



NEW PERSPECTIVES IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Turkey in its quest for more power over Balkans

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Abstract

Turkey is currently a major player in the Balkans, as it is continuously trying to expand its sphere of influence. As part of its foreign policy strategy, Turkey is developing common interests in the region. European Union has changed its policy toward Turkey and, at the same time, Turkey constantly challenges Europe. As history tells us, Balkans have been battleground for clashes of different powers. Turkey is increasing becoming a powerful actor that has to be taken into consideration, even though in the Balkan area it is showing certain limits. The qualitative method is used in the study, referring to secondary data, as it relies on various critical journals entailing Turkish politics, foreign policy and international relations. The study focuses on two main areas: economic relationships and religious influence, through which Turkey is trying to project power into the Balkans. The paper tries to test the hypothesis that economic struggles and Balkans orientation toward European Union have prevented Turkey in fully achieving their goal.

Key words: *major player, foreign policy strategy, geo-economy, religion, influence*

Turkey a major player in the region

Turkey's goal is to become a preeminent regional power not only in the Middle East (Nehme, 2009). It is a mistake, however, to think of Turkey as an exclusively Middle Eastern power. The modern Turkish Republic is the heir to the Ottoman Empire, which at its height ruled a vast expanse of territory stretching west across North Africa, as far north into Europe as Vienna, east into the Caucasus, and south throughout much of the Arab world. The heart of Turkey's power is its core strategic territory and its influence radiates from this strategic location.

Davutoglu (2001) laid out its "Strategic Depth" doctrine regarding expanding influence in Balkans, and since then Turkey's quest for power in Balkans has continued. Nowadays we see Ankara's involvement in Bosnian issues, its rapprochement with Serbia, the influx of Turkish investors, and the popularity of Turkish TV soap operas across the region or use of religion. Such activism is part of the so-called "Neo-Ottomanism", which fuels fears that today's Turkey is at best inspired by imperial nostalgia to gain a strong position in the region. According to Bechev (2012), "Turkey has been linked to the Balkans: in its security strategy and diplomacy, geography, demography, and political imaginaire" (f. 4).

It should be noted that the post-Cold War world system created opportunities for Turkey to exert influence in countries that were previously unavailable - the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East. Turkey's position was further strengthened following the events of September 11, when, under this new order, the West considered Turkey an indispensable ally in the fight against Islamic terrorism. Despite this Western approach, in 2002 an Islamist-rooted government took power in Turkey. In the new context, Turkey takes another role in foreign policy. This study will analyze two main dimensions Turkey uses to exert power in Balkans: economy and religion. The new vision for foreign policy emphasizes the incarnation of strategic depth towards well-defined goals - in political, economic and cultural terms. In his speech on Europe Day, 8 May 2009, Davutoglu (2009) reflects these goals. First, according to the cultural perspective, it represents a country through which historical cultural mobility is integrated in universal culture:

The first is the cultural aspect. We need to put to the forefront the consolidating rather than the dividing nature of cultures. We imagine a Europe that communicates well with the whole accumulation of human culture that unifies the principle of plurality with "common good" and "ethics of coexistence".

To reinforce Davutoglu's words, in a much stronger tone, "Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım portrayed Erdoğan as a descendant of a well-regarded Ottoman-

era sultan” (Peterson, 2017). A local official of Justice and Development Party (AKP) controversially posted on his Facebook page that Erdoğan “will be the Caliph of the Presidency,” and that in 2023 – when the Turkish republic reaches its 100th birthday – “Allah will finish the light.” (Ibid). Actually, other officials say that Turkey is in the process of restoring its historical Ottoman influence as a leader of the Islamic world. Those references point to a moderate, inclusive form of Islam, but also authoritarian rule in the form of a sultan.

Secondly, in the above speech, Davutoglu (2009), according to the economic perspective, claims that Turkey deserves to be amongst the superpowers:

Second dimension of our vision for Turkey is related to the economy. Again, as Turkey we want to maintain our ambition to rank as one of the most powerful economies of the world with our powerful human resources, with a new understanding of technological revolution, science, and project of sustainable economic development. This geography cannot maintain weak economies. Such an economy entails instability as well as distrust in this region. Being aware of this, in the period ahead we hope that Turkey will rank among the top ten economies of the world.

To understand Turkey’s power, Friedman (2012) lists the powers of the future in the famous book “The Next 100 Years”, he notes:

Then there is Turkey, currently the seventeenth-largest economy in the world. Historically, when a major Islamic empire has emerged, it has been dominated by the Turks. The Ottomans collapsed at the end of World War I, leaving modern Turkey in its wake. But Turkey is a stable platform in the midst of chaos. The Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Arab world to the south are all unstable. As Turkey’s power grows—and its economy and military are already the most powerful in the region—so will Turkish influence (f. 7).

Methodology

This is a social research and the method of data used was secondary methodologies of data collection. It involved the use of secondary sources, i.e. collecting information and data that could be used for this research. While carrying out the research, emphasis was to look for data about the foreign policies of Davutoglu, how he influenced their implementation in Turkey and how is TFP is working in Balkans.

While carrying out the library research, reliance was on books published about the Turkish foreign policies. Furthermore, there was a need of looking at the profile of the authors before using the published books. Materials relied on were ones published by academics with experience in addressing Turkish foreign policies.

Research Question / Hypothesis

This paper tries to answer the question: Are economic and religious dimensions contributing to the success of Turkish Foreign Policy objectives in Balkans?

The hypothesis of this study is: Economic struggles and Balkans orientation toward European Union have prevented Turkey in fully achieving their goal of projecting their power in Balkans.

Theory of International Relations

While doing the research, constructivism is the theory helping in testing the hypothesis. Constructivism is the claim that important aspects of international relations are historically and socially constructed, instead of the inevitable consequences of human nature or other essential characteristics of world politics (Jackson, P & Nexon, M, 2002).

Constructivists create the necessary spaces for the identity and interests of international actors to take a central place in the theorization of international relations. In this context, now that actors are not simply governed by the imperatives of a self-help system, their identities and interests become important in analyzing the behaviour of these actors. Taking into account the nature of the international system, constructivists see such identities and interests by not being objectively based on material forces, but as being the result of ideas and the social construction of such ideas. In other words, the meanings of ideas, objects, and actors are set on the basis of social interaction (Ibid). In this sense the historic legacy takes priority.

Many authors (Bulent, Aras, Friedman, etc.) point out that Islam is the foundation of AKP's policy. Using the parameters - geography, history, population and culture - Turkey applies soft power. Rather than judging them as a barrier, which has happened in its Kemalist past, Turkish policymakers have turned them into strategic assets. Thus, the new Turkish public diplomacy has been built to spread the soft power of the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus, but also beyond. It seems Turkey has become more confident in overcoming the fears of the past by building a new identity in international relations.

To illustrate the above-mentioned concept of constructivism, when cognitive maps are outlined, using explanations from critical geopolitics, Davutoglu mentions the collective memory or what is commonly referred to as common heritage. In this context, Davutoglu (2001) states that "the analysis of the sphere of international relations, without penetrating the historical depth, is similar to the psychological analysis when it does not take into account the data on a person's

memory” (p.551). Thus, a foreign policy perspective, without considering historical assets and geographic depth, would not be compatible with Turkey’s geography.

Referring to Cohen (2016), constructivism has precedence in the Davutoglu’s thinking. First, Davutoglu (2001) has emphasized that Islamism and history are important in creating solidarity or friendship between different civilizations and cultures. He stresses that “the best way to ensure that interaction between cultures is positive is communication among international organizations. . . and that the role of culture and history is of great importance in improving relations between nations” (Cohen, 5). Second, constructivists argue that states’ interests are not determined by power, but by identities built during a long process of socialization. Unlike realism, according to Wendt (1999), “it is not the hard power that promotes international relations but the power of ideas” (p. 8). And third, another element - reflected in the outlying principles drafted by Davutoglu - is the priority given to the soft power in relation to the hard power, and according to Cohen (2016), “power in Davutoglu’s thinking involves not only realistic transitional aspects but also social and civil identity, as these factors further stimulate a nation’s ability to add power and influence to other actors” (p. 7).

How does Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP) works in Balkans

Since the AKP came to power, Turkey has adopted new principles in forming foreign policy. This new foreign policy now operates within a conceptual framework formulated by Ahmet Davutoglu, based on principles such as balance between security and democracy, zero problem policy toward Turkey’s neighbors, developing relations with the neighboring regions and beyond, rhythmic diplomacy, and multidimensional foreign policy.

In this framework of TFP, Aras & Fidan (2009) explain this change by referring to the notion of geographic imagination, which defines “cognitive maps of political elites and thus paves the way for labelling regions . . . and provides a framework for assumptions and representations for policymakers” (p. 196). From this perspective, Turkey, as it has increased contacts with neighboring countries through political, economic and cultural mechanisms, has reduced conflicting perceptions of the past. Turkey is reinterpreting its international position through a new foreign policy vision.

“Strategic depth” is essentially based on the geopolitical and historical analysis of Turkey’s international position. As Davutoglu (2010) notes, the concept is a “reinterpretation of Turkey’s history and geography in line with the new international context” (p. 430). In this context, the “Strategic Depth” analysis is essential to understanding the current agenda of Turkish foreign policy. According

to Kirisci (2009), “the meaning of the book derives from. . . introducing the concept of Strategic Depth as a factor that should characterize Turkish foreign policy “ (p. 36).

“Strategic Depth” is the guide of Turkish foreign policy. Based on this guide, geography takes on Turkey a very important role as much as culture and history. The strategic location and historical heritage of Turkish geography enables Turkey to engage in all the processes and geopolitical developments of the regions surrounding it. This circumstance makes it a geographic center - one of Davutoglu’s basic concepts. One of them is the Nearby Land Basin which includes three regions related to Turkey with land borders: the Balkan Peninsula, the Middle East and the Caucasus.

Based on this premise, this basin directly impacts on the formulation of Turkish foreign policy. Davutoglu (2001) gives extraordinary importance to this area as it states that “Turkey should not make the mistakes of the past. . . in the alienation of this basin” (p. 157). As Turkey tends to become an economic superpower, it is also trying to expand its influence in these regions.

It is commonly known that the Balkans represent the Turkish bridge to the West, and Turkey aims to use this bridge not only to exert its influence in this area, but also to establish a relationship with the West. Turkey’s goals are clear and in the case of the Balkans there is a double purpose: influence in the region and other opportunities to Europe because “an Anatolian country that has no impact on Balkan developments . . . neither can maintain the integrity on this sensitive geopolitical field and nor can be opened to the world” (Davutoglu, 2001: 157).

Then, in his analysis of the strategic depth, Davutoglu (2002) protects Turkish “imperialist” interests, calling Muslim populations “Ottoman remnants”. He adds that “particularly two countries (Bosnia and Albania), where Muslims, the natural allies of Turkey, have a Muslim majority, have expressed the will to turn this historic experience based on Ottoman legacy into a natural alliance. Meanwhile, Turkish and Muslim minorities in Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Sandzak, Kosovo and Romania are important elements of Turkish politics in the Balkans “ (p.161).

Between Davutoglu’s lines there is the tendency for hegemony. It seems that Davutoglu has secured the influence in Albania as he worries about Russia’s neutralization in the region and maintaining the equilibrium with the US. He also worries about the countries over which Turkey really has influence when proposing the preparation of a plan. “. . . internal security in the Balkans would equilibrate the Russian factor in the area as well as the preparation of a framework plan would be necessary to guarantee the internal security and territorial integrity of Albania, Bosnia and Macedonia. . . “ (Davutoglu, 2001: 162).

Economic relations

Turkey's economic role in the Western Balkans has been somewhat successful in achieving economic relations. In fulfilling "No Problem with Neighbors" principle, Turkey has been focused on normalizing and intensifying cultural, political and economic ties with neighboring countries, including Albania and other Balkan countries. Therefore, relations with the Balkans countries have improved considerably. In this sense, promoting economic integration and diplomacy as a way of solving problems has helped raise Turkey's profile as soft power.

Factors driving Turkish tendency to invest in Albania's economy are common history, geographic proximity and Turkey's growing economic influence. On the Albanian part, the government of Albania has defined Turkey as a strategic partner, along with Italy, Greece and Austria - the so-called four-angle Albanian foreign policy.

In 2012, trade between the two countries was estimated at \$ 400 million. Turkey has increased its investments that have already reached over a billion dollars. Albania is not yet integrated into EU structures due to problems with law enforcement and corruption. This situation creates a tendency to find support in other countries. As Likmeta (2010) says, Albania finds the "rescuer in the former imperial ruler" (f. 3). However, it should be noted that there were over 160 bilateral agreements between Turkey and Albania in various areas of cooperation, including agriculture, tourism, national archives, environment, education, defense, energy, trade and the economy. Turkey regards Albania as a key strategic player in establishing peaceful co-existence and stability in the Balkans, and also supports Albania's integration into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions (Pawel, 2010: 12), while still had leverage on such structures.

Considering the whole Balkans countries, economic relationships should be the major path for Turkey to create the leverage it aims. And yet Turkey's relative economic success for much of the 2000s has *not* been translated into a large increase in Turkey's economic presence in the Balkans. This is mainly because the Turkish economy has stalled in the last decade or so (Srivastava, 2016).

Turkey was a success story before the 2008 financial crisis, with GDP growth reaching a peak of 9.4 percent in 2004. The effects of the financial crisis hit Turkey hard, but Turkey rebounded quickly, posting a 9.2 percent growth rate in 2010 and 8.8 percent growth in 2011. Since then, however, Turkey's economy has slowed: GDP growth has oscillated between 2 and 4 percent since 2012, and that slowdown has been accompanied by diminished potential for Turkey to improve its trade position with Balkan countries. (Ibid)

At present, apart from internal problems and the conflict in Syria, the Turkish government's biggest challenge is the increasing economic prosperity and repairing the damage to investor confidence caused by domestic political instability. Erdogan and the AKP have centralized much power as via constitutional amendments or by shutting down media organizations – tactics they have already employed – but without economic prosperity, this power will be far from secure (Toskoz, 2017).

The underlying weakness in the Turkish economy has manifested in the Balkans by the limited extent to which Turkey has managed to increase the value of its regional trading relationships. Despite Turkish officials' flurries of high-level visits to the Balkans, in part because of the government's concentrated push to solidify economic relationships in the region, Turkey has failed to take a significant position in trade with most Balkan countries, let alone a dominant one. This is illustrated by the chart below.

Investment in the Balkans

The media has made much of expanding Turkish influence in the Balkan region. The statistics regarding the level of investment, however, do not bear this out. The latest data on outgoing Turkish foreign direct investment (FDI) is from 2012, but it paints an underwhelming picture of Turkish investments.

Both in absolute terms and a percentage of Turkey's overall FDI, Turkish investment in the Balkans is limited. According to the data above, countries like Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania each accounted for less than 1 percent of Turkey's outgoing FDI. It is also unlikely that Turkey's FDI behavior has changed markedly since 2012 (Toskoz, 2017).

Here, too, Turkey's commitment to the Balkans is relatively underwhelming in terms of the type and quality of projects it has undertaken and the financial value of TİKA's activities in Balkan countries. In its 2014 annual report, TİKA reported a budget of \$168 million. The largest Balkan recipient of this aid by far was Bosnia and Herzegovina, with 7.35 percent of the TİKA budget that year. In absolute terms, that is just under \$12 million – insufficient to create influence or power in a foreign country. Furthermore, most of the other Balkan countries only received 2 percent or less of TİKA's budget in 2014, according to the annual report (TIKA, 2014).

Religious influence

Religion, as another dimension Turkey employs to connect with the Balkans in the strategic thinking of Davutoglu (2001), is part of geo-culture, a term used to describe how human beings think about their culture in order to explain basic assumptions

and the meanings upon which human nature is built. Moreover, “geoculture is a set of norms, which are widely accepted in a certain social environment. It is closely related to a political process and the factors constituting geocultural norms are derived from political aspects (Wallerstein, 1991: 15).

Religion has been one of the most debatable issues in social sciences for years (Davutoglu, 2001). Even the definition of religion has raised several questions and hence there are several approaches concerning the definitions of religion in different fields. Furthermore, the discipline of international relations has also become interested in the role of the religion in politics especially since the early 1990s (Ibid). The debate on this issue has increased in the post-Cold War world. From the rise of fundamentalist religious movements to the increasing role of religion in politics, the secularization theories, which had assumed the decline of the religion in social life thanks to the advance of modernization, had to be revised (Venetis, 2015).

However, since 2005, the AKP’s foreign policy has changed to multi-dimensional foreign policy which is described by Öniş and Yılmaz as “soft EuroAsianism” strategy (Venetis, 2015). Yet, according to them, “soft Euro-Asianism” does not just apply to the former Soviet Union region and the Middle East, but to all of Turkey’s neighbors.

Religion is also a potential lever that could allow Turkey to exercise power in the Balkans. As the map below shows, Kosovo and Albania both have Muslim-majority populations. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bulgaria have sizable Muslim populations as well. This map, however, obscures the significance of the Muslim population in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This country is a combination of two distinct entities: Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The population of the former is roughly 80 percent Orthodox Christian, and the latter is about 70 percent Muslim, which means in practical terms that at least part of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be considered a Muslim-majority country like Kosovo or Albania.

The fact that Turkey is a Muslim country creates a natural shared interest between Turkey and the Balkans’ Muslim states. Turkey even committed a brigade of troops to the region in the 1990s, within the context of U.N. and NATO intervention in the Balkans. This was in large measure to support the Muslim populations in places like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Albania. Any time EU seems to distance itself from these countries, and the situation is destabilized, Turkey is ready to intervene and gain influence in the region.

However, these relationships will also be a barrier to any strong assertion of Turkish power in the region. While there is a sizable Muslim population in the Balkans, there are also many Orthodox Christians and ethnic groups of various stripes that will be hostile to any Turkish move (Srivastava, 2016). Although Turkey

and Serbia have managed to work together in terms of their economic relationship, they are on opposite ends of the Kosovo issue. More broadly, a large swath of the Balkans would not welcome a return of Turkish influence in the region - contrary to what Davutoglu says: Turkey is a natural actor in this region (Tozkoz, 2017).

Furthermore, Turkish Islam was pushed in the Balkans during recent decades as a tool of Turkish influence. The Gulen movement, a one-time ally of the Turkish government, established schools and social services throughout the Balkans with the government's blessing and encouragement. Since then, there has been a break between Fethullah Gulen, a predominant Turkish preacher and politician, and the AKP government. Erdoğan has blamed Gülen for being one of the masterminds behind the attempted coup last year. As a result, Turkey has established a new organization called the Maarif Foundation to take the place of Gulen's organization. The Turkish government is pressuring countries to relinquish control of Gulen offices and schools to the Maarif Foundation. Turkish government officials have also brought up the issue of expelling Gülen teachers and closing their schools in countries like Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. And while many countries have already acquiesced to the Turkish government's demands, the Balkans' Muslim countries have not. They have made public pronouncements supporting the Erdoğan government, but the Maarif Foundation's head noted in an interview with Turkey's Daily Sabah that "talks with Balkan countries like Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina were continuing" (Stockholm Center for Freedom, 2017), without the expected success.

From this perspective, ostracizing Gulen may have created political confusion in some of these Balkan countries rather than developing an affinity for the Turkish brand of Islam. The basic religious doctrine is the same between AKP's version of Islam and Gulen's. The difference between AKP and Gülen versions is political. Still, there is a limit to how much Turkey can play the Muslim card in these countries, both due to the Gulen-AKP fracture and because the countries have created their own versions of Islam. There will also be an inevitable backlash from the region's non-Muslim countries if Turkey pushes the issue too hard (Ibid).

The role of Turkish Islamic networks in Albania

After the Cold War, an important role in exercising the cultural dimension in the Western Balkans, including Albania, has been given to the introduction of Turkish Islamic networks in the region. This role - has been fulfilled by the "Diyanet" - Turkish Presidency for Religious Issues and non-governmental networks, such as neo-Sufi communities and charitable Islamic foundations. Though their influence may be limited, it is natural that these networks have a long-lasting influence on

Islam in the Balkans by fulfilling their goal: strengthening ties between Turkey and these countries.

Since 1924, Diyanet was perceived as an instrument to create national identity based on Pan-turkism, Islamic religious tradition and the secular state system, as it is emphasized in the Constitution of Turkish Republic: “ The Presidency of Religious Affairs, which is within the general administration, shall exercise its duties prescribed in its particular law, in accordance with the principles of secularism, removed from all political views and ideas, and aiming at national solidarity and integrity” (Article 136). However, referring to the AKP foreign policy, it can be noted that Turkey is very interested in controlling Diyanet. Conservative AKP on one hand, and Diyanet, a Kemalist institution, do not find a common language in their intentions. But after 12 years in power, the AKP has worked to “introduce some state institutions under its umbrella, aiming for a strong control over the Kemalist-born Diyanet “(Axiarlis, 2014: p. 83).

Since the early 1990s, Diyanet has opened its own missions throughout the Balkans, aiming to support Turkish communities in the region, as well as to develop cooperation with Islamic institutions. The main task of Diyanet’s representatives is the selection of students to study theology in Turkey. Another aspect of Diyanet’s work is the translation and distribution of religious literature. Only 40,000 texts have been translated and distributed in Albania (Korkut, 2012: 117 - 123).

Turkish Islamic charity networks in the Western Balkans

A considerable number of Turkish Islamic charity organizations are also active in the Western Balkans, including Albania. Charitable institutions have a long tradition in Turkey. In Ottoman society, educational services, health and social services were provided mainly by religious foundations (vakifs). These foundations were nationalized in 1924, but the institution’s Islamic of vakif provided a model for pro-Islamist civil society in the 1980s and 1990s (Barnes, 2012: 7).

“Suleymans”, a community established in the ‘20s as a reaction to the closure of schools, have their roots in Sufism. Currently they are influential in some European countries. They teach Balkan Muslims the Turkish tradition Sunni-Hanafi and protect them from the influence of neo-Salafism, which they consider a deviation from Islam. They have a very well organized network in the Western Balkans, with dormitories and schools where the Koran is studied throughout the region through a number of different foundations. Suleymans have been active in Albania since 1996, and run nine dormitories in eight different locations across the country. They have been active in Kosovo, Macedonia and Bosnia since the early 2000s. They are also aiming to expand their activities and open new dormitories in many regions. (Barnes, 2012: 8-12).

“AMHV” - “Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi” Foundation (AMHV) is associated with Erenkoy community, which nowadays is one of the most influential communities. At first this foundation dealt mainly with social services, particularly distribution of aid to the poor. Now the network has extended itself beyond Turkey. The bulk of its financial resources come from religious Turkish businessmen, many of them originating from the Balkans who want to support their Muslim supporters in the Balkans (Barnes, 2012: 14-17). AMHV started its activity in Kosovo in the late 1990s to provide humanitarian assistance after the war. It set up an association, “Istanbul International Brotherhood and Solidarity” (IIBS) which has opened a permanent office in Pristina in order to coordinate humanitarian activities in the region. Since then, AMHV has been developing its activities in a similar way as in Turkey, building dormitories and running Koran courses. IIBS coordinator in Pristina explains that their main goal is to ensure that the Turkish tradition remains the dominant form of Sunni Islam in the Balkans. Currently they manage dormitories and madrasas in Kosovo. AMHV is also active in Albania - with the madrasa in Shkodra - and constantly tries to extend its activities. (Barnes, 2012: 44).

IHH - İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı (Foundation for humanitarian aid and human rights) was founded in 1993 by German branch Milli Gorus (Milli Gorus - National Vision is one of the leading Turkish organizations in Europe) and supported by the Refah Party (outlawed in 1998). Understandably it is now close to the AKP and to reformist wing of Milli Gorus. IHH has helped - during the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo - through humanitarian aid for refugees in Albania, Macedonia, Sandzak and Bosnia. Besides humanitarian aid, IHH also emphasizes the need to provide spiritual support to Muslims in the Balkans, especially in areas where there is Christian missionary activities. In 2006, IHH distributed 10,000 Korans in Albania and Kosovo, and 5,000 books for children in Tirana. Although IHH is now focusing on other countries like Palestine and Lebanon, it still close ties with Islamic institutions and Muslim communities in the Western Balkans (Barnes, 2012: 71).

Besides their humanitarian activities, these charities have played an important role in establishing contacts between the pro-Islamic civil society in Turkey and Muslim and Islamic communities and institutions in Western Balkans - exercising in this way public diplomacy so pronounced by the new spirit of today’s Turkish foreign policy.

With these projects, undertaken by state-financed institutions and the co-called non-profit foundations, Turkey has not been able to dictate its policies in such domains.

Conclusion

The Balkan region is still not one of Turkey's main partners. For example, European Union countries have much stronger economic ties with Turkey than with Balkan countries. However, Turkey is still attempting to extend its tentacles in the Balkans. We talk about Albania as a potential economic partner of Turkey, but, for example, Serbia ranks among the countries with the greatest intensity of economic cooperation. Therefore, in this context, it is to be noted that Turkey, despite its potential, has not yet strongly intervened economically in Balkans.

Encouraged by importance of the Balkans, the new Turkish foreign policy run by the AKP has repositioned Turkey as a regional power in the Balkans. As explained above, Turkey is increasingly using geo-economic values such as foreign direct investment, signing free trade agreements and other forms of economic support to create a political influence.

Turkey continues to use economics not only to strengthen political influence but also to maintain stability in the region from whose destabilization Serbia and Greece could benefit. In this context, Turkey continues to use its strength for economic expansion. The small Balkans countries should know their position and orientation, as Turkey has not used all its potential Turkey has some distinct economic advantages relative to neighboring powers, but the next few years will be tough for Turkey's economy. That will limit its ability to project power in the short term.

According to Friedman (2011), Turkey will rise as a regional power. In this paper, we discussed what that rise will mean in terms of Turkey's ability to project power into the Balkans. We conclude that while Turkey will seek to increase power in the Balkans because of its imperatives, doing so will be difficult in the near-to-medium term. Concerns about Turkey's trade and investment positions in the Balkans are overstated, and while Turkey shares natural interests with Muslim-majority countries in the Balkans, there are inherent limits to how far Turkey can use this to its advantage.

Europe is becoming wary of Turkey's power; at the same time, Turkey is increasingly unafraid of challenging Europe. The Balkans have always been a battleground for outside powers. In the current state of affairs, Turkey's influence is rising, but there are limits to its power and it will face some of those limits in the Balkans.

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Starting All Over. The politics of protest and the struggle for democratic consolidation in Albania

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Abstract

Experimenting with democracy in Albania has reached a quarter of a century, displaying that democratization is a complex project that begins with the transition but does not always end in consolidation. Therefore, novel approaches and theories that elucidate what occurred after the early transition as well as during it are considered necessary. In western democracies, one of the broadly accepted and well-practised forms of citizen engagement is protest participation. A plethora of authors deem that protest participation is a pivotal activity for the formation of a democratic public as well as an instrument for fostering democratic consolidation. Consequently, as on the one hand, we perceive an upsurge of protest activities in the western countries, hence, on the other, we see a gradual deterioration of protest participation in a Post-Communist country like Albania. Local studies on this topic are sporadic and not as much of participation trends is known of Post-Communist Albanian citizens. While, other sources of participation studies, which stems from western countries tend to construct their analyses based on broad formal questionnaires without analyzing the contrast between protest in democracies and protest in authoritarian regimes. Thus, in this article, we aim to shed light on the correlation between protest participation and state mobilization strategies. More concretely, how the state undertakes to mobilize measures to promote or prevent social movements activities? The answer to the aforesaid question will be in heart of this paper.

Keywords: *protest, Albania, state mobilization, democratization, Social movement*

Introduction

Following the 2009 election in Albania, the defeated Socialist Party radicalized its interaction with the government by contesting the legitimacy of the elections as well as its overall policy. These contentions reached its peak on 21 January 2011, when protesters engaged in a riot against the Prime Minister's edifice. In this confrontation, four protesters lost their life and dozens of others were injured. Police forces as well count several injures among their forces. The government called for a coup d'état while the opposition blamed the government for killing innocent unarmed protesters. The events of 21 January confirmed once again the idea that right after little more than two decades of the fall of the communist regime, the experiment with democracy did not promise for any long-term success. This episode well captured the spirit of politics in contemporary Albania that mix elements of political competition with strong authoritarianism.

Theoretical background

Understanding routes of protest in Albania seem to be a key point issue for future democratic consolidation. Therefore, in this paper, our goal is to explore protest patterns in contemporary Albania, in particular at how people express themselves through acts of protest in the public space. We look at how Albanians organize collectively, what this means for their political action and what these actions mean for the character of the political system in which they live. In a nutshell, we will look at Albanian politics and think about how political institutions undertake to mobilize measures to promote or rather prevent social movements activities. The goal here is to explain the dynamics that underlie protest patterns.

Classic and modern authors stressed the idea of the unique value of citizens participation in public activities. Whereas, contemporary theorists ranging from participatory democrats (Pateman, 1970; Barber, 1984, Möckli 1994; Schiller 2002; Steiner 2012; Mansbridge-Parkinson, 2012;) to democratic realists (Schumpeter, 1952; Sartori, 1987) share the same opinion about citizen participation as a central characteristic of democracy. While according to Inglehart and Welzel (2007), protest participation is one of the prerequisites that an effective democracy to take place.

Protest movements in Albania begin to reflect and influence mainstream politics since the system collapsed. To understand Albania's political system and it's social and political world we need to pay attention to the protest. In a normative

perspective, a protest plays a significant part in the cultural, civil and political life of citizens. It encourages the spread of engaged and informed citizens and aims at strengthening democracy by enabling direct participation in public affairs. (see Inglehart and Welzel, 2007; Welzel, 2007). Protest enable individuals and groups to express dissent and grievances, to share views and opinions, to expose flaws in governance and to publicly demand that the authorities rectify problems and are accountable for their actions. (see Kaase and Marsh, 1979; Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart and Catterberg, 2002).

Remarkably the interaction between protest and the democratic consolidation in post-communist Albania has not been in the focus of internal researchers. However, if we look at domestic post-communist studies we see that political orientation of citizens in areas such as nationalism, authoritarianism, and political culture have earlier been studied. To name a few see for example Feraj 1999, 2011; Sulstarova, 2003, 2006; Biberaj 2011; Kocani 2004, 2008, 2012; Çullhaj 2017. While the phenomenon of protest as important as it remains unanalyzed from domestic scholars.

The protest is a strategy employed by those who are relatively powerless. Michael Lipsky defined it as “a mode of political action oriented toward objection to one or more policies or conditions, characterized by showmanship or display of an unconventional nature, and undertaken to obtain rewards from political or economic systems while working within the systems”. Furthermore he specify his definition by stating that; “if you have substantial political or financial clout, it is more common to work through the system to express your views (writing letters, giving campaign contributions, and talking to legislators); those without substantial resources resort to rallies, demonstrations, boycotts, civil disobedience, or other forms of direct action” (Lipsky, 1968, pp. 1144-1158)

Data from several studies show that those citizens who are willing to engage in protest behaviour accept the basic democratic values to a higher degree. Political tolerance is one of such values, which denotes that respondents allow the full legal rights of citizenship to groups they themselves dislike (see Sullivan et al., 1982). Accordingly, political tolerance is the “willingness to grant rights and freedoms to enemies” (Guérin et al., 2004: 371), (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). Therefore, we can infer that protest activities play a crucial role in the process of democratic consolidation in post-communist Albania.

The democratization process in the post-Communist Albania involved massive demonstrations, students strikes, and other forms of collective protest as the regime began to open up to political expression and competition. However, demobilization of movement that was out of state control characterized the period after Communism in Albania. In the old communist fashion, the state institutionalize politics as a hard to die legacy. In other words, highly repressive

closed regimes first liberalized and then democratized, protest levels rose and then fell as the state still falls back in its old fashion activity as an all-controlling inhibitor apparatus.

Methodological Approach

This paper draws on qualitative methods employing an interpretive analysis of the state of citizens' protest participation and its effect on the process of democratic consolidation. In process of this analysis, we evaluate as proper to avoid complex debates about concepts definitions and the uses and misuses of methods, but, focusing on clarification of what has really happened in the country, and which of the existing theories is helpful in explaining the complexities of these developments. The paper starts with a brief presentation of a conceptual framework, followed by in-depth analyses of the country's experience with protest actions as one of the prerequisites toward democratic consolidation, as well as the role of other actor in this endeavour. However, from a standard methodological viewpoint the question what causes what could be addressed as follows: how the state undertakes to mobilize measures to promote or prevent social movements activities? In this whole perspective, the question of what is the independent variable here can also be better formulated: both the state and social movements have to be considered as independent and dependent variables (interchangeable status) to oversee more precisely what causes what.

Defining Albania's regime. From Externally Hybrid to internally Authoritarian

The main premise of this paper is to explain that the nature of the regime in Albania has an intertwined nature. Today most leaders give up to non-democratic norms of legitimation and deliberate liberal democracy without fully adopting its practices. States, in which authoritarian control coexists with legal competition for political office, are classified as hybrid regimes. (Diamond, 2002). According to Democracy index of 2017, Albania is characterized as a hybrid regime based on externally broad parameters of evaluation. Despite this fact, within the last decade, Albania's domestic environment bears a resemblance to an autocratic regime, when the state itself or state-sponsored organizations dominates the field looking to monopolize mobilization, lowering participation and competition in all levels. Consequently, protest levels stay low and rare. Those that do ensue has the propensity to escalate in direct actions or violence.

In this paper, our line of reasoning covers Albania's domestic political environment of which at least some legitimate and public political competition coexists with an organizational and institutional playing field that renders this competition unfair. We argue that within Albania, protests are likely to be manoeuvred by state strategies. The Focus on this variable can elucidate the rapid shift of Albania from its path toward a flawed democracy to an autocratic regime.

In the following, we look at protest as the independent variable, namely how politics and protest have interacted to produce the contemporary, state-of-the-art authoritarian regime in Albania.

Democracy's state-of-the-art in Post-Communist Albania

From the time when Sophocles' Antigone rebelled against her King Creon, by defending the honour of her brother, revolt toward the authority has become one of the people's peaceful political means of stating dissent. (Butler, 2000) Uprisings against authority occurred in Albania throughout history but, with the installation of the Communist regime, Albanians political culture orientation shifted toward isolation. The politics of violence, slanted towards anyone that dare to challenge regimes political power, was the veiled political culture that Albanian citizens internalized along those years. Consequently, if we want to categorize current Albanians' political culture in relation to attitudes towards authority, it classifies as a 'submissive one' which means unquestioned and unlimited subjection to those who are in power.

Consequently, it can be said that communism led to the preservation of the notion of strong state, but it defined its functions in terms of the welfare of the entire community. Liberal democratic values as tolerance and trust were almost non-existent in communist Albania. Distrust of political institutions and fellow citizens and intolerance towards different views prevailed during the communist period. (Rose, 1994, pp. 18-30_ In the terminology of the civic culture approach, there was mostly a subject culture which has characterized Albanian citizens. However, there were some participant elements in communist political culture, such as high-level popular participation in facade elections, as well as forced 'public activity' to mobilize the socialization process, save for when the system collapsed such attitudes vanished without delay.

Therefore, as I stated elsewhere, from an ontological perspective, the legacy of the communist regime destroyed any precondition for the internalization of democratic values among Albanians in the abstract sense, let alone as a political system. (Çullhaj, 2017)



However, due to the long systemic oppression exercised by the communist regime, mobilization in Albania reached its peak between 1990 and 1992. Citizens, workers, students were marching, striking and hunger-striking in pursuit of freedom and democracy dominated the bulk of protests back in the 90s. In the March 1991 parliamentary elections, the Democratic Party failed to win the majority in parliament. In the early parliamentary elections of March 22, 1992, the Democratic Party won the absolute majority of seats in parliament. It governed until 1997. During this period, the Democratic Party's government conducted a series of reforms to liberalize the country, to build a free-market economy, to ensure rule of law, and to consolidate the democratic electoral system. At its opening to the outside world, Albania signed hundreds of cooperation agreements with European countries and beyond. This was the predominant way of thinking outside of Albania to evaluate Sali Berisha's era as one of the nascent democracy, marked by the common shortcomings that one would expect to see in a poor country. Whereas domestically the situation was quite different. Social tensions, political conflict, suppression of any kind of opposition voices and actions coupled with the financial breakdown in 1997, lead to the disintegration of the state. This kind of political style showed that tension and confusion were more suitable adjectives for the Berisha's era rather than common. Albania under Berisha was not a pluralistic immature-democracy, but a strong autocratic regime in which subordination rather than representation characterized all opposition forces. Such kind of political style followed pretty much all government since the system changed. The Democratic Party again appeared as the winner of the much contested 1996 parliamentary elections. The elections that followed the troubled year of 1997 gave power back to the Socialist Party, which tried to appease the political environment. The Socialist Party was reaffirmed in once more contested elections of 2001 failing in their democratization endeavours. A new change of government took place in 2005, the clear winner was the Democratic Party which was subsequently reaffirmed in the elections of 2009 yet contested. It was not in this way that Albanians thought that democracy was held to transpire. Three decades later that the system changed, it is not democracy that has triumphed in Albania but façade-autocratic-democracy.

After the events of 2011 that I pointed out at the introduction, which followed by the change of power in 2013 brought a new hope for Albanians. The triumph over the long-lasting transition and finally enter the road to the democratic consolidation. Citizens denounce with the vote the autocratic style of Sali Berisha, binding him to resign from party leader and to move into opposition. However, five years after the Socialist Party leader Edi Rama came into office, his political style activities seem to be far more problematic compared to his predecessor. As we earlier showed, Albania continued to organize elections but contestation concerning their outcomes always accompanied them. Opposition parties run and




win seats, but ostracism deliberation toward new forces outside the mainstream of the incumbent political-economical establishment expands. The opinions of the ruling groups dominate news and current affairs TV programs. Nowadays, there are no more critics of the government on television, because televisions owners are already part of the ruling group. Alternative media like online newspapers, blogs, social media, internet think tanks manage to construct a free Political debate, but the television remains the ultimate means of mass broadcasting, therefore the impact of the alternative media is in a second hand, mostly for young individuals who usually don't care about politics. Thus, Albania has become an atypical case of the hybrid-autocratic regime. Namely - externally displaying a hybrid political regime while internally an autocratic one, - where political competition is officially legal but heavily twisted by the strength of neo-autocratic all-controlling leaders. To put it with Diamond "the existence of formally democratic political institutions...masks the reality of authoritarian domination, provides the base for hybrid regimes" (Diamond, 2002: 24). Or as Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt insightfully put it:

Democratic backsliding today begins at the ballot box. The electoral road to breakdown is dangerously deceptive. With a classic coup d'état, as in Pinochet's Chile, the death of a democracy is immediate and evident to all. The presidential palace burns. The president is killed, imprisoned or shipped off into exile. The constitution is suspended or scrapped. On the electoral road, none of these things happen. There are no tanks in the streets. Constitutions and other nominally democratic institutions remain in place. People still vote. Elected autocrats maintain a veneer of democracy while eviscerating its substance. Many government efforts to subvert democracy are "legal", in the sense that they are approved by the legislature or accepted by the courts. They may even be portrayed as efforts to improve democracy – making the judiciary more efficient, combating corruption or cleaning up the electoral process. Newspapers still publish but are bought off or bullied into self-censorship. Citizens continue to criticize the government but often find themselves facing tax or other legal troubles. This sows public confusion. People do not immediately realize what is happening. Many continue to believe they are living under a democracy. Because there is no single moment – no coup, declaration of martial law, or suspension of the constitution – in which the regime obviously "crosses the line" into dictatorship, nothing may set off society's alarm bells. Those who denounce government abuse may be dismissed as exaggerating or crying wolf. Democracy's erosion is, for many, almost imperceptible. (pp-5-6)

At present, in Albania, the problem is not with extremist demagogues because they have been neutralized by the bipartisanship of the Albanian electorate, which does not easily replace the traditional political orientation, despite how lucrative and touching the narrative of the demagogues is. But, with a new event that has not happened before, the promotion of candidates with criminal records that have further eroded the fragile democracy in Albania. As the above authors analyze,

from fear, opportunism and misconception for the triumphing at any cost of their political party.

Democracy Index (2015), argue that Hybrid regimes are nations where consequential irregularities exist in elections regularly preventing them from being fair and free. These nations commonly have governments that apply pressure on political opponents, non-independent judiciaries, and have widespread corruption, harassment and pressure placed on the media, anemic rule of law, and more pronounced faults than flawed democracies in the realms of underdeveloped political culture, low levels of participation in politics, and issues in the functioning of governance. For comparison purposes, the table below shows a full democracy like Norway a hybrid democracy like Albania and an authoritarian regime like Russia. Despite there are some net differences between Albania and Russia in several political realms, in the political participation section the values are almost equal which displays that Albania has not done much progress in this political feature, so imperative for a democratic consolidation.

Democracy Index 2017								
Rank	Country	Score	Electoral process and pluralism	Functioning of government	Political participation	Political culture	Civil liberties	Category
1	 Norway	9.87	10.00	9.64	10.00	10.00	9.71	Full democracy
77	 Albania	5.98	7.00	4.71	5.56	5.00	7.65	Hybrid regime
135	 Russia	3.17	2.17	1.79	5.00	2.50	4.41	Authoritarian

Listing by country is available on The Economist website <http://pages.eiu.com>

Managing Protest through State mobilization strategies

Graeme B. Robertson in his book *The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes* argue that “hybrid regimes tend to feature hybrid protest in which the isolated, direct action style of protest that characterizes authoritarian regimes is mixed with the more symbolic protest patterns of democracies” (Robertson, 2011, p. 4) According to Robertson a lot of protest in hybrids is managed; that is, permitted, controlled,

and integrated into the broader political strategies of elites. Furthermore, within these kinds of regimes, variations in protest patterns are likely to be driven by three key variables: organizational ecology, state mobilization strategies, and elite competition. As important as they are the analyzes of each one of the above variables far exceed the possibilities of this paper. Consequently, we will limit our analyzes on the variable of the state mobilization strategies which in our opinion shed light on the reasons of the actual state of low levels of public participation as well as of the scarce levels of protest activities.

According to Robertson in contemporary authoritarian regime “competition in elections and on the streets means that contemporary authoritarians are likely to seek not just to repress opponents, but also to mobilize their own supporters. Consequently, in order to pass the political test election, provide the ability of the incumbents to mobilize large numbers of supporters on the streets will be crucial” (Robertson 2011, pp 32). On the other hand, Robertson states that the danger of allowing demonstrations of opposition strength on the streets is that it might signal to regime insiders the possibility that a challenge to incumbent rulers could succeed. In Albania, there are not examples of a successful overthrow of incumbent elites by a former regime. Except in the tumultuous year of 1997 caused by the pyramidal crises when the Socialist Party and other opposition forces took advantage from people’s desperation and a stubborn President who did not want to resign - calling for a mass mobilization which leads to almost a civil war and to a Pyro’s victory, inheriting a devastated country. In this case, street protests helped encourage a former Prime Minister and Socialist Party leader Fatos Nano, newly released from a political imprisoning, who revived his career by mounting a challenge to the incumbents. If we bring in in this analysis the events of 2011, in the post-communist collective memory of Albanians, protesting against the government remains a risky activity similar to the communist period. According to Robertson, rulers in hybrids are likely to resort to a variety of ways of repressing opposition demonstrations while in hybrid-autocrat regimes violence is still a final resort for both incumbents and opposition forces which eventually lead to a total passivity of individuals in political involvement.

Furthermore, Robertson argues that leaders in contemporary hybrids regimes have weaker tools for mobilizing support than their counterparts in totalitarian or closed authoritarian regimes. This is not the case in Albania’s reality, because even if it is not a closed authoritarian regime the leader still has that huge advantage of keeping a monopoly of political organization. In Robertson words, this monopoly was usually exercised in the context of socialist economies, which gave the state tremendous influence over flows of economic and financial resources. Albania today is not a socialist economy anymore, however, the state still controls more than a few strings in realms of employment, economic and financial resources. We



will briefly analyze this phenomenon by adding another variable to this scenario, namely, the state propaganda as another monopoly of political organization which on the long run turns to be the main one that influences all the other variables.

As stated earlier, with the coming into power of Edi Rama the internal political situation apparently changed for better in comparison to his predecessor Sali Berisha. Rama was more liberal in his political style than Berisha in relation to the contention concept, a political behaviour that promised for fostering democracy a step further. But this is not the case. Despite his liberal behaviour, Rama invested his political energy and state apparatus in constructing an all-controlling media to convey only his way of doing politics, silencing all opposite voices. Today, media in Albania is only able to act as a biased watchdog to those in power due to the control exercised through advertising industry and other interests for their owners. This control is exercised even upon the public television, which is legally required to provide coverage of public interest since it is funded by public taxes. But this television only bears the name 'public' because it is under the full control of any government in power, thus betraying its original mission. When the opposition party wins elections, the general director and employees are replaced with people loyal to the winning party, with the intention to pursue the political line of the winner. On the other hand, many other private Media count on financial resources in order to survive in the media market. Before Rama's era, the Media's environment was quite different. Those Media that were held reliable were associated either with Democratic Party or Socialist Party and when each one of them was in power Media were under their political influence. This was not an ideal situation, but at least we had an alternative view of the political situation, as well as critics towards government was possible. While, in Rama's era there are no more such divisions because media's reporting is influenced by the economic and political interests of their owners, interests, that are in the hands of the government. Consequently, the result is a hitched media environment that represents the interest of a single part, the government. Today there is no single media that play an active role in the public political debate. Independent news coverage or an independent political analysis is uncommon. The situation is so absurd as the Prime Minister has established his personal online television on Facebook, ERTV Edi Rama television and also two Facebook virtual newspapers "Good morning" and AMARCORD. The main critic on government come from online portals. One of them in a recent article argues that Rama has begun these forms of communication within what he calls 'co-governance with citizens', but in fact is a propaganda inventive, to make more noise than work. Rama, along with one or two ministers, is developing communication through a giant screen, which has cost over 100,000 euros and is used fairly throughout to make more shows than work. So, we are in the conditions when we have a cabinet closed in a box, like within ERTV, where the government successes trumpet. (lapsi.al/2018/04/16).

Today in Albania the possibility to organize exist but if you do not have any kind of support, whether political or economic the failure is guaranteed. According to Roberson in hybrid regimes the organization outside of the state is usually allowed, but then again, is this possibility exercisable in a capillary controlled political environment when any activity that dares to challenge Rama's political power is filtered through a biased media and subsequently captured and neutralized by state apparatus through means of economic or political 'seduction.' Those individuals or organization that refuse and resist such seductions are left in a mediatic obscurity and thus condemned to be politically dead.

Moreover, Robertson argues that contemporary hybrid regimes now run in market-oriented economies, which limits the extent to which the state can link participation in approved organizations with economic advantage, making it harder to mobilize supporters. In Albanian case this phenomenon is somehow equal to an autocratic regime when the state still has that kind of power to link participation with economic advantages, mobilizing a broader mass of supporters. Synthetically, in contrast to Robertson, the presence of an organizational monopoly and more state control over the economy have not reduced the extent to which economic and social advancement is tied to participation in state-approved organizations.

Today in Albania, anti-government protesters have been in some ways discouraged and exhausted, imprimis by their leader who has a different political agenda and secondly by the disregard that the government displayed towards their demands. In Albanian political environment, the general belief is that when the opposition forces that are somehow independent, well organized and enjoy enough funds does not succeed to address their demands, imagine how hard this endeavour turn to be for a modest organization. Rama created a political system in which competition is allowed but defeat is highly improbable and is beset with tensions. Today Albania bear a resemblance to a closed autocracy when contention is heavily repressed and public protests are sporadic and when they do take place shifts in violence. Actions are politically isolated, spontaneous and without the coordination of any organized social movement (Tilly 2004). In the following, I will briefly analyze social movements in Albania and their role in the democratization process.

Social Movements as a Democratization feature

According to Cohen and Arato (1992) civil society has two main democratic functions. First, associations and movements from within civil society cooperate, develop identities, offer the opportunity for participation and create networks of solidarity. Second, civil society organizations and associations try to influence or



reform the state. At times they also take on issues of corporate power and have pressed states to redress the power imbalance generated by capitalism. They also, increasingly, organize globally to promote social justice transnationally. Civil society thus has a dual function, offering a vision of a more participatory system and engaging in the public sphere to promote change. For Iris Marion Young (1999: 152), ‘the critical and oppositional functions of the public spheres of civil society perform irreplaceable functions for democracy’.

While, Charles Tilly in his book *Social Movement 1768-2004* state the idea that social movement has contributed to the evolution of democracy, but on the other hand is a democracy that creates the preconditions that a social movement could arise. More concretely, he has identified a broad correspondence between democratization and social movements. Social movements originated in the partial democratization that set British subjects and North-American colonists against their rulers during the eighteenth century. Across the nineteenth century, social movements generally flourished and spread where further democratization was occurring and receded when authoritarian regimes curtailed democracy. The pattern continued during the first and twenty-first century: the maps of full-fledged institutions and social movements overlap greatly.

Whereas, in communist states, Tilly argues that the destruction of centralized superstructure would rapidly open the way to social movements, which would then help construction of a democratic civil society. However, such explosion of social movements does not happen in post-communist Albania. Why so? In Tilly’s words “where democracy fell short, social movements remained sparse” (Tilly 2004, p.125). Consequently, the problem of such failure is with the quality of democracy that has been implemented in Albania rather than with social movement patterns.

To paraphrase Della Porta

If democratization promotes democracy via the broadening of citizens’ rights and the public accountability of ruling elites, most, but not all, social movements support democracy. In fact, in pushing for suffrage enlargement or the recognition of associational rights, social movements contribute to democratization – Gains in the democratization of state processes are perhaps the most important that social movements can influence and have the greatest systemic impacts (Della Porta 245).

Social movements are fundamentally political and are based on changes in the nature of the state itself and the state has to become involved in institutionalizing these claims. In post-communist Albania, such condition has not been a priority for the leaders as long as in old communist reminiscence their political power is a target and under challenge by the social movements. The activity of the later has been seen as power threatening thus leaders keep to destroying opportunities for action, imposing restrictions on movement activities thus leaving an empty

political environment. Consequently, social changes without the support of the state will not persist. In communist Albania, the party claimed to represent the general interests of the people. While in today's liberal democracy, political parties and interest associations claim to represent social groups and the people. The question that rises here is whether the state has created today the conditions for representation resembling classic conceptions of participatory democracy, a device for representing the underrepresented through social movement activity. We want to stress that a condition that is considered to limit social movement potential is followed by political leaders by weakening movements organizational structures. New movement organizations have not emerged during the democratization process and those few that arose have not survived state domination and the decline in mobilization was comprehensible. Social movements activities and their contribution to more participatory approaches have been diminished by autocrat leaders.

To conclude, the weak civil society and the strong state authority remained the definitive characteristics of Albanian political culture in the communist period. The strong party-state made the emergence of a viable civil society impossible. In addition, communism was to a great extent responsible for the creation of another important aspect of Albania's politics: autocratism.

Conclusion

Some observers have emphasized the authoritarian nature of Albanian leaders to illustrate elements of continuity in Albanian political culture. Along these years, political leaders seem to make a virtue out of rejecting Politics and Ideology towards an extreme political pragmatism, turning into anti-politics and their ascent to power has been based on virtual platforms lacking in substantive content. Perhaps, this is the main fact that confirms people's lackadaisical attitude and low level of participation toward Politics, as compared to the 1990s when they were seemingly acclaiming for real democracy. In this sense, is not the strong hand of Albanian leadership but is their particular emptiness as politicians that drive people to disengage from the Political process.

In Albania, the tradition of the strong leader also constrained the democratic impulse when in 1996 Berisha intensified the exercising of personalist rule of political power depending upon a 'presidential pyramid' in which the president is supported exclusively by personal appointees and is able to govern by presidential decree, bypassing parliament in the process. Along these years the introduction of the new constitution helped to prevent the concentration of power in a few hands and formally speaking it is written excellently but in practice, it has had



no effect on the reduction of the autocratic attitude of political leaders. Once in power, controlling everything remains their *modus operandi*; every independent institution must be under their control to consolidate power and to avoid criticism as well as accountability. In a situation when civil society is not existent or better said captured by political influence, democratization process is constantly under serious threat from the inability of the elite for self-restriction and critical reflection over their holistic control tendencies. (Çullhaj, 2017, pp. 103-104)

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Student perception comparison on learning methods based on thinking styles

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Abstract

Universities are always seeking new teaching methods. The object of their search is to discover and implement effective and efficient ways of teaching methodologies. Modern technology has had an influence in this area, and as a result new types of teaching are being developed nowadays, for example, the online and hybrid learning. Today, three teaching methods are universally applied in learning: traditional, online, and hybrid learning. In Albania, universities have begun to implement the elements of hybrid learning, such as LMS (Learning Management System). The application of different teaching methods, serves the purpose of a more effective transfer of knowledge among students. Because students can differ from each other. One element which can make them different, is their thinking style. The objective of this study is the analysis of student perception on learning methods based on thinking styles. The descriptive method and quantitative research are utilized for this paper. The research

instrument is the questionnaire, which was distributed online. The study sample consists of 190 students from Albanian universities. SPSS 20 and JASP-0.8.5.1 are used to analyze the data in the study. The study concluded that students have different perceptions on the hybrid learning. Students belonging to different thinking styles have different preferences with respect to the traditional learning, online learning and hybrid learning. There exist differences in perception on two statements on the hybrid learning and for one statement on the online learning.

Keywords: *perception, traditional learning, online learning, hybrid learning, thinking style*

Introduction

Technological developments frequently result in improvements and innovation in teaching methodology. Significant technological advances have an impact on the development of new teaching methods. New online and hybrid teaching methods can be used by anyone to study at anytimes. The advantages of these methods reside with the self-management of study time and ability to access it at any place (Fitzgerald & Li, 2015; Farkas, 2011). Study programs in the hybrid learning include a number of study hours completed on campus. Whereas in online study programs, about 80% - 100% of the program takes place online (Allen & Seaman, 2011). Contemporary teaching methodologies (online learning and hybrid learning) are regarded as most effective methods to be employed in the future by universities (Morris, 2010; Anderson, Boyles, & Rainie, 2012; Collopy & Arnold, 2009; Güzera & Canera, 2014; O'Malley & McCraw, 2001; Jasim, Sherbiny, & Guirguis, 2015; Ora, Sahatcija, & Ferhataj, 2018; Dziuban, Graham, & Picciano, 2014; Curran, 2008). Since students possess various characteristics, not all teaching methods deliver academic results with the same level of effectiveness. Students acquire knowledge with one of their preferred teaching methods. Such behaviour on the part of students is determined by their thinking style. Thinking style is one of the influencing factors in student academic performance (Sahatcija, Ora, & Ferhataj, 2017; Cano-García & Hughes, 2010; Bernardo, Zhang, & Callueng, 2010). The objective of this study is to analyze student perceptions of learning methods based on thinking styles.

Literature Review

Topics on education engage by and large a great many researchers (Collopy & Arnold, 2009; Güzera & Canera, 2014; Jasim, Sherbiny, & Guirguis, 2015; Sahatcija,



Ora, & Ferhataj, 2017; Ora, Sahatcija, & Ferhataj, 2018; Harris, Sklar, Amend, & Novalis-Marine, 2010). Interestingly, there has been an increase in research performance on such topics in recent times. Moreover, today's developments and advances make it possible for further research breakthroughs in the field. New teaching methods are a field that is both wide and significant with respect to research, and as such it encompasses additional extensive research. It has been concluded by various researchers that the hybrid learning is more effective than the online learning or traditional learning (Morris, 2010; Fitzgerald & Li, 2015). While other researchers conclude that the online learning along with the hybrid learning will be the future of teaching in universities (Güzera & Canera, 2014; Anderson, Boyles, & Rainie, 2012; Collopy & Arnold, 2009; Stockwell, Stockwell, Cennamo, & Elise, 2015). Such programs and courses are positively perceived by students. (O'Malley & McCraw, 2001; Jasim, Sherbiny, & Guirguis, 2015; Ora, Sahatcija, & Ferhataj, 2018). In Albania, universities have recently introduced elements of the hybrid learning in different study programs.

Meanwhile, in a research setting, thinking style is an even more complex matter. Researchers have difficulty in interpreting the complex functioning of the brain. Thinking style, by its own merit, is a highly intricate field, with respect to thoughts, actions, reasoning, and judgement and it clearly requires further study of the impacts on its various aspects. There exist a number of categories on thinking styles (Sternberg, 1997; Zhang & Sternberg, 2005; Gregorc, 2017), however this study utilizes the classification according to Gregorc (2017). He argues that thinking style is classified in four categories: concrete-sequential, concrete-random, abstract-sequential, abstract-random. The thinking style categories are created as a result of combinations of perceptual quality and ordering ability. Perceptual quality consists of abstract and concrete. Abstract quality infers the usage of intuition, imagination and conception of ideas that are unseen but perceived by an individual. Whereas the concrete quality makes use of the five senses in order to gather information that are based on tangible objects. Ordering ability is formed by sequential and random. Sequential is applied by persons who wish to receive information in a step-by-step manner or to execute actions in logical order. The opposite of sequential is random. Such individuals do not prefer to organize information logically, which occurs often. Therefore, these individuals will skip steps instead of organizing in a linear manner and will achieve their objectives. Individuals employing concrete-sequential, prefer to act in a logical order, predictable and fact-based, following directions, prefer structured environments, find it hard to work in groups and manage abstract ideas. Individuals who employ abstract sequential prefer listening to others, analyze matters in detail before making decisions, strong application of logic in solving solutions, yet do not prefer task repetition. Persons employing concrete random prefer risk, using intuition,

try various ways in solving a problem, yet lose effectiveness once limitations are placed, and have no other options. Individuals employing abstract random collaborative, have great communication abilities, tend to thrive in personalized environments but encounter difficulties in adapting to competing environments and cooperating with authoritarian types (Gregorc, 2017).

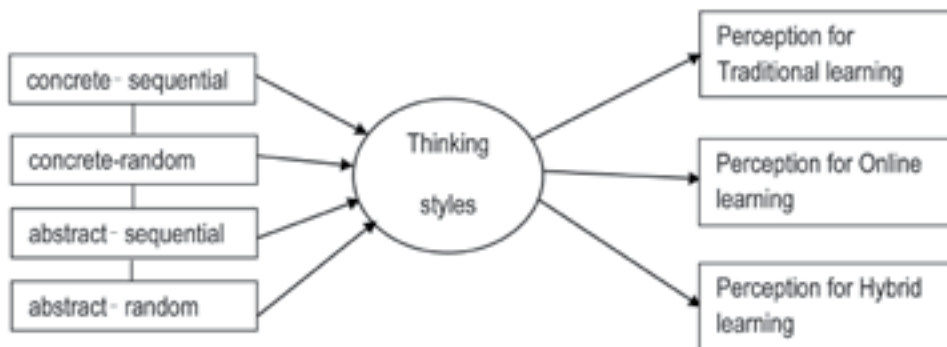
The research questions of the study are:

- (1) Are there differences in perception of the traditional learning between students who belong to different thinking styles?
- (2) Are there differences in perception of the online learning between students who belong to different thinking styles?
- (3) Are differences in perception of the hybrid learning between students who belong to different thinking styles?
- (4) Which element of the traditional learning is most preferred based on student classification according to thinking style?
- (5) Which element of the online learning is most preferred based on student classification according to thinking style?
- (6) Which element of the hybrid learning is most preferred based on student classification according to thinking style?

The research hypotheses of the study are:

- H1a: Students who belong to different thinking styles have the same perception of the traditional learning ($\alpha=0.05$).
- H1b: Students who belong to different thinking styles have the same perception of the online learning ($\alpha=0.05$).
- H1c: Students who belong to different thinking styles have the same perception of the hybrid learning ($\alpha=0.05$).

The literature review provides this conceptual model:

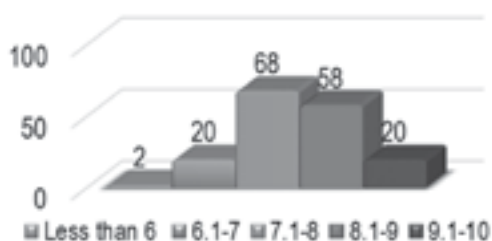


Methodology

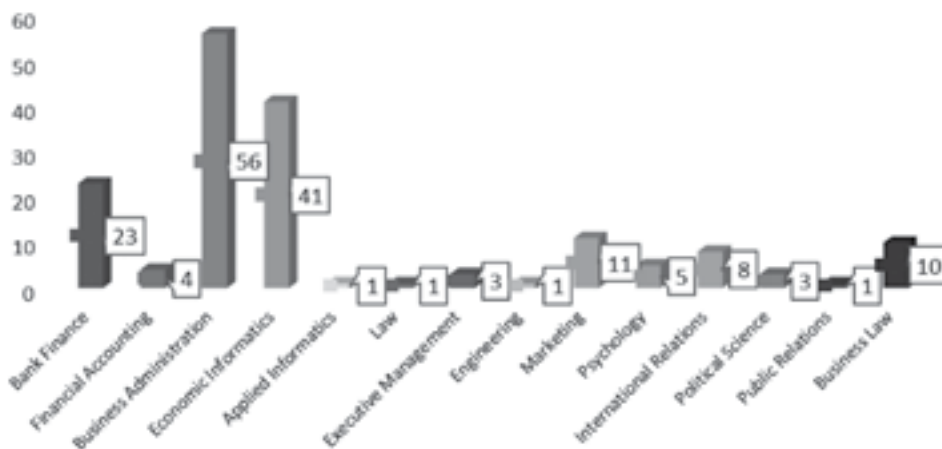
This study employs the descriptive method. Data collection was realized through quantitative research, where the research instrument utilized was the questionnaire (O'Malley & McCraw, 2001; Gregorc, 2017). The questionnaire is structured in three parts. The first part consists of questions on teaching methodology, the second part consists of questions on thinking style and the third part consists of demographic questions. The evaluation of questions was conducted through a five-point Likert-scale, with items ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”. The questionnaire was distributed online during the period March 2017 – June 2017. The study sample consists of 190 Albanian university students. Valid questionnaires for use in this study are 168. The rate of response return is 88%. The descriptive data of the participants in the study is shown in the following graphs.



Graph 1: Gender



Graph 2: Grade Average



Graph 3: Student Distribution According to Area of Study

The analysis of the data was conducted through JASP-0.8.5.1 and SPSS 20. The conclusions of the analysis shown on Table 1 establish the reliability coefficient Cronbach's $\alpha=0.889(>0.7)$. Therefore, the data collected through the questionnaires are valid and reliable and are further employed in the study.

TABLE 1: Reliability coefficient Cronbach's α

	Cronbach's α
scale	0.889
Note. Of the observations, 168 were used, 0 were excluded listwise, and 168 were provided. * minimum acceptable value 0.7.	

Results and Discussion

This part treats the empirical analysis of the findings of the study.

Are there differences in perception of the traditional learning between students who belong to different thinking styles?

Table 2 data show that there do not exist significant statistical differences in perception about the traditional learning between students who belong to different thinking styles. Sig values of the traditional method statements are $> \alpha=0.05$. The analysis concluded that there do not exist differences in perception of the traditional learning.

TABLE 2: One – Way ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Thinks the traditional learning is more effective	Between Groups	13.275	3	4.425	2.024	.113
	Within Groups	358.576	164	2.186		
	Total	371.851	167			
It is easier to study with the traditional learning	Between Groups	10.894	3	3.631	2.402	.070
	Within Groups	247.958	164	1.512		
	Total	258.851	167			

Prefers traditional study programs	Between Groups	.575	3	.192	.148	.931
	Within Groups	212.258	164	1.294		
	Total	212.833	167			
Information received in traditional study programs are equivalent to information received through the online learning and hybrid learning	Between Groups	1.548	3	.516	.464	.708
	Within Groups	182.446	164	1.112		
	Total	183.994	167			
Performs better with the traditional learning	Between Groups	1.151	3	.384	.283	.838
	Within Groups	222.254	164	1.355		
	Total	223.405	167			
Interested in taking more traditional courses	Between Groups	1.660	3	.553	.371	.774
	Within Groups	244.858	164	1.493		
	Total	246.518	167			
Thinks the traditional learning encourages student-professor academic discussion	Between Groups	3.444	3	1.148	.910	.437
	Within Groups	206.836	164	1.261		
	Total	210.280	167			
Prefers listening to in-class lectures	Between Groups	4.944	3	1.648	1.107	.348
	Within Groups	244.050	164	1.488		
	Total	248.994	167			

Are there differences in perception of the online learning between students who belong to different thinking styles?

Table 3 values show that value $\text{Sig}=0.038 < \alpha=0.05$. This means that there exist significant statistical differences between students who belong to different thinking styles regarding the statement that it is “easier to access learning materials online”. Whereas for the other statements on the online learning there do not exist significant statistical differences between students. The analysis concludes that students have different thoughts regarding solely one statement on the online learning.

TABLE 3: One – Way ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Thinks that the online learning is more effective	Between Groups	6.795	3	2.265	1.546	.205
	Within Groups	240.324	164	1.465		
	Total	247.119	167			
Thinks it is easier to study with the online learning	Between Groups	2.102	3	.701	.569	.636
	Within Groups	201.874	164	1.231		
	Total	203.976	167			
Prefers online study programs	Between Groups	2.514	3	.838	.713	.546
	Within Groups	192.766	164	1.175		
	Total	195.280	167			
Information received through online study programs are equivalent to information received through the hybrid learning and traditional learning	Between Groups	.357	3	.119	.112	.953
	Within Groups	174.352	164	1.063		
	Total	174.708	167			

Performs better in online courses	Between Groups	.996	3	.332	.283	.838
	Within Groups	192.284	164	1.172		
	Total	193.280	167			
Interested in taking more online courses	Between Groups	3.396	3	1.132	.837	.475
	Within Groups	221.723	164	1.352		
	Total	225.119	167			
It is easier to self-manage study in online courses	Between Groups	3.047	3	1.016	.813	.488
	Within Groups	204.899	164	1.249		
	Total	207.946	167			
More effective in time management with the online learning	Between Groups	6.943	3	2.314	2.232	.086
	Within Groups	170.051	164	1.037		
	Total	176.994	167			
Easier to access materials online	Between Groups	11.285	3	3.762	2.864	.038
	Within Groups	215.376	164	1.313		
	Total	226.661	167			

Are differences in perception of the hybrid learning between students who belong to different thinking styles?

Data analysis concludes the two statements on the hybrid learning have significant statistical differences between students who belong to different thinking styles (table 4). Differences exist only for the statements: “prefer hybrid study programs” (value Sig=0.022 < $\alpha=0.05$) and “it is easier to self-manage my studies in hybrid courses” (value Sig=0.037 < $\alpha=0.05$). There do not exist differences in perception, regarding the other statements, between students notwithstanding their thinking styles.

TABLE 4: One – Way ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Thinks the hybrid learning is more effective	Between Groups	11.520	3	3.840	2.071	.106
	Within Groups	304.099	164	1.854		
	Total	315.619	167			
Easier to study with the hybrid learning	Between Groups	9.618	3	3.206	2.347	.075
	Within Groups	224.001	164	1.366		
	Total	233.619	167			
Prefers hybrid study programs	Between Groups	11.670	3	3.890	3.293	.022
	Within Groups	193.735	164	1.181		
	Total	205.405	167			
Information received through hybrid study programs are equivalent with information received through the online learning and traditional learning	Between Groups	4.114	3	1.371	1.536	.207
	Within Groups	146.458	164	.893		
	Total	150.571	167			
Performs better through the hybrid learning	Between Groups	6.808	3	2.269	2.112	.101
	Within Groups	176.186	164	1.074		
	Total	182.994	167			

Interested in taking more hybrid courses	Between Groups	3.855	3	1.285	1.033	.380
	Within Groups	204.050	164	1.244		
	Total	207.905	167			
It is easier to self-manage study in hybrid courses	Between Groups	7.862	3	2.621	2.885	.037
	Within Groups	148.971	164	.908		
	Total	156.833	167			
More effective in time management with the hybrid learning	Between Groups	1.738	3	.579	.542	.654
	Within Groups	175.381	164	1.069		
	Total	177.119	167			
Easier to access materials in the hybrid course	Between Groups	7.075	3	2.358	2.002	.116
	Within Groups	193.205	164	1.178		
	Total	200.280	167			

Which element of the traditional learning is most preferred based on student classification according to thinking style?

Table 5 values show that students who belong to the concrete-sequential thinking style prefer most the element of attending auditorium lectures in the traditional learning (mean value = 4.49). Students who belong to the concrete random thinking style have a preference for the element of performance in the traditional learning (mean value = 4.59). Students who belong to the abstract- sequential thinking style prefer most the element of general output with the traditional learning (mean value = 4.24). Students who belong to the abstract-random thinking style prefer the element of productivity in the traditional learning (mean value = 4.35).

TABLE 5: One – Traditional learning evaluation

Table 5: One – Traditional learning evaluation				
		N	Mean	Std. Error
Effectiveness of the traditional learning	concrete-sequential	69	4.07	.163
	concrete random	34	3.32	.273
	abstract-sequential	34	3.88	.218
	abstract-random	31	3.97	.323
	Total	168	3.86	.115
Simplicity in use of the traditional learning	concrete-sequential	69	4.17	.140
	concrete random	34	3.53	.212
	abstract-sequential	34	4.09	.176
	abstract-random	31	4.19	.276
	Total	168	4.03	.096
Quality of the traditional course	concrete-sequential	69	4.09	.149
	concrete random	34	4.03	.171
	abstract-sequential	34	4.03	.166
	abstract-random	31	4.19	.220
	Total	168	4.08	.087
Information update	concrete-sequential	69	3.91	.144
	concrete random	34	3.76	.164
	abstract-sequential	34	4.06	.133
	abstract-random	31	3.97	.194
	Total	168	3.92	.081
Productivity	concrete-sequential	69	4.33	.144
	concrete random	34	4.15	.164
	abstract-sequential	34	4.21	.168
	abstract-random	31	4.35	.260
	Total	168	4.27	.089
General output	concrete-sequential	69	4.04	.159
	concrete random	34	4.00	.219
	abstract-sequential	34	4.24	.174
	abstract-random	31	3.94	.202
	Total	168	4.05	.094
Performance in traditional courses	concrete-sequential	69	4.38	.157
	concrete random	34	4.59	.164
	abstract-sequential	34	4.21	.183
	abstract-random	31	4.19	.157
	Total	168	4.35	.087

Attending in-auditorium lectures	concrete-sequential	69	4.49	.155
	concrete random	34	4.29	.161
	abstract-sequential	34	4.03	.221
	abstract-random	31	4.32	.224
	Total	168	4.33	.094

Which element of the online learning is most preferred based on student classification according to thinking style?

Students who belong to the concrete-sequential thinking style have a preference for the element of flexibility regarding time usage with the online learning (mean value = 4.54). Whereas students belonging to concrete random thinking style prefer most the general output element of the study program with the online learning (mean value = 4.06). Students belonging to the abstract-sequential thinking style and abstract-random thinking style prefer most the accessibility element of the online learning, mean values respectively 4.38 and 4.39. Table 6 provides a detailed view of the above.

TABLE 6: One – Online learning evaluation

		N	Mean	Std. Error
Effective-ness of the online learning	concrete-sequential	69	4.00	.131
	concrete random	34	3.56	.257
	abstract-sequential	34	3.85	.199
	abstract-random	31	3.55	.212
	Total	168	3.8	.094
Simplicity of use with the online learning	concrete-sequential	69	3.81	.137
	concrete random	34	3.68	.192
	abstract-sequential	34	3.94	.174
	abstract-random	31	4.00	.202
	Total	168	3.85	.085
Quality of the online course	concrete-sequential	69	3.86	.136
	concrete random	34	3.68	.206
	abstract-sequential	34	4.00	.164
	abstract-random	31	3.68	.176
	Total	168	3.82	.083
Information update	concrete-sequential	69	3.99	.131
	concrete random	34	4.00	.152
	abstract-sequential	34	3.94	.126
	abstract-random	31	3.87	.231
	Total	168	3.96	.079

General output	concrete-sequential	69	4.22	.140
	concrete random	34	4.06	.207
	abstract-sequential	34	4.26	.186
	abstract-random	31	3.87	.216
	Total	168	4.13	.090
Self-study	concrete-sequential	69	3.80	.138
	concrete random	34	3.97	.196
	abstract-sequential	34	3.56	.175
	abstract-random	31	3.71	.203
	Total	168	3.85	.085
Flexibility with time usage	concrete-sequential	69	4.54	.141
	concrete random	34	4.00	.193
	abstract-sequential	34	4.24	.112
	abstract-random	31	4.32	.149
	Total	168	4.33	.079
Accessibility	concrete-sequential	69	4.19	.162
	concrete random	34	3.68	.222
	abstract-sequential	34	4.38	.134
	abstract-random	31	4.39	.137
	Total	168	3.77	.086

Which element of the hybrid learning is most preferred based on student classification according to thinking style?

Table 7 values show that students who belong to the concrete-sequential thinking style prefer most the elements: general output, self-study with the hybrid learning and accessibility (mean value = 4.62). Students with the concrete random thinking style and abstract sequential thinking style have the greatest preference for the general output element of the hybrid study program, mean values respectively 4.32 and 4.53. Students who belong to the abstract-random thinking style prefer most the element of accessibility (mean value = 4.39).

TABLE 7: One – Hybrid learning evaluation

		N	Mean	Std. Error
Effective-ness of the hybrid learning	concrete-sequential	69	4.17	.150
	concrete random	34	3.53	.240
	abstract-sequential	34	3.82	.225
	abstract-random	31	3.68	.287
	Total	168	3.88	.106

Simplicity of use with the hybrid learning	concrete-sequential	69	4.38	.132
	concrete random	34	3.79	.230
	abstract-sequential	34	4.12	.183
	abstract-random	31	3.9	.219
	Total	168	4.12	.091
Quality of the hybrid course	concrete-sequential	69	4.55	.123
	concrete random	34	3.85	.207
	abstract-sequential	34	4.21	.157
	abstract-random	31	4.19	.224
	Total	168	4.27	.086
Information update	concrete-sequential	69	4.17	.122
	concrete random	34	3.85	.170
	abstract-sequential	34	4.32	.145
	abstract-random	31	4.19	.150
	Total	168	4.14	.073
Productivity	concrete-sequential	69	4.46	.136
	concrete random	34	4.21	.162
	abstract-sequential	34	4.5	.142
	abstract-random	31	3.97	.199
	Total	168	4.33	.081
General output	concrete-sequential	69	4.62	.132
	concrete random	34	4.32	.178
	abstract-sequential	34	4.53	.154
	abstract-random	31	4.26	.254
	Total	168	4.48	.086
Self-study	concrete-sequential	69	4.62	.107
	concrete random	34	4.21	.183
	abstract-sequential	34	4.5	.142
	abstract-random	31	4.1	.193
	Total	168	4.42	.075
Flexibility with time usage	concrete-sequential	69	4.41	.137
	concrete random	34	4.15	.180
	abstract-sequential	34	4.29	.123
	abstract-random	31	4.23	.190
	Total	168	4.3	.079

Accessibil- ity	concrete-sequential	69	4.62	.126
	concrete random	34	4.12	.183
	abstract-sequential	34	4.24	.184
	abstract-random	31	4.39	.216
	Total	168	4.4	.084

H1a: Studentët who belong to different thinking styles have the same perception of the traditional learning ($\alpha=0.05$).

Table 8 values show (Sig = 0.643 > $\alpha = 0.05$), therefore, there do not exist significant statistical differences in perception of the traditional learning between students who belong to different thinking styles. Thus, students share the same opinion regarding the traditional learning. Since there do not exist differences in perception of the traditional learning, it can be concluded that hypothesis H1a is supported by confidence interval 95%.

TABLE 8: One – Way ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Perception for tradi- tional learning	Between Groups	1.214	3	.405	.559	.643
	Within Groups	118.669	164	.724		
	Total	119.882	167			

H1b: Students who belong to different thinking styles have the same perception of the online learning ($\alpha=0.05$).

Table 9 analysis concludes that students who belong to different thinking styles have the same perception of the online learning. Value Sig=0.555 > $\alpha=0.05$ shows that there do not exist significant statistical differences between students regarding perception of the online learning. Hypothesis H1b is supported by confidence interval 95%.

TABLE 9: One – Way ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Perception for Online learning	Between Groups	1.113	3	.371	.697	.555
	Within Groups	87.306	164	.532		
	Total	88.419	167			

H1c: Students who belong to different thinking styles have the same perception of the hybrid learning ($\alpha=0.05$).

Value Sig =0.033 < $\alpha=0.05$ shows that students have different perceptions for the hybrid learning. Students who belong to different thinking styles do not share the same opinions on the hybrid learning. Between students there exist significant statistical differences in perception of the hybrid learning. The analysis concludes that hypothesis H1c is rejected.

TABLE 10: One – Way ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Perception for hybrid learning	Between Groups	5.435	3	1.812	2.981	.033
	Within Groups	99.668	164	.608		
	Total	105.103	167			

Conclusions and Recommendations

In general, students have a positive perception of teaching methods. There do not exist significant statistical differences in the traditional learning between students who belong to different thinking styles. Students do not share the same opinion with the online learning about the statement “easier to access material online”. There exist significant statistical differences between students regarding this statement. Whereas, regarding the other statements for the online learning preferences are similar. With regard to the hybrid learning, there exist differences only for two statements, the “general output” and “self-study in the hybrid learning”. Specifically, students who belong to different thinking styles have different preferences regarding elements of the learning methods. The elements most preferred by students about the traditional learning are: attending in-auditorium lectures, performance, productivity and general output. The elements most preferred about the online learning by students: general output, flexibility in time usage and accessibility. The elements most preferred about the hybrid learning are: general output, self-study and flexibility in time usage. Students have different perceptions only of the hybrid learning, whereas about the traditional learning and online learning, they have the same perceptions. The conclusions of the study are in line with those of the literature review. Thus, students who belong to different thinking styles have different preferences about learning styles.

The extensive application of hybrid study programs and online study programs is recommended to universities. Based on the study’s conclusions it is recommended

to universities the use of specific auditoriums for students who belong to different thinking styles.

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The Importance of Reading Books in students' life

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Abstract

Books play an important role of a teacher, guide, and friend in our life. Why is it important to read books? Why do students need books? This is the great research question we have raised, according to the chairman of the Publishers Association, Petrit Ymeri, which was invited to the UET Forum, in a conversation with students and lecturers at the end of of the 20th edition of the book in Tirana: where he showed the problems facing the book, from VAT to bad translations. One of the concerns raised by UET students in their questions, was the battle of paper book with the digital book and the world of social networks that has involved young people. Concretely, he argued that, “the book is always fashionable, it’s a paper or a digital book, we get it online, download it or not, we read, as Umberto Eco said that we need to flip our eyes when we read on the phone or ipad. The book of paper, continues to be the winner everywhere, because the book of the paper can be re-read. We all know, besides the pleasure we have in our hands, but even when you make a note, you go back to read it again”. (Mapo, 2018). A study published in Social Science & Health shows that reading books has a significant relationship to increase lifespan. A team of public health researchers from Yale University looked at data for 3,635 Americans over age 50 collected from 1992 to 2012. Adjusting for age, sex, race, education, wealth, marital status, and depression they found, that those who read books were more likely to live longer. (Flood, 2016). In this study, we want to measure book readership of students. How many students are currently reading and how to encourage readers of the future?

We have compiled a self – questionnaire that measures student involvement with the genre of reading, engagement in fairs, the participation in city libraries, etc. About 80 questionnaires were distributed to see the current situation of students in a Private University (European University of Tirana).

Key words: Books, Students, Genre of reading, City libraries, Book Fairs, Digital books.

Introduction

Why is it important to read books? In the digital world reading books, is placed face to face with digital book and the traditional book. The study we are going to present does not intend to identify the losers or winners of each category of reading. The concern that arises is whether we will have readers in the future in a world that is fragmented by the rapid evolution of technology? Is the level of readership of books reduced by students? How many students are currently reading according to the tool they choose to read, why they choose one of these tools, the way they read, their membership in a book club, their favorite book genre, the form of reading (for example, alone, accompanied, loudly), the time they spend to read, attendance in city libraries, book fairs, their favorite author and books, etc. According to a study, which is published in the September issue of the *Journal Social Science & Medicine*, by three authors from Yale University, on average, book readers were found to live for almost two years longer than non-readers, the paper also specifically links the reading of books, rather than periodicals, to a longer life. “We found that reading books provided a greater benefit than reading newspapers or magazines. We uncovered that this effect is likely because books engage the reader’s mind more – providing more cognitive benefit, and therefore increasing the lifespan”. (Bavishi, Slade, Levy, 2016). There are two cognitive processes involved in reading books that could create a “survival advantage”. First, reading books promote the “slow, immersive process” of “deep reading”, a cognitive engagement that “occurs as the reader draws connections to other parts of the material, finds applications to the outside world, and asks questions about the content presented”. “Cognitive engagement may explain why vocabulary, reasoning, concentration, and critical thinking skills are improved by exposure to books,” they write. Second, books “can promote empathy, social perception, and emotional intelligence, which are cognitive processes that can lead to greater survival”.(Bavishi, Slade, Levy, 2016).

Enjoy Reading

As teachers, as parents, as educators, we all want the best for our students. We're probably all aware that it's important to make sure they are confident, fluent readers who enjoy reading, but often it's hard to know where to start. What can we do as teacher to help our students get familiar reading with books? And how do we help them progress at school when the teaching is different nowadays? The big challenge for teachers is not simply getting students to read – it's getting them to enjoy it too. It's one thing for students to trudge through set texts in a lesson, but will they open another book when they got home at the end of the day?

But reading for pleasure is so much more than just a form of play or escapism – it is also a way of connecting with text. According to Pullman (2004), writing on the features that make reading pleasurable: “Consider the nature of what happens when we read a book.... It isn't like a lecture: it's like a conversation. There's a back-and-forthness about it. The book proposes, the reader questions, the book responds, the reader considers”. And we are active about the process... We can skim or we can read it slowly; we can read every word, or we can skip long passages; we can read it in the order it presents itself, or we can read it in any order we please; we can look at the last page first, or decide to wait for it; we can put the book down and ... we can assent or we can disagree. (Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p.6).

According to Krashen(1993), who is a major proponent of the value of reading for pleasure he found when children read for pleasure, when they get “hooked on books”, they acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called “language skills” many people are so concerned about: they will become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use complex grammatical constructions, develop a good writing style, and become good (but not necessarily perfect) spellers. Although free voluntary reading alone will not ensure attainment of the highest levels of literacy, it will at least ensure an acceptable level. Without it, I suspect that children simply do not have a chance. (Ibid.).

For Ames (1992), students with learning goals seek to understand content, master skills, and gain competence. In contrast, students with performance goals attempt to maximize their grades, test scores, or public recognition for achievement (Guthrie et. al, 2000).

The benefits of reading books

- According Clark and Rumbold (2006), research has shown that reading for pleasure is positively linked with the following literacy-related benefits:

- reading attainment and writing ability (OECD, 2000) for reading that is done both in school and out of school (Krashen, 1993; Anderson et al, 1988; but also see Taylor et al., 1990);
- text comprehension and grammar (Cipielewski and Stanovich, 1992; Cox and Guthrie, 2001), even after a variety of health, wealth and school factors were statistically controlled for (Elley, 1994);
- breadth of vocabulary (Angelos and McGriff, 2002), even after other relevant abilities such as IQ or text-decoding skills are controlled for (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998);
- positive reading attitudes (Guthrie and Alvermann, 1999), which are linked to achievement in reading (McKenna and Kear, 1990);
- greater self-confidence as a reader (Guthrie and Alvermann, 1999);
- pleasure reading in later life (Aarnoutse and van Leeuwe, 1998). (p.9)

Similar findings PISA (OECD, 2002), explored the reading habits of 15-year-olds in 32 countries. In this study, UK students came seventh in terms of mean performance, below Finland, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland and Korea. Overall, 72% of students said that they read for enjoyment on a daily basis: 12% read for more than one hour a day on average, 23% for between 30 minutes and one hour, and 36% for up to half an hour. Those who were high achievers in reading literacy were much more likely than low achievers to read for enjoyment: 87% compared with 55% said they did so. Girls were much more likely than boys to read for enjoyment: 78% of girls, compared with only 65% of boys, said they did so on a daily basis. At all levels of achievement in reading literacy, girls were significantly more likely than boys to read for enjoyment. Among the 25% of students who were most proficient in reading literacy, 90% of girls, compared with 84% of boys, read for enjoyment every day. Among the least proficient 25% of students, however, the difference was much more marked: 64% of girls, compared with only 48% of boys, did so.(as cited at Clark, Rumbold, 2006).

A Nestle Family Monitor (2003), which surveyed 914, 11-18-year-olds attending state and public schools across England and Wales, reported that four in five (83%) of young people read books in their spare time, with 16% reading books everyday. Only one in ten (11%) said that they never read books outside school hours. Overall, 40% agreed with the statement that books are important to them. However, a third also agreed with the statement that they have better things to do than read books, while a quarter agreed that they would be disappointed if somebody gave them a book as a present. This survey also reported that girls read more books for pleasure than boys. More specifically, one in five boys (16%) said that they never read in their spare time compared with 7% of girls. Overall, two-thirds (65%) of young people reported that they find reading enjoyable, with 21% also claiming that it is very enjoyable. (Ibid.).

Reading Motivation

Research findings are also likely to present only a temporal snapshot of students reading preferences. So, why do some people choose to read for pleasure while others do not? According (Mitchell, (1992); Guthrie & Wigfield, (2000); Baumann & Duffy (1997), indeed, “motivation for learning is thought to be one of the most critical determinants of the success and quality of any learning outcome” and it is therefore likely “that motivational processes are the foundation for coordinating cognitive goals and strategies in reading ...reading motivation is defined as “the individual’s personal goals, values and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading, reading motivation is a multifaceted construct that includes reading goals, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, self-efficacy and social motivation for reading” and “motivation to read and reading ability are synergistic, mutually reinforcing phenomena”.(as cited at Clark and Rumbold, 2006).

According Mazzoni, Gambrell and Korkeamaki (1999) two related aspects of reading motivation are reading attitude and reading interest: *Reading attitudes* “refer to the feelings and beliefs an individual has with respect to reading ”, *Reading interest* “relates to people’s preferences for genres, topics, tasks or contexts and *Reading motivation*, “as outlined above, refers to the internal states that make people read”. (Ibid.) In addition to motivation, another important factor in fostering lifelong readers is choice.

According Sanacore (1999), Krashen (1993), Flowerday & Schraw (2000), “encouraging and respecting reading choices are important steps toward helping children, young people and adults develop a sense of ownership and self-determination”, “students who choose what they read and have an informal environment in which to read tend to be more motivated, read more and show greater language and literacy development”, similarly, “teachers like to provide choice in the classroom because they believe that it increases motivation, effort and learning”(as cited at Clark and Rumbold 2006).

Motivation often is domain specific, according Wolters (2003), “motivation also is important for the maintenance of behavior, particularly when activities are cognitively demanding”. Reading is one such activity, as many different cognitive skills are involved. These range from processing individual words to generating meaning from complex texts. Furthermore, although reading is required for many school tasks and activities, it is also something students can choose to do or not; “Am I going to read or do something else?” Given these characteristics, motivation is especially crucial to reading engagement. (as cited at Guthrie & Wigfield & You, 2012, p.602 – 603).

One of the most frequently cited studies is the study carried out by Gambrell et. Al (1996) where they found six classroom characteristics that influence



pupils' reading motivation. This characteristics include having a teacher who (1) models reading, provides access to both, (2) large amounts and (3) wide variety and reading material in the classroom, (4) provides opportunities for children to choose reading material, (5) offers opportunities for students to interact with other students and adults in the classroom about their reading interest and (6) provides incentives directly related to reading.(Pečjak, Košir, 2004).

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore: Why do students need books? In this study, In this study, we want to measure book readership of students. The two research questions are: How many students are currently reading and how to encourage readers of the future? We have compiled a self – questionnaire that measures student involvement with the genre of reading, engagement in fairs, the participation in city libraries, and so on. The objectives of this study are to identify some variables of their relationship with the book, more concret, we want to analyze:

- students currently reading;
- The tool they choose to read;
- Why they choose one of these tools;
- The way they read;
- Their membership in a book club;
- Their favorite book genre;
- The form of reading (for example, alone, accompanied, loudly);
- Time spend reading;
- Attendance of city libraries;
- Book fair;
- Their favorite author and books etc.

Method

Participants

The questionnaire was administered to 80 students 19 – 35- year – old students.

The most involved age group was 19 - 21 years old with 27% of students, 22-25 years with 23% of students, 26-35 years old with 15% of students, and abstention resulted 15% of responses; 28% of the sample were females. 22% of the sample were male and 21% have abstained.

Instruments

To evaluate students readership at books, we have used a self – administered questionnaire about this study. In the questionnaire designed, we have made a cross-section of the research methods, both quantitative and qualitative. The questionnaire contains a total of 17 questions. In the quantitative method are included all the variables encoded in response, while the inclusion of the qualitative method consists in their personal responses (the title and author of the book they are currently reading or have just completed, the way they read, the favorite book genre, their presence at a book fair, also marking the publishing house, their book or their favorite author).

Procedure and Design

Faculty of Education evaluated and authorized the collection of data by allowing researchers to use the data for scientific purposes. Understanding the situation in which students are concerned with the development of critical thinking as a situation that can be presented to the university's governing bodies to make possible solutions. Students volunteered to participate in the research, without receiving any reward, after presenting a statement of informed consent signed by their pedagogues and agreeing to anonymously complete the questionnaire. A self – reported questionnaire was administered to the students while they were in school, after researchers from the Department of Education (European University of Tirana) explained the aims of the study to them.

Data Analyses

We have used the SPSS 22 program. In this procedure the variables was analyze with the frequencies procedure. Understand the situation where students are in their relationship with the book, the level of readability and related aspects.

Results

Following are the relevant findings, in an effort to answer research questions and to validate the hypotheses of the study:

By gender 28% were Females, 22% were male, and 21% have abstained. The most involved age group was 19 - 21 years old with 27%, 22-25 years with 23%, 26-35 years with 15%, and abstention resulted 15% of responses.

The question, 'Do you prefer to read books?' 27% of students said sometimes they prefer to read books, 25% said with No answer, 15% with Yes answer, and 13% have abstained.

The question, 'Do you enjoy reading?' 35% with yes, 30% of students said to some extent because it depends on the genre of the book, and 15% have abstained.

The questions, 'Do you prefer to read E – books or Print Books' 38% of students prefer to read E – books only, 27% of students prefer to read Print Books only and 15% have abstained. Why do they own a E - Reader for the purpose of reading digital E – books, 20% said 'I read to reduce the cost of spending', 11% said 'Reading with E – books is more exciting for me', and 7% said 'I want books but buying them spends me money, so I can't buy them'.

The question, 'Are you reading any books currently or you have just finished reading it' 28% of students said 'I'm currently reading', 25% of students said 'I just finished it', and 27% have abstained.

The question, 'Where do you prefer to read more?', 24% of students said 'whenever I have time', 19% of students said 'during vacations and holidays', 17% of students said 'on bed', 10% of students said 'before I lay down to sleep', 10% of students said 'even more during the weekend'.

The question, 'Are you a member of any book clubs in or out of your school', 48% of students said 'they are not members of a book club', 25% of students said that 'they are members in a book club', and 7% have abstained.

The question, for 'What genre of books do you like to read?' Responses to the genre preference are listed below, Romance came in first; then Story from real life; Foreign writers; Modern; Historical; Classic, Crime and mystery, Diary; Comic, Fantasy; Trips; Autobiographical; Factual books; Others; Fantasy story, Horror.

The question 'How Do You Prefer to read your books?', 51% of students prefer to read alone, 18% prefer to read accompanied and 11% have abstained.

The question, 'When you read books, do you prefer to read aloud?', 48% of students said 'I prefer silent reading', 22% of students said 'I prefer aloud reading', and 10% have abstained.

The question, 'Do you prefer to talk to your friends about what you've read?', 42% of students said 'I prefer to talk to my friends', 26% of students said 'I don't prefer to talk to my friends', and 12% have abstained.

The question, 'How many hours a week do you spend reading books?', 30% of students said 'I probably spend about 1 hour and 30 minutes a day reading books', 21% of students said 'I probably spend about one hour a day reading books', 14% of students said 'I probably spend about 2 hours a day reading books', and 9% of students said 'I probably spend about 3 hours or more reading books'.

The question 'Do you attend the library of your city to receive books?', 40% of students said 'Yes I use city libraries to get books', 26% of students said 'I do not use city libraries to get books', and 14% have abstained.

The questions, 'Do you attend a book fair?', 45% of students said 'I do not attend the book fair', 25% of students said 'I attend in the book fair', and 10% of them have abstained.

The questions, 'Which was the last time you were at the book fair', from the answers was the 2017 annual fair, publishing houses where they bought the most are: Uet Press; Pegi; Dudaj Albas; Living.

The questions, 'What are your favourite books of all time and who are your favourite authors?'. So we are going to list cited authors and a list of student books to discover their current preferences towards books. They are listed as follows:

Honoré de Balzac ("Eugénie Grandet"; "Le Père Goriot"), **Göte, Stefan Cvajg;**
Gabriel García Márquez("Love in the Time of Cholera", "One Hundred Years of Solitude");

Gustave Flaubert ("Madame Bovary");

John A. Barnes("John F. Kennedy on Leadership"), **Osho;**

J. K. Rowling("Harry Potter"), **John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, Dale Carnegie;**

Victor Hugo("Notre-Dame de Paris", "Les Misérables");

Danielle Steel("Once in a Lifetime");

Khaled Hosseini("The Kite Runner");

Zhyl Vern("Around the world for 80 days");

Jean Sasson("The Princess");

Paulo Coelho("The Alchemist");

Isabel Allende("The House of the Spirits");

Salman Rushdie, José Saramago, Umberto Eco;

Nicholas Sparks("The Theory of Everything", "A Ride to Remember" , "The Choice", "See me", "Dear John");

Don Brown("The Da Vinci Code");

Anthony Doerr("All the Light We Cannot See");

Stephen King("Mr. Mercedes"), **Rebecca James, Ayn Rand;**

Joseph Conrad("Heart of Darkness");

Leo Tolstoy("War and Peace",);

Jenny Tomlin("Behind Closed Doors");

George Orwell("Nineteen Eighty-Four");

Kate Andersen Brower("The Residence");

Rhonda Byrne("The Secret");

Daniel Kehlmann("Measuring the World");

Sophie Hannah("The Human Condition");

Cecelia Ahern ("PS, I Love You");

Jojo Moyes ("Me Before You");

Anna Premoli("Please let me hate you");

John Green("The Fault in Our Stars");

Tatiana de Rosnay("Sarah's Key");

Sandra Boynton("Belly Button Book");

Federico Moccia("Three Meters Above Heaven");

Jane Austens (“Pride and Prejudice”);

Gary Chapman (“The 5 Love Languages”);

Students have mentioned from Albanian authors: **Migjeni**, **Martin Camaj**, **Ismail Kadare**(“Arch of Triumph”, “Broken April”), **Gjergj Fishta**, **Petro Marko**, **Stavri Pone**(“Tears of the roses”).

Discussions and Conclusions

Why should students read books?

In addition to their attitudes towards reading, students should have a reason why they need to read books. According Clark and Akerman(2006), the reasons why young people need to read is because:

- It is a skill for life;
- It teaches them how other people live and feel;
- It helps them understand the world;
- It helps them find what they want/need to know;
- They have to;
- It helps them understand themselves;
- It is fun and because it gives them a break.

Top 10 tips to help them enjoy reading:

To help make reading enjoyable and fun, we asked experts and authors what they recommend to help reading.

1. *Make books part of your family life* – Always have books around so that you are ready to read whenever there’s a chance.
2. *Join your local library* – Get a library card. You’ll find the latest videogames, blu-rays and DVDs, plus tons and tons of fantastic books. Allow them to pick their own books, encouraging their own interests.
3. *Match their interests* – Help them find the right book - it doesn’t matter if it’s fiction, poetry, comic books or non-fiction.
4. *All reading is good* – Don’t discount non-fiction, comics, graphic novels, magazines and leaflets. Reading is reading and it is all good.
5. *Get comfortable!* – Snuggle up somewhere warm and cosy, either in bed, on a beanbag or on the sofa, or make sure they have somewhere comfy when reading alone.
6. *Ask questions* – To keep them interested in the story, ask questions as you read such as, ‘What do you think will happen next?’ or ‘Where did we get to last night? Can you remember what had happened already?’

7. *Read whenever you get the chance* – Bring along a book or magazine for any time they have to wait, such as at a doctor's surgery.
8. *Read again and again* – Encourage them to re-read favourite books and poems. Re-reading helps to build up fluency and confidence.
9. *Bedtime stories* – Regularly read at bedtime. It's a great way to end the day and to spend valuable time.
10. *Rhyme and repetition* – Books and poems which include rhyme and repetition are great for encouraging them to join in and remember the words. (Pearson, 2018, p.7).

Reading books is part of the educational process, which includes all forms of formation of the individual, such as family, school, society, and mass media. All these forming components play their part in encouraging young people to read the book. In family an important role has our parents. Parental education on reading books begins when their children are babies, in preschool, in primary, and upward.

Parents are a child's most important teacher and it's never too young for a child to start, even if you're only reading with your child for a few minutes a day. Before they're born, babies learn to recognise their parents' voices. Reading to your baby from the time they're born gives them the comfort of your voice and increases their exposure to language". Also as Christopher Edge has said "Books transform children's lives - they can open windows onto new worlds, widen their horizons or even just make them laugh themselves silly! Reading for pleasure can give children the key they need to unlock their dreams". (Pearson, 2018, p.2 – 4).

In school are our teachers. A number of studies have shown that contextual variables of the classroom such as instructional practices, teacher support, and other conditions may directly impact students' reading competence. An important classroom characteristic is the quality of teacher-student relationships. When teachers emphasize collaboration and positive interpersonal relationships (between themselves and students and among students in the classroom), students motivation increases for school in general and for reading.

Furrer, Skinner, (2003) and Decker, Dona & Christenson (2007) said that "when students believe their teachers think they are important, they are likely to participate more socially in the class-room" also "as both teacher and student reports of the quality of teacher-student relationships increase, there are also enhancements in positive social interactions and engagement outcomes". (Guthrie & Wigfield & You, 2012, p.25).

Reading books tends to involve two cognitive processes that could create a survival advantage. "First, it promotes "deep reading," which is a slow, immersive process; this cognitive engagement occurs as the reader draws connections to other parts of the material, finds applications to the outside world, and asks questions



about the content presented” (Wolf, Barzillai, & Dunne, 2009). “Cognitive engagement may explain why vocabulary, reasoning, concentration, and critical thinking skills are improved by exposure to books” (Stanovich, West, & Harrison, 1995; Stanovich & Cunningham, 1998; Wolf, Barzillai, & Dunne, 2009). Second, “books can promote empathy, social perception, and emotional intelligence, which are cognitive processes that can lead to greater survival” (Bassuk, Wypij, & Berkman, 2000; Djikic, Oatley, & Moldoveanu 2013; Kidd & Castano 2013; Shipley, Der, Taylor, & Deary 2008; Olsen, Olsen, Gunner-Svensson, & Waldstrom, 1991). “Better health behaviors and reduced stress may explain this process” (Bassuk, Wypij, & Berkman, 2000). (as cited at Bavishi, Slade, Levy, 2016).

Promoting reading with the aim of inspiring all students to read for pleasure is a responsibility of all schools. The benefits for literacy skills, wider learning and personal development are supported by substantial research evidence.

The findings from this survey confirm the need for schools to:

- From the study responses, the number of students who prefer to read books is very little differentiated by the number of students who do not prefer to read books. Therefore, the number of readers should increase in the future and need a serious engagement of educational policies, school as an institution and family to encourage their children to read books. The book culture should be promoted to all children regardless of age, gender, social status, etc.
- We also learned from the results that the most favorite way to read is E – Book. This means that technology (E – Book) has replaced traditional books (Printed Books). However, the focus of our study is just reading books, so this aspect is not taken into account, it is enough for books to be part of students life, regardless of how students choose to read with E – Book or Printed Book.
- Another problematic point of study is the lack of attendance of students as a registered club member of books outside or within the school. School policies should be activated here to encourage students or to organize them in book clubs. Another way is to involve teachers to encourage and motivate students to read at least one or two books during the course semester that they give. Also, students in a large number of responses do not frequent city libraries and book fairs as two important aspects of the individual culture with the book.
- Their favorite authors are foreign authors and Albanian authors are very little mentioned by students, like Migjeni, Ismail Kadare, Martin Camaj, Petro Marko, Stavri Pone. Perhaps this point should be addressed to school policies and home publishers who should find a solution to encourage readers for Albanian authors. It is necessary to create student clubs, academic forums that promote more Albanian authors.

- Create a culture in which all students are encouraged to be enthusiastic readers. To support this goal, schools with effective approaches consult with students to learn of their interests and to ensure that the range of reading materials available in school reflects those interests.
- They recognise that a diverse range of reading materials will encourage students to read, for example websites, comics and magazines. They engage students in the planning and delivery of reading and library activities, offering them the opportunity to select and purchase reading materials for their use. (Clark, & Foster, 2005, p.93).
- Consider how we can support parents in encouraging reading in the home. The role of the home is important for all children. Home-school practices that successfully involve all parents in students home and school reading, in ways they value, need to be shared between schools.

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Ten-year incidence and time trends of psychiatric disorders in Scutari from 2005 to 2015

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Abstract

Aim: *One in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. Mental disorders are among the leading causes of ill-health and disability worldwide. There is no data on mental health incidence in our country. Scutari is the most important city in north region of Albania, which provides hospital and day care mental health services for people living in this area. This retrospective study aimed to estimate the ten-year incidence and time trends of mental health cases, diagnosed in Scutari from 2005 to 2015. **Method:** All new cases diagnosed in Scutari during 2005-2015 were included in the study. The data were collected from statistic office registry of mental health Institutions in Scutari. We considered demographic and socioeconomic data, age, diagnosis, timing of first diagnose and the service which provided the care for each case. It was estimated the incidence per 100.000 inhabitants and it was analysed the time trends over a decade. **Results:** There were 7620 cases diagnosed in total during ten years. Among them about 83 % (n =6287) were hospital inpatients, while community mental health centres provided inpatient and day care for 17% of cases (n=1333). The incidence ranged from 244 to 378 per 100.000 inhabitants, still there was not much change in*

*the incidence rates over a decade. Community mental health services were established in Scutari in 2010 reflecting the new public health policy. Since 2010 community mental health centres had a rapid increase in figures each year, taking over some of the patients flow from state psychiatric hospital of Scutari which was the only service up to 2010. About 60% of diagnosed psychiatric patients were males versus 40% females; 57% lived in rural areas versus 43% in urban areas. The most prevalent diagnoses according ICD-10 were psychotic disorders (F20-29), followed by mood disorders (F 30-F39). **Conclusion** Mental disorders were more frequent in this study with predominance of Schizophrenia. Those problems were more common in male, in patients that live in rural area and unemployed persons. Young people and active age people were also more likely to have mental disorders that indicating an early age of onset for mood, anxiety and alcohol disorders.*

Keywords: *mental health services; Scutari; psychiatric disorders; incidence; time trend; decade*

Introduction

WHO defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (WHO, 2004). The mentally ill is vulnerable and should be recognized as such and strongly considered whenever we are talking of universal coverage (Obayi et. al, 2017). So nowadays the adopted slogan “No health without mental health” is the true one (Prince et. al, 2007).

Based to the WHO report, one in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. Around 450 million people currently suffer from such conditions, placing mental disorders among the leading causes of ill-health and disability worldwide. (WHO, 2001).

The problem of mental disorders and mental disorders continues to grow with a significant impact on health and social, human and economic rights in all countries of the world (Demyttenaere et al., 2004). For this reason, the fact that mental health is a foundation for the well-being and efficient functioning of the individual and the community as a whole, and the World Health Organization and other international organizations identify the improvement of mental health as a preoccupation primary for both low and middle income and wealthy countries (WHO, 2005).

Mental disorders include: depression, bipolar affective disorder, schizophrenia and other psychoses, dementia, intellectual disabilities and developmental disorders including autism.



In our country, there is no national survey about mental problems and their prevalence in the population. In Albania the data about epidemiology and incidence of mental disorders are few (Kruja et. al, 2012). Scutari is the most important city in north region of Albania, which provides hospital and day care mental health services for people living in this area. This retrospective study aimed to estimate the ten-year incidence and time trends of mental health cases, diagnosed in Scutari from 2005 to 2015.

Method

All new cases diagnosed in Scutari during 2005-2015 were included in the study. The data were collected from statistic office registry of mental health Institutions in Scutari. We considered demographic and socioeconomic data, age, diagnosis, timing of first diagnose and the service which provided the care for each case. It was estimated the incidence per 100.000 inhabitants and it was analysed the time trends over a decade. Classification of the mental disorders was based on diagnostic criteria from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-5. 5th ed (DSM_V) (APA, 2013) and also the International Classification of Diseases and Injuries 10th Revision (ICD_10) (WHO, 1992). For analyze of epidemiological statistical data we were used the software SPSS version 19.

Results

There were 7620 cases diagnosed in total during ten years. Among them about 83 % (n =6287) were hospital inpatients, while community mental health centres provided inpatient and day care for 17% of cases (n=1333). The incidence ranged from 244 to 378 per 100.000 inhabitants, still there was not much change *in the incidence* rates over a decade. Community mental health services were established in Scutari in 2010 reflecting the new public health policy. Since 2010 community mental health centres had a rapid increase in figures each year, taking over some of the patients flow from state psychiatric hospital of Scutari which was the only service up to 2010. About 60% of diagnosed psychiatric patients were males versus 40% females; 57% lived in rural areas versus 43% in urban areas. The most prevalent diagnoses according ICD-10 were psychotic disorders (F20-29), followed by mood disorders (F 30-F39).

Table 1 represent the overall demographic data of patients surveyed from 2005 -2015 for SHSHMSH and 2010-2015 for QKSHM.

TABLE 1 The general demographic data of the population

The general demographic data of the population	Number of cases	Percentage of cases
Total number of cases 7620		
Number of cases dealt with at QKSHM	1,333	17.5%
Number of cases dealt with at QKSHM	6,287	82.5%
Settlement (225549 inhabitants according to CENSUS 2011)		
Scutari	6,139	80.57%
Puka	86	10.7%
Great mountain	566	7.43%
Other	99	1.30%
Residential area		
rural	4,327	56.8%
urban	3,293	43.2%
gender		
Females	3,085	40.5%
Male	4,535	59.5%
Age group		
Average age 43 ± 4		
0-14 age	68	0.90%
15-24 age	417	5.48%
25-44 age	3,3341	43.85%
45-64 age	3,385	44.43%
+65 age	409	5.37%
Ethnicity		
Albanian	7,415	97.3%
Egjyptiane	55	0.73%
Malazeze	26	0.35%
Not declared	124	1.63%
Religious Sessions		
Catholic	4,070	53.42%
Myslyman and Bektashis	3,394	44.54%
Christian is a Catholic	34	0.45%
Atheist	15	0.20%
A believer without proper definition	38	0.50%
Data is missing	69	0.91%

Table 2 present other demographic data of the population related to the educational level, monthly family income, employment and family heritage.

Familiar familiarity with many studies carried out (mentioned in the theoretical part) is very related to the emergence of PSHMs to successors. It is worth pointing out that each data is contained in each patient's card.

TABEL 5.2 Other population data

Other general population data	Number of cases	Percentage of cases
Educational level		
Without education	91	1.19 %
Primary Education	157	2.06 %
8-9 Year Old Education	492	6.45 %
Secondary education	5,181	68 %
High education	1,699	22.3 %
Monthly income		
No income	34	0.44 %
Social help	267	3.5 %
100 to 200 thousand for month	2,349	30.8 %
200-400 thousand for month	2,612	34.29 %
400-600 thousand for month	1,583	20.77 %
> 600 thousand for month	775	10.2 %
employment		
Employed	3,423	44.9 %
Without job	2,670	35.04 %
retiree	970	12.73 %
Gardens and schools	557	7.3 %
Familiar familiarity		
Previous family history	2,699	35.42 %
No family history	4,921	64.58 %

For years now, the clinical diagnosis of cases is based on the determination of mental health problems according to DSM-IV and DMS-V classification. In recent years, especially after 2010, the classification of DSM V coded by ICD 10 is being used.

The table below presents the prevalence of morbidity based on classification of DSM V but coded according to ICD 10.

TABLE 3 Prevalence of morbidity according to ICD 10

1Diagnosis by ICD 10	No. of cases	Prevalence0
F10-F19	245	3.2%
F20-F29	3534	46.4%
F30-F39	2001	26.3%
F40-F48	771	10.1%
F60-G69	256	3.3%
ETC	813	10.7%
Total	7620	100%

Since classification of mental health problems was introduced long afterwards by the existence of the psychiatric hospital in Shkodra district, the detection, classification and treatment of cases with disorders were based on DMS-IV and DMS-V. For this reason, the cases dealt with by the SHSHMSH are presented with the classification according to DSM - V as the cases taken in the study are from 2005.

TABEL 5.20 Demographic factors and mental problems. Logistic regression

Demographic data	Demographic Factors and Mental Health Problems Odds Ratio (95% CI) p value <0.05 ¹					
	F10-19	F20-29	F30-39	F40-48	F60-69	Tjetër
Separation by sex						
Female	1 ² (reference)	1.18 1.08-1.27 p=0.0003	1.01 0.9-1.12 p=0.79	2.60 2.23-3.04 p<0.0001	1.08 0.87-1.35 p=0.44	1.03 0.90-1.17 p=0.65
Man	28.12 (11.56-68.39) p<0.0001	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)
Residence						
Urban	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)
Rural	1.08 0.84-1.39 p=0.60	1.24 1.14-1.34 p<0.0001	1.18 1.08-1.3 P=0.0013	1.36 1.17-1.54 P=0.0001	1.73 1.36-2.23 p<0.0001	1.06 0.91-1.22 p=0.51
Age groups						
0-14 age	~ ₃ N/A	~ ₃ N/A	10.0 (2.24-40.0) p=0.0022	~ ₃ N/A	~ ₃ N/A	94.33 (22.70- 391.84) P<0.0001

15-24 age	1.89 (0.99-3.59) p=0.05	1.35 (1.02-1.8) p=0.032	2.18 (1.5-3.23) p=0.0001	1.54 (0.98-2.40) p=0.057	1.09 (0.57-2.09) p=0.82	1.22 (0.960-1.7) p=0.22
25-44 age	1.24 (0.71-2.13) p=0.47	1.71 (1.38-2.12) p<0.0001	1.29 (1.01-1.66) p=0.037	1.25 (0.87-1.8) p=0.2	1.3 (0.80-2.13) p=0.3	4.17 3.23-5.56 p<0.0001
45-64 age	1.25 (0.72-2.18) p=0.44	1.72 (1.39-2.14) p<0.0001	1.41 (1.10-1.8) p=0.0058	1.07 (0.75-1.54) p=0.68	1.93 (1.17-3.23) p=0.011	3.85 2.95-5.0 p<0.0001
+65 age	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)

1. All *p* values values that resulted in <0.05 are called statistically significant for 95% CI.

2. Since the habit of drinking alcohol or drugs is most commonly encountered in males compared to women, in this table for illnesses caused by ethylitis or female drugs are taken as a reference. This is to see the impact that this consumption may have on males.

3. Can not be calculated due to lack of value. For diseases classified in F10-19, F20-29, F40-48 there are no diagnosed cases for the age group 0-14 years.

TABEL 5.22 Demographic factors and mental problems. Logistic Regression (continued)

Demo- graphic data	Demographic Factors and Mental Health Problems Odds Ratio (95% CI) p value <0.05 ¹					
	F10 - 19	F20 - 29	F30 - 39	F40 - 48	F60 – 69	ECT
Educational level						
Without education	7.4 (4.08 – 13.47) p<0.0001	6.37 (3.43 – 11.85) p<0.0001	10.30 (5.9 – 17.94) p<0.0001	5.38 (2.8 – 10.31) p<0.0001	6.37 (3.43 – 11.85) p<0.0001	6.37 (3.43 – 11.85) p<0.0001
Primary Education	9.27 (5.8 – 14.8) p<0.0001	7.32 (4.48 – 11.95) p<0.0001	11.8 (7.52 – 18.5) p<0.0001	4.98 (2.9 – 8.5) p<0.0001	4.18 (2.37 – 7.3) p<0.0001	2.67 (1.4 – 5.12) p = 0.0031
8-9 year education	2.17 (1.37 – 3.43) p = 0.0009	9.85 (6.95 – 13.96) p < 0.0001	11.57 (8.15 – 16.44) p < 0.0001	7.03 (4.9 – 10.10) p < 0.0001	3.98 (2.67 – 5.92) p < 0.0001	2.32 (1.48 – 3.64) p = 0.0002
Secondary education	0.70 (0.50 – 0.99) p = 0.043	30.29 (22.8 – 40.24) p < 0.0001	12.41 (9.33 – 16.51) p < 0.0001	2.73 (2.03 – 3.67) p < 0.0001	0.51 (0.36 – 0.73) p = 0.0002	4.55 (3.4 – 6.09) p < 0.0001

High education	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)
Monthly income						
No income	3.08 (1.13 – 8.38) p = 0.027	4.64 (1.9 – 11.28) p = 0.0007	3.83 (1.5 – 9.78) p = 0.0049	5.5084 (2.34 – 12.92) p = 0.0001	1.73 (0.5 – 5.9) p = 0.37	3.08 (1.13 – 8.38) p = 0.02
Social help	1.52 (0.88– 2.63) p = 0.12	10.38 (6.9 – 15.5) p < 0.0001	5.76 (3.78 – 8.77) p < 0.0001	1.21 (0.67 – 2.18) p = 0.508	1.21 (0.67 – 2.18) p = 0.508	2.7 (1.68 – 4.34) p < 0.0001
100-200 thousand	5 (3 – 7) p = 0.0001	18.04 (13.03 – 24.96) p < 0.0001	4.9 (3.5 – 6.8) p < 0.0001	1.91 (1.3 – 2.69) P = 0.0002	0.38 (0.24 – 0.58) p < 0.0001	3.20 (2.29 – 4.48) p < 0.0001
200-400 thousand	0.5 (0.37 – 0.81) P = 0.0025	19.96 (14.43 – 27.59) p < 0.0001	6.70 (4.84 – 9.29) p < 0.0001	0.97 (0.68 – 1.39) p = 0.89	0.55 (0.37 – 0.82) p = 0.0031	1.73 (1.23 – 2.44) p = 0.0016
400-600 thousand	0.80 (0.54 – 1.19) p = 0.28	9.96 (7.15 – 13.87) p < 0.0001	7.58 (5.4 – 10.57) p < 0.0001	3.64 (2.59 – 5.13) p < 0.0001	0.60 (0.4 – 0.92) p = 0.019	1.98 (1.39 – 2.83) p = 0.0002
> 600 thousand	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)
Employment						
Employed	1.34 (0.71 – 2.52) p = 0.36	65.39 (35.8 – 119.24) p<0.0001	17.46 (9.6 – 31.8) p<0.0001	3.97 (2.16 – 7.32) p<0.0001	1.05 (0.55 – 1.99) p = 0.87	2.61 (1.4– 4.83) p = 0.0023
Without job	2.13 (1.13 – 3.99) p = 0.017	44.95 (24.63– 82.06) p<0.0001	22.98 (12.5 – 41.97) p<0.0001	5.08 (2.75 – 9.36) p<0.0001	2 (1 – 3) p= 0.58	3.03 (1.63 – 5.64) p<0.0004
retiree	1.0 (0.9 – 3.58) p = 0.0931	18.56 (10.05 – 34.27) p<0.0001	11.0025 (5.9 – 20.42) p<0.0001	8.79 (4.7 – 16.38) p<0.0001	6.61 (3.52 – 12.38) p<0.0001	15.95 (8.6 – 29.5) p<0.0001
Gardens and schools	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)
Familiar familiarity						
Previously familiar history	1.31 (1.01 – 1.69) p = 0.039	3 (2 – 4.69) p < 0.0001	1.13 (1.02 – 1.26) p = 0.016	2.88 (2.47 – 3.35) p<0.0001	2.95 (2.29 – 3.81) p<0.0001	1.113 (0.95 – 1.29) p = 0.16
No family history	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)	1 (reference)

Based on the logistic regression of variables with morbidity, it is worth pointing out that a strong signal correlation exists for most of the variables taken in the study for CI 95% p values have resulted to be less than 0.05

Discussion

A state that respects and protects the basic civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of its people has as its core issue the promotion of mental health. Without the security and freedom offered by these rights, it is very difficult to maintain a high level of mental health (Gost, 2001). Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General of WHO, on releasing the World Health Report has said; “Mental illness is not a personal failure. In fact, if there is failure, it is to be found in the way we have responded to people with mental and brain disorders” (WHO, 2001).

In this study, 7620 individuals have received special treatment at the Mental Health Service [6,287 (82.5%)] and the Community Mental Health Service [1,333 (17.5%)]. This is a descriptive retrospective epidemiological study, which is based on the research of individuals' files that have been diagnosed with at least one mental health problem during their lifetime in the Shkodra district for a period of 10 years from 2005 to 2015. The analysis of the data on the incidence of PSHM problems in Shkodra district is based on the number of population according to 2011 CENSUS (Census, 2011).

The number of inhabitants of Shkodra region according to CENSUS is 225,549, out of which 166,050 inhabitants belong only to Shkodra district.

In total, the PES incidence over 2005-2015 resulted in 3378.42 persons with PSHM for a number of 100,000 inhabitants, which is a relatively high figure compared to some of the countries close to Albania. In a 2010 study on mental health problems in Serbia, Kosovo, Malta, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), the prevalence of mental illness resulted in figures of 44.8%. However, the prevalence of having a mental disorder ranges between the Balkan countries, for example, the Republic of Macedonia has the lowest prevalence of 21.5%, followed by Croatia with 39.9%, Bosnia and Herzegovina with 48.2%, Serbia with 54% and Kosovo with 62.2% of the population analyzed. Issues related to anxiety disorders ranged from 15.6% to 41.8%, behavioral disorders from 12.1% to 47.6%. Disorders due to Etilization, Somatization and Psychotics were less frequent. The most commonly encountered individual problems in this study were Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder with an interval of 10.6% -35.4% and Major Depression with 4.1% -35.4% (Priebe et al., 2010).

Table 1 and 2 presented the general demographic data of patients surveyed from 2005 -2015 to the AHSH and from 2010-2015 to QKSHM. With regard to the

prevalence of morbidity we can say that we have a prevalence of cases who suffer from diseases that according to the classification of ICD 10 are included in F20-29. This group includes diseases such as schizophrenia that takes the lead, delusional disorders, and reactive psychiatry. These diseases occupy a 46.4% prevalence of the total morbidity encountered in this paper.

We think that this large number comes as most of the cases analyzed belong to the SHSHMSH, where the patients treated there are serious complications with PSHMs such as Schizophrenia.

Second, we classify Depressive Disorders and Affective Disorders with 765 and 739 cases, respectively. Then rank those with mental retardation, neuritis disorders, personality, anxiety, reactive, and so on. If we were to be based on the ICD-10 classification, the highest prevalence is shown for the categories of diseases that are included in F 20 - 29 with 46.4%, in the second place those with F 30-39 with 26.3%, with F 40-48 and the other category with 10% respectively, while those in category F 10 - 19 and F 60 - 69 with over 3%.

The number of men cases treated near the two centers resulted to be higher by 4,535 (59.6%) compared to female cases 3,085 (40.5%). The incidence appeared higher again for male gender compared to women 2011.98 and 1367.8 respectively. Even with regard to the classification according to the classification of diseases, again there is a prevalence of male cases against women. This is most evident in cases of diseases caused by ethylisation or drugs. This is also in line with the literature cited as men in this category have the highest percentage of cases in men: 5.6%, women 1.3% (WHO, 2014).

In urban-rural segregation, rural households account for 56.8% of urban areas compared to urban areas 43.2%. Even with regard to the incidence, there is still a high incidence in rural areas of 1918.34 cases per 100,000 inhabitants versus 1460 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in urban areas. The largest number of cases analyzed belonged to age groups 35-44 years and 45 to 54 years with 1726 and 1861 cases respectively. The age groups 55-65 and over 65 already represent the same number of cases with 1067 cases altogether. The 25-34 age group represents 1018 cases altogether. The smallest number of cases is noted for age groups 0 to 24 years.

Regarding the level of education, those who have declared a secondary education level have a very high prevalence of 68%, secondly those with higher education 22.3%. those with 8-9 years of education and primary education rate of the cases is small by 6.45% and 2.06%.

The highest proportion of cases with PSHM represent individuals who have declared income from 2004-400 thousand lek per month and 100-200 thousand lek per month with 34.29% and 30.8% respectively. Then rank them with 400-600 thousand lek per month with 20.7% and over 600 thousand lek per month with 10.2%. Individuals who have had a previous family history with mental health

problems appear with 35.42% of cases while those without family history with 64.58% of cases.

It is worth pointing out that this paper revealed a strong correlation for all the risk factors that we have taken in the study. Significant strong links were noted for gender, place of residence, age groups, educational level, monthly income, employment and familial heritage. For all these cases we have had significant links of $p < 0.05$ and CI 95%.

Conclusion

The prevalence of mental disorders in Albania is higher if we compared with other countries. This difference may be explained by population or/and genetic structure and environmental factors. Mental disorders were more frequent in this study with predominance of Schizophrenia. Those problems were more common in male, in patients that live in rural area and unemployed persons. Young people and active age people were also more likely to have mental disorders that indicating an early age of onset for mood, anxiety and alcohol disorders.

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Personality traits and stress coping strategies among Albanian young adulthoods

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Abstract

Personality is defined as a set of general, consistent, and distinct patterns of behavior displayed as a reaction to the environment.. As personality traits differ across individuals, so do stress coping strategies. Therefore some people use healthier coping strategies (e.g., Active coping, Positive reframing, Planning, Humor etc.) as compared to others, who might employ Self-distraction, Denial, Substance use, Behavioral disengagement etc. The present study aimed to assess whether personality traits (e.g., neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness etc.) determine the choice of a specific coping strategy (adaptive or maladaptive). Methodology The sample included 255 participants (Mage=26.45years, SD=4.4years), 169 women and 86 men. The measuring instrument was a self-report questionnaire; The Brief Big Five Inventory (BFI) questionnaire was used to measure the 5 personality traits while The Brief Cope questionnaire was used to measure the stress management techniques. Results showed that Neuroticism correlated positively with less adaptive coping strategies, such as self-blame ($r=.32$ $p<.01$), substance use

($r=.17, p<.01$), venting ($r=.15, p<.05$) and behavioral disengagement ($r=.12, p<.05$) but negatively correlated with adaptive coping strategies such as humor ($r= -.18, p<.01$) and active coping ($r= -.31, p<.01$). Extraversion positively correlated with several adaptive coping strategies such as active coping ($r=.19, p<.01$), positive reframing ($r=.21, p<.01$) planning ($r=.17, p<.01$), humor ($r=.27, p<.01$) etc. Conscientiousness was also positively correlated with several adaptive coping strategies such as planning ($r=.39, p<.01$), religion ($r=.16, p<.05$) and active coping ($r=.24, p<.01$), and negatively correlated with maladaptive coping strategies such as denial ($r= -.16, p<.05$) and substance use ($r= -.24, p<.01$). Agreeableness was positively correlated with several adaptive coping strategies (e.g., use of instrumental support ($r=.22, p<.01$), active coping ($r=.24, p<.01$), and negatively correlated with maladaptive coping strategies such as behavioral disengagement, ($r= -.12, p<.05$) and substance use ($r= -.15, p<.05$). Openness to experience also showed positive significant relationships with several adaptive strategies such as active coping ($r=.23, p<.01$), positive reframing ($r=.23, p<.01$), planning ($r=.27, p<.01$), humor ($r=.19, p<.01$), etc.. Results supported the claim that personality characteristics are relevant in the choice of coping strategies, particularly as regards the distinction between healthy and unhealthy coping. Findings are discussed in the context of theoretical and practical implications.

Keywords: Big Five, personality traits, coping strategies, individual differences

Theoretical background

Theories on coping strategies

What kinds of environmental events are typically cited as stress stimuli, or in Selye's terms, "stressors"? Lazarus and Cohen (1977) speak of three types: major changes, often cataclysmic and affecting large numbers of persons; major changes affecting one or a few persons; and daily hassles. As to the first, certain cataclysmic phenomena are usually treated as universally stressful and outside anyone's control. Included here are natural disasters, man-made catastrophes such as war, imprisonment, and uprooting and relocation. These may be prolonged events (e.g., imprisonment) or over quickly (earthquake, hurricane), although the physical and psychological aftermath of even a brief disaster can be extended over a long time.

During the last years, especially during the last few decades, there's been an increasing interest on the processes using by people coping with stress (Ogden, 2007). The starting point of this research is to analyze the concept of stress itself and coping, suggested by Lazarus (1996). Lazarus argued that stress consisted on three processes. The primary appraisal is the perception of the threat. The

secondary appraisal is the process of remembering a possible reaction to that threat, while facing it is the execution of that response. During all the while, individuals react to their environment including different ways of thinking, emotions and behaviours which are consistent with their personality traits and previous ways of coping (McCrae & Costa, 2003). So, Lazarus and Folkman, (1984) observed that the coping is a dynamic process which changes during the course of a stressful interaction between the individual and the environment.

The confrontation is defined by Lazarus as: “The process of managing the stress sources, which are considered as overwhelming to the individual’s resources and also as an effort to manage the demands of the surroundings as well as the internal ones” (Lazarus & Launier, 1978). In the context of the stress, coping reflects the ways the individuals interact with the stress sources in the effort to go back to some kind of normal functioning. This may include correcting or eliminating the problem, or changing the way a person thinks of a problem, or learning to tolerate and accepting it (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980).

Cohen and Lazarus (1979) defined the objectives of coping/managing as: 1) to reduce the difficult environment conditions and to increase the possibility to heal; 2) to regulate or to tolerate the negative events; 3) to preserve a positive self-image; 4) to maintain an emotional balance; and also 5) to carry on satisfying relationships with others. Individuals prefer different managing techniques predisposed by specific personality features and more over, the personality searches for ways of unflexible managing (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). To study the process of coping, Lazarus and his colleagues developed a measure which was called types of management (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). This measure consisted on a series of assertions, each of one portrays the coping or the action people engage when under stress. The persons who answered tell that when techniques used in a specified stressful interaction, are used or not, make a valuation of the questions in Likter scale.

The evaluation in the ways of stress managing is the difference between two types or general techniques of facing. The first model of coping strategies is problem-focused coping, focusing on solving the problems or doing something to change the source of stress, and emotion-focused coping, focusing on reducing or managing negative state of emotions, which relate to (or are caused by) the situation (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980).

Even though most of stressors encourage both ways of facing, the technique focused on the problem tends to prevail when people think something constructive may be achieved. Meanwhile, the technique focused on emotion, tends to prevail when people feel that the stressor is something that has to be endured (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). The difference between these two techniques is important according to Carver et al. (1989). Studies show that the responses on the techniques

of managing stress are generally more than two (Aldwin, Folkman, Schaefer, Coyne & Lazarus, 1980; Aldwin & Revenson, 1987; Coyne, Aldwin, & Lazarus, 1981; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986; Parkes, 1984; Carver et al., 1989).

Also, there is evidence showing that facing is constant during all the period of a stressful event (Gil, Wilson & Edens, 1997; Powers, Gallagher-Thompson & Kraemer, 2003) and that people tend to use the same ways of facing in stressful situations (Moss & Holahan, 2003). Researchers have noticed that these other techniques strongly differ in character (Scheier, Weintraub & Carver, 1986).

Some of the answers focused on emotion include denial, some others include positive reframing and many others include the search for support. These answers differ very much from each other and more over, they might have different consequences on someone's success on managing (Carver et al., 1989). Also the coping strategy focused on the problem deserves a further investigation (Aldwin & Revenson, 1987). Problem-focused coping in itself, can include some special activities in the individual such as planning, active managing, asking for help, self-distraction, or simply compel themselves to wait before making a decision. All of these different techniques individuals use should be considered and measured separately (Carver et al., 1989). Carver and colleagues (1989), built the instrument to measure the different techniques individuals use when facing a potential stressor.

According to Carver et al., (1989), there are fourteen managing techniques (active management, instrumental support, emotional support, surrender, self-distraction, release of negative feelings, positive reconstruction, denial, acceptance, use of substances, humour, self-guilt and religion): Active management is the process of trying to plan ahead to eliminate or improve stress's effects. Active management include direct action, increasing of someone's efforts and the struggle to develop a step-by-step facing technique. Active management is very similar to the core of problem-focused facing of Lazarus & Folkman (1984), but Carver et al. (1989) showed the differences of techniques in this wide category (Scheier & Carver, 1985).

Planning is thinking how to face a stressor. Planning includes the usage of action strategies and thinking on the steps that must be taken and how to best face the problem in order to eliminate it. This technique is also thought to be adaptable and useful in the facing process (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Another technique is the seek of social support for instrumental reasons, therefore asking for advice, help or information from the others. Another technique is seeking social support for emotional reasons, used as moral support, sympathy or understanding. These two techniques have separated functions, as the result of their concept differences. But, practically, they may very often occur at the same moment (Aldwin & Revenson, 1987).



The tendency to seek emotional support is a double-edge knife. It may seem functional in many ways. The individual who has become unsecure as the result of a stressful transaction, might get calmed using this managing technique. This technique may favour to get back in other techniques such as positive riconstruction, planning or active managing. On the other hand, sympathy sources might be used to release negative feelings (Carver et al., 1989). Studies have shown that using the technique of seeking emotional support to release negative feelings is not always adaptable (Billings and Moos, 1984, Costanza, Derlega, and Winstead, 1988, Tolor & Fehon, 1987). The notion that the technique of seeking emotional support isn't always useful, shows that some techniques of stress-answering might be ill-fitted (McCrae & Costa, 1986).

Another managing technique is surrender, which consists in reducing the efforts to face the stressor, even to give up objectives when dealing with stress factor. Surrender is reflected in a feeling of powerless. In theory, surrender might occur when people expect poor facing results. Self-distraction, another managing technique, is a variation of surrender. It is pretented that self-distraction occurs when a situation prevents surrender (Carver, Peterson, Follansbee, & Scheier, 1983). Self-distraction occurs in a large scale of activities (going to the movies, watching TV, reading or shopping), which help to deteach a person from thinking on the behaviur dimension, or the objective in which the stressor interferences, but apparently, escaping from facing a problem, doesn't exterminate it (Scheier & Carver, 1977). The other technique individuals make use of is the release of negative feelings, therefore, expressing negative feelings to make them go away. But, according to Scheier & Carver (1977), this technique isn't very useful, as concentrating on the negative state, might increase the stress perception, also might deteach the individual from active management, positive reframing or planning, which are considered to be adaptable.

The deteachment from an objective, might be an adaptable answer sometimes, according to Klinger (1975), even though this answer often prevents adaptive facing (Aldwin & Revenson, 1987; Billings & Moos, 1984; Wills, 1986). Positive riconstruction, a technique, which is considered also by Lazarus & Folkman (1984), some kind of emotion-focused facing: facing in this case aims to manage the negative feelings instead of stressor itself. This technique is appreciated in positive terms, which aim to ridirect a person to continue or begin the active management, planning or positive riconstruction. Another technique is denial, the rejection to believe that a stressor does exist, or the effort to behave in such a way as the stressor didn't exist. Often, is suggested that denial is a useful technique which eases the facing (Breznitz, 1983). On the other hand, denial brings other problems, by rejecting the reality of the event, the event gets more serious, making it more difficult to face (Matthews, Siegel, Kuller, Thompson dhe Varat, 1983). A third

point of view is that denial is useful in the early phases of a stressful transaction, but prevents from facing it later (Mullen & Suls, 1982; Suls & Fletcher, 1985).

The opposite technique of denial is acceptance, a functional facing response. When the individual accepts the reality of a difficult situation, this seems to be engaging in the effort to take care of the situation. Acceptance seems to be more important when adapting with the stressor (Carver et al., 1989). The technique of using the substances is another response when facing a stressor by using alcohol or other drugs as a way to detach from the stressor. Naturally this technique isn't adaptable according to Carver et al. (1989). Humor is another technique consisting in joking on the stressor, which brings positive effects on facing the stress.

Another technique individuals make use of when dealing with a stressful event is self-blaming, which relates with the guilt individuals feel toward particular behaviors or habits they engage to. According to Peterson, Schwartz dhe Seligman (1981), self-blaming is asociated to harmful pysical responses as distress (anxiety, fear). Shirom (2003), also showed that self-blaming, surrender and the use of substances are non-adaptable managing techniques. The last technique described by Carver et al. (1989) is turn on religion as a coping response through prayers or meditation. McCrae & Costa (1986), think that this technique may be of a great importance to many individuals. Religion may serve as a source for emotional support and as a mean for positive reframing and growth, however, its function depends by the individual itself (Carver et al., 1989).

Personality and coping strategies

The personality has a strong connection with the nature of coping as the personality inflicts on the experienced situation, which, in turn, inflicts on specific managing techniques (Bouchard, Guillemette, & Landry-Leger, 2004; Penley & Tomaka, 2002). The personality's influence on emotions and behaviors is especially clear on stressful situations, which allows the change on choosing the managing techniques (Strelau, 2001). The personality doesn't affect only the choice of ways of coping, but also the capability to put them in action (Vollrath, 2001).

Other studies have also shown that the five personality features are in strong connection with the managing techniques and that special personality features encourage specific behavior responses. In their research they also got to the conclusion that the Extraversion feature, Being Opened to Experiences, Politeness and Consciousness are positively connected to active managing, acceptance, planning, seek of instrumental support, religion, release of negative feelings, humor and positive construction (Hooker, Frazier, dhe Monahan, 1994; McCrae & Costa, 1986; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Grant & Langan-Fox, 2007; Hessegrave & Colvin, 1998; Penley & Tomaka, 2002; Watson, Minzenmayer, dhe Bowler, 2006).



McCrae and John (1992), also showed that the expression of Being opened to experiences might lead to intellectual interests, that foresees the use of active managing techniques, positive reconstruction, acceptance, humor and self-distraction, which in return demand the capability to consider new perspectives. Some other studies have shown that the Extraversion feature is positively connected with active managing and positive valuation of the stressor, as well as the Neuroticism feature was positively connected to emotional support, self-distraction, self-blaming, denial and substances use (Hooker, Frazier, & Monahan, 1994; Watson & Hubbard, 1996; Vollrath, 2001; Velting, 1999).

Hooker and colleagues (1994) also showed that Politeness feature was negatively connected with managing techniques as self-blaming, surrender, substances use and denial. In their study, O'Brein and DeLongis (1996), showed that Politeness feature was positively connected with emotional and instrumental support.

In their research, Connor-Smith and Flachsbart (2007), showed that Extraversion and Conscience features predicted managing techniques such as active managing, planning and positive reconstruction, as well as Conscience feature predicted resistance to surrender impulses. Meanwhile Being opened to experiences predicted techniques which demand the capability to consider new perspectives to unexpected events. Neuroticism feature predicted weak coping strategies to release negative feelings, emotional support and self-blaming. Hemenover and Deinstbier (1996) reached to the same conclusion in their research, that Neuroticism feature is connected to inadequate ways of coping. Also in another study, the high Conscience feature predicted low levels of surrender, self-blaming, substances use and denial (Lengua, Sandler, West, Wolchik & Curran, 1999).

In the study of O'Brien and DeLongis (1996), Conscience feature showed a stronger connection with the active managing and planning, and negatively with self-blaming, self-distraction, surrender and substances use. In the study of Watson and Hubbard (1999), being opened to experiences, was connected with planning, managing and positive reconstruction. Knoll, Rieckmann and Schwarzer (2005), got to the conclusion that Extraversion feature was connected with positive coping through the techniques of positive reconstruction, humor, instrumental and emotional support, while Being opened to experiences was positively connected with the active managing. They also showed that the techniques used by these two features are efficient and give positive results.

Depression and the quality of life among people of the third age

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Abstract

Depression is a widespread problem in third age (> 60 years old). A considerable number of elderly people and their relatives fail to recognize the symptoms for a variety of reasons. The presence of depression increases the risk of death and has a negative effect on the life of the elderly. The relationship between depression and the quality of life has often been investigated over the past years. However, in Albania studies concerning third age are very scarce. Therefore the following literature review might contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between depression and the quality of life. The study also aims to identify other aspects or factors affected by this relationship, which in turn will help service providers to promote a better quality of life, identify risk factors leading to depression and implement treatment in due time. This literature review entails articles which meet established criteria and have as their object the quality of life, depression and third aged people. The studies under consideration are cross-sectional, longitudinal etc. Mental health has an impact on the physical health, while the reverse is also true. The elderly exhibiting depression symptoms have generally speaking a poorer quality of life as compared to those who do not experience depression. Also people having a low quality of life, due to factors such as social support and physical health, are more prone to develop depression. In conclusion, studies have found a link between the level of depression and the quality of life among the elderly.

Keywords: *depression, quality of life, old age*

Introduction

Individuals over 65 are currently classified as elderly. Aging is an inevitable process of any living organism and is associated with the reduction of organ system capacity reserves, the ability to adapt to environmental factors and the capacity to respond to stress and stressful situations.

Besides being an inevitable physiological process, aging is one of the main factors reducing the quality of life due to its chronological, biological, social and psychological dimensions. The high prevalence of chronic diseases and disabilities in the elderly, compared to any other age group, along with a limited social life on their part, leads to the reduction of the quality of life.

Quality of life is defined as the “individual’s” perception of their position in life, in the context of the culture and value system they live in, as regards their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. Studies on life quality in relation to health have assessed the quality of life and report that it is a multi dimensional concept, including physical functioning, social and psychological factors, life satisfaction, well-being, and awareness on the state of health. The physical functioning dimension includes daily life activities and effects of chronic illness (if present). The dimension of social functioning involves relationships with family members, friends and society. The dimension of psychological functioning includes emotional states such as depression, anxiety, fear, anger, and happiness.

Depression is one of the most frequent psychiatric disorders that affect third age. In studies conducted in different countries, the prevalence of depression in the elderly has been reported to reach up to 15%. Risk factors to depression in the elderly are not very different from those of the youngest population; however exposure to these factors varies with age. Being female, problems with physical health, neurotic characteristics of personality, a history of depression, living in elderly homes, inadequate life events, and lack of social support are significant risk factors for the development of depression in the elderly. Also, depression is often associated with an increased mortality risk and low treatment levels of physical health disorders. Thus, depression can negatively affect the quality of life. Several studies have investigated the relationship between depression symptoms and quality of life in the third age. This literature review can serve to better understand this relationship and to provide an overview to quantitative studies on this subject.

Methodology

As above mentioned, the purpose of this literature review is to understand the relationship between the quality of life and symptoms of depression in the elderly. The objectives of this paper are as follows:

- Investigate the relationship between depression and quality of life
- Understand factors that affect depression
- Discuss the role that environmental factors have on the manifestation of depression and whether these factors affect the quality of life.

In addition to the objectives, a number of research questions have been built, which we aim to address as follows.

- What is the relationship between depression and quality of life?
- What are the factors that influence the appearance of depression symptoms and do these factors affect the quality of life?
- Gender differences in psychosocial factors that lead to the onset of depression symptoms.

Keywords such as depression, quality of life, other elderly were used to select different studies. After finding a number of articles, several criteria were set to shortlist the studies that would be included in the literature review, namely:

- Extracting studies from scientific websites such as MEDLINE, PubMed, PsychINFO, etc.
- Quantitative studies
- Studies involving individuals of the third age (≥ 60 years)
- Studies that show which variables may lead to depression in the third age.
- Studies that highlight the factors that affect the quality of life of the elderly.
- Studies that have as their objective the quality of life, depression levels or the symptoms of depression in the elderly.

Third age

According to Erik Erikson, individuals develop throughout their lives. He was among the leading theorists in psychosocial theories, studying individuals to the

end of their lives. According to him, individuals develop at certain stages, where they face certain conflicts, which the individual either successfully or unsuccessfully resolves. At this stage, individuals begin to think about death. This might also be due to life events such as retirement, spouse's death, change of dwelling place, and changes in social dynamics. At the final stage, the psychosocial task is Integrity against Despair. At this stage, questions on the meaning of life arise, what has been achieved, a reflection on lost or seized opportunities. Integrity to Erikson, refers to the feeling an individual experiences when s/he feels proud of their achievements and is pleased with them. With the experience of integrity, the individual feels little regret about things that could have been done. Having enough self-confidence, the integrity person appreciates the course of life and accepts the idea of closure, which makes death less frightening. Failure to accept and like oneself and the world regardless of the flaws leads to a tendency to depression. A person disposed to despair is not satisfied with his / her memories or self-image. S/he has an insufficient sense of belonging and has little time left to try again to mature or fulfill his / her desires. These people feel that they have misused their lives and experience much regret. They feel angry about those things they could not do in their lives while hoping they could turn back the time and be given a second opportunity.

Psychosocial factors affecting the onset or intensification of depression symptoms in the third age

Psychosocial variables that are most prevalent in the third age as compared to younger age groups can be characterized as newer stressors emerging or intensified at the third age. These may include: being widowed, living alone, illness, cognitive decline, financial difficulties / poverty and caring. Each of these variables increases at the third age, so we can observe if there are gender differences in these variables at the third age.

Being widowed/ living alone

Marital status and life style are the most studied variables regarding depression among the elderly. The data show that women are less likely to be married and more likely to be widowed compared to older males. Although the literature clearly states that older people who are married are less depressed than elderly people who are separated / widowed, there is little evidence whether there is a gender difference when it comes to marital status affecting depression.

Depressive symptoms are an expected reaction to loss, but if these symptoms persist for more than two months then they may indicate a depression disorder. Older people are more likely than younger ones to choose sorrow as the best way to adapt to loss (Torges, Steeart & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2008). Compared to women, men are more likely to fall into depression after losing their spouse and being affected by it for a longer time. This may be due to the fact that the loss of a spouse can have different consequences for men and women, linked to the different roles they have in marriage: for widowed women, financial hardship is the first mediator to depressive symptoms, meanwhile for men housekeeping is the first mediator (Umberson, Wortman & Kessler, 1992).

Illness / poor physical health

Depression in sick patients usually leads to higher levels of inability and morbidity. For many physical ills, related experiences, such as the need to manage the disease, limited functions or pains resulting from illness, hearing or vision loss, may provoke the onset of depression. Depression on its part makes it more difficult to treat the disease.

Since physical health is measured in a number of ways: the number of chronic illnesses, the ability to perform everyday tasks, etc., gender differences can be observed in men and women. There are gender differences in the elderly, where women experience more chronic illnesses, demonstrate less ability to perform in day-to-day tasks, and in questionnaires self-report poorer health. In a study conducted by Noh et al. (2016), found that there was no difference in score regarding depression between males and females who had not been diagnosed with any disease. On the other hand, women who were diagnosed with at least one disease were more depressed than men who were diagnosed with at least one disease.

Cognitive decrease/ dementia

Studies concerning cognitive decline / dementia and depression in the elderly vary depending on other variables. In a study conducted by Geda et al., (2006), found that those who suffered from depression were more likely to develop mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or incidence of dementia with a stronger impact for those who did not have a prior history of depression.

Dementia can be a risk factor for depression as a result of psychological reactions to the cognitive and behavioral changes associated with dementia. Since depression adds another burden to the quality of life of patients suffering from dementia (and their caregivers), it is very important to treat it.



Data on depression as a risk factor for the onset or a correlation of cognitive decline are mixed. In studies conducted by Sevick, Rolih and Pahor (2000), data on depression as a predictor or correlator of dementia or cognitive decline were mixed, and no gender differences were reported. In a meta-analysis by Jorm (2000), there was a small but significant link between a history of depression and the passing of dementia or cognitive decline within a period of less than a decade, but again there is no gender difference. In a study among individuals with dementia, elderly women with mild dementia have more depressive symptoms than older men with light dementia. However, it is not clear whether a history of depression is a risk factor for dementia or cognitive decline.

Financial hardship/ Poverty

Financial status is one of the most stressful events experienced by the elderly. Old people who are economically disadvantaged are more likely to experience depressive symptoms, due to exposure to chronic stressors, such as low income, exposure to unsafe and unprotected environment. Such issues can complicate treatment for low-income elderly people who suffer from depression. Moreover, socioeconomic disadvantages in early life may increase vulnerability to depression throughout life due to effects of poor nutrition, reduced educational opportunities, less access to healthcare, etc. All these disadvantages become more evident with time. Though financial difficulties and poverty are thought to be more prevalent in females than men, throughout their lives, however, few studies on depression indicate that women experience more financial difficulties and poverty than old men.

Care

Caring for other people is often a must among old people. Pinquart and Sorenson (2006) in a meta-analysis showed that women caregivers reported higher levels of depression symptoms compared to male caregivers. Moreover women reported higher levels of responsibility, more care hours, greater variety of caring tasks, and more personal care.

Problems with social support

Deficiencies in social support, the negative aspects of the social network, and even excessive social support have been studied as risk factors for the elderly, either when they are causes or effects of depression. In particular, problematic relationships can be a factor to explain depression in the third age, including marriage conflicts, perception of family criticism, and spouse's depression. Despite the fact that old

people are less lonely than young or middle aged people, loneliness is associated with depression at this age. Social support that is perceived as unnecessary or excessive may be a risk factor for depression. Increasing the level of depression symptoms associated with receiving social support is found in the elderly with physical disabilities who have a great desire for independence.

Loneliness and quality of life

Despite the fact that females live 6-8 years longer than men, they have lower life quality. According to Kirchergast and Haslinger (2008), the low quality of life in old women comes as a result of social and behavioral factors. Old women may be widows, socially inactive, have income problems, and experience a series of health problems that make them feel unhappy with their lives.

Moreover, cultural habits and socio-economic factors can explain the effect of gender differences in the quality of life. Women in particular seem to experience more stress about their health, family and display low self-esteem. Also, the majority of old women cite that the inability to perform their daily tasks and pursue social activities limits their lives. On the other hand, it is known that women's body weakens faster than men's. Consequently, at the third age, they have more functional disabilities, health problems, dependence on others, and experience cognitive decline (e.g. Alzheimer) that make them feel miserable. In European countries the number of widowed women is higher than their male counterparts.

Being widowed produces a lot of negative feelings in a person: they feel stressed, frightened, worried. Moreover, the majority of widowed women become socially inactive and refuse to participate in activities. They note that their income is lower than their spouses', which makes them feel dependent on their families.

Loneliness is another problem at the third age. Abuse is one of the many factors that affect it. Often, the elderly are forced to tolerate unpleasant behavior on the part of their family members because they fear ending up being alone in a time they will most need care.

Health problems are observed more among old women the men. Age-related disabilities impair their ability to perform daily activities independently. This lack of independence or autonomy deprives them from communication or pursuing activities outside the home; they feel that their life has no longer a meaning. The death of friends (a likelihood which increases with age) increases social isolation because it is very difficult at this age to make new friends. Their income mostly goes to buy medications. Due to such a lifestyle, the elderly are vulnerable to exhibit depression and spiritual degradation. Consequently, old women stand lower in the social ladder, either because of loss of the spouse or poor relationship with other



family members. Loneliness grows even more over 75 years of age because of an increased prevalence of depression and being widowed.

So, the elderly who live near their family members have social support, exhibit better mental health and less solitude. All of these lead to a better quality of life.

Physical illness, depression and quality of life

Chronic pain seriously affects a person's daily activities and at the same time even the quality of their life. Chronic pain and psychological disorders are highly interrelated, affecting physical and psychosocial functioning. Various studies have shown that chronic pain is related to severe symptoms of depression. Moreover, factors such as economic disadvantage, medical complications are related to the low level of quality of life.

In a study by Akyol, Durmuş, Doğan, Beck, Cantürk (2010), the objective was to investigate the effects of overall health and personal characteristics on the quality of life of the elderly and to assess the relationship between the level of depression symptoms, pain intensity of quality of life. There was a negative correlation between quality of life, pain intensity and depression level. The presence of a chronic illness and poor education status reduced the quality of life and increased the level of depression in the elderly. The quality of life is negatively affected by the level of depression and intensity of pain. However, a number of studies have focused on being widowed as a life event that affects third age.

Studies that link depression to the quality of life

The study conducted by Cao et al., (2016) aimed to look at the relationship between life quality and depression. The study included 1168 Chinese elderly. The findings of this study showed that the highest scores in terms of life quality dimensions concerned social support, followed by the environment, physical health and psychological health. Results showed that there was a negative correlation between physical health, the environment and depression in elderly people. Those who suffered from depression were older, less educated, had lower monthly incomes and were likely to report insomnia. All dimensions of the questionnaire on life quality, except for the social dimension, had a negative correlation with depression.

In their study in Portugal, Becker et al., (2018), identified the link between depression and life quality, but in this case the effect of sleep quality served as a mediator variable. The study showed that the elderly who had 6-9 hours of sleep had a better cognitive functioning, lower levels of physical and mental illness and better quality of life compared to those who slept less or more.

A meta-analysis proves that depression is associated with subjective sleeping disorders (Becker, Jesus, João, Viseu, & Martins, 2016), and other activities (Dzierzecki et al., 2015; Maglione et al., 2012 Potvin, Lorrain, Belleville, Grenier, & Prévile, 2014; Rashid & Tahir, 2015). So sleep quality is considered an important variable affecting depression and other variables, such as life quality.

The study conducted by Demura & Sato (2003) had as its objective the analysis of the relationship between depression life quality characteristics of elderly living in community and compare them later by gender and age. 1302 people participated. The results of the study showed that the characteristics of depression in the elderly differed according to age groups and gender. Depression was higher among those who were advanced in age compared to those who were about to enter adult age and was higher among very old women. The main factors associated with the elderly who lived in the community were the number of friends and spirits. In particular, the increase in the number of friends was associated with reduced depression.

The study conducted by Diefenbach, Tolin, Gilliam intended to look at the symptoms of depression and quality of life in the elderly who received home-based home care services through home care programs. The study involved 66 elderly. They suffered from chronic diseases and needed home care. The results of the study showed that the link between depression symptoms and impairment of life quality dimensions was quite strong and widespread. Symptoms of depression were almost linked to damages of life quality in all dimensions.

Halvorsrud L, Kirkevold M, Diseth A, Kalfoss M. (2010) aimed at looking how symptoms of depression, physical function, health satisfaction, age and environmental conditions affect the quality of life based on Wilson and Cleary's model. The study conducted in Norway stratified the population by age, gender and living area. The results showed that the quality of life is directly dependent on environmental conditions and health satisfaction. In addition, environmental conditions indirectly affect the quality of life, mainly through symptoms of depression that the elderly display.

Xiao, YoungYoon, Bowers (2015), in their study aimed to show how way the elderly organized their lives (the comparison between elderly people living in homes vs. those living in elderly homes) had a direct effect on the quality of life of the elderly and if daily activities and depression have an indirect effect on the relationship between the way of life's organization and quality of life. Psychological factors have been identified as very important in the quality of life of elderly people who live in their homes (Baernholdt et al., 2012; Wicke et al., 2014), namely on psychological factors, depression causes poor quality of life due to low levels



of social engagement and behavioral and verbal concerns (Dow, Lin, Tinney, Haralambous, & Ames, 2011). Differences in the link between the way of life organization and depression have always been shown. For example, a previous study reported that elderly people who had cognitive impairments and lived at home were less depressed compared to those who lived in elderly institutions (Nikmat et al., 2015). In contrast, another study showed that those living at homes and communities experienced more depression than those who lived in elderly homes (Chung, 2008). The findings of this study showed that individuals living in community reported better daily activity and less depression, which are related to a better quality of life compared to those who lived in the homes of the elderly. These data suggest that elderly homes themselves do not bring about low life quality, but mediating factors, daily activities and depression have a significant impact on the quality of life.

Treating depression symptoms can lead to life improvement. The study conducted by Wang, Tzeng, Chung (2014), focused on the effects of group psychotherapy on symptoms of depression and quality of life in the elderly, who live in elderly homes. Therapy was conducted once a week for 8 weeks among 96 elderly in Japan. The results of this intervention showed that depression was significantly reduced for the group who had participated in the therapy compared to the control group. Also, data analysis showed significant differences in social and psychological dimensions, but not physical and environmental ones.

Religion and quality of life

A large number of studies have shown that religion is positively associated with mental health and well being at the third age (Ardelt, 2003; Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001; Nelson-Becker, 2005). Various studies have pointed out that high levels of religious inclusion predict a greater satisfaction in the lives of third-aged people (Moberg, 2008, Roh, 2010). As mentioned above, social support is very important. Studies have shown that social support is also positively linked to life satisfaction in the third age (Roh, 2010; Yoon & Lee, 2007). Social support is not only a predictor of life satisfaction in the elderly (George, 2006) but has been found to be a positive result of faith in the elderly (S.J. Jang & Johnson, 2004, E. O. Lee & Sharpe, 2007). The study conducted by Park, Roh, and Yeo, (2011) among old Korean emigrants in America aimed to find out whether strong religious faith was positively related to a greater life satisfaction and whether the relationship between them was mediated by social support. Results showed that strong religious beliefs are associated with greater enjoyment of life and that social support partly explains the relationship between religion and life satisfaction. These data may indicate that

religious involvement and social support can be important factors to improve the quality of life of the elderly.

One of the dimensions of life quality measurement is social support and in the elderly it is seen as an indicator of their well-being. On the other hand depression is one of the major problems in the third age. The spiritual and religious part also serves as a strategy to cope with the various losses that the elderly experience during their lives (González-Celis, 2012a; González-Celis & Araujo, 2010). Following their previous study, Gonzales-Celis, Gómez-Benito (2013), conducted a study among the elderly in Mexico, which aimed at assessing whether social support and spirituality are indicators of life quality in the elderly and investigate their effects on depression. Individuals with higher levels of depression had poorer life quality and vice versa. There was also no change in the quality of life depending on the type of depression. There was no meaningful connection between scores in the dimension of spirituality and participation in a religious group. It was noted that individuals who participated in a group had higher scores in the dimension of spirituality, which means that affiliation in a group helps increase spirituality level, which in turn can affect the quality of life of people.

Regarding spirituality and quality of life, we can say that spirituality can be a defensive factor when used as a source to fight depression symptoms. In this way the quality of life of the elderly can be improved through psychological interventions to reduce the presence of depression symptoms. Spirituality can also be used as a source, as well as a coping strategy to strengthen other aging fields.

Conclusions

At the end of this literature review, what we can say is that there is a negative relationship between depression and quality of life. Severe depression symptoms are associated with a poor quality of life and this relationship seems to remain stable over time. Depressed people have a poorer quality of life than those who do not suffer from depression. Based on past studies, an improvement in quality of life has been observed in people who have fully or partially recovered compared to those who have a persistent depression. Elderly people who had two or more physical illnesses had a poorer quality of life compared to people with fewer physical disabilities. In general, life quality dimensions were negatively affected by depression or symptoms of depression.



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Best Interest of the Child _____

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Abstract

In this paper we aim to discuss the best interest of the child as one of the one of the key principles and priorities to international and domestic law. The purpose of this study is to treat the legal aspect for best interest of the child especially related to adoption institute and on the possibility of children's adoption by homosexuals, identification of the most critic cases that are related with it, and ongoing debates about the composition of the family, because more and more homosexuals aim to adopt a child therefore it is very important to clarify the criteria that have to be considered by courts in order to guaranty the best interest of the child.

Key words: *best interest, child, parent, law, doctrine*

Methodology

This research is combination of a qualitative and a comparative study but mainly focused on a qualitative one. It will concentrate on the analysis of the statutory national rules, international legal instruments and related case law in the field of adoption. On the other hand, it shall deal with the literature dealing with adoption laws, Hague Convention etc. Considering a variety of doctrinal articles related to this study. The research will be focused on several national legal systems.

Best interest of the child

Children are the most delicate and sensitive beings of the planet...it's our duty to decide and act for them properly. They are the future of the country, and the main

attention should be focused on children as the foundation of future. International legal instruments also the Albanian Family Code recognize that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. According to Convention on the Rights of the Child, "...a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier .." If we refer to Family Code, there is no definition what a child means by law, but we can interpret from article 6,7 and 8 of Civil Code.

The best interest of the child principle, is an old concept that originally appeared as a standard articulated in the American Adoption Law in the mid-1800s (Kohm LM, 2009: 9). Today, this concept is changing and there are new issues to deal with. Domestic legislation sets out strict rules for making decisions about children only on the basis of their best interest. Although in any international convention or instrument for child protection, the best interest is primary, in the national legislation of different countries the context of this interest is viewed in different ways, depending on the country's socio-economic development. Due to the evolution and legal changes of children's rights in Albania, the aim is to create a normative framework and judicial practices in accordance with international standards. This interest has started to be widely recognized by social workers, practitioners and professionals working with children. International legal instruments and national legislations of EU countries, explicitly proclaim the best interest of the child as the most important and necessary condition for the child's future. The Albanian legislation gives importance to whether the person is able to create a suitable family environment to raise and educate a child

Children's adoption by single homo/heterosexual parent should be treated based on the best interest of the child or based on the nondiscrimination of these people for their sexual orientation?

The Declaration of Human Rights of 1959 sets the best interest of the child at the highest consideration and is mentioned in Articles 3, 9, 18, 20, 21, 37, 40; The European Convention on the Adoption and Convention on the Rights of the Child also set the best interest as primary consideration.

The child's well-being is determined by individual characterizing circumstances for the child, such as the age of the child (which is related to the ability of the child to perceive), the child's growing environment and the relationship with the biological parents.

Our legislation, as well as the domestic law of the EU countries, give priority to the growth of the child by the biological parents, determining the validation of all opportunities to keep the child in his or her family, which must be accompanied with the government's supportive policies towards families with severe economic conditions, creating facilities in order to avoid renouncing parental responsibility and giving consent to child adoption. One of the main principles of F. Code is the

best interest of the child. Like the Constitution, other laws have seen the minor involved in the concept of citizen without differentiating it (UNICEF, 2009: 25).

In cases where it is noted that the rights of a child are not respected, the People's Advocate may start addressing this case even on his own initiative, where he considers that the best interest of the child is not taken into account¹.

Best interest of the child is a standard designed to guide judges when making child-related decisions, it is also a determining factor for specific actions, mainly for adoption (CRC, Article 21). In examining the issue of adopting a child to determine what is best for a child, the court must first rely on the child's happiness (on child's will), or on other aspects of religion, race, nationality, or economic status of adoptive parents? Which of these criteria is most important to the well-being, and education of a child?

First of all, we are not dealing with a hierarchical list by AZ, which sets out the criteria, conditions and values that adopting parents must have, but the diversity of values and circumstances that characterize the beginning of a new parent-child relationship leads the court in determining and selecting the primary criteria on a case-by-case basis and that the issue of the best interest of the child does not have strict rules. In interpreting this interest, emphasis is placed on the child as an individual with his / her thoughts and feelings as well as the child as a subject of civil and political rights, as well as special protection (Training Manual, 2012: 16). In many cases, only legislation cannot determine the best interest for each child individually, in any particular situation. Adoption should always be allowed if it serves the child's interest, so the child's interest in wellbeing (Weisberg, Appleton, 2006: 1129). However, the doctrine sets out a general summary list of criteria to be taken into account in determining the child's highest interest in establishing the adoption relationship, such as:

- Adequacy of the child with adoptive parents
- The consent of the child with regard to adoption
- Prospective parents' ability to raise children
- The economic situation of adoptive parents
- Change of race between parents and children (especially in those cases where adoptive and adopted children have different skin color)
- Sexual orientation of adoptive parents
- Religion, language, culture (in those cases where the child is at an age who understands and can suffer such changes)
- Age of adoptive parents and age difference between adoptive parent and adopted child
- Any other aspect that the court considers important

¹ <http://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/sq/të-drejtat-e-fëmijëve> date of access 31.01.2018



The best interest principle should define all policies and decisions regarding children, not allowing the prevalence of adult interest (UN Supplementary Report, Italy, 2001: 15). The obligation to respect the child's interest does not violate the rights of adults, in our case of biological parents and adoptive parents, but this interest under UNCRC prevails over other rights.

Can a child's decision be made against his will even if it is in his/her best interest?

Under Article 9 of the CRC, in cases involving the separation of the child from one or both parents, if the child disagrees, this action is not undertaken even though it may be in his / her interest. In cases where it is established that the child's wish is expressed under the influence of different forms from other persons, an adverse decision may be taken with his will that at the trial of the court constitutes his best interest.

In the case of *Sommerfeld v. Germany*, judged by the ECtHR, the applicant alleges that the German court did not take into account his request to have contacts with the daughter who was born out of wedlock, so there was a violation of his right to respect for family life and that he was the victim of discriminatory treatment.

It is based on Articles 6, 8 and 14 of the Convention. German courts based on sections 1634 and 1711 of the German Civil Code unjustifiably impose the father of children born out of wedlock in a less favoring position than the father of children who is divorced from the biological mother and in cases of giving custody does not take into account the child's highest interest but the case is judged on the basis of the father's status. Most importantly, the German regional court did not consider allowing contact between the child and the natural father *prima facie* in its best interest since the child repeatedly refused to meet his father. The court had the right to refuse the father's request, as long as this was not in the best interest of the child. According to Article 9, paragraph 2 of the CRC, a child who is separated from one or both parents must maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis only if this is inconsistent with her best interest.

What about in case of adoption procedures of a child from a couple who has biological children, whose child's interest should prevail? Should the biological child's wish or consent be taken into consideration by the court regarding the adoption of a brother or a sister?

Neither domestic law nor international legal instruments regarding adoption and children's rights are expressed in relation to such situations. Courts are basically based on the principle that in every action taken with regard to a child, consideration should be given to the child's wishes, respecting his/her best interest, but how to decide whether one child's interest is to be met fulfill the interest of the other child? Adoption procedures according to Law 9695 "On Adoption Procedures" do not provide as part of the administrative or judicial procedures for taking the opinion of the biological child that his parents adopt a child.

Another type of adoption, transracial, often opposed by different organizations in different countries and coupled with controversial ongoing debates, is considered to be a violation of the child's interest. Courts in general, in reasoning about their attitude to decisions in relation to this type of adoption, say that such an adoption relationship would be easily evident from others, the child would have easy to understand in their age small non-biological connection with parents and that this new relationship does not mimic the natural family, as is the purpose of adoption. Given that the child's highest interest is in court interpretation, in those cases where adoption of a trans-national adoption is approved, the child is generally colored while the parents are white. This puts discriminating discriminatory positions on colored adoptive applicants, which for the application for transgressive adoption, the courts decide to violate the child's highest interests. Different scholars define trans-racial adoption as the adoption of black children by white families (Turner & Taylor, 1996: 262).

Conclusions

As sanctioned in both international and national legislation, priority should be given to raising the child in the biological family, interfering with financial or social support.

It is important to design effective social programs and policies to sensitize or extract the family from the difficulties that have led to the abandonment of the child

References

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction
- European Convention on Adoption 2008
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