lower purchasing power, an increase

in corporation tax at the end of the financial year, whereas during the financial year they play a minor role, etc.

6. The social impact of declining quality of accounting information in inflationary environments

The concept of the public at large and the idea of satisfying its informational interests brings into question a wider range of actors participating in the social game, in which accounting has assumed a very important role. In this sense, we are talking about multiple stakeholders in accounting information, of which investors, creditors, management teams, employees and public administrations are representative categories.

The quality of accounting information is affected to a greater or lesser extent by the inflationary phenomenon, as the interests of all these stakeholders, as participants in the social game, are affected because, under inflationary conditions, due to monetary instability, the value of the structures recognised in the accounts is affected and distorted, creating difficulties in the valuation process and implicitly in terms of reflecting a true picture of economic reality.

As we pointed out earlier, accounting has an important role to play in society, on the one hand as a social intermediary, by assisting the process of redistributing resources in society and guaranteeing sustainable economic progress, and on the other hand serving the public interest, by providing all stakeholders with correct and balanced information.

From the detailed analysis that we have carried out previously, it has been possible to establish that, under inflationary conditions, the information provided by historical cost accounting is distorted and no longer equally meets the desire to serve the public interest, in the sense that the information needs of stakeholders are no longer fully satisfied.

In this context, the social impact that inflation has as a result of the decline in the quality of accounting information must be seen in terms of the impairment of the essential role of accounting, which is to serve the public interest, and not as a direct and immediate effect of this macroeconomic phenomenon on the individual as a member of society.

7. Conclusions

Maintaining capital and operating profitably under inflationary conditions is an ongoing concern and also a particularly complex issue for every economic entity, for which appropriate accounting information is naturally required to solve.

While the traditional historical cost accounting model is accepted as an optimal solution in a situation of price stability, there are serious reservations about its use and usefulness in a situation of general price increases, not least because it is difficult or almost impossible to comply rigorously with the requirement to ensure a true and fair presentation of the financial position and results.

In fact, one of the most serious consequences of historical cost accounting, in conditions of inflation, which also has many social implications, is the decapitalisation of businesses, which raises the issue of finding solutions that help to combat or even eliminate this major shortcoming of the accounting model in question. In this situation, maintaining capital becomes an essential objective for every economic entity, on the achievement of which the very continuation of activity under efficient conditions depends. In view of the many arguments presented during the analysis carried out in our study, it can be concluded that, under conditions of inflation, the quality of accounting information is adversely affected and accounting is no longer fully able to fulfil its assumed role of mediating the process of social intermediation and satisfying the public interest. In these circumstances, we believe that it is necessary to implement accounting methods that are adapted to inflation and that will remove the disadvantages of accounting based on the historical cost principle. The analysis of such methods can also be an objective for future research, which will continue the scientific approach started in this study.

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“TO BE A ROCK AND NOT TO ROLL” *. ARTISTS AND THEIR DRUG OF CHOICE

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Abstract: *This study analyses the relationship between artists and the use of illicit drugs, the causes and circumstances that determine the use, the types of agreed drugs, the manners of consumption, the effects produced, as well as their opinions on the drug phenomenon. Many artists performing in various fields experimented with drugs, their effects were and still are often appreciated as positive, while the artists believe that, under the influence of drugs, they become more creative. In this paper, we made a brief history of the connection between artists and the phenomenon of drugs, a short presentation of the theories regarding drug use, of the institutional context. For better understanding, we referred to previous research by specialists in the field who analysed the artist-drug relationship. We used documentary analysis and biographies to conduct the study. The results of the research describe the general image of a group of individuals with a lifestyle which does not exactly match the classical pattern considered by society to be "normal". They are open to experiences with drugs, non-conformists, and rebels, and this is noticeable not only from their actions and values, yet most of the time from a physical point of view.*

Keywords: artists, celebrity, drug use, effects of drug addiction.

1. Introduction

Drug addiction is practiced since ancient times, and drug trafficking is one of the biggest problems of the entire planet, due to the fact that it is an extremely profitable business. It covers all countries, all social strata, all social activities and does not consider age. Psychiatrists, psychologists, neurophysiologists, neurochemists, pharmacologists, pedagogues, lawyers, sociologists, etc., from all over the world, approached the study on drugs from various perspectives, drug addiction being the subject of many discussions. Drug studies concern different aspects, which aim at their biological, psychological, and social consequences.

As a paradox, in a contemporary society where inventions, discoveries and achievements in all fields reached an incredible level, many individuals appeal to illicit drugs, and thus, take refuge in a hallucinatory world, from which, very often, they never come back. The reasons behind drug use are diverse, being nevertheless mainly divided into three categories: biological, psychological, or social.

In this study we tried spotlight the fact that one of the groups of society that enormously suffers from the drug problem is represented by artists. Although not everyone resorts to illegal substances. Although, it is a fact that they are more inclined to become victims of various types of drugs, because they have easier access to drugs. The drug is a substance that the use turns into habit and which directly affects the brain and nervous system, changes mood, perception and/or state of consciousness. (Campbell, 2001: 10) The process of creation "appears as a flexible and surprising reuse of human experience and knowledge." (Mărcuşanu, 2005: 120)

The man was and is in a continuous *process of creation*, which permanently separated him from the animal world. This creation of the new represents "the highest form of human activity, that dimension of personality, studied not only by psychology, which is *creativity*."

*Led Zeppelin, "Stairway to Heaven." Led Zeppelin IV. Atlantic, 1971

(Golu and Păiș, 2000: 160) The *creativity* "makes possible the creation of real or purely mental products, as it is a progress in the social plan", and it has as main component the imagination, although it also assumes motivation, willpower, and perseverance. (Cosmovici, 2005: 154).

The man was always interested to find ways to break away from the daily routine and create ephemeral pleasures. Drug addiction is practiced since ancient times, and its traces are almost lost in the mists of time. This was widespread in primitive societies, as well as in the Middle Ages (Sandu, 2002: 5). Since ancient times, some drugs were not only used for their supposed therapeutic effects, yet also for recreational purposes. In some of the most developed ancient civilizations, psychoactive plants played important roles in both the economic and religious fields (Ray and Ksir, 1996: 6). Although some of the names used by the ancient civilizations were preserved until now, some of the corresponding plants are no longer known and much knowledge disappeared in the mists of time (Șelaru, 1998: 11). This also happened with the terms of *Soma*, a mystical liquid also known in Vedic culture as the *nectar of the gods*, or the ambrosia of the Greeks, of which a single drop was said to bring immortality.

Sometimes, not even the name of the substance used is known, nor the plant from which originates. Thus, it is known that the Pitia of Delphi foretold the future placed on a tripod, from under which a smoke with hallucinogenic effects was coming out from the burning fire. The drug used by the "initiates" of that time is not known to date. In other cases, the tribes of Mexico, for example, have preserved from the distant times of the Aztec civilization the secrets of use of some plants in certain rituals, and some of such plants were discovered by our civilization only in the last few decades or in the last century. (Șelaru, 1998: 12-13) The tablets of the Sumerian civilization prove the knowledge of opium about seven millennia before our era. The Babylonians, who were descendants of the Sumerian civilization, transmitted during their expansion the knowledge of the cultivation and preparation of opium to the Egyptians and Persians. (Șelaru, 1998: 21). Hence, poppy and opium first appeared in Asia Minor. The Greeks also knew opium. Homer speaks in the "Odyssey" about a drink that Helen, Zeus' daughter, gives Menelaus to drink to forget about troubles and unhappiness. At the same time, the opium is also mentioned in the Aeneid, by the poet Virgil.

In the year 450 B.C., Herodotus described how opium was consumed by the Scythians, namely, by burning the seeds and inhaling the smoke (Edwards, 2006: 176). The Egyptians were using opium in rituals, and the Chinese, although they learned about opium when it was brought by the Arabs in the ninth century, they used it only in medical treatments. In India, cannabis was used in some religious rituals. It was known since the Middle Ages that the use of the flour that resulted from cereals that were grown in unfavourable conditions and attacked by fungi, were generating mental and somatic disorders known as ergotism, causing hallucinations, convulsions, and gangrenes of the extremities. These disturbances were called the holy fire, the fire of St. Anthony, etc. It was later learned that the fungus that caused these disorders was the ergot. Lysergic acid was identified as the active ingredient that was causing hallucinations (Șelaru, 1998: 20). Our ancestors, the Geto-Dacians, used a series of cures obtained from plants with narcotic and hallucinogenic properties, in religious rituals or in medical treatments.

In modern society, drugs play a much different role than they had even 100 years ago. Major events occurred in pharmacology and medicine, which have brought revolutionary changes in the manner we look at drugs, influencing our behaviour about drugs and drug consumption. (Ray and Ksir, 1996: 7). Drug addiction became a social phenomenon in the '60s, first in America, with the hippie movement, which was born in the student campuses in the United States, although it also spread to other countries. Its members developed their own lifestyles, declaring themselves against materialism and repression. According to the British Encyclopaedia, hippies promoted recreational use of hallucinogenic substances, especially marijuana and LSD, for so-called "journeys of the mind", justifying consumption as a way of expanding consciousness.

In the 1970s, marijuana was considered a harmless drug, fact that encouraged pro-marijuana groups to even call for its legalization. The "harmlessness" was based on inconclusive studies, the number of users being much lower than today, and the power of the drug was less significant than now. (Campbell, 2001: 161). With the coming of the '70s, the consumption of both cannabis and amphetamines has increased, these years marking the stage of "powders".

In the 80s, the heroin use became a major problem for different states, along with the use of MDMA (ecstasy). With the '90s, ecstasy became an extremely popular drug among young people, being associated with the *rave* movement. The followers of the movement participated in parties with electronic music, at which impressive shows of lights and lasers, as well as the most unusual outfits, were always present. This has often been compared to the hippie movement, due to the positive attitude, libertine style and nonconformism manifested by its followers.

In recent decades, there was a significant increase in the concerns of researchers in various scientific fields for the development of theories on drug use, abuse, and dependence. Hence, there are three types of explanatory theories: biological, psychological, and sociological.

- ❖ Biological theories. These theories focus on the genetic or constitutional mechanisms of the human body, trying to find an explanation for the fact that some individuals start using drugs or become addicted to them (genetic factors, metabolic imbalance)

- ❖ Psychological theories emphasising the mechanisms of "re-strengthening of the person" or the type of personality of the consumer (potential/negative, re-strengthening, inadequate personality, predisposition to problematic behaviours)

- ❖ Sociological theories. Unlike biological and psychological theories emphasising individualistic factors in drug use and dependence, sociological theories consider structural factors. Thus, drug use becomes a group phenomenon, which is learned, like any conduct (social learning, social control, subculture, selective interaction/ socialization).

2. Artists and drugs over time: celebrities, victims of drugs

In psychology, creativity is defined as "the unitary set of objective and subjective factors that lead to the creation by individuals or groups of an original and valuable product for society". (Zlate et al., 2005: 128) Regardless of the field in which they operate, many artists did not remain indifferent to the influence of illicit substances on the human being and, at the same time, on the process of creation, considering, among other things, that drugs would make them more creative.

In 1821, "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater" by Thomas De Quincey appears, in which he describes the effects of opium on his life. Despite all the praise that De Quincey had for opium and the effects it had on him, he suffered from consumption. For long periods of his life, he was unable to write because of his addiction, even declaring that "opium gives and takes back at the same time." Other famous English writers who lived during that period, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning or Samuel Taylor Coleridge, were also addicted to opium. (Ray and Ksir, 1996: 339-340)

In 1840, the psychologist Jacques-Joseph Moreau also founded a club whose members were writers such as Théophile Gautier, Victor Hugo, Charles Baudelaire, Eugène Delacroix, Gérard de Nerval, Alexandre Dumas, and Honoré de Balzac. They met monthly in a hotel in Paris and consumed a green paste made from hashish to explore drug-induced experiences. (Wishnia, 2008: 14). In 1843, the poet Théophile Gautier described the experience of cannabis use as having similar effects to those produced by LSD: "A dose as big as a full teaspoon is enough for those unaccustomed to this delight of true followers... I sat on the divan, lying down as comfortably as possible among the Moroccan pillows, in anticipation of ecstasy. After a few minutes, I was engulfed by a general numbness. My body seemed to melt and become transparent. I could see perfectly in my chest the hashish I had consumed in the form of an emerald that spread millions of sparks... From time to time, I could see my friends disfigured, half people, half plants, with the thoughtful air of the ibis sitting on one leg or of some ostriches

that were waving their so extraordinary feathers that I was bending of laughter in my corner..." (Edwards, 2006: 178)

The British Havelock Ellis conducted a series of tests on some friends with an aesthetic sense, and paraphrasing Charles Baudelaire, in 1902 he published an essay on mescaline, called "Mescal: A New Artificial Paradise. (Edwards, 2006: 230) Intrigued by the drug's potential to amplify aesthetic responsiveness, Ellis persuaded an artist to visit his apartment in the Temples and swallow Peyote. Nothing happened at first, so Ellis suspected that he had not extracted the active substance properly. He tried again, and "to make sure of success, the experiment was repeated with four mushrooms". The result was perhaps the first negative experience induced by a hallucinogen and described in the literature. The victim wrote about the experience: "I saw how a very intense blue light begins to play around all the objects. Such a silent and sudden illumination of all things around... it seemed to me as a kind of madness that engulfed me from the outside, and its strangeness affected me more than its beauty. Wanting to get rid of it, I headed to the door. However, a sudden difficulty in breathing and a numbness of the heart caused me to let myself back into the armchair from which I had just risen. From this moment on, I began to be engulfed in a series of attacks that I can only describe by saying that I felt like I was dying... I had imagined that I was on the brink of death, and I felt how the power to resist to the violent sensations that manifested within me was weakening with every moment." The terrified artist felt "a nauseating and suffocating gas that was rising in my head." Undeterred, Ellis continued and recruited two poets for his experiments. One of them did not like mescaline at all, stating that he prefers hashish much more. The second reached a state of bliss and, while playing the piano with his eyes closed, "he saw one or two shapes that could have been shields or breastplates." (Edwards, 2006: 23)

Marijuana became popular among musicians in the '20s and '30s with the phenomenon of jazz. The "vipers" (the name refers to the hissing that was heard when pulling from the joint) accompanied the sounds of instruments such as piano, drums or trumpets in boogie rhythm. It followed a long line of songs about marijuana, such as <<When I Get Low, I Get High>> of Ella Fitzgerald, <<Sweet Marijuana Brown>> of Duke Ellington, <<Texas Tea Party>> of Benny Goodman or the famous hymn of the fans of this drug from the jazz period <<If You're a Viper>>. Mezz Mozrow, a clarinetist who worked with Louis Armstrong and Sidney Becket, stated that "marijuana elevates the musician into truly mastery spheres, "making him hear everything "right" all at once. Henry Anslinger also believed that this drug makes artists in the jazz world able to play multiple notes. Armstrong was arrested in 1931 for smoking weed in the parking lot of a Los Angeles club and was also the first celebrity to be arrested for the drug. After prohibition, songs about marijuana began to decline, although the drug was still consumed by musicians. In the early '40s, Malcolm X was funding and selling grass to bands that followed him around the country. He wrote in his autobiography that at least half of a band's musicians smoked marijuana. (Wishnia, 2008: 19)

The drug-induced euphoria improves the appreciation of music, and numerous rock and jazz artists have stated that under the influence of marijuana they would perform better, even if this effect was not objectively confirmed. (Mihai, 2005: 81)

Billie Holiday, also known as Lady Day, was one of the greatest singers in the history of jazz music. She was discovered in the '30s, when she was singing in clubs, later becoming one of the black singers who collaborated with white musicians. She was using marijuana since the age of thirteen, yet in the '40s, she became addicted to heroin. In 1947, she was arrested for possession and spent a year in prison. In 1959, she was arrested again while lying on the hospital bed. Suffering from cirrhosis as a result of drug and alcohol use, Billie Holiday dies at forty-four years of age.

Pierre Mari and Patrick Mignon analysed the importance of the connection between jazz music and drugs. In the late 1980s, they published an article in "Esprit" magazine in which they talked about the jazz phenomenon that appeared in New Orleans with the development of marijuana use. They pointed out that many musicians were creating songs with references to

the drug, such as <<Muggles>> (marijuana cigarettes), which was recorded in 1930 by Louis Armstrong, or <<Reefer Man>> (marijuana seller) by Cab Calloway. In their opinion, marijuana and jazz were related. (Turlea, 1991: 26)

An essential ingredient of the mass bohemia of the '60s was cannabis, spreading everywhere with the cultural and political rebellions of that time, with the "total assault on culture," as the radical hippie poet John Sinclair said. Artists who claimed the style of some like Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti were proud marijuana smokers, using the drug to stimulate spontaneous versification in the jazz bop style, such as Kerouac's poem <<Mexico City Blues>>. Like the jazz phenomenon, rock music culture popularized marijuana among the masses of the '60s. In 1964, the members of the famous group The Beatles were persuaded by Bob Dylan to smoke for the first time, and the effects were soon to appear in the more complex and nuanced music of the songs included on the album "Rubber Soul". With the advent of the hippie subculture, grass and LSD became its ships of "expansion of consciousness." Songs with subtle messages about drugs began to appear and reach the charts, such as <<Eight Miles High>> of The Birds, <<White Rabbit>> from Jefferson Airplane, or Bob Dylan's <<Rainy Day Woman #12 & 35>> in which he urged people to take drugs. (Wishnia, 2008: 20-21)

Numerous artists from the rock music world have been picked up by police for marijuana possession, such as John Lennon and George Harrison of The Beatles, The Grateful Dead, or Brian Jones and Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones. Keith Richards had received a year in prison after allowing guests to smoke in his home, even if he was released after The Times newspaper in London criticised his conviction in an editorial. A member of the legendary band The Neville Brothers of New Orleans, Charles Neville spent three years in Angola prison in Louisiana because of two cigarettes with marijuana. One of the most drastic cases is that of Rocky Erickson, lead singer of the psychedelic-garage band in Austin, The 13th Floor Elevators, who spent three years in a prison for insane criminals for possession of a single marijuana joint. (Wishnia, 2008: 23) According to Edwards (2006: 244), in 1968, a twenty-three-year-old with long hair and wearing an old but shiny military tunic presented himself at his clinic. He was the guitarist of a well-known band. His personal doctor refused to prescribe him the ration of 30 tablets of Dexedrine (dexamphetamine) which he considered necessary every twenty-four hours. The combination of insomnia and drugs makes him almost unconscious. "Man, I'm not coping without," he says. He was offered a treatment to gradually reduce the number of tablets, but he left and did not return. In the 1960s, the link between amphetamine and music spread widely. The 1960s were of historical importance because they marked the beginning of an association between drugs and dance culture, which has been perpetuated in the rhythm of many other types of music, until now.

In the '30s, the Rasta movement was born, with cannabis as a symbol, the "grass of wisdom" being used by Jamaican spiritual visionaries who found support in the Bible. In the late '60s, both grass (ganja) and Rasta found a niche in the expanding music industry. The birthplace of reggae music was Studio One, becoming popular very quickly among musicians. Musician Horace Andy told the author of <<Reggae Music>>, Lloyd Bradley, that people came there because they could smoke weed and knew they would find the necessary condition for the music. By the mid-70s, the influence of marijuana was evident in both music and lyrics, the most influenced genre being the dub (remixed instrumental versions of reggae, adapted for sound-system halls), with a simplified rhythm and cryptic vocal fragments lost in echo, powerful bass and drums amplified to a mysterious intensity. In 1975, Peter Tosh reached number one in Jamaica with the song "Legalize it", 3 years after being beaten by the police to the point of fainting during a raid for marijuana). Although in the '80s, Jamaican audiences turned *en masse* to reggae styles made for dancehall, songs about ganja never stopped appearing, from Wayne Smith's Under Mi Sleng Teng in 1985 to Sister Carol's Red Eye in 1996 and Junior Kelly's Boom Draw in 2001. (Wishnia, 2008: 28-29)

The legendary Bob Marley, the most iconic figure in reggae music, was a heavy cannabis user and has always made arguments to support its legalization, arguing that it is absurd for a natural plant created by God to be illegal. One of his best-known pieces, <<I Shot the Sheriff>>, depicted the fate of a marijuana grower harassed by a fanatical officer of the law. He was arrested in 1977 after London police found marijuana in the apartment where he was staying. However, because he was on his first offense, he got away with a fine and a warning. (Moskowitz, 2007: 42) The back cover of the album titled "Kaya" (Jamaican term for cannabis) depicted a colour drawing of a spliff growing from a marijuana plant to match the title. The album was seen as an intimate portrait of the lifestyle that Bob Marley loved. (Moskowitz, 2007: 87)

While in the '70s, after hip-hop has emerged, there were only a few songs with clear references to marijuana, the situation has changed since the '90s. Cypress Hill released their first album in 1991, featuring grass-referenced titles such as <<Stoned is the Way of the Walk>>, <<Light Another>>, and <<Something for the Blunted>>. (Wishnia, 2008: 37) The British writer Aldous Huxley, who even influenced some Romanian writers such as Mircea Eliade or Anton Holban, was very popular during the hippie period. His works were influenced by mysticism, and in "The Doors of Perception" and "Heaven and Hell", he describes his experiences with the use of mescaline, a drug with which he came into contact in 1953. In 1960, he told "The Paris Review" magazine that it is important for people to realize that the monotonous universe in which most live is not the only one that exists and that it is healthy for everyone to have the experience caused by LSD. He believed that he could not generalize when it comes to the effects of LSD because everyone reacts differently, and it could indirectly help some artists in the process of creation. (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, 2000: 17). He died in 1963, following a dose of LSD in an intramuscular injection, which he asked his wife in writing because he could no longer speak. Aldous Huxley had some influence even on the musicians, the name of the rock band "The Doors" being inspired by the title of the work "The Doors of Perception". In choosing the title, Huxley was also inspired by a quote from the poet William Blake. The lead singer and leader of "The Doors", Jim Morrison, began taking drugs while studying cinema at the University of California in Los Angeles, such as LSD. He used mostly cocaine, claiming heroin is harmful for him. In 1971, Jim Morrison died at just twenty-seven years of age from a heart attack. According to his girlfriend, it was allegedly caused by a dose of cocaine. However, his death remains a mystery to this day, with various hypotheses.

Brian Jones, the founder, and guitarist of the famous band "The Rolling Stones", ended up abusing drugs, due to the fame and success of the band, as well as to the fact that he had begun to feel pushed aside by the other members. He was arrested in 1967 after authorities found marijuana, cocaine, and methamphetamine in his apartment. Although he admitted to smoking marijuana, he denied that he would use other drugs. In 1968, he was arrested again for possession of cannabis, but due to the sympathy of the judge, he got away with only a fine and a warning. His use of drugs, his estrangement from his bandmates, as well as the problems created by his arrests, led to his exclusion from the band in 1969. Just a month after the public announcement, he was found dead in the pool of his home. Brian Jones' death was the first among artists who belonged to the rock phenomenon of the '60s, who died at the age of 27, followed by Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, and Jimi Hendrix.

A lot of people believe that LSD is closely related to creativity. Numerous experiments have attempted to study the effects of LSD on it. There is no evidence to show that this hallucinogenic drug would increase creative capacity. After an experiment that had professional artists as subjects, it was concluded that the drug is more likely to produce negative than positive effects on their creativity. (Ray, Ksir, 1996: 380)

Jimi Hendrix was probably the greatest instrumentalist in the history of rock music, the guitar hero of all time. Many people tried to overcome his interpretive technique but no one has been able to match his incredible achievements. His image is often associated with drug culture. He was consuming cannabis, hashish, LSD, and amphetamines (especially on tours), as well as

occasionally cocaine. Despite the severe lectures that Hendrix received from some close friends about how dangerous and destructive LSD was, he consumed it in large quantities as its fame grew. It blurred his mind and began to change his mood. (McDermott, Kramer, 1992: 146, 170). Producer Tony Bongiovi said that it was not just once that Hendrix tried to convince him to try drugs. He remembers how once, when he was in the studio, Hendrix's girlfriend, Devon Wilson, was smoking in his face trying to get him to smoke marijuana while Hendrix immobilized him. (McDermott, Kramer, 1992: 185) The phenomenal success of Hendrix had generated a wide base of supporters and admirers. Many of the fans even sent him drugs in envelopes. Some contained bizarre mixtures of substances subject to a special control regime. A fan in northern California sent him some LSD accompanied by a brief description of the "journey" he would be able to enjoy if he used it. An Indian from Arizona offered him peyote, along with detailed instructions on the extraction of strychnine. Most fans even wrote their addresses on envelopes, wanting Hendrix to share with them his experiences. (McDermott and Kramer, 1992: 228) In 1969, Hendrix was arrested in Toronto after customs officers found several packets of heroin and a pipe with unprocessed hashish in his luggage. (McDermott and Kramer, 1992: 255) Musician David Crosby had stated that Hendrix had remarkable physical endurance, being the only man he knew able to play after consuming acid (LSD) and that whenever he tried, he had the impression that his guitar strings were melting. (McDermott and Kramer, 1992: 276).

Michael Jeffery, Hendrix's manager, had noticed that Hendrix was consuming more and more drugs at a frightening rate, having an insatiable appetite for cocaine. He had learned that Jimi had even snuffed out heroin, an incident that terrified him. (McDermott and Kramer, 1992: 316) In September 1970, at just twenty-seven years of age, Jimi Hendrix passed away, following asphyxiation with his own vomiting, during sleep. It was made official that he took a dose of sleeping pills, yet not higher than usual. Despite the death certificate, there are numerous theories regarding the death of the artist that has aroused numerous suspicions and has remained a mystery to this day.

Janis Joplin, one of the representative singers of the hippie period, became known in the '60s. With success, drugs have become present in her life, consuming various drugs, such as psychoactive ones, amphetamines or even heroin. She died in 1970 from a heroin overdose and was found in her hotel room by her manager. Janis Joplin remains in music history, people often speaking of her as the female version of Elvis Presley.

Elvis Presley, an American singer, and actor, also known as King of Rock'n'roll, consumed surprising amounts of drugs throughout his life. In her memoirs, the ex-wife of the famous Elvis Presley, Priscilla Presley (1993: 160), says that he had impressive knowledge of drugs, taking amphetamine and sleeping pills, although Elvis claimed he did not need them and that he would not develop an addiction. Because of boredom and anxiety, over time, he began to depend more and more on drugs, believing that the fast pace of life helps him get rid of destructive thoughts, nevertheless the result was a false self-assurance and an aggressiveness that was not in his nature, ending up losing confidence in himself and in others. (Presley, and Harmon, 1993: 298) Elvis was curious enough to try the LSD one night with his closest people. As a result of the experience, they all became cheerful, and then they watched the tropical fish in an aquarium, which, although, there were about two or three of them, in their eyes had become a whole ocean of bright fish. At dawn, Elvis and Priscilla went outside and looked at nature in all its details. They considered the experience to be an extraordinary one, because they knew that LSD was a drug that was too dangerous to be taken just by fun, they never touched it again. (Presley and Harmon, 1993: 222) As an avid badge collector, Elvis wanted to get the badge of the Federal Narcotics Office and didn't leave until he got one. The fixed idea was because Elvis imagined that this badge would give him the right to carry as many illegal drugs as he wanted, to any country. (Presley, 1993: 301-302) Elvis Presley died in 1977, at the age of forty-two, from a heart attack and drug use had major implications in his death.

Keith Moon, drummer for the rock band "The Who," was known for his unique performances and eccentric style, as well as for his destructive behaviour. With the success of the band, he adopted a chaotic lifestyle from which there was no shortage of banned drugs, this starting with amphetamines. In 1978, he died of an overdose of medications prescribed to ease his symptoms during the alcohol rehab process. Keith Moon is still regarded today as one of the most talented drummers in the history of rock'n'roll music.

American jazz singer and trumpeter Chet Baker began using heroin in the '50s, developing an addiction that lasted the rest of his life, and in the early '60s, he spent more than a year in a prison in Italy because of it, being arrested countless times. As the years passed, the artist was getting better and better, despite the physical degradation. In 1988, at the age of fifty-nine, Chet Baker fell from the balcony of his hotel room, his death being accidental. At the autopsy, it was confirmed that he had heroin and cocaine in his blood, drugs that were also found in his room.

The visual artist, Jean-Michel Basquiat, is known especially because of his "primitive" style, as well as for his collaboration in the 80s with the artist Andy Warhol. He first attracted attention with graffiti works, and as his popularity grew, he entered the world of drugs. After a long battle with heroin addiction, Basquiat died of an overdose in 1988 at the age of twenty-seven.

River Jude Phoenix was an American actor, musician, and activist, becoming known for his appearances in films such as "Stand by me", "Indiana Jones" or "My Own Private Idaho", although his close friends knew that his true passion was playing the guitar. He was also known for his involvement in animal and environmental protection activities for PETA and beyond. After he began to be recognized for his merits in the world of actors, he started to occasionally use marijuana, cocaine and heroin, along with some friends. He died at the age of twenty-three in 1993 from an overdose of cocaine and heroin, collapsing in front of a club owned by Johnny Depp at the time.

About Shannon Hoon, the lead singer of the rock band Blind Melon, is said to have been a talented and charismatic, impulsive musician. Shannon and his band came to the public's attention after he became friends with vocalist Axl Rose, an old friend of his sister's. Axl proposed a collaboration and they recorded several songs with the legendary band "Guns N' Roses", as the second voice, including for the song "Don't Cry", even appearing in the video. In 1995, at the age of twenty-eight, he suffered an accidental death on the bus used by his band on tour, following an overdose of cocaine.

The 2000s also took with them many artists known and loved by fans. With the grunge movement of the early '90s, the rock band "Alice in Chains" experienced international success. The band's lead singer, Layne Staley, was known to be addicted to heroin and cocaine. Over the years, his physical condition deteriorated deeply, as he became unable to perform live. In the last years of his life, he isolated himself from family and friends, rarely leaving his apartment. He stated that he was aware that he made a big mistake when he started using drugs. Layne Staley passed away in 2002 at the age of twenty-four, in the same way as actor River Phoenix: accidental death due to the lethal combination of heroin and cocaine.

Paul Gray was the bassist and one of the founders of the numerous award-winning metal band "Slipknot", including a Grammy, and was known for their chaotic and energetic live performances. Paul Gray has long struggled with drug addiction, leading to his death at the age of thirty-eight in 2010 as a result of an overdose of morphine.

Amy Winehouse, the Jewish singer, known for her strong voice and the ease with which she combined musical styles, struggled with drugs and bulimia, being a subject to which the media paid a lot of attention. After unsuccessful rehabilitation attempts, Amy died in her own home in 2011 at the age of 27 from alcohol poisoning.

Whitney Houston was one of the most beloved and award-winning pop artists of all time. There was no shortage of drugs in her life, as she admitted to being a consumer of marijuana, cocaine, ecstasy, and other drugs. She died at the age of forty-eight in 2012. She was

found unconscious in the bathtub after drowning. After the autopsy, it was learned that Whitney had consumed cocaine that day. Although drugs have destroyed the lives and careers of many artists, some have managed to overcome their addiction. Among the happy cases is the American actress Melanie Griffith, who has struggled with drug addiction for many years, especially cocaine. English comedian and actor Russel Brand has stopped using since 2002, having been addicted to heroin. American actor Robert Downey Jr. has become addicted since childhood, yet he has not been taking drugs since 2003. The famous musician Elton John faced the problem of drugs (especially cocaine) in the 80s, but he no longer consumes. The American jazz trumpeter, Miles Davis, who was one of the most important musicians of the twentieth century, managed to overcome his addiction to heroin and cocaine. The musician Ray Charles, a consumer of drugs like marijuana since his teens, he then became addicted to heroin. He overcame his addiction in 1966 at the age of thirty-six.

3. Romanian writers and drugs

Historian and anthropologist Andrei Oișteanu conducted a study entitled "Romanian writers and narcotics", published in several issues of the 22 journals in 2008. We find out that the psychotropic substances were not unknown to some writers from the Romanian space. One of them is Daniil Scavin (1805?-1837). Suffering from depressive states, the opiomaniac writer committed suicide at the age of thirty-two, in Iasi, by administering large doses of mercury and opium. If at first, some substances were used for medicinal purposes, then they spread to the artistic and bohemian environments of the big cities. A victim of morphine addiction was Alexandru Odobescu, who committed suicide in Bucharest in 1895 with an overdose of morphine. Influenced by French writers like Gautier or Baudelaire, Alexandru Macedonski was taking hashish pills and probably smoking opium. The case of Ion Barbu involves a "drug addiction". He first discovered cocaine and ether, and then became addicted, writing poems under the influence of drugs. Another Romanian writer who is known to be a drug user is Mircea Eliade. He smoked opium at the age of twenty-two seeking to "escape"; in the early '30s, he smoked cannabis thinking it helped him in mental focus and meditation and in the '40s, he treated a depression with amphetamines.

4. Conclusions

Many drug-using people suffer from depression, and some have active suicidal tendencies. The specialists who work with these people can diminish the possibility of suicide, primarily by helping them stop using drugs, because many suicides occur when they are under the influence of drugs. Specialists must always evaluate suicidal behaviour at the first contact with a new client. (Blume, 2011: 194-196) There are famous cases of suicide among artists who were known to be drug users. One of these cases is of the leader of the rock band "Nirvana", who in 1994, was diagnosed with bronchitis and severe laryngitis. Shortly after, Kurt Cobain's body was found inanimate on the porch of the artist's home in Lake Washington, and he was shot in the head. Under a flowerpot, it appears that the artist of only twenty-seven years left a letter from which it was understood that his death was a suicide. He was addicted to heroin, and at the time of his death, he had heroin and diazepam in his blood.

Fashion designer Alexander McQueen also committed suicide in 1994 by hanging himself because of his depression at the age of forty. Before committing suicide, he took a mixture of cocaine, tranquilizers and sleeping pills. Another famous case of suicide is that of Sid Vicious, bassist of the British band "Sex Pistols", and his image has always been associated with the punk-rock movement. Being raised by his mother in an inappropriate environment, his first contact with drugs was in childhood, and in his high school years he entered their world. His tumultuous relationship with Nancy Spungen, a heroin addict, greatly influenced Sid. In 1978 he was charged with her murder by stabbing, and shortly after, he had two suicide attempts. In 1979, at just twenty-one years old, Sid Vicious died of a heroin overdose. Even to this day, it is

not known for sure if it was a suicide or if the rumours are true that his mother gave him a lethal dose because she feared that her son would return to prison.

Drug use is one of the most serious social problems facing contemporary society. In attempts to prevent illicit drug use, a detailed and appropriate knowledge of drug use and addiction is necessary to access certain resources. Informing and educating the population about the risks they are exposed to by drug consumption is essential. Many artists face the problem of drugs, in the darkest corners of public life. To stimulate creativity, many of them seek resort in drugs, seeing them as a source of inspiration. Many cases in the world gradually came to the attention of the public, as many artists dying from overdoses. Thus, drugs prematurely ended the careers of many individuals with potential.

Among those who used drugs, a large part ended up in that situation because of lack of information or erroneous information, as well as due to the creation of a positive image regarding certain types of drugs. The list of celebrities succumbed because of drugs is very long. Over time, many young talents who would have had a promising future, became victims of this seductive and at the same time life-destroying phenomenon. Some celebrities were destroyed by the same drugs that may have given them a boost in the creative process at some point. Unfortunately, not all of them managed to escape from the spell of drugs, and many of them did not survive and ended tragically. However, even today, many artists struggle with drug addiction, wanting to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Was the work of any celebrities influenced in any way by the drug's use? Would Jimi Hendrix still be considered the greatest instrumentalist in the history of rock music if he did not consume drugs in such large quantities? Would he still have had those incredible achievements? Would Elvis Presley still be considered the "King of Rock'n'roll" if he didn't consume huge amounts of drugs throughout his life? All these are each generation questioning itself, but they failed to reach an answer. This is a theme to be explored in a future study. It is a reality that illicit drugs have considerably influenced the life course of some great names in the field of art, continuing to be associated with them or with different subcultures, even after the years passed. There are many suspicious deaths of celebrities attributed to drug consumption. However, no one can ignore the entire industry which starts to build around those celebrities, which means, at the end of the day, lots of money in someone's pocket, other the musician him/herself.

The analyses should be continued to understand all the reasons and what causes the start and continuity of the drug consumption by the artists. A question to be answer in future study is why their staff supports their addiction. Many aspects need to be considered and corelated.

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PRESTIGE MAKING TECHNIQUES. THE CASE OF ELENA CEAUȘESCU

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Abstract. *Romania illustrates the theme of famous women with Elena Ceaușescu, the wife of the former communist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu¹. Despite graduating the primary school with difficulty, she managed to be praised as a politician and renowned scientist. She was also the woman with the highest position in the official hierarchy of a communist state. Moreover, she remains the only woman representative sentenced to death and executed in national history. How was that possible? The socio-political context and the prestige manufacturing techniques through which the representation of a worldwide personality was built for Elena Ceaușescu will be further analyzed in this article.*

Keywords: ideology, propaganda, social representations, communism, famous women.

1. Final outcome

Let's start with the end. Until December 22, 1989, the day they left the seat of power besieged by protesters, the Ceaușescus had been the object of an unprecedented cult of personality.

Nicolae Ceaușescu held, mainly, the functions of general secretary of the single party, president of Romania, supreme commander of the armed forces and president of the Front of Socialist Unity and Democracy². The following titles and positions were noted in his wife's CV: academician; member in the small center of power - Permanent Bureau of the Executive Political Committee (ExPC) of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (CC of the RCP); first Deputy Prime Minister of the Government; member of the country's legislative forum; president of the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST); president of the Scientific Council of the Central Institute of Chemistry (CEICHEM). However, above all she was the head of the party's executive committee. She was the COMRADE, as her husband himself called her, his direct correspondent. She was the second office for the dignitaries in the front line of power, complementary to the first office - her husband's office.

Following the rebel that broke out in December 1989, in the context of the economic crisis in the 80s and the changes in the “communist camp” caused by the reforms on the “perestroika” model, the Ceaușescus “fled” with a helicopter landed on the roof of the CC headquarters. In the next three days, Romania experienced the unique phenomenon of a “live revolution”, due to the manipulations applied, mainly through the only national television station. The citizens were “informed” that mysterious armies of “terrorists” were fighting on the side of “horrible dictators”, resulting in countless casualties. Disconnected from the information on the evolution of the political situation in the country, the Ceaușescus were captive in the military garrison in Târgoviște. The newly installed power instituted an Exceptional Military Court to judge them. On December 25, 1989, after a trial on the Stalinist

¹ Nicolae Ceaușescu (1918-1989), initial profession: shoemaker. Illegalist communist since 1936. He spent over 6 and a half years in prisons and camps for adhering to communism. Member of the leadership since 1945 and party leader (1965-1989). In 1969 he also took the position of head of state. Then, in 1974 he declared himself as President of Romania, created for this purpose.

² The Front of Democracy and Socialist Unity was the organization which included all the other citizens of Romania, starting the age of 4, through trade unions, religious unions, creation unions and other organizations under the leadership of the Communist Party.

model, both were sentenced to death and executed¹. However, no evidence and witnesses were brought and the accusations were not proven even at a later stage.

In the collective memory, Elena Ceaușescu remained as a prototype of the imposture and the bad influence. Predominantly Orthodox, the Romanian community associates her to Eve - the author of the original sin through persuasion. A stereotype of consensus and the traditional expression “the man is the head (of the family) but the woman is the neck”.

2. Ideology, propaganda and social representations

The astonishing biographies of the Ceaușescus were built on the channel marked by the „historical fracture” of the agreements between the Allies at the end of the Second World War. Romania entered the sphere of Soviet influence. The manipulations exercised by the Kremlin in imposing and operating the communist regime will be copied here, as well as in the other countries of central and south-eastern Europe, which will form part of the “communist camp”². In essence, these are those inventoried by R. J. Lifton (1961) in his study of “thought reformation” for the purpose of a “totalitarian psychology”: 1. Control of mass communications; 2. The “mystical” manipulation (this mainly refers to the cult of the leader’s personality); 3. The requirement of “purity” of individuals; 4. The cult of confession of current and past thoughts (in correlation with the “requirement of purity” and achieved through party criticism and self-criticism); 5. Presenting communist ideology as a “sacred science”; 6. Language remodeling; 7. Putting faith in the party and the community above any personal interest (Lifton, 1961).

In terms of social thinking, the focus was on the axis of ideology - propaganda - social representation. Without aiming to insist on these complex relations, we will remember from the beginning that in a communist regime propaganda is the only public form of communication. Lenin was also the first propaganda theorist defining it as a means of: 1) forming a vision of the world; 2) creating an awareness of the individuality of the group and its integration in the society; 3) complementary action to other forms of communication and social intervention. The logic of the inference of the syllogism in which the conclusion is known before the premises thus becomes an operational rule in the formation of adequate representations of the concepts and theories of ideology (Moscovici, 1976: 263).

These were the mechanisms used to apply the processes of rewriting the history and falsifying the biography of the leaders that contextualize the case proposed for analysis. According to the Marxist-Leninist theory, the establishment of a communist regime is done by the victory of the proletarian revolution against the “exploiters”. Its leaders and “ferments” represent the distinct category of “professional revolutionaries” who induce “class consciousness” in workers. Since the Romanian realities - and not only - were totally different, we resorted to what Maurice Halbwachs (1935) calls the reconstruction of the “social frameworks” of memory. Through omissions and / or substitutions of personalities and events, distortions of meanings and resignations, August 23, 1944 - the date when the weapons were returned by Romanians against former allies in the Axis, will be celebrated as a national holiday³. This date was associated to the meanings of armed insurrection, then of “social revolution and national liberation, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist”. And the communist party,

¹ They were accused of organising armed actions against citizens and state power with 60,000 people being killed, destroying properties, trying to flee the country, owning more than a billion dollars abroad. In the legal terms of that time: genocide against the Romanian people, acts of diversion, undermining state power and the national economy. Based on Ceaușescu’s execution.

² Communist propaganda in the “cold war” referred to opponents with the antagonistic terms “communist camp” (of „peace-loving countries”) and “imperialist camp”.

³ Starting with the summer of 1941 until August 1944, Romania participated in the war with Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union. In the conditions of the counter-offensive of the Red Army and the landing of the Allied troops in Normandy, a political alliance was concluded in Bucharest for the return of weapons. Upon the request of the Allies, the representatives of the main parties in Romania also joined the communist party. On August 23, 1944, Ion Antonescu, the military dictator of the state, was arrested and an armistice with the USSR was declared in the name of the aforementioned alliance.

which at that time counted about 800 members (most of them in prison or in emigration) was considered its leader and organizer. In addition, it was resorted to successive falsifications of the biography of the communist leaders. Neither Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej¹, the first communist leader of Romania, nor Nicolae Ceaușescu were, at least, in Bucharest at the time of the “revolution”. Both had the status of political prisoners during the war. And, for each of them, in the years when he had the power, propaganda created the representation of the main organizer and leader of the “revolution”.

3. Real biography and political meanings

As far as Elena Ceaușescu is concerned, according to the autobiography written for the party in 1949 (which contained several syntax and spelling mistakes), she was born in Petrești (Dâmbovița), on January 7, 1919. She declared her parents - Nae and Alexandrina - farmers with a property of 4 hectares of land and a house (Central National Historical Archives, CC Fund of RCP - Cadre, file C / 1424, f. 3.). This fortune classified them in the middle category of the Romanian peasants from the interwar period. At the census in 1930, 74.95% of rural households owned less than 5 ha of land, 17, 10% had between 5 and 10 ha and only 5.5% had land between 10 and 20 ha (Scurtu and Buzatu, 1999: 58). However, according to communist ideology, a “healthy social origin” - an essential condition for political ascension - meant coming from the lower category. As a result, the signatory of the autobiography did not declare that her parents also owned a shop. Which, among other goods, sold a new product for the rural world - the penknife. This is why the people in the village called the girl „Lenuța, Penknife’s daughter”. She also hid the fact that her father was in the Liberal Party (Central National Historical Archives, Fund 53 - file P / 73, vol 1, f. 16).

According to the statements in the mentioned autobiography, the girl had attended and graduated from primary school between 1926-1930 (Central National Historical Archives, CC Fund of RCP - Cadre, file C / 1424, f. 3.). However, the documents from the archives of the local school disappeared for the promotion of the student Petrescu N. Elena². After her death, two transcripts were published in the daily “România liberă”. It turned out that the “well-known scientist all over the world” repeated the fifth grade (Băcanu, 1989). The original documents had been lost. However, the information about this student repeating the grade differs depending on the time, place and source. Whether she repeated the grade or not, she managed to graduate primary school.

Until the age of 17 she lived in her native village. The few traces in the collective memory outline the shadow of a good girl³. She had learned, as he would later boast, to cook, to keep the house clean, to sew, to knit, to crochet⁴ ...

At the beginning of 1936, she settled in Bucharest, after her elder brother, Gheorghe⁵. Through a contest of circumstances, he had joined the communist party, outlawed since 1924. His girlfriend, Rașela Rozenfeld, a textile worker (Central National Historical Archives, Fund 53 - file P / 73, vol 1, f. 16.), was also a communist follower. His younger sister joined their entourage and got a job as an apprentice in a small garment factory. In the workshops where she worked, she came in contact with the unions and then with the communist youth organization. She was going to claim claim in her autobiography, however, that she joined the

¹ Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1901- 1965), initial profession: electrician. Member of the Communist Party since 1931 and political prisoner (1933-1944). Leader of the Communist Party of Romania (1945-1954; 1955-1965).

² Interview with Ștefan Ghenu, former secretary at the school in Petrești (March 18, 2009, interviewer Lavinia Betea).

³ Interview with Eugen Roșu, history teacher at the school in Petrești (March 18, 2009, interviewer Lavinia Betea).

⁴ Interview with Violeta Năstăsescu, former English translator for Elena Ceaușescu (May 5, 2017, interviewer Lavinia Betea).

⁵ Interview with Mariana Dinulescu, niece of Elena Ceaușescu (April 10, 2015, interviewer Lavinia Betea).

party in 1937 with the political task of maintaining links between communist detainees and those in illegality.

The circumstances of meeting the militant Nicolae Ceaușescu remained unknown. What is certain is that in 1939 they were lovers. However, they got married only at the end of 1947 when they were expecting their first child and Ceaușescu had become one of the leaders of the Communist Party, now the only party in the country.

After the war, claiming a “revolutionary past”, Ceaușescu's concubine tried, for a short period of time, the profession of activist. As in this period of manipulations, strikes, demonstrations and confrontations with opponents, the new statute required quite special qualities (organizational spirit, charisma, the gift of oratory, influencing ability, etc.), she did not adapt. She had also tried to train at a party school but had dropped out (Central National Historical Archives, Fund CC of RCP – Cadre, file C/1424, f. 13). Later, in the summer of 1947, she gave up, for a time, a stable work commitment for the status of mother and wife. A completely different one from other women even in those difficult post-war years. His is because the family of a communist leader had a residence endowed with all the comforts of furniture and other utilities, holiday villas, work car, driver, guards, housekeeping staff, preferential supply. Everything through the institution called the Party Household.

Elena Ceaușescu got a new job again, in 1950, in the Foreign Relations section of the party leadership (Central National Historical Archives, Fund CC of RCP – Cadre, file C/1424, f. 9-10.). Thus, she started her career as a “cadre”¹. However, she was in charge of recruiting and hiring drivers, maids and administrative staff from the publication “For lasting peace, for popular democracy”². The magazine was the press “organ” of Cominform³ and appeared in the languages of all Member States. A job more suitable for her lack of appetite for political tasks and mother with three children⁴.

Although there was no evidence of her acceptance in the small illegal party, she claimed the privileged status of illegalist⁵ from the beginning of its legal organization the privileged status of illegalist. She claimed she had participated in strikes and coordinated the communist youth organization in one of the sectors of the capital city. Those recommended for references in this regard were as “discovered” as she was. In fact, since 1941, party militants who were in connection with her interrupted the connection on the grounds of her indiscipline in conspiracy (Central National Historical Archives, Fund CC of RCP – Cadre, file C/1424, f. 31.). However, the valid argument is a pale contribution to the “proletarian revolution”: visits with food and clothing packages to the camp in Tg. Jiu where her boyfriend and brother were imprisoned, in 1943-1944.

In the party's hagiography, two moments will become reference legends of her “revolutionary” past. The first is the title of “Queen of Labor” obtained by Elena Petrescu at a countryside celebration in August 1939. This was considered a flattering homage to her feminine qualities. However, the award was based on “voting” by postcards bought by “fiancé” Ceaușescu, supported by other comrades⁶. The other is the “organization” of an anti-fascist demonstration on May 1, 1939 by the utecists Nicolae Ceaușescu and Elena Petrescu. A false

¹ The “Cadre” sector would be today's correspondent of the human resources department. However, the selections, classifications and decisions of the cadres were made on the basis of a political grid. The statement “cadres decide everything”, which has become a slogan, belonged to Stalin.

² Interview with Ștefan Andrei, former Minister of Foreign Affairs (August 30, 2011, interviewer Lavinia Betea).

³ Cominform was a supranational organization (1947-1956) established with the intention to restore some of the Cominternist practices. Its headquarters were in Belgrade (1947-1948), then in Bucharest.

⁴ Valentin, physicist (b.1948) Zoia, mathematician (1948 -2000), Nicu, physicist (1951-1996). Nicu Ceaușescu has been trained and introduced to political positions since 1971, being appreciated as his father's potential successor.

⁵ After the communists came to power, membership in the party during its period of secrecy was rewarded with special pensions and the right to attend rest homes, polyclinics, special hospitals, etc.

⁶ Interview with Ion Iliescu, son of a former illegalist, former president of Romania (September 20, 2009, interviewer Lavinia Betea).

imagery was operated by the party's historians: the portraits of the two were implanted among the heads of a crowd. In reality, the event was organized by the authorities of the time, following the fascist model and dedicated to King Carol II (Petcu, 1994: 93-95).

After a first assessment of the case, Elena Ceaușescu's claims as "illegal" were rejected (Central National Historical Archives, Fund CC of RCP – Cadre, file C/1424, f. 27.). In the autumn of 1960, the petitioner returned with the request for seniority in the party since 1939. Her husband was now the secretary with organizational problems in the CC, ie number 2 in the political hierarchy. Thus, new and false references and recommendations were made for his wife. And in a few years, she was going to appear in public with a communist past from 1937 (Central National Historical Archives, Fund CC of RCP – Cadre, file C/2175, f. 1-3.).

4. Building the profile of technocratic expert

Elena Ceaușescu was a special case due to her political ascension, not on the direct line of activists, but as a technocrat who represents chemistry. In the sixth decade, communist programs gave priority to chemistry and physics as forces of progress which were meant to improve life quality.

It is not known how and when exactly, Ceaușescu's wife "passed" from Cominform magazine to an CEICHEM laboratory. In the official biography of the 80's she is presented as a chemical laboratory specialist from 1944 to 1957, when she was promoted to researcher (Consiliul Național pentru Studiarea Arivelor Securității, 2004: 138). The chemistry she had "embraced" had become "the most dynamic branch of contemporary science", as the party would praise her Central National Historical Archives, Fund CC of RCP – Cadre, file C/2175, f. 1-3.). From the four primary school classes, she moved directly to being a student through favorable circumstances created by the positive discrimination of young militants from the "exploited class" upon admission to higher education. But this was mainly thanks to her husband's position. Under the protection of Mihail Florescu¹, the minister of chemistry, politically subordinated to Nicolae Ceaușescu, she made a career in the field. In 1957 she graduated from the Faculty of Industrial Chemistry of the Bucharest Polytechnic Institute, through non-attendance courses. This is how she was immediately promoted to the position of researcher.

According to the testimonies of the staff from the Ceaușescu residence, the student was having private lessons at home in order to pass the exams (Dobrescu, 2004: 88). She was especially cared for by Professor Solomon Ozias, the holder of the macromolecular chemistry course, with the doctorate in Leningrad and the head of the CEICHEM department where she worked. Along with him and five other authors, Elena Ceaușescu made her debut in the specialized press with the article *Polimerizarea stereospecifică a izoprenului cu trietilaluminii și tetracolorură de titan*, published in 1961 in "Revista de Chimie". The article has three pages and an exclusively Soviet bibliography (Solomon, Ceaușescu, Bittman, Hlevca, Florescu, Mihăilescu, Ciută, 1961). Until 1965, the "researcher" did not produce anything else.

This did not stop her from becoming director of CEICHEM in 1964 and enrolling in a doctorate. As for the management of the research institute, she did it, like many others at the time, on Lenin's recommendation - through organization and control. In the phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat and then of the construction of communism, these can be reduced to simple algorithms, accessible to any literate: evidence, registration, use of the four arithmetic operations, issuance of receipts. Thus, according to the famous remark of the "father of the proletarian revolution", even literate cooks are capable of leading the state.

¹ Mihail Florescu (Iacob Iacobi, 1912-2000), chemical engineer, communist since 1934, former volunteer in the Spanish Red Brigades and in the French resistance. Among the positions he held, the longest period was Minister of Chemistry (1952-1957; 1965; 1970-1980).

In 1965, after Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's death, Ceaușescu replaced him as party leader. At the end of the year, the director of CEICHEM became part of the national council that coordinated the scientific research, made up of 90 personalities.

In December 1967, Ceaușescu's wife submitted her doctorate in macromolecular chemistry with the thesis *Stereospecific polymerization of isoprene*. It was the only doctorate for which the regulations were repealed by state decree. According to the archive documents, on November 14, 1967, Elena Ceaușescu requested the Minister of Education to establish the commission to submit her thesis (Veress, 2012). It was not clear from the unusual request if she had followed any preparation program. The next day, apparently unrelated to his claim, the Council of State issued a decree repealing the previous regulations on admission, internship and doctoral education plan. This decree was valid only during the time required for the leader's wife to obtain the doctorate (Veress, 2012). Since the presentation of the doctorate was public, another manipulation was resorted to: when the potential auditors showed up on the day and time announced, they were notified that the event had already taken place earlier (Veress, 2012).

According to the opinions of chemistry specialists, the thesis signed by Elena Ceaușescu is the synthesis of some valuable research, coordinated at CEICHEM by Professor Ozias F. Solomon, with well-known researchers among the contributors (Veress, 2012).

5. Social prestige as a variable dependent on the psychocultural profile of the group

The 20th century was also a time of feminism. Elena Ceaușescu was a contemporary of many celebrities from different fields who changed the representation of women's potential. She climbed to power at a time when the success of American politicians depended largely on the telegenics and performance of wives. The Romanian communist leader's wife was the guest of the former artists Jiang Qing, Isabel Peron and Imelda Marcos, metamorphosed into politicians by their husbands...

A reason for the resistance of the superiority of the communist regimes was the full equality of the woman with the man, established in the constitutions of the socialist countries. At the level of common observation, it could be concluded that a culmination of gender equality, through the performance and prestige of women, was the condition of women in communist regimes. Attracting women to the party has been a constant task of the political program. However, in no other country in the "communist camp", did women reach the peaks "conquered" by Ana Pauker¹ and Elena Ceaușescu in Romania. Were the Romanians different?

The correlation of the mechanisms to lead the social life with the psycho-cultural profile of the respective societies is a current topic in intercultural psychology (Beugelsdijk and Welzel, 2018). The approach opposes universalist theories which aimed to identify universal leadership schemes (Hermann and Milburn, 1977; Bartone, Eid, Johnsen, Laberg, and Snook, 2009), either as prototypical psychological traits of the leader, or as mechanisms to obtain and maintain valid transcontextual power. The model of cultural attributes proposed by the Dutch psychosociologist Geert Hofstede was highlighted in this sense (Hofstede, 2003). The starting point of his analysis are six dimensions which configure the cultural profile of a nation with two attributes each, defined from the perspective of a continuum between maximum and minimum, in an ideal-typical way: collectivism vs. individualism; femininity vs. masculinity; power concentration vs. power distribution; avoiding uncertainty vs. engaging in uncertainty; long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation (Shi-yong, 2004). In this paradigm, according to recent studies, the cultural profile of Romanians is strongly collectivist and relatively feminine,

¹ Ana Pauker (Ana Rabinsohn, 1893–1960), initial profession: primary school teacher. Illegalist communist and political prisoner (1936-1940). She lived in the USSR during the war. Member of the party leadership (1945-1952). Among the positions held: Minister of Foreign Affairs (1948-1952), Deputy Prime Minister (1949-1952). In 1952 she was investigated and expelled from the party leadership on charges of deviationism.

which reveals their orientation towards harmony and cooperation rather than ambition, competitiveness and appetite for personal assertiveness. As far as the division of power is concerned, Romanians accept more easily social inequity, the legitimate right of those who have the power to lead the many, consider that power must be centralized, aspects that correlate with the high values of the collectivist variable. We can notice an orientation towards avoiding uncertainty, which leads to a deeply conservative mentality. The change is seen with suspicion: Romanians opt for compliance with regulations, to the detriment of the regulatory conflict and its innovative potential, which could affect the predictability of social relations (Voicu and Voicu, 2007; David, 2015).

In accordance with this psycho-cultural profile, the prestige of the leader depends on his ability to support the reproduction of the social structure, to ensure predictability and concentration of power, to respond to the need for security and control. In the light of the mentioned model, such a leader would fail miserably in other societies articulated on democratic structures. However, this is appropriate not only for the psycho-cultural profile of Romanians, but for any “closed society”.

Regarding the communist regimes, the psychosocial profile of a separate group, designated by the Russian term *nomenklatura*, must also be taken into consideration. In essence, the scope of this concept includes the elites who impose and implement the party's ideology and program in all spheres of society. *Nomenklatura* and lower levels of communist political structures functioned on the basis of the “principle of democratic centralism”. This means that the decision taken by the higher hierarchical forum with a majority of votes becomes binding for everyone. The decision is, in fact, the privilege of the leader who ensures the functioning of some institutions and propaganda mechanisms, facade, meant to ensure the representation of a special democracy – “socialist democracy”. An essential feature of the *nomenklatura* is careerism (Voslenski, 1980: 28). In constant competition for promotion and retention in *nomenklatura*, its members will be willing to any initiative or commitment linked to the vision and aspirations of the leader. He will become the holder of absolute power; this will corrupt and degrade him completely with “the greatest and most constant force of erosion” (Acton, 2000: 232-233).

Thus, the inclusion of Elena Ceaușescu in the CC was made by the decision to promote women, corresponding to their weight and role in society, adopted in the summer of 1972. The decision was followed the proposals, established in advance in the small conclave of power and voted unanimously according to the “principle of democratic centralism”. Through these mechanisms, she and the other “proposals” were voted unanimously. Ceaușescu's wife entered the Romanian parliament (1975) in the same way she had entered the party.

6. “World-renowned scientist”

According to the communist ideology, science was defined as a force for production and treated as such in the party's program.

Well-advised and supported, Elena Ceaușescu first focused on scientific recognitions from abroad. This was possible through Ceaușescu's special positioning in the camps of the “cold war” and Romania's good relations with advanced capitalist countries and not only. The special position of the Romanian leader in the “six-day war” and especially the condemnation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by his teammates in the Warsaw Pact in 1968, made him appear in the opposing “front” as a “good communist”. This good reputation and profitable business with the hosts of the countries he had visited were also favorable the satisfaction of foolish pride.

According to the official list of scientific titles, the first distinction was awarded to Elena Ceaușescu in Paris in 1970 - honorary member of the International Society of Industrial Chemistry (Central National Historical Archives, Fund CC of RCP – Chancellery, file C/2175, f. 1, reverse). Then, American pragmatism appeared in its co-optation, in 1973, as an active member of the New York Academy of Sciences and a Member of Honour of the American Institute of

Chemists, Washington (Central National Historical Archives, Fund CC of RCP – Chancellery, file C/2175, f. 1, reverse)).

The hosts of Ceaușescu from abroad imitated the American practice of introducing in his wife's program some meetings with scientists and the gifts of recognitions and distinctions. In the same year 1973, while accompanying her husband on a regular visit to Latin America, Elena Ceaușescu became a Member of Honour of the College of Chemists and Chemical Engineers of Costa Rica (San Jose) and of no less than three institutions in Ecuador; The National University of Engineering in Lima awarded her the title of Professor of Honour; and she participated two ceremonies in Argentina for the award of the title of Doctor Honoris Causa (Central National Historical Archives, Fund CC of RCP – Chancellery, file C/2175, f. 1, reverse).

The woman, who had graduated only primary school in a normal regime, already had the most impressive record of international recognition in the history of Romanian science. Therefore, prior to her admission in the Romanian Academy, she appeared as consecrated in Paris and in both Americas as a "scientist". With regard to her inclusion in the country's first scientific forum, the decision was taken in the smallest center of power - the Permanent Presidency, consisting of 7 members - at the meeting on February 25, 1974. 5 direct tenures ("bulk") of members of the Academy (Elena Ceaușescu being one of them) and 26 promotions of corresponding members were decided at that moment (Central National Historical Archives, Fund CC of RCP – Chancellery, file 16/1974, f. 5.).

A first volume under the signature of the academic, entitled *Cercetări în domeniul sintezei și caracteristicilor compușilor macromoleculari – contribuții* appeared in 1974, under the auspices of the Academy Publishing House and CEICHEM. In the same year, the paper was translated into English. Translations and publications abroad followed (Central National Historical Archives, Fund CC of RCP – Chancellery, file 102/1987.).

The precious emissary and arranger of her recognitions abroad was General Ion Mihai Pacepa¹, the deputy head of the Foreign Security Intelligence Direction (Pacepa, 1992). Also specialised in chemistry, until 1978 when he "defected" in the USA, Pacepa used to bring her suitcases full of specialised literature and documents, purchased by subordinates (Pelin, 1997: 116). From her office, these were going to be studied by the real researchers at CEICHEM.

Except for the visits to the Warsaw Pact countries, after being included in the party leadership, Elena Ceaușescu joined the official delegations, benefiting also from the special program of some ceremonies of awarding titles and scientific recognitions. Only in 1975 she received the titles of Member of Honour in the Society of Polymer Science in Japan and the Society of Chemistry in Mexico, as well as two titles of Doctor Honoris Causa (of the University of Tehran and the Women's University of the Philippines). The following year she added the titles of Corresponding Member of the Academy of Athens and Doctor Honoris Causa of the University of Yucatao (Mexico). Her official trips in 1977 earned her the quality of Member of Honour of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences and an Associate Member of the Institute of Egypt. The icing on the cake were the titles awarded in 1978 in Great Britain: member (Fellow) of the Royal Institute of Chemistry in the United Kingdom and Professor of Honour of the Polytechnic of Central London. In the same year, the title of Member of Honour of the Illinois State Academy of Sciences was added to her fake laurel wreath (Central National Historical Archives, Fund CC of RCP – Chancellery, file 102/1987).

The prestige of the Romanian communist leader's wife was also supported by scientific publications from abroad. Nowadays, for example, in the ISI-web knowledge database, Elena Ceaușescu appears with 35 articles and over 90 citations (Haiduc, 2012). Through the efforts of Security officials and their connections abroad, Elena Ceaușescu appears as a personality in *The International Who's Who*, London, Europa Publications Limited for the years 1979-1980

¹ Ion Mihai Pacepa (1928 -?), initial profession: chemist. Deputy Head of Foreign Security Intelligence Direction (1966-1972), First Deputy Head of Foreign Security Intelligence Direction (1972-1978). In 1978, while on a mission in Federal Germany, he sought political asylum in the United States.

and 1980-1981; and in *Who's Who in Science in Europe*, Guernsey, Francis Hodgson (1978) (Popa, 2014).

In 1979, she was named the president of the National Council for Science and Technology for these “undeniable merits”.

7. Domination and prestige as complementary strategies for social ascension

As an omnipresent feature of human groups, the hierarchical organization is represented by Maner and Case (2016) through a theoretical model which takes into account two determining variables in upward mobility: domination and prestige (Maner and Case, 2016: 129). The first factor of differentiating these ascension strategies relates to the way of accessing and maintaining a position of social influence: respect, in the case of prestige; fear, in the case of domination (Cheng, Tracy and Henrich, 2013). Thus, “people who adopt a strategy of domination in order to rise in social hierarchies tend to be highly calculated and view others as allies or enemies, categorizing them as those who could help them or, viceversa, block their efforts to obtain a superior social rank” (Maner and Case, 2016: 137). The position is not offered to them voluntarily, but confiscated by the leader, who uses the resources at his discretion and arbitrarily once he has access to them, in order to achieve the ultimate goal: maintaining power. From a psychological point of view, the propensity for domination correlates with particularly emphasised narcissistic personality marks, respectively low levels of pleasantness and cognitive and emotional empathy (Cheng, Tracy and Henrich, 2013).

In the case of Elena Ceaușescu, in 1973 she entered the Executive Committee, the body that decided the current tasks of the party between congresses through the mentioned party procedures. In 1976, through the same mechanisms, she took over the leadership of the staff committee of the CC which decided on the promotions and “dismissals” of senior political activists, economic managers, diplomats, dignitaries in education, culture and art. With the exception of her husband, she had become the most influential man in the party and, implicitly, in the country. From 1980, she had the position of first Deputy Prime Minister of the Government. She added new titles in the coming years, while also keeping the old ones.

She evolved in the center of power as a tougher and more inflexible authority than Ceaușescu himself. She used to interfere, without inhibitions, in any matter of party and state. Every time ministers or technocrats tried to inform about the real situation in one area or another, she would shut their mouths, supporting her husband to enforce his decisions.

On January 7, 1979, Elena Ceaușescu's first official anniversary was organized. She was 60 years old (not publicly declared) and after the last retouches on her seniority in the party, 40 years of “revolutionary activity”. The party's official, the daily “Scântea” paid homage to her for “revolutionary activity in the labor movement, for the assertion of Romanian science, for the special contribution to the implementation of the party's policy and the state of shaping the multilaterally developed socialist society” (Scântea, 07.01.1979). The birthday woman was offered the highest orders and decorations, and her record could only be surpassed from that moment on by that of her husband. In the ceremony dedicated to her, the high party and state dignitaries called her “a remarkable example of a communist militant for the freedom and independence of the homeland” and a “brilliant scientist” (Scântea, 07.01.1979).

During the party congress in the same year, the practice of sending common messages to Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu also began. The speakers on the stage and the “telegrams” of the various “working groups” thanked them for their “valuable guidance” and “mobilizing example”.

The power will now have, in Romania, the dual representation of a two-faced Janus.

Her birthday ceremony, as well as his, was going to be repeated and amplified year after year. She is “praised” in mirobolant metaphors (“mother of the country's children”, “woman among women”, “brilliant example of what a woman is and should be in our contemporary society”, etc.) ” (Scântea, 07.01.1979). Did this have the expected effect on the crowd? The successive rewriting and re-signification of history, the excessive public exposure of the

Ceaușescu - imagistic and discursive - enhanced the inoculation mechanisms (McGuire, 1964) and the propaganda techniques of prestige that gave Elena Ceaușescu the attributes of a world-renowned scientist and political personality.

In view of the dual model of prestige versus domination proposed by Maurer and Case (2016), in direct relation to the intensification of the forms and contents of propaganda aimed at increasing prestige, Ceaușescu resorted to all possible means of domination over direct subordinates and the people in whose name they claimed to act. They responded to potential threats through the forms listed in the table below:

Table 1: Forms of manifestation of domination in the case of Elena Ceaușescu

Criterion	Domination	Forms of manifestation
Sabotage and ostracization	Sabotage and ostracize the competent members of the group, who are perceived as a threat.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eliminate from the decision-making group former illegalists and second-generation leaders with critical aspirations and political ambitions. 2. In Romania, special measures have been applied to prevent any form of dissidence (regular verification of personal typewriters, prohibition of conversations with foreigners).
Information control	Take over, store and use the information in the group to maintain and strengthen the social rank.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The daily report presented by the Minister of Interior to Elena Ceaușescu by the Minister of Interior; 2. In the 1980s, at the request of the head of the CC Chancellery, all the documents addressed to Nicolae Ceaușescu were forwarded to Elena Ceaușescu before he could make decisions.
Vigilance and control	Closely monitor group members as a way to reduce any threat to social status.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The members of the leadership inherited the practice introduced by Stalin to start work at a fixed hour, however they finished work based on the time when the leader left the headquarters. 2. After Elena Ceaușescu took over the position of head of the staff section of the CC, the practice of randomly convening, in the evening, the members of the decision center in a specific location built in the nomenklatura district was introduced. 3. It is also randomly specified if they can come accompanied by their spouses. 4. They could only go to weekend and holiday residences with the group of other leaders and always based on the decision of the Ceaușescus. 5. All of them, including Ceaușescus' children and their entourage, were under the supervision of special services.
Blocking networks between subordinates	Use all necessary means to prevent the creation of alliances between subordinates.	Through the above mentioned measures, the possibilities of informal meetings in the absence of the Ceaușescus were avoided. Close members of their families were also discouraged from having relationships with each other or with other relatives.
Role assignment	Assign to subordinates roles that do not	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In accordance with the party activist's missions (organization, mobilization and control), the periodic "rotation" of the

	<p>correlate with their abilities, to prevent them from excelling.</p>	<p>dignitaries was defining for the personnel policy introduced under the direction of Elena Ceaușescu</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The excellence as experts in one field is cancelled by the Ceaușescus' claim to provide "valuable guidance" in all areas. 3. Any conversation about political tasks in an informal setting was charged as an act of indiscipline and sanctioned as such.
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Taken and adapted according to the criteria of the domination model proposed by Maner and Case, 2016.

8. Locus of control – personal determination or destiny?

Rotter's theory (1966) regarding the preeminence of the assignment by the individual of an external causality (destiny, circumstances) or internal (own merits and actions) in achieving the desired goals was a large audience one during the ascension of Elena Ceaușescu. As for her, she died convinced that she had succeeded in everything through effort, self-sacrifice and own skills. A few moments before her death, she made a stunning statement in front of the court: "I have worked and fought for the people since I was 14, this is how I sacrificed my life for the people".

The reality was completely different as it appears from the data, the causal relationships and the arguments presented above. Elena Ceaușescu's fate, if we are to use this term, lies in her husband's political evolution and personality. The quality of his wife favored her rise in the absence of skills that would have justified the prediction of performance in any field. The peculiarities of the marriage relationship, imprinted mainly by her personality, ambitions and narcissism brought her the power. In the opinion of those who knew him closely, Nicolae Ceaușescu was the man of only one woman (Andrei and Betea, 2011: 289). While his wife did not hold political functions, the nomenclature speculated on her spectacular potential due to the visible influence over her husband. If in a first stage we can speak exclusively of a love addiction from the husband, along the way it has become a much more complex addiction fueled by the "emission of power" and the evolution of the leader. In fact, after the rebelliousness in 1968, in order to avoid the intervention of foreign forces under the pretext of the help requested by a part of the party (as it happened in Czechoslovakia), the party leadership decided to display the representation of an articulated group, without cracks, around Ceaușescu. They also launched mechanisms by which he could not be removed from his position. In the context of this fear, he was going to become more and more anxious and suspicious in his relations with collaborators. His fear increased with age and deteriorating health. His wife thus became his most faithful collaborator and gradually censored the information brought to his attention in order to avoid annoying him.

The daily life in the 80's still remains in the collective memory of Romanians by remembering the cold, waiting in lines, the darkness, the fear of women to get pregnant, the increased state of disgust, suffocation and revolt. At the same time, however, the propaganda amplified the merits and praises brought to the party leaders. The Ceaușescus themselves supervised it with the declared objective to "develop the socialist awareness" for the people who lived in socialist Romania. The example of the "revolutionary devotion in the service of the people" of the two should have encouraged the masses to carry out impossible planning and export tasks in order to fully repay the external debt.

Thus, in order to create adequate social representations of what the Ceaușescus wanted, propaganda supported what Serge Moscovici called a state of imbalance of the crowd "subject and abused by the abundance of superlatives", discursive verbalism and the ellipsis of perceptual reality data (Moscovici, 1997: 45-46). In this sense, cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1954) reached the heights of a "mass schizophrenia, leading to the outcome of December 1989 (Iakovlev and Marcou, 1991: 129). The identification of the Ceaușescus with the "happy present" and "bright future" in the propaganda schemes thus had opposite effects to what was

expected, leading to the stereotype of associating change for the better with the physical elimination of the dictatorial couple.

In conclusion:

1. The re-signification of history and the falsification of the biography of the rulers are political manipulations widely used throughout human history. The ideological program and the means of propaganda available to the communist leaders were favourable for the allegory of the political career of Nicolae Ceaușescu's wife;
2. The personality and the evolution of the marriage relationship of the Ceaușescus in the context of Romania's foreign policy in the context of the "cold war" allowed the development of persuasion techniques meant to lead to the representation of Elena Ceaușescu as a "world-renowned scientist";
3. The "principle of democratic centralism" that regulated statutorily the internal life of the party in communist regimes allowed the Romanian leader to associate his wife with the power exercised in such a dominant way that in front of the court that sentenced them to death Elena Ceaușescu used the phrase "our people" (Marius Tucă Show, 1999).
4. Certain psycho-social peculiarities of the Romanian community and the careerism of the nomenklatura were in turn potentiating factors of the original communist leadership represented by the Ceaușescus. As a close relative confessed while seeing them killed by bullets: "The Ceaușescus would not have reached that criminal power without the support of other criminals..."¹.

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¹ Interview with Violeta Năstăsescu.

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PATRIARCHAL RESISTANCE IN AN ERA OF GENDER UPSPRING IN AFRICAN SPORTS: THE CASE OF CAMEROON WHERE THE LIONESSES ARE BETTER MEDALS HUNTERS THAN THE LIONS 1954-2017

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Abstract: *In recent years, sports have been the most rapid social phenomena in the world and Africa has not been side-lined. But as it is the case with many other disciplines, it has turned to a male practise, (controlled and managed). In many African nations, female breakthrough in sports based on performance has not really changed societal perception vis-à-vis female participation in sport. In Cameroon, societal considerations based on tradition and culture has greatly undermined female breakthrough and performances in sports. This paper argues that notwithstanding the arsenal of international and national convention in-which Cameroon has entangled itself, the integration and recognition of female participation in sports is still minimal. Paradoxically the lionesses have many a time enabled Cameroonians to listen to the national anthem and see their beloved green-red-yellow flag fly very high. Based on historical and qualitative data the paper demonstrates that limited attention was given and is still given to female performances in Cameroon. The paper (analyses) considers the administrative, the urbanisation, the socio-economic and the cultural factors to understand the present trend of Cameroon female sports.*

Keywords: Patriarchal, Gender, Sports, Social Perception, Athletes, Federation.

1. Introduction

In every human society there exist a certain division of based on sex, age, with activities that are devoted to each strata. In many societies in Africa and around the world, gender issues are curial questions that mobilize general attention of political leaders, social actions, educationists and researchers. This attention is also visible and can be well viewed in the domain of sports, where there is a difference in treatment of male and female athletes. In Cameroon particularly sports has portrayed the highly patriarchal nature of the society- from refusal to accept the female engagement in sport to the undermining of their performances.

Sport is a social representation of historical, social and cultural forces, and at the same time it affirms, legitimates and reproduces those very same conditions. In other words, sports reproduce social reality and transmits those aspects of culture that convey meaning about the social, political and economic order of society; about gender, race and class relation; about the body and physical activities(Strool 2002:130).

In Cameroon there has always been a white stone female presence and participation in sport; be it, in school level or high level competitions. Unfortunately in most cases, female preparation, participation and performances in local or international competitions have suffered comparison to male performances. This negative marginalisation in the words of Slattery (2012:16) kills female sport potential as: 'inequality in sport may be the major stumbling block to why women still do not reach their full potential in sport and are not empowered enough to take up their rightful place in sport.'

Most of the available studies have always focused on male sports, with special fixation on football and migration. In the last three years Cameroon has played host to major female sporting competitions African female volleyball Olympic qualifiers 2015, Female AfroBasket coupled to 2016 Rio Games qualifiers 2016 and female AFCON 2016 (African Football Cup of Nations). These competitions coupled with the two Olympic Games gold medal (2004 Athens

and 2008 Beijing) of Francoise Mbango and the gold medal won by Fegue Marie at the Commonwealth Games (Glasgow 2014) had a great impact on social regard not only on female participation in sports but most importantly the value attributed to their performances. This was particularly true owing to the fact that the lions had not been able to come home with any trophy; one could say it was just like looking for a shadow in dark. Notwithstanding these first class performances on the part of the lions, little has been done in themes of research on female sport. In the same line of thought very few have investigated why female performances are under-regarded and marginalized in Cameroon.

In a purely patriarchal constituted society like Cameroon, norms are neither easily contested nor trespassed. To understand why men owners of public space (champions), refuse to share this space with the 'weaker sex', we shall use social gender theories. We shall evoke the social gender theory of Harding cited by I. Courcy et al (2011 :5) according to which three major processes contribute social construction of gender: 1) gender symbolism; 2) structuring of certain social activities based on gender (gender structure); et 3) individual construction of gender identity (individual gender). We shall use in this research two of the cited theories: gender symbolism and gender structure to understand the male rejection of female performances. This article will study some of the reasons for patriarchal resistance to the emergence of female sport and performance in Cameroon. It will start by presenting the place of women in the Cameroonian society as viewed by other researchers in the field of gender studies; then it proceed to view institutional instruments (national and international) that acted as catalyser to female emergence in the Cameroon sport arena. It will go on to demonstrate that female performances have not received the required attention and valorisation it deserves due to the patriarchal nature of the Cameroonian society.

This article will argue that this marginalisation is partly due to the poor treatment of female sport and particularly performances by media and also the relative slowness in applying institutional measures as concerns gender issues. Finally it will evaluate the merits of studying gender breakthrough in sports and inform decision makers on the importance of promoting gender equality in sport as a means of consolidating social development through women empowerment and as an instrument of our foreign diplomacy.

2. The constraints of being a woman in Cameroon

When you are born a woman in Cameroon, you're already tied to a handful of stereotyped obligations as to your status in the society. We shall go on to see that the place of the woman was at home Sama Yeba (2002:2) as wanted by certain custodians of our traditions and religion. This section will deal with societal constraints in certain regions of Cameroon.

2.1. Societal constraints imposed on girls and women

In Cameroon, the socialisation process was/is different for girls and boys and varies depending on the environment. In some villages of the East, Adamawa, North, Far North, West, Centre, Regions of Cameroon female school attendance is very low as a result of traditional and religion constraints.

The South-West and the North-West Regions are the only regions in Cameroon with schools of higher female enrolment than male (RNEPS2014:19). In reality due to institutional efforts, this tendency is fast declining. In the case where they are allowed to go to school, the leisure activities were and are not the same as for boys.

The society has set rules within the society, in homes etc...the role of the woman is first and foremost to procreate, she represents the affective sex with maternal qualities, "the Angel of the house", subtle and fragile. She is in charge of all house chores and the upbringing of the children both morally and academically. This early definition of the responsibilities of a girl child goes a long way to influence the duration, the qualification, the training as well as the choice of job of the woman she will become. The man represents ferocity, strength, decision making etc...in one word he is the "head". (Ella: 1985:16)

Basically these were the constraints and stereotypes of society on the activities of her members. Even the socialisation process triggered by urbanisation and education has just partially tried to inverse the course of social behaviours and norms as concerns gender issues. If women are confined to household duties, how will they encourage their daughters to get involved in sporting activities which they never experimented as youngsters? Can it be possible for them to stay passive to the choice of their daughters to run around in shorts while their mates are performing 'normal' female duties at home? Are parents in urban areas ready to buy sports equipment for their daughters or wives? These questions are just the reflection of our regard on whom and what a girl/woman is supposed to be and do. In a nutshell they are to perform the daughter-sister-wife-mother duties expected from them.

2.2. The perception of sporting activities for the female sex

The practice of physical education and sport is a fundamental right for all' IYSPE (2005:16). Unfortunately this is not always the case in our society. In certain situations women are so involved in striving for the wellbeing of their families so much so that they hardly have time for leisure. Ntamag Lucien (2017) after investigating had this to say about the situation of the Cameroonian women. Information from international organizations reveal that that 79% of women are involved in informal jobs in Cameroon (call boxers, hairdressers, vendors of all types) and are greatly involved in household care activities and the education of children (Ntamag 2017:4)

With this hand full of duties to accomplish, participation in sport although a fundamental right and an instrument of indiscrimination becomes inefficient because of daily live battles for survival. The girls are always the ones to accompany their mothers in such activities, while the boys will have the opportunity to involve in game playing. For many Cameroonians particularly for the traditional purist, it is an abomination for women to expose their bodies in public. In the Northern region where the majority of families are Muslims it was not even acceptable for girls to sit around boys apart from school not to talk of playing together, with their legs, laps and hair exposed and wearing shorts Dongmo A,S (2017). Sport was regarded as/a practice that emasculated women emasculating women and reduced their chances of child bearing and/turned them to stud boys who could not become good wives (Ella, 1985; Eleme Asse, 2017) We can also add to these constraints the stigmatization of female sporters as being cheap sexual prey for men and unproductive to the family, with some accusing them of lesbianism (Dongmo, 2017; Oloko, 2017). It is worth noting that there has been a lot of progress in the battle leading to the involvement of women in sport. The most difficult is for their performances to be accepted and magnified by men. A number of events backed by (inter)national legislative dispositions has ease the emergence of women in the masculine world of virility expression.

3. Fighting with legal instruments in hand

The administration took a number of measures to implicate the majority of youth in sport as part of the socialisation mission of the school. In Cameroon sports and physical education is an obligatory subject in the academic curricular. The Comite d' instruction physique du territoire was created in Cameroon under French administration as far back as 1925 to organise and implement the practise of physical education and sport in the territory. The Cameroonian government prepared an administrative and legal frame for the integration of girls/women in sport. They also adhered to international conventions in the domain

3.1. The legal and administrative texts for the rise of the Lionesses in Cameroon

This decree just as subsequent ones made no restriction on girls/women participation in sports. The fortunate girls from 'rich families' who went to private schools, had their first sport and physical education lesson in 1945, but for those in public schools it was only in 1952 with the graduation of the first batch of the National Centre for sport and physical education (CNSEP)

of Dschang that they had the opportunity. Amongst the graduates of 1952 was a woman named Ebolo Alvine (Ella 1985). So in French Cameroon all pupils enrolled in school indiscriminately were to have sports lessons. In addition to curricular lessons all pupils were to take part in sport competitions of their choices depending on their capacities. Women had a bicycle cycling team in Yaounde in 1950; others took part in the school, college and university games called (OSSUC) example of Tsanga, Zanga Dephine, Abaze, Ntyan Ndongo, Manyonga who at the time had to compete with boys. Officially there has never been any restriction on female participation in sport activities. Restrictions noted here are the fruits of family and religious considerations.

At independence, the young state declared its desire to promote gender equality in sport through the July 1962 decree instituting a Sports Charter in Cameroon which encouraged all citizens to participate in sport activities for its many values. The recruitment of students into the National Institute of Youth and Sports and the National Centre of Youth and Sport has never been restrictive as concerns gender. Cameroon being a member of the UN adopted all the instruments put in place by this organisation and other agencies in favour of gender promotion and equality amongst citizens. In 1970 was created a ministry of youth and sports for the promotion and protection of all strata of sport practice in the country Ndongo Minsoko (2005:225).

3.2. Participation of female athletes in national and international competitions

The creation and functioning of National Teams in Cameroon is an evidence of this willingness of the state to protect gender equality and wellbeing. The female 4x100m came bronze medallist at the first edition of the All African Games in Brazzaville in 1965 (Ndongo, 2005; Ella, 1985). The only female national team which had never existed was the National Female Football Team, whose first international tournament was the African female football tournament in 1991; which is today called Female AFCON.

The promotion of elite sport alongside physical education and sports lessons, school competitions and specific female sporting events such as the activities marking the celebration of the international day of the woman affirms the Cameroonian governments' policy of inclusive gender protection. It will be long and boring to cite all the official documents which encourage and promote sport in Cameroon for all citizens irrespective of gender, age, religion, tribal or professional considerations. The major ones are: the sports and physical education charter of 1996; the 2011 national sports law (minsep.cmr.gov: 2017). We can agree at this point that the introduction of sport at all educational levels served as a social catalyst for the greater involvement of girls into sport competition and their gateway into elite sport competition. The successes of the pioneer female sporters sparked up admiration from other ladies and served as role models for the younger generations. Despite this codification and protection of female participation in sport, societal regards has only slightly evolved as many still have negative remarks about female performances. We can conclude with this quote which goes thus: 'The fight undertaken by Cameroonian women since independence for the complete legitimization of sports seem to be fruitful to an extent: 'political recognition of female sport through officialization and legitimization, though even at this level, disparities associated with gender remain salient' (Ntamag 2017:2)

The decision by Cameroonian authorities to create and manage female national team in all the sport played in the territory was a great step forward that gradually changed the perception and consideration for women involvement in sport.

4. The masculine reaction to the outstanding performances of the Lionesses

In a purely patriarchal constituted society like Cameroon, norms are neither easily contested nor overcome. To understand male resistance to accepting female performances, it will be judicious we use the social gender theory of Harding cite by Courcy et al (2011 :5) according to which three major processes contribute social construction of gender: 1) gender symbolism; 2) structuring of certain social activities based on gender (gender structure). We

shall use this theory which will be completed by MacDonald (2014: 97), 4 rule hegemonic masculinity character traits which says:

Hegemonic masculinity the atop sits hierarchy of masculinity types refers to a normalizing ideology of gender relations involving the production, negotiation, and reproduction of male domination over women in which he proposes four rules that men are expected to follow. The first rule, 'No Sissy Stuff,' calls for the rejection of all that is feminine; this includes traits such as openness and vulnerability. The second rule, 'The Big Wheel,' requires striving endlessly for fame, success, and social status by all means. The third, 'The Sturdy Oak,' encourages independence, confidence, strength, and toughness. The fourth and final rule, 'Give 'Em Hell,' denotes violence, aggression, bravado, and a willingness to defy authority (MacDonald 2014:97)

These behavioral traits were not expected from women who were considered fragile and it was abnormal for the virile to magnify the fragile. In Cameroon these negation took many forms. Every society establishes norms on how gender issues are to be handled. Some of the norms are no written but are codified by social day to day activities starting from childhood. Unfortunately as the children grow up this perception is reinforced.

4.1. The outstanding performances of the Lionesses of Cameroon and the under-grading rewards their receive

Cameroon is a nation of sport lover. When it comes to sport, all Cameroon sport their national team. Unfortunately when it comes to giving honor and respect for outstanding performances by female athletes and teams there is a breakdown. This is what will be examined in this section. Before bringing the different aspects of rejection we shall show some of the outstanding female performances at international competitions between 2000 and 2017. We shall take the results of the Summer Olympic Games 2000-2016, the Commonwealth Games 2006-2014.

Table 1: Comparative results of Cameroonian male/female athletes at the Olympic Games between 2000 and 2016

Sex	male	Female
Medal	1Gold (2000 Sydney)	2 Gold (2004 Athens-2008 Beijing)

Sources: compiled by Koizah Karh based on field data

During the 2000 games held in the Australian city of Sydney, Cameroon recorded her first ever Olympic Games Gold medal obtained by the male football team. In the next edition a woman called Francoise Mbango won a Gold medal in the Triple Jump event during the 2004 and 2008 games.

Table 2: Comparative results of Cameroonian male/female athletes at the Commonwealth Games between 2006 and 2014.

Medal – Sex	Male	Female	Total
Gold	0	1	1
Silver	1+2=3	1+3=4	7
Bronze	1+2=3	1+2+3=6	9
Total	6	11	17

Sources: compiled by Koizah Karh based on field data

For just but these two international competitions, it is striking to see that the real hunters are the lionesses who make sure they carry home a *prey medal*. As concern the unique case of the Commonwealth Games, the lionesses succeed in satisfying the appetite for medals during every edition. Gold which is the supreme medal and most difficult to predate (Mbango 2017)', has been caught twice at the Olympic Games and once at the Commonwealth Games by the lionesses. The lions have never had gold at the Commonwealth Games. During this period only once has a lioness been Flag Bearer for Cameroon at the Olympic Games. This is rather very

frustrating; the attribution of the Flag Bearer is based on virility, bravery and a potential medalist regrets (Dongmo 2015) generally for male athletes. Femininity to them does not represent this value which is male.

Coming back to the negation of female performances, if we refer to the gender symbolism of (Courcy et al, 2011), coupled to the (MacDonald) Big Wheel rule which consist in trying to over shadow female performances, we will realize that it starts by giving less conducive working conditions (no working equipment's, no special bonuses, difficulties in logging and transportation) in order to ensure that the end result is a fiasco. This approach is particularly common with team sport such as volleyball, handball, basketball and football. This negligence is accompanied by little media attention to present their plight and magnify their performances. The media has made no effort to build and preserve the image of female sport role models Mbarga Bikié (2017). Instead they are in the search for faults to hammer on because controversies sell better when it concerns women. Ndole (2017) sees the mirror image of the majority of women who openly criticize the performances of women, wanting to make a comparison with male performances and play style rather than encouraging them, thereby giving more vigor to men.

Institutionally very few women have been uplifted to become role models or icons in our country. Mbango points out that she is one of the rare female *sporter* to receive national state honors for her bravery and determination in her strive for victory. She adds that if not for the fact that the Female AFCON was held in Cameroon, there would have been no state reception for them just as in the previous expeditions (Gold medal at the All African Games Maputo 2011, silver medal All African Games Brazzaville 2015, vice African champions in 2014). The national female basketball team after losing to Senegal in the 2016 AfroBasket finals in Yaounde received no official merits they were instead brutally sent out of the hotel because they demanded an upgrade of match bonus and special prices as with the male teams.

To further devaluate and minimize female hard earned successes, the men have adopted the spine over method wherein they attribute the performances to the great enlightened genius coaches who in almost all cases are men. 'When there is success, it is the intelligence of the trainer but the reverse is the fault of the lazy young girls who know nothing and understand nothing' (Mbango; Mbarga). It should be noted that in Cameroon, there are very few women in top service managerial position in sport. Kariuki Wamaitha, J. (2015:40) points out the case of Kenya saying 'factors affect women in leadership such as the gender bias in the appointment of sport officials...(Observed) that there was a feeling that women are better suited in carrying out expressive activities such as organizing meetings and also the attitude of a few women administrators that 'we don't hire the competition''. The above frustrations accumulated by female *sporters* have gone a long way to discourage many talented young girls to get involved in sport. Our next endeavor here will consist in reflexing on mechanisms to overcome the tides.

4.2. In the quest of a bright spring for lionesses

Individuals that get involved in sports just as any other socio-professional activity have the strong desire to be respected, recognized and earn a living out of it. Girls/women who get involve in sport at the (inter)national level are those that have won the battles against societal taboo (Mbango, 2017; Dongmo, 2017; Kariuki, 2015: 2) and prejudice. They have fully accepted the daughter-sister-wife-mother theory but have added the non-conformist aspect and got involved in sport participation. This section is concerned with aspects of gender frustration which needs to be (re)address by the society and administrative institutions for a better gender representation and recognition. One of the major bone of contention as concerns female sidelining in sports is the inequality in treatment vis-a-vis the men (before, during and after competition). The special attention given to the lioness's prelude and post female AFCON was mainly due to the fact that Cameroon was the host nation and had gained popular attention. Forbinake (2017) commented Presidents Biya's speech during the reception of the lionesses at the Unity Palace:

The head of state deliver a statement which essentially was a praise song for the exploits of the female lions. He said by their performance, the lionesses had carried out their assignment creditably and remains an example of courage, solidarity, team spirit, characteristics that show their love for the fatherland. “Cameroon says thank you” he told them, urging them, as they go back to their various clubs, to continue to carry Cameroon’s flag very high (Forbinake 2017:2).

Unfortunately this triumphant reception in honour of female sport successes are rear as before then only Mbango had received such a state decoration and national recognition after her Olympic victories of 2004 and 2008. Fegue Marie who won gold in the weightlifting event at the Glasgow Games never received such attention or recognition. It is worth noting here that the national female handball team returned to Cameroon on 14th December 2016 from Angola after participating and obtaining a bronze medal with a historic qualification for the next handball world cup scheduled for December 2017. This success was silent by state institution as they received no official recognition. These hand ballers just as the basket ballers who after taking second place during women AfroBasket organised in Yaoundé in 2016, were send out of the hotel like slaves without their bonus. These teams prepare (without water, equipment, transport facilities) and depart for competitions in anonymous ways and if not of a political ambition, their successes also stay underground (Mbanga 2107; Ndole 2017). One of the envisaged solutions to this situation is to provide suitable preparation conditions and equal bonus distribution to those representing the green-red-yellow flag (Mbango 2017).

The next antibiotic to help kill the patriarchal resistant virus in sport is the appointment of female management staff. The lack of role model at the head of female teams renders certain issues difficult to handle by men (Mbango, 2017; Kariuki, 2015). Are women unable to manage teams and produce good performances? Are they not having the same certificates and diplomas as their male counterparts? Are the born to be always second behind men? Must a leader be hard and reject authority? These questionings if objectively responded to will enable ours understand that women can deliver the good in and out of the pitch. It is said by some (Kariuki, 2015) that men consider emotively a poor leadership quality to be a pure female character trait. Many women around the globe today have climbed and are still climbing to the top of the political leadership ladder.

In the field of sport defeat is attributed to the athletes and victory to the trainer, this is particularly true of female teams (Ndole 2017) which are headed by men. All the fame and merits is attributed to the microscopic vision and analysis of the game by the trainer. Presently in Cameroon only one lady officiates as referee in the Elite One Football League and has ever officiated at the Cameroon National Cup Finals: Azentambong Carine who is also a Fifa referee. She is one of the three Cameroonians female referees serving at the international level.

Amongst the forty-four (44) national sports federations in Cameroon only two are headed by women and they leadership is put at stake. All other women in managerial positions are second not first, not female Secretary General in a federation or even a regional league president or secretary general. There are some female staff in the national teams who occupy secondary positions. In the male national football league Victorine Formum is the only lady who sits as coach on the bench of a male team. Mbango, Mbarga, Dongmo all regret the fact that women are not given much confidence in such position as they believe they can delivered the goods. Kinang (2017) is of the opine that women are slide-lined because those that had no merits were appointed and were unable to be up to expected standards. Regretting the fact that the merit factor Kaufman, P. and Wolff, E. A. (2010), is not the criteria used to appoint staff at the head of teams or sport administrative institutions. The casing error in appointment female staff in managerial and decision taking position has discredited the female folk (Oloko2017, Eleme, 2017). Another envisaged solution will be to review the relationship between media and female sporters:

Research showed that the media persisted in covering mainly male athletes. A consistent finding is the under-reporting of female athletes and their sporting events throughout all mass media, for example, in 1994 men were found to receive 93.8 per cent of coverage on US

television. Since the media are seen as helping to shape values, this severe under-representation creates the impression that women athletes are of little importance in the sporting world. The claim that women tend to be ‘symbolically annihilated (Bernstein A. and Blain N 2002: 7)

The above is still a reality in Cameroon as female sport receives less consideration as compared to male sport. At times even when female sport is put at the forefront the comments and the tone used is melancholic looking for the hair in the sauce. The media can react differently by projecting meriting female *sporters* to the forefront. Journalists have to invite these ladies to their programs and paint a brighter image of them with emphasis on their performances. Only in this way can they become role model and recognition (Mbango 2017; Oloko, 2017). Eleme was surprised that the Miss Lionne beauty contest did not feature in the news headlines of the major media houses (radio, newspaper, tv). This contest was to portray the femininity of female sports. It also helped kick against stereotypes on sport deforming and impact on child bearing as most of the contestants were mothers. The contest was also aimed at electing the most beautiful Indomitable Lioness of 2016. All those that took part were international athletes. Eleme Asse Marie. G. C (athletic) emerged winner, first runner up Ngon Ntame Victoire l’or (volleyball) and second runner up Nguiadem Kamdem Anney (football) as seen on the plat below.

Figure 1: Winners of the Miss Lionne 2017 Beauty Contest (Ngon Ntame left, Eleme Asse centre, Nguiadem Kamdem right)ⁱⁱ



Source: Eleme Asse photo collection, retrieved in Yaoundé on 12-02-2017

Such initiatives can help families have another regard on female *sporters* thereby inflicting deadly blows to stereotypes about sport and their participation. Again it will in the long run make acceptable female performances as everyone would familiarize his/herself with such performances. A lot of education should be done both horizontal and vertical to reduce psychological and mental barriers as concern female success in sport and society at large.

In this article, we have briefly summarized the situation of Cameroon female *sporters* who no matter the priorities on the field do not receive the required retribution and recognition. Based on the performance and experiences of the female international athletes we argue that the non-recognition and undermining of their performances in both institutional and socio-cultural. Using Harding social gender theory we demonstrated how our society is constructed and structured to remain patriarchal. In this mental and social frame no opportunity was given for any female intrusion as it was/is a ‘taboo for men to applaud female success.’ This research aims at creating awareness on educational norms and values we transmit to our children and the regard they should have about gender issues. We are of the opinion that women be mentality decolonized before women as they have the knife in their procession. Just accepting to have female role models will be a major breakthrough in this period of social chaos. Social change and (re)valorization of the female folk will be beneficial to the development of our society and nation as a whole. A continues exclusion of the female folk from sport will lead to the auto destruction of the system and will affect the pillars of our civilization.

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THE PHENOMENON OF BULLYING AT EARLY SCHOOL AGE: SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

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Abstract: *The phenomenon of bullying is a very little-known problem nowadays, also an uncomfortable subject. The consequences and causes of this phenomenon are manifested in every generation of children, noting a significant increase in psychological violence among students at small school age, being considered by the aggressors a normal, unintentional, repeatable situation that causes amusement and at the same time a feeling of well-being. The aggressor analyzes the class of students very well, choosing the weakest colleague or colleagues, who cannot defend themselves. They become vulnerable quite easily, thus labeling, bullying, mockery and even social exclusion, rejection follows. By conducting out a socio-pedagogical survey in rural schools using as a research tool the questionnaire applied to 105 little school children, coming from a precarious social environment, we wanted to identify if there is bullying that negatively influences mental development, social relations and students' behavior, their environment of origin being a factor that can favor the existence of this phenomenon.*

Keywords: bullying, young schoolchildren, aggressors, victims, social environment.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of bullying refers to several types of behavior that children can encounter at school, such as threatening, humiliating, destroying personal property, being excluded from a group, not being allowed to interact with other classmates or spreading derogatory words. It seems that physical appearance, shyness, the presence of certain disability or health problems, belonging to a precarious social environment, ethnicity, all these lead to the emergence of a new victim of this phenomenon. This is where the teaching staff must intervene, analyze the problem and try to talk personally with everyone, both the victim and the aggressor, find useful solutions.

Studies have shown that bullying does not have just one cause. Specialists say that the most important factors that contribute to the spread of this behavior are those of a personal, family, environmental, situational and social nature. Factors related to the family, school, social environment, or even one's own person can create the desire to attack those around them.

Bullying is defined as "the long-term physical and psychological terrorizing by an individual or group of a child who cannot defend himself in the situation" (Eftimie, 2014: 260).

In the National Education Law no. 1/2011, with subsequent amendments and additions, art. 66, at point 6, we find the following definition: "Psychological violence (bullying) is the action or series of physical, verbal, relational and/or cyber actions, in a social context that is difficult to avoid, carried out with intention, which involves an imbalance of power, have as a consequence the loss of dignity or the creation of an atmosphere of intimidation, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive, directed against a person or group of persons and aimed at aspects of discrimination and social exclusion, which may be related to belonging to a certain race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, social category or to a disadvantaged category or beliefs, gender or sexual orientation, personal characteristics, action or series of actions, behaviors carried out in educational units and in all spaces intended for education and professional training."

If we translate the English term “bullying” by “harassment”, the state of bullying characterizes the mental system of the bully’s personality, but also the mental system of the one prone to being bullied, the victim. Both the bully’s and the bullied’s personality are formed over time, based on a synthesis between individual favorable and psycho-social factors from the family microgroup or from the peer group (entourage).

The conceptual analysis shows the difficulty of defining the issue of aggression and especially the term bullying, the border between them is subtle and almost imperceptible. The operationalization of the concept of “bullying”, as a dimension of aggression, requires the analysis of the internal and external factors of the children’s personality, which is in a transformation in all its dimensions, affective, cognitive, social, attitudinal, of character.

A difficulty in defining the term “bullying” resides in the fact that most of the time, the term aggressiveness is used as a synonym for violence. “Specialists claim that, clinically, aggression is necessary for self-affirmation, while violence is the person’s response to a real or imagined danger in which the person is” (Ropotică, 2009: 422). Bullying produces emotional and behavioral problems that can continue to develop into adulthood.

2. Forms and causes of bullying aggression occurrence

Bullying is not a simple problem that occurs in the relationships between the bully and the bullied, but a complicated problem that must be solved by developing the social environment of the classroom, school, family as well as society. Children who bully other children are usually insecure, fearful, and have a history of internal trauma that is not being adequately managed in their families. Many authors represent the emotional environment at home as an important factor in becoming a bully or a victim. Thus, the lack of warmth between parents or between parents and children, the use of any type of violence and abuse in the family, combined with the lack of clear and reliable rules to guide the child, can catalyze the adoption of bullying behavior.

School is the place where children develop their own strengths, receive new knowledge, form their own personality, make children perceive reality and the world around us. School is an environment that educates every child with the desire to succeed, to overcome obstacles. And yet the bullying behavior persists and is very common in the school environment, the environment that society counts the most in the formation of a personality to which the future belongs.

Bullying is a form of aggression that is common among young schoolchildren, manifesting itself in aggressive behavior toward one or more students in the class, using insults, nicknames, lies, intimidation, threats someone or even it leads to acts of violence such as hitting, slapping, pushing, pulling hair, ears. Bullying is not a normal stage of children’s development and is considered a phenomenon that precedes aggressive behaviors with even more serious consequences (Nansel, et al. 2001: 2097). Simultaneously, bullying can contribute to the formation and maintenance of an environment of fear and intimidation in the school.

This growing phenomenon in the education system and beyond, must be treated seriously, detected, prevented and resolved in time. It is the duty of the adults to manage the situations and bring back a positive climate in the school environment and in the family. Teachers also play a major role in preventing, identifying and solving bullying behavior among students. The relationship between teachers and parents can prevent this scourge of international scope.

Bullies are formed over time - they are not born that way. Somewhere in life, children learn that in order to move up the social/hierarchical ladder, to gain benefits (attention, recognition, reputation, popularity, influence, power) they must fight, dominate, or assert themselves through defeat/submission to the others. Thus, in a concrete way, these children learn that to be successful, they must use their strength (both physical and intellectual/social skills) to win over others.

This type of dominant, competitive-aggressive behavior can be learned from parents, from peers in the group or entourage where they spend more time, from an older brother, sometimes from teachers, and last but not least, from the mass media. Thus, a child who is not properly guided ends up using these behaviors excessively, abusing them both at school and in everyday life in his quest to be successful. Furthermore, in this age of speed, children have become accustomed to immediate gratification and benefits with minimal effort. Often, these benefits are superficial and do not maintain the same level of satisfaction over time, making the person in question look for new benefits or new ways of obtaining them. It is, however, worth noting that, in children, these uncontrolled cycles lead to essential behavioral changes, especially lack of patience, lack of attention and lack of concentration, chronic dissatisfaction, boredom and the permanent search for factors to distract their attention or to stimulate them emotionally.

Passive victims of bullying aggression represent that category of students who are victimized by some peers and who do not show aggressive bullying behavior toward other students. Passive victims are at a higher risk of various mental health problems compared with those not involved in such behavior. Some studies suggest that victimization is positively correlated with problems such as anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000).

Bully-victims represent the category of students who are bullied by some colleagues, but who in turn exhibit bullying behavior toward other colleagues. Bully-victims show the poorest psychosocial functioning, representing a particularly high-risk group, characterized by higher rates of behavior problems, low self-control and social competence, poorer functioning in the school environment, compared to bullies and passive victims (Haynie et al., 2001; Nansel et al., 2001). Also, this category of students presents mental health problems, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, eating disorders, depressive symptoms (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000; Haynie et al., 2001). Moreover, they are often involved in a deviant group and may be less able to form positive friendships with peers (Haynie et al., 2001).

An equally important but often overlooked category is that of *passive witnesses or observers*. "Some who hate conflict and embarrassment so much that they run away and turn away whenever they see something that makes them uncomfortable. There are those who consider themselves too weak and too insignificant to intervene. Some who, by intervening, disturb the situation even more" (Olweus, 1993: 39).

3. Consequences of the phenomenon of bullying

Many researchers have highlighted the short- and long-term negative impact of bullying that affects both victims and aggressors. Children who act as bullies are at greater risk of antisocial and delinquent behavior and involvement in criminal offending as adults (Olweus, 1991: 74) Depression is considered the most common mental health problem resulting from bullying (Kaltiala and Matti 1999: 665). Bullied children are disadvantaged, unhappy and suffer from problems related to self-esteem and self-confidence. They often feel anxious, feel shame and even feel guilty about what happened to them. In school, they are usually friendless, lonely and abandoned intruders (Olweus, 1993: 57). Their friendships are often affected due to increased fear of trusting their peers. The negative consequences affect not only their mental health but also their academic performance and can decrease their motivation to go to school and learn.

Consequences for victims

Some students respond to violence with violence. To defend themselves against the aggressor, they ask for help from friends, older brothers and sisters, very rarely - from parents and teachers. Children can also react to verbal abuse, by applying physical violence, a characteristic method especially for boys. Violence can stop when forces are comparable, if the

aggressor notices that he is unable to intimidate or demoralize the victim. In most cases, violence is directed at those who cannot adequately defend themselves.

Violence causes certain psychological harm to the victim, which manifests itself through a decrease in self-esteem, self-esteem, an increase in the level of anxiety, but also the development of depressive states. Most children completely lose their ability to defend themselves, believing that they are the only ones to blame for the fact that they are being bullied.

The child who was the victim of violence can isolate from other students, decrease in activism, fear, tendency to avoid communication with those around him. One of the worst effects of bullying is the high risk of suicidal behavior. With the passage of time, children who are bullied harshly and without support and help from the outside, lose hope in a positive solution and believe that suicide is the best option to eliminate their suffering. Physical problems include headaches, anxiety, sleep disorders, but a serious problem can be self-withdrawal from the educational process. Learning motivation, school success will decrease, which leads to the impossibility of completing the studies.

For most victims, the consequences can manifest themselves over the years in the form of stress disorders, anxiety, restlessness, social isolation and even antisocial behaviour.

Consequences for witnesses (observers, spectators)

Witnesses to violence can be teachers, students, auxiliary teaching staff, non-teaching staff of the educational institution and rarely parents. As witnesses of violence, adults, children and adolescents feel helpless, because of their inability to stop the violence, they consider themselves guilty and they fear that they can always end up in the place of the victim. Most of the witnesses do not inform teachers or parents about what happened because they doubt that measures will be taken, and their security will be guaranteed. For most children, reporting violence equates to weakness and inability to deal with problems. When violence is not stopped in time, witnesses associate themselves with the perpetrators, not the victims. Together, they find certain justifications to blame the victim, and frequent scenes of violence form tolerance for aggression and observers. These behaviors degrade the psycho-social climate in the classroom and school and negatively influence relationships between students or students and teachers. The atmosphere turns cold and the situation cannot be resolved unless the witnesses reveal the truth to stop the violence.

Consequences for the perpetrators of acts of violence (aggressors)

Often, the experience of bullies to dominate in school is the only possibility to achieve the desired status in the community. Thus, violence becomes the way to relate to those around even in adulthood. The aggressors' manifestations can also be accompanied by other behavioral problems, such as absenteeism from classes, smoking, alcohol abuse and various crimes. By far, not all children have such a combination of problems and not all become initiators of school violence.

Most of the perpetrators have a lower academic achievement and some may be expelled from the educational institution or taken into the records of the police station. In the case of serious crimes, which threaten the life and health of the victim, the aggressors are liable to administrative or criminal sanctions for the acts of bullying committed. Resorting to such punishments may make the child stop resorting to violence for a while, but it will not remove the cause of the aggressive behavior.

Consequences for the educational institution

Manifestations of violence in educational institutions reflect the problems that occur there. The unfavorable atmosphere in schools where cases of violence occur contribute to its spread and consolidation. Some pedagogues and managers of educational institutions do not deal with the conflict resolution, considering that these acts are normal for the formation of

resistance, the ability to defend the point of view, to defend oneself and to be prepared for the difficulties of life. When small acts of violence are tolerated, it is very easy to end with bullying, even if the administration of the educational institution has an authoritarian style. Such control keeps students in tension, but does not protect them from violence, but stimulates the formation of aggressive behavior.

In both cases, the administration of the educational institution and the teachers appoint the initiators of the violence responsible for maintaining the plain order, dealing with the amelioration of the cases that take place in the school so that the higher courts do not know the situation. Thus, children consider that they do not act and do not control themselves in these acts, taking personal measures themselves such as transferring to another educational institution, absenting themselves from classes or abandoning their studies. The inability of the schools to deal with the violence leads to conflicts with the parents, who will subsequently stop attending the meetings or move the children to another school.

4. The problem of research

Be it physical or verbal, bullying exerted on the child can have negative effects. Unfortunately, even in the 21st century, we can talk about quite serious forms of this type of violence to which children are subjected, avoiding asking for help for fear of repercussions. In Romania, few studies have investigated bullying in schools (Grădinaru, 2016: 225). According to the official data of the Children's Telephone Association, between October 2011 and October 2013, 2907 cases of bullying were registered in Romania, 45.72% of the cases involving physical violence, 22.86% verbal violence, 15.24% emotional abuse and 14.28% relational abuse.

Violence in Romanian schools has a high frequency. More than 75% of schools face this problem, 53% recognize these acts of bullying as a common practice, and 12% declare that they are happy to witness conflict situations (Grădinaru, 2016: 226).

5. The purpose of the research

The research aims to analyze the opinion of fourth-grade students regarding the phenomenon of bullying in school, to identify the negative educational influences that it constitutes on their development. The research questions was How does bullying affect children emotionally and socially? What do children think about the existence of this phenomenon at school? The objectives of the research are the following: to identify if whether are students in the 4th grade subjected to the phenomenon of bullying; to identify children's opinions about the phenomenon of bullying; to identify with the help of the questionnaire to what extent children subjected to psychological violence are affected.

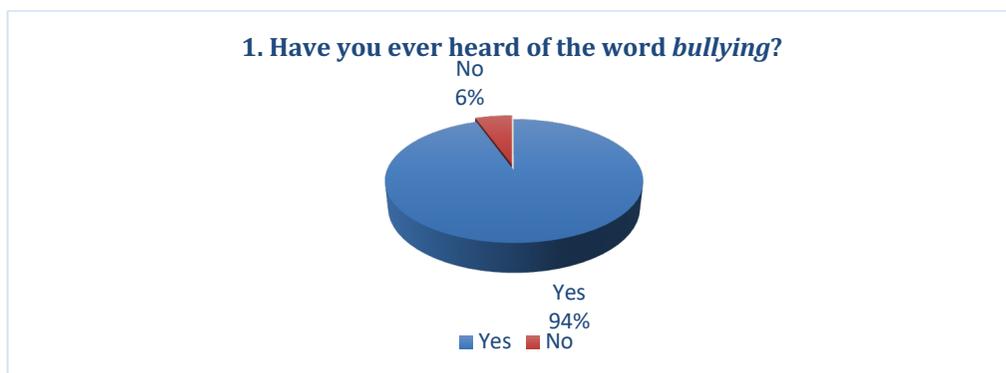
6. The working hypothesis

It is assumed that children are subjected to the phenomenon of bullying in rural schools, and these manifestations negatively influence their mental development, social relations and behavior. Students will give me the opportunity to observe how many of them are subject to bullying, what consequences bullying has on cognitive development, and how students manage this situation. In questionnaire number two, the teachers will answer the questions in the questionnaire and will reveal to me from their own experiences, focusing on bullying in schools and the negative educational consequences on the child.

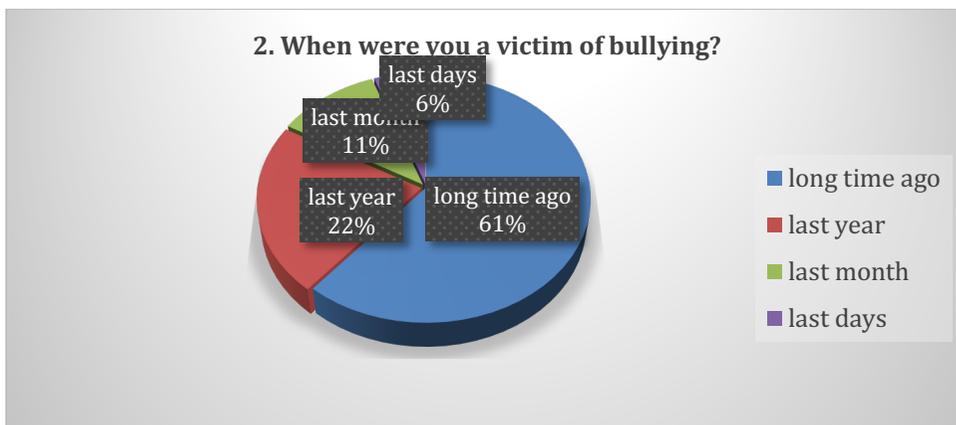
7. The sample of subjects is composed of 105 students, of which 64 are boys and 41 are girls and aged between 10 and 11 years from rural areas, with modest social status from Argeş County. To verify this hypothesis, we used the questionnaire-based survey as a research method.

8. Graphical Analysis and Interpretation

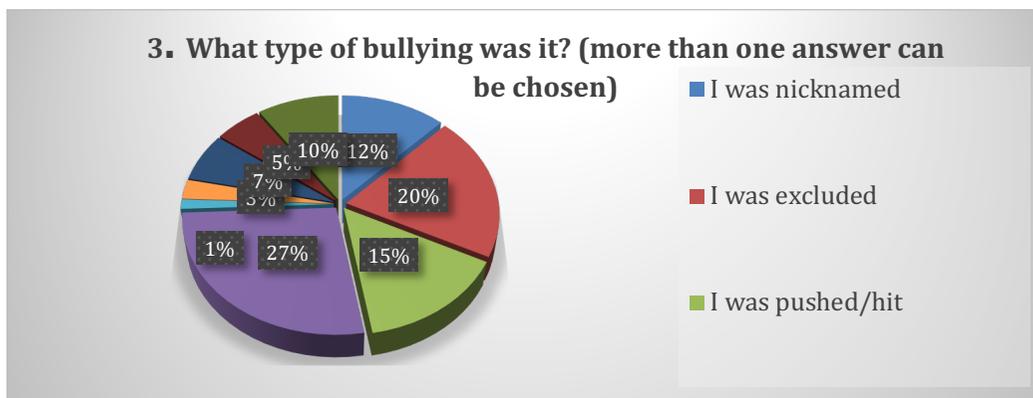
Analyzing the first question of the questionnaire, 89% of the students stated that they have met this term before, while only 11% have never heard of the word bullying.



To the question “When were you a victim of bullying?”, 60% answered that they were some time ago, 22% last year, 11% last month, while only 7% were the other day. Sooner or later, most students go through this form of emotional violence, with advanced or medium forms, but very late the connection is made with this phenomenon. We can see that bullying is increasing more and more, being very common in educational institutions with primary classes and up to high school.

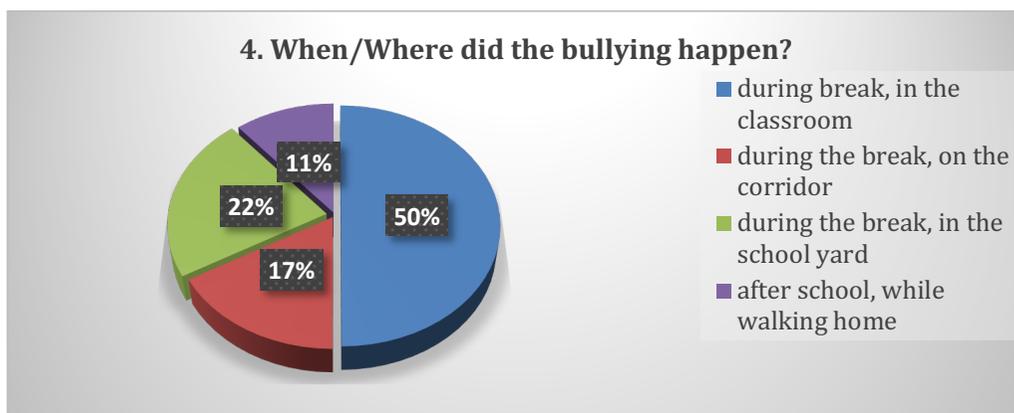


To the question “What type of bullying was it?”, 30% stated that they were offended, 22% that they were excluded, 16% that they were pushed or hit, 13% that they were called nicknames, and on the last places they found out the answers regarding the students who have other ethnicities, other religious beliefs, those who ask for money or other objects from the victims, who force them to do things for other colleagues, respectively those who laugh at the victims because of the way they look. As can be seen, at the top of the ranking are insults, hitting/pushing and exclusion, which are inseparable from a school collective and which still continue to spread rapidly in as many educational establishments as possible.

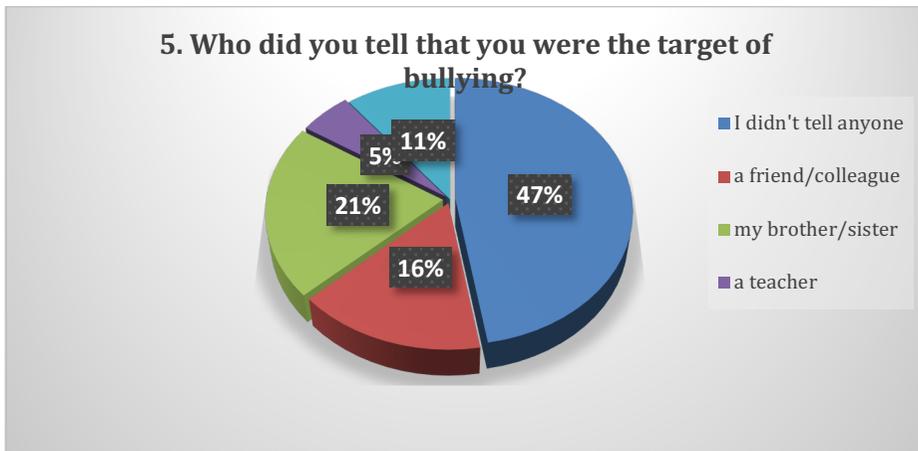


50% of the students surveyed stated that the bullying occurred during recess, in the classroom, while the other 50% were divided as follows: 22% of observers say that in the school yard, 17% during recess, in the corridor, and the remaining 11% after finishing classes, while they were on their way home. So half of the students have detected cases of bullying in the classroom, which can cause learning difficulties for both victims and observers.

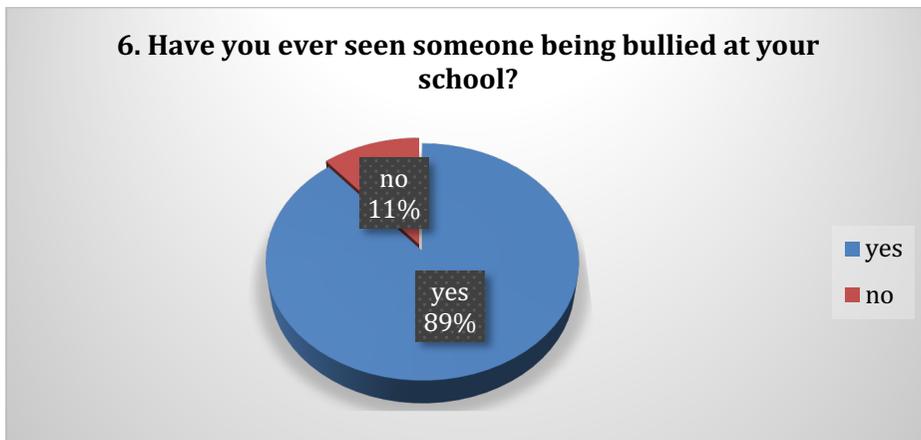
According to the answers received, this phenomenon is unconditionally present within the school and is in a continuous process of transmission.



As can be seen, more than half, 53% did not tell anyone if they were the target of bullying, 18% told a colleague/friend, 23% their brother/sister and only 6% had the courage to tell a teacher. Most of the victims of this phenomenon are afraid to tell someone close to their problem, considering that it is better to stay at this stage as long as necessary. But, on the other hand, the remaining 47% told their relatives, but as can be deduced from the answers, no initiative was taken to prevent and improve this situation.

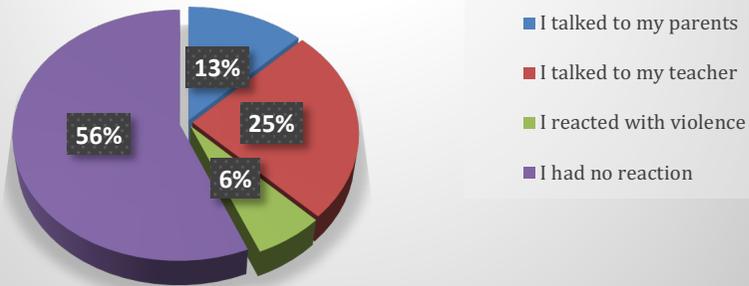


To the question “Have you ever seen someone being bullied at your school?”, 89% of the students surveyed answered yes, while only 11% answered no. So, in school there are cases of emotional violence, in several age categories, the phenomenon being noticed in all most classes. 11% can even be represented by the victims of bullying in the 4th grade who do not make contact with other schoolmates, probably also because of insults, hits, nicknames. Therefore, they do not notice that there are other people in the same situation, thus justifying their answer.



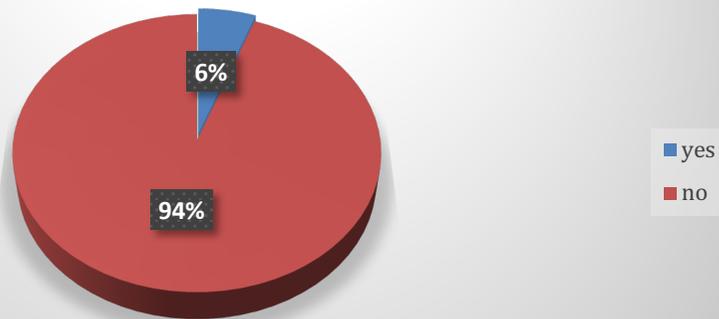
To the question “If you answered yes, how did you react?”, 56% had no reaction, 25% spoke to the teacher, 13% spoke to the parents, and the 6% reacted with violence. Analyzing the answers, more than half of those who said yes did not react to existing bullying situations in the school to avoid a conflict. They discussed the situation with the teacher or with their parents. We can see that they don't communicate either in class or at home. Parents often avoid listening to the child and actively participate in supporting him.

7. If you answered Yes, how did you react?

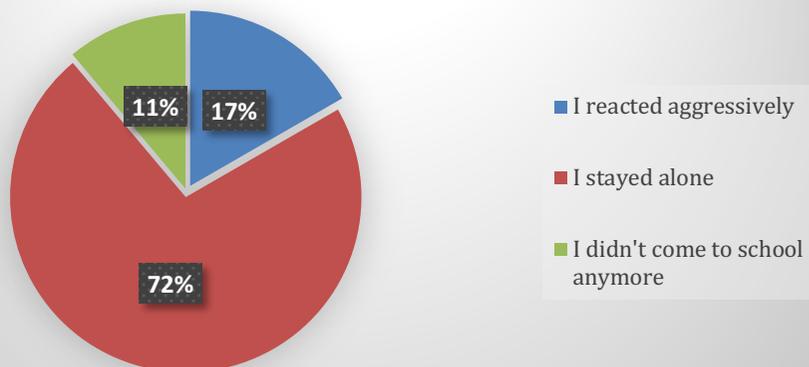


To the question “Were measures taken after they found the aggressor?” only 2 answer options were used: 94% answered No, and 6% yes. Students who responded negatively stated that no action was taken regarding existing bullying cases in schools, or that the situation was better for a short time, and then it started again.

8. Were measures taken after they found the aggressor?

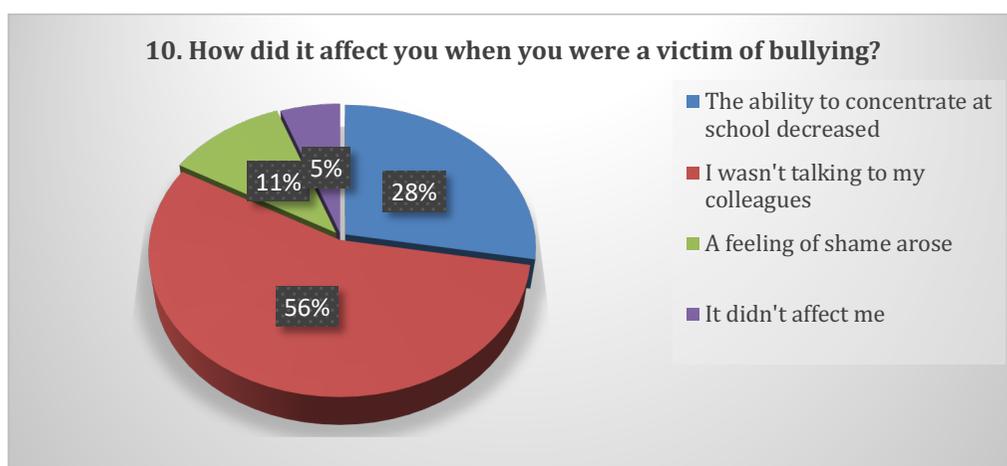


9. What did you do when you were a victim of bullying?



According to the above question, the following answer options were identified: Only 17% of the students reacted aggressively when they were victims of bullying because it can easily cause a conflict from which it will be quite difficult to get out. In a percentage of 72%, the students stated that during the period when they were the victims of this phenomenon, they were isolated from the rest of the group because the insults, hits and other humiliations did not stop. 11% of students stopped attending classes, which may indicate that bullying has reached a fairly advanced form. Those children were very affected by the aggressors' behavior toward them, choosing to be absent from classes just to avoid direct contact with them.

To the question “How did it affect you when you were a victim of bullying?” more than half, i.e. 56%, answered that they did not talk to their colleagues, here referring to shyness, isolation, followed by 28%, a percentage represented by students whose ability to concentrate during classes decreased, 11% the students who acquired a sense of shame and only 5% the student who was not affected by bullying. As shown in the diagram, the consequences are multiple. From shyness, shame, isolation can lead to unmotivated absence from classes.



This last question “Are you still a victim of bullying?” is represented by a negative response of 94%, which indicates that the degree of bullying is quite low, but it exists, while the positivity is 6%.



9. Conclusions

We found that students face the phenomenon of bullying at school, we discovered the children's opinions about bullying and last but not least, we identified to what extent children subjected to this phenomenon are affected in school success.

The socio-pedagogical research carried out with the aim of analyzing the negative-educational influences that bullying constitutes on a child's development, confirms our working hypothesis regarding the devastating effects that this phenomenon has, being declared a major problem in schools.

Bullying is a risk factor for school dropout and juvenile delinquency. Students who bully are 5-6 times more likely to engage in antisocial behavior as adults (Olweus, 1991: 87). Most often, a child who has been severely bullied ends up dropping out of school for fear of being bullied again. Even in the case of the mildest forms, repeated exposure to a bullying experience predisposes children to the development of numerous mental health problems: depression, anxiety, eating disorders, etc. (Limber, 2002: 16).

Bullying is not a phenomenon that appeared yesterday or today, but it has always existed. As long as there is someone with a weaker personality, that someone will be the subject of jokes and teasing from colleagues.

Today we observe numerous changes, in terms of the evolution of the family unit, both in terms of the value, attitudinal and behavioral models adopted, as well as in terms of organization, functioning and relations between members. The multiple parenting models proposed to parents contribute to the changes that we, specialists in the field or not, notice. The school is in the process of rebuilding its foundations.

Additionally, the child is not only subject to family influences, but to a wider set, which includes the socio-cultural environment. As many psychologists argue, the family and school must persevere in developing children's sense of belonging to the family, school and community.

Secondary socialization is related to the social division of labor and the social distribution of acquired knowledge. It involves internalizing the requirements, information and values promoted by different institutions with which the young person comes into contact step by step. The socialization process of the young person is sometimes difficult, even if the parents get involved properly and support his education, because the proximity factors that influence the shaping of the self can play a negative role. If parents are not properly involved in their children's education, the situation becomes even more complicated.

The school environment must be aware that: insulting, teasing, hitting, stressing, spreading gossip, threatening, isolating, mocking, imitating must stop because they represent unhealthy attitudes and behavior that harm the development of any child. The cultivation of prosocial values must be a constant in the education of students.

At the school level, bullying can be prevented through education, more precisely, through the development of disciplinary policies and through the promotion of prosocial values. The school environment must deal more carefully with the danger of bullying.

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COVID-PANDEMIC RELATED RESTRICTIONS ON THE FREEDOM OF CIRCULATION IN EUROPE

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Abstract: *Based on a triangulation of the specific analysis in the fields of European studies, law and sociology, the hereby paper aims at creating a comprehensive study on the impact of the restrictive measures following the Coronavirus pandemic at European level and in the member states. The analysis of the positions adopted in the European Union in matters of migration and freedom of movement, starting with February 2020, aimed at limiting the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, will be based on the multilevel governance theory and focused on the responses to the global challenges related to this pandemic. Thus, the study is framed on the three dimensions of this theory, namely the European institutional level, the national level and the sub-national level. Within this framework, the measures undertaken by the European Union, the member states and the local authorities in order to manage the crisis, as well as the way they were received at different levels, will be discussed. Taking into account the fact that, since the establishment of the Freedom of movement as a fundamental principle of the European Union, no such limitations have ever been introduced, the current study proposes an analysis on their impact on the circulation of people across the EU territory.*

Keywords: coronavirus crisis, European legislation, member states, free circulation, multilevel governance.

1. Introduction

The proposed research topic is in line with the broader field of studies on international migration, combining methods specific to the social sciences, tools in the field of legal sciences and European studies. The aim of the research is to analyse the situation of the temporary restriction of the freedom of movement of persons in the European Union, as a result of the challenges imposed by the coronavirus epidemic.

We therefore propose a three-dimensional study to follow, in logical succession, the analysis and decision-making plans, from the supranational to the national, and, further, the local level, in an effort to establish the impact of these restrictions on the dynamics of migration circumscribed to the above coordinates. The theory of multi-level governance specific to the field of European studies can be applied in the analysis of the effects of this crisis on European policies in the field of migration and freedom of movement of persons, thus building the bridge between the three levels of analysis.

Until recently, across the common European territory, regarding the freedom of movement of people, there was a general consensus in matters of decisional process and application of the common rules in the national state-European Union relationship. For the period of time when the sanitary crisis generated by the coronavirus was ongoing in Europe, we can identify an atypical temporary situation, but with mid and long-term effects in terms of precedent creating limitations to the freedom of circulation in the EU. The multilevel governance theory introduced in the European scientific literature by Gary Marks and Liesebet Hooghe (2001), which describes the way in which authority and the influence on policy making are divided among multiple levels of governance, can be used in understanding the way in which the decisional process in matters of intra-EU migration has changed. Although numerous

studies documenting the limitations on the freedom of movement within the European space already exist, the global landscape of restrictions on the space mobility of people generated by such a crisis contain elements of novelty and are worth addressing. Furthermore, effects of these limitations have been observed in various domains of the societies, particularly in the European space, as the last decades of evolution in terms of common market have resulted in a high level of interconnectivity.

For example, the unprecedented context determined by the covid 19 outbreak caused several shortcomings regarding the work domain, like increased unemployment in some sectors and the lack of workforce in others, due to the restrictions for traveling in the case of seasonal, migrant workers (Pogan, 2021a). In addition to this, the limitations on the freedom of movement favoured the development of various types of virtual communication, both in terms of interindividual relations and in the institutional level. A study issued in 2022 (Bularca, Nechita, Sargu, Motoi *et. al.*, 2022: 2) reveals that *“due to its direct impact on peoples’ health, the pandemic indirectly influenced the way organizations operate, with many being forced to constantly adapt and improve their communication”*. All these outcomes of the limitation of freedom of movement are also tackled in numerous other studies (Kassim, 2022; Blauberger, Grabbe & Ripoll Servent, 2022; Eijken and Rijpma, 2021) and are worth analysing in the attempt to evaluate whether the restrictions respected the condition of proportionality, or, in other words, if the costs were worth the result achieved in regard to the prevention of the virus spreading.

2. Objective

Based on a triangulation of the specific analysis in the fields of European studies, law and sociology, the hereby paper aims at creating a comprehensive study on the impact of the restrictive measures following the Coronavirus pandemic at European level and in the member states.

Thus, the purpose of the analysis is to understand whether or not there has been cooperation, negotiated governance, convergence in the measures taken, and a concordance between the decision-makers' discourse and the effective implementation of the measures, in particular related to migration issues.

It is expected that the study of public policy documents and normative provisions will demonstrate whether the localization of the sub-national level within the multi-level Governance is achieved by decoupling from the national level and collaboration with the supranational level, or the state-centred model of authority is predominant.

The secondary objectives of the research are as follows:

- ▶ Analysis of the positions adopted at EU level in the field of migration and freedom of movement, starting with February 2020, in order to limit the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus
- ▶ Analysis of the positions adopted at member states' (MS) level in the field of migration and freedom of movement, in order to limit the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus
- ▶ Analysis on the impact of these measures on the European citizens

3. Methodology

The theory of multilevel governance in the European Union applied to the situation of the measures taken in response to the global challenges specific to the pandemic.

The design of the proposed research is circumscribed to the three fundamental directions of investigation. Thus, the general framework is provided by the application of the theory of multi-level governance in the European Union, in reference to the specificities of the situation of the measures taken in response to the global challenges specific to the pandemic.

The analysis follows the three dimensions specific to this theory, namely the European institutional level, the national level and the sub-national level. Therefore, the research will

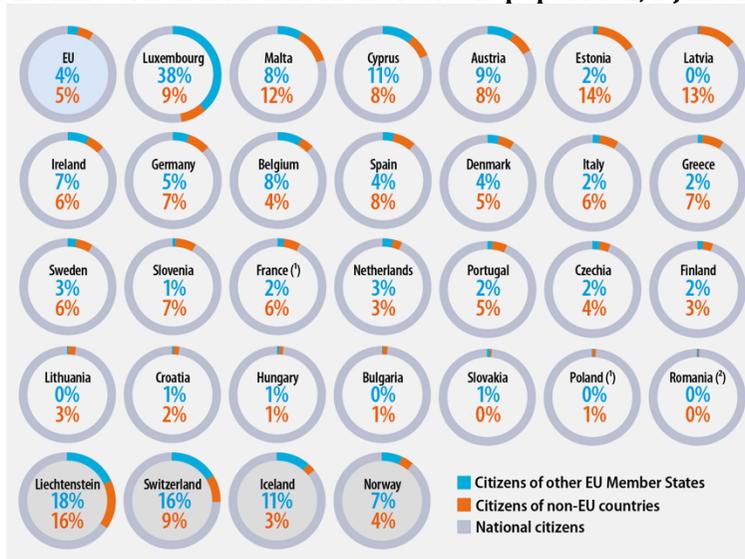
analyse the measures proposed by the European Union, Member States and local authorities for crisis management, as well as their reception at other levels.

In this context, the main arguments of the multilevel governance theory need to be addressed, along with coordinates of the concept of European freedom of movement, and observe in which ways their usual characteristics and evolution were affected by the consequences of the pandemic. Several types of measures were enforced throughout the European Union aimed at limiting the effects of the spread of the virus, and in the following sections they will be examined at different levels.

4. European level measures

The freedom of movement for persons within the European Union, formalised by the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, constitutes the legal basis on which citizens of the Member States of the European Union may move and establish themselves in the territory of a State other than that of which they are nationals. Thus, according to Eurostat figures, on January, 1st, 2021, about 4% of EU citizens lived in Member States other than those of which they were citizens. Compared to the year 2018, before the Coronavirus pandemic, there is a slight growth of 0,1% (Eurostat, 2019). The current situation for each Member State can be observed in the figure bellow.

Figure 1. Share of non-nationals in the resident population, 1 January 2022



Source: Eurostat

In the development of the sanitary crisis associated with the coronavirus there can be observed two stages: one, that started in March 2020, with the closing of the borders and lockdown in most EU countries, and the second, that provided a wider range of rules applicable depending on the evolution of the crisis, after the mass vaccination began in January 2021.

In the first period, there was a low level of coordination amongst EU institutions in creating common rules regarding the free travelling (European Commission, 2020a). Most of the member states decided to close borders. “One explanation for the lack of coordination among EU member states may be that all member states have separately transposed the Free Movement Directive in national legislation, and there has been quite a lot of variation in how the different criteria have been implemented in national legislations (Heinikoski and Hyttinen, 2022: 85)”, is stated in a study that analyses level of cooperation in this matter.

Later on, during the covid pandemic, all EU countries set in motion coordinated response mechanisms aimed at limiting the spread of the virus, including limitations of the freedom of movement. Thus, a colour code was created based on the epidemiological situation in each region, meant to encode various indicators evaluating the number of new cases, the percent of population infested, and so on. Similar colour coding schemes were also considered necessary in other areas of the globe, including the USA, such as a study published in 2020 explains: “In the context of pandemic, where significant modifications to daily life are required and which change with local and regional transmission risk, the time for a color-coded alert system may have finally come” (Coppola and Ryan, 2020). In addition to this, the common measures included, as core action, supporting the research and innovation in creating and distributing vaccines against de virus.

The EU Digital COVID Certificate Regulation (Official Journal of the European Union, 2021) entered into application on July, 1st, 2021. According to this regulation, EU citizens and residents were once again allowed to travel freely across member states based in the Digital COVID Certificates, which was issued after performing the vaccination scheme and which could be verified across the EU. This type of certificate was recognized by all member states, regardless of where the vaccination was performed, and it was meant to ensure the fact that the travelling restrictions that were established could be eliminated in a coordinated manner.

When the Covid-19 pandemic was proclaimed in 2020, the EU institutions reacted rapidly, and the Commission designed regulations that allowed for the adoption of border management elements, such as the reintroduction of border controls, but, at the same time, insisted on the idea of limiting the negative effects on the freedom of moving, by stating that any restrictions should be “proportionate, i.e., not going beyond what is strictly necessary” (European Commission, 2020b). Furthermore, after the appearance of the EU Digital COVID Certificate, any person who could prove the completion of the vaccination scheme exempt from additional restrictions to the freedom of movement. This means that all EU countries were supposed to not introduce additional measures to restrict the travel possibilities of these people, except, of course, for the situation when these were meant to safeguard public health.

However, should such a situation appear, like the case of new variants of the virus that could raise concern, the member state that decided to introduce new limitations was supposed to notify both the European Commission and the other member states, and also provide evidence and arguments in support of such decision.

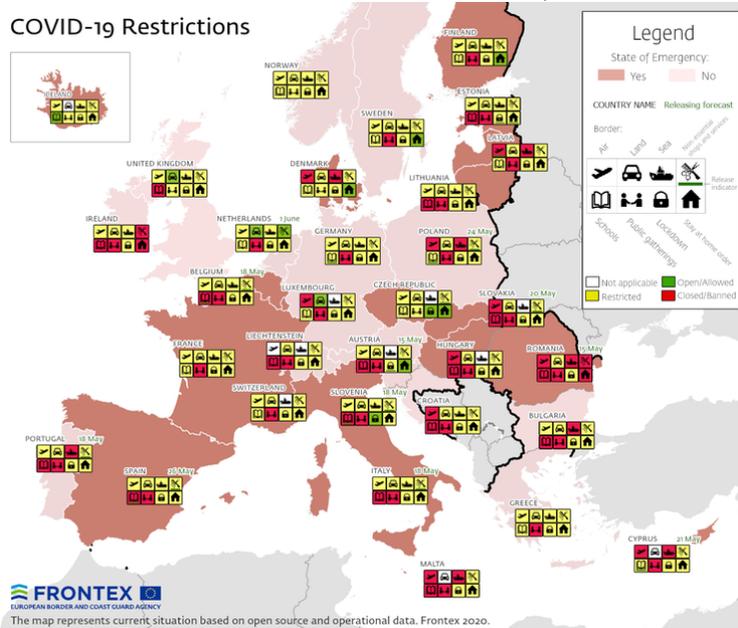
In regard to the Schengen Space, as an area of free circulation, although there are no legal basis authorizing EU institutions to decide upon any kind of limitation on the Schengen territory, being given the common external frontiers, it was somehow logical for the Commission to be given the authority to decide at common level. Furthermore, the European Council supported the adoption of common measures coordinated by the Commission.

5. State level measures

The Covid-19 pandemic brought along challenges that each country attempted to approach using various tools, with the final goal of ensuring the security of its citizens. Due to the effects of globalization and the unprecedented rise in peoples’ circulation worldwide, the virus was rapidly transmitted. In this context, as the United Nations tried to explain, “state authorities are having to deploy maximum resources to combat the spread of the disease and protect lives. Decisions are being made rapidly and, even though well intended, some can inadvertently have adverse consequences” (United Nations: 2020, p.3).

In all the countries severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic the lockdown has been a common measure, but with different intensity, and it implies the close of borders too. The figure bellow displays the main restrictions on the freedom of circulation enforced in the EU member states in March, 2020, at the beginning of the crisis.

Figure 2. Covid-19 restrictions of free circulation, March 2020



Source: <https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/covid-19-restrictions-4IdY3J>

As can be observed in Figure 2, in many EU member states State of emergency was declared. This allowed the adoption of strict measures of border control, and severe limitations to the free circulation. The most important restrictions that were adopted in the beginning of the pandemic were: limiting the circulation on land, air and water, public lock-downs, school closing, stay at home orders, and non-essential shops and other service providers were closed. Also, public gatherings were banned or restricted in all the countries. As the map shows, there were however differences in the application of these measures amongst member states, depending both on the gravity of the virus spread, but also on their sanitary systems' capacity to respond to such a crisis, and other kinds of aspects related to national specificities.

In terms of freedom of movement, during the Covid-19 pandemic, internal border controls were reinstated, and after the introduction of the Covid-19 certificate they allowed for the implementation of controls of the people entering the states, so they respected the criteria for being allowed to travel freely.

The Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code) (Official Journal of the European Union, 2016) establishes the option for the member states to reinforce border controls at the internal frontiers in case of severe threat for the internal security or public policy of a state. However, Article 26 of the mentioned Code states that “where a Member State decides, as a last resort, on the temporary reintroduction of border control at one or more of its internal borders or at parts thereof, or decides to prolong such reintroduction, in accordance with Article 25 or Article 28(1), it shall assess the extent to which such a measure is likely to adequately remedy the threat to public policy or internal security, and shall assess the proportionality of the measure in relation to that threat.” (Official Journal of the European Union, 2016).

However, this was a temporary situation, as by the middle of June 2020, approximately three months later, controls at the internal borders were eliminated within a coordinated effort, partly due to the subsiding of the first wave of infections, but also due to the economic pressure of saving the European tourist season. Even after this, as various studies and data prove, “free movement within the EU remained subject to a patchwork of national travel

restrictions, including quarantine and test requirements. As new and more contagious strains emerged, Member States continued to restrict mobility within their territories, as well as between them. With the virus continuing to spread globally, non-essential travel to the Schengen area also remained banned for all but a few third countries” (Eijken and Rijpma, 2021: 34-35).

6. Local level of authority

In regard to Romania, the effects of the freedom of movement on intra-EU population mobility are addressed in numerous academic studies, which frequently place our country in the category of source states for migrants (Sandu, 2014; Anghel & Horvath, 2009; Matichescu et al. 2015, Pogan 2021b), a fact also supported by Romania's position in 2016, for example, on the second place among the countries of origin in terms of migration flows to OECD countries (OECD, 2019). Since the Romanian social landscape is severely influenced by factors associated to external migration, ranging from economic input, social transformation, family constitution and so on, any kind of alteration on the normative provisions ruling this sector directly influences the life of the citizens. Furthermore, as various studies assert, in Romania “migration is primarily based on migration networks (a person arriving in a particular destination country facilitates the arrival of others known in that country), is circulatory (most emigrants come and depart regularly from the destination country returning in Romania) and temporary” (Ilie Goga, 2020: 31).

As presented above, during the coronavirus pandemic several restrictions were established, both in our country, and also in other European countries. Some of the most affected states in terms of sanitary crisis, such as Italy and Spain, are preferred destination countries for Romanian emigrants, thus the limitations on the freedom of movement affected this category of people both in regard to the option of leaving Romania, and also referring to the possibility to access certain areas of these countries. Taking into account these coordinates, the restrictions on the free movement of people adopted severely impacted numerous people.

Another reported issue is related to the ways in which the decisions to implement restrictions were announced or adopted: “Since free movement is a core principle of the European Union, it is striking that it is restricted with an announcement in a press conference (Denmark) or as a sidenote in a government decision reintroducing internal border control (Finland), regardless of how good the intentions were.” (Heinikoski and Hyttinen, 2022).

Of course, such situations also occurred in Romania and were reproduced on a larger scale at EU level, as, due to the decades of free circulation, many EU citizens benefit from the right to live, work, study in another member state.

As explained in the section above, many of the measures applied in order to contain the spread of the virus although decided at national level, were implemented on sub-national level, taking into account the specific evolutions in different zones.

7. Conclusions

Although numerous studies documenting the limitations on the freedom of movement within the European space already exist, the coronavirus associated global context regarding restrictions on the space mobility of people was unprecedented. The findings in this paper highlight the fact that one of the fundamental rights of EU citizens, a core value of the European construction, namely the freedom of movement of people, can easily be infringed given a situation of crisis.

In regard to the analysis of the ways in which restrictions were applied, we can observe that, except for the early period of the coronavirus pandemic, which was defined by a perceptible sense of emergency and some anarchy in the relations amongst EU member states, the measures undertaken by the member states were coordinated. One of the most notable results of this coordination can be observed in regard to the effects of vaccination on the free

circulation, where, due to the early implementation of mass vaccination and the funding of the vaccination campaigns, EU countries reported high percent of immunized citizens. Also, in this regard, the good cooperation between the supranational-national-subnational decision-making process ensured positive results and a relative containment of the spread of the virus.

In terms of European integration mechanisms, the application of the subsidiarity principle determined the involvement of all decision and execution levels of authority throughout the period of the pandemic. When the same concerns affected all the member states, centralized decisions were adopted, and assistance tools were used.

Furthermore, another conclusion of our research leads to the idea that the measures that limit the free movement of people were limited to containing the crisis, as the EU regulation require, and, when sanitary conditions allowed, they were either removed or replaced by more permissive regulation. Contrary to the opinions suggesting that “despite the active role of the EU institutions in coordinating national responses and bringing them in line with EU law, ultimately, more binding coordination and regulation is required to ensure legal certainty and manage mobility” (Eijken and Rijpma, 2021: 34), we conclude that the normative provisions and actions of the EU common institutions, as well as the actions of the member states were all directed towards creating a secure space – including the usage of Covid certificates, vaccination, common initiatives to provide social and financial support for the vulnerable categories most exposed to the effects of the pandemic.

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INTEGRATION OF STUDENTS INTO THE UNIVERSITY MILIEU AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE LEARNING DURING THE ANTI-COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

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Abstract. *The anti-COVID-19 restrictions and lack of face-to-face learning have increased depression and anxiety among students, alienating them from the university milieu. It can be argued that students suffered from the phenomenon of social anomie during the pandemic restrictions between 2020 and 2022. After the lifting of these restrictions in March 2022, some universities in Romania adopted blended learning, both face-to-face and online. In this context, did the partial return to face-to-face teaching reduce the anomic phenomenon that students faced during the COVID-19 pandemic? To answer this question means to observe whether students integrated into the university milieu during blended learning. Based on a sample of 130 respondents enrolled in undergraduate courses at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work in Bucharest, it was observed that students, counter to expectations, integrated into the mixed university milieu embraced after March 2022. The inter- and intra-personal processes in J. Weidman's conceptual framework explain this. Integration was possible because students befriended their own peers, peers with whom they had only interacted online during the pandemic restrictions. Also, the satisfaction they felt at going back to the "lost" style during the COVID-19 restrictions made students feel closer to their own faculty.*

Keywords: Student socialisation; blended learning; post-pandemic; COVID-19; online learning.

1. Introduction

In response to the spread of the COVID-19 virus, most of the world's countries have decided to move education on their territory online. 1.6 billion school and university students across the globe changed their way of life due to pandemic restrictions (Feuer, 2020). In Romania, approximately 377 thousand students were feeling the changes after March 2020 (Dumitrache et al., 2021: 4). After almost two years, universities in Romania could return to face-to-face learning (Rosca, 2022).

Students spent two years in a different academic milieu than the "traditional" face-to-face environment that required them to be physically present in lectures and seminars. Lack of physical contact with peers and professors, interaction through e-learning platforms and the effects of government restrictions and the COVID-19 pandemic (anxiety, loneliness and depression) have taken their impact on students' integration into the university environment. Did the anomic effects of that time continue to manifest in their presence and alter student integration after the faculty partially returned to physical education? Partially because in the case of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work in Bucharest (the source of the study sample) after the anti-COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, courses and seminars were conducted in a mixed format (partly online and partly physical). Aiming to answer this question, this research sought to test the following hypothesis: student integration into the blended university milieu after the lifting of anti-COVID-19 restrictions was decreased.

2. Effects of pandemic restrictions and online learning on students

At the end of the state of alert in Romania in March 2022, several universities in the country have implemented the mixed learning teaching model to give students the opportunity to gradually return to pre-pandemic "normality". Below, some problems caused by pandemic

restrictions and the inability of online learning to fix them are outlined. The effects of the restrictions and online learning continued to be felt by students even after their lifting and the implementation of blended learning, which was partly face-to-face.

The European COvid Survey (ECOS), research conducted in three waves (November 2020, January 2021 and April 2021) in Germany, the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Portugal and Italy found that depression and anxiety have increased among adults in Europe compared with the pre-pandemic period (Hajek, André, et al., 2022). In April 2021, 27% of respondents said they were depressed, while 26% said they were anxious. In all three waves and in all countries, people aged 18 to 29 (referred to as "young adults") had the highest rates of depression and anxiety compared to other age groups (Hajek, André, et al., 2022). "Young adults" were also lonely during this period. In a study by Harvard University, it was shown that 43% of American "young adults" reported that feelings of loneliness increased after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (Graupensperger, Scott et. al., 2022).

Students, a group that is part of what researchers have termed "young adults", felt the above problems. A study of about 746 thousand students in China showed that after the pandemic began, 45% of them were likely to experience acute stress, anxiety and symptoms of depression (Liu, Zhang, et. al., 2022).

Anxiety, depression and loneliness are mental problems caused by physical and social distancing, seen as solutions against the spread of COVID-19. These mental problems are manifestations of anomie, a sociological phenomenon theorised by Emile Durkheim, a founder of sociology, which "... refers to the mutual alienation of individuals and the loss of the authority of hitherto naturally recognised rules". (Baltasiu, 2007: 279). From Emile Durkheim's perspective, pandemic restrictions altered the rules of interaction of individuals, thus reducing the authority of these rules.

Although the university milieu is a normative context that regulates student life and should have addressed the lack of norms during the pandemic, this did not happen. Students had similar rates of loneliness, depression and anxiety as other groups in the young adult age group. In other words, the e-learning approach does not reduce the effects of the social anomie generated by the pandemic among students. Studies conducted before and during the COVID-19 pandemic have shown that *learner interaction in the online environment is not sufficient to integrate the student into the university milieu*.

Studies that have addressed distance learning have found that the biggest problem with this type of teaching is the personal contact between the teacher and student (Coyner and McCann, 2004; Hockridge, 2013; Swaggerty and Broemmell, 2017). Thus, students do not form strong connections with their own teachers, connections that should help the student understand the subject matter being taught (Stodel, Thompson et al., 2006). Interactions mediated by online platforms can decrease the sense of belonging to formal and informal groups in the university milieu and can even lead to feelings of alienation among students. These causes are responsible for the fact that dropout rates are higher if subject teaching occurs through online environments than if it occurs face-to-face (Phirangee, 2016).

A study of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in higher education, involving 17 thousand students from 41 European countries, confirmed the above studies: "A paradox therefore emerges a flexible timetable and living at home may, on the one hand, be less stressful and financially demanding, but, on the other hand, may make it more difficult for students to concentrate on their studies and may also alienate them from their peers" (ESU, 2021: 44). Qualitative studies conducted between 2020 and 2022 confirm the above (Son, Hedge et. al., 2020; Knight, Carlisle, 2021).

3. The socialisation process

We understand socialisation as a process closely related to the two concepts by which we analyse the individual's link with society: sociality and sociability. We call "man's quality of

being a social being and society's property of constituting itself as a form of human inter-existence by a single term, sociality ..." (Ungureanu, 2002: 23), while sociability "expresses the capacity (ability) of a person or group of people to integrate into a society" (Ungureanu, 2002: 23). Sociality takes different forms, depending on how an individual relates to other people. This is a qualitative dimension of society, which generates different degrees of integration of people into society. Therefore, sociability is the quantitative dimension of society: "human societies are constituted and develop on the basis of different types or forms of sociality (cooperative or competitive, egalitarian or unequal, dominant or participatory, etc.), and these types or forms generate or allow different degrees of manifestation of sociability" (Ungureanu, 2002: 23–24). Socialisation is the measure of an individual's sociality, his sociability. Through socialisation, the individual's ability to integrate becomes reality inside a particular group.

In the perspective of these concepts, the degree of integration of the student in the post-pandemic university milieu is an expression of sociability, actualisation of this capacity to be a social being in the university milieu. Sociability gains expression in the university milieu because of the socialisation process.

According to I. Ungureanu, we call socialisation "a process ... by which the individual integrates into a society by adopting its values and norms (habits, rules of life, conduct, ideals, etc.) and manifests his own measure of sociality, his sociability". (Ungureanu, 2002: 62). According to R. Schaefer, socialisation is defined as a "lifelong process by which people learn the attitudes, valucand behaviour appropriate to members of a particular culture" (Schaefer, 2016: 73).

This research intends to discover: what is the degree of socialisation generated by "learning both online and in physical format". In the perspective of the present theories, such learning represents a form of human inter-existence with different features than "traditional" face-to-face learning. To measure the degree of integration of a student is also to see the quality of the university environment in which the student integrates.

When is a student integrated into the university environment? According to symbolic interactionist theorists, integration into a group is completed when the individual defines him/herself as part of the group (Kuper, 2003: 1356). It was then for the socialised individual that the new group became a "generalized other," meaning "the organised community or social group that provides the individual a unity of self ..." (Mead, 1932: 154 apud Baltasiu, 2007: 84).

Specifically, the individual acquires a new social position - social status, and from this, the group expects the fulfilment of the roles associated with the position they have acquired, namely "the set of expectations assigned to a person who occupies a social position or social status" (Schaefer, 2016: 97). More precisely, in the university environment, we say that a student has integrated when " ... they accept the faculty's expectations regarding [their] academic performance as legitimate and behave accordingly" (Weidman, 1989: 310). Thus, a strong indicator of a student's integration into the university environment is the fulfilment of the roles attributed to his or her social position that he or she acquired when entering the university environment.

A research instrument that measures a student's degree of integration according to the fulfilment of the social roles assigned to them was designed by M. Farnese, P. Spagnoli and S. Livi (2022). In this research, the student's degree integration was measured based on the instrument created by the three Italian researchers.

4. University socialising

One of the most widely used conceptual models used in research addressing the issue of student socialization is that constructed by J. Weidman (1989). The American sociologist has the credit of unifying in one model the concepts, variables and student socialisation studies carried out on American campuses, especially in the late 20th century.

How does socialisation occur in a university environment? To answer this question, J. Weidman elaborates a model similar to the 'inputs-environment-outputs' model found in

computer science. From the American author's viewpoint, the student enrolls in a university with a set of personal characteristics specific to his or her personal history, complies with the social norms within this environment, and eventually changes his or her personal goals because of the pressures during the years of schooling.

„Undergraduate socialisation can be conceived of as a series of processes whereby the student:

- 1) enters college freshman with certain values, aspirations, and other personal goals;
- 2) is exposed to various socializing influences while attending college, including normative pressures exerted via (a) social relationships with college faculty and peers, (b) parental pressures, and (c) involvement with noncollege reference groups;
- 3) assesses the salience of the various normative pressures encountered for attaining personal goals; and
- 4) changes or maintains those values, aspirations, and personal goals that were held at college entrance”. (Weidman, 1989: 301)

Weidman argues that by the end of the undergraduate cycle, students' values, aspirations and personal goals will change because of the socialisation process. These signs of successful socialisation are no different from the ones observed by symbolic interaction theorists and authors such as Richard T. Schaefer, Adam Kuper and Ion Ungureanu. Both values, aspirations and personal goals are expressions of the individual's identity, an identity that is formed through socialisation: 'Through socialisation, personal identity is formed, and this in turn reacts to the socialisation environment, particularly through the behavioural variations it determines'. (Ungureanu, 2002: 62-63)

J. Weidman's model succeeds in decomposing the entire socialisation process in the university milieu into parts that can then be operationalised. For this research, the American author is relevant as he shows which factors increase or decrease the degree of student integration during mixed learning, implemented after the lifting of the pandemic restrictions.

The socialisation of the student is carried out by complying with the norms of the university milieu. Compliance is reached through the young person's interaction with agents of socialisation within the university milieu (teachers, colleagues) and outside the university milieu (parents, friends, voluntary organisations, or work colleagues). Interaction with agents of socialisation occurs at the interpersonal level (frequency of communication and attachment to others) and "intra-personal" level (favourable attitude towards the social norms of the university milieu). Inter- and intra-personal interactions shape the student's acceptance or non-acceptance of university norms, in other words, integration according to the model discovered by J. Weidman.

Of these factors, the most important are interpersonal relationships. J. Weidman believes that the norms of the academic milieu will be internalised by the student, especially after he or she has built primary (attachment) relationships within the university (Weidman, 1989, p. 308). And these relationships are built if the student has interacted frequently with others in the academic environment. J. Weidman also points out that subjective appreciation, i.e. the student's satisfaction with the university environment, increases or decreases his or her degree of integration into that environment.

5. Methodological considerations

The research was conducted in June 2022 on a sample of approximately 130 students enrolled in the courses (sociology, anthropology and human resources) of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work in Bucharest. The sample sought to include students who either started their academic journey in physical format, but also online during the pandemic restrictions between 2020 and 2022. For reasons of data collection efficiency, 93% of the sample was composed of sociology students.

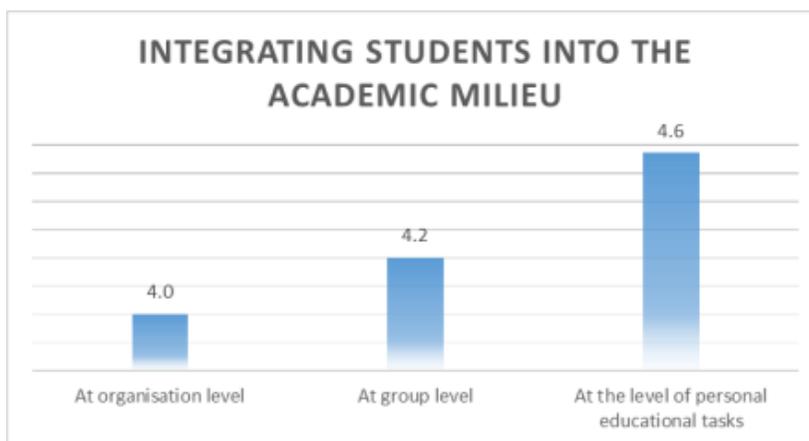
In terms of demographics, most respondents were female (84%) under the age of 22. Most of the responses were received from students enrolled in their first and second years of study.

6. The student's degree of socialization into the university milieu

The degree of student integration was measured using the student socialisation scale designed by Farnese, Spagnoli, Livi (2022). The concrete expression of a student's socialization is the knowledge of the roles he or she fulfils within the university environment, the fulfilment of which determines how high his or her sense of belonging to formal and informal groups within the university environment will be.

The student socialisation scale was translated into Romanian and adapted to the level of the language used by the students in the sample. The successful adaptation of the scale by the Italian researchers in this research was verified by a factor analysis. According to the analysis, the items of the scale, translated into Romanian, actually measure the student's socialisation. The value of the KMO test ("Kariser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling adequacy") had values at each level higher than 0.70: at the organization level - 0.85, at the group level - 0.83, and at the level of educational tasks - 0.87. The factor analysis also confirms the validity of the scale, which was also proved in the article by the three Italian researchers. On the basis of these items, three new socialisation variables were created, which showed the following:

Table 1: Integrating students into the academic milieu



Source: Author's table

The above results disprove the hypothesis of this study. Despite expectations, the students were integrated into the blended university milieu after the lifting of the anti-COVID-19 restrictions.

Students are aware of their educational tasks at the college. Why was the median for this variable higher than that for the organisation and groups? There are two explanations. Either the lecturers' requirements in courses and seminars held in mixed teaching mode were not very different from those held online, so students would have already been used to what they had to fulfil after their partial return to physical education. Another explanation would be related to data collection. Students completed the questionnaire shortly before the summer session started, at which point they knew what exams and papers they had to prepare.

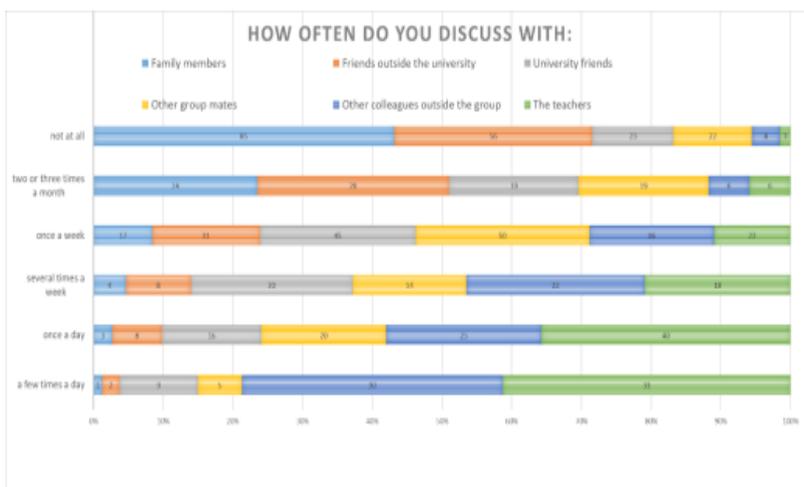
7. Explanation I: Interpersonal process

How do you explain the students' socialization within the faculty as an organization and within groups within the university milieu? Interpersonal relationships (frequency of

interactions and attachment to other classmates) are the processes in J. Weidman's model by which we can explain the above question.

In the table below, we find that students interacted most per day not with their own colleagues or friends from the university, but with teachers. Through daily discussions with teachers, students learned the values and standards of the faculty and became part of the institution.

Table 2: Frequency of interaction in the university milieu



Source: Author's table

In terms of integration into the college community, it was not the quantity but the quality of interaction that made the students feel closer to their colleagues. Not the quantity because during the pandemic students had a discussion a few times a week with other colleagues (ESU, 2021: 22), while after the lifting of the restrictions, Romanian students had from the sample discussed by other colleagues once a week. But, these discussions, occurred between peers who, after the partial return to physical education, became friends.

Table 3: Number of new friends that students have made among colleagues after the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions

How many good friends have you made since you started university among your classmates?	N	%
0	7	5,2
1-2	58	43,3
3-4	42	31,3
peste 5	27	20,1
Total	134	100,0

Source: Author's table

8. Explanation II: Intrapersonal processes

The subjective appreciation of the academic environment is in J. Weidman's (1989) model, a factor that increases or decreases the student's inclusion in the university environment. It is not so much the quality of the academic environment that matters in itself, but the positive or negative perception the student has of this environment. A student checks the extent to which his or her own goals can be achieved in the university environment and draws conclusions whether this environment is conducive to his or her own aspirations. If he perceives it as useful, the young person, according to J. Weidman's model, will be satisfied or dissatisfied with the university environment he belongs to.

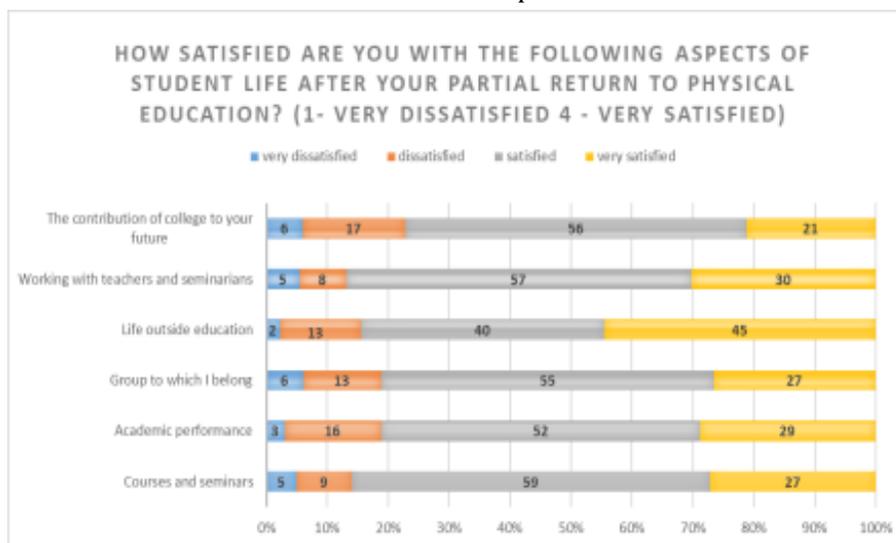
Online learning provides resources that differ from face-to-face learning and is useful for achieving the goals set by students. Therefore, students will also value online, face-to-face and mixed forms of learning differently.

During the pandemic, students evaluated online learning forms according to the form of education, field and level of study. Students were most dissatisfied with the move of seminars and practical classes to online format (ESU, 2021, p. 34). The degree of dissatisfaction was even higher for students enrolled in fields of study such as agriculture, general and veterinary medicine, where practical placements are worth much more to them than for those studying one of the humanities (ESU, 2021, p. 34).

For students enrolled in humanities subjects, such as those in the study sample, blended learning (partly online) was not as high a reason for dissatisfaction as for those enrolled in agriculture, general and veterinary medicine.

The data gathered from the survey confirm the above expectations: *students enrolled in the undergraduate courses of the Faculty of Sociology in Bucharest were satisfied overall mixed education* (for all items in the questionnaire related to this aspect, the median of the answers on a four-point Likert scale was "thank you"). Students were particularly positive about the following: their cooperation with professors, the courses and seminars held in the mixed format, their extra-curricular activities, the group they belong to, their academic performance and the faculty's role in their future.

Table 4: Satisfaction with aspects of student life



Source: Author's table

Of the aspects of student life mentioned above, the greatest satisfaction (45% said they were "very satisfied") was with life outside academic activity. After two years of long-distance interaction with their own peers, not living on university campuses, and being deprived of spending time away from home due to restrictions, they have "made up for what they missed" during their time in co-education. Unsurprisingly, students were most satisfied with informal activities outside study and classes.

For students, the partial return to traditional teaching was a reason for great satisfaction (cumulatively, 87% answered "satisfied" or "very satisfied") because after two years of waiting, they could collaborate unmediated by technology with teachers in the faculty. However, this collaboration "did unfix" the problems of online learning. As we can see in the graph above, the lowest satisfaction was recorded in terms of the contribution of the faculty to the student's future (77% "satisfied" and "very satisfied" responses), a sign that the online educational act makes it difficult to adopt a future professional status.

Students are satisfied with the faculty's contribution to their future, their relationship with the faculty and their academic performance has more integrated more into the faculty, as has the organisation, more than other students. For them, the partial return to a physical format brought them closer to the values promoted by the college and helped them get to know how the college works after two years of not crossing its threshold.

It can be stated on the basis of the correlation table below that through the unmediated contact of technology with teachers the students' "sense of us" increased. Even the partial return to physical learning is enough to solve a problem often reported by researchers concerning distance learning: the emergence of alienation. Thus, teachers are a source of role models in mixed learning, helping integrate students into the university and helping them acquire a future professional status.

Table 5: Correlations between student integration in the academic milieu and aspects of student life

		Integration into the organisation	Integration at group level	Integration at individual task level
The contribution of the university to the student's future	Pearson Correlation	.364**	.304**	.455**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000
Life outside education	Pearson Correlation	.174*	.198*	.252**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.049	.025	.004
Group to which I belong	Pearson Correlation	.091	.296**	.236**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.299	.001	.007
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.263**	.273**	.456**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.002	.000
Working with teachers and seminarists	Pearson Correlation	.310**	.218*	.461**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.013	.000
Courses and seminars	Pearson Correlation	.201*	.158	.356**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	.069	.000

Source: Author's table

The students felt that they were part of the groups in the college although they interacted with their peers more on academic, formal and difficult topics. Such interactions occurred after two years of students not being able to have extracurricular activities together

with their peers due to restrictions. So this minimal interaction was enough, after two years apart, to bring them closer together.

9. Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced universities globally to implement online learning. After the restrictions were lifted, at some universities courses and seminars were taught in a mixed mode (online and face-to-face) so that the transition to the 'normal' pre-pandemic university environment could be made smoothly. This research observed the extent to which mixed learning contributed to this transition from the perspective of student integration into post-pandemic life.

The interaction mediated by online platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic did not make it possible for students to build their own friendships, a process that would have increased their socialisation. The return, at least partially, to face-to-face learning has remedied this problem. As a result, against expectations, students became integrated into the face-to-face and online university milieu introduced after the restrictions were lifted. It remains to be seen in future studies how the socialisation process has changed in universities that have switched from co-education to fully physical education.

Student satisfaction with the university milieu is, in J. Weidman's model, along with the making of primary relationships or friendships, an important factor in the student's integration into the university environment. Student satisfaction has increased because of being able to return to the extracurricular activities they were deprived of during the two years of the pandemic. The satisfaction, in particular, with these changes has thus amplified their integration into the post-pandemic blended university milieu and in the future into the full face-to-face one.

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APPROACHING SCHOOL DROPOUT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ITS TRIGGERING PHENOMENA

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Abstract: *School dropout represents one of the current most striking society's problems. In recent years, the number to those who choose to drop out from school has grown considerably, the main causes being the precarious financial situation, bad family examples, low interest in completing studies, lack of confidence in the quality of teaching, etc. The investigative process was carried out in Caraş-Severin County and consisted of quantitative research involving the sociological investigation, the technique used to be the opinion poll, and in order to obtain the data necessary for the study, the instrument used was the questionnaire, applied to a number of 100 people from the rural and urban communities of Caraş-Severin county. Results: the phenomenon of school dropout is continuously increasing, in order to decrease the rate of school dropout, measures will have to be implemented to convince the young population that dropping out is not a real solution for reducing the problems they face. In order for this phenomenon to decrease, the involvement of the authorities and representatives of educational institutions is essential.*

Keywords: school dropout, pupils, teachers, causes, multidisciplinary team.

1. Introduction

School dropout is extremely widespread in the current school environment, and it is a major problem of the Romanian education system, but also a problem at the level of the entire society, because leaving school early leads to social exclusion and marginalization.

According to the literature, school dropout means school pupils and students not attending school, regardless of culture, age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, social and financial status. Children at risk of dropping out of school are deprived of the opportunity that the educational institution brings to the formation of the future adult, both personally and professionally. (Ekstrand, 2015 :459).

In the author's conception (Neamţu, 2003: 199) "school dropout is defined as definitive evasion behaviour that consists in ceasing school attendance, leaving the educational system, regardless of the level reached, before obtaining a qualification or complete professional training or before the end of the cycle of studies started. Those who drop out of school are no longer readmitted to the same educational institution and are not enrolled in an alternative schooling program".

2. Causes of school dropout

The causes of dropping out from school are diverse and can be generated by:

1. *Single-parent families*, but also tragedies that involve an increased level of stress in the child's life are factors in decisions regarding school dropout.
2. *Material situation of the family of origin* represents a risk or protection factor in the pupil's adaptation to the school environment.
3. *Defective relationship* with the education system, with the teaching staff, the group of pupils, the lack of adaptation to the school environment due to the reduced motivation to

- go to classes caused by the bullying received - are elements of the vicious circle that makes up the reasons for dropping out of school. (Cace, 2010: 28)
4. *Pupil's environment*, alcohol and tobacco consumption are risk factors that can be causes of school dropout. Adolescent age represents an important threshold in the continuation of studies, because pupils face contradictory feelings, the interest being placed on the activities carried out within the entourage, on adolescent relationships and less on educational ones. (Bonea, 2019: 387-403)
 5. *The pupil's inhibitions, the frustrations accumulated within the family*, the group of pupils, the wrong school orientation, the lack of emotional and moral support from the teaching staff, the low grades obtained, corrections and repetition outline the reasons for dropping out of school.
 6. *School phobia*, school pupil and student personality, depression and introversion are factors that lower academic performance.
 7. *The ranking of pupils according to their academic performance* and the marginalization of those who do not rise to the level of the collective is a reason for dropping out of studies.
 8. *Family pressure for obtaining maximum results* leads over time to frustrations and traumatic experiences, the pupil is attracted to vices, destructive entourages to overcome the desires of the members (Manoil, 2019: 350-354).

3. Concrete measures to prevent and combat school dropout

Considering the multitude of causes that determine school dropout, a solution to reduce this phenomenon would be the implementation of strategies to prevent and combat this phenomenon. There are many aspects that make school dropout a difficult problem to solve.

Dropout prevention has certain limits. No matter how well thought out and scientifically based prevention may be, the limits appear as a result of the many phenomena that influence this phenomenon through their interaction. Drawing the analogy between school dropout and predelinquency, the effectiveness of preventive action is undermined by internal limits and external limits.

An effective intervention of teaching staff through the very educational process they carry out with children, can be a means of preventing school dropout through its intervention at the level of individual, family, school risk factors, those determined by the environment of origin.

An important aspect of school dropout prevention is the creation of special success situations for school difficulties, because success and rewards develop the pupil's initiatives and increase his confidence in his own possibilities. The teaching staff can only be the promoter of programs whose purpose is to prevent and combat school dropout.

Another element in combating school dropout is represented by the participation of all children in the educational program, according to their respective strengths and possibilities. The starting point is the premise that every child has value, uniqueness and has a learning potential, regardless of his or her social needs. "For a better prevention of school dropout, the skills and needs of each child integrated into the education system, whether of a different religion or ethnicity than the rest of the children, must be known" (Țoc, 2018: 39).

4. The role of the multidisciplinary team in preventing school dropout

Early detection of cases exhibiting a risk of school dropout is the main solution that can improve the phenomenon. The social worker, the educational counsellor, the psychologist, but also the teaching staff with higher training can manage to recognize the early signs of school dropout and establish an individual and personalized intervention plan to reduce the problem.

Combating and preventing the phenomenon of early school leaving is a topical issue for both specialists and the authorities in Romania and at the level of the European Union.

The well-being of the person and human rights present the importance of equal opportunities for any child in terms of completing compulsory studies, but the reality presents

the ethnic and genetic characteristics of the individual which are discriminatory factors favouring school dropout. Ensuring a future for people in society, assuring compliance with the non-discriminatory principle, but also the moral involvement of institutions are facilitating agents in maximizing efforts to support pupils to have an equal chance at schooling. (Bridgeland, 2006).

In order to combat school dropout, pupils must adapt to the educational requirements, and teachers and their families must provide moral support to help manage risk situations.

Young people who wanted to attend vocational school and were forced to enrol in high school education, later abandoned it due to the demand, requirements and inconsistencies between the pupils' desire and what they receive from an educational and less professional point of view. The main reason given by high school students for dropping out of high school is based on the heavy tasks they receive and the lack of intellectual skills needed to complete them. The difference between school students with intellectual skills and those who want a job must be understood by the Romanian state. Combating the dropout rate can focus on giving importance to the formation of vocational schools, which train professional workers in certain fields. In this case, attending high school and completing secondary education and then, at the young person's desire, the higher ones, can only be focused on those school students who want it, without any obligation (Bonea, 2019: 394-398)

A basic and continuous training of teachers is necessary to be able to prevent and combat the phenomenon of school dropout. Children show certain symptoms in different situations, such as: juvenile delinquency, decreased motivation, involvement and school performance, they may be introverted or have comprehension problems. The attention of the teaching staff must be focused on the pupil's problems and symptoms, in order to succeed, together with the specialists in the field of education, psychology and social assistance, in solving the specific needs. Family problems, social marginalization, prejudice and discrimination, insufficient income are effects that lead to school dropout, effects that a well-trained teacher must observe early (Bonea, 2019: 387-394)

The Member States of the European Union must implement public policies to prevent and combat early school leaving in order to reach the objective of reducing school dropout below 10%. Through prevention, Member States must facilitate the access of school pupils and students to educational institutions equally, without discrimination and social stigmatization. The implementation of programs that want to train teachers for the purpose of exclusively identifying and supporting pupils at risk of dropping out of school is another way of intervention through which the goal is to be achieved. Ensuring the quality standards of Romanian education, the appropriate endowment of schools, the implementation of European projects for the rehabilitation of rural schools, but also the observance of hygiene norms and the educational requirements of children, regardless of their status, is another solution that the Ministry of Education wants to implement (Ministry of Labour, 2014)

Teacher training should include sections on how to address and prevent school dropout. In 2015, the Government of Romania approved the Strategy regarding the reduction of early school dropout, which includes measures to be implemented by 2020 to combat school dropout. Through this strategy, Romania had as its main objective to reduce the dropout rate from 17.3% in 2013 to 11.3% in 2020. Romania acknowledged the problem of school dropout and wants solutions to prevent and combat it, but this solution and these solutions must be implemented from the beginning of the pupil's life. Kindergarten is the first environment in which the child is integrated from an early age (Crosnoe, Crumb : 2007:267-282)

Providing a permanent and faithful feedback to school pupils and students is aimed at maintaining their involvement in the educational process, preserving curiosity and the desire to attend school, the final objective being the decrease in the school dropout rate. The focus of the educational unit on the pupils' needs, on their development and less on teaching and memorization is a sustainable solution that can bring positive effects in the pupils' lives. (Weerman, 2010: 339-355)

In order to prevent school dropout, educational institutions must train teachers so that they focus on each student or pupil's inclinations to achieve performance in one or more subjects for which he or she shows curiosity and passion. The support offered by the teaching staff must be focused on helping the pupils and students towards a correct orientation towards certain fields of study, the emphasis being on the training of high-performing pupils in the field in which they possess skills and abilities and less on the training of all pupils, regardless of their passions, skills, fields only with the aim being promoted to the next grade. Eliminating the classic and rigid education system can represent a starting point in combating school dropout. (Dianda, 2008)

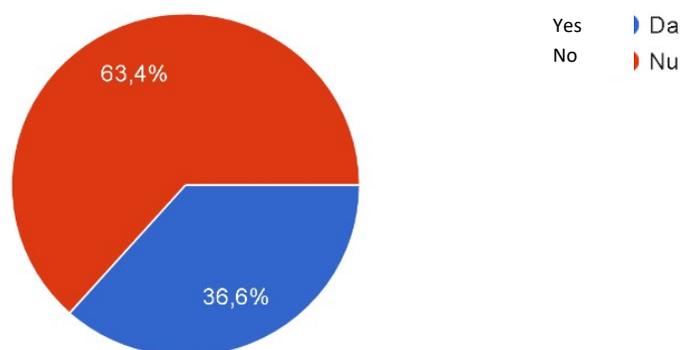
4. Applied research

The investigative approach was represented by a quantitative research. The quantitative survey involved the sociological investigation, the technique used being the opinion poll, and to obtain the data necessary for the study, the instrument was the questionnaire, applied to a number of 100 people from the rural and urban communities of Caraş-Severin county. *The purpose* of this research is to identify cases of school dropout and establish the causes that determined this phenomenon, for each individual, but especially to identify the pupils and students who are prone to this phenomenon. *The general objective* of the research is to highlight the main causes that lead to school dropout, how poverty influences the decisions made by the child.

5. Data analysis and interpretation

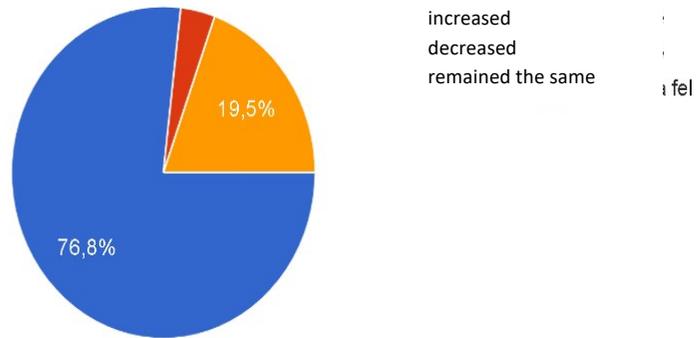
In order to reach the proposed objectives, the questions of the questionnaire were aimed at determining the population's perception regarding the phenomenon of school dropout in Romania. The results obtained following the centralization of the answers have the following relevance:

Figure 1 The focus on education in Romania



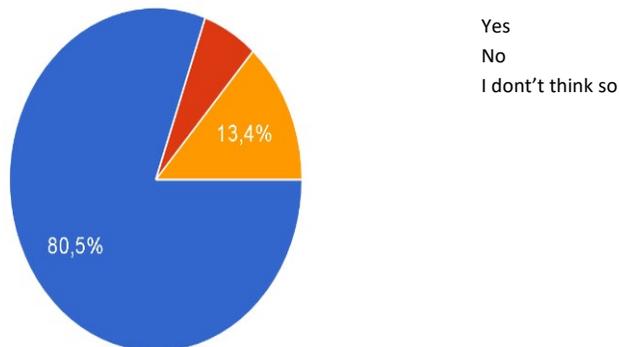
Analysing the graph, we can see that 63.4% of the people surveyed believe that emphasis is placed on education in our country, only 36.6% of those surveyed gave a negative answer.

Figure 2 School dropout rate in Romania



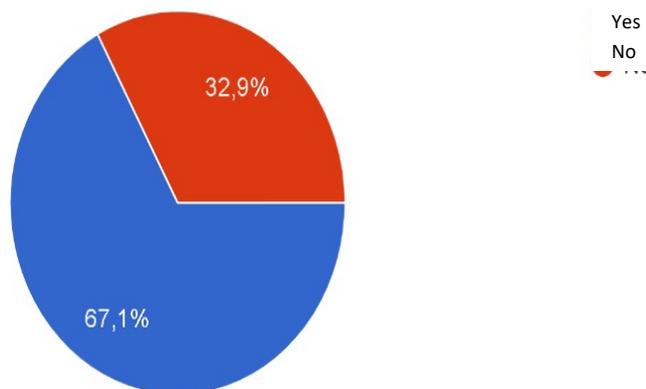
76.8% of the people surveyed believe that the school dropout rate is on an upward curve, 19.5% conclude that it has remained the same, and 3.7% agree that the school dropout rate is decreasing.

Figure 3 Predisposition of children from disorganized families to school dropout



80.5% of the respondents opted for the Yes option, because in their opinion children from disorganized families are prone to dropping out of school. 13.4% of the subjects chose the option I don't believe, and 6.1% of them said that it is not because of disorganized families that they are prone to drop out of school.

Figure 4 The importance of the counsellor in preventing school dropout



The people surveyed answered the question related to the *importance of the counsellor in preventing school dropout*, as follows: 67.1% considered that the school counsellor plays an important part in preventing school dropout, and 32.9% concluded that he does not have an important role in combating school dropout.

6. Research conclusions

The results of the present study demonstrate that the school dropout rate is on the rise, and this is due to the low importance that pupils and young people attach to education, many of them believing that it will not help them much in the future. From the applied research, it emerges that children from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with a poor financial situation, as well as children from disorganized families, who, in the absence of worthy role models, choose to drop out of school are much more prone to drop out, considering this as normality.

An important aspect that the present study promotes is the importance of counselling among children and adolescents. The role of the school counsellor is a particularly important one, because by monitoring the pupils' situation, he can identify the most vulnerable, those who register low academic performance, who encounter difficulties in adapting and learning. Early identification of these children can prevent school dropout. Therefore, school dropout in our country is an alarming phenomenon, which can be prevented by involving several social stakeholders, teachers, parent, school counsellors etc.

7. General conclusions:

Dropping out of school has major implications on the personal development of the individual, and short-, medium- and long-term consequences on human resources and the development of communities in general.

The improvement of this phenomenon undoubtedly depends on the measures that the school will adopt. The teaching staff, through their personal input, contributes to making the school an attractive environment, thus reducing the school dropout rate. In order to decrease the number of those who drop out of school, it is necessary to use teaching methods and techniques aimed at triggering the motivation to learn, both at the micro-social and individual level. Teachers can stimulate in pupils the development of empathic skills and the feeling of belonging to the group. Also, the involvement of parents is essential, they should carefully monitor the school situation of their children, communicate permanently with the teaching staff, pay attention to the needs of the children, spend time with them, follow the circles that the children frequent. Children who exhibit an inappropriate behaviour in the school environment, have low learning outcomes, they are introvert, apathetic, they need specialized support to be able to overcome crisis situations. Children and youth counselling is vital because the school counsellor may identify the causes that generate certain behaviours of school pupils and students, and can offer the support that children and young people need. For the counselling sessions to be successful school pupils and students to show significant progress, will, motivation, involvement and flexibility are needed, both from the part of the school pupils and students, as well as from the part of parents. Therefore, the multidisciplinary team from educational institutions, together with families and children and youth, can contribute to the reduction of the school dropout phenomenon.

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SCHOOL – OPEN SYSTEM AND FACTOR OF SOCIAL PROGRESS TEACHER'S COMPETENCE PROFILE, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL CHANGES

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Abstract: *In the context of the process of major restructuring of the professionalization system for the teaching career, the school / university has four important missions: a scientific mission, developing and maintaining a wide knowledge base; a mission of citizens, to promote equal opportunities, to develop active citizens; an economic mission, enabling the development of a professional project and promoting integration into the labour market; a personal development mission, contributing to the development of the personality and full potential of each person. The present study aims to examine the relationship between school and society, as it is reflected in the conception of students-future teachers. More specifically, we were preoccupied with providing a relevant diagnosis of the competency profile outlined by students-future teachers. The data collected and analyzed as a result of the investigation led to the following findings: the emotional-affective dimension determines, to a significant extent, the efficiency of the communication relationship; the investigated subjects especially appreciate the climate of communication, the emotional connection established between teachers and students.*

Keywords: competence profile, centering on educated, affective climate, supportive communication, autonomy.

1. Openness to the new - promoter of the educational partnership

The school, as a social subsystem, is in a relationship of mutual influence with the external environment in which it integrates. As long as all the individuals who form a group, a community and society as a whole are socialised from an early age through the educational system, the school holds the strategic position of prime importance in the progress of society. "Lifelong learning" is not only an educational philosophy, but the philosophy of facilitating the development of human beings as such, but also of human communities, with the potential to "reshape opportunities in life" (Evans, Schoon and Weale, 2013).

In this context, the wanted outcomes from the educational system must be educated people, who, in addition to information and cognitive acquisitions, must have beliefs that relate to a set of known and socially accepted values, attitudes compatible with the civic spirit and responsibility within the group of belonging or the community in which they integrate and last but not least, the skill of lifelong learning and thus the ability to adapt to an environment in continuous changing (<https://proform.snsr.ro/baza-de-date-online-cu-resurse-pentru-dezvoltarea-unui-management-institutional-antreprenorial-de-calitate-in-scoli-defavorizate/parteneriatul-scoala-societate>).

Open-minded, active, dynamic individuals also mean strong, cohesive communities/societies with a solid, healthy, competent, dynamic and thus competitive human capital (Nicoll, 2009). Facing this challenge, the Romanian school can be conceived as social service, open to the community partnership, which accepts the social influence from the external environment and is able to influence, in its turn, the external environment in the sense of social progress.

In Romania there are studies that confirm that school success also depends on the social and cultural characteristics of the original environment (Ivan, 2009; Țoc, 2013). For a real and efficient partnership in education, axiological, attitudinal and behavioral changes are needed at the level of the partners involved.

The change at school level must aim, in addition to promoting cooperation between all the elements interested in the development of education, and establishing a balance between the educational offer and the demand for education, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, ensuring the flexibility of the curriculum, in accordance with the identified educational needs of the community.

2. The role of the University in the current social context

The major role of the University has been intensely debated in the specialized literature. There are two different perspectives: on the one hand, the development of professional skills, on the other hand, the production of culture.

Like people, institutions and society as a whole learn and change: "He who does not learn anticipatively, will be forced to learn by shock, one of the most expensive and painful forms of education for societies or institutions" (Malița, 2001: 253).

In the contemporary era, the content of the general culture knows radical restructurings, imposed by the changes that have occurred and are occurring in the material and spiritual life of the society. All these require the revision of the traditional concept of general culture and its connection to the requirements of the contemporary era. The value of this concept depends not so much on the quantity and richness of knowledge, but on how it is articulated and organized in the system, according to the level of psychic development of the taught ones.

The professional culture of the student-future teacher is determined by the important social functions that derive from his/her status in our society:

a) the function of a *specialist* in a certain field. This function requires from the teacher a thorough specialized culture, partially realized in higher education and subsequently completed by different forms of improvement;

b) the function of an *educator*, shaper of the personality of the young generation, can be properly fulfilled by the teacher only by possessing a deep psychological, pedagogical and methodological training;

c) the function of *mediator and co-partner*, in order to establish cooperative relations with its students, but also with parents, state bodies, mass-media, etc.

With regard to the required European competences, three categories can be summarised (Joița, 2005: 36): *cognitive competences, social competences, affective competences*.

Living in a knowledge-based society, training represents, in this context, an action of shaping the educated according to the demands of the current society. The concept of training has allowed to make a closer connection between the initial training activities carried out in schools with the professional development activities.

In this context, the teaching-learning relationship acquires a new nuance, the responsibility of learning being an important objective that must be taken into account by the teacher, along with the formation of self-confidence and autonomy in learning. The teaching act must be built around the participation of the student in his/her own training.

The pupil/student – centred learning must be understood under the following aspects: *Conception, theory*, regarding the manner of approaching the instructive-educational process, with emphasis on the highlighting of the human resource, with the meaning of respecting the interests, needs and aspirations of the educated; *Deontology*: increasing the quality of the teaching activity by valuing the subject of learning.

Described by specialists as a coping strategy in organizational fulfillment in situations of uncertainty (Bond, Leung, Au et al., 2004), the unrealistic-optimistic attitude can produce

great individual and social damage as the progressive confrontation with the requirements of a reality that requests flexibility, effort and perseverance.

Therefore, in shaping the profile of future practitioners in the field of education, for the development of competences, the following objectives must be taken into account:

- a) the manifestation of an open attitude towards innovation, towards the new, of a receptive attitude towards the new requirements and changes in education;
- b) the development of mental flexibility, the construction of adaptable constructive structures, which would allow the future practitioner to adapt quickly and efficiently in various educational situations;
- c) the de-construction and re-construction of the model of teacher internalized as a result of traditional pedagogical practices;
- d) the development of social-relational skills, tasks and problem solving, through interrelationship and interaction; the development of empathy;
- e) the understanding and awareness of the idea that the teacher, in addition to the problems of teaching, faces many other problems (openness to the classroom management), that he must fulfill multiple roles (and not only that of knowledge transmitter);
- f) the affirmation of the affective -emotional side of the students' personalities, awakening the emotions of pleasure, enthusiasm in the act of learning.

3. Self concept – the connection between determination and self-determination, between knowledge and self-knowledge

In the present context, the school aims to form individuals capable of taking responsibility for acquiring competences. The thesis of cognitive flexibility (Spiro, 2001) brings to the fore the existing potential of the knower subject, the constructivist teacher having the role of determining what previous representations are necessary for the realisation of the cognitive compilation of knowledge.

In a broad sense, learning means a change that occurs in our cognitive structures, in the patterns of interpretation of reality, in the strategies of solving problems (Siebert, 2001: 28). Cognitive and metacognitive mental processes are essential in learning, teaching is a condition of training the mental processes of building understanding, it is a condition of organising situational terms to facilitate learning.

Knowledge cannot ignore neither the individuality of the one who knows, learns, nor the context in which he finds himself.

The central role in knowledge is played by the student because he faces cognitive conflicts (between his own ideas and other ideas, between previous and new experience), he raises questions, he seeks answers and offers solutions, he debates, he makes predictions, he produces cognitive experiences. It is the teacher's task to support the educated, to introduce them to scientific knowledge, to guide them, coordinate them, to organize the conditions and to facilitate the way to knowledge.

The training of the student-future teacher for lifelong learning, for continuous improvement is today a unanimously accepted necessity. Education can no longer be reduced to school institutions, nor can it be restricted to a single period of time.

The understanding of the individual as an extremely complex system, with the maximum capacity of self-organisation, offers new foundations for accepting and explaining the individual's need to learn continuously, independently, all his life. The concepts of *self-directed learning*, *self-learning*, *self-taught learning*, have raised in front of the theory and practice of education and training the problem of organizing new socio-organisational frameworks in which to learn. The progressive pedagogy, subordinated to the principle of "self-organisation instead of schooling", has focused, starting with the eighth decade of the XXth century, on the ideas: *self-determination*, *self-realization*, *self-experience*, *self-organisation*

(understood in this context as "an alternative to the rigid bureaucratic structures of the official training system" (Siebert, 2001: 28-29).

The learner's self-concept is "a cognitive construct that includes the set of convictions and beliefs about himself (and the world) of the learner. Essentially, the self-concept is formed on the basis and through the taking by the individual of his full responsibility for his own decisions, for directing his own life" (Dumitru, 2007: 108). For C. Stan (2001: 48) the self concept is defined as "the sum of the individual findings of a human subject, related to his personal attributes and qualities and open to self-improvement, self-realisation, so that self-knowledge and self-education are simultaneous and congeneric activities.

From the first steps it takes in the guided learning system, the independent, autonomous learning, however, involves a certain psychological instrumentation, a certain personality profile and above all, a certain learning experience, it involves specific resources - resources whose identification, measurement, control and development have entered the field of interest of many researchers (psychologists, teachers, sociologists, theoreticians and practitioners) for a long time and continues to arouse interest due to the practical purpose of enriching the scientific knowledge in this direction (Negovan, 2007).

I. Al. Dumitru (2008) presents some suggestions for teachers, necessary to guide the students in the process of self-knowledge. The teacher must *assist, support, guide the students in exploring their own Self*, to self-reveal, to be aware of their capacities, their positive and negative qualities. Rather than offering solutions, the teacher-counselor would better *try to find out which alternatives were previously experienced* or used by the student in similar situations and to what extent they gave results or not. Thus, the teacher can better understand why his student's previous attempts and efforts have failed;

Asking questions is a procedure that must be used with caution. Open questions are more comfortable for students than closed questions (which limit the possibilities of self-exploration), they leave more freedom of action.

The teacher must *listen carefully to his students*, encourage them to reflect and describe their emotions, present ideas and opinions; it is a good way to facilitate self exploration. Special attention is also paid to *non-verbal language*; students communicate not only verbally, but also through non-verbal means (facial expressions, looks, tone of voice, certain gestures and body movements, etc.). It is easier to censor our verbal communication than non-verbal communication.

In training activities, the teacher can make *use of metaphors*. Using metaphors, the teacher can facilitate the students' cognitive process, thus contributing to a better understanding of situations and problems. The teacher can ask the students *to synthesise and summarise the topics and subtopics discussed and to reflect* on the role of the methods and procedures used in the respective didactic activity. The way in which the students synthesise and summarise allows the teacher to make decisions regarding further steps.

Self-knowledge requires constant self-examination, self-evaluation. That is why the pupil/student must be required to systematically and consistently move from analysis to self-analysis, from evaluation to self-evaluation, from criticism to self-criticism and generally from knowledge to self-knowledge. There is a need, therefore, to increase individual responsibility.

Developing confidence in one's own strength, in the value of one's own ideas and opinions, represents another important objective.

4. The psycho-social portrait of teachers – a diagnosis among the educable

If in the case of other professions we talk about good specialists, in the case of the teaching profession, the efficiency can no longer be reduced only to the knowledge and mastery of the specialized field. A good specialist is not always a good educator. Only the combination of specialized competences with psycho-pedagogical, methodical competences leads to the education and training of an efficient teacher.

4.1 The Objectives of the study

The study aims to investigate the opinion of students-future teachers regarding the competences of the teacher in a society in permanent evolution and change, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the role of the Program for the certification of competences for the teaching profession in their training as future professionals in education.

4.2 Research methodology

The research method used was the questionnaire-based survey. The data collected from the questionnaire-based survey were filled in with those of the focus-group interview.

The questionnaire addressed to a sample of 80 students in the second year of the pedagogical route of initial training within the Department for teacher training, contains 15 items both open and closed.

The opinions and assessments of the students were requested in four ways: a) in the form of dichotomous answers: yes; no; b) by appealing to assessment scales; (c) by choosing one or more variants from a given list; d) in the form of open appraisals, without pre-formulated answers.

5. Conclusions and discussions

We present below the results obtained from the application of the questionnaire.

One of the items of the questionnaire addresses the competences of the successful teacher in today's society. Analyzing the results obtained from the descriptive processing, we observe that students appreciate the most the following characteristics: Relaxed environment, open towards communication (15%), motivational, supportive communication (12.5%), passion for teaching (11.25%), flexibility, openness to student opinions (11.25%).

The interactive style, scientific training, confidence in students, authority, authenticity, empathy, self-assurance were other characteristics of the successful teacher, identified by the subjects. These results are summarised in Table 1 and in Figure 1. :

Table 1: Characteristics of the successful teacher, in the student's view

Characteristics of the successful teacher	No of answers	%
Relaxed environment, open to communication	12	15
Motivational, supportive communication	10	12
Passion for teaching	9	11
Flexibility, openness to student opinions	9	11
Interactive style	8	10
Scientific training	8	10
Trust in the student	7	9
Authority	6	8
Authenticity	5	6
Empathy	4	5
Self-assurance	2	3

Following (table 2), we present the attributes of effective didactic communication, in the subjects' vision, in descending order of the percentages obtained:

The data in Table 2 and Figure 2 highlight the emphasis placed by the investigated subjects on *scientific accuracy*, *accessible language* (same percentage: 12%) and *synthetic and logical exposure* (11%), as the main attributes of effective communication between the teacher and the student; in third place it is appreciated the *expressive speech* (10%), *enthusiasm and motivational support* (the percentage being the same: 10%).

Figure 1: Opinion of students on the characteristics of the successful

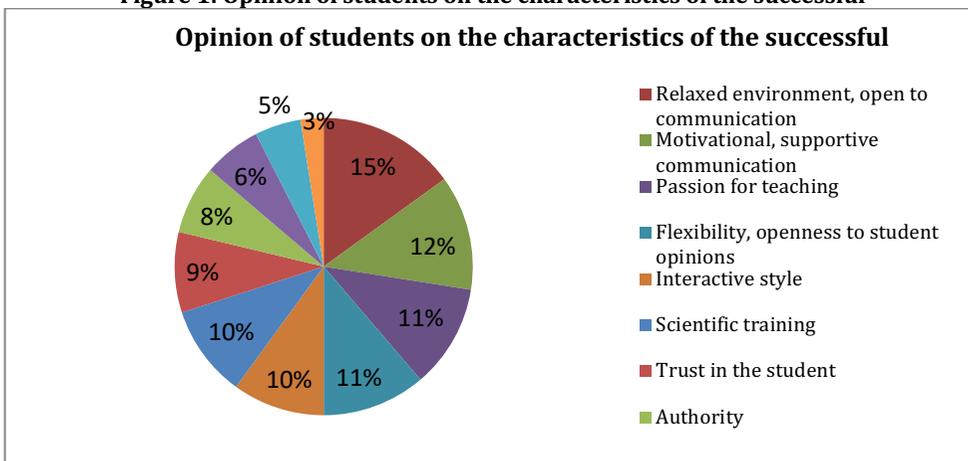
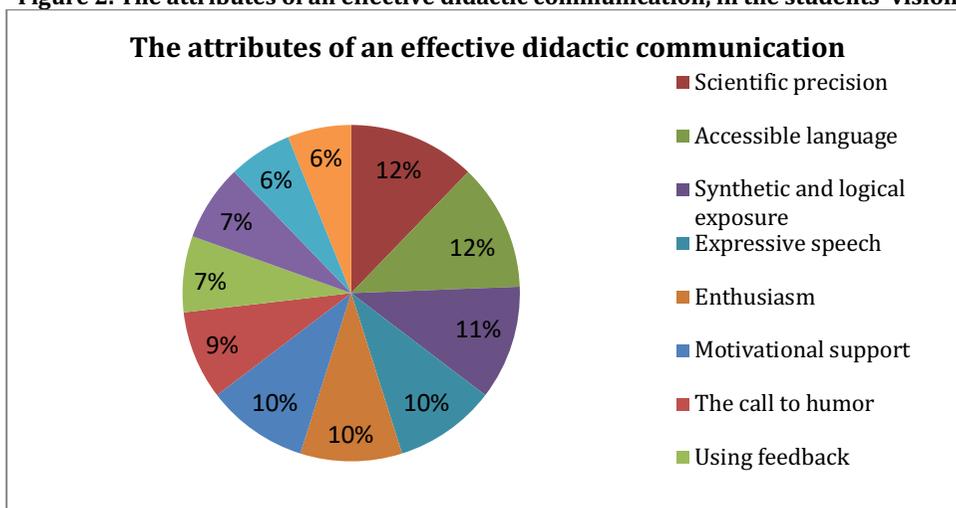


Table 2. The attributes of effective teaching communication

Attributes, in the students' view	No of answers	%
Scientific precision	10	12
Accessible language	10	12
Synthetic and logical exposure	9	11
Expressive speech	8	10
Enthusiasm	8	10
Motivational support	8	10
The call to humor	7	9
Using feedback	6	7
Stimulating curiosity	6	7
Using examples	5	6
Lack of prejudice	5	6

Figure 2. The attributes of an effective didactic communication, in the students' vision



Another item aims to identify the extent to which students are satisfied with communication with the teachers (table no. 3, Figure 3): only 8% appreciate that the communication relationship with the teacher pleases them to a *very large extent* and 27% - to a *large extent*; most of the students (46%) choose *the right extent*, and the rest: to a *small extent* (13%) and to a *very small extent* (6%).

Table no. 3. Students' perception of the communication relationship with teachers

Percent	The extent to which students are satisfied with communication with teachers	Percent	The extent to which teachers emphasize the emotional side of didactic communication
46 %	To a right extent	47 %	To a small extent
27 %	To a large extent	22 %	To a right extent
13 %	To a small extent	15 %	To a large extent
8 %	To a very large extent	9 %	To a very small extent
6 %	To a very small extent	7 %	To a very large extent

The data in Table 3 and Figure 4 also show the extent to which teachers manage, in the students' view, to emphasize the emotional side of didactic communication: most responses (47%) are focused on the option *to a small extent* or *to the right extent* (22%); the other variants of answer are: *to a large extent* – 15%, to a very small extent – 9%, and to a *very large extent* – only 7%.

Figure 3. The extent to which students are satisfied with communication with teachers

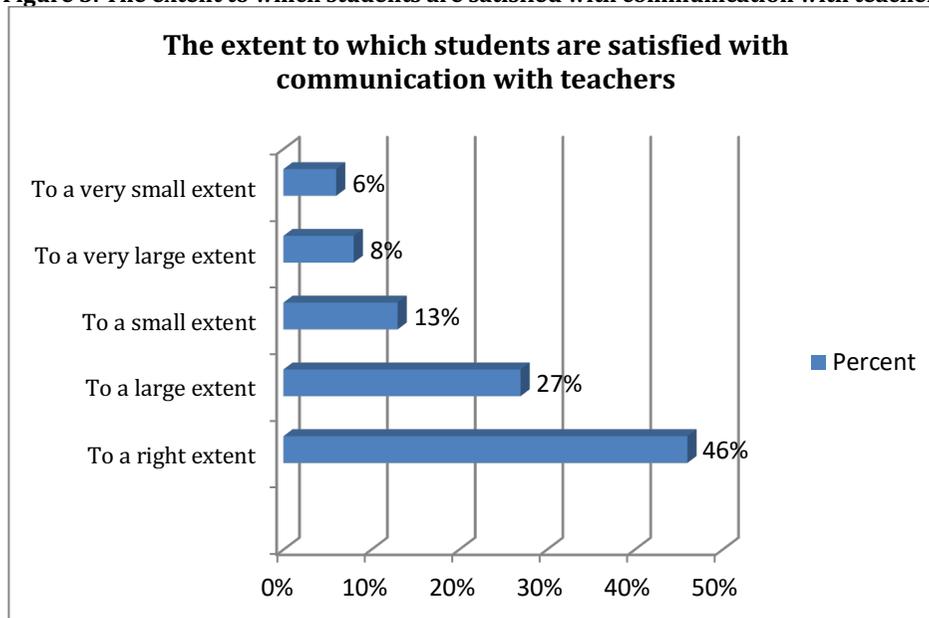
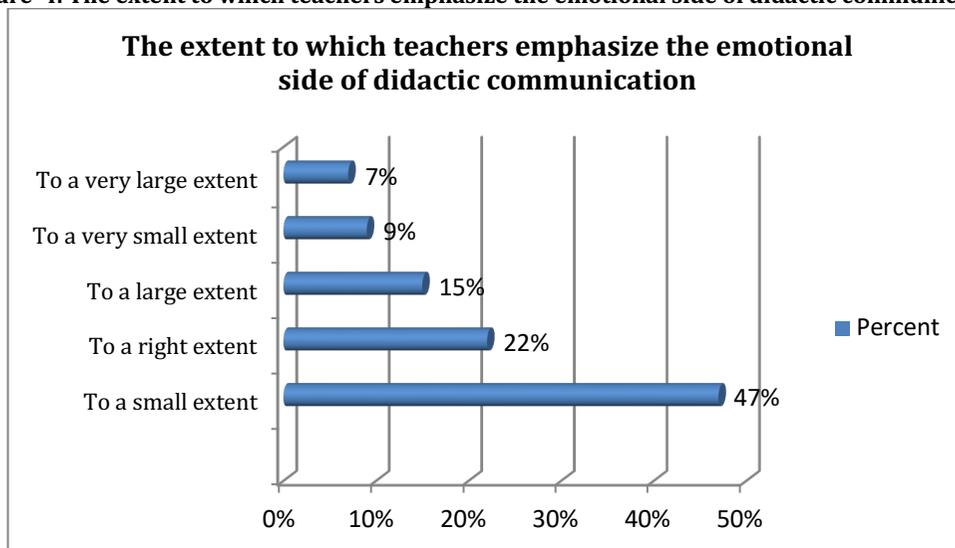


Figure 4. The extent to which teachers emphasize the emotional side of didactic communication



The students' answers regarding the role of the Teacher Training Department in the formation of managerial skills of future teachers are divided between the three answer options: yes – 51.25%; no – 41.25%; I cannot appreciate – 7.5%. These gratifying results are also confirmed by other responses of the subjects. For example, another item asked subjects to rank certain skills according to the importance they believe they have. The answers are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Hierarchy of the teacher's competences, according to the students

Competences	Rank/hierarchy
Of communication and relationship	1.
Methodological	2.
Motivational support/ development of self confidence	3.
Management, management of conflict situations	4.
Student evaluation	5.
Technical and technological	6.

The data recorded following the application and interpretation of the questionnaire were completed with those obtained by conducting the "focus-group" interview. The interview guide was applied on 16 people, the questions in the interview guide being varied: introductory questions, connection questions, key questions, aimed at the objectives of the investigative approach, and in the end, final, synthesizers questions, .

We aimed to identify the perceptions, representations and attitudes of the students regarding: the criteria for assessing the successful teacher; the main problems faced by students when communicating with teachers; suggestions regarding stimulating interactions in the classroom.

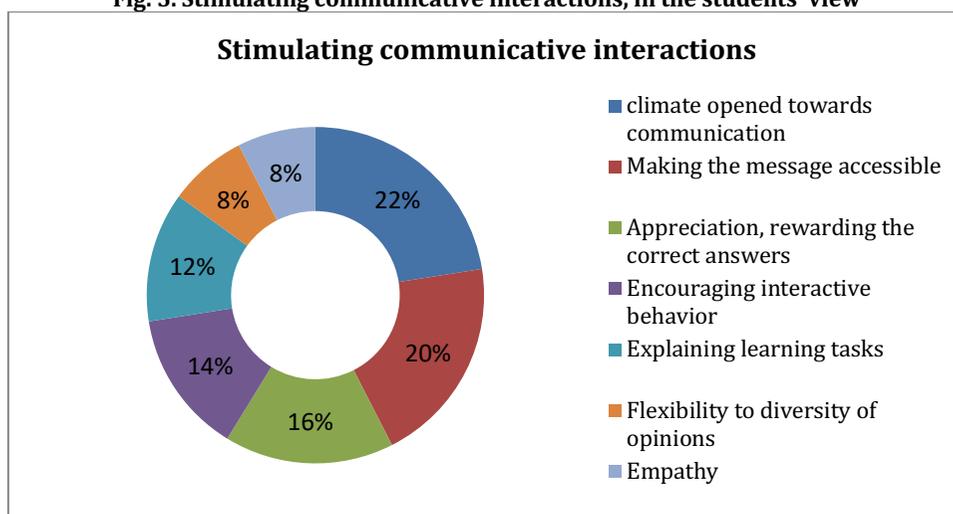
Regarding the didactic communication relationship, the investigated subjects appreciate, first of all, aspects related to the emotional side of the teachers' personality, to the psychological support: the supportive attitude, the communication and counseling skills. The main problems faced by students in communicating with teachers are: lack of understanding/empathy; abstract language; blocking/intimidation. It is noticed that the problems mentioned by the students were more aimed at the psycho-relational dimension.

With regard to the stimulation of communicative interactions, we present below the main aspects and coordinates which, in the view of the subjects of the sample, are of the utmost importance, as evidenced by the interpretation of the recorded data (table 5, figure 5):

Table 5. Coordinates of stimulating teacher-student interactions

Crt. No.	Stimulating communicative interactions, in the students' view	%
1.	Climate opened towards communication	22
2.	Making the message accessible	20
3.	Appreciation, rewarding the correct answers	16
4.	Encouraging interactive behavior	14
5.	Explaining learning tasks	12
6.	Flexibility to diversity of opinions	8
7.	Empathy	8

Fig. 5. Stimulating communicative interactions, in the students' view



The results obtained in the mentioned study provide an empirical basis for reflecting and restructuring the school curriculum, from the perspective of emphasizing the socio-emotional dimension, with emphasis on developing self-confidence, forming an open attitude towards the new and towards communication, easy adaptation to change.

Starting from the idea that lifelong learning seeks to awaken "in each individual the need to continue studying and training, the taste for new experiences, the desire to overcome oneself and to improve the quality of one's own life" (Neculau, 2004) and deepening the analysis of the pedagogical professionalisation of students - future teachers, at least two formative directions can be distinguished from a curricular perspective: one – that of building a desirable profile of competence of the teacher's training and the subsequent development of the outlined competences, another – of the scientific practice of the profession (Joița, 2008: 18). In this regard, the teacher is asked to demonstrate cognitive, social – relational, managerial and didactic teaching skills, he is asked to opt for the strategic options advantageous to the development of his students.

In shaping the profile of future practitioners in the field of education, the following *objectives* must be taken into account:

- a) focusing on the training/development of competences; development of mental flexibility, construction of flexible constructive structures, which would allow the future practitioner to adapt quickly and efficiently in various educational situations;

- b) de-constructing and re-constructing the model of teacher internalised as a result of traditional pedagogical practices; understanding and awareness of the idea that the teacher, besides the problems of the act of teaching, faces many other problems (openness to the class management), that he must fulfill multiple roles (and not only that of knowledge transmitter);
- c) knowledge and meeting of the various needs of the educated; individualisation and personalisation of learning;
- d) focusing on active, experiential, constructivist learning;
- e) promoting self-confidence;
- f) development of social – relational skills, problem solving, tasks through interrelationship and interaction; developing empathy and understanding towards colleagues and their opinions;
- g) the manifestation of an open attitude towards innovation, towards the new, of a receptive attitude towards the new requirements and changes in education;
- h) the affirmation of the affective-emotional side of the educated personalities, the awakening of the emotions of pleasure, enthusiasm in the act of learning.

On the one hand, school must be open to society, in order to form individuals capable of leading to the development of society, on the other hand, society is an important dominant source in the foundation of curricular design.

From this perspective, the curriculum is required to be designed based on the prospecting of the evolution of society in order to prepare students to cope with and adapt to the society in which they live. Thus, it is necessary for the curricular objectives to aim at developing the capacity of pupils/students to put into practice the knowledge they have, the content of learning to be derived from the social life, relevant and in line with the current and prospective developments of the society, and the teaching activities also to bear the social mark, the students being involved in activities that involve cooperation, communication and problem solving.

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SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE VALUE CHANGE IN ALGERIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract: *Social media, as a part of the digital system, has brought up great debates on all Fields, cultural, political and other levels ... and has created clear confusion in private and collective spaces, which made it necessary for us to shed light on this multifaceted and intertwined phenomenon, in order to understand, read and diagnose its problems, and its impact on social patterns. Therefore, we wanted this contribution to be a window on social media, especially Facebook, and its impact on individuals and groups, all of this within the framework of virtual social networks that arise in the framework of permanent interaction between individuals, and the convergence of concerns and opinions.*

Keywords: social networking sites, Facebook, social networks, individualism.

1. Introduction

The knowledge and technological explosion, especially in the field of media and communication, has created a cultural, social, and even political revolution, by pushing a lot of concepts, information, and systems inside the internet that have confused traditional social structures and are now close to complete fusion in the culture of the other, which possesses the information, technology and methods of influencing generations, so that the conservative generation.

After that, social networking sites or (social media) began to appear successively, and inserted themselves inside the house and in all societies, until they became playing a prominent role in crystallizing the culture of information at the expense of national and national cultures that have become weak and unable to protect them from melting into the world culture through several variables such as globalization, the information revolution, alienation and intellectual extremism, which is one of the most prominent challenges facing the construction of cultural identity, social networking sites are Web pages that can use active interaction between members participating in this social network that already exists on the internet and aims to provide various means of These features can include (instant messaging, video, chat, file sharing, Discussion Group, E-mail) (Mubarak and Fadlallah, 2010: 06).

On the other hand, studies in all fields, especially in the sociological field, began to study these virtual networks and their effects on all systems, whether Social, Psychological for individuals, or political for systems, and statistical theories and programs began to appear every time, to study the individual within this virtual system, how it affects and how it is affected, how new diseases have appeared that talk about addiction, depression, schizophrenia, and others, and try to find quick solutions, as Tarun Bastampillai from Flinders University in Jamaica (Gharib, 2018 : 241) said, "the main meaning of this is that instead of resorting to treating patients with people suffering from depression are referred to medications or individual psychotherapy Only, doctors should also look at direct social networks and the broader social context including the influences of friends, family, and well-being at work," he said While social networks have facilitated communication between people more than ever, it is necessary to be careful about who becomes friends with them, as despair and anxiety can spread through close social networks.

2. Values of globalization through social networking sites

The internet, social media and other means of communication are credited with making the world more open to each other, in such a way that all the borders of countries and the values of societies have disappeared, where individuals merge from the outside and begin the journey of inevitable integration imposed by the values of globalization in making the world a single society in which everyone shares the values of everyone, and some stand up to this values, and even fight them under the name that they do not belong to their societies and describe it as "cultural invasion" or "cultural appropriation" and other vocabulary and concepts indicative of this, but their lives are changing towards these values in a way that they do not feel, because they have become part of their lives and their daily behaviors and uses, these Globalization, which Anthony Giddens considers "a new stage of the emergence of modernity, in which social relations intensify at the global level, where inseparable cohesion occurs between the inside and the outside, in which the local and the Global are connected by economic, cultural, political and humanitarian ties" (Khalik, 1999 : 52).

The value orientations of societies are a relatively stable attitude of individuals towards profit margins, and material and spiritual benefits that are crystallized through socialization and a general worldview, these values take a hierarchical form according to the importance of values in these societies and gradually descend to less important values until some values that can be considered central and authentic in other societies fade away, so some values become dominant according to the socio-cultural characteristics of societies, and those values form a complete system, while the importance of some values decreases in the hierarchy, where traditional values dominate, such as in patriarchal or masculine societies and others in the formation of collective consciousness Which is dominated by family, social, religious and other values such as what happens in Arab and Islamic societies.

In return ... In the " progressive societies " that are economically and politically developed and in the field of freedoms and rights, we find that there are other values that are of very high importance, and may be considered a fundamental pillar on which these societies are based such as freedom of thought and belief, freedom of self and private practices, up to indicators that can be considered taboos that cannot even be talked about in other societies such as the one we talked about earlier.

For example, the famous football player "Messi" appears at his wedding in the company of his wife, from whom he has children before marriage, and they are also accompanied by them in an appearance that seems familiar and natural to them, the audience and the media as well, but this appearance does not seem normal for Arab, Islamic and other societies so that it raises question marks, questions, and perhaps even ridicule from individuals who believe that what is happening in their societies is normal and supposed to be global, those manifestations that were previously few in attendance, which have increased in their appearance to the world the internet, social networking sites and the media, all contributed to the globalization and interpolation of phenomena The so-called "taboos" in some societies were broken, borders were opened, cultures melted, societies shared their customs and traditions, as Roland Robertson described "that there is a historical trend towards the shrinkage of the world, and individuals and societies are becoming more aware of this shrinkage" (Khalik, 1999 : 52) they are well aware of the scale of the rapprochement of cultures that melt into each other every day, "and all the novelties that intentionally or unintentionally seek to integrate the world's population into one global community" (Khalik, 1999 : 53) the number of individuals with access to the internet is increasing, the audience of social networks is increasing significantly and significantly, and local cultures are increasingly and continuously influenced by the unified values of modern societies, in Europe, North America and other regions of the world this process is more active and dynamic, and their impact is noticeable on less developed traditional societies, and the impact can be Greater than others in the processes of globalization and the openness of other cultures..

As mentioned earlier, the internet, the press and social networking sites have contributed to increasing interaction between human beings of various stripes, orientations, beliefs and skin color, and have made the world a miniature society in which everyone overlooks the values and cultures of everyone, and it is noteworthy that this process has increased its effectiveness and strength since the advent of social media networks and increased interaction location, age, gender and... The individual may also meet with others who are different from them in ideas, wrestle with them at times, agree with them at other times, may influence them, and may be susceptible to their influences, so he begins a campaign of digging into all or some of his values and questioning all his National, national and religious convictions, with the aim of finally subjugating him to the forces and elites controlling the or reconcile with her " (Hijazi, 1999 : 133-134).

3.Social networking sites in Algeria

The introduction of online social networking sites in algerian society has -confused traditional social structures and made them declare a state of high alert at all levels, especially at the beginning of interaction, at the level of individuals, and extended family, and at the level of the region and society as a whole, but its effects have begun to appear clearly at the level of political decisions of the algerian state and its attempt to remedy the situation-especially with the weakness of the official media- these sites that have found a suitable climate for nesting and expansion, where you hardly sit with someone until they start talking about youtube or facebook, the latter of which is considered "an electronic social network that can be accessed for free and is managed by facebook limited liability company as its private property, and it is one of the most prominent social networking sites that appeared in the twenty-first century, through which a personal page identifying the person is set up and communication and acquaintance is carried out with all subscribers to this site to transfer knowledge, news, and form visions and orientations without restrictions or limits" (Theeb, 2015 : 246) and other sites that have become an integral part of our lives, you can notice a set of young people sitting in a cafe each with his smartphone, they may chat on some social networking site, and they may send each other photos, messages and links on various topics, and on some topics that form the nature of their social network and their preoccupations on these sites, so it even becomes virtual reality, and most of the topics are about what happened on the page, video and publication...

Facebook may be the site that algerians are most interested in unlike other communities, this site that has captured the processes of virtual communication between individuals, this site that has provided algerians with political, social, psychological outlets and economic transactions also from buying and selling and other individual and collective concerns about the values issued by facebook, and what our focus on the youth category is not in essence the idea that it is an age group that is highlighted by the study, but as an age group that has its own cause and effectiveness in society -and that -- to build its values through socialization institutions, within the family and in the arms of educational and other institutions, "and that the past inherent in the life of the individual is the one that plans all stages of his life, including traditions, recipes, character and culture, as well as taken derived from society" (Camilleri and Tap, 1986 : 288), social networking sites in general and facebook in particular have become a valuable and cultural load he finds the legal frameworks to defend himself, his concerns, ideas and values against the currents of traditional society, and the young man becomes alienated from reality and completely immersed in facebook.

The unconditional support and the social network that embraced the algerian young man and gave him intellectual security, freedom of expression, and abolished the social authority of the traditional society is the one that listened to that young man unconditionally, and even provided him with the participation of his ideas and obsessions without limits, and brought him together with a handful of friends who share the same and the authority of the family, and even went beyond that to the rejection of religious and other authority, which was

previously unacceptable, so he started with pseudonyms, and then he bypassed the stage of hiding his thoughts and unleashing himself with his own name and his real image, he publishes, comments and argues on all topics and even taboos, which he has become fearless to discuss and speak about with scientific evidence and what he learned from his friends on facebook, as well as what he has seen from books and articles proving his opinion and refuting other opinions, which he sees as reactionary and traditional compared to what he is saturated with on facebook.

Just as traditional society has become suffering from imposing its control on individuals, traditional approaches and classical formats have also become unable to develop a real and realistic explanation of what is happening in social formats with modern variables and the entry of social networking sites on-line, individualism as a methodological approach aims to build a socio-cultural reality in which an individual chooses his life, behavior and belief, and guarantees the characteristic of independence and excellence, "and a socio-cultural reality, in which people can choose their way of life, behavior and beliefs, a reality that guarantees the rights of individuals, as non-coercive individuals to sacrifice or compromise on something they believe in"(Taylor, 1999 : 15). This methodological orientation, the beginnings of which began to appear with the studies of hobbes, john locke and adam smith, and then the real individualistic sociological theses revived and appeared in the writings of raymond boudon raymond boudon, where the individual is considered one of the main causes in the occurrence of social phenomena and not vice versa, the individual is not a result of social phenomena, but is the main actor in creating a different social reality, and that social values are not binding on individuals.

Virtual reality and what it has produced for many years among young people, many of whom have rebelled against traditional society, is a systematic motivation to consider that "explaining a social phenomenon means always taking into account that it is the result of individual actions" (Bir Ansar, 1992 : 71), which is what the young algerian who did not engage in the direction of holism agreed with, and this style of thinking is the product of modern societies that imposed their perception of individuals and communities through social networking site technologies, hence we find "two important elements in the field in which the social actor is located are the factor of choices made to him and the value of goals provided by" (Boudon, 1997 : 270), a young person finds a lot of options on facebook, but he remains the real actor in choice and belonging.

4.The concept of a social network through sociological approaches

The social network is considered as a union of social attitudes of (socially actors and their relations) which is the basic and generally accepted definition of this concept, the social network consists "mathematically" of a set of nodes of social actors within the network regarding the exchange of resources and information(Barabási and Bonabeau, 2003 : 50-59), thus within the framework of a social network the social actors are grouped on the basis of the similarity of their positions, their connections to each other and the type of resources and information circulating in a situation, and according to Forsi Michel considers that "a social network is a set of relationships between a group of actors .This group can be an organization (such as a company) or a network of friends, and the nature of these relationships can be very diverse depending on the actors,and can also include families and associations (Zammar and Nisrine, 2012 : 55).

Social networks are flexible social structures and soft tissues through a combination of ideas, rules, actions and common interests, where social networks accumulate vertically and horizontally with huge social capital built on the basis of trust, mutual support, empathy and participation in common affairs and topics, social networks are the living fabric of social life that allows its participants to interact with each other, such as family and To achieve common goals, and that individuals can build bonds and relationships through six encounters, even if they are superficial,or what is known as the theory of six handshakes (Milgram, 1967 : 60-67),

theory of six handshakes), there are only six handshakes that separate an individual from another, and that anyone on earth who is familiar with another is only figuratively separated by six handshakes.).

There are two types of networks:

A-personal or selfish network: it is the set of relationships and links that an individual establishes within the social system according to his interests and preoccupations, and tries to exclude those who do not participate in it.

B-the complete or social network: it is the network in which individuals coexist, create a pattern of interactions and social ties, they try by increasing relationships through common interests.

The term social network was first introduced in 1954 by John Barnes (John A. Barnes) in his book "Class and Committees in a Norwegian Island Parish" (Barnes, 1954 : 39-58). This concept became widespread in various fields of human knowledge, without forgetting the contributions of scientists before in considering society as a complex interweaving of various social ties and their formations, where the roots of the concept of the social network and the theory of networks go back to the foundations of sociology, we mention, for example, George Zemel G. Simmel where he wrote books about social relations with the network structure in 1903 in his work "big cities and spiritual life" (Simmel, 2002 : 27) and Emile Durkheim E. Durkheim studied the structure of society in relation to its social organization and the collective consciousness of people gathered according to beliefs, values, rules, according to social solidarity, so that the whole goes beyond the sum of the parts, and in social psychology to the whole (D. Moreno, 'T. Newcomb 'A. Beivlas), and in social anthropology to both J. Barnes, E. Bott, K. Mitchell, A. Radcliffe-Brown).

In the Thirties of the twentieth century in America, the relations between individuals were studied using social maps and graphs in which active individuals are represented by symbols or dots and the relationship between them by arrows or lines, thanks to studies (Moreno, 1934) Moreno is the founder of discipline analysis within social networks, then the discipline analysis of social networks began to develop at the hands of Rad Cliff Brown - a famous anthropologist, it was from him that serious studies of anthropologists-, sociologists and social psychologists began to use this concept, and the concept of a social network in the second half of the twentieth century became popular among researchers and its uses increased in a lot of areas.

5. Types of social networks

Social networks are formed according to interests, tendencies, needs, areas of influence, social situations and attitudes, and there are many networks, including political, economic, financial, cultural, religious, entertainment and others.

The formation of networks in small communities begins with the accumulation of social capital, where trust between individuals known to each other serves as a natural beginning for the formation of such networks.intra-system relationships are established through bridges and links within political organizations, financial institutions, associations, trade unions, the press, religious organizations and other groups that share certain ideologies, which creates conditions for regular contacts and the establishment of mutual trust influence.

Social networks are divided into formal and informal vertical and horizontal, informal networks are based on informal relationships that arise within the framework of everyday interaction, and in formal networks the rights and duties of actors within the network are clearly defined.

As for Vertical Networks, the team consists of the top, which consists of leaders and their closest assistants who make the group's strategy and internal rules, in addition to codes, techniques and relationships in the event of conflict, confrontation or cooperation with other groups, and the principle of "who is not with us is against us" is still what unites and defines the boundaries of these networks.

As for horizontal networks in contrast to vertical vertical with their clear delimitation of subordination, authority and responsibility, it is the group of individuals that have approximately the same social status, power and influence.

5-Analysis of social networks: the analysis of social networks is of great importance and has an applied value in modern studies on the informal economy, family support networks, cultural and political structures, to solve problems in the public and private sector, as well as in Intelligence, Counterintelligence and other activities by using a number of qualitative and quantitative concepts, such as the degree of centralization, the degree of aggregation, communication and others.

It was conducted by American sociologist Mark S. Granovetter (Granovetter, 1973 : 1360-1380). 1973 a working paper called "the strength of weak ties", where it was found that the chance of getting a job through your acquaintances is three times greater than through advertisements or employment offices, and most often it is through people with whom you have superficial relationships such as your neighbors, for example, and not through relatives or close friends. "Granovetter" also concluded at the end of the study that superficial relationships allow us to benefit from a new network of acquaintances that does not exist in our circle of strong relationships, whose members are often similar to us. The nature of the relationship in superficial ties is weak, so we cannot rely on it, but by respecting the nature of this relationship, it can achieve for us what did not occur to us.

The sources distinguish between three levels of analysis in networks in which different methods are used (Jackson, 2008). Micro-level or the level of individual actors or micro-networks.

2-the level of relatively large communities.

3-the macro level where major international companies are studied.

6- Social network analysis program (SNA program): it is a program that facilitates quantitative or qualitative analysis of social networks by describing network features either through numerical or visual representation

Graphics and visual forms of social networks are important for understanding network data and transmitting the result of analysis (Mitchell, 1994 :16-22). Visualization often facilitates the qualitative interpretation of network data, in which network analysis tools are used to change the format, colors, size and other characteristics of the network representation (Wasserman and Faust, 1994 : 251), some SNA (Social network analysis) programs can perform predictive analysis (Chapin, 1950: 263-267). This includes the use of network phenomena such as a tie to predict individual-level outcomes (often called the isotope effect or infection modeling), the use of individual-level phenomena to predict network outcomes such as tie / edge formation (often called homogeneous models or a certain type of triad of relationships, or the use of network phenomena to predict other network phenomena (Snijders, 2001: 361-395).

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ARMED CONFLICTS AND IMPACTS ON DEVELOPMENT IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (2003-2014)

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Abstract: *A very poor, landlocked country, the Central African Republic has experienced unprecedented politico-military crises since the last coup attempt of October 25, 2002, which led to the political change of March 15, 2003. For years now, the RCA has experienced repeated mutinies and recurring coup attempts, which have only tragically worsened the conditions for survival of most of its population. The consequences were not limited to the capital as in the past; they affected the hinterland, with the withdrawal of the former rebellion which occupied part of the national territory. The country was divided into different zones: an area under government control, an area under the direct control of the insurgents and a third area cut off from the main roads, and therefore isolated from communications with the capital. Such a partition has led to a serious deterioration in the lives of at least 2.2 million people directly or indirectly affected by the consequences of the conflict. Our article proposes to question the socio-political trajectory of the CAR, analyzes the viability of the various military operations and their impact on development.*

Keywords: Armed Groups, Conflicts, Incidence, Development, Central African Republic

A Central African country, the Central African Republic has been mobilizing more or more vehement analysts for several years. Facts, more or less explosive, some of which date from the period of transfer of sovereignty, maintain misunderstandings and tensions. The State, meanwhile, badly articulated before and after the democratic opening of 1990, struggled to deploy properly (Antier, 2008:8). In December 2012, the regime of François Bozizé, had been built on a frothy state base since March 15, 2003, the political and military situation changed with the overthrow of the old regime and the establishment of a government of transition extended to the opposition and all the political forces of the country, including the party of the former President. The new authorities suspended the constitution, dissolved the National Assembly and the government and took new measures aimed at restoring security through operations of disarmament and recovery of looted objects, peace and unity, creation of a national transition council and a government responsible for boosting growth and preparing for the next elections (Tamekamta, 2013:2). They have created favorable conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance to affected populations. Indeed, the populations living in the former conflict zones are experiencing a very worrying humanitarian situation. The lack of access to supplies from the capital has deprived the local populations of basic necessities as well as the possibility of benefiting from basic health services, systematically looted by each other; the occupation of areas by General Bozizé forces or their liberation by loyalist forces and the presence of the active front near towns and villages have exposed the populations to repeated abuses forcing many people to live in permanent insecurity, often forced to abandon daily occupations and seek refuge in the bush. So what explains the repeated violence in the Central African Republic? Through written documents and oral sources we will question are the different actors in conflict? And what is the impact of these conflicts on the development of CAR? The answer to these questions will constitute the framework of our present analysis.

1. Conflicts in the Central African Republic: roots, actors and geopolitical issues

The Central African Republic has for several years displayed the face of a country that is politically unstable, economically weak, socially disintegrated and in which the level of insecurity is very high. From 1996, the mutinies and Coups d'Etat which followed one another negatively affected society and disrupted the business cycle.

1.1. Roots and Actors of Current Violence

The Central African Republic, a former French colony called Oubangui-Chari which became independent on August 13, 1960, has a particular history marked by a succession of coups. With an area of 622,984 km² and 4.6 million inhabitants in 2012, the CAR is the result of the fight against the French settlers, led by the priest Barthelemy Boganda, who died in a plane crash on March 29, 1959. Subsequently, David Dacko, cousin of the latter, succeeded him until the "New Year's Eve putsch" by which another distant cousin, Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa, took power. After being enthroned emperor on December 4, 1974, he was ousted in 1979 by "Operation Barracuda". His imperial coronation, initially acquiesced by France, structured around Napoleonic mimicry in the court of Barengo, was accompanied by the total drying up of the state coffers and the defilement/distortion of the Central African in his self-esteem. Returned to power in 1979 by the care of France, David Dacko strongly marked by a permanent illegitimacy and accused of usurpation by his enemies and probably approved the putsch by mutual consent of September 1, 1981 through which General André Kolingba took the reins of power. Strongly influenced and supported by France until 1990, André Kolingba was gradually let go by François Mitterrand who probably reproached him for his managerial zeal and the non-application of the Baule clauses (Ango Ela, 2001: 35).

At the same time, social unrest in the form of mutinies arose in the country and forced the general-president to organize the first ballot and to withdraw from political life. Ange-Félix Patassé, who succeeded him on October 22, 1993, failed to reconcile the Central Africans. The delays in payment of civil servants' salaries, the suspicions of financial mismanagement, the confiscation of the electoral process and the unjustified death of numerous personalities (including the former dictator Jean-Bedel Bokassa) for which he is accused, engage the country in a series of mutinies, violence and instability (Ango Ela, 2001: 47). Despite the signing, in January 1997, of the Bangui agreements supposed to put an end to the conflicts, the re-election of Patassé on September 19, 1999, once again set the country up for violence. Also, the efforts of the international community and the military support given to Patassé by the Congolese rebel Jean-Pierre Bemba, did not dissuade General François Bozizé, leader of the rebellion of the liberators and former chief of staff of Patassé, to seize power following the coup d'état of March 15, 2003. Welcomed by an innocent jubilant crowd, Bozizé, supported by the political convergence baptized: Kwa Na Kwa, did not succeed in cleaning up life public. Instead, a disjointed and phantom state in its functioning was constituted, characterized by social resentment, institutional tinkering and democratic archaism (Kalck, 1992: 26).

1.2. The actors of the conflicts in the Central African Republic

As for the rebel coalition, otherwise known as Séléka, made up of the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP), the UFDR, the FDPC and numerous rebel groups, and probably supported by Chad, it was born in December 2012. Initially based in the north of the country, this rebellion of 4,000 turbaned men - the majority of whom are Muslims - launched an offensive after which the main towns (Bambari, Kaga Bandoro and Ndélé) were occupied in two weeks. Very cornered, François Bozizé, from whom the N'Djamena security proxy was withdrawn, summoned the intervention of the Multinational Force for Central Africa (FOMAC) and requested the mediation of ECCAS (Benghemane, 1983: 17). Congolese President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, a mediator mandated by ECCAS, manages to obtain an agreement in Libreville on January 11, 2013. This was initiated by the presidential representatives (led by Jean Willy Biro Sako), the non-military politico-military movements combatants (MLC and FDPC

represented by Abdoulaye Hissene), the democratic opposition (represented by Nicolas Tiangaye) and the Séléka coalition (composed of the CPJP, the UFDR, the UFR, reinforced by the Patriotic Convention for the Salvation of Wa Kodro, CPSK, represented by Michel Am Nondroko Djotodjia). It revolved around the following clauses: the retention of the President of the Republic until the end of his mandate (2016), the formation of the government of national unity, the release (Berman, 2008: 10).

1.3. The Libreville Agreement and its impact

Although appreciated on the whole, the Libreville Agreement has, however, aroused dissension and suspicion on both sides. The Séléka coalition, suspected of violating the ceasefire, accused the Bozizé camp of having torpedoed the terms of the Libreville agreement, despite the formation of the government of national unity on February 3, 2013 (Berman, 2008: 11). The overlay political intrigues and the difficulty of mobilizing and disarming destitute child soldiers recruited by the Séléka, the situation deteriorated until Bozizé lost the total confidence and legitimacy granted to him by Idriss Deby Itno, Jacob Zuma and Francois Hollande (Biyogue-Bi-Ntougou, 2010: 15). Indeed, mocked by his friends of yesterday and subscribed to his fate, Bozizé only counted on the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), under-trained, under-equipped and demotivated, incapable at the strategic and operational level of winning a military victory. These forces remained loyal as well as the South African Defense Force (SADF) could not cope with the firepower of the Seleka, who had previously taken hostage their leader, Michel Djotodjia, who had left for their eastern stronghold of the country, for circumstantial mediation with the central power (Berman, 2008: 13). Lonely and deaf to the multiple arrests of the Congolese mediator, Bozizé was driven from power on March 24, 2013 by the rebellion which he said was in the pay of Chad and Sudan. In his inglorious flight, the deposed president took refuge in Yaoundé where the government authorities told him that he was in transit to an unknown exile. During his transitional stay in Cameroon, Bozizé multiplies meetings with the national and international press and says he is the victim of a plot by promising the worst to the new authorities (Benghemane, 1983: 22).

Since then, in defiance of human dignity, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated, punctuated by the events that occurred on the night of August 6 to 7, 2013 in the locality of Bossangoa (capital of the prefecture of Ouham in North-east of Bangui), with more than a hundred dead and the beginnings of the genocide. Now, the Muslim population, suspected close to the Seleka, is the target of attacks by loyal to the ousted president. On the other hand, the Christian population, accused of being in collusion with the ex-FACA and François Bozizé, is the victim of the abuses of the Séléka. This is how the self-defense groups, called anti-balakas formed by the Christian populations in September in reaction to the exactions of the elements of the Séléka essentially target Muslims; hence the deadly clashes in Bossangoa (September 2013), Bouar (October 2013) and Bangui (since December 5, 2013 despite the French and African military presence) that left several hundred dead.

Today, the RCA threatens to die, as the settling of accounts and the cruelest abuses overlap (Kalck, 1992: 33). Several actors are involved in the ongoing conflict: the internal actors, the main animators of the Central African “drama” and the external actors, forgers of the expected peace. As for the internal actors, they were initially made up of the FACA and the Séléka rebels (20,000 combatants from the CAR and especially from Sudan and Chad in September 2013) to which were added the lively political opposition by Prime Minister Michel Tiangaye. Today, the fighting forces have been reconstituted around the ex-Séléka divided into several rival factions; anti-balakas and Godobé. External actors consist of neighboring countries supplying mercenaries (Chad and Sudan), providers of transnational disorder, African countries concerned with peace (Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, etc.), regional institutions and sub-regional (AU, ECCAS, CEMAC) and bilateral and multilateral partners (France, EU, and UN) (Biyogue-Bi-Ntougou, 2010: 26).

2. The regionalization of the conflict: multiple issues

Five elements can explain the regional dimension of the Central African conflict: the regional approach to solutions to end the crisis, the belligerent influence of certain neighboring States in the persistence of the conflict, the movement of refugees, the sub-regional transfer of insecurity and the symbolic quest for leadership by certain heads of state. Regarding the first element, it concerns the sub-regional political effort (Biyogue-Bi-Ntougou, 2010: 33).

2.1. Crisis exit initiatives

These are initiatives and acts to end the crisis, concluded within the framework of the African Union, ECCAS and CEMAC (Tamekamta, 2013:5). Thus, the multiple agreements, concluded after tough negotiations, poorly executed by the Bangui authorities, have accelerated the spread of the political field by armed groups and political artificers, more businessmen and gang leaders than patriots. It is in this context that, on June 21, 2008, a so-called General Peace Agreement (APG) was signed in Libreville by the Central African government and three rebel movements, under the mediation of Omar Bongo Ondimba and Muammar Gaddafi. This one, summarizing the previous agreements, is accompanied by multiple clauses. Moreover, the rebel groups (mostly from the "Liberators" of 2003), the political opposition and civil society said they had been cheated by François Bozizé who only applied the terms of the agreement which were favorable to him (Biyogue-Bi-Ntougou, 2010: 45).

2.2. The involvement of some neighboring states

This element concerns the involvement of certain neighboring States in the maintenance of the Central African conflict. In this register, Chad plays a leading role. François Bozizé took power in 2003 thanks to the support of N'Djamena. Also, the Séléka benefited from the military support of Chad in March 2013. The second role is played by plural rebel groups that scour the territorial peripheries of Sudan and the DRC. Massively recruited for a decade, these, more seasoned, make up the main fighting factions and make the most of the illicit exploitation of the country's wealth.

2.3. Conflicts in the Central African Republic and refugee movements

The Central African conflicts have set in motion several thousand inhabitants (5,000 Central African refugees in Congo-Brazzaville in June 2013, more than 80,000 in eastern Cameroon). The fourth element is determined by the insecurity broadcast from the CAR. The neighboring countries, in particular Cameroon, are more marked than the others. Indeed, the eastern region of Cameroon has suffered, for several months, repeated attacks by armed men from the CAR. Elements of the Séléka are indignant at the fact that Cameroon has granted temporary asylum to the deposed president and that it is sheltering the ex-FACA who plan to reconquer Bangui (Tamekamta, 2013:7). The frequent altercations between the security elements on the border of Cameroon with the elements of the Séléka resulted in the death, on August 19, 2013 in Tocktoyo, of the Cameroonian officer of 2nd rank and chief of post of the border locality, Félix Ngando Dalle. Also, on November 16, 2013 in Gbiti, new incursions by Central African armed groups left one dead and several injured on the side of the Cameroonian army. This painful sequence turns out to be the climax of the difficult relations between the two countries and could justify, in part, the procrastination of Cameroon to take an active part in the Central African crisis before the intervention of France (Berman, 2008: 22).

3. Political instability and nation building in the Central African Republic

It is not enough to claim that the RCA is late. We still have to try to answer the following question: why this delay? It is in this perspective that we approach this chapter of our study by trying to identify, to highlight the impact of political instability on the CAR. Political independence was also the first victory won by Africans over the imperialist powers. Another fight promises to be tight. It is no longer a question of fighting against a foreign occupation or

against a common oppressor. It's about fighting an internal virus that keeps growing: the virus of division. After the struggle for decolonization, our leaders must now lead the fight of national construction for the building of a united and prosperous nation. But if we consider the political instability that reigns in French-speaking black Africa, then we understand the difficulty there is in building viable nations in this part of the continent (Tamekamta, 2013:9).

3.1. The trampling of the work of national construction

After its independence, the CAR at the time of national construction (Decoudras, 1995: 10). But before any analysis, it is necessary to say what national construction is. It can be defined from three components:

- The use of a strong and personalized power allowing national unity around a man.
- The installation of a single party to overcome centrifugal forces;
- The administration which is incumbent on the management of the country (Decoudras, 1995: 12).

Given the artificial nature of our states, there are many divisive factors that could hinder the harmonious development of nation building. The first concern of any government is to try to build a nation by bringing together seemingly irreconcilable elements. It is therefore difficult to see how an unstable political regime, engraved with turmoil of all kinds, can easily carry out this work of national construction (Kalck, 1992: 26). This is therefore one of the impacts of these phenomena on the Central African Republic.

The work of national construction is thus hampered by the instability of political regimes. She is stalling and one wonders if the leaders have kept their promise.

Indeed, a foreign turnaround begins to be felt after its independence. The Central African leaders who, in announcing their political program, placed particular emphasis on national construction, magically turned away from this task. Their fundamental concern, their permanent concern becomes the consolidation of their position and the strengthening of their authority. The work of national construction was thus sacrificed on the altar of the satisfaction of personal needs. Once a shaken political regime crumbled, the new rulers in power strove to put in place a security apparatus that had nothing to do with nation building. We were then witnessing the setting up of a whole complex network of internal and external intelligence, which, far from constructing, engages in a systematic settling of accounts, all seasoned by sensational declarations. Haunted by the frequency of overthrows of governments, the Central African leaders who thus had to bring down the regimes around them abandoned this work of national construction to ensure first that they did not risk losing power to the profit from another group. This relegation of national construction to the background plunges the country into stagnant misery (Duhem, 2013: 5)

Moreover, the reaction of this army did not bode well for the building of a united and prosperous nation. When she was not collaborating with the regimes in place, instead of putting herself outside of all political activity, she intervened in the government and took power: the reasons she put forward seemed at first very reassuring for the people who still retained the hope of seeing his condition improve. When we observe the behavior of the Central African army during the first decade of independence and try to seriously reconsider these words of President Sékou Touré, we are surprised by the gap that existed between intentions and reality. It is therefore clear that an army was at the service of national construction. If it was she who occupied herself with politics, she turned away, so to speak, from the tasks which fell to her. The work of national construction feels a serious blow which gradually trims the wings of national integration. Moreover, national integration was not left out. In CAR, national construction could not be conceived without the integration of all social strata. However, in this region of Africa, national integration was often incomplete. Whatever the nature of the regime encountered in the CAR, national integration was ensured by the army and the single political party (Decoudras, 1995: 20).

The army, which should therefore be the center in which the mixing of populations must take place, misses out on its role as a driving force for national integration. It was to her that the task of confronting the scourge of tribal divisions and promoting discipline duty and civic-mindedness and national consciousness should fall in part. But his maneuvers became rather political. It was much more concerned with the destabilization of regimes, military intervention, the implementation of political plots and assassinations and the struggle to retain power. This state of affairs could only contribute to accumulating a whole series of factors that hampered the work of national construction, thus rendering national integration incomplete in the CAR. One of the impacts of this instability of the political regimes of this region of the globe was manifested by the reversal of the army and the leaders, which led to the trampling of the work of national construction. The army was not, in the CAR, the only appropriate instrument of national integration. On the other hand, there was the party which, better than any social organization, was responsible for educating the masses, for indoctrinating them to make them convinced militants.

In the CAR, therefore, whatever the nature of the regime, the single party was the ideal instrument for promoting national integration. It is, as is commonly said, the crucible where all the living forces of the nation were mobilized. The single party was therefore the expression of the nation. That is why all the social organizations have been incorporated into it. It therefore became the only weapon that could fight against separatism and underdevelopment. But this single political party itself faced many difficulties (Duhem, 2013: 5).

In a country plagued by political instability, the first thing, the first decision taken by the new strongmen of the system was to dissolve the single party. At that moment, one may well wonder what became of the work of national construction (Kalck, 1992: 40). After this abolition of the party, had anyone ever thought of another instrument to ensure its succession? We could therefore see how much this phenomenon of political instability had an impact in the CAR. The people were therefore left to themselves, any gathering of more than four people became suspicious and soldiers were sent to try to disperse the men. Political life was thus brought to a halt. The people fell asleep in apathy as they began to understand that they are kept out of the activities that decide their fate. This is one of the reasons why, in the CAR, the people should not be counted on to defend the fall of a regime, regardless of the degree of popularity of its leader (Tamekamta, 2013:5).

3.2. From threatened national unity to the worsening of tribal affinities

As we have just seen, political parties, instead of being instruments of national integration, appeared rather as forces of oppression. This leads to hypocrisy of the mass which, law of waging an open war against the party, pretends to be integrated into it, while seeking other channels of transmission through which it could easily find the solutions to its problems. The party, casually, began to deteriorate from below. Within the party, small groups formed and soon became parties within a party. The height of these events was the tribal character of these groups that were formed. The dissensions continued and there was thus a serious threat hanging over the unity of the whole country. The tribal affinities that we thought had completely vanished reappeared within the single party. Each group thus formed suspects the other of wanting to confiscate power. Everyone was therefore on the alert and this was a situation that did not bode well for national unity. Thus, the instability of political regimes had an impact on the social and political organizations of the States in question and jeopardized the national unity of the country. Instead of arriving at a national conscience, at a national solidarity, one ended up rather with a feeling of mistrust which hovered over all the members of the party. This is why people took refuge most often in ethnic groups and always resorted to the old, tried and tested tribal solidarity. The tribal community represented total security for the African from French-speaking black Africa (Tamekamta, 2013:5).

In addition to this intensification of tribal affinities which were born within the instrument of national integration, we discovered a series of maneuvers which were not on the

side of an ethnic group, but rather on the side of an individual. , of a figure that was emerging within the party that we were lining up. This situation gave rise to struggles for influence, opposition between individuals with a view to seizing power. Each major figure now relied on his own political clientele to establish his authority and dreamed of a possible change in the situation that propelled him to power. These struggles for influence sometimes went so far as to provoke serious internal divisions which jeopardized the national unity of the country in question. We were thus heading towards a risk of balkanization (Mbog, 2013: 10).

The political instability of the regimes in the Central African Republic created a climate of division where ethnic particularities and national dissensions arrived. The constant change of governments, the succession of plots, far from leading to the establishment of a solid centrifugal force, rather leads to an explosion. The different groups that made up the country tended to identify with their tribe of origin and the state represented for them nothing more than a vague and abstract notion instituted by the head of state with the complicity of Westerners. to perpetrate the enslavement of the rural masses. The individual, instead of presenting himself as a member of the state, as a citizen, of a nation, presented himself rather as a member of a determined ethnic group. Even the poorest members of the rulers' tribe considered themselves privileged and, despite their social position, held no hope of eventual political ascent. They almost always identified with the ruling elite and claimed to hold power. When the fall of the regime then occurred, we saw the other ethnic groups warmly welcoming the new strong men and presenting them as saviors while the group of the overthrown regime installed an atmosphere of mourning (Mbog, 2013: 10).

We then heard in the streets expressions like these “the masters had become the slaves”. The new leader in place, instead of thinking of building the nation which had long suffered from this ethnic divide, sought rather to take his revenge and to satisfy his revenge. If he did not entirely decimate the elite of the rival tributes, he hindered their rise either by snatching positions of responsibility from them, or by blocking all the channels that could allow them a social ascent. There was therefore, so to speak, a climate of eternal opposition between the tribes vying for power and doing everything possible to ensure that they took over the reins of the State or at least ensured control of political decisions. . Such events were a danger for the national unity of the country which risked fading. This national unity, very precarious at the start, fell into disrepair over the years (Tamekamta, 2013:7).

The CAR therefore risked balkanization during the first decade of its independence. This succession of changes that occurred was not likely to strengthen the feeling of belonging to the same nation, but unfortunately contributed to pushing Africans to confine themselves to the small groupings that had preceded the colonial period. This behavior of the masses should not be seen as an attitude hostile to the work of national construction. The Central African was not rebellious to the formation of a nation. It is rather the failure of the institutions put in place and very often subject to change, the inadequacy of national integration, the excessive importance given to political affairs, thus relegating social organizations and the work of supervising the mass in the background, which constituted serious threats to the national unity of a country.

All the social organizations that existed well before independence had been dissolved or incorporated into the single party to allow better national integration. This is a good initiative, but which had really not been put into practice. Because when the villager found himself in town, and he did not meet the warm welcome to which he was accustomed in his countryside, he automatically had recourse to the people of his tribe who could well provide him with the support he needed. Moreover, the difficulties faced by this man who came from the countryside to integrate into the community forced him to turn to the members of his tribe. While there was a party that was to promote this integration into the new social environment, we observed people falling prey to serious problems of the same order. This is the reason why the hinterland environment tended to recover in the cities. People tended, in large cities, to group together according to tribes or according to ethnicity. They were true that this

phenomenon was not unique to the CAR and that it was found in other African countries as well. But the real problem was that in the CAR, we had a state that had not yet managed to establish itself as a strong nation. Such experiences, when they were coupled with a proliferation of tontines and tribal associations, even clans, and when to all this was added the threat of a perpetual change of regime, there was reason to be afraid. For the national unity of the country which could easily sink into balkanization (Duhem, 2013: 5).

We therefore see how great the impact of the instability of political regimes was in the Central African Republic. It was necessary to feel in the trampling of the work of national construction clipping the wings of national integration and constituted a serious threat to national unity because of the intensification of tribal affinities and the risk of balkanization. But the impact of this phenomenon was not limited only to nation building. It embraced a wider and vital domain for modern societies. This was the area of development.

3.3. Political instability and development

After independence, two main poles of attraction were the target of the CAR: national construction and development. As far as this notion of development is concerned, it is quite obvious that it encompasses a complexity of economic, social, cultural and psychological phenomena that we cannot address here exhaustively, for lack of very precise scientific data. This is a notion on which many specialists in development economics cannot agree. At the risk of embarking on the dangerous path of controlling development, it would be prudent to limit oneself to a definition from which it is possible to analyze the impact of political instability on development in the CAR (Duhem, 2013: 5).

To ensure the realization of a plan, it was therefore absolutely necessary to let time take its course. But the face of instability offered to the CAR suggested that the development plans were never followed from start to finish because they intervened, in most of the time. The instability of the political regimes was therefore a serious handicap to the implementation of the plans in the CAR. What becomes of economic development when planning is so often shaken by political crises?

Each new team that comes to power must rethink the economic data and present its development policy, which is not always in the same direction as that of the predecessors. This leads to the failure of the predictions. The country remained steeped in underdevelopment. We arrive here at an idea that did not fit with Western conceptions. Political instability was not a consequence of underdevelopment. Just because Africa was underdeveloped did not mean there was political instability. It was true that the state of underdevelopment of a country could cause a dependence which sometimes placed it in a situation of political instability. But political instability cannot be explained by underdevelopment. Rather the opposite is possible. It is political instability that accentuates underdevelopment. The more a country grew into an unstable regime, the more its economy collapsed and the more it sank into a state of underdevelopment. It was therefore not underdevelopment that was the cause of political instability in the CAR. It is rather the political instability of these countries perpetuated its state of underdevelopment. It was therefore one of the causes of the presence of underdevelopment in the CAR. Underdevelopment was thus an effect of the impact of political instability on the nation. (Tamekamta, 2013:7).

Planning is not the only component of development which is thus severely shaken by the political instability of the regimes in place. The same is true for aid and economic relations with the outside world. Tax is an important source of income here but is not enough to finance the plan. As for the creation of money, it is a procedure relatively little used in Africa: it assumes that the government is entirely in control of the issue; however, very often, this is organized on an international basis, through monetary cooperation agreements. The loan which very often is of external origin.

To succeed in financing its plan, the government resorted either to borrowing or to aid, which were operations conditioned by external relations. Aid from a developed country to a

French-speaking black African country largely depended on the relations that exist between the two countries. The CAR, in order to develop, needed to intensify its relations with the outside world in order to receive from it significant and long-term aid. But how could she obtain long-term help when governments were very often subject to change? Which Western country accepted, for example, to make loans to African States extending over a period of more than five years without having first ensured the stability of these States? This is one of the effects of political instability on the CAR. The CAR thus watched helplessly as its development plans stagnated, for lack of foreign aid for its financing, national resources having proved insufficient. The CAR, during the first decade of independence, was thus in a very boring situation for the governments. The wariness of Western states to grant increased aid to the CAR therefore stemmed from the political instability that reigned there (Mbog, 2013: 10). They were therefore condemned to see their development plans collapse before they even had time to enter their operational phase.

It should be noted that the instability of a regime could tip the country in question from one block to another. This change of course was a serious blow to the development of the nation. To get an idea of this phenomenon, one only had to consult the table which shows that three countries share more than half of the total aid. These are Ivory Coast, Senegal and Cameroon. When we push the analysis further, we realize that these three countries are States that benefited and enjoyed undeniable political stability. This finding clearly showed that a possible change in aid would lead to economic stagnation and, by extension, the failure of development forecasts because this aid was not mathematically distributed equally among the countries that had it need. To avoid these failures of the plans due to the reluctance of foreign investors and the refusal of the aid necessary for their financing, the CAR governments had endeavored to stimulate foreign investments by the process of investment codes. But before any analysis, it is necessary to say what an investment code really is (Tamekamta, 2013:12).

Despite the attractive conditions presented by these investment codes for the foreign investor, the latter still shows distrust of countries with very unstable political regimes. As we have seen, the investment codes provided for arrangements that sometimes extended over a period of 10 to 20 years. However, for these investments to subsequently prove beneficial for both the foreign company and the host country, the political regime in place had to enjoy undeniable stability. We therefore feel, through these investment codes, the impact of the instability of political regimes on the CAR.

We are therefore in the presence of a young State which is looking for itself, in the long and bitter struggle it is waging against underdevelopment. But this phenomenon of instability, which grew more and more during the first decade of independence, constituted a real handicap to the development of the CAR. This is a country that could not get by on its own. He needed aid, loans and above all to maintain economic relations with the outside world, especially with the developed powers. But unfortunately, this help was not free, the loan even less so. All that remained was economic relations with the outside world, characterized in particular by exchanges, which were really vital for the states of French-speaking black African (Tamekamta, 2013:14).

3.4. The perpetual change an infernal circle

After their accession to independence, the CAR had obtained its autonomy (Tamekamta, 2013:9). Being unable to think of a new system of administration that would fit in with local realities, he found himself suddenly confronted with a thorny system: the gradual reform of the administration. Let us not forget that the few European executives who occupied almost all the positions of responsibility had been placed in their position by the former metropolis. It was now necessary to ensure the necessary succession. The brutal change of certain regimes in the CAR during the first decade of independence distorts the Africanization of executives. Either the new leaders who take power carry out a rapid evacuation of the former settlers and put in their place nationals with no experience of administrative affairs, or else it

is the administration which, with each coup de force, with each overthrow of regimes, metamorphoses, no longer obeying, so to speak, the gradual reform of the administration which was supposed to be done in successive stages taking into account sectors not yet mastered by nationals. It is therefore not surprising that in the CAR, people complain about the administrative heaviness which very often leads to inexplicable delays in the processing of certain files. We are entitled to wonder if this is not one of the causes of a hasty reform of the administration which had been put in place by the former colonial powers. My administrative machine is comparable to a society. Her life has its ups and downs. After a crisis which therefore shakes this machine, it is advisable to let a transition period pass to allow it to catch its breath. Such a procedure does not exist in CAR. The brutality with which regimes follow one another in the CAR therefore has serious consequences for the administration. This leads to a blockage of the administration, to a stagnation that compromises the development of the country. This is one of the aspects of the impact of the instability of political regimes in the CAR (Tamekamta, 2013:22).

The crisis affecting the Central African Republic is the most serious that the country has known since independence. Not only is it the final act of a progressive disintegration of the state, but it calls into question the Central African social fabric by reviving the question of autochthony and by designating the Muslim as the harmful foreigner. In March 2013, in the absence of French military intervention and decisive African military mobilization, the Seleka rebels appropriated the CAR, inventing a traitorous power in the process. The complexity of the current situation, having reduced the effectiveness of FOMAC, Resolution 2127 of the UN Security Council remains an opportunity that France and the African institutions (ECCAS and AU) had seized to restore the humanities in RCA. In this context, the transitional authorities and their international partners are promoting rapid elections and classic DDR as a way out of the crisis to the detriment of the long-term response required by a country in pieces. In doing so, they take the risk of making the Central African Republic a territory in a situation of chronic instability where the border between peace and war will be blurred for a long time.

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SPATIAL RIVALRIES AND SAND MINING IN SA'A: A CASE STUDY OF LAND CONFLICTS BETWEEN SAND MINERS AND WOMEN FARMERS.

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Abstract: *This study focuses on a gendered approach to land management in peri-urban areas. It focuses on the diminishing role that women continue to play despite the various changes that have taken place in society. The aim here is to set up a socio-anthropological material of lived situations that allow for the analysis of a conflictual situation generated by sand exploitation in two villages of the Sa'a district, namely Avazam and Song Ntsaga. The hypothesis adopted is as follows: the man owns the land and the woman manages it. This established order has so far allowed a fair balance for both. Today, the man claims to be the manager and invades the woman's agricultural space. The confrontation of these two actors generates conflicts with regard to the specificity of the roles of each. To verify this hypothesis, data was collected through documentary research, interviews and direct observation. The data collected gave rise to three articulations: the city's demand for sand, the modalities of access to the land and finally the management of the land in relation to the exploitation of the sand.*

Keywords : gender, rivalities, duable development, environnement.

1 The draining of the village by the city

The urbanisation of the city of Yaoundé has had repercussions on its periphery, of which the department of Lékié, and mainly the district of Sa'a, is an example. The villages of Sa'a, which are potentially rich because they are conducive to food crops, have been influenced by the city in several ways, the most recurrent of which is that of space. Contact with the capital has modified the interests and needs of the villages. The relationship between urbanisation and spatial occupation is changing. Urban expansion is inexorably accompanied by food and infrastructure needs. Food crops are becoming cash crops. Over the years, in parallel with the decline of crops for export, population growth in the capital has led to a frantic demand for food. Because of its large population, Sa'a is a market where most food production is absorbed by the city of Yaoundé. The "buying-seling¹" criss-cross the villages in search of foodstuffs, in order to sell them in Yaoundé. In such a context, any increase in food supplies can only be achieved by enlarging the cultivable area in order to increase agricultural production. However, these villages are densely populated areas with populations of 200 to 400 people per km². Therefore, the land is highly contested, as it is thanks to its exploitation that rural people make some money. The parallel growth of population and production leads to a rapid reduction in the available land. Farms become smaller and smaller, and the disproportion between the cultivable area and the growing demand of the city becomes greater. Following Rambaud, (1960), we can add that urbanisation is manifested by the introduction of the notion of accumulation into rural societies. The latter makes it possible to build up a network of redistribution and thus offers better control over individuals and the means of production. Those who have more then dominate those who have not and can make them their dependents. This means that the production system has an impact on the formation of social stratifications

¹ Buying-seling is a reseller of food products purchased from rural women. She generally buys her supplies in the surrounding villages or from women who come to sell their products in markets such as Mokolo, Mvog Mbi, Essos...

or hierarchies (Abéga, 2007). This leads rural people to change their relationship with the land. However, the problem that arises is generally that of the rational use of space by the populations. This generally results in conflicts.

As can be seen, the city has affected the agricultural land area through the intensification of old cultivation methods and marketing prospects. The direct repercussions of urbanisation on this periphery are the search for arable land, as rural people have no other activity than farming and must therefore have sufficient crops to have a surplus to sell. Agriculture in the Sa'a region is therefore marked by the co-existence of cash crops (cocoa) for export, and food crops for family and urban consumption.

Contrary to all expectations, it is not the coexistence of these crops that leads to discord between men and women farmers, as they sometimes even farm together in households, but the exploitation of sand. In fact, in the study area, the subjection of agriculture to sand occupation is becoming more widespread. In the past, women in these villages did not have problems with space for production. Introduced in Avazam and Song Ntsaga a few years ago, sand exploitation has taken on great proportions, blurring the women's mode of appropriation of the land. The need to make high profits has led farmers to exploit large areas of land. This disproportionate expansion of land through sand mining has been accompanied by a clear reduction in the space available for agriculture, and thus for women. This can be attributed to the urbanisation of the city of Yaoundé, in that the modernisation of housing and infrastructure requires sand.

While it is known that sand is mined in Ebebda, it was also done marginally in Avazam and Song Ntsaga. But with the opening up of this region marked by the erection of a bridge, thus allowing trucks to have access, sand exploitation has become one of the main commercial activities of these villages. Today, the land that is suitable for agriculture is the site of competition between sand mining and agriculture. The former is taking over almost all the space that was previously reserved for the latter, which is relegated to plots that are of little use to sand farmers because they are far from the sandy areas. The dynamics of the demand for sand are increasingly reducing the amount of land available for cultivation.

Today, women farmers in Avazam and Song Ntsaga face two problems: producing enough to consume and selling the surplus. Urban food pressure and household security lead them to have several fields, playing on their number and their respective agricultural values. This strategy avoids any possibility of stock-outs. According to Nkaloulou (2001), speaking of Congolese society The peasant woman generally works on four fields. The first is put under cultivation, while the second, started the previous year, enters its exploitation phase, the third is productive for the second year and the fourth is at the end of its exploitation and is starting to fallow. For this author, this sequence corresponds to the four-year cassava crop cycle. Contrary to the author's view, this cycle does not only correspond to the cassava cycle. The multiplicity of fields also corresponds to a need to have several agricultural products throughout the year. It should be noted that a field has several crop varieties. These do not have the same production time. For some, such as banana plantain, it takes two years to harvest, while maize takes only three months, etc. So if she needs plantain, for example, she will go to the field she grew two years ago. It is clear that to ensure continuity before the harvest of the cultivated fields, she must have others. In other words, to ensure food security, she needs a lot of space. The fields therefore periodically return to old, previously developed land, where the fertility has returned to its original level after a more or less long fallow period with trees. This system consumes quite a lot of space, in the sense that it requires a large area of land for a few square metres actually ploughed, but it gives the soil time to recover afterwards. In addition, food crop farming has remained practically traditional. The most recurrent is slash-and-burn agriculture, which, contrary to what is generally accepted, is seen by women farmers as the only appropriate method of farming to ensure the protection of the land. It is therefore clear that women farmers are aware of the balance between exploitation and restoration.

To quote Nkaloulou (2001:90), *'for land to continue producing, it must be protected against certain destructive factors. This is why the duration of exploitation of a piece of land will not exceed the cultivation cycle of its main crop, in order to allow a rapid reconstitution of the forest tissue or the vegetation cover and thus the edaphic complex. Contrary to what is said, the peasant woman often does not abandon the land because it is exhausted. She puts it to rest as a sine qua non for returning to it later. For example, in order to allow the land to recover quickly, the peasant woman must avoid clearing the land. She also gives the cut trees every chance to bud. The vegetation cover is then quickly reconstituted. Forest or savannah species quickly take over. Within a few years, the fallow plants restore the soil complex to its original state. And the land can be cultivated again.*

In order to preserve their soil, the women farmers thus raise the issue of space management. What about hourglasses?

The rush of peasant farmers to become sand miners and the commercial growth of this resource raises the issue of overexploitation of sand. The latter is based on the notion of unlimited resources. In this region, the sand occupies a large area in terms of extent. This impression of inalterability leads to an overexploitation of this material. It is estimated that more than ten 22-tons trucks make several rounds of sand per day. Sand is taken from all directions, especially around the bridge and beyond, in order to supply a buoyant market, which is Yaoundé. This overexploitation is one, if not the main factor, behind the degradation of the soil in the two villages. The need for foreign currency encourages farmers to collect at too fast a rate to allow the sand to reconstitute itself, which makes the fragile exploitation-reconstitution balance precarious. While in Ebebda the sand is extracted from the river, in Avazam and Song Ntsaga it is a sandy strip, which is not as easily replenished as the rivers. However, the soils of this region owe much of their fertility to the cover of the material, which has great value and provides vital protective services. The sand protects the soil from the effects of erosion, flooding, etc. The disappearance of sand is worrying because of the loss of the functions it provides, especially the pedologic functions (soil protection). A tour of these villages reveals huts that are in danger of collapsing because sand has been dug up to a few metres from the concessions. The sand continues to flow not far from the houses, which favours their deterioration, the foundations of which are visible in those that are attacked. The exploitation of sand also has quite serious consequences for the health of the population. The stagnation of water in the quarries favours the proliferation of malaria-transmitting mosquitoes, which determines an important pathogenic context. Malaria remains a real handicap that slows down human activity.

If at the beginning it was the fallow land that was targeted, the lure of profit is such that even the food fields are destroyed. The arable land is removed, the diggers go as far as the clay or rocky areas. One can therefore imagine the tensions that can exist between men and women, especially since today we meet peasants who no longer have any space to make food fields, or who no longer have fruit trees, which constitute a very large financial contribution in the region. The trees are collapsing because the sandmen are digging around them. They go so deep that they attack the roots. Also, these villages are now landlocked because of the trucks that have destroyed the road. It is clear that this area is evolving towards an almost general impoverishment, because of the decrease in cultivable areas, and the consequences mentioned above. As a result of these effects, we are witnessing a serious degradation of the environment and a disruption of the spatial organisation.

2 Spatial organisation

In both villages, the layout of the settlement reflects in principle a spatial plan of the main families. Each village is divided into lineage areas and each head of a family has the right to own plots of land inherited from the father or a relative. The fields of the members of the same domestic unit are grouped together next to each other according to these divisions.

The spatial organisation is also reflected in the organisation of production spaces. The latter is marked by the social division of roles and tasks between the sexes. The man devotes himself to cash crop activities. Apart from a few minor activities, he has an exclusive monopoly on the transaction of cash crops for export, although this is no longer as profitable as it once was. Women, on the other hand, find their social fulfilment in food crops. The food fields are her property, although this is defined through marriage. The distribution of space is carried out as follows: each man inherits from his father or a family member a space to build and practice agriculture. Each woman receives from her husband the land she needs for the crops she will grow during her life in the village. As the demographic pressure is strong, each family jealously guards its space. Some families are obliged to borrow or to make do with the spaces just behind the houses. Others go further into the forest depending on their land tenure. Land has both symbolic and material functions for rural people.

2.1 The land: a symbolic element

More than a space for the materialisation of people, the land fulfils a symbolic function in the perception that rural people have of it. In the holistic vision that these populations have of it, the land is beyond morpho-structural identities.

For Magnant (1996), who has studied the Sara society in Chad, land is for these populations both an element of nature that harbours forces that make it fertile, and an unalterable asset that is essential for food production. For Coquery-Vidrovitch (1994), the inalienability of land is due to its sacred and extrapatrimonial function. This is why it is the property of the lineage. This author considers that if land remains inalienable, it is simply because of the persistence of mystical and religious foundations of land rights. This religiosity has a lot to do with the nutritive function of land. Indeed, the fact that the land feeds the peasants means that it is clothed in a mystical-religious halo, because it is the source of life. Everything it produces is the will of the gods and the ancestors. Melone (1972) refutes all these hypotheses that tend to make the land sacred and thinks that it is a way for the elders to assert control over the land. They therefore take as their basis its belonging to the genies. When this explanation is no longer sufficient, it is said that the land is a community asset and belongs to the lineage. For this author, these explanations tend to fight against the tendency towards individualism.

2.2 Land: a material good

It is the place where individuals materialise, in the sense that it represents a factor of group cohesion. It is always ready to bear the burdens of the community. What characterises the land is its permanence, because although clans come and go, the land remains unchanging and always ready to bear the burdens of the community. The traditional organisation of African societies distinguishes between two main roles: that of the owner of the land and that of the user. Even if land remains a community asset, its use is complex, as it can change from collective to individual use. Land therefore has several uses within a community or household. For example, even if the members use the same production unit, they may have different purposes, ensuring subsistence in one case, or providing income in the other. This divergence of objectives can lead to conflicts within the household. The distinction between plantations and food fields generates a segmentation of the lineage exploitation at the level of the family or household, which tends to take on great autonomy for individuals.

2.2.1 Access to land

In principle, all members benefit from the usus of the land and each bears sole responsibility for cultivating his land, regardless of gender. However, he does not establish his crops on just any part. The locations of the fields, the boundaries of the fields, are passed on from father to son, from husband to wife, from mother to daughter or daughter-in-law. In fact, in the modalities of access to the land, there are two main roles: that of owner and that of

manager. Men see themselves as the owners of the land, while women have only a strict right to manage it.

a- Men and access to land

If there is one fact that recurs in the readings, it is that access to land is essentially reserved for men. For Verdier (1986: 12), it is generally the man who founds a territory, so the rights to the land are transmitted only through the (male) line of the founder. In this sense, the land becomes inalienable and cannot be given to outsiders. It serves the reproduction of the group, and to take it out of the lineage would be to reduce the space for present and future generations.

Why is land passed on between men? Once again, sacredness will play a major role in this appropriation because, according to Gény (1992: 44), in Africa many rural populations consider land to be a divine element. As a result, it cannot be appropriated by humans. It is a heritage belonging to the ancestors who have entrusted the management of its use to their descendants living on the land. As a result, the latter cannot transfer ownership to a stranger since they are usufructuaries. They can only grant a right of use.

It was with colonisation and the introduction of cash crops that the soil became an asset and an object of individual appropriation. It can be said that it is appropriated by men because it is the latter who practice cocoa farming, which permanently alienates the soil on which it is planted, unlike food crops which are temporary. As the land belongs to the person who has valued it through the act of clearing and cleaning, the man therefore acquires the right of ownership through this crop for the rest of his life. According to Santoir (1992), the conditionality of registration of cocoa farmers for subsidies imposed by the German administration is another reason for this appropriation of land by men, which will give rise to the right of ownership and, at the same time, promote the right to land for men.

b- Women and access to land

Bazzi-Veil (2000) in her analysis of the profile of African women, argues that in Cameroon, women, who represent 51% of the population and participate in more than 75% of agricultural production, are only 3.2% landowners in the North West region and 7.2% in the South West region, i.e. at the national level less than 10%. We do not question these claims, nor do we question the claim that men have a monopoly on the control of property management in the community. This can be seen in most parts of the Central Region where the occupation of space shows the constant preoccupation of men to control the land. Thus, cocoa farms are prominent in the immediate vicinity of the villages, while food crops are increasingly removed from the houses as they fallow. Although these spatial disproportions are a result of the monopoly of control of the land by men, the fact remains that once acquired by women, they keep it as long as they live in the community. This is all the more true as the system of land use is individual and therefore as the descendants of the same ancestor inherit the property bequeathed by him. Each one exploits the land that belongs to him with his wife. The latter therefore generally exploit the land of their husbands and if, before, agricultural activity was controlled by the men insofar as it was they who decided on the location of the crops, more and more, the women themselves are taking the initiative to open new fields according to the fallow periods. They choose the land that suits them based on the nature of the soil. Delpêch (1985: 339), speaking of the Eton women in the department of Lékié, also believes that even if, in *Beti* custom, the woman has land only through her husband, the hold of the monetary economy increased by urban proximity is such that she has become aware of her financial power. To do this, she closely controls the land she cultivates, considers it her property and does not hesitate to lodge complaints when she feels her rights are threatened. Yet the law states that regular maintenance of a plot of land showing that its occupation meets a need reinforces the rights of the user. When a fallow land is cleared, each of the women returns to the plot she was cultivating, and is allocated the same locations. Also children have a right to the land that was

cultivated by their mother. Nowadays, each woman can claim a kind of right to the land, since each time the land is cleared, she finds it again, and each child has a virtual right to the land cultivated by his mother (Binet 1956). For this author, the woman also has rights to her former fallow land as a representative of her children.

In the light of what has just been analysed, it is because of the principle of exogamy that women only have a right of use over the land. At the time of marriage, they leave their family to live with their husband. As a result, they cannot own or control the land. Although the land, because of the permanence of the food fields, is owned by women. However, they only have the right to usufruct. This form of appropriation determines a limited hold on the land for women. However, it should not be assumed at first sight that the fact that women do not have land is a sign of segregation. According to Verdier (1986:13), because of exogamy, women occupy an ambivalent position in society, insofar as they are called upon to live in their husband's lineage. Thus, without ceasing to be part of their lineage as a sister, they enter their husband's lineage as a wife. The women's dual status as sister and wife thus gives them an ambiguous and mobile position that prevents them from receiving land inheritance in either lineage. For the latter, it is not a question of an incapacity specific to their sex, but of an incompatibility linked to the rule of exogamy which requires that land be transmitted to men. Irène Albert (1993:46), for her part, believes that even if these are isolated cases, there are women who inherit land. For this author, they often inherit from their fathers, who have no brothers, or from their mothers. In this case the land is shared between all the children, boys and girls. However, it should be noted that all these women who inherit are either single and remain in their father's village, or they are married in a neighbouring village, otherwise it is impossible for them to work in these fields because of their distance. With Albert, therefore, the birth hypothesis is not verified. It is mainly because of the distance, the lack of means that would allow them to exploit their plots by paying a labourer that women often do not have land in their native village.

It may happen that during the fallow period, the wife takes the initiative to open a new field on her husband's land without asking his permission. It is imagined that if the marriage lasts for a lifetime, the wife owns her fields. It was noted that among the *Beti*, it is increasingly the woman who 'reserves' the land for the man in the sense that when she farms a plot, it will later revert to her son. In this case, it is difficult to say that women are marginalised in land management. Similarly, as has been said, unmarried women who remain in their communities are not adversely affected, as they have plots of land that they cultivate, so that it is difficult for a male relative to take over this land without conflicts arising. It is in this sense that, according to Binet (1959), the clearing of natural forest under customary law is an act of development that confers important rights on the person who carries it out. The system finds its internal regulation through the constraints of manual labour.

The woman can freely open up fields on clan territories or on her husband's territory. However, the man can use his power as landlord to take away a plot from her. He can do this directly or subtly. Santoir (1992) shows how men have taken plots away from women by growing cocoa on food fields. Over time, these mixed fields became pure cocoa fields. These strategies of exclusion of women to guarantee access to land will be repeated in the exploitation of sand in Avazam and Song-Ntsaga. Indeed, there is a confrontation between these two social actors over the use of land because of a new activity that provides foreign currency.

3 Spatial conflicts

Rivalry is assimilated to conflict, which is understood as an expression of divergent interests linked either to different social positions or to personal strategies (Olivier de Sardan, 1995: 176-177). For Hogue et al (1989: 81) the term conflict in the social sciences refers first of all to the notion of a human relationship or interaction between individuals... the resources available to the actors are generally limited. Consequently, their objectives will sooner or later conflict. Rather than a dissociated and pathological phenomenon as Durkheim ((1912) 1986) thought, Simmel ((1908)1992) conceives of conflict as a normal, and sometimes necessary and

beneficial, form of social life, in that it expresses a discrepancy between the established rules and the new problems that arise in the social system, "*conflict is less a pathology than a phenomenon in the incessant production of the social system by itself. It is central to the dynamics of society as well as to the vitality of society*" (1908:31). A conflict can be seen as a tension between actors who seek to assert divergent interests. For Ferréol (1995), '*conflicts oppose, in very diverse forms, individuals or groups whose interests diverge. These confrontations are capable of upsetting the existing order. Either by changing the ownership of existing means or by modifying the relationship of authority*'. They are therefore indicative of social dynamics. Conflicts related to land can be considered to be all 'phenomena of tension and competition for natural resources and the confrontations that may result from them: competition, disagreements, disputes, declared opposition or confrontations (symbolic violence being as important as physical violence)' (Chauveau and Mathieu, 1993: 243). As for Feeny (1988), he defines social conflicts as '*mediation mechanisms through which a social demand for change is expressed*'. For this author, it is economic changes that are sources of conflict. This is reflected in the case of conflicts between households in the sense that the increasing scarcity of agricultural land, accentuated by the sale of sand, leads to conflicts over the land. These conflicts are then seen as a reflection of the inadequacy of social systems of land management and the evolution of land through bargaining. Indeed, when land becomes valued, as is the case with the sale of sand, then it becomes the object of increased covetousness, which leads to conflicts.

The conflicts we will study arise from disagreements and disputes over access to and control of sandy land. These conflicts arise because of multiple demands and competing pressures on the land. The exploitation of sand on increasingly scarce arable land has led to strong competition for scarce space. This is the case for the households we interviewed.

3.1 The disputed spaces

Spaces are contested according to needs and priorities for land use. The first are the food fields, because of agricultural production, which requires great pressure on the land. The demographic pressure and the scarcity of arable land lead to strong competition, which mechanically leads to violent clashes.

a- The food fields

The food fields remain the preserve of the women. In both villages. During the various interviews, it emerged that each woman has her own fields, the number of which varies according to her needs and availability. This appropriation of the food fields by the women attests to a great deal of autonomy in the organisation of activities and in the management of harvests, but this is only in the form of usufruct.

b- Fallow land

The fallows that are scattered in different agricultural areas are intended to allow the land to recover its fertility. It should be noted once again that, in principle, it is the women who return to these areas to grow crops. The fact that men compete for these areas which are under the control of women demonstrates the limited control they have over this domain which is theirs, due to the sexual division of roles.

3.2 The parties involved in the conflicts

These conflicts have involved several actors with different interests. Ngo Mboua (2002) lists the categories of actors at two levels, horizontal and vertical. The vertical level generally concerns conflicts between farmers and the administration. Horizontal conflicts, on the other hand, are between different actors. We are interested in the second level. The horizontal level includes households, families, neighbours, etc. Men are more involved in these conflicts than women. The latter are mostly married women. In this article we focus only on conflicts between domestic units.

3.3 Household conflicts: a case study

The case of Mr. and Mrs. Abega is representative of all the household conflicts we have identified in Avazam and Song-Ntsaga. The couple lives on the border between Avazam and Song-Ntsaga, more precisely in Elesogue, but considers themselves to be from Avazam. In this hamlet, the houses of the two villages face each other, on either side of the road, which, it should be noted, is impassable at this level by cars because of the degradation of the road by the trucks transporting the sand. The couple, like most peasants, are mainly engaged in agriculture.

As the owner of a large sandy area that he shared with his brother, he practised sand exploitation in parallel with agriculture, and had no "problems" with his wife, as each occupied his own space. It should be noted that his wife was against this sand exploitation, because she felt that she had several children to whom she would have to leave land as an inheritance, as the demographic pressure in the locality made land a rare commodity. When sand mining expands in the area, Mr Abéga mines sand continuously for months. The demand increases every day and the sand decreases. He has no choice but to turn to the spaces used by his wife. He asked her permission, but she refused. He ignores the ban, because as he says, *'I don't want to be imposed on, I can't bend over backwards in front of my wife'*. He calls in the sand diggers he has recruited for this purpose, and they clear Mrs Abega's entire field. This is the confrontation between the two spouses. According to the husband, *'she had to follow me with a machete. Well, I ran away because I had the upper hand'*. The couple argued and Mr Abéga did not fail to remind her that she was a foreigner because, as his wife said, *'he had told me: is this your father's land? Didn't you turn your back on the place where you were born? Don't come and tell me about my heritage. He had used the word heritage that, here at home, he is the only one to manage his heritage.'*

This testimony by Mrs Abéga clearly shows the low status of women in the context of marriage. As a mobile element of society, in a patrilineal system, women can only access land through marriage, which has an impact on their social situation. Her ability to develop the land through agriculture for subsistence, trade or inheritance for her children may be questioned depending on the circumstances. Indeed, even if she is able to open a field on her husband's land, he can evict her at any time. Divorce or widowhood are not the only factors that call into question her right to use the land. This injustice is all the more alarming because she is not compensated. In the best of cases, her husband can be satisfied with showing her another space so that she can make another field. However, she needs a minimum of 3 to 6 months between sowing and harvesting. This situation forces her to resign herself because, as Mrs Abéga says, *"I let it happen, because if I started to insist that he should not sell his sand any more, then maybe I would leave"*. There is thus a source of imbalance in the unit. As the woman is not the owner, she disappears from this exchange structure, which once again excludes her, to the benefit of the man who monopolises the spaces that are reserved for him, because as Mr Abéga states, *'even 60 m from where we are now, there was a field there that I had torn out'*.

The patrilineal system and the virilocal residential mode of marriage mean that women are not considered to be fully integrated into their husband's group. In fact, the woman who leaves the country remains an outsider. ADJAMOGBO (2000), who studied the Gban society in the south-central part of Côte d'Ivoire, shows that within the domestic unit in which she lives and works, the woman is above all considered as a passing stranger, who is obliged to leave if she wishes to do so when her husband dies. This status gives her few rights in the village where she lives and works, where she remains on the margins of community decision-making. Her role is mainly limited to the production of children and food to ensure the survival of the lineage.

In general, women have a dual status, firstly in relation to their family of origin and secondly in relation to their husband. This is an ambiguity that is unfavourable to women, as it always places them under the authority of men, particularly their fathers or husbands. However, this social organisation converges towards an entirely male control of society. Although the crisis in cash crops and the demand for food in the city has enabled the women of

this locality to be at the centre of economic production, thanks to the production of food crops, which gives them a certain economic independence, the exploitation of sand has once again disrupted this activity to the benefit of men exclusively, who monopolise the best land and call into question the balance between exploitation and the restoration of the environment, which is of concern to the women farmers.

Conclusion

Women, as managers of the agricultural land they exploit, are dispossessed of it according to the circumstances. Indeed, the exploitation of sand in the villages of Avazam and Nsong-Ntsaga has turned the men and women of this locality into economic rivals who compete for the production areas. While there used to be relative stability in the management of the land, this has been challenged by the introduction of sand mining. The recognition of the effort made by the individual to work is recognised for men to appropriate the land, which is not the case for women, as they are a mobile element of society. Their access to land is indirect and temporary. Permits to farm can be challenged at any time. Although their form of agriculture is environmentally friendly, they are embedded in a system that takes great care to keep them out of the management of land and material assets. Once again, it appears that it is men who control the financial circuit through sand mining, as was once the case with cocoa farming.

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EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT SOCIO-POLITICAL, CLIMATE AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES

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Abstract: *What skills are needed to solve the complex equations that life forces us to solve, equations that have so few constants and so many variables? Any change is stressful. For a flexible mind stressful situations can become developmental challenges for evolution. For a rigid mind, however, stress is discouraging, it becomes a limit, a dead end. Whether we like it or not society evolves and education must evolve with society. The VUCA concept is more current than ever. We have no idea what the world will look like, we can only imagine scenarios. What we learn now may become irrelevant in a few years.*

Keywords: education, skills, information technology, the VUCA concept, the future

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, we find numerous terms in the press and academic literature that refer to an ever-increasing inability to understand the world and cope with the things that are happening around us. Examples include uncertainty, turbulence, rapid change, dynamism, disruption, complexity, hyper-competition, high-speed markets. (<https://www.studypool.com>). Recent pandemic conditions have made new contributions to the organization of the education system. Therefore, school/ educational and learning activities demonstrate that efficiency is achieved through the involvement of the school and institutions that form an educational partnership designed to streamline learning and online. The concept of partnership involves elements of socio-economic status and involvement of public institutions in special situations such as those related to the pandemic (<https://madalinaradulescu.ro>).

For several years, the notion of “VUCA” has gained popularity as a term to cover the different dimensions of this “uncontrollable” environment. In various posts and articles, we read, for example, about a “VUCA world” and especially about “Leadership in a VUCA world”. But what does it really mean to live and lead in a VUCA world?

2. The VUCA concept

V.U.C.A. is an acronym. It consists of the initials of the English words volatility (volatility), uncertainty (uncertainty), complexity (complexity) and ambiguity (ambiguity). There are a lot of explanations, including a Harvard Business Review article by Nathan Bennett and G. James Lemoine a long list of web pages where this concept is explained. However, a few clarifications need to be made (Bennet and Lemoine, 2014: 3).

Volatility refers to the speed of change in a field, industry, market or world in general. In economics it is associated with fluctuations in demand, turbulence and short time in markets and is well documented in the literature on the dynamism of industry (<https://madalinaradulescu.ro>). The more volatile the world is, the more and faster things change. That is, we are talking about the nature, speed, magnitude, volume and dynamics of change.

Uncertainty – uncertainty refers to the extent to which we can confidently predict the future. Some of the uncertainty is perceived and associated with people’s inability to understand what is happening. Uncertainty, however, is also a more objective characteristic of an environment. The truly uncertain averages are those that do not allow any prediction, nor

on a statistical basis. The more uncertain the world is, the harder it is to predict. Bennet and Lemoine, 2014: 4).

Complexity - complexity refers to the number of factors to consider, their variety and the relationships between them. The more factors there are, the greater their variety and the more interconnected they are, the more complex the environment (<https://madalinaradulescu.ro>). Under conditions of high complexity, it is impossible to fully analyze the environment and reach rational conclusions. The more complex the world is, the harder it is to analyze. Bennet and Lemoine, 2014: 5).

Ambiguity – ambiguity refers to a lack of clarity about how to interpret something. A situation is ambiguous, for example, when the information is incomplete, contradictory or too inaccurate to draw clear conclusions. More generally, it refers to blurring and vague in ideas and terminology. The more ambiguous the world is, the harder it is to interpret (Bennet and Lemoine, 2014: 6).

In practice, the four terms are linked. The more complex and volatile a situation is, for example, the harder it will be to predict and therefore the more uncertain it will be. However, all four are distinct elements that make our environment – the world, a market, an industry – harder to understand and control. The distinct nature of these four elements can be further clarified by visualizing them (<https://madalinaradulescu.ro>).

As illustrated in the picture below, in a purely volatile (but not uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world, there are a lot of rapid but predictable changes. On the other hand, in a purely uncertain (but not volatile, complex and ambiguous) world, it is hard to say how things are evolving (<https://madalinaradulescu.ro>). And in a purely complex world (but not volatile, uncertain, and ambiguous), things are hard to handle and understand. Finally, in a purely ambiguous (but not volatile, uncertain, and complex) world, it is hard to discern things. This concept perfectly describes the world in which we operate today, including (if not especially) in Romania:

- unstable world with an exponential pace of development;
- full of interdependencies between many factors in a global context;
- characterized by little clarity about what is right and what is not, it is difficult to discern between multiple options and their potential results.

The notion of VUCA has been widely applied in the field of leadership and business and to a lesser extent in educational policy reviews. The outbreak of the covid outbreak in early 2020 and the long-lasting global effects have significantly expanded the implications and concreteness of this term for the millions of people whose lives have been completely transformed in a few days. This also affected students, teachers and all those involved in education (Bennet and Lemoine, 2014:5). All over the world schools and institutions of higher education or closed and suddenly switched to online teaching and learning. Since the beginning of the century, we have been living in a turbulent and rapidly changing world and this tends to become the so-called “new normal”. In addition to the coronavirus pandemic, we are facing climate change and environmental disasters, the rapid evolution of technology, demographic growth, immigration, the revival of nationalist politics and the rise of inequality. We are also facing what seemed unimaginable – war.

3. How do we prepare young people to venture into this V.U.C.A. world, not to simply survive but to understand it, to occupy a critical position about it, and ultimately work to change it for the better?

Volatility can be counteracted with **vision**.

Vision acts as a real compass, undisturbed by any fluctuation, called to cope with volatility. Let’s think, for example, how similarly, people always want to listen to music while solutions have evolved from gramophone and CD players to online streaming services. Processes and products change, needs remain the same.

Uncertainty can be countered with **understanding**.

Knowledge is the key to uncertainty. It is necessary to harmonize talents, convert anxiety into resistance. Collecting, interpreting and sharing information with others is essential. To be effective in a VUCA environment, people must learn to look and listen beyond their area of expertise, and develop and demonstrate collaborative skills. There is little chance of understanding the complexity of turbulence from your own perspective.

Complexity can be clearly **counteracted clarity**.

Leaders know how to focus on what matters and is really important. Complexity disappears when you focus on a few things with great impact. Einstein said, “If I had an hour to solve a problem, I would spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about the solution.” Cause and effect influence must be discovered and analyzed (<https://madalinaradulescu.ro>). „Mistakes are made in the world of VUCA because there are many things to research, many ideas to experiment with; their effect can be minimized, then measured and used courageously to obtain better information that reduces complexity, but also uncertainty and ambiguity” (Bennet and Lemoine, 2014: 5).

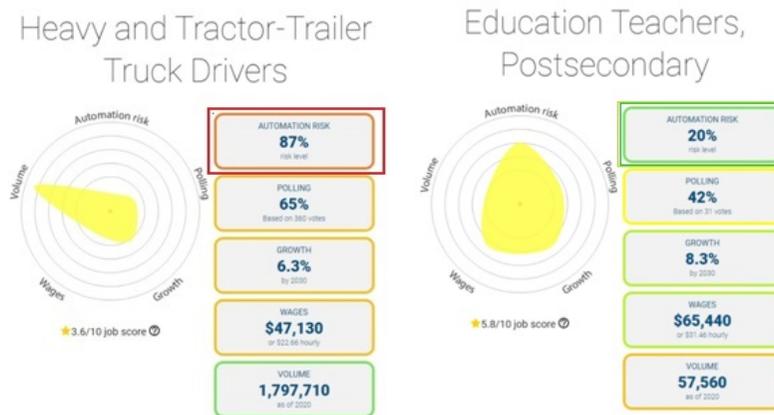
The VUCA world demands reinvention, qualification and retraining every day. Most teachers never thought of teaching online before March 2020; nowadays they are proficient in online teaching (<https://madalinaradulescu.ro>). Strength training and resistance can change the game during volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. If we want to succeed in our personal and professional lives, we need to know the real meaning and characteristics of the following key terms: **vision, understanding, courage, communication, competence, preparation, resilience intelligence**. To survive in the world of VUCA, it essentially requires intelligence, more than intelligence, which is emotional intelligence and, most importantly, the coefficients of adversity that represent resilience or we can say adaptability.

4 C & 6 C in Education

Some of the current education systems still focus on the transmission and accumulation of information. This made sense in the past when it was difficult to access information, there was no internet, online libraries, specialized sites for all kinds of information and activities, streaming. We are being assaulted daily by a huge volume of information, some useful, others superfluous (Fullan, 2018:28). The phenomenon of “fake news” is growing and is used more and more often as a weapon, it is spoken of the “post truth” era.

In this context, the education system provides an even greater amount of information, without developing in students the skills to filter and interpret information correctly, to distinguish between what is important and what is not important. In an ocean of information porridge, students and students can no longer discern which information is correct, useful, important. They no longer make connections between the pieces of true information so that after they have completed the puzzle of information they can get a correct picture of reality. In addition to the large amount of information, most schools strive to provide students with predetermined skills such as: How to calculate integrals; how to program computers; driving vehicles and machinery; Some of these skills required for certain activities will probably no longer be needed in the labor market in the near future. These activities, jobs will be done by robots or will be automated.

Figure 1. Automatization risk for 2 professions: truck driver and teacher



What is to be done? What should we teach students? Many pedagogical experts believe that technical skills are slow, but their role should be reduced. The general life skills and socio-emotional competencies of students should be developed to enhance their ability to cope with stress. One of the most important skills is coping with change, learning new things, and keeping your mental balance in unusual situations. To survive and thrive in a constantly changing world, it takes a lot of mental flexibility and great reserves of emotional balance.

In the US National Education Association publication “preparing 21st century students for a Global Society” (<https://www.edcan.ca>). A guide for 4Cs. It is recommended to teach the 4 C’s in schools – critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity.

Also called 21-century learning skills, it is believed that they help students learn and are therefore vital for success in school and beyond.

Critical thinking

Critical thinking is focused, careful analysis of something to better understand it. When people talk about the activity of the “left brain,” they usually refer to critical thinking. Here are some of the main critical thinking skills:

- To analyze is to break something down into its parts, examine each part, and observe how the parts fit.
- Argument is the use of a series of logically connected statements, supported by evidence, to reach a conclusion.
- Classification is the identification of types or groups of something, showing how each category is different from the others.

Communication

- Analyzing the situation means thinking about the subject, purpose, sender, receiver, medium and context of a message.
- Choosing an environment involves deciding the most appropriate way to deliver a message, from a face-to-face chat to a 400-page report.
- Evaluating messages means deciding whether they are accurate, complete, reliable, authorized and up-to-date.
- Compliance with conventions means communicating using the expected norms for the chosen environment.
- Active listening requires careful attention, taking notes, asking questions, and engaging in any other way in the ideas that are communicated.

- Reading is decoding written words and images to understand what their initiator is trying to communicate.

Creativity

Creative thinking is open to discovery of possibilities. When people talk about the activity of the “right brain,” they most often refer to creative thinking. Here are some of the most common creative thinking skills:

- Brainstorming ideas involve asking a question and listing all answers quickly, even those that are exaggerated, impractical, or impossible.
- To create something is to form it by combining materials, perhaps according to a plan, or perhaps based on the momentum of the moment.
- Designing something means finding the conjunction between form and function and shaping materials for a specific purpose.
- Entertaining others involves telling stories, making jokes, singing songs, playing games, playing roles, and making conversation.

All over the world, both traditional and most progressive school systems are familiar with the four Cs in. Communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity have become the core elements of the 21st century educational movement to prepare students for careers in the present and future world. Now, two decades after the beginning of the 20th century, it is found that social, emotional and mental health problems are on the rise in our schools and in society at large (Fullan, 2018:101). To address these issues, education must continue to evolve to fully meet the needs of today’s students.

A Canadian-born education researcher, Michael Fullan introduced another 2 Cs, character and citizenship, as part of his new pedagogues for deep learning. While the old 4 Cs are still relevant to the careers of the 21 century, these new additions represent a new focus on well-being (Fullan 2018:76). By creating more meaningful relationships for students with their peers, their schools, and the global community, the six C’s pursue not only career success in the future, but also success in every aspect of life. This is how we evolve from 4 C to 6 C.

Compassion and character

Compassion and character are attributed to the student’s personal effectiveness – their ability to empathize with others and apply this information to their behavior. Often referred to as emotional intelligence, this C is the foundation for creating positive and meaningful relationships. In fact, studies have shown that people with high emotional intelligence have greater mental health and lifelong leadership skills.

Compassion and character have become increasingly important for the development of modern careers. Emotional intelligence is a basic requirement for many employers today. The World Economic Forum listed emotional intelligence among the top six skills sought in the workforce in 2020. In 2015, it did not even exceed the top ten, which testifies to the growing importance in every aspect of society.

Figure 2. Emotional intelligence enters the top 10 and ranks 6th.



Community and citizenship

Today's students are growing up in an increasingly connected world. This connectivity brings with it a greater responsibility than past generations to think like global citizens. Community and citizenship help students develop a sense of purpose through these connections and ultimately strive to contribute to the improvement of the world. For example, students can focus on real-world issues such as sustainability to put learning in a tangible, immediate and measurable context. *Complex problem-solving skills*, the most important workforce skill required for 2025, according to the World Economic Forum.

Figure 3. Analytical and innovative thinking # 1 in the list of skills that will be needed in 2025.

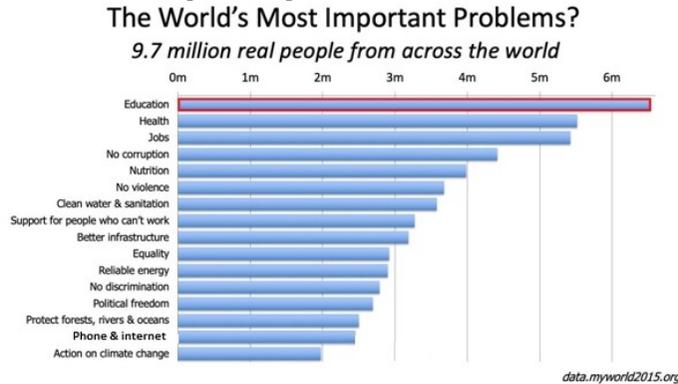


The addition of these new Cs is not intended to overshadow the four originals; they are included to create a comprehensive, well-rounded education focused on life success. Balance is key – there are no two school systems the same and each requires a different approach to learning environments. After all, the purpose of education should not be to create good workers, but to create good people. (<https://www.edcan.ca>).

The problems of the Romanian education system If the population structure will change in the future according to the predictions in the figure above, all policies will have to be changed. Social protection policies, labor policies, medical policies, etc. Educational policies are also on the path of change .

Perception of education (importance of education) globally and nationally

Figure 4. Almost 7 million out of 9,7 million believe that Education is the most important problem worldwide.



School dropout

The dropout rate is the difference between the number of students enrolled at the beginning of the school year and the number of students enrolled at the end of the same school year, expressed as a percentage of the number of students enrolled at the beginning of the year. School dropout means that students stop attending school and the consequences are seen later: unemployment; social exclusion; poverty and health problems.

The main reasons that determine young people to quit their studies too early are: personal or family problems; learning difficulties or poverty. But these are not the only causes of abandonment, the issues regarding the education system, the atmosphere in schools and even the relations between teachers and students must also be remembered. The phenomenon of school dropout is more pronounced in rural areas, in Roma communities, in very poor areas where child exploitation also occurs. Also, school dropout among girls is somewhat higher compared to the EU (overall average), where school dropout is higher among boys.

Figure 5. School dropout in Romania

Early leavers from education and training by sex and labour status [edat_lfse_14]										
Last update	28.04.22									
Extracted on	28.05.22									
Source of data	Eurostat UNIT [%]									
AGE	From 18 to 24 years SEX M & F									
GEO/TIME	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	12.6	11.8	11.1	11.0	10.6	10.5	10.5	10.2	9.9	9.7
Portugal	20.5	18.9	17.4	13.7	14.0	12.6	11.8	10.6	8.9	5.9
Romania	17.8	17.3	18.1	19.1	18.5	18.1	16.4	15.3	15.6	15.3
Slovenia	4.4	3.9	4.4	5.0	4.9	4.3	4.2	4.6	4.1	3.1
Slovakia	5.3	6.4	6.7	6.9	7.4	9.3	8.6	8.3	7.6	7.8
Males										
GEO/TIME	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	14.5	13.6	12.7	12.5	12.1	12.1	12.1	11.8	11.8	11.4
Portugal	26.9	23.4	20.7	16.4	17.4	15.3	14.7	13.7	12.6	7.7
Romania	18.5	18.7	19.5	19.5	18.4	18.0	16.7	14.9	14.7	15.1
Slovenia	5.4	5.0	6.0	6.4	6.7	5.8	5.3	5.2	4.6	4.2
Females										
GEO/TIME	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	10.6	10.0	9.4	9.4	9.1	8.9	8.8	8.4	8.0	7.9
Portugal	14.0	14.3	14.1	11.0	10.5	9.7	8.7	7.4	5.1	4.1
Romania	16.9	15.9	16.7	18.5	18.7	18.1	16.1	15.8	16.6	15.5
Slovenia	3.2	2.6	2.7	3.4	3.1	2.5	3.0	3.8	3.4	1.9

Source : Eurostat

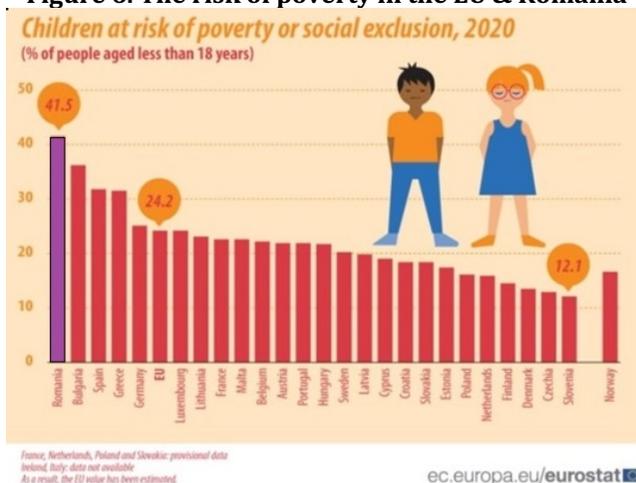
Politicism and private interests

Political behavior based on personal, group or party interests make financial resources difficult to allocate or investments not to be made efficiently. The lack of access to

digital technology but also the lack of digital skills of both students and teachers and the moral wear and tear of existing digital equipment (Ceobanu et. al, 2020:81).

The Romanian education system was not prepared for the situation created by the COVID pandemic, which only deepened the already existing inequalities, both at the level of society and especially among children. We can see it both in terms of the risk of poverty or social exclusion and in terms of difficulties in accessing online education, internet services, Wi-Fi, etc. According to Eurostat, in 2019, four out of five young people (80%) aged 16 to 24 in the European Union (EU) had basic digital skills or above. The authors of a recently published study claim that „, When educational institutions issued a mandate to convert all face-to-face courses to online ones, often in a week or less to create this metamorphosis, the very nature of education changed”.(Motoi&Popescu, 2021:137)

Figure 6. The risk of poverty in the EU & Romania



Poverty among children remains a serious issue in Romania and even in the EU , almost 25% of European children being exposed to the risk of poverty or social exclusion.

The figure 6 is 24% higher than the share of people aged between 16 and 74 (56%). Young people in Romania in 2019 were in last place in the EU in this regard, with only 56% of them having basic digital skills or above the basic level, Eurostat data show. This reality does not seem to have changed after almost two years of the pandemic, where teaching was done *volens nolens* online. This shows that there is still a need for investment in the development of digital skills in pupils, students and teachers. The underfunding does not only refer to the salaries of teaching staff and auxiliary staff, but also to the provision of teaching aids, modern laboratories, workshops in general, all the infrastructure & logistics related to teaching activities. Focusing on the system and the needs of society, not on the needs of the student. Although in the current Romanian education theoretically all the attention is focused on the student, on the maximum development of all his skills and competencies, in reality, the focus falls less on the student and more on documents that often have no relevance in the teaching-learning process (Ceobanu et. al, 2020:87) .

5. What education will look like in a changing future

Humanity as a whole has always been in a constant state of change. Only, now more than ever, the conjunction of several factors make the change felt more acutely, more painfully. The effort required to adapt to new conditions is exhausting, because we are not physically and mentally prepared for this effort. But maybe it's hard for us because we don't know how to

adapt to changes „there are more questions than answers”. What kind of skills are necessary for contemporary man to adapt to modern life?

Currently most education systems are still based on the accumulation of information but now we are overwhelmed by the huge volume of information (Ceobanu et. al, 2020:104). More than ever, people need skills to interpret this huge volume of information, to distinguish what is important and what is not, to make the necessary connections between information to form an overall picture of reality, of the world. Otherwise people's lives and futures will be decided arbitrarily. Educational policies should primarily focus on the formation of those general skills necessary in life, skills necessary to face the VUCA universe, to learn new things, to maintain mental balance in all kinds of unusual situations (Bennet and Lemoine, 2014: 7). The linear view of life is changing. The standard by which life was measured has been decalibrated. Other measurement standards are required. The old division of lives into relatively stable periods of Study, Work, Pension is no longer relevant. The future will force us to learn permanently, from childhood until the end of our lives, and somewhere along the way we will have to work, only that we will change our job and profession several times during our life. And there will be no question of pension. A flexible mind has no pension. Any stop means regression, to maintain and evolve requires effort. Of course, there will be holidays and vacations, somehow we need to recharge our batteries. In this context, educational policies must take into account and pay attention to the 6Cs. See the skills needed in the future presented above. Daniel Goleman said „We're being judged by a new yardstick: not just by how smart we are, or by our training and expertise, but also by how well we handle ourselves and each other” (Goleman 2018:167). The structure of the population will change in the future. According to UN predictions, world population growth will stabilize at apx, 10.9 billion by the end of the century (Rosling, 2018: 95). Those statistics estimate that we will reach a plateau sometime earlier by 2070, apx 9.7 billion after which the world population will begin to decline. In this situation, an important share of the world's population will be made up of adults.

Figure 7. Population growth will decrease.

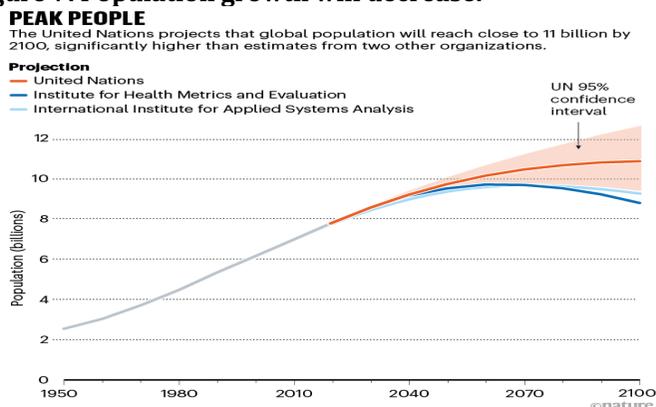


Figure 7 show that although the base of the graphs remains constant (number of births relatively constant), the adult age categories are increasing in size. Their share in society becomes quite important. They will be active on the labor market, but in a changing world they will have to change their profession and workplace several times during their lifetime. In this context, androgogy - the training of adults should become relevant to the design of educational policies. Regarding the future of education, experts have cited a variety of forces shaping the future of education, forces they believe will impact the skills required of future teachers to provide quality education and support for learners.

6. Conclusions

From what was exposed in this study, we can state that there is a relatively high degree of inconsistency between the personal perception of the role and digital skills and the objective reality. Regarding the relationship between the personal and the digital-educational ecosystem, several conclusions were drawn, but here, we will refer more to the skills in using IT equipment and the online education platform. Even if there are percentage differences in response regarding the two categories of respondents, relevant for this hypothesis is the connection between what the respondent believes and reality, that is, truthfulness. At the majority level, students and teachers responded that the school has the necessary infrastructure for online education, and digital skills are in the acceptable-very good range. However, given the systematic observation of educational processes at the managerial level, as well as the existence of the IT infrastructure that can be tested, we believe that many (but not the majority) of the recorded responses do not have a high degree of veracity. So, there is a relatively large discrepancy between the sociological and the objective reality regarding the respondents' digital skills.

The transformation of the physical ecosystem of the classroom into a digital ecosystem, while in itself a beneficial thing, has widened this opposition or distance. It must be stated that the error does not belong to the educational digital ecosystem, but to the mental ecosystems of the participants, both teachers and students, who do not have the necessary digital and managerial skills, but also to the social-political ecosystem, which did not ensure legislative and financial coherence. The limits of this research were related to the relatively small research universe, especially, in the case of teachers, to the short time needed to readjust the research to the new reality to be researched, to certain contradictions between the degree of subjectivity of the respondents and the desirable degree of objectivity.

As future research directions, first of all, we can think about the continuous theorizing and possible operationalizations of the VUCA concept, a concept that, in Romania, is just at the beginning. In other words, the pandemic crisis, as a trigger of the pedagogical paradigm and, at the same time, as a potential factor of segregation, would be a worthy direction to consider. Another perspective takes shape in the hybridization and virtualization of educational processes, and the fusion between physical and digital ecosystems could represent an education formula of the future.

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THE SNOWFLAKE GENERATION - THE IMPLICATIONS OF OVERDEVELOPED EGO ON SOCIAL REALITY

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Abstract. *This material deals with the effects of the main traits of the Snowflake generation, namely, exacerbated ego (hypersensitivity), overdeveloped individualism (selfishness) and fear. This typology of young people born between 1980 and 2000, known as the "Me Generation" has been approximated in the past by Constantin Rădulescu Motru by the concept of "anarchic personality", which is the opposite of "energetic personality". To understand whether the young people of the "Me Generation" belong to one of the two categories, I will first make some theoretical clarifications.*

Keywords: snowflake generation, ego, fear, anarchic personality, cultural personality

1. Conceptual delimitations

1.1. Personality in Constantin Rădulescu Motru's vision

To be able to talk about anarchic and energetic personality, the term personality must first be clarified from a theoretical viewpoint. This term, Constantin Rădulescu Motru means "a set of skills that help you accomplish a task. This determination is impossible without ego-consciousness" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 552). In other words, personality is closely linked to the individual's ability to have a purpose in life. Vocation is from this viewpoint "the greatest lever of progress" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 521). The man who seeks to find and follow his vocation is "a transformer of energy. He is the prophet of energetic personalism, toward which the whole of reality is evolving." (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 521). Vocation plays a particularly important role in society because in it "the highest moral and intellectual qualities of the soul are embodied together. It is therefore no coincidence that the people who have had more men of vocation have progressed the most" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 521). This perspective is important because it raises the question of social change, which depends on how generations actively involve themselves, and implicitly in accordance with their vocation, in responding to the challenges of the times (the thesis of the generational entelechy of the German sociologist Karl Mannheim is taken up here) (Mannheim, 1952: 307). Returning to vocation, it can be said that its main merit lies in making man responsible for himself (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 521).

According to Rădulescu Motru, personality "crystallizes around the ego, but the structure of personality includes, besides the ego, many other soul elements. The ego is the flash of lightning that reveals where the soul's anticipation is leading! The personality is the solid machinery that mediates the realization of anticipation" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 557). In other words, alongside vocation, personality has a close relationship with the ego because when we have the correspondence between ego and personality, the result is vocation (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 558). Here, a clear distinction must be made between ego and personality. The ego is "the permanent feeling, or rather the feeling of man's superiority in relation to his environment" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 559). Personality, on the other hand is "a systematization of varied and externally multi-linked soul acts. It begins having a structure through the impulse given by the self, but once the structure has begun, it continues to develop through the incorporation of many elements foreign to the self" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984). However, the link between the self and personality is so strong that the absence of the self leads to the disappearance of the personality: 'However rich and beautifully created the structure of

the personality may be, if the self were missing from it, life would be missing' (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 560).

The consequences of the absence of ego-consciousness in the composition of the personality are dreadful because they lead to an imitation of reality rather than to a real, organic existence: "When ego-consciousness is missing, the personality is an imitation or a biological composition of no importance for the life of the soul" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984). Since the ego is "an impulse in the crystallization of the person" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 561), when it is sick, the personality will be the first to reflect this problem: "If [the ego] is infirm, a strong personality cannot crystallize around it; and if it is strong, a weak or infirm personality cannot crystallize around it" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 561-562). Given the above, the ego is for the individual the "centre of his feelings" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 564).

The ego is also the basis of personality, it develops along with the nervous system (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 568-569). Initially, the ego was like an "emotional intuition", and later, because of cognitive processes, "self-consciousness" emerged, which is the rational part of the ego. However, its evolution does not imply a loss of intuition. The importance of this emotional intuition lies in the fact that it "constitutes the core of the self. It dictates the form of life that each person will take. It is the calling or vocation (...). In its small content lies the spring of all tensions of the soul" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 570-571). The role of the ego in the formation of personality is therefore definitive because it plays "the role of a crystallizing seed" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 571). However, it must be pointed out that "the ego is the ferment, but not the pattern of personality" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 572). In other words, the ego is only the beginning, it is the true beginning without which the rest would not be possible, but not the continuation. To the ego is due the beginning and direction of personality, but for the rest "i.e. for everything that concerns the material and the cohesive forces of this material, personality has its own organization" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984). Personality is therefore "a combination of soul factors that mediate a free activity according to social and ideal norms" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 574-575). In other words, through work, man manifests himself as a free social being, and therefore as a personality.

1.2. Energetic and anarchic personality

An energetic personality is the type of personality that involves "the power of the soul" and free activity, while the man with unfree activity is "only an organic individuality" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 579). From this perspective 'Generation I' risks becoming an organic individuality because it gives up freedom for security. According to Constantin Rădulescu Motru, the personality of the individual comes from above, from a certain ideal and from certain norms (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984.: 580). Energetic personalism is "forged by the school of work" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 622), which is why it is based on the idea of a fulfilled vocation, of seeking, finding and maximizing the calling that each individual has. What is important to say here is that this search for self-awareness also involves the people around you. For Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, the energetic person is the one who "succeeds in bringing into the souls of his fellow men, by encouragement and example, the desire for noble work" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 625). Ennobled work occurs when man no longer positions himself at the centre of the world and when he has begun to work in accordance with his competence. In other words, orderly ego produces order through work, while overdeveloped ego, chaotic as it is, creates all kinds of imbalances in the social corpus: "The gigantic, mystical and vagabond ego grows everywhere. Orderly ego at work is a rare plant. It is easier to have the whole universe in a sentimental self than to transform by work (...) the little corner of the country in which you were born" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984).

For energetic personalism "personality is a direction of energy" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 641), but for anarchic personalism, energy is wasted. Energetic personalism implies a human ability to anticipate certain things, which in turn is based on a consciousness of purpose. From this perspective, this type of personalism is built beyond a very clearly directed energy

and on the awareness of the purpose for which you do a certain thing. Thus, when anticipation is put into the service of work, personality develops, it is perfected. In other words, man is perfected by working (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 642). It must be repeated that to be useful, work must be in accordance with man's vocation, and therefore, in accordance with the calling he has and the skills he has acquired in this regard.

Anarchic personalism is described by Constantin Rădulescu Motru as such: "In anarchic personalism, the ego dominates. The property of identification, not to say monkeyhood, knows no bounds; as in a dream, the ego is wasted. The people in whom this type of personalism throne is full of reformers, imitators of everything that is seen in foreigners. Tradition in it is not respected, nor is professional competition. Only one cult rules: the cult of incompetence (...) The ego is hypertrophied, the personality amorphous." (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 622). The problem is that overdeveloped ego creates anarchy both personally and socially. In this sense, Rădulescu Motru states that the more ordered the ego is, the more energetic the personality is, and vice versa (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 572). Moreover, when the ego directs man's judgment, he arrives at certain justifications, but fails to know things (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984). In other words, when the ego is overdeveloped, man no longer lives in truth.

If personalism is educated, it becomes energetic. If education is lacking or poor, it becomes anarchic. Education therefore plays a crucial role in the development of young people: "Education influences a person's development (usually from childhood) to bring out his spiritual dispositions for society. Education is hard work." (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 646). The two actors who play a principal role in the process of educating a young person are the family and school, and above or in addition to these two come to the Church. Why also the Church? Because "Personality is formed under the influence of religion (...) Whoever is refractory to religion is also refractory to morality, and is therefore an eccentric, an asocial" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1984: 575).

2. Secondary analysis on statistical data

2.1. Overdeveloped ego in the family relationship

a) Relationship with parents

In the relationship with parents, the overdeveloped ego is reflected through two central indicators: the preference for the comfort of the parental home stemming from the need for security and the excessive involvement of parents in the lives of young adults. This over-involvement perpetuates their infantilisation. The immaturity of young people in this generation is becoming constant, and this is evidenced by the increasing percentages of individuals for whom the idea of independence, of detachment from the family, is becoming increasingly obliterated. Alongside comfort, another factor that counts is fear, the fear of knowing the unknown alone. This comes precisely from the exacerbation of the ego, which, being sensitive, does not know how to deal with failure.

The "Me Generation" shows new tendencies in terms of living with their own family (i.e., living with their spouse and/or children). A Pew Research Center study showed that young people's intention to live with their own family is the lowest of all generations studied in 2019, only 55% of "Generation Me" members were living with their own family. At the same age, the percentage for "Generation X" was 66% (in 2003), for "Baby Boomers 85% (in 1987), and for the "Silent Generation" 85% (in 1968) (Barroso, Parker and Bennett, 2020). It can be seen that the propensity to start and live with their own family is lowest for the "Me Generation".

About 30% of those who do not live in their own family live with their parents (14%) or other family members (14%), but in both cases the percentages are higher than for other generations when they were the same age (20 and 30 respectively). Moreover, previous studies have shown that even after the economy started to recover after the Great Recession, the average number of Snowflakes living in their parents' homes continued to rise. Compared to women, men are more likely to choose this option, which is why their percentage is almost double: 18% of men compared to 10% of women.

These percentages show that the need to feel permanently safe has weakened the ability of these young people to express themselves as autonomous, individual beings. In other words, the comfort of the safest space, the parental home, encourages them to indulge in living with their parents even in the age when the desire for independence is at its most effervescent. Of course, parents, and especially helicopter parents (i.e. over-protective parents), play a critical role in this problematic equation, as their actions contribute to the permanent infantilisation of young people.

b) Relationship with partners

More than half of the "Me Generation" decided not to marry, and those who did marry later in life. Given that most of this generation is unmarried (around 60%) we are dealing with a significant change from previous generations. Ego manifests itself here through all sorts of fears that prevent them from engaging in serious relationships. Eva Illouz explains the influence of individualism through what she calls "cold ambivalence", which she in turn explains through the concept of *abulia* (Illouz, 2015: 127, 139). By *abulia*, she means "a more advanced stage of the culture of abundance, in which the capacity to will and to want is very low" (Illouz, 2015: 126). In other words, because this generation is egocentric, it is indecisive in its relationship with the other (Illouz, 2015: 139). This tendency is more present among men who develop what Illouz calls "commitment phobia", but it is not lacking among women either (Illouz, 2015: 126). Given these facts, these percentages are not so surprising: only 44% of "Millennials" were married in 2019, compared to 53% of "Generation X", 61% of "Baby Boomers" and 81% of "Baby Boomers" at a similar age (Barroso, Parker and Bennett, 2020).

For those who have decided to marry, the age at which they take this step has progressively increased over the years: "The median age at first marriage has gradually increased over the last decades. In 2019, men got married for the first time at the age of 30 and women were 28 when they got married. This is three years older - for both men and women - than in 2003, four years older than in 1987 and seven years later than in 1968" ((Barroso, Parker and Bennett, 2020). Thus, the overdevelopment of the ego causes Snowflakes to have lower rates of nuptiality and older ages at first marriage because the fear manifests itself in the family.

The fall in the birth rate and the postponement of the decision to have children is another important effect. According to a 2015 study by the Urban Institute, millennial mothers are delaying the decision to have children the longest in U.S. history (Astone, Martin and Peters, 2015: p.1). The "Generation Me" birth rate in the U.S. through 2012 was 948 births per 1,000 women, by far the lowest rate of any generation (Astone, Martin and Peters, 2015). It can therefore be seen that the "Snowflake Generation" is on track to have fewer children than their predecessors but also that the birth rates of women in this category are currently the lowest in history (Sturgeon, 2019).

2.2. Ego in the teacher-student relationship

Distancing from the social norm manifests itself in various areas. For example, in New York City in 1979, 29% of drivers did not stop when traffic signs indicated. Not 20 years later, the percentage has tripled (to 97%). Another example is cheating at school. According to one study, while in 1969 34% of pupils cheated, in 2002 the figure had risen to 74%. Another study conducted in 2012 on a sample of 25,000 high school students showed that about 60% of participants agreed with the statement "the real world, successful people do what they must do to win, even if others consider it cheating" (Twenge, 2014a: 33). These data show that, unlike previous generations, 'Generation Me' not only questions authority, but contradicts it entirely. A good example of this is the disputes between pupils/students and their teachers. According to one survey, 61% of the teachers surveyed said that their authority was not recognized, about 25% had been threatened in various forms (messages, phone calls, emails, etc.), and about 30% said that students had shouted at them (Twenge, 2014a: 34–36).

In this equation, grades are the main "destabilizing factor" in the balance between student and teacher. Why? Because 'Generation Me' has a tendency, because of its exacerbated egos, to claim that it deserves more than it gets. Several studies have shown that there is a fracture between the notion of performance and the grades received. As evidence of this, according to a 2008 survey 66% of students agreed with the statement "if I explained to my professor that I was trying hard, I think he or she should take me into account in terms of my course grade", a third felt that "if I attended most of the courses, I deserve at least a B grade", and 32% complained that professors often gave them lower grades than they deserved on assignments (Twenge, 2014b: p.77).

What's interesting about this generation is that although they claim to be open-minded, the "Snowflake Generation" has a real problem with criticism. It is easy to see this when, right from school (high school, college), young people have a lack of concentration in classes, lectures. In America in 2012, nearly 40% of the first-year students in college said they were frequently bored in class in their senior year of high school (compared to 29% in 1985). Beyond this placid, apathetic attitude, which represents the first level of the problem, the second level concerns the type of reaction young persons have when teachers sanction this attitude. The transformation of constructive criticism, which is intended to repair, to help resolve certain shortcomings, into praise, is a reason why both teachers and managers have noticed young people's decreasing resilience to criticism.

2.3. Ego at work

a) Overdeveloped ego - a means of deprofessionalization?

The exacerbated ego of young people is reflected in their misplaced ambitions for professionalism. By professionalization, we mean those young people who work in the field for which they trained. When we talk about American society, in 2012, about 60% of teens expected to graduate from college or vocational school, which is almost twice as high as in 1976. Importantly, the number of those who actually got their degree remained unchanged (about 10%). Also in 2012, 84% of teens entering college expected to graduate in the next four years, but only half did. In the same year, three of the four college first year students said they intended to get a masters or doctoral degree. However, the number of doctoral degrees awarded accounts for only 4% of the number of degrees awarded, and the number of medical degrees awarded to graduate accounts for only 1% of the degrees awarded. This means that about 4 out of 5 aspiring doctors will be disappointed and 9 of 10 potential doctors will not be able to achieve their goals. A study by the Chronicle of Higher Education found that of the 4.3 million students who started the college in the fall of 2004, fewer than 1 in 4 graduated.

Despite these statistics, young people's expectations of the workplace are high. According to a 2011 survey, young people aged 16–18 expected their starting salary to reach \$73,000 and then rise to \$150,000. Compared to these expectations, the median household income in 2009 for all adults was \$50,000, about one-third of young people's aspirations. Overestimation comes with high expectations, which in turn implies high materialism. Official statistics show that in American society in 1967, when "Generation Boomers" were in college, 42% of first-year students said it was important to be financially well-off, while in 2013, the percentage of young people agreeing with this statement nearly doubled to 82%, the highest in history. Interest in materialism is closely correlated with young people's consumerist outlook. A study by Christian Smith on a sample of 18–23-year-olds found that 65% of participants in that survey said that shopping gave them particular pleasure, while only 9% felt that there were some problems with consumerism.

b) The emergence of incompetence or the "Dunning-Kruger" effect

The "Dunning-Kruger effect" was introduced into the literature around 1999 by Professors David Dunning and Justin Kruger of Cornell University, who defined it as an error of judgment in which less prepared people misjudge their capabilities. In other words, they judge themselves to be more competent than they actually are. This behavior is caused by the fact

that these individuals are unable to recognize their level precisely because of their lack of competence in the field (Crangan, 2020). In other words, "incompetent individuals lack the metacognitive skills necessary for accurate self-assessment" (Dunning and Kruger, 1999: 1122). The authors liken this phenomenon to what, in the lexicon of neuroscience is called anosognosia. This not only causes paralysis but also generates the inability to realize that one is paralyzed (D'Amasio, 1994, in Dunning and Kruger, 1999: 1130). Incompetence, therefore, in addition to leading to poor performance, also involves an inability to recognize that one's performance, specifically your own, is poor (Dunning and Kruger, 1999: 1130). The Dunning-Kruger effect therefore refers to the lack of cognitive impartiality that leads people to believe that they are smarter and more competent than they really are. This is possibly because people of lower ability lack the ability to recognize their own incompetence. Thus, the mixture of low awareness and low intellectual abilities causes people to overestimate themselves (Cherry, 2021).

Given the figures showing how many young people have career expectations, salaries, etc. that are not in line with their training, questions about the emergence of this effect among the "Me Generation" are legitimate. A study led by San Diego State University psychology professor Jean Twenge found that young people in this generation want more money than previous generations but are willing to work less than their predecessors for it. The findings emerged from a national survey of more than 350,000 young people in the US. More than 60% of those surveyed said it was important to be rich, while only 48% of the "Baby Boomers" who graduated from high school between 1976 and 1978 held the same belief. What's interesting is that when the topic of "work ethic" was brought up, nearly 40% of the "Me Generation" said they didn't want to work hard, compared to just 25% in the 1970s. The author argued that the unfounded materialism of these young people deserves attention because this materialism is linked to depression and anxiety, two traits that are not missing from the behavioral mosaic of the "Me Generation" (Bielski, 2013). Therefore, the exaggerated demands of these young people are an indicator of the Dunning-Kruger effect that seems to be spreading among them.

3. Conclusions

Generation Me', 'Snowflake', 'Millennial', 'Generation Y' or 'Self-centred Generation' are those young people who were born between 1980 and 2000. Their main problematic characteristics are hypersensitivity, increased loneliness and a propensity to develop certain fears. We have talked about the transition from an energetic personality, which arises because of a work culture involving a high degree of professionalism, to an anarchic one, in which the ego dominates. I have used these two concepts because the 'Me Generation' is theoretically approximated by the anarchic one. This approximation is given by the central role that the ego plays in the lives of those in question.

Once the two concepts were clarified from a theoretical perspective, I wanted to discover how the ego manifests itself among the three central dimensions of social reality: family, school and workplace. Concerning the family, the studies consulted showed a reluctance of the "Snowflake Generation" to start their own families and a strong tendency to live with their parents. This confirms the hypothesis of a permanent search for "safe spaces" and avoidance of autonomous actions. In the teacher-student relationship, as I said, ego creates imbalances and affects the educational process because young people only receive what they feel is useful to them, and these assessments are often subjective. In the working environment, the ego leads on the one hand to an increase in deprofessionalisation and on the other to the emergence of a new cult of incompetence (the Dunning-Kruger effect), because the expectations that these young people have do not reflect reality.

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WHEN THE FLIGHT FROM REALITY BECOMES AN ASSUMPTION OF THE LOSS OF IDENTITY - AN ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT GEOPOLITICAL POSITION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

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Abstract. *The 2016-2021 electoral cycles in the Republic of Moldova brought as a novelty the disappearance of political parties that assumed and promoted the Romanian national identity. At the same time, in the public discourse in Chişinău, a rejection of the geopolitical approach to the problems of the Republic of Moldova was noted. The promotion of a Moldovan civic nation at the expense of the Romanian national identity is another component of the political developments in Chişinău during the same period. In the following lines we try to analyze the causes and effects of this renunciation of the Romanian national identity in the public space of Chişinău, starting from the forms of manifestation of this renunciation. We also analyze the theoretical and argumentative sources of the promotion of the Moldovan civic nation starting from two policy papers published in Chişinău in 2012 and 2017 that constitute the foundations of these significant changes in public discourse in the Republic of Moldova.*

Keywords: Republic of Moldova, Moldovan civic nation, national identity, Moldovan language, Bessarabia

On May 1, 2019, Republic of Moldova state television broadcasted the documentary film „Moldova 89-91” by director Eugeniu Damaschin (Preaşcă, 2019). The film presents the events that led to the exit of the current Republic of Moldova from the Soviet Union, using contemporary footage and interviews with survivors of the events made 30 years after they occurred. The montage of these interviews is designed to show that the assumption of the Romanian national identity in the public space in Chişinău in the years before the dissolution of the Soviet Union would be the main cause of the political and economic problems facing the Republic of Moldova today. The insinuation of this idea is a subtle one, testimony to the director's skill, and the film we are talking about is part of a wider effort to remove the issue of Romanian ethnic identity in the Republic of Moldova from the public space. In the following lines we will analyze the programmatic documents of this mutation promoted in Chişinău in the public and political space, a mutation that has forms of manifestation also in Romanian mass-media.

National identity and its forms of manifestation among the countrymen abroad are considered fundamental elements in the grid of geopolitical analysis proposed by Anton Golopenţia, Ion Conea and M. Popa-Vereş (Golopenţia, Conea and Popa-Vereş, 1939). Anton Golopenţia pointed out that the nation does not stop at the borders of the state, but also exists beyond them, naturally constituting an area of interest for relations between states (Golopenţia, Conea and Popa-Vereş, 1939, p. 109-110). According to Golopenţia, the object of geopolitical research is the potential of states; potential being the result of the constituent factors: territory, nation, population, economy, social structure, culture, mode of government, political environment; thus geopolitical research is not only geographical or only economic or only political, but is simultaneously geographical, demographic, economic, social, cultural, political. From the point of view of M. Popa-Vereş it is an obligation for the state to use all means to maintain the cultural cohesion of those parts of its nation that are not contained within its own

borders, geopolitical research being aimed at providing arguments to support such action (Golopenția, Conea and Popa-Vereș, 1939, p. 123-124). Maintaining national identity in the historical Romanian province of Bessarabia, a large part of which has now become the Republic of Moldova, is thus an area of geopolitical interest.

The issue of national identity in Bessarabia has a history spanning more than two centuries, beginning with the annexation to the Russian Empire in 1812, when local institutions and the Romanian language were removed from the public sphere and gradually replaced by imperial institutions and the Russian language (Jewsbury, 2003). The union of Bessarabia with Romania in 1918 triggered a process of creation of a Moldovan national identity separate from the Romanian one on the left bank of the Dniester River (King, 2002) in parallel with a state construction subordinated to the Soviet Union, namely the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova (Cojocaru, 2009). In the post-1944 Soviet period, the Soviet authorities de facto abandoned the project of creating a Moldovan language separate from Romanian, although they maintained the Cyrillic alphabet script, continued the steps of Russification of the Romanian language spoken between the Prut and Dniester rivers (Bruchis, 1984) and continued the project of building a Moldovan national identity separate from Romanian (Cașu, 2000).

The main demands of the population of Soviet Moldova between 1988-1989 were the return to the Latin alphabet and the official name of Romanian language as steps to recover national identity, the anti-Soviet uprising in Chișinău having an identity essence (Ghimpu, 2002). The presence in the public space in Chișinău of promoters of a Moldovan national identity different from the Romanian one remained a constant after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The argument crystallized during the Soviet period became a constitutive element of the ideology of the pro-Russian political parties in the Republic of Moldova, preserving the main theses according to which the Moldovan language is different from the Romanian language, the ethnogenesis of Moldovans was a historical process separate from the ethnogenesis of Romanians, and as a consequence there is a Moldovan national identity different from the Romanian one (Eremia, 2018). One of the adjacent theses, also taken over from the Soviet period, is that the population of the Republic of Moldova is multi-ethnic, in which the majority of a certain ethnicity would be a relative one - this despite censuses showing a clear majority of Romanian speakers (even if the name „Moldovan language” is often used following decades of Soviet propaganda in this regard).

Essentially after 1989 the political scene in Chișinău was divided into two camps: pro-Romanian and pro-Russian, each of the two sides adopting one of the Romanian or Moldovan national identities. The pro-Romanian line of argument in Moldova also made the case for accession to the European Union, but over time the subject of Chișinău's rapprochement to the European Union became dominant over the subject of national identity. This led to articles that considered the „Flower Bridges” of 1990-1991 as events that should remain in the past, as they have no place today, the subtext being that the promotion of Romanian national identity in the Republic of Moldova would be a matter of the past, with no use today (Necșuțu, 2021). The association European Union - Romanianism versus Russia - Moldovanism has induced in the public space of the Republic of Moldova the idea that the essence of the confrontation on the internal political scene is geopolitical - the confrontation between the West and the Russian world (Varzari, 2020).

The superimposition of the pro-Western orientation over the Romanian national identity in the political discourse gradually led to the elimination of the identity issue. The differentiation between the „geopolitical vote” (understood as a choice between the Western world and Russia) and the „anti-corruption vote” started to be made during the 2016 presidential election campaign (Călugăreanu, 2016). This was the starting point for the rejection of the „geopolitical vote” - which resulted in the removal of the issue of Romanian national identity in the Republic of Moldova from the public space, Romanian national identity being linked to the pro-Western orientation. Romanian national identity began to be seen as an

obstacle to solving the problems faced by the Republic of Moldova: „One of the remarkable phenomena of Moldovan politics is the pendulum swing between East and West. The identity problem, ethnic structure, separatist conflicts, imitative democracy, precarious economic situation, predominantly parochial political culture underlie the pendulum phenomenon” (Boțan, 2016).

The campaign against „geopolitical voting” returned to Chișinău on the occasion of the 2020 presidential elections, when the positioning of the main candidates Maia Sandu and Igor Dodon were analyzed from this point of view (Cenușă, 2020). Already in the 2021 parliamentary elections, it was noted that geopolitical disputes, i.e. the pro-Western or pro-Russian orientation of the Republic of Moldova, were removed from the public debate: „A large part of Moldovan citizens no longer perceive pro-Russian or pro-European messages in geopolitical terms. Instead, they look at foreign relations through the prism of how foreign cooperation with the West or the East helps to solve the country's challenges” (Fedoseev, 2021). Significantly, the removal of the issue of national identity from the public and political space between 2016-2020 led to the effective disappearance from the political scene of parties that supported the Romanian national identity, and these were replaced by parties with a discourse focused exclusively on eliminating geopolitical choice and solving economic and administrative problems. At the same time, the pro-Russian parties in Chișinău have maintained and further promoted their discourse supporting the Moldovan national identity separate from the Romanian one.

This evolution of the political discourse in the Republic of Moldova, which had the effect of removing almost completely from the public space the Romanian identity discourse, is a novelty; the preservation of the Romanian national identity was alive even during the Soviet domination in Chișinău and the main way of resistance against the processes of denationalization and ethnic assimilation set in motion by the Soviet Union (Cașu, 2014). The phenomenon described above, with political effects and at the level of national consciousness in the Republic of Moldova is based on two policy papers: „ *Integrarea grupurilor etnice și consolidarea națiunii civice în Republica Moldova*”, Institute for Public Policy, Chișinău, 2012 by Oazu Nantoi, Igor Botan and Andrei Iovu with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and „*Consolidarea coeziunii sociale și a unei identități comune în Republica Moldova. Probleme cheie și recomandări practice*”, Institute for European Policies and Reforms, Chișinău, 2017 by Vladislav Kulminski, Vadim Pistrinciuc and Andrei Popov with funding from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We will try in the following lines to analyze these documents, the premises from which they start and the conclusions they reach.

The 2012 study launched and justified in the public space the idea of a Moldovan civic nation (Nantoi, Botan, Iovu et al, 2012). The essence of the argument in this study is that the conflicting identity approaches in the Republic of Moldova - Romanian and Moldovan - are irreconcilable and neither of them would be able to impose itself, therefore another way of defining the identity of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova must be sought, namely the adoption of a civic identity. The study proposes a consistent summary of the theoretical discussions around the concepts of ethnicity, nation and nationalism. The three major currents are mainly presented: the primordialist theory, which argues that ethnicity is attributed at birth as the basis of identity; the instrumentalist theory, which argues that ethnicity is a phenomenon that can be modified and manipulated by an elite for political purposes; and the constructivist theory, according to which ethnicity is a phenomenon in permanent change. The authors of the cited study tacitly argue against a primordialist approach to national identity and imply that they support the latter two theories. A cursory exploration of nation-building in the rest of the world favours from the outset of the study countries where civic nations have been built, where ethnic identity is secondary. Unfortunately, this quick approach to historical phenomena spanning hundreds of years ignores the fact that in most cases civic nations were the result of often extremely aggressive assimilationist policies. The overall conclusion of the theoretical

apparatus in the study is that civic nations have succeeded in eliminating the problem of identity conflict - a conclusion that is at least exaggerated given current developments.

The main pillar of the historical argument is the idea that the Romanian nation was created in the 19th century and that the territory of Bessarabia, annexed in 1812 to the Tsarist Empire, did not participate in this process of nation-building. The key events for the identity construction of the population in the region are then listed, events whose interpretation would constitute points of conflict in the antagonistic Romanian-Moldovan relationship: the union of Bessarabia with Romania in 1918, the Soviet ultimatum and the annexation of Bessarabia in 1940, Romania's participation alongside Nazi Germany in the war against the Soviet Union, the annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union in 1944. This study argues that the views on these events are irreconcilable and likely to remain permanently conflicting.

The climax of this state of confrontation is presented as the period 1988-1992, when the reaffirmation of the national identity of the Romanians in Bessarabia through demands for recognition of the Latin alphabet and the Romanian language led to the outbreak of inter-ethnic conflicts that culminated in the autonomy of Gagauzia and Transnistrian separatism. The primordialist approach to identity-building and the attempt to build an ethnic state around the Romanian ethnic group - which has triggered violent contestation from other ethnic groups - is to blame for these developments that hinder Moldova's development to this day.

The last episode of this evolution is presented in the form of the attempt of the Party of Communists and President Vladimir Voronin to build a Moldovan ethnic identity during the years 2001-2009, an attempt that was fiercely contested and eventually failed.

According to the 2012 study, attempts to build a national identity based on ethnicity - Romanian or Moldovan - are doomed to failure in Moldova, the only solution being a new approach: civic nationhood.

What would such a civic nation look like? The cited study states that „The principles of a civic nation are: supremacy of law, right to free choice, rational attachment to state institutions, unity of citizens based on their consent to live together, pluralism, democracy, freedom, and respect for individual rights” (Nantoi, Boțan, Iovu et al, 2012, p. 42). Such a project should be approved by all political forces, so that there is continuity in the event of changes generated by elections. In addition, a number of mechanisms are envisaged, mainly aimed at promoting and imposing this identity model among the population. The essential confusion in this definition is the false dichotomy between citizenship rights and freedoms and national identity, the two being not opposed but complementary. Citizens' rights and freedoms are thus wrongly instrumentalised in order to eliminate Romanian national identity from the public space in Chișinău.

The ideas presented above were repeated in 2017 (Kulminski, Pistrinciuc, Popov et alii, 2017), on the same structure of the argument and with the same conclusions. In the study mentioned here, the multi-ethnic character of the population of the Republic of Moldova is underlined, this despite the realities attested by the census history which indicates a clear Romanian/Moldovan majority. It also tries to give credence to the idea that the Russian language should be maintained as a language of inter-ethnic communication, to the detriment of the mother tongue of the majority of the population. The argument continues with the idea that the adoption of the Romanian identity was likely to cause a rift between the citizens of the Republic of Moldova after the break-up of the Soviet Union, which in turn generated the conflicts that culminated in Transnistrian separatism. The solution proposed in the 2017 study is to abandon ethnic identification and adopt a civic identity.

The last censuses in the Republic of Moldova - in 2004 and 2014 - were contested, there were valid allegations of data falsification and manipulation. Yet the figures from these censuses continue to inform public policy proposals. On a historical scale, censuses in the current Republic of Moldova show a tendency to increase the number of settlers during the imperial periods, and nowadays the highest degree of ethnic homogeneity in the region's

history, with 82% Moldovan/Romanian. The „multi-ethnic Moldovan people” thesis is simply no longer supported by statistics.

The two studies mentioned above do nothing but bring the project of the Soviet nation back to the present, while preserving its main characteristics: the Russian language as a language of interethnic communication, the ethnic identity confusion Romanian/Moldovan. The historical analysis of the evolution of national identity in the Republic of Moldova starts from the false assumption that the national consciousness of Romanians developed in the 19th century, an assumption contradicted by in-depth studies on Romanian national identity before this period (Armbruster, 1972 and Pop, 1998). The thesis that the population between Prut and Nistru did not participate in the historical process of Romanian national identity formation is also false and has been rejected (Ghimpu, 2002). A correct historical view cannot fail to notice that the Romanian identity construction on the left side of Prut was stopped at the beginning of the 19th century by the Russian imperial project, resumed in the interwar period, stopped again and hijacked by the Soviet imperial project.

Supporters of „Moldovan civic identity” promote the false idea of „peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups in Moldova”. A blatant untruth, from 1812 until the disappearance of the Soviet Union the history of the region was one of ethnic cleansing and constant discrimination against Romanians. During the Tsarist period the Romanian nobility was assimilated into the Russian nobility and removed from the leadership of the province (Jewsbury, 2003). This was compounded by successive waves of colonisation that changed the ethnic picture of the region. At the beginning of the 20th century, Chişinău shocked the whole world with the savagery of anti-Jewish pogroms, so that one can hardly speak of „peaceful coexistence”. The Soviet Union completed the picture of ethnic cleansing with mass deportations, the organization of a starvation of the population on the same level as in Ukraine and the resumption of colonizations (Caşu, 2014). The „peaceful coexistence” of ethnic groups in the Republic of Moldova used to argue civic identity is a myth, in reality we have a long history of ethnic cleansing instrumented by the imperial power in Moscow.

All this theoretical construction of the Moldovan civic nation has had political effects, the structure of this discourse being taken up by the current President of the Republic of Moldova Maia Sandu in most of her public interventions in which she has positioned herself on the side of the need to overcome the geopolitical divide (Radu, 2017). The renunciation of the geopolitical approach to the problems of the Republic of Moldova and implicitly to the promotion of the Romanian national identity has been presented as an obligation even in the Romanian media (Ghincea, 2021).

This theoretical construction of the geopolitical divide approach and the abandonment of geopolitical analysis in the public discourse in the Republic of Moldova were forgotten after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. On 3 March 2022, the Republic of Moldova applied for membership of the European Union and the public discourse split again into two camps: pro-Western and pro-Russian. At the same time, there has been a reserve in the public assumption of Romanian identity, a significant example being President Maia Sandu's speech in the European Parliament when she stated that „We are a European country, with a European language, a European history and a European political system. At least 1/3 of us are already EU citizens” (Sandu, 2022). The President of the Republic of Moldova avoided any reference to the Romanian national identity of the population of the Republic of Moldova, and when she referred to the fact that one third of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova are European citizens, she hid the fact that there are about 1,000,000 citizens of the Republic of Moldova who have taken back Romanian citizenship.

Essentially, public discourse in the Republic of Moldova has returned to the starting point: geopolitical options are as real as can be and there can be no question of artificial constructions. With the war in Ukraine, the political class in Chişinău was forced to make a clear choice and suddenly abandon the discourse that abandoned geopolitical themes. The energy

crisis triggered by the bombing of Ukraine's electricity grids quickly re-oriented Moldova towards Romania for electricity supply (Hotnews, 2022).

The question of the assumption of the Romanian national identity by the political class in the Republic of Moldova remains under question, as seen in President Maia Sandu's speech to the European Parliament, but also in other public interventions. This is most likely due to the attempt to maintain as much as possible the approach to this topic during the electoral campaigns of previous years, dominated by the set of ideas supported by the two programmatic documents presented in this article. Apart from the energy crisis, the Moldovan government is facing a series of protests supported by pro-Russian parties that are allegedly aimed at destabilising the country in the context of the war in Ukraine (Călugăreanu, 2022).

A quantitative and qualitative analysis of the media in Moldova and Romania could reveal more effects of public discourse in support of the Moldovan civic nation, its ways and means of dissemination. Most of the forms of manifestation of this type of discourse, however, were expressed through social networks, which unfortunately do not allow the preservation for future reference of the various interventions. Something specific to the discourse in support of the Moldovan civic nation has been its predominance in the space of social networks, with very few supporters who support it through traditional written media (newspapers, magazines, scientific journals).

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BULLYING IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT - FROM IGNORING TO IDENTIFYING SOLUTIONS

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Abstract. *The statistics show how big the problem of bullying is globally and in Romania, but a high number of the people who should stop this phenomenon exhibit an attitude of ignorance and sometimes denial. The research objectives of the present study aim to analyze the phenomenon of bullying in the school environment, on the one hand, and on the other hand, to identify the decisive prevention and intervention measures undertaken in school institutions that have contributed to the reduction or eradication of the phenomenon. Two qualitative research methods were used: the analysis of the relevant documents identified based on the analysis of the literature and the comparative analysis of the research results identified in the field. The main results of the analysis reflect the fact that at the global and national level, in the school environment the phenomenon of bullying has expanded in a worrying way, its effects repercussions on the social stakeholders involved in the educational environment, highlighting acts of violence in various forms, more serious or lighter, such as hitting, striking, tagging, humiliating or mocking verbal aggression, threatening with beating, extreme violence, delinquency, up to suicidal ideation and suicidal behavior on the part of the victims. The conclusion highlight that this phenomenon constitutes a challenge for decision-makers in school institutions, which, associated with the tendency to ignore or not recognize this problem, generates dysfunctions in identifying viable solutions that lead to the prevention, reduction or eradication of the phenomenon of bullying in the school environment.*

Keywords: bullying, school, prevention, intervention, ignoring.

1. Introduction

Bullying is defined as "hostile/excluding and derisive humiliating behavior... A child is labeled, teased, mocked in his circle of acquaintances or by peers who call him a certain way (referring to physical appearance or medical/family problems). Sometimes these teasings turn into fights or even, in certain cases, physical attacks (Costescu, 2019). Bullying involves an aggressive behavior which may take many forms as defined from various perspectives on interactions with others, perception, behaviorism, type of education (Filip, Popp and Andrioni, 2021:187).

Representatives of the authorities, teachers, school principals and, in general, decision-makers in Romania prefer to declare that bullying does not exist as a phenomenon, rather than making efforts to combat it in Romanian schools. While in other countries there is a major concern for studying and combating bullying, in Romania we have statistics of violence in schools, but very few preventive measures, which mainly involve education in the sense of combating bullying.

One of the studies carried out at the national level on bullying is by the NGO „Salvați Copiii” ("Save the Children"), from 2016 (Grădinaru, Stănculescu and Manole, 2016). This NGO, together with UNICEF and other non-governmental organizations, make substantial efforts to combat bullying in schools, while the decision-makers ignore it or do not recognize it as a phenomenon, so that the sociological measurements and the strategy for stopping the phenomenon are hampered by the approach to the subject by those who should stop it.

While Romania ignores bullying in schools, cyberbullying is also developing with maximum speed, which also requires a lot of measures to combat the new phenomenon that

mainly affects children and adolescents, being related in many cases with the school environment. In the other European countries, but also in the USA, Canada and Australia, this new phenomenon was intensively studied after the year 2000.

In Moldova Republic there is a much bigger interest for this phenomenon in the last years and also teachers and authorities seem to know better what bullying is and how to fight against it. In 2021, UNICEF Moldova funded a study and a practical guide for teachers, named „Stop Bullyng in School!” (Petrică, 2021), which contains the clear definition of the phenomenon called bullying, updated and adapted to the school environment, so that the signs of its existence to be well understood by teachers and decision-makers in schools, in order to be able to apply methods to combat and stop this phenomenon. This should happen also in the romanian schools, because the consequences of this phenomenon are reflected in the big number of violence cases which appears in the national statistics every year and the violent behavior is encreasing. One of the most terrible cases is that of a 14-year-old boy who visited his sister at school, to take her the food package received from the national "Milk and Corn" program, in March 2016, but was stoned to death by a group of children. Until that moment, the boy had been the victim of bullying, but no one had reported it. Even after the boy died, no explanation was found, with the authorities considering the terrible deed just "innocent play with dire consequences" (Adevărul, 2017). Such behaviors are, however, often encountered in the school environment in Romania, and the step from bullying to extreme violence is often made very easily.

2. The perception of bullying. Analysis of the literature

The study made by the NGO „Salvați Copiii” („Save the Children”) in 2016 shows that many of the children in Romania do not know what bulling means. „less than half of those who participated in the research had heard of the term "bullying" (48% of children answered yes), while 52% said they had not heard or did not know the term. Of those who say they heard, 35% did so on the Internet, 30% on TV, 24% on English class, and 13% in conducting class. Referring to what they understand by bullying, most of those who have heard of the term say that it is a form of aggression, physical or verbal (25%), mocking or humiliating (14%) or bullying (13%).” (Grădinaru, 2016: 29). The same study shows that 73% of children state that they witnessed a bullying situation in their school; 58% of the children state that they witnessed a bullying situation in their class; 69% of children state that they witnessed a bullying situation in the online environment; 46% of the children state that they witnessed a bullying situation in the group of friends. Also, about the physical violence and/or destruction of property, sthe study shows that 13% of children stated that they happened to destroy another child's things; 16% of children stated that they repeatedly hit another child, and 30% of children that they repeatedly lightly hit a colleague; 32% of children say they have been pushed or pushed by other children, repeatedly; 39% of children say that they were slightly injured and 16% that they were repeatedly beaten at school. „In the peer group, 78% of the children state that they have witnessed a mild aggression (pushing or light hitting) but repeated; 69% of children say they witnessed a fight between Two children. In the school environment, 73% of children state that they witnessed a bullying situation” (Grădinaru, Stănculescu and Manole, 2016: 52).

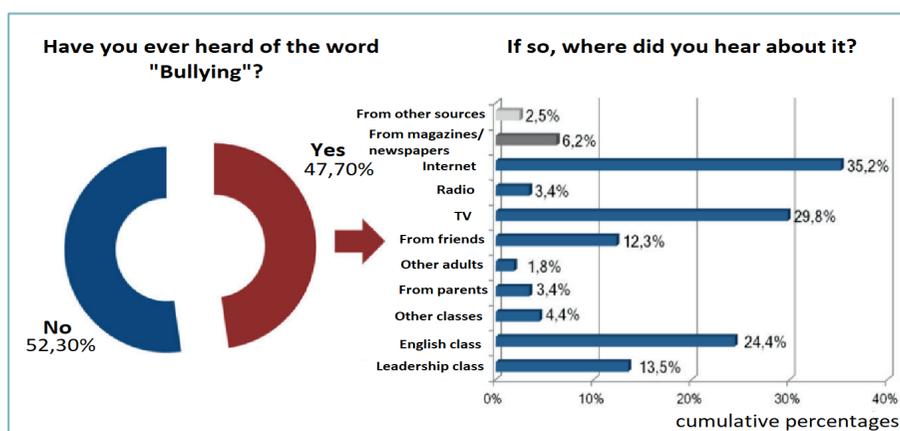
The most serious is the situation in relation to the threat of physical violence and/or humiliation, according to the same study: „19% of children say they have repeatedly humiliated another child at school; 22% of children say that they threatened to hit another child; 29% of children were threatened with hitting or beating; 24% of children were humiliated or shamed in the peer group; Rumors were spread about 37% of children; 84% of children state that they witnessed a situation in which one child threatens another; 80% of children state that they have witnessed a situation in which a child is humiliated by another child” (Idem). This kind of situations shows the link between bullying and killing other children in school, as it happened with the boy stoned to death by the other children, in the school yard, in Argeș county, in March 2016, the same year when the study of „Salvați Copiii” („Save the children”) was made. The NGO

has collected data during the period of May 30 - June 10, 2022, from approximately 400 schools in Romania, to be able to analyze the evolution of the phenomenon. In 2022, „Salvați Copiii” have released another research about bullying which shows that 82% of the students witnessed bullying situations in the school where they study, 73% in the class where they study, and 45% in the group of friends. But there are still no accurate data and certain actions made by the Romanian authorities for stopping the bullying phenomenon.

Asked if they have heard of the term "bullying", 48% of children say yes, while 52% say they have not / they don't know the term. Of those who say they heard, 35% did so from the Internet, 30% from TV, 24% from the English class, and 13% in leadership class. Referring to what they understand by bullying, most of those who have heard of the term say that it is a form of aggression, physical or verbal (25%), mocking or humiliating (14%) or bullying (13%)” (Grădinaru, Stănculescu, Manole, 2016: 29) (Figure 1). However, in a country like Romania, where many cases of bullying lead to extreme violence, the Government should do much more to stop this phenomenon. The local authorities should cooperate at least with the NGOs and the researchers, to find solutions to at least help the children understand what bullying means and how harmful it is.

The understanding of the term and phenomenon is necessary as a first step for the children in the comprehensive process. For this, we should have in Romania a much greater concern and involvement from local authorities and school decision-makers for this phenomenon.

Figure 1. The source of information about bullying



Source: Grădinaru et al., 2016:29

Many studies have been made about bullying and its consequences, in the last 20 years, in many of the countries all over the world. A study from 1995 shows that „that victims of bullying may lack skills in emotional regulation, a process which facilitates coping with provocative situations to lessen the stress of negative emotions” (Cicchetti, Ackerman, Izard, 1995: 1). Starting from this definition, a study from 2000 in the USA had examined the emotional regulation and display patterns of victims during classroom bullying episodes. The conclusion was that: „Children in grades one through six were observed during free play in the winter and spring of three consecutive school years. Results of the study indicated that the coping styles observed in victims of bullying can be grouped into two distinct clusters: 1) problem-solving strategies that are associated with the de-escalation and resolution of bullying episodes; and 2) aggressive strategies that tend to perpetuate and escalate the bullying interaction. Parallels were found between victims’ and bullies’ emotional displays. Results are discussed in the context of how maladaptive emotional regulation processes may act as risk factors for chronic victimization” (Wilton, Craig, Peper, 2000: 226).

One of the biggest problems of bullying is ignorance or sometimes denial. A study from 2003, „She is not actually bullied. The discourse of harassment in student groups”, shows how in many situations, the victims are ignored by the group and the authorities as well, because of the mentalities of the particular regions of the world. „Bullying is a considerable problem in schools. It has various negative effects on the children involved. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how children themselves interpret and construct bullying. Three elementary school classes with a high number of victim nominations were chosen among the 48 classes taking part in a larger study. The pupils from selected classes were interviewed in small groups. (...) The results suggest that bullying can be construed as unproblematic and justified among children. For example, the ‘interpretative repertoire of underestimation’ constructs bullying as a game or some other harmless action, the ‘odd student repertoire’ describes the victim as a negatively deviant student who cannot behave as he/she should and the ‘interpretative repertoire of deserving’ constructs meaningful reasons for hostility towards the victim” (Teräsahjo, Salmivalli, 2003: 134).

Also in 2003, Sarah Woods (University of Hertfordshire) and Dieter Wolke (University of Bristol) from UK tried to answer to the question: „Does the Content of Anti-Bullying Policies Inform us About the Prevalence of Direct and Relational Bullying Behaviour in Primary Schools?": „A total of 2377 children in primary schools (six year olds/year two: 1072; eight year olds/year four: 1305) were individually interviewed using a standard interview about bullying experiences. A detailed content analysis scheme that closely followed the core whole-school intervention approach was carried out on a total of 34 schools: 24.5% of the children reported being directly victimised very frequently and 45.9% reported being relationally victimised frequently or very frequently. No correlation between the content and quality of anti-bullying policies and the prevalence of direct bullying behaviour was found. Conversely, an inverse relationship was found for relational bullying behaviour: schools with the most detailed and comprehensive anti-bullying policies had a higher incidence of relational bullying and victimisation behaviour. Inspection of school anti-bullying policies per se provides little guide to the actual amount of direct bullying behaviour in schools” (Wolke, 2003). Also, violence against children “has long-term effects and is generated by a multitude of factors: financial, social, psychological, emotional factors. In order to prevent this phenomenon, the intervention of the authorities is also needed by adopting effective laws to protect victims of domestic violence” (Filip, Popp and Androni, 2020:311).

A study from 2006 presents the results of a phenomenological study with elementary school children identified as bullies or victims. The Results of the study indicate that bullies seemed to hold a positive regard of themselves despite their negative behaviors. They even acknowledged and understood their bullying behaviors. They blamed their victims and felt empowered by their actions toward someone that they perceived as weaker. Victims, on the other hand, internalized their problems and often blamed themselves for the bullying. These victims suffered a low self-esteem and often used strategies to avoid bullies and their inappropriate behaviors. In examining the various aspects of the complicated nature of bullying and bullying behaviors, a phenomenological approach was used” (Omizo et al., 2006: 89).

In addition to the danger of violence, up to murder, on the background of bullying, there is a high degree of danger of suicide of victims of bullying, as shows a recent study, carried out in 2020, based on the analysis of teenagers in the school environment in 83 countries (Tang et al, 2020). The school system should be able to stop this phenomenon with the help of psychologists, as shows a study from 2004 (Reid, Monsen, Rivers, 2004), but neither this problem could be solved in Romania. Many of the studies tried to answer to the most important questions about this phenomenon: „Why do some children bully at school?” (Rigby, 2005) as a study made in the Australian schools.

3. Research methodology

The research objectives of the present study aim to analyze the bullying phenomenon in the school environment, on the one hand, and on the other hand, to identify the decisive prevention and intervention measures undertaken in school institutions that have contributed to the reduction or eradication of the phenomenon.

Two qualitative research methods were used: the analysis of the relevant documents identified based on the analysis of the literature and the comparative analysis of the research results identified in the field.

The analysis started from the following research questions: 1) How is the bullying phenomenon perceived in the school environment?; 2) What are the solutions and intervention measures in case of the existence of the bullying phenomenon?

4. Analysis and interpretation

4.1. From bullying to extreme violence and delinquency

Based on the analysis of the documents studied and the comparative analysis of the research results in the field, it is found that the same type of problems are common to all countries. To deny and to ignore the victims of bullying encourages especially aggressive behavior and violence in the school environment, accentuating the recidivism of juvenile delinquency. The majority of the answers were linked with the problems from home that the aggressive children have, as a recent study about the juvenile delinquency in Romania shows (Otovescu, 2021): „According to statistical data published by the Public Ministry², in 2019 there were 3,850 minors prosecuted for criminal acts, increasing by 146 in comparison with the previous year, but less than in 2016 and 2017, when there were registered 3,883, respectively 3,882 criminal cases of juvenile delinquents. In 2016, there was an increase in the number of juveniles prosecuted in the previous year (3,548), but also compared to 2014, when there were 2,966 criminal cases which implied juvenile offenders. The increase of 884 cases in 2019 in comparison with 2014 is a bad sign, especially because the statistics also show an increase in the number of criminal acts committed with violence (rape and robbery), as well as an increase in the number of juveniles arrested. Thus, in 2019 there were 76 rapes committed by minors, in comparison with 66 in 2014, respectively 616 robberies, in comparison with 611 in 2014, being pre-trial detained 460 minors in 2019, in comparison with 371 in 2014. The pre-trial detention is a measure ordered if the person presents a high degree of social danger. During the same period, there was a decrease in the number of thefts committed by minors, from 1,496 to 1,369, which shows, however, that an important number of non-violent crimes have become violent crimes” (Otovescu, Creac, 2021: 154-155).

In 2004, the researchers from the University of Turku, Finland, studied the substrat of this kind of violent behavior of children, by the „Connections between attitudes, group norms, and behaviour in bullying situations” (Salmivalli, Voeten, 2004), one of their observations being that „Most students believe that bullying is wrong, and they think that one should try to help the victims. Nevertheless, most students do not express their disapproval to peers who bully, and actually do nothing to intervene or support the victim” (Salmivalli, Voeten, 2004: 247).

A study made in 2000 by a team of psychiatrists reveals that: „Bullying or its effects do not seem to be a distinguishing factor among those admitted to an adolescent unit. In the outpatient group, however, being bullied is frequently a factor in the presentation of adolescents to psychiatric services, with depression being the diagnosis in over 70% of cases. In contrast, bullies and bully/victims were most likely to present with conduct disorders, which were frequently co-morbid with hyperkinetic disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)” (Salmon et al., 2000: 563).

4.2 Suicidal behavioral risks of bullying victims

The victims of bullying can be injured and killed by their aggressors, but also can commit suicide. A recent study from 2020 analyses the „Global risks of suicidal behaviours (SB) and

being bullied as well as their association among adolescents have been poorly understood.”, aiming „to determine the risks of suicidal ideation (SI), suicide planning (SP), suicide attempt (SA) and being bullied in adolescents and their related associations across gender, countries and different WHO regions” (Tang et al, 2020: 1). The study „examined the data of Global School-based Health Survey of 1st Jan 2003 to 31st Dec 2014 from 83 countries and demonstrated that the global risk of SI in adolescents was 16,5%, SP 16,5%, SA 16,4%, and of being bullied 35,3% respectively. The risk of SB varied across WHO regions and the highest risk of suicidal behaviours was in Africa (SI 19,9%, SP 23,2%, SA 20,8%). Girls had a significant higher risk of SI and SP than boys. There were significant associations of being bullied with SI, SP and SA in boys and girls, and the association with SA was stronger in boys than girls. The association of being bullied with SB also showed regional variations; the strongest association for SI was found in Southern Asia, and for SP and SA were found in Western Pacific” (Idem: 2). „Findings from this study suggested that the association of being bullied with SA was stronger than on SI and SP. Given that being bullied increases the risk of mental health problem that lead to increased risk of SI, SP and SA, it might be that being bullied could contribute to poor impulse control among adolescents, which is the strongest predictors for SA. However, impact of being bullied on impulse control cannot be estimated as impulsivity was not measured in GSHS, which could be an area for future investigation” (Ibidem: 10).

To diminish the suicidal behavior, there must be solutions for the children and teenagers affected by bullying, but the Romanian Government does not have this kind of programs and not even studies about the complexity of the phenomenon. In this field, also the NGOs are the only ones to try to apply solutions.

The most recent study made in Romania, in 2022, by the NGO 'Save the Children Romania', analyses data centralized following the online consultation of children in June 2022. The analysis show that 82% of students have witnessed bullying situations in the school where they study, 73% in the class where they study, and in the group of friends 45%. „The psycho-emotional impact is all the stronger, as the children emerged vulnerable from the two years of the pandemic: one in three children faced anxiety states and needed counseling and psycho-emotional support, the percentage rising to over 50 % in the case of teenagers, leading to extremely serious consequences, namely suicide attempts” (Save the Children Romania, Press Release, June 2022). A good solution found by the NGO is the „Health Camp” organized every summer. This year, the camp welcomed 100 children and young people from Romania, to learn how to manage their anxiety or other strong emotions and how they can have better relationships with those around them.

4.3. Social and educational response measures in reducing the phenomenon of bullying

The US Department of education have a great concern about the evolution of this phenomenon and the actions in the USA schools could be a good model for the Romanian authorities and school principals. In a report from 2011, „Analysis of State Bullying Laws and Policies”, we can find a chapter dedicated to the „Analysis of State Bullying Legislation” for all the states of USA. From 2011 they were already preoccupied of cyberbullying, also: „The law states that bullying is prohibited at any location, activity, or function that is not school-related, or using technology or devices that are not owned by the school, (...) For purposes of the analysis, legislation was rated as more expansive if it grants schools jurisdiction over both on-campus and off-campus bullying or cyberbullying behavior” (Stuart-Cassell, Bell, Springer, 2011: 24). They have made an analysis of the history of the phenomenon in the USA and also of the evolution in every state, based on the modifications in the law field, comparing the results: „Most bullying laws do conform to research-based definitions by emphasizing the intentional nature of bullying behavior and the harms inflicted on targeted victims. Exhibit 8 reports the language commonly found in state legislation that identifies the impacts of bullying on victims. State laws most frequently define bullying as acts imposing 'general harms', 'threats of fear of

harm', 'physical harm' or 'property damage'. Less frequently laws described acts that 'disrupt the school setting', 'interfere with learning', or 'cause psychological harm'" (Idem: 26).

Even if democratic countries are tolerant with many kinds of behavior, in the United States of America we can find solutions in order to apply „zero tolerance” for violence. A study from 2003, from Virginia, reveals how works the legislation in the school environment from the USA, protecting children in front of extreme violence. „The federal government, through the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (GFSA), required states to enact zero tolerance legislation mandating school districts to expel students automatically for a period of one year if they brought weapons to school. Under threat of losing federal education dollars, states complied. In turn, school districts developed disciplinary policies that reflected state mandates. In Virginia, as in other states, concern has mounted that application of these policies sometimes results in inequitable and nonsensical treatment of children” (Sughrue, 2003: 238), analysing the evolution of zero tolerance policies violence and guns to the school district level, utilizing Virginia as an example for the emergent case law. This can be taken as model, as well, for other situations, as legislation that can be made to reduce bullying in schools.

There is a big concern about bullying also in the United Kingdom and the researchers recommends a personalized approach for each individual situation, there is no single recommendation or that can be applied in a unitary manner. „Schools in the UK are required by law to have a behaviour/school management policy, within which they are required to make reference to bullying in terms of promoting respect for others and intolerance of bullying and harassment. Schools also have a duty to state clearly what their position is regarding anti-bullying initiatives (School Standards Framework Act, 1998). However, apart from guidelines there are no universal policies that need to be implemented” (Woods, Wolke, 2003: 382). But the examples of success can be analyzed and taken into account for a country strategy.

5. Conclusions

The main conclusions of the study highlight the fact that anti-bullying prevention actions are important in the prevention of school violence, and ignoring and denying bullying in the school environment leads to the extension of the negative effects of this phenomenon on the victims, on the one hand, and on the other hand the knowledge and the awareness of the phenomenon leads to the use of models of good resolution practices and the application of intervention measures that contribute to the reduction and eradication of this phenomenon.

From all the studies carried throughout the world, in the past 30 years there has been a constant concern for knowing and reducing the phenomenon of bullying in many countries, despite the fact that we witness an attitude of ignorance and denial of the phenomenon among the general population, as well as at the level of stakeholders in the school environment. Based on the specialized studies analyzed and on the basis of the comparative analysis of the research results, it is found that there is an increasing trend of aggressive behaviors at the global and national level in society, but also in the school environment, and thus this phenomenon of bullying can lead to actions of extreme violence, delinquency, risks of suicidal ideation, suicidal behavioral risks of bullying victims or other associated risks.

Due to the fact that the prevention segment of aggressive behaviors leads to the prevention of violent actions in schools, the need to inform and raise the awareness of the population and social stakeholders involved in the school environment on the phenomenon and connotations of bullying is a priority. Along with the prevention segment, the intervention segment in the case of actions of abuse, harassment, intimidation, is imperatively necessary in order to reduce or eradicate the phenomenon of school bullying. At the level of schools in Romania, the first step of the Romanian authorities must be to stop ignoring and denying the existence of bullying. The second step must be the understanding of the situation. Other necessary steps must be the collaboration with the researchers and the NGOs, in order to find solutions and apply them, with the purpose to create good Bullying laws and policies and to apply them in school environment.

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BRIEF CONTENT ANALYSIS REGARDING THE CIUC-ODORHEI-TREI SCAUNE REGION IN THE 1936 ISSUES OF THE INTERWAR NEWSPAPER "NEAMUL NOSTRU"

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Abstract. *The present article focuses on one of the few publications that addressed the Romanian public from the Ciuc-Odorhei-Trei Scaune region in the interwar period. Familiarizing the general public with the issue of the local Romanian minority from Harghita-Covasna-Mureș counties is a long and arduous process, fact proven by the present state of the topic in the public sphere: even nowadays their problems and the challenges they face are still under-reported, both by mass media and elite discourse. From this perspective, the article aims to highlight some of the main ideas promoted in the "Neamul nostru" newspaper, to get a better understanding of the type of interethnic coexistence between Romanians (dominated local minority) and Hungarians (dominant local majority) that took place in the interwar timeframe. From a methodological standpoint, the newspaper was filtered with the help of content analysis instruments and the conclusions prove to be useful for the present day understanding of the relationship between the two ethnic groups in Transilvania and also the (low) quality of the state intervention in the area.*

Keywords: content analysis, local minority, dominant minority, Transilvania, interethnic coexistence

1. An introduction to the Romanian publishing from the Ciuc-Odorhei-Trei Scaune region

Until the Great Union on December 1, 1918, the Romanian communities in the former Szekler seats did not have their own publications in the Romanian language. Information about the daily life of Transylvanian Romanians and those over the mountains could only be found in newspapers and magazines printed in Sibiu, Brașov, Blaj, Arad, Pesta s.a., among which we note:

- Telegraful Român [The Romanian Telegraph]
- Gazeta Transilvaniei [The Transylvanian Gazette]
- Tribuna [The Tribune]
- Luceafărul [The Evening Star]
- Românul The Romanian
- Observatorul Observatory
- Federațiunea [The Federation]

The articles were largely signed by local priests and teachers, who often used pseudonyms to escape the dire consequences they could face for their actions from the Hungarian administration.

The first publications in Romanian or bilingual (Romanian-Hungarian), published in 1922 were the newspapers, monitors or bulletins of Treiscaune, Ciuc and Odorhei counties:

- "The official gazette of Treiscaune county" (bilingual, 1922-1926),
- "The official monitor of Treiscaune county" (1926-1938),
- "The official gazette of Ciuc county" (1922-1924),
- "The bulletin - respectively the official Gazette of Odorhei county" (1923-1925).

The first real newspapers in Romanian appeared later. In the former Treiscaune county, today Covasna County, respectively in Sf. Gheorghe, appeared:

- "Here - in Treiscaune county" (1932-1934),
- "Our Nation" (1934-1936),

- "The Oituzul" (1935-1938),
- "Courier of grafts" (1936-1937),
- "New Era" (1933-1940), monthly magazine edited by the Association of Teachers from Treiscaune county,
- "The ASTRA Bulletin" (1938-1940), edited by the Central Department of Treiscaune County,
- "Flux" - Monthly (monthly) literary and critical (1934) - appeared in the town of Covasn

2. The "Neamul nostru" newspaper

It appeared in the period 1934-1936 and it was founded by I.N. Țuțuianu and directed by PhD I. Roșu. The publication had a weekly appearance regime (Sundays) and contained four pages per issue. Its motto was: "Weekly sheet of Romanians from the Szeklerized land for national propaganda, culture, science and art".

3. Methodology

The hereby analysis is centered upon the first issue available online, more precisely the first number published between January and May 1936, which are available in the Newspaper and Magazine Collection on the Eurocarpatica - Digital Library website.

The interwar newspaper content database includes an average of 25 entries (articles/columns) per issue, which generated a database with more than 470 items.

The method used was content analysis focused on the following coordinates:

1. Correlating article categories and perspective with frequency and size of columns
Identifying citations relevant to columns
2. Identifying the keywords of the headings
3. Identifying the perspectives of the authors present in the articles
4. Identifying the main ideas promoted regarding interethnic coexistence in the area

There were several types of articles which we identified within the newspaper:

1. opinions and analysis
2. local reports
3. religious clarifications
4. call for reflection
5. call to action
6. poems and literary fragments
7. monographs and scientific research
8. orthographic - grammatical correction
9. useful tips in the household
10. Christian calendar
11. advertisements

Regarding the size of the articles, we have created a list of categories, with corresponding text coverage:

1. schematic (several lines) (37,50%)
2. short (<1 column) (20,83%)
3. medium (1-2 columns) (37,50%)
4. long (2-3 columns) (8,33%)
5. extended (>3 columns) (none)

4. Obtained data with corresponding text coverage (%)

1. Identified perspectives and associated quotes

A. The ethnic perspective

- oppressed Romanians (4,17%)

"Because being a correspondent for a national paper in the era of Hungarian rule meant: "Always a candidate for the Szegedin prison" as a sacrifice for the great national cause. At that time the slogan was: "A Romanian editor must write with the criminal code in front of him and knowing that the gendarme is behind him". (Fundeia, 1936: 1)

- union as a millennial dream (4,17%)
"The past is the foundation on which our nation is built today. It is the steel pedestal on which the brothers, who are returning to their motherland today, raise trivets of worship and glorification of the eight hundred thousand heroes who fell on the altar of the homeland, for their liberation and the realization of our millennial dream". (Tuțuianu, 1936: 2)
- Hungarians regarded as brothers (4,17%)
"And the Minorities and native Romanians live on the same lands. And both receive from the good God the same rains, the same snows, the same amount of sunshine. The zephyr or the harrier likewise blows over them. And if nature brings them so close to reconciliation, why should we humans be envious of them?". (Tepeș, 1936: 1)
- the enemy beyond the borders (4,17%)
"Who will benefit from this feud? Who else but the external enemies of our borders, which are common borders, because they also decide the glia from which the Romanians get their piece of bread, and the glia from which - quietly - the Minorities also get what they need for themselves and their families. ... All currents contrary to this solidarity are hostile to the homeland and must be fought with energy". (Tepeș, 1936: 3)
- forgetting the past to achieve national solidarity (12,50%)
"What was ... for us is gone forever, and the wound until you were still bleeding closed, together with the forgetting of the past". (Tuțuianu, 1936: 1)
"The press in the annexed lands must have the general characteristics of the press from all time and be a creative force, but it must also have a character specific to the readers it addresses here, a character of solidarity, of reconciliation based on deep conviction. ... This solidarity is a national, imperative and absolute necessity". (Hațegan, 1936: 1)
"And to those who forget how noble the Romanian is, how forgetful of the pains of the past he is, how lenient he is, the press from the annexed land has the duty to remind them at any given time: solidarity is today our gospel; solidarity requires clear thinking, common aspirations, equal rights, equal duties and above all strength of character". (Tepeș, 1936: 1)

B. The institutional perspective

- equality in rights and duties (4,17%)
"And the Romanian, the Szekler, the Saxon, and the Jew are equal before the laws - they have the same rights and the same duties. And one and the others have the right to multiply their family, according to God's command, through honest work, through economy, through respect for the laws... What is asked of them in return? The same duties to some and to others. As faith is claimed to M.S. The king or any Romanian, the same is required of any Minority. As loyalty and obedience to the laws of every Romanian is required; the same is required of any Minority." (Tepeș, 1936: 2)
- institutional stuttering (4,17%)
"The ministry took the right to advertise the confessional school back in 1930 [it did not meet the requirements of the law]. However, the confessional school continues to operate without any right, because the same Ministry, by other counter-orders, grants the school the right to operate. Or one of two: either the school has the right to advertise and then it can function, or it doesn't have this right and then on what basis does it function". (Stroiescu, 1936: 3)
- recorded acts of treason (12,50%)

"here in Transylvania, freed from the Hungarian yoke for 17 years ... even though "Speak Romanian" is written on the walls of all our authorities, there are still today many civil servants who - forgetting how much blood was spilled to have the freedom to speak Romanian to our mother, forgetting that in the old days you had to hide from them and tremble in order to be able to find freedom and sing a Romanian doina, today, in the hearing of everyone, defying the high sense of Romanian dignity, I speak Hungarian even at official banquets, and these potentates of the day, out of a desire to flatter yesterday's master, slander themselves in the Hungarian language without blushing". (Fundea, 1936: 2)

C. The perspective of the role model

- great Romanians / models (4,17%)

"Once upon a time, Dr Valer Branișce was the editor of the newspaper Dreptatea from Timișoara, a newspaper where many enthusiastic students worked, only for the love of being called "correspondent", based on a certificate given by the newspaper's management... it was a semi-title of nobility, in the legion of Romanian fighters, from Transylvania, on national soil... But the Hungarian anger from that time was not appeased. It was smoldering in the ashes and one day Dr Valer Branișce is sued for many articles... He is advised to answer the judges in Hungarian - which he knew perfectly... - with the assurance that if he speaks in Hungarian will be given the least punishment. Outraged by the proposals made to him by both the investigating judge and the prosecutor whom he knew, Dr. Valer Branișce ... presented himself before the jurors at the final negotiation unyielding and dignified, even though he knew that his fate was in their hands...". (Fundea, 1936: 1)

- local facts of ordinary people (12,50%)

"Baptized Gheorghe, spontaneously took out and gave for these hungry Bessarabian Romanians the sum of 5 lei, which he had for that day's bread. This thought was immediately followed by another 15 pre-military young men who collected on the spot the sum of 86 lei, as much as they had... Although it is a small amount for us who have a bread to eat, it is big for our poor brothers across the Prut who they don't even have a "polemunk shell" to appease the hunger of thousands of starving children". (Ionescu, 1936: 2)

"After a program composed of various songs, the innocent children went through parks and cemeteries where they threw seeds and small cakes, food for the poor birds shriveled by the cold. Nice initiative". (s.a., 1936: 1)

D. The scientific perspective

- literary (16,67%)

"You have been spoiled by bearish mistresses/A pleasant life like no other under the sun/That's how it will be, and I swear it,/That she's only old, and good as a grave". (Joantă, 1936: 1)

"Romanian language lessons ... for Romanians who know how to read and write in Hungarian and want to learn to speak and write Romanian". (s.a., 1936: 3)

- religious (8,33%)

"And then will our deed be Christian? ... Isn't szekely close to the Romanian and the Romanian close to szekely? Then - for God's sake - why should we become enmity, why should we hate each other, why should we use any occasion to pit one against the other?". (Țepeș, 1936: 2)

- everyday philosophy (8,33%)

"In the age of light and materialism, when we all seem to be possessed by a cold haste, we don't think anymore, it seems we don't have time to think about a true friendship... not interest is the basis of a friendship, but the matching of souls... And it seems to me that this is a justification, because friendship is also a form of love". (E.R, 1936: 1)

- historical arguments and monographic extracts (4,17%)
"The historical past of the Valcele Spa is a living testimony for anyone and everyone that the Valcele Baths stand at the head of all other similar Baths in the country and abroad; and Valcele mineral water is one of the most radioactive mineral waters in Europe, as university professors Teposu and Campeanu express with all their competence. Through all the scientific researches, Valcele waters are indicated in all diseases of eating, stomach and digestion". (Păstina, 1936: 3)

E. The organizational perspective

- commercials
"Read and Spread Our Nation" (at the end of each edition)
- obtaining support for the appearance of the newspaper
"What remains now is for all good Romanians to appreciate the selfless work done in the interest of the nation and by paying their obligations towards this advertising organ, they should all be in debt". (N.N, 1936: 1)
- call to action / reaction
"The county committee of the Anti-revisionist League asks this or all the presidents of the newly established mesh committees and communal sub-committees to send by January 15 the minutes of establishment of the respective committees... for the preparation of the annual report of the county organization". (s.a., 1936: 1)

5. Main conclusions

The idea that the geographical region ("land") in question is a Szeklerized one is a recurring reference within the newspaper's pages, and also highlighted in the front-page motto which is published in each issue. This is an attitude totally opposite to today's perspective, when the expression Szeklerland is promoted both through ignorance and through "programmatic language" in the public sphere.

Here, a difference must be made between the action (Szeklerized land) component indicated by the Romanian point of view versus the identity one (Szeklerland) promoted by the Hungarian side. The first expression reveals a forced external action that has a transformative capacity on a Romanian space, while the second one shows an identity brand that wants to be established through both external and internal factors.

The analysis and opinions written within the newspaper regarding the quality of the interethnic coexistence in the area can be split into five categories:

- The first one is focused on the need to forget the sufferings endured in the past by Romanians in order to achieve the ultimate ideal - national solidarity -, both of the natives and of the minorities
- The second one it promotes the idea of equality in rights and duties, regardless of ethnicity
- A third category is the religious perspective that dictates the love towards the other
- The fourth category is the one that identifies the Romanians as a constant disturbing factor, a sort of the "enemy outside our borders" feeling created by their elites by "segregating their community" and the constant refusal attitude for the fact that they are living in the same space with the Romanians.
- Last but not least important, the fifth idea promotes the model of great personalities or those remained unknown who showed national dignity and acted accordingly to their ideals versus blaming the behavior of the those dilemmatic Romanians who, even more than 15 years after the liberation of Transylvania, proved a behavior of servitude towards the Hungarian elites.

Articles focused on the religious, literary or scientific perspective have a deep educational undertone. Thus, the newspaper not only reports, but also educates the public through its appearances. From this perspective, the publication contains:

- Grammar lessons that are bilingual "for Romanians who know how to read and write in Hungarian and want to learn to speak and write Romanian", out of the desire to correct the facts of the past (school education of Romanians exclusively in the Hungarian language)
- Excerpts from the Gospel, reproduced at length and then "interpreted" in the meaning of the common man, to strengthen the Christian religious feeling at the local level
- Relevant extracts from local monographs of Romanian villages, made to a good extent by priests and teachers, who want to remind the reader of the antiquity and specificity of the Romanian element in the area
- Poems or literary fragments signed by local or national authors, introduced to strengthen a general culture of the reader
- Opinion articles or reports that bring to light old historical facts and events 1) that disadvantaged the Romanians in the region during the Hungarian regime 2) that demonstrate the antiquity and native status of the Romanians, intended to increase the sense of dignity and ensure the continuity of a memory local collectives.
- Paradoxically, although they remind the reader, the authors of the articles also urge to "forget" in order to achieve the feeling of national solidarity at the local level, regardless of ethnicity

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ASSISTANCE INTERVENTION PROCEDURES IN RISK SITUATIONS

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Abstract: *The universe has been in continuous transformation since the beginning of the world. Throughout this system, people experience change at every step, constantly learning to adapt their personal goals to the challenges of their environment. Social assistance thus appears as a response to the problem of vulnerable groups, offering professional and specialized help to those in need. The current approach aims to follow the intervention procedure in risk situations, implemented by the social worker, with a preponderance in the case of victims of drug abuse. This phenomenon is constantly growing, the National Anti-Drug Agency, the main intervention body, are fighting a continuous battle against drug trafficking, which is developing with an alarming speed, intervening both at the national and county level, through the Anti-Drug Evaluation, Prevention and Counseling Centers.*

Keywords: intervention, social worker, vulnerable group, risky situations, drug addiction .

1. Introduction

In a world where social and political changes occur at every step, the role of social workers has gained complexity, being asked to get actively involved in the support offered in society, by developing approaches that meet the needs of vulnerable groups, as well as developing support services. Social work is not only a promoter of resources in crisis situations, but is involved in the entire process of social development and assistance to vulnerable persons/groups, a fact that has led to a reconstruction of the identity of the profession and the role of the social worker, due to the need for development of new skills and knowledge to keep up with the changes and emerging issues.

2. Risk situations. Vulnerable groups

The risk situation is a circumstance in which a large part of the population can end up, for various reasons, and often without fault (for instance natural disasters, earthquakes, etc.). According to Law 292/2011 on Social Assistance, "the situation of difficulty is the situation in which a person who, at some point during the life cycle, for socioeconomic, health reasons and/or resulting from the environment socially disadvantaged life, lost or limited their own social integration capacities; families, groups of people and communities may find themselves in a difficult situation, as a result of the majority of their members being affected;". Social risk situations have a direct impact on the economic situation of the individual and his family, such as a decrease in income (unemployment, pension) or an increase in expenses (illness, maternity).

The vulnerable group is represented by individuals or families who are at risk of losing their ability to meet daily living needs because of illness, disability, poverty, drug or alcohol addiction or other situations that lead to vulnerability economic and social. Also, there are external situations, macro-social level events that can turn certain people into vulnerable people: earthquakes, floods, wars, economic crises, etc. (according to art. 6 letter h) of Law 219/2016 on the social economy and art. 6 lit. p) from the Social Assistance Law no. 292/2011)

From the assistance point of view, the vulnerable group refers to a social category with certain characteristics, which may be in common situations of difficulty, generating marginalization or social exclusion, permanently or for a certain period of time. The limitation, the non-existence of own or community resources, the impossibility of accessing existing opportunities determine serious consequences on the development of intellectual capacities, physical, moral and spiritual integrity. Considering the fact that the phrase "vulnerable group" is often identified with that of risk group or marginalized group, the definition of risk groups can also be valid for vulnerable groups.

In any society there are such groups that struggle with lack of power and control, with persistent problems, with physical, emotional, mental and social deterioration, with the absence of inner resources, with a lack of family and social support, with discrimination, stigmatization, and often with human rights violations. (Buzducea, 2010) The problem of vulnerable groups is the object of social policies designed and implemented by public administration authorities, but despite this fact there is no explicit definition based on which they can be identified. Thus, a number of socioeconomic indicators are used, such as worse living conditions, a low level of education, lack of income. It can be observed that the state of poverty is the main indicator of the level of vulnerability of a social category, whether it is permanent or temporary, cases in which living conditions do not rise to the level considered acceptable for these groups.

The Ordinance no. 68 of August 28, 2003 regarding social services lists the following categories of people as vulnerable groups: children; old people; disabled people; people addicted to drugs, alcohol or other toxic substances; persons who have left prisons; mono-parental families; people affected by family violence; victims of human trafficking; people with no or low income; immigrants; homeless people; persons infected with or suffering from HIV/AIDS; chronic patients; people suffering from incurable diseases; other people in situations of social need.

Social work and assistance thus appears as a response to the problem of vulnerable groups, offering professional and specialized help to those in need. Possessing a solid theoretical basis, crowned by varied practical experience and a well-developed common sense, social workers become agents of change. Social work and assistance are based on effective action in the intervention, a fact that requires the social worker to have solid theoretical knowledge in various fields such as psychology, communication, sociology, political science, legal science and others, knowledge that has the role of helping him to understand in depth what happens with the elements of the client-social worker system. The specialist not only stores and reproduces information and knowledge, but has the ability to access elements from various theories in order to focus them towards the field on which he intervenes. On the other hand, the social worker cannot carry out an operative and intensive action all alone, considering the complexity of the beneficiaries' problems, a fact that requires the social assistance activity to be carried out in collaboration with various specialists from fields with diverse objectives, but focused on the same aspect: the person as a whole.

3.Social work as an field interlacing

It can be said about social work or assistance that it is both an art, a science and a profession; theorists and specialists in the field assign to it the idea of art because "it assumes on the part of the one who practices it a series of personal qualities, special skills, which through education develop skills and abilities, form the talent necessary to act in a great diversity of situations, so you can understand people and help them help themselves." It is a science because, although it is at the intersection of various disciplines, it has borrowed and shaped ideas, concepts and principles from each to form its own theoretical basis. Furthermore, it is a profession because it has a set of systematized theoretical knowledge, it is a long-term activity put at the service of social needs, carried out professionally both for the benefit of the person

and for the good running of society, it is found as a specialization in the academic field and it also relies on its own legal system and code of ethics.

Social work as a profession was built around two values: respecting the dignity and integrity of the human being, and recognizing democracy as an essential requirement of social life. Starting from these, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) enunciated in the Encyclopedia of Social Work the following professional values (Neamțu, 2003): "Respect for fundamental human rights; Development and promotion of social responsibility; Promotion of individual freedoms; Supporting self-determination".

The assistance intervention is necessarily based on the interaction of two personalities: the client, who brings into the assistance relationship his or her set of problems and functional deficiencies, and the social worker, whose role is to unpack and harmoniously reorganize that set. In other words, the essence of the interaction is a process of directly or indirectly changing the client's behavior to help him acquire skills and resources for self-help.

The International Federation of Social Workers states that "the profession of social worker promotes social change, problem-solving in human relations, empowering and liberating individuals to enhance social well-being. Using theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their living environments. The principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work." (Neamțu, 2016). In Doru Buzducea's opinion, "the social worker is the one who assists clients in solving their own problems. He or she intervenes when people are faced with need, imperfection, lack, and various other problems. The mission of the social worker can be found in participating in solving community social problems, in ensuring a decent minimum of life and increasing the quality of life of vulnerable social groups, in improving the social functioning of people, as it restores what has been disordered."

The relationship between the social worker and the client is based on a partnership; the social worker is not a person who miraculously solves the problems that the client identifies, but has the role of collaborating with that client in the long run based on a commitment through which the client's self-determination is pursued. This process of change is achieved only through collaboration (the client participates in setting goals and making decisions, because if the specialist were to impose certain activities on the client, the latter would not show sufficient interest in getting involved) starting from the resources that the client already possesses, those strengths and skills that work for him or her, in order to detect some constructive solutions. The long-term objective is to give the client the ability to help himself in case of subsequent problems, so the help provided by the specialist is for a limited period, an aspect discussed from the beginning of the case resolution.

In the opinion of Lymberly (2001), there are three perspectives on the field of social assistance: traditional, market-oriented and of partnership. The traditional perspective sees social work as "a relationship between a professional and a client, between whom there are differences in power and knowledge, as well as a certain social distance". According to the market perspective, the social worker is "a supplier (provider) of services and the user of the service is a consumer, having a relationship that is understood as a commercial exchange". The partnership perspective is derived from the traditional one, providing that "social workers engage service users in active and equal participation which recognizes the expertise the service user brings to the helping relationship". (Neamțu, Condor, 2016)

4. The theoretical-methodological universe of assistance intervention

Recognizing the scientific status of social assistance necessarily requires recognizing its own methodological body, so that the following elements can be identified: a) reference theories (big models), b) knowledge and intervention methods and techniques, c) the procedures for evaluating the empirical reality and its theoretical reconstruction, as well as the degree of efficiency of the assistance approach.

The specific theories in social assistance appeared relatively late, due to the fact that they incorporate foundations from most of the older sciences, it being a fairly recently formed science, a product of the modern era. Thus, the theoretical basis of the intervention was based especially on professional practice, which is why, although classical theories are recognized in the specialized literature, in practice specific theories, born from empirical knowledge, are used more.

In the scientific community, the idea is accepted that any theoretical construction has a minimum factual basis (made of empirical data), and on the other hand any empirical investigation relies on a minimum of theory. More precisely, there is a unity between the empirical and the theoretical, the two dimensions coexist in any approach from the socio-human disciplines: hypotheses, theories, ideas, in general, enhance concrete research, and empirical findings lead to the formulation of new hypotheses, interpretations, theories.

We have chosen as a research topic *Intervention in the situation of drug abuse*. The reason why this aspect captured our interest the most, out of the multitude of social problems that a social worker can face, is that drug abuse and addiction is a real and devastating social problem that affects especially young people. Romania already faces a relatively large number of drug users/addicts, and the speed with which the trafficking is developing is worrying. New substances appear, with increasingly complex and devastating effects, which from a medical point of view are difficult to remove, new forms of trafficking appear and the age at which consumption begins drops dramatically. However, in the struggle with the phenomenon of drug use, a social worker can feel discouraged in the face of the challenges that this scourge brings. Whether we are talking about the onset of consumption at younger and younger ages, changes in the profiles of users of psychoactive substances, the development of new substances with unprecedented manifestations, as well as the long-term implications from a physical, psychological and socio-economic point of view of consumption, all imply the imminent need for a multidisciplinary intervention. Thus, the National Anti-Drug Agency is fighting a continuous battle against drug trafficking, which is developing with an alarming speed, intervening both at the national and county level, through the Anti-Drug Evaluation, Prevention and Counseling Centers. It is an uphill battle of a few people against a growing phenomenon that requires patience, work, trust and an iron will, and even if the entire phenomenon cannot be eradicated at once, even saving a single life is a victory.

According to the principle of unity between the quantitative and the qualitative, the present approach aims to combine the two styles of research in order to obtain a vision as consistent as possible with reality, thus using the case study method and the sociological survey based on questionnaires.

Qualitative research aims to understand certain ideas, attitudes, desires, needs, in relation to the problem that is the basis of the research. The goal is achieved by obtaining free answers, which can be interpreted in several ways, without emphasizing statistics, but only the meaning of the collected data, offering the possibility that this information is analyzed in a way in which the main role is played by words and phrases. Qualitative research uses a number of empirical methods in data collection, such as case study, in-depth interview, participant observation, introspection, life story, document analysis.

Quantitative research uses numbers and methods of statistical analysis. They tend to be based on the numerical measurement of specific aspects of the studied phenomena with the aim of testing causal hypotheses. The methods most often associated with quantitative research are: sociological survey and opinion poll. The most used data collection techniques within these methods are the questionnaire and the quantitative content analysis.

5. Highlighting the results obtained

This approach brings to the fore a study carried out in 2018 in the town of Reșița, Caraș-Severin county, which summarizes some clarifications with regard to the following lines of investigation: the degree of information of young people in relation to the issue of illicit

substances, determining the average age of at which consumption begins, the effects determined by drug consumption. We chose to collect the quantitatively relevant data through a survey, using a structured questionnaire with closed and open questions, applied to a randomly selected sample of 100 young people aged 14-20. Being a sensitive topic, it took a lot of convincing about the confidentiality of the answers to get the subjects to complete the questionnaire. After interpreting the statistical data, we noticed the following trends:

- Most respondents know that drugs can be addictive after consumption. Also, a part believes that they damage the physical and mental body, and two other answer options are related to the well-being that consumption provides.
- Most young people first hear about drugs in their circle of friends, which means that information can be uncertain and have a negative influence. However, discussions with parents have a significant weight, which is gratifying. Living in the age of technology, it is obvious that a good part come into contact with the subject on the Internet or other mass media. And health education lessons seem to fail to achieve their goal, being a means rarely mentioned in the responses.
- It seems that all respondents have knowledge about Marijuana, Ethnobotanicals and Cocaine. Ethnobotanicals are still considered legal drugs in their view, although they have been outlawed for several years.
- Most of the young people were offered drugs for consumption, the next part were enticed to buy, and the last percent were protected from these offers.
- It is worrying that many young people accept or are indifferent to the idea of drug use, while a smaller percentage totally disapprove of the practice.
- It seems that the majority of respondents have tried drugs at least once, a significant percentage use occasionally or weekly, and fewer have never tried.
- Unfortunately, we are talking about young ages of the onset of consumption, mostly at 15-16 years, then 14 years and even 13 years.
- It is gratifying to note that a significant percentage of respondents have abstained from consumption so far. The most popular substances are Marijuana, Ethnobotanicals and Ecstasy, being easier to obtain and cheaper.
- Fortunately, substance abuse is not practiced in most families. A few respondents are not sure, answering that they do not know, and a very small percentage observed this behavior in the family.
- Family relationships are predominantly harmonious. However, we found a link between poor relationships and the consumption of young people in the respective families.
- Young people are generally part of organized families. There is a tendency for the consumers to belong to the disorganized or in other situations.
- Most of the respondents consider themselves in a generally good condition, but there are people who feel depressed, tired, even with aggressive tendencies. Generally, among consumers.
- The majority of young people believe that the environment is the main determining factor in starting drug use. Another important factor is curiosity, and the next is represented by family problems.
- Most of the respondents' entourage are substance users, the young people surveyed know quite clearly the habits of their friends, which means that the young users do not bother to hide their vices, even though they constitute illegal acts.
- It is most often consumed at parties, in bars and with friends. Another reason to consider that the environment is a very important factor in determining consumption.
- It seems that a lot of young people want more understanding from their parents, although family relations were mostly declared to be harmonious. Those concerned about school would be more satisfied with the improvement of the school situation,

and the rest of the respondents want understanding from friends or more interesting pastime activities.

- Finally, the questionnaire ended with the possibility of choosing not to have started consumption. 60% of respondents regret having chosen this path, but a significant percentage is firmly convinced that drugs have not left a negative mark.

In order to outline the most unified perspective on the topic of discussion, we qualitatively analyzed the files of some beneficiaries of the Caraș-Severin Drug Prevention, Evaluation and Counseling Center, users of illicit substances, focusing on the assessment of personal history, the assessment capacities, resources, relationships, etc., defining the central problem and the general lines of work established in partnership with the social worker in charge, carrying out the intervention as well as evaluating the results obtained after a period of time. Notable progress has been registered in the cases concerned, a fact that demonstrates the usefulness of integrated assistance to the consumer, as a beneficiary of a specific anti-drug center, as well as the imperative of promoting the services of these institutions, especially in the educational environment.

6. Proposals and recommendations; directions for future approaches

Drug abuse and addiction are a real and devastating social problem that affects young people in particular. Following the applied study, we were able to form an opinion on this phenomenon, both from a statistical point of view and from the psycho-emotional implications determined by the impact of this scourge. Young people are increasingly interested in the consumption of illicit substances; either under the influence of their surroundings or out of curiosity, they decide from an ever younger age to try, starting with drugs considered "light" and continuing with various substances whose manifestations often surprise them.

Teenagers are special people: adults in the making, beings easily influenced by the multitude of attractions in the world. Thus, they are the surest target of drug dealers, who first lure them by offering illusions in a pill, by appearing friendly because they offer them an expensive thing, totally disinterested in appearance. The moment life puts them to the test, when the family environment no longer provides them with the resources necessary for a harmonious development, it is easy to find their validation in the magical substances that erase any trace of sadness for a few hours. It's just that the effect passes, and passes faster with each dose taken; thus themselves needing more, more often, until addiction sets in. And at that point, he would do everything possible to turn back time and stop before taking the first drug, because now it hurts all over the place and it's hard to bear.

But the reality is not as simple as pressing a delete button. The parents, whom they wanted in the past to be more understanding, more benevolent, are perhaps the only support in the fight against drugs. The National Anti-Drug Agency, through its county branches, is doing everything it can to reintegrate consumers and give them a chance for a new start, but that depends entirely on their determination. The earlier the intervention is made, the more the chances of success increase, it being easier to keep an addiction under control for a few months or 1-2 years than decades of consumption. However, in each case there is a risk of relapse at any time.

All these aspects lead to the formulation of several proposals and recommendations:

- Good communication within the family as well as at school, these being the main socialization environments of a child, is essential for preventing the start of substance use. Temptations appear earlier and earlier, so the information should also be done early. Of course, there can be the question of being tempted to try if the subject is brought to their attention, but we believe that the parents' openness, offering unconditional love, trust and free will could cancel the temptation of the "forbidden fruit". When children feel loved, respected, and know their worth, they don't need to gain validation from deviant behaviors.

- Promotion of activities as healthy alternatives to drug use in schools, prevention and information from specialists.
- Supervising pupils from disorganized families and other risk groups, providing them with support and counseling in case of difficulty, with a view to keeping them away from harmful influences.

7. Conclusions

Assistance intervention in risk situations represents a challenge in the practice of any social worker. The dynamics and diversity brought about by the situations in which the beneficiaries can find themselves, require the specialist to have thorough training and a multidisciplinary approach to be able to carry out an effective intervention. Social assistance or work, considered by some authors to be at the same time an art, a science and a profession, appears as a response to the problem of risk groups, which include children, people with disabilities, people addicted to alcohol and psychoactive substances, people with disabilities, victims of violence domestic and others.

The social worker, agent of change, is the professional who combines art with science, even with several sciences, social assistance being at the intersection of several fields of activity, a fact that requires the use of concepts from sciences such as sociology, psychology, biology, law, etc. ; thus the social worker plays various roles such as Intermediary, Lawyer, Educator/Teacher, Counsellor, Case Manager, Manager of service tasks, Development factor of the staff of the institution where he or she works, Administrator, Agent of social change, Professional, etc. The social worker interweaves in the practice the set of theoretical knowledge, with a series of specially developed skills, together with his own experiences and personal experiences, in order to treat each case individually and appropriately, taking into account certain principles.

Although social work has established itself relatively late as a science in its own right due to the fact that it incorporates foundations from most of the old sciences, it has developed its own theories and methods from practice depending on the variety of problems of the beneficiaries. Also, the intervention is carried out professionally, following certain strategies and intervention plans recorded in a written agreement with the beneficiary, called a contract.

The research part is dedicated to the study of certain phenomena classified as social problems, respecting a principle of unity between empirical and theoretical: hypotheses, theories, ideas, in general, enhance concrete research, and empirical findings lead to the formulation of new hypotheses, interpretations, theories. In order to be sure that the results obtained are as close as possible to the truth, the methodology requires both a quantitative and a qualitative approach, depending on the nature of the studied phenomena, the theory from which the study is claimed, but also depends on the accessibility of the methods and techniques, on the existence or absence of the appropriate investigation tools, of the financial resources, of the time interval we have at our disposal for carrying out the study, of the desired depth of the conclusion.

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THE GEOPOLITICAL MAPS OF THE ROMANIAN IDENTITY (II)

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Abstract. *Civilization also means a self-imposed order, as part of personal liberty. Personal liberty implies the awareness of the Other, as a person and as space. The Other is not merely an individual, it is a collective actor. That is, order is about mapping space – the shape of the collective Other. The highest social function of mapping space is culture. The specialized institution/instrument of culture to deal with the social order by mapping the actual, the past, and the possible social space is the Atlas, with its historical, sociological, anthropological, etc. maps. Culture offers people space awareness, that is, the ability to know the meaning of space and a sense of personal and collective belonging. The most obvious instrument for doing so is the Atlas. Here I will present some geopolitical maps regarding the Romanian Ethnic Space structured under three categories: ethnic evolution, geopolitical pressures on the Romanian space and the significant-densities of the Aromanians to the south of the Danube. Part Two will represent some of the most significant maps by Simion Mehedinți – the founder of modern Romanian geography and a forefather of geopolitics.*

Keywords. Geopolitics, Geohistory, Romanian Ethnic Space, Aromanians, Significant-Density Theory, Maps.

1. Golopenția's social function of geopolitics

The former three cartographic groups stressed the importance of thinking geopolitically in foreign policy, and, in the subtext, the importance of geopolitics at the level of public thinking. Anton Golopenția is the one to make the theory of what we name the socialization of geopolitics, of the importance and process of geopolitical education for the nation (a civilized people). Here we will present some of Mehedinți's maps. Most of them have no explanations as such, only indirect ones, or not at all. Therefore, explanations are extracted by us from the analysis of the text.

The socialization of Geopolitics is the situational awareness education of the people. It is a byproduct of the "cultural personality" process, which stresses the importance of attaining the personal potential by aiming at the highest values. Nationhood is based on ethnicity, shared values and mostly on collective action based situational awareness.

The two instruments for socializing geopolitics are the Atlas (historical, geographical...) and Encyclopedia made from a Romanian perspective. These two are to place the individual in the national kinship (*neam*) and into life and world. In the following, we will extract the cartographic information from Simion Mehedinți

2. Maps (axes) of the Romanian space

The façades – strategic openings, fostering the nation-building process are internal and external. For instance, the Black Sea façade means "freedom and light" (Mehedinți, 1943: 163) and it is the natural attraction-driving force of the people living close to it (ibidem). The Mountains are the internal seeds of nation formation, and the Danube is the "axis" of historical maturation and social circulation, "the most political river of Europe" (Mehedinți, 1943: 47) and "the most historical" (Mehedinți, 1943: 70). The internal façades are the Carpathians (the "Carpathian Fortress"), the Forest, the Danube, the Black Sea – and the Straits ("the external façade").



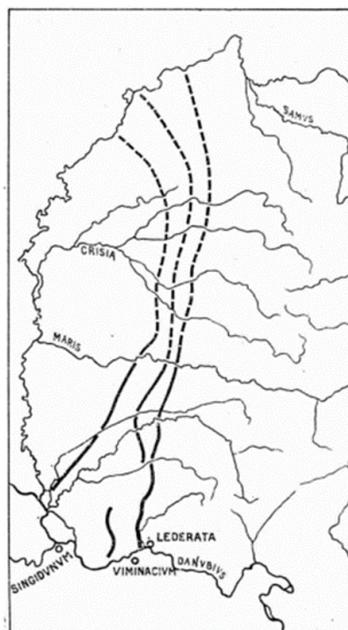
Map 1 Internal Geopolitical façades of Romania as pillars of nationhood (Mehediți, 1943: 34)

The Communication Axis of the Romanian Space. Romania as the Connector between West and East, via the Constantinople railroad, from Berlin to the Persian Gulf, via the Black Sea. The second axis is Ploiești to Cernăuți toward Berlin.



Map 2 Romania as a Connector between West and East via Black Sea (Mehediți, 1943: 134)

The ancient axes of defense of Transylvania’s inland, including Limes Dacicus at the Someș’ Gates. The Carpathians are at the Eastern border of Europe, but they had to be defended to the Someș Gate against the barbarians – in Antiquity, and against the nowadays Hungarian irredentism. The Mehediți’s map draws into attention the Carol fortified line built in the 30s of the 20th century, much less developed than the Roman limes presented here.



Lin. de apărare spre apus

Map 3 Defending lines of Transylvania (from Antiquity to the present days). (see Mehedinți, 1943: 135).

3. Danube and the Sea maps

Danube is organically linked to the Black Sea by lines of communication and by the continuous current, which reaches far away toward the Straits. “Unfortunately, Romanians approached [organizing] the Danube’s mouth exactly when big fatality started to be showing up. A physical one, another ethnographic and an historical-geographic one stemmed from the international trade to the Pontus Euxinus and brought it into decay.”¹ (Mehedinți, 1943: 74)

It is about silting of the shores, and, on the other hand, the Tatars and Turkish pressure – their occupation of Dobruja in the 15th century.

Danube has two geopolitical functions, one internal and the other external. The internal function of the Danube is its catalytic role in unifying Romania – “The territorial integration of the Romanian State, in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, was determined, to a great extent, by the Danube.”² (Mehedinți, 1943: 152).

Danube’s geopolitical functions were chocked by the Ottoman’s occupation of the right-side strategic points, called raia, for almost four centuries (for instance Giurgiu’s and Turnu’s raia were established in 1417, Brăila’s in 1540, Tighina’s in 1538³), ending in 1829, with the Adrianopol’s Treaty.

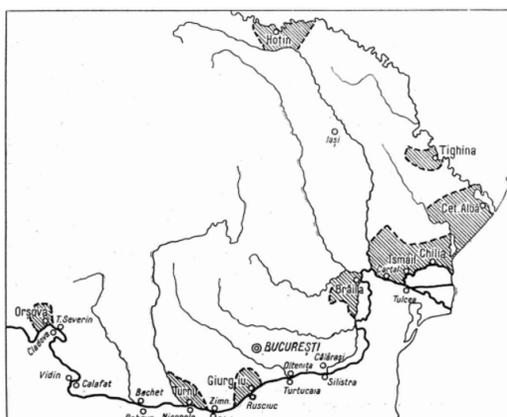
¹ “Din nefericire, Românii s-au apropiat de gurile Dunării, tocmai în momentul când o mare fatalitate se ivește în istoria acestei mări. Un factor fizic, unul etnografic și altul istorico-geografic stăvillesc comerțul internațional din Pontul Euxin și aruncă marea aceasta în paragină.”

² „Întregirea teritorială a Statului Român, în secolul al XIX-lea și la începutul secolului al XX-lea, a fost determinată, în cea mai mare parte, de Dunăre.”

³ *Atlas istoric*, harta „54. Țările Române (mijlocul sec. XIV – mijlocul sec. XVI)”, harta „68. Țările Române de la jumătatea sec. XVI – începutul sec. XVIII.”



Map 4 Mouth of the Danube are connected to the Straits (see Mehedinți, 1943: 151). Observe the correct name: Bessarabia – given to the southern part of right-side province of Moldavia.



Map 5 Figure 5 Ottoman raia on the Romanian territory (15-19 centuries) (see Mehedinți, 1943: 153)

The external geopolitical function is linked to the Danube Delta: “... the mouths of the Danube are the vital point of the Rhine-Danube diagonal (... the "eighth sea" of Europe) ...” (Mehedinți, 1943: 267).

The second stage of the geopolitical rebirth of Romania after Adrianople’s Treaty of 1829, is the partial return of Bessarabia to Moldova Principality, the three districts (*judete*): Cahul, Bolgrad and Ismail, after the Russian defeat by the Allies (Great Britain, France, Turkey and Sardinia) concluded in 1856 with the Treaty of Paris: “regaining the Danube’s mouth in 1856, after the Russian defeat in Crimea, was a great step forward to the economic and political development of the Romanians.”¹ (Mehedinți, 1943: 78)

¹ “... redobândirea gurilor Dunării la 1856, după înfrângerea rușilor în Crimeea, era un mare pas în dezvoltarea economică și politică a neamului românesc.”



Ținutul de la gurile Dunării.

Map 6 The Old, the New Dobruja (the Cadrilater) and the three Bessarabian districts recovered in 1856 (Mehedinți, 1943: 154)

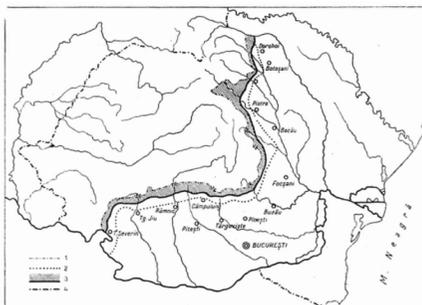
The third stage is the Union of Moldavia and Walachia – 1859 – the Principality of Romania. The fourth is the independence in 1878, when Romania gains access to the Black Sea geopolitical façade. The fifth and the last is the recovery of the old region of Cadrilater from Bulgaria, in 1913. Most of these geopolitical stages were part of the Eastern Question – the strategic management of the legacy of the crumbling Ottoman Empire: “The fifth step was the border rectification in 1913. The Bulgarians, arriving in Ceatalgea [during the first Balkan war, near Constantinople], were not only satisfied with Constantinople and the Bosphorus, but also wanted the whole coast to the Danube delta i.e., all of Romania by the sea! The imperialism fever is disturbing To defend ourselves against these threats, it was necessary to straighten the border in Deliorman [Cadrilater], bringing it closer to the line proposed to us in 1878 [by the Russians] and which we could not accept because it had been presented to us as a kind of exchange with the three Bessarabian counties [Cahul, Ismail, Bolgrad], torn again by the Russians. Here, then, is how the Danube contributed to the territorial integration of the Romanian State until 1913

1.” (Mehedinți, 1943: 156).

The Danube and Black Sea are part of the Ponto-Baltic isthmus geopolitical complex (Mehedinți, 1943: 87), the Eastern frontier of Europe.

The collapse of the Danube line and the loss of Dobruja in May 1918 (Treaty of Bucharest). Just before the accomplishment of the Great Romania by the end of 1918, by October 1917, the fall of Russia in the hand of Bolsheviks left Romania to fight alone with Germany, Austro-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey.

¹ „Al cincilea pas a fost rectificarea de graniță din 1913. Bulgarii, ajunși la Ceatalgea [primul război balcanic], nu se mulțumeau numai cu Constantinople și cu Bosforul, ci voiau și tot țărmul până la delta Dunării, adică toată România de lângă mare! Frigurile imperialismului sunt turburătoare Pentru a ne apăra față de aceste amenințări, a fost nevoie de îndreptarea graniței în Deliorman [Cadrilater], apropiind-o de linia care ne fusese propusă la 1878 și pe care n-o putusem accepta, fiindcă ne fusese prezentată ca un fel de schimb cu cele trei județe basarabene [Cahul, Ismail, Bolgrad], smulse iarăși de ruși. Iată, așadar, în ce fel Dunărea a ajutat întregirea teritorială a Statului românesc până la 1913.”



1 — Granița în 1914; 2 — Granița cerută în tratatul din 1918; 3 — Granița redusă prin tratative; 4 — Granița la încheierea păcii.

Map 7 The frontiers of Romania after the Peace Treaty of Bucharest Apr/May 1918 (Mehediți, 1943: 156). The blue dotted line is added by us to represent the Mehediți's missing Eastern new frontier (the loss of Dobruja)

Kirițescu's map is a more graphic view of the same geo-strategic situation of Romania, in May 1918: the loss of three of the four internal façades – the Carpathians, the Danube, and the Black Sea. The Black Sea loss was only somehow compensated by the Unification of Bessarabia, on the 27th of March, the same year, since no other port compared with Constanța's capabilities. (see Kirițescu, 1922: 427-433)

SCHIȚA XIX.



Map 8 "Mutilation of Romania after the Treaty of Bucharest" – Constantin Kirițescu, vol II, 1943: 427. Black area designates the territory lost by the Kingdom of Romania: the Carpathian main heights, Dobruja, Turnu Severin, important parts of Moldavia.

4. Maps of Transylvania

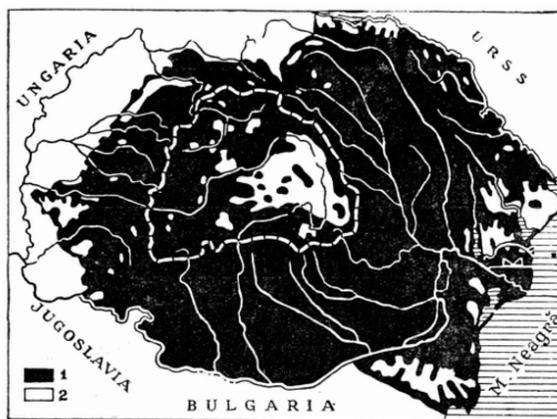
There are several lines of discussion regarding the mapping of Transylvania, emphasizing the:

1. Centrality, considering its:

- a. relationship to the Carpathian Fortress concept, to which it is inextricably related;
- b. role in accommodating various foreign invasions;
- c. political contribution to developing the Romanian statehood in the Middle Ages;
- d. cultural weight in forming the Romanian society.

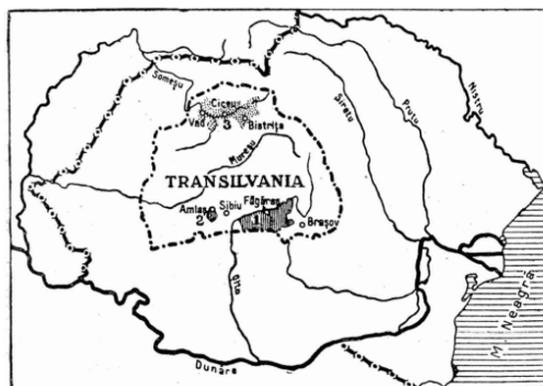
1. Role in defending Europe, being part to the geopolitical complex: The Ponto-Baltic Isthmus

2. Peripheral position during the Hungarian domination (1867) vs. its flourishing after the reintegration in the Romanian State 1918.



1. Românii dintre hotarele regatului.—2. Insule de străini.

Map 11 Transylvania - the core of Romania
(Mehediți, 1943: 186)

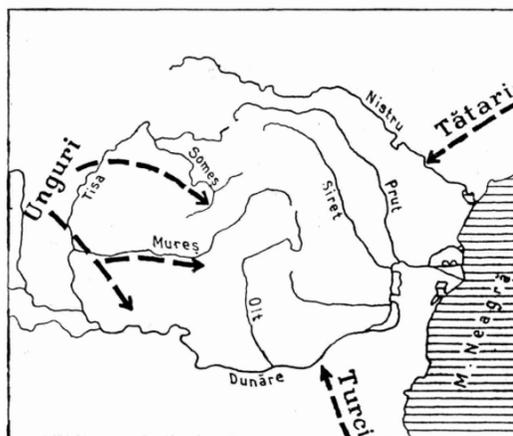


1. Ducatul Făgărașului. — 2. Ducatul Amlășului. — 3. Posesiunile domnilor moldoveni în Transilvania.

Map 12 Transylvania is deeply interlinked to the statehood of Moldavia and Wallachia (here are represented their respective possessions in the Middle Ages). (Mehediți, 1943: 246)

c. Meanwhile, the internal function of the Carpathian fortress is to bridge and concentrate the Romanian ethnicity. Mehediți insists that the Carpathians are not the spine, as George Vâlsan and others wrote, but the bridge of the Romanian space. Mehediți could spare this theoretical detour by understanding that *spine* is the same with *axis*, which means also *bridging*. (Mehediți, 1943: 148)¹ The same function is related to cultural function. It seems that the seed of the Romanian language is around the Abrud area, in the Apuseni Mountains (Mehediți, 1943: 211).

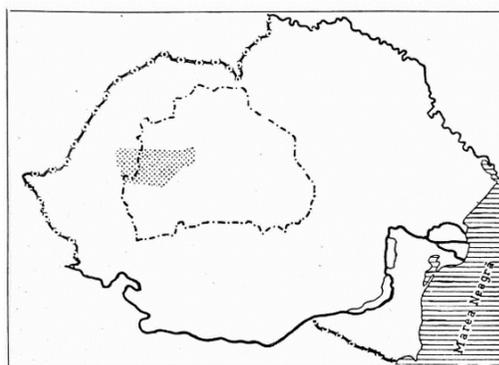
¹ "Carpații n-au fost zidul despărțitor, ... n-au fost «coloană vertebrală»...; din contra, plaiurile lor, atât de icumenice, și forma rotundă a «cetății» ... au servit ca mijloc de concentrare și unificare..."



Asediul cetății carpatice.

Map 13 Invasions of Romanian lands in the Middle Ages: Hungarians, Tatars and Turks (Mehediñi, 1943: 233)

d. This is linked to the ethnopolitical function, of resisting the invaders and, thus in forming the Romanians. (Mehediñi, 1943: 252)



Sămburele graiului românesc în apusul țării.

Map 14 The core of the Romanian language (Mehediñi, 1943: 211)

2. Defending Europe as part of the Ponto-Baltic Isthmus

The Carpathian Fortress is part of a larger geopolitical and geo-historical complex called the Ponto-Baltic isthmus. (Mehediñi, 1943: 274) We remember that the Isthmus is „the frontier between Asia and Europe” (Mehediñi, 1943: 272)¹, which stretches from the Baltic Sea to the Dardanelles passing by the Nistru and the Romanian Black Sea, separating two worlds, „utterly different” (Mehediñi, 1943: 306)².

¹ „Frumtaria din lungul Nistrului este vecină cu istmul ponto-baltic, hotarul dintre Asia și Europa. ...”

² „Astfel stând lucrurile, situația vecinilor Rusiei e clară: La istmul ponto-baltic stau față în față două lumi, cu două concepții diametral opuse. Spre răsărit, slavii mongolizați și câștigați pentru dictatură proletară; la apus, e lumea germano-latină care leagă individul de națiune, ca tot istoric (de aci și numele de regim «totalitar»), dar lasă omului în sânul familiei și al națiunii, apoi națiunii ca parte a omenirii, toată puțința de a-și desvolta personalitatea și a contribui cu partea sa de originalitate la progresul omenirii.”



Linia Stalin pe istmul ponto-baltic.

Map 15 Ponto-Baltic Isthmus (Mehedinti, 1943: 284)

Considering that Russia, especially the Soviet Russia, is the biggest threat to the European-order, Mehedinti thinks of the Isthmus as a defensive complex against this gigantic pressure. There are only two major physical obstacles in front of it: the Pripet marshlands, and the Carpathians – the Transylvanian Fortress.

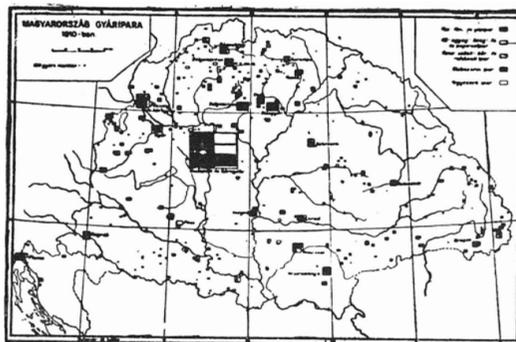
3. From the periphery of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire (1867) to the core of Romanian modern state (1918)

There are several reasons for the Transylvania's weakness during the Austro-Hungarian domination.

1. The natural configuration of the territory: naturally oriented toward Romania and excentrated against Hungary since the old times:

„The Tisza meadow forms ... a swampy border, which had great economic consequences. In this area, the connections between the Carpathian fortress and Hungary were few. Only at two points (Szeged and Solnoc) was crossing the Tisza a little easier. ... This explains the truly remarkable historical fact that Transylvania did not feel connected to the center of Hungary, that is, to the capital Buda-Pesta. ... And how foreign Transylvania was to the rest of Hungary is seen not only from the number and orientation of roads, but also from a decisive

fact, when it comes to trade relations: the fact that Transylvania had another currency, other weights and other units of measure than Hungary.”¹



Harta lui Szekfű, arătând distribuția industriei mari în 1910.

Map 16 The unequal distribution of heavy industry in former Austro-Hungarian Empire (Mehedinți, 1943: 222)

2. The chauvinist economic policies: “The Hungarians, wanting to make Budapest a great industrial center, used all the authority of the State to favor the Hungarian element.

«In 1906, the Hungarian parliament passed a law making the creation of any industrial enterprise conditional on the prior approval of that ministry. According to Undersecretary of State Sztérényi, the purpose of this law was to employ Hungarian workers, by setting up factories, provided that 75% of the workers were Hungarian.

The chauvinist goal was partly achieved, but the price of this experience was the ruin of Transylvanian industry ... [In 1910] Of 2643 industrial enterprises, with more than 20 workers, Budapest comprised 1296, or almost half, while Transylvania once very prosperous, it was left with only 382. Thus, Transylvania, whose creative economic individuality had facilitated it to have a preponderant influence in the Danube countries, was reduced by the Hungarian governments, to the role of vassal province, as a mere sender of raw materials for large industry centralized around Budapest. » [Moga, L'orientation économique de la Transylvanie, Rev. of Transylvanie, 1940, pp. 96 and 101, respectively]” (Mehedinți, 1943: 221).²

The result was a massive dwindling of industry in Transylvania which, in 1910 had only 382 companies. After 1918, since Transylvania was organically integrated into the Great Romania. If in 1920, Transylvania's heavy industry used 167.388 H.P and the number of

¹ „Lunca Tisei formează ... un hotar mlăștinos, care a avut mari urmări economice. În zona aceasta legăturile dintre cetatea carpatică și Ungaria erau puține. Numai în două puncte (Seghedin și Solnoc) trecerea peste Tisa era ceva mai ușoară. ... Așa se explică faptul istoric în adevăr remarcabil că Transilvania nu s-a simțit legată de centrul Ungariei, adică de capitala Buda-Pesta. ... Iar cât de străină era Transilvania de restul Ungariei se vede nu numai din numărul și orientarea drumurilor, dar și dintr-un fapt decisiv, când e vorba de relații comerciale: de faptul că Transilvania avea altă monedă, alte greutateși și alte unități de măsuri decât Ungaria.” (Mehedinți, 1943: 217-218)

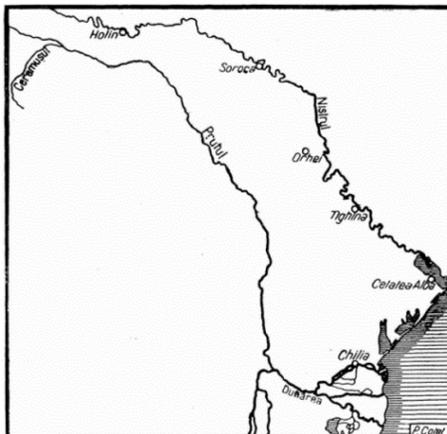
² „Ungurii, voind să facă din Budapesta un mare centru industrial, au întrebuințat toată autoritatea Statului, ca să favorizeze elementul maghiar. «În 1906, parlamentul unguresc a votat o lege care subordona crearea oricărei întreprinderi industriale de aprobarea prealabilă a ministerului respectiv. După mărturisirea Subsecretarului de Stat Sztérényi, scopul acestei legi era să dea de lucru muncitorilor de rasă maghiară, prin înființarea de fabrici» cu condiția ca 75% din lucrători să fie Maghiari.

Scopul șovinist a fost în parte atins, dar prețul acestei experiențe a fost ruina industriei din Transilvania ... [La 1910] Din 2643 de întreprinderi industriale, având mai mult de 20 lucrători, Budapesta cuprindea 1296, adică aproape jumătate, pe când Transilvania odinioară atât de înfloritoare, rămăsese numai cu 382. «Astfel, Transilvania, a cărei individualitate economică creatoare îi înlesnise să aibă o influență preponderantă în țările dunărene, a fost redusă de guvernele ungurești, la rol de provincie vasală, de simplă trimitătoare de materii prime pentru industria mare centralizată împrejurul Budapestei.» [din Moga, L'orientation économique de la Transylvanie, Rev. de Transylvanie, 1940, p. 96, respectiv 101]”

companies was 231, in 1937 there were 568 companies and 207.157 HP. (Mehedinți, 1943: 219-223).

5. Maps of Bessarabia - the eastern border. The Ponto-Baltic Isthmus

Bessarabia is the “Eastern hinge of Moldavia and the Eastern border of Europe” (Mehedinți, 268)¹.



Cea mai înaintată linie de cetăți europene în fața stepei.

Map 17 Bessarabia – the Eastern frontier of the Great Romania, a component of the Ponto-Baltic

The Nistru river is part of the Ponto-Baltic Isthmus, “the frontier between Asia and Europe...” (Mehedinți, 287)².

At the same time, Bessarabia is integrated into the complex of surroundings of the Carpathians – “Europe’s most advanced bastion to the east...” (Mehedinți, 287)³.

In behavioral terms, the Nistru river is the border between the sedentary and nomadic populations (idem, 273).



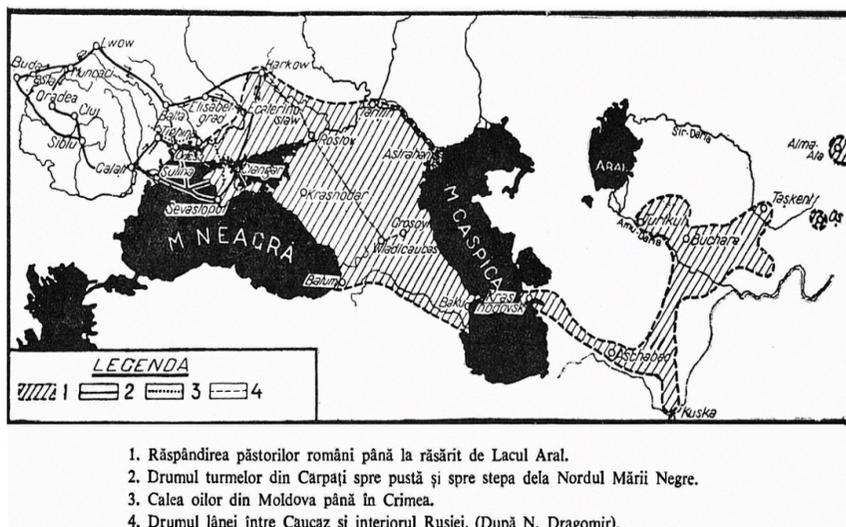
Linia Stalin pe istmul ponto-baltic.

Map 18 Ponto-Baltic Isthmus (Mehedinți, 1943: 284). Bessarabia is its southernmost pillar.

¹ „Marginea răsăriteană a Moldovei este hotarul de răsărit al Europei.”

² „Frunteria din lungul Nistrului este vecină cu istmul ponto-baltic, hotarul dintre Asia și Europa. ...”

³ „... cetatea carpatică și împrejurimile ei formează bastionul cel mai înaintat al Europei spre răsărit ...”



Map 19 Bessarabia was the springboard-contact between the Romanian territory and Eurasia through flocks of sheep. (Mehedinți, 1943: 278)

Bessarabia was central to the Eastern transhumance from the Carpathian Fortress toward the Caspian Sea, as Wallachia was toward the Balkans. Transhumance vs. nomadism is the main cultural and behavioral difference Romanians and other peoples from Eurasia: “From the Carpathians, herds descended to the Black Sea in Dobrogea, to the Crimea and even further from the Sea of Azov to the Caucasus, the Caspian and the Transcaspien steppes. Just as superlative nomadism is an Asian phenomenon, so too, transhumance in the big style is a European phenomenon, namely Romanian. ... I only revealed its exceptional dimensions ... to see how agricultural colonization across the Dniester was supported by a pastoral movement in the same direction. Thus, a kind of Moldovan “brand” was created there.” (Mehedinți, 1943: 279)¹

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3. Mehedinți, S. (1943), *Opere complete*. Vol. 1. Bucharest: Fundația Regală pentru Literatură și Artă.
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¹ “Din Carpați, turmele coborau până la Marea Neagră în Dobrogea, până în Crimeea și chiar mai departe de Marea Azovului, spre Caucaz, Caspică și stepele transcaspiene. După cum nomadismul superlativ este un fenomen asiatic, tot așa, transhumanța în stil mare este un fenomen european și anume românesc. ...; am relevat doar dimensiunile sale excepționale ... spre a vedea cum colonizarea agricolă dincolo de Nistru a fost sprijinită și de o mișcare pastorală în aceeași direcție. Astfel s-a creat acolo un soi de «marcă» moldoveană.”