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NEW NORMAL: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Citizenship education, international competences and extended reality: Immerse yourself

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Keywords: *citizenship education; extended reality; authentic learning environments; international competences; curriculum development*

Introduction

Higher education supports students in acquiring competences; a mix of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Experience has shown that it is precisely attitude and skills that ensure a better connection to the labor market, in whatever sector in whatever country.

This article examines the developments and experiences in authentic learning environments in relation to international aspects of citizenship education. It discusses the possibilities and limitations of the use of extended reality in general and in this context.

The author links this to the educational and societal developments in Albania and her home country The Netherlands, during and after COVID-19, and shares her thoughts on the needs for continuing attention on new forms of citizenship education. The pandemic makes it necessary to re-consider past self-evident interpersonal relations and international relations.

After a short introduction on the concepts of citizenship education, internationalization, and extended reality, the article first digs into the relevance

of competence based learning and authentic learning-environments, in order to highlight the importance of learning styles and learning environments.

The inventory of the possibilities and limitations of the use of extended reality in the context of citizenship education and internationalization, is followed by an overview of the current situation in Albanian and Dutch societies and higher education.

The focus is on the curriculum and class-room level in higher education, so on knowledge exchange at practitioners level, with an eye for the policy implications at other levels.

Citizenship education

Citizenship education contains the personal development of reflective ability, moral compass, media literacy and international experience, as Willeke Slingerland of Saxion UAS stated during the Albanian Week of Integrity in 2020. She investigated the importance of higher education in the total system of integrity (Slingerland, 2016).

Opinions differ on which role the government should play in citizenship education and which role of educational institutions like universities should take. Integration, civil society, active citizenship are goals most people agree upon. Working on common values: that is already more difficult. One should realize that international integration, like the EU, not only changes citizenship as such, but also the contents of national curricula, and the purpose and assumptions of citizenship education (Keating, 2009). The COE announced Competences for democratic culture during the Learning to live together conference about the future of citizenship an Human Right education in Europe (Council of Europe, 2019).

There are many theories on citizenship education and curriculum. Curtiss and Warren distinguished the following elements, already in 1973:

FIGURE 1. Citizenship education curriculum (Curtiss & Warren, 1973)



In the next section, the role of international competences are first addressed in general, and later more specifically on international citizenship education.

Internationalization

Part of citizenship education is linked to internationalization. How is internationalization integrated in the curriculum of the university and in its organization? Preferably not as a goal as such but as a means to become a responsible, capable professional. With an open, flexible approach, ready for the world. This is what internationalization is about, and why it should have its role in the university curriculum and organization.

The European Association for International Education has a widely accepted view on internationalization. She defines internationalization as: “The intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society.” (EAIE, 2020)

It is good to realize that it is definitely more than ‘something with English’ or mobility. Nor are English or mobility necessary components of internationalization. Conducting a module in English, whether or not to students from abroad, does not make it internationalized. Conversely, a module or training can be internationalized without switching to English or building in mobility (Saxion UAS, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic it became apparent that international contacts are crucial, but traveling not always necessary let alone possible. There are many forms of internationalization, that are beyond the scope of the article. It is mainly to address the role of internationalization in competence development.

The main contributions of internationalization include:

- For higher education, it contributes to high quality education and research, addressing the needs of the employment market and addressing global challenges.
- For learners, it contributes to personal socialization, like working in an international classroom, online or offline. It contributes to personality development of the learner, the more general skills and awareness. It is needed for professional qualification of the learner, in the strict labor market sense.
- For society, it contributes to solving societal problems. Like contributing to more inclusive communities. Of course, it could also contribute to problems, like the environmental impact of traveling.

Internationalization in education also includes research of course. But that is not discussed in detail here, other than joint student-research activities, and the role of educators and the relevance of their professional development including research skills.

International elements used to be included in the curriculum as embedded mobility within a course, exchange mobility for individual students, networked mobility in networked curricula and courses with mobility windows and integrated mobility in joint curricula. More and more society realizes that mobility is not always necessary. How can online cooperation, virtual mobility and (Keating, 2009) obtain the same goals? On an organization level or national level, there are different programs to support international competence development for staff and students. In the European context there is national and European funding for international cooperation, with different goals and means. Next to various Erasmus programs, Horizon2020 and the new European University Networks are worth mentioning.

Extended reality (XR)

Let's move on to the next important concept. Virtual reality can be used as a tool to learn in an authentic learning environment. In this article this concept includes augmented reality, virtual reality and more.

It includes also online learning, whereby different locations are linked, or making learning place and time independent.

Extended reality is new and not new, because creativity has always been there. Transferring information and experiences to other regions or other times was done via magic lanterns, and is done in museums. Also currently, augmented reality initiatives like Humanity House in The Hague, work on site. It let the visitor experience what it is like to be a refugee.

There are many forms of extended reality, below a short impression is given:

- The Building Information Model (BIM) and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) were early examples, in construction and geography, of professional extended reality.
- Digital storytelling in marketing is widely used in companies around the globe (e.g. LEGO, Tony Chocolonely)
- Nintendo is the predecessor of the current serious gaming. Edu games and professional training games show professionals and learners how to deal with a certain situation, like a house on fire, or an animal with a behavior issue.



- Home automation is more and more common in healthcare, for instance to support elderly on a distance.
- VR/ AR devices, computers, motion capture solutions, robots, cameras, drones, are used in the link between industries, students and researchers. Google glasses is a well-known example.
- Welding simulators are getting daily practice in vocational education at various levels.

Competences and authentic learning environments in the curriculum

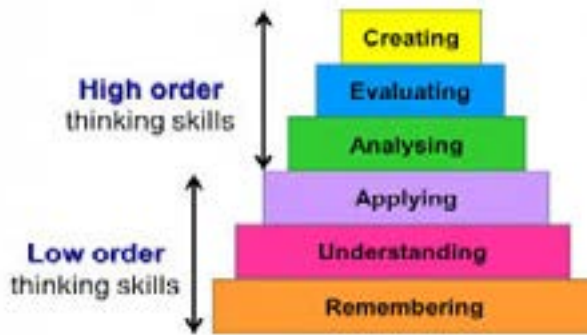
Before going into more detail about the possible role of XR in international citizenship education, it is important to realize how learning works. A number of theories are used to share the notion of competences and the relevance of authentic learning environments in building and executing a curriculum.

Competences are defined as a mix of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Although knowledge is indispensable to a greater or lesser extent, experience shows that it is precisely attitude and skills that ensure a better connection between the young qualified professional in the labor market.

Some universities or university programs are more research-oriented, with an academic focus. Other courses, especially those offered by universities of applied sciences, are by definition labor market oriented. The point is that both are labor market oriented and both require a set of skills and attitude, but the content is different. So there is no real difference in approach, if we are aware of the different conditions on the general labor market and the specific labor market for scientists. In the cognitive domain, Bloom's taxonomy distinguished different levels of learning objectives. From knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis to evaluation (Bloom, 1956). There is a never-ending debate as to whether this is sequential or not, nevertheless, the theory is widely used for teaching philosophies and strategies.

Kratwohl designed a revised version, shown in the figure below, with a more general approach. Divide skills into high and lower order skills. Create (creativity) being the highest skill, and evaluating seen as the reflective skill. (Kratwohl, 2002)

Figure 2: The taxonomy of educational objectives (Kratwohl, 2002)



ot just knowledge but also skills, are also reflected in Miller’s pyramid. The following levels are used in education to assess the level of competence: knows about, knows, knows how, shows how to do. This also reflects the importance of skills. From passively acquiring knowledge to actively showing how to do it (Miller, 1990).

Awareness is important. The theory of Curtis and Warren is useful for that. They distinguish four levels. The theory is mentioned here specifically, because it also links to citizenship skills, which require conscious behavior.

1. Unconscious incompetence. A student does not understand or does not know how to do something and does not necessarily recognize the deficit. This should be recognized before moving to the next phase.
2. Conscious incompetence. Though the student does not understand or know how to do something, they recognize the deficit
3. Conscious competence. The student understands or knows how to do something. But this requires attention and concentration.
4. Unconscious competence. The student has had so much practice with a skill that it has become a second nature and can be performed easily. The skill could be taught to someone else. (Curtiss & Warren, 1973)

Interdisciplinarity is another issue, that is not addressed here in detail, but relates to complexity of situations. Disciplines need each other to solve a professional problem or to investigate a question.

In the report ‘Preparing 21st century students for a global society’ of NEA, there is a focus on the 4 C’s: creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration (National Education Association, 2012).

Curriculum development requires an eye for the composition of competences in a curriculum, for that cause the Zelcom model is useful. Zelcom stands

for Zelfstandigheid (Dutch for self-reliance) and Complexiteit (Dutch for complexity). The model is used at universities of applied sciences in The Netherlands. Independence (or self-reliance) and complexity are two axes that together determine the competence level. Important for the qualification level of the study program, assessing assignments, determining assessment criteria and assessing student performance. A useful tool for curriculum development. In making training more relevant to the profession, and clearer also for partners in the professional field (Bulthuis, 2013). The model is also used as a quality control tool in (inter)national accreditations.

Self-reliance	C	D	E
	B	C	D
	A	B	C
	Complexity		

FIGURE 3: Zelcom-model (Bulthuis, 2013)

Authentic learning environments are key to competence based learning. In fact competence based learning requires authentic learning environments. An approach that allows students to explore, discuss and construct concepts and relationships in a context that involves a real world problem and projects that are relevant to the learner, and the professional field.

Wehlage defines five standards of authentic instruction. Higher order thinking, depth of knowledge, connectedness to the world, substantive conversation, social support for student achievement (Wehlage, 1993). The practical environments include: simulation, student created media, inquiry based learning, project based learning and peer based learning (Revington, 2018). Here the links to citizenship education are obvious.

These notions are not all new, by the way, but they form a useful overview. Benefits of authentic learning environments include:

- a better preparation for the professional field
- learn to assimilate
- obtain problem solving skills
- learn to be flexible
- motivation for learners (and educators)

When looking at *how* students learn, Kolb distinguishes 4 different learning styles of participants in education or elsewhere (Kolb, 2005):

- Doer, is actively experimenting and gaining experience. His motto is: let's get to work. Guessing and missing is allowed in his approach.
- Dreamer, is experiencing concretely and observing reflectively. He looks in all directions and finds solutions.
- Thinker, likes reflective observation and conceptualization. He is able to reason well and likes to work independently.
- Decision maker, likes abstract conceptualizing and active experimentation. He is a problem solver.

It is important to note, that there are four moments when learning actually happens: by experiencing, by reflecting, by conceptualizing or by applying. Learners could go through the entire cycle, starting with experience.

Although many curricula at universities are very structured and well organized, they may not cover all these different learning styles. Whether one should apply the same, complete cycle every time, or one could select parts from it for certain learning units, is a question to take into account. Preferably, the overall curriculum attention should cover different learning styles, which could be included in the Zelcom model, for instance.

After the why of the learning experience, the authentic learning environments are chosen to show *how* are they learning? The curricular spider web developed as SLO is a widely used tool to decide about the learning environment elements, like grouping, location, resources, teacher role and so on. (SLO Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development, 2018).

FIGURE 4: Curricular Spider Web (SLO 2018)



Now that the educational setting elaborated, another look into citizenship education, XR in the international context is in place.

International citizenship education and extended reality (XR)

Ahrari et al, use this model of citizenship education and curriculum (S. Ahrari, 2017).

Figure 5: Categories of democratic citizenship education curriculum (Ahrari, 2017)



One can distinguish direct links with knowledge, skills and attitude at different levels and the competence models and authentic learning models mentioned before. All these citizenship competences are applicable to the professional atmosphere. Not only students in public management need to be educated or self-educated, although it is obvious in their curriculum. Also a technician or an architect must be aware of the ethical implications of professional activities and decisions and be able to act on them.

Professionals need to work meaning-oriented, which should be addressed in every curriculum. Of course one cannot do this in every assignment or module, therefore the overview like in Zelcom is useful in curriculum development.

When returning to extended reality in the curriculum, the following benefits of XR are mentioned by (Gils, 2020), (Häfner, 2020) (Papagiannis, 2020) and others:

- It ensures a variation in learning.
- Personalization is possible. Experiencing it yourself, making your own avatar, designing your own situations.

- It is more compelling, exciting than most forms of learning.
- Engaging, and leads to active learning
- Cooperation is key (possibly, depending on others) and engaging with others.
- Technical skills go hand in hand with knowledge (and preferably awareness).
- It offers the possibility to interact with data in a different way.

Except from scientific research proof comes from companies who share their experiences with XR and express how it affects their work, saves time and brings motivation. (ASML, Valmet websites). The labor market is of course the driving force behind the need for XR professionals and professionals with experience with XR. Companies also highlight that XR experiences also make learners realize it also influences their environment, not only vice versa.

There is a lot of experience with XR worldwide in companies and not-for-profit-organizations and in educational institutions, but in concrete terms, outside technology and healthcare home automation, little research seems to have been done into the effects in education, let alone in the international context.

Of course there are limitations to extended reality. Time and costs, -including expensive labs- , although depending on the form of XR. Technical issues are relevant, like the availability of a strong internet connection.

In education the following disadvantages or and risks one needs to be taken into account: (Dede, 2009) and (Häfner, 2020).

- Risk of limited acceptance of the technique or tool or way to use it (students feel discomfort for various reasons).
- Not always contributing to learning outcome because of overload of information and experiences.
- Safety issues and security issues of the data or of the student (for instance: harassment by anonymous avatars).
- Communication issues (distraction because of wearing glasses; cultural issues).

It is important to also look at the environment, of teacher, of institute and beyond.

Dede and Dunleavy also note the need for attention on teacher's competences: '...it is the teaching that explains most of the difference in student learning gains on studies that compare technology-based versus control curriculum, rather than the media by which instruction is delivered' (Dede, 2009).

When looking at authentic online learning environments, the model of Parker is quite informative, it combines relevant elements from some of the



previously mentioned models. It looks at learner’s needs from three perspectives: authentic learning environment, meaningful learning with technology and open educational resources (Parker, 2016).

FIGURE 6: Learner needs in online learning (Parker 2016)



Towards the link between citizenship and XR a few additional viewpoints are shared here.

Online learning requires knowledge, skills and awareness of the consequences, possibilities, threats. Like the council of Europe shows in her Digital Citizen Education Handbook (Council of Europe, 2019) with 3 dimensions:

- Being online: Access and inclusion; learning and creativity; media and information literacy.
- Well-being online: ethics and empathy; health and well-being; e-presence and communication
- Rights online: active participation; rights and responsibilities, privacy and responsibilities; consumer awareness

Fonseca et all researched informal interactions in 3D education in ‘Citizenship participation and assessment of virtual urban proposals work’. The main result sees new technologies in education not as tools or delivery systems, but a set of resources and affordances that provide an opportunity to rethinking our educational aims, methods and institutions (David Fonseca, 2016).

Burbules states the following important finding about the use of IT and media: “The failure to engage this opportunity for rethinking is a constraint on the truly transformative potential these technologies possess. At the same time, this rethinking has to have a critical dimension: not only what these technologies do for us, but what they do to us ” (Burbules N. , 2016).

Haupt concludes that IT are a fixed feature in current citizenship education. The author discusses some aspects with regard to citizenship education and new media in formal education. Digital media, for example, offer a variety of possibilities of enhancing interactivity and of voicing one’s opinion. Additionally, citizenship education can make use of these tools by allowing for a testing and trying out of political action within the small scale. Still, digital media in citizenship education also bear some challenges that educators should take into account. For instance the expectation that all students (and teaching staff) are competent in using digital media, may lead to exclusions for groups of people that don’t have access to or (yet) have the competencies of using these new tools. One major function of citizenship education therefore is to aim for the inclusion of all groups of people and to make use of all options to reach learners by the means of new media. (Haupt, 2017)

Investigation from a journalist perspective was done by Georgieva et al, who advise to definitely include ethical issues in the learning process and include learning new media (Georgieva, 2018).

Saxion UAS works with its XR Lab and also started experiments at the intersection of XR and citizenship because more experiences and research are needed, also for teachers. Sanchez states in his proposal for the use of XR in international competences acquirement: “Innovation gives new opportunities for education. The intended benefit for students is an enhanced interaction about and retention of specific international competences that go beyond the current use of digital platforms. With AR / VR, skills can be trained in real-life situations outside one’s own physical location, in so-called Authentic Digital International Learning Environments” (Sanchez, 2021). Pilots will have to prove that:

- AR / VR will be meaningful for international distance learning, especially in stimulating students to complete their courses by strengthening retention of learning experiences and competences. A benefit that should not be underestimated for the student is the authentic (international) authentic learning experiences that stimulate the critical view of global issues (i.e. promotion of global citizenship). Innovation is the focus on the explicit connection with the responsibilities of the future international professional and the international competences in their profession.
- Relevant starting point is, how teachers can better embed authentic international learning environments in the curriculum. Students participate

in the development of the AR / VR environment and indicate themselves which competencies they aspire to as professionals in a globalizing context.

The general conclusion of various studies is that AR / VR applications can improve the learning process, learning motivation and effectiveness. Researchers indicate that further study is needed to understand how this medium can best be used for new types of learning experiences.

Little research has been done within higher education into the added value of these emerging technologies for internationalization, international competences and the impact on graduation. Many initiatives are currently still in the embryonic or pilot phase and are nationally / regionally oriented.

COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic shows us that in the new education (during or post COVID-19) attention must be paid to building up international and interdisciplinary competences, also at a distance, for at least two reasons. Firstly, because traveling and meeting each other in person is not always physically possible and the society still needs these competences. Secondly, because the current information bias threatens understanding between different groups in society and leads to possible misunderstanding and polarization, which are seen as a major risk for social stability. This applies to most societies around the globe, including the author's home country The Netherlands.

The pandemic made traveling less possible, sustainable development goals make that traveling is looked at critically for climate protection (United Nations, 2015).

The Dutch organization for international education (NUFFIC) foresees a change in economic gravity and perhaps an economic crisis worldwide and how these developments are changing European education. The education strategies of countries and regions must be geared to this (Nuffic, 2020).

- Digitalization of society is accelerating.
- Flexibilization of education was given a boost.
- More opportunities to collaborate and integrate technology into curricula through distance learning.
- Self-reliance is key.
- A greater focus on cooperation within the region and within Europe.
- Safety, security and uncertainty need to be addressed.

Although not post-COVID, the COIL concept gets rapid attention in international education in the past year. Coil stands for Collaborative Online International Learning:

Collaborative: Student to student learning by working together, to improve the team skills. Online Learning how to work in a remote team and manage virtual tools in a professional manner. International: Cross cultural learning by bringing the world into the classroom, offering all students an international experience in cultural, language and time management, cooperation skills and leadership skills. Learning: Practicing professional skills and learning from peers around the world (Coventry University, 2021)

Coventry University in the UK is an COIL expert, with projects with many European universities. Together with Saxion UAS a COIL Finance Lab and a COIL Security Lab are executed, with reflective portfolios as part of the professional products that are assessed.

It could have been mentioned earlier in this article, as COIL is a tool to design authentic learning environments without traveling. It is E-learning, but could be much more, with or without XR. The collaborative part is key here: real time or asynchronous, digital, and with insight. COIL could be a vehicle to give students the possibility of an international experience. More students can now gain the necessary international experience remotely, without traveling, as a replacement for or in preparation for physical international experience. COIL could be a tool to design authentic learning environments without traveling.

Yet, digital education is not equally accessible to everyone. Digitization is taking place at different speeds within society and society needs to be careful that everyone comes along (Garcia Estrada, 2021). Yet, online learning and XR cannot replace the real experience totally and everywhere. Whether it could, and when and how real meetings and real experiences are necessary needs to be researched. Sometimes a real experiences supports better learning later, sometimes online collaboration is a perfect start of the learning journey.

During the pandemic learners and educators got other experiences and notions, that need a follow up. Possibilities and learning needs are to be taken into account by educators and managing and policy staff at universities and beyond.

Albanian higher education and society

Higher education in Albania is expanding, but how can it cater for the needs of the changing society and its young people? A few researches on the quality of higher education, the labor market development and the experiences with international citizenship education are mentioned below.



Intensified cooperation with EU and EU countries would certainly lead to expansion of economic sectors in Albania, especially in the main urban areas. Preparing the labor market for the future is important to deliver challenges to young professionals in Albania. In IT, agribusiness, tourism and other sectors. Whether or not one believes in Richard Florida's Rise of the Creative Class (Florida, 2002), it seems obvious that Albania needs creative professionals in the broad sense. These professionals are needed to link innovations to the various professional uses, and they are needed not only to design, but also to apply.

According to OECD, Albania has improved access to education and raised learning outcomes since the 2000s. The organization states that educational attainment and performance still are strongly influenced by students' background characteristics. This reflects systemic challenges of low funding, unstable governance and limited capacity. Placing student learning at the centre of Albania's evaluation and assessment processes can help to focus the system onto raising standards for all (OECD, 2020).

The European Commission investigated the impact of migration on higher education and the Albanian society. Albania has one of the highest rates of emigration in recent decades in the world, part of which includes a substantial scientific diaspora. The Albanian scientific diaspora is relatively young, mainly located in OECD countries yet highly mobile between them, diverse in terms of field of study, and mainly employed in universities and research institutes. Members of the diaspora maintain close links to Albania, yet only a small minority realistically foresee return, due to a combination of economic and political obstacles (GVG for European Commission, 2012).

Positive features in this respect are, compared to other countries, the increasing number of university students, the growth of the number of universities, the relatively freedom of curriculum design and the high percentage of female students.

Laze investigated social dimensions of universities in Albania. She defines the role of Albanian universities as threefold: Firstly, assist development of society; here is the link to citizenship; secondly, support economic development; here is the link to professional competences. Thirdly, fulfill aspiration of young people; here is the link to personal development. Universities should work on their teaching methods, content of teaching and management, is her advice (Laze, 2013).

This also reflects the results of the research 'Mentoring and teachers' professional development in Albania' by (Gardinier, 2018). Mentoring, reflecting and communicating helps, but also requires teachers to be up to date in technology.

The VALEU-X project of a number of EU and Albanian universities executed a needs assessment on virtual collective teaching and learning in Albania, delivered important conclusions and advices on how to proceed with collective online teaching (VALEU-X Project, 2020). Although part of the interviewed staff

felt confident to work online even collaboratively. The advices include a need for more international exchange, for more capacity building of educators on skills and mindset. This in order to have XR as part of formal curricula and to enhance IT literacy of educators.

Concluding remarks

This article discussed the scientific insights and societal developments around international citizenship competences in curricula at universities and how collaborate learning and extended reality can play a role in this.

First, the author likes to share the statement of Burbules: ‘Education is a catalyst on the well-being of individuals and our joint future. If we are to end unsustainable thinking and practice, we will need a transformed system of education to guide us into a prosperous and sustainable future. Here we argue for a different orientation toward thinking about new technologies in education. Not just as tools or delivery systems but as a set of resources and affordances that provide an opportunity to rethink our educational aims, methods and institutions. What do these technologies for us and to us?’ (Burbules N. , 2016)

Since COVID-19, citizenship education has gained additional relevance, because of the importance of being able to deal with digitization and technology, both in terms of technology and in terms of knowing what it can do for a learner and what it does to the learner and to society; to the personal responsibility as a professional, to media literacy and to civic involvement. This goes for Albania as well as for other European countries, like The Netherlands.

Distance learning is already possible and common to some extent, but collaborative online learning and use of extended reality is advised, in order to cater for the international citizenship competences. Experiencing and learning citizenship skills while working on personal professional development is key.

Pilots and experiments in various professional fields are needed to see what works and what doesn’t. These are needed for, but especially, with students. With the support of enthusiastic educators, because they are the ‘conductor’. With COIL as the basis and experiments with students; with active learning and reflection as an integral part of their learning process, in order to keep cohesion in society -not societies- and to be aware of equal opportunities.

There is an urge to work on continuous development of existing curricula and work on new curricula, for instance on XR design. The design technological curricula is relevant for the professional field, but especially the crossroads of technics and creativity are most promising. This also reflects the need of the



Albanian society to trigger and keep creative young professionals. This fits in human capital agendas.

Depending on the specific study program, it could be more or less focused towards technology and more or less focused towards active citizenship roles. But it should all contain reflection on professional roles in the setting, with an eye for alternatives and consequences. All should be able to use and reflect on the media, on how it is used in their scope and beyond.

Albanian universities are part of Erasmus cooperation programs and other international projects. One would hit two birds with one strike, if these elements were in international projects. Since one may not have the opportunity to do everything separately and it works best integrated. At Saxion UAS the intention is to use e.g. the Erasmus-project on Resilient Democracy and European Identity for this exchange of experiences. For the benefit of the learning process of Albanian and Dutch students, the curricula at both sides and society.

On last word about the teachers, the educators. When using authentic learning environments, the ethical implications of actions or thoughts become more apparent. With a professional focus, students are likely to be interested and focused. But it is necessary to address these specifically when adopting XR in whatever forms. With XR there is possibility for more inclusiveness, but requires well trained professionals to support the learning process. If not, it might be just another 'drill', or one makes it too complicated; high tech is fine, but this is all about meaningful application.

Hopefully educators are critical, but mainly enthusiastic about all these new possibilities for students, institutions, society and themselves as educators. That they are able and willing to immerse themselves in new international experiences with their students.

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Summary in Albanian (based on English summary below, please check)

Arsimi i lartë mbështet studentët në marrjen e kompetencave, një përzierje njohurish, aftësish dhe qëndrimesh. Përvoja ka treguar se janë pikërisht qëndrimi dhe aftësitë që sigurojnë një lidhje më të mirë me tregun e punës, në cilindo sektor në cilindo vend.

Artikulli shqyrton zhvillimet dhe përvojat në mjedise autentike të të mësuarit në lidhje me aspektet ndërkombëtare të edukimit të qytetarisë. Ai diskuton mundësitë dhe kufizimet e përdorimit të realitetit të zgjeruar në përgjithësi dhe në këtë kontekst. Fokusi është në kurrikulën dhe nivelin e dhomës së klasës në arsimin e lartë, pra në shkëmbimin e njohurive në nivelin e praktikuesve, me synimin për implikimet e politikave në nivelet e tjera.

Autori e lidh këtë me zhvillimet arsimore dhe shoqërore në Shqipëri dhe vendin e saj të lindjes Hollanda, gjatë dhe pas COVID-19, dhe ndan mendimet e saj mbi nevojat për vëmendje të vazhdueshme në format e reja të edukimit të qytetarisë. Për shkak se pandemia e bën të domosdoshme rishikimin e marrëdhënieve ndërpersonale dhe përvojave ndërkombëtare të vetëkuptueshme të së kaluarës.

Në arsimin e orientuar profesional, mjediset autentike të të mësuarit janë të rëndësishme, sepse i bën nxënësit më të lehtë përvetësimin, marrjen e aftësive për zgjidhjen e problemeve dhe ata janë më të motivuar për të mësuar. Në varësi të stileve të tyre personale të të mësuarit, ata marrin kompetenca.

Kompetencat e shtetësisë janë të domosdoshme, pavarësisht nga fusha specifike profesionale e nxënësit, por përmbajtja dhe forma duhet të përshtaten me situatën. Përvojat ndërkombëtare janë pjesë e këtyre kompetencave. Pikërisht në këtë fushë ndodhën zhvillime të mëdha, për shkak të COVID-19 dhe në mënyrë të pavarur prej tyre.

Në një shoqëri ku udhëtimi nuk është i mundur për shkak të kufizimeve fizike ose financiare ose që nuk dëshirohen për shkak të konsideratave të qëndrueshmërisë, bashkëpunimi për të mësuar në internet ofron shanse. Sidomos arsimi me realitet të zgjeruar mund të shërbejë si përgatitje ose zëvendësim i përvojave ndërkombëtare në të vërtetë. Sigurisht që ka kufizime

dhe kërkesa, por përparësitë janë të shumta, p.sh. mundësitë e personalizimit, është tërheqëse, përshtatja e aftësive teknike dhe nevoja për të bashkëpunuar.

Që nga COVID-19, edukimi për qytetarinë ka fituar një rëndësi shtesë, për shkak të rëndësisë së të qenit në gjendje të merren me dixhitalizimin dhe teknologjinë, si nga aspekti i teknologjisë, ashtu edhe nga aspekti i të diturit se çfarë mund të bëjë për një nxënës dhe çfarë i bën atij dhe shoqërisë; për përgjegjësinë personale si profesionist, për shkrim-leximin për media dhe përfshirjen qytetare. Kjo vlen për Shqipërinë, si dhe për vendet e tjera të Evropës, si Holanda.

Pilotët dhe eksperimentet në fusha të ndryshme profesionale janë të nevojshme për të parë se çfarë funksionon dhe çfarë jo, me mësimin ndërkombëtar bashkëpunues online si bazë. Reflektimi duhet të jetë një pjesë integrale e procesit të të mësuarit, në mënyrë që të ruhet kohezioni në shoqëri - jo shoqëritë - dhe të jemi të vetëdijshëm për mundësitë e barabarta.

Ekziston një dëshirë për të punuar në zhvillimin e vazhdueshëm të planprogrameve ekzistuese dhe punë në programe të reja, për shembull në hartimin e XR. Planprogramet teknologjike të dizajnit janë të rëndësishme për fushën profesionale, por veçanërisht udhëkryqi i teknikës dhe krijimtarisë janë më premtues. Kjo gjithashtu pasqyron nevojën e shoqërisë shqiptare për të nxitur dhe mbajtur profesionistë të rinj krijues. Universitetet shqiptare janë pjesë e programeve të bashkëpunimit Erasmus dhe projekteve të tjera ndërkombëtare. Njëri do të godiste dy zogj me një goditje, nëse këta elementë do të ishin në projekte ndërkombëtare. Kjo është po aq e rëndësishme në Hollandë.

Duke kombinuar edukimin për qytetarinë dhe XR ekziston mundësia për më shumë përfshirje, por kërkon profesionistë të trajnuar mirë për të mbështetur procesin e të mësuarit. Nëse jo, mund të jetë vetëm një 'stërvitje' tjetër, ose dikush e bën atë shumë të komplikuar, pasi kjo ka të bëjë me një aplikim kuptimplotë. Shpresojmë që arsimtarët në Shqipëri dhe jashtë janë kritikë, por entuziastë për të gjitha këto mundësi të reja për studentët, institucionet, shoqërinë dhe vetë si arsimtarë. Se ata janë të aftë dhe të gatshëm të zhyten në përvoja të reja ndërkombëtare me studentët e tyre.

English summary

Higher education supports students in acquiring competences, a mix of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Experience has shown that it is precisely attitude and skills that ensure a better connection to the labor market, in whatever sector in whatever country.

The article examines the developments and experiences in authentic learning environments in relation to international aspects of citizenship education. It discusses the possibilities and limitations of the use of extended reality in general and in this context. The focus is on the curriculum and class-room level in higher education, so on knowledge exchange at practitioners level, with an eye for the policy implications at other levels.

The author links this to the educational and societal developments in Albania and her home country The Netherlands, during and after COVID-19, and shares her thoughts on the needs for continuing attention on new forms of citizenship education. Because the pandemic makes it necessary to re-consider past self-evident interpersonal relations and international experiences.

In professional oriented education authentic learning environments are important, because it makes learners easier to assimilate, obtain problem solving skills and they are more motivated to learn. Depending on their personal learning styles, they obtain competences.

Citizenship competences are necessary, regardless of the specific professional domain of the learner, but the content and form should be adapted to the situation. International experiences are part of this competences. It is exactly in this field that large developments took place, because of COVID-19 and independently thereof.

In a society where travelling is not possible because of physical or financial restrictions or not wanted because of sustainability considerations, collaborate online learning offers chances. Especially education with extended reality may serve as preparing or replacing for real-live international experiences. There are certainly limitations and requirements, but the advantages are numerous, e.g. the personalization possibilities, it is engaging, the adaptation of technical skills and the need to cooperate.

Since COVID-19, citizenship education has gained additional relevance, because of the importance of being able to deal with digitization and technology, both in terms of technology and in terms of knowing what it can do for a learner and what it does to the learner and to society; to the personal responsibility as a professional, to media literacy and to civic involvement. This goes for Albania as well as for other European countries, like The Netherlands.

Pilots and experiments in various professional fields are needed to see what works and what doesn't, with collaborative online international learning as the basis. Reflection should be an integral part of the learning process, in order to keep cohesion in society -not societies- and to be aware of equal opportunities.

There is an urge to work on continuous development of existing curricula and work on new curricula, for instance on XR design. The design technological curricula is relevant for the professional field, but especially the crossroads of

technics and creativity are most promising. This also reflects the need of the Albanian society to trigger and keep creative young professionals. Albanian universities are part of Erasmus cooperation programs and other international projects. One would hit two birds with one strike, if these elements were in international projects. This is equally important in The Netherlands.

By combining citizenship education and XR there is possibility for more inclusiveness, but requires well trained professionals to support the learning process. If not, it might be just another ‘drill’, or one makes it too complicated, since this is all about meaningful application. Hopefully educators in Albania and abroad are critical, but enthusiastic about all these new possibilities for students, institutions, society and themselves as educators. That they are able and willing to immerse themselves in new international experiences with their students.



Domestic Violence and its Economic Costs

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Abstract

Domestic violence is a growing concern for Albanian society. Gender-based violence-oriented studies have focused on physical, sexual, and psychological manifestations or their consequences. There is still no study to refer to the socio-economic cost of violence against women in Albania. Knowledge of the economic causes and consequences of the problem is important to enable society to deal with it constructively and correctly. It should be noted that the financial / economic costs that accompany the phenomenon of domestic violence, result as one of the factors that lead the family to deepen poverty and also limit women's opportunities for development. The purpose of this study is to describe the economic cost of violence against women. This study seeks to draw attention to the economic aspect of this phenomenon - the economic cost of violence experienced by women. Although the socio-economic cost of domestic violence requires a very complex and advanced study and especially an efficient statistical system (administrative resources), it is important to clarify that this study is an attempt to present how much it

costs a family, violence against women in marital relationships. An important finding of this study is the fact that there is a cause-and-effect relationship in the relationship between domestic violence and the economic situation of the family. So in a family in which violence is present in many forms, its economic situation is significantly affected. In addition to the individual consequences of the psychosocial cost of pain and suffering, interpersonal violence has a number of economic effects at the population level, including reduced credibility in economic, legal and social structures.

Keywords: Domestic violence, economic cost, abused woman

Introduction

Domestic violence is a growing concern for Albanian society. The profound social and economic transformation after the 90s, brought significant changes not only in the structure of the economy, standard of living, but also in the change of gender balance in Albanian society. Gender balance within the family is severely damaged by the presence of violence in the couple's relationship. This relationship, severely damaged by violence, has health, social and economic consequences for the family. The country has come a long way in isolating itself until it has completed a framework with an Anti-Domestic Violence Law (which entered into force in June 2007), a National Strategy and an Action Plan to combat it (2007-2012), and also numerous programs and projects against violence which have been implemented and have partially combated many aspects of domestic violence.

According to the Albanian legislation "Domestic violence" is any action or inaction exercised between persons who are or have been in family relations, which results in violation of physical, moral, psychological, sexual, social, economic integrity. Domestic violence is a crime that is often hidden. In Albanian society it is seen as a private matter, with little or no attention to prevention, mainly by various non-governmental organizations.

However, studies show that domestic violence is widespread in Albanian society. Gender-based violence-oriented studies have focused on physical, sexual, and psychological manifestations or their consequences. There is still no study to refer to the socio-economic cost of violence against women in Albania. Knowledge of the economic causes and consequences of the problem is important to enable society to deal with it constructively and correctly. It should be noted that the financial / economic costs that accompany the phenomenon

of domestic violence, result as one of the factors that lead the family to deepen poverty and also limit women's opportunities for development.

The purpose of this study is to describe the economic cost of violence against women. This study seeks to draw attention to the economic aspect of this phenomenon - the economic cost of violence experienced by women. Although the socio-economic cost of domestic violence requires a very complex and advanced study and especially an efficient statistical system (administrative resources), it is important to clarify that this study is an attempt to present how much it costs a family, violence against women in marital relationships. The gaps that appear in statistical information, especially towards gender indicators, make it difficult to build a complete quantitative model from which specific costs of violence can be calculated.

Although many difficulties arise, the analysis can never be more than a careful statistical assessment, in which some calculations are still more uncertain than others and some aspects have not been possible to include. This does not mean that there is no possibility of making some cost assumptions.

Research questions are:

- How is the behavior of abused women towards the various services they can access?
- How do they perceive the right to have services, are there insecurities and do they tend to leave such concerns within the family.
- How can the economic impact of violence on their families be measured?

Literature review

Domestic violence has consequences for both the victim and society. It consumes public and voluntary services as well as causes considerable pain and suffering to the individuals on whom it is exercised. While considerations based on the principles of respect for human rights provide a solid basis for public intervention in domestic violence, a better understanding of the full costs of domestic violence provides the basis for intervention with a policy-making aid system, that on the financial side. Adding a financial dimension to violence expands the range of ways in which strategic interventions can be articulated, measured and evaluated. In particular, the inclusion of the financial dimension can help address priorities in the policy-making structure.

Calculating the cost of violence is a useful strategy to increase policymakers' sensitivity to the importance and effectiveness of intervention. Understanding

the economic dimensions of interpersonal violence is very necessary not only to assess the economic damage it brings to the family and society, the economy in general, but also to determine the complete platforms of intervention, support of this category at risk. Violence is often considered a phenomenon that should receive proper attention, as a phenomenon that has its roots in an individual psychological problem or psycho-social relationship that does not work. So it is also a structural and complex social phenomenon.

Violence costs and its types

Cost, in a socio-economic analysis is divided into direct costs which result directly as related to the provision of health care and the costs of the judicial system, and indirect costs. The division of costs into direct and indirect is problematic. The impact of violence has short-term and long-term effects which are of a social and economic nature among individuals and communities. So far, many of these effects have been categorized together as indirect, a dark box which has rarely been opened and evaluated.

Direct costs represent the value of goods and services used in response to domestic violence. Direct costs are defined as “the value of goods and services used to treat and prevent domestic violence” (A. Morrison and M. Bihel). Another definition treats direct costs as “costs associated with interpersonal violence” (CDC 2003). Most direct cost studies have been addressed to various sectors including legal services, justice, health and social services. To determine the distribution of cost sharing through different agents of society some of the studies distinguish between services provided by society, the private sector and a combination of the two (Graves 1995). Some other studies have included individual costs.

Indirect costs are “total costs that are not incurred as a direct consequence of domestic violence. Indirect costs include salary losses and psychological costs (Hornick, Paetch and Bertrant, 2002) The calculation of psychological costs has been a normal practice in court cases which required the measurement of monetary values of the compensation of raped victims. The psychological costs were much greater than the direct economic losses that were inflicted on the victims (Miller, Cohen and Rossman 1993). Some studies have attempted to assess the negative effects of violence on housing costs, a cost to society. In the US, for example, a doubling of the suicide rate was accompanied by a 12.5% drop in real estate values (IADB, 2002).

So far, efforts to assess the human and emotional costs of fear, pain and suffering have been based on methodologies built from the application of

costing methods in road accidents, crimes and health situations, and this remains a privilege of developed countries which have established systems of stable information.

Indirect cost is very difficult to calculate and most studies are oriented towards the top of indirect costs such as loss of income from job loss and increase of job leave (Stanko, Crisp et al. 1998; Yodanis and Godenzi 1999; Walby 2004). However, losses in labor productivity also include non-monetary costs, becoming the basis for a multiplier effect that generates declining incomes, reduced labor participation, and a contraction in investment and savings. Women who worked while having violence in their relationships stated that “they were not able to share the trauma they had suffered in their personal lives with their daily work, thus causing low performance at work or loss of days of work” (KPMG 1994).

A useful typology which shows the indirect costs of violence is suggested by Buvinic et al. (1999). This typology presents a cost estimation scheme which shows the impact of violence. This structure allows the division between social and economic costs, monetary costs or those that have an imputable value, those non-monetary costs as well as those costs which it is not possible to present through a monetary value.

TABLE 1. A typology Socio-economic costs of violence¹:

Type of cost	The impact
Direct costs: Value of goods and services used to treat and prevent violence	• Medical
Non-monetary costs: Pain and suffering	
• Criminal justice system	
Multiple social effects: Impact on interpersonal relationships and quality of life	Intergenerational transmission of violence Reducing the quality of life Erosion of social capital Reduction in participation in democratic processes

Definitions that serve for measurement

Many studies in the literature try to determine the parameters of domestic violence even for those who experience violence perpetrated by the current or former spouse / partner, or by “someone known to the victim”.

¹ (Source: Buvinic et al, 1999)

The national definition defines that, “Domestic violence” is any act of violence, according to point 1 of this article, exercised between persons who are or have been in family relations.

In many developing countries this is the definition that applies as it refers to the type of relationship between the two sexes - engagement, cohabitation and marriage. For this analyze it is important to start with the definition (definition) of violence. One of the reasons for this is that the literature contains a range of concepts on violence, ranging from interpersonal violence, domestic violence, domestic violence or couple violence. The definition within each concept refers to the size of the population experiencing violence. These changes are significant as the prevalence rate often determines the basis of the methodological formula that will be used to make the cost estimate.

DHNP is multifaceted and includes sexual, psychological, physical and economic abuse. There is a broad consensus in the literature regarding the set of behaviors that refer to any form of violence.

Physical violence includes behaviors such as beating, pushing and burning

Psychological abuse includes: bullying, swearing, isolation and abandonment behavior.

Sexual violence includes sexual problems, refusal to use a condom, sexual harassment and rape.

While financial abuse includes deprivation of material goods, control of money and control of assets that the family has.

Studies related to cost surveys focus on physical, sexual and psychological abuse within an intimate / couple relationship. Of course, defining definitions on types of costs is of great importance for this study and they are presented in more detail when describing application methodologies.

Costs of violence in developing countries

While existing studies emphasize the selection of costs to be observed and by what methods, few of them are applicable in most developing countries due to different social norms regarding the acceptability of violence, lack of a policy-making structure and information systems, as well as differences in the economic structure that subsequently affect the ways in which violence is assessed.

In many developing countries, domestic violence is perceived as a private matter and to be recognized as a social issue that requires a political and social response which reflects the high rate of acceptance of violence against women. Lack of will especially translates into minimal services from public structures at national, regional or local levels. Also, the use of services by abused women

is limited due to socio-cultural norms, the distraction of service providers and the fear of retaliation. Given this lack of response, assessing the costs of violence may remain a secondary priority for developing country governments. Seeking to measure violence means first getting to know it well. The methodology for conducting the study is limited by the lack of a coherent and reliable information system through which the prevalence of violence can be assessed, especially as long as law enforcement, shelter and other sectors do not perceive domestic violence as a problem. They do not record information or maintain an information system on the extent of use of services related to the mitigation and prevention of violence. All of these information gaps intertwined with the limited knowledge of the consequences of violence make it difficult to build a database from which average unit costs can be calculated.

As noted in the citations above, most cost studies refer to western industrialized countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, Finland, and Australia, where the information and services system is highly developed. And yet few of them are really valid and applicable to the reality of countries that are still developing.

A study made in the year 1999 by the Inter-American Development Bank in Chile and Nicaragua (Morrison and Orlando 1999) examined the impact of DHP on a household's capacity to provide income. In Chile, all types of DHP reduce women's incomes by 1.56 billion (more than 2% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 1996). Abused women earn much less than those who are not subject to violence. Beyond the effects on income, the study in Nicaragua found that 63.1% of child victims and women have to repeat their school years and also tend to drop out of school on average four years earlier than other children. Of course, these children who are present or victims of abuse tend to imitate this behavior and repeat its cycle. In the context of public health there have been attempts to assess losses in terms of morbidity and mortality. A World Bank study showed that the annual rate of rape and domestic violence was equal to 9 million years of life with a physical disability, including years lost from premature death as well as time lost from disability caused or illness as a cause. of violence (World Bank 1993). Other studies of the cost of violence have estimated losses due to premature death (Pispa and Heiskanen 2001; CDC 2003).

Conceiving a cost analysis

What has been emphasized above in this study is that domestic violence is a widespread and disturbing social phenomenon which is often treated by qualitative studies conducted in the country, or as a social and legal problem being a crime against a person. or as a health problem affecting women and

their children. If we want to address the issue of economic tension that it causes for the family and society as a whole in the form of various socio-economic costs, the creation of a conceptual basis is what helps analysis. There are seven essential cost-focusing steps that are usually required to follow a study of the phenomenon of violence from an economic point of view:

1. Define clear objectives for practicing costing methods.
2. Identify the level of aggregation in accordance with these objectives.
3. Develop an operational definition of Couple Violence, which summarizes the experiences of most women.
4. Describe the behaviors of requesting assistance from women who are victims of violence to determine the appropriate services to be considered in the costing method.
5. Design the services that are available to victims of violence.
6. Determine which methods or combinations of methods are most appropriate.

Factors to consider in measuring violence

In all studies on the economic cost of domestic violence, there are several key factors that are important against cost estimation as well as the methodologies used for these estimates. These factors are:

- a. definition of domestic violence,
- b. measurement of violence,
- c. conceptualization of opportunities / services to seek help in cases of experiencing violence.
- d. cost categorization,
- e. methodological challenges such as time frame or unit of analysis and
- f. data collection methods

Many studies in this field have shown that it is difficult to find a model that can be applied to all types of violence and its effects. The one most used by researchers is the “comprehensive” model which is based on the understanding of the interaction between individual, situational and socio-cultural factors. According to this model, there is not a single factor that causes violence but a number of converging factors. The process of estimating the costs of domestic violence requires an observation of the impact of domestic violence on both the victim and a range of social institutions. This requires knowledge of the degree of injury



to people both physically and mentally as well as knowledge of the consequences and deteriorations in the lives of injured and individuals related to them. These damages are addressed by a large number of social agencies and institutions that need to be identified. The literature on the cost of domestic violence shows that there is a higher diversity of responsible institutions than there is in the literature on costs in general. In a broader context, the areas where measurement should be oriented are the criminal justice system, the health care system, social housing and migration services, as well as legal and civil services. Within each area, there are a number of specific institutions that operate and provide these services.

Source of Data and Methodology applied

The research methodology is based on different approaches. First of all, the reviewed literature that refers to the issues addressed in this study - emphasizes the great importance of not only the analysis of quantitative but also qualitative information presented through specific interviews. The main part of the statistical information used to conduct this analysis is a part of the data detached from the central set of data from the survey “Domestic Violence” conducted by INSTAT during 2007. The purpose of this analysis is to focus on the economic cost of domestic violence (against women) and to provide a measurement approach in the case of Albania.

One of the objectives of the survey itself was to identify some of the direct and indirect costs of domestic violence. Data for this national survey were collected from 2699 households and the target group are women aged 15-49 years. In each family selected through a probabilistic sampling process, only one woman in this age group was interviewed.

Among others, the questionnaire used in this survey has collected information on these variables (which are the ones that are of interest for this thesis):

- Women who have experienced violence and who have sought help from persons or services
- The reason that no medical, legal or social assistance was requested
- Categories of persons or services that may require assistance from abused women.
- Value in money paid for services
- Were women absent from work due to the violence, and for how many days?

Also, for the case studies, there were used other official data produced by other surveys of households conducted by INSTAT, related to the level of income.

The sampling is done according to the specifics of the costs of violence and the possibilities to measure it. One of them is the Household Cost Model. Within households, the main costs to be considered are personal expenses, income reduction, loss of family work and loss of productivity.

The cost estimate presented in this study refers mainly to the individual cost and the primary unit of analysis is the household and in each household a woman is interviewed. For this have served the data collected in the framework of the national survey mentioned above, and exactly a part of the data selected by it. The selected data refers to the variable that collects information on the cases of women who have experienced violence and who have sought help somewhere because of violence. There are 193 cases (women interviewed) that will be analyzed in this study, who answered “Yes” to the question if they asked for help somewhere due to the violence.

Attempts to measure the cost of violence in Albania

The referencing situation in Albania remains a difficult task. Supportive literature is very scarce and studies on violence as a social phenomenon are very limited. Quantitative studies at the national level are also almost non-existent. In such an unexplored field, it is still difficult to analyze the aspect of economic cost in the Albanian context. In Albania, as in other countries, it is assumed that the family has the necessary support from the state and the law, to prevent and protect its members from ill-treatment and to maintain its stability. Although the state has made progress in this regard, again the relationship between the service seeker (the abused) and the service provider (public and private and health and legal services) is still fragile and unorganized and any damage it suffers tends to be fixed within “House walls”. Individuals do not always seek specialized help, it is necessary to know how much potential service is used.

For the reasons mentioned above, the international literature was the only literature served to this paper. This literature really provides a lot of information in this regard but again the effort remains difficult. In developing countries which have similar characteristics to Albania, such studies are also very limited.

Analysis of a case study: expenses in the family affected by the phenomenon of violence

Having explained theoretically and empirically what this phenomenon is and how the financial effect it has on the family can be measured, and after arguing

some of the trends through literature review and study, it is important to go deeper into this issue through two case studies. The case studies are based on data collected from official sources but also from a population selected for this purpose. It aims to confirm the main hypotheses of this study which aim to measure that domestic violence has a cost to the Albanian family which should not be ignored.

The case studies presented are based on these two scenarios

The baseline scenario is oriented towards measuring direct costs, where costs are calculated based on the type and number of services required by abused women multiplied by the unit cost per service. And a revenue loss scenario, which imputes the cost of employment income that the family is supposed to lose due to the presence of Domestic Violence.

A model of household expenditure estimation

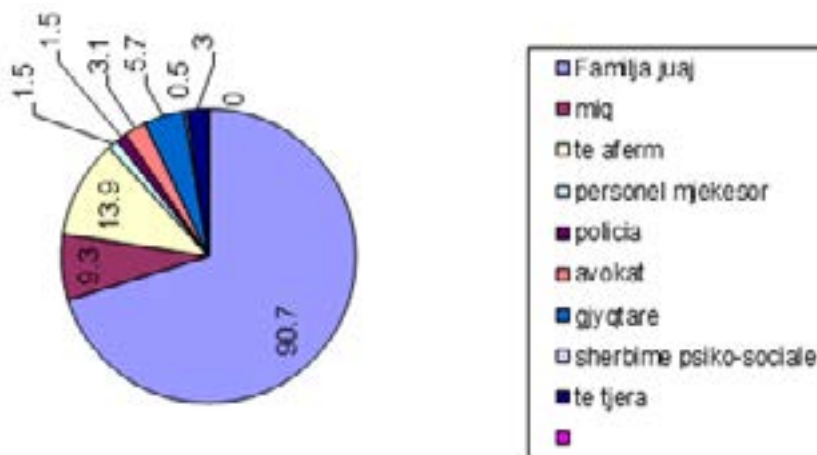
As mentioned above in the methodology section, the unit of analysis is the family and in each family a woman is interviewed. An abused woman may or may not seek specialized help to end the ongoing pain in her life. The directed question on which it was conducted and the selection of “my population for study” was:

“Have you ever tried to ask for help?” and Where did you seek help?

The basic (initial) scenario applied is based on the costs of households, in which women admit to having suffered some form of violence, as a result of which they have turned to legal services, police or medical services. According to this scenario, if this woman has received services / assistance five times at the medical services, then this request made five times during the last 12 months, multiplies the direct cost of the initial circumstance by 5 times for the given period. The income lost in this case is related not only to the type of services that women have requested but also their number, within a given period of time.

The data show (see graph) that the number of women seeking help in legal and specialized services is very limited, however we will try to concretize the model with this small number of cases.

CHART 1. Where do abused women seek help?



If we refer to the description given above where: Health service costs include (costs of emergency, medical visits, medications, surgeries, mental health care, dental), the analysis would be more complete if in addition to the percentages of service delivery to have all the amounts of money spent on each of these services.

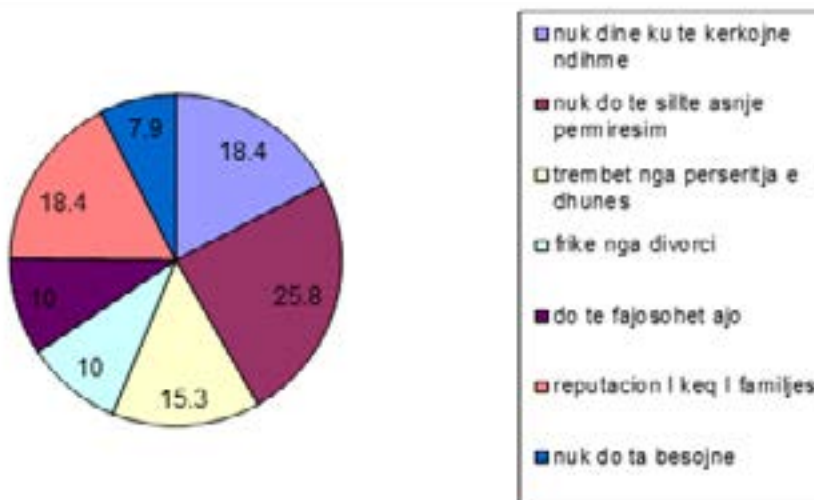
Women have reported that they seek help to family, friends, medical staff, police etc. for services received but the reported value belongs to a large range and refers to a large grouping of services. For this reason we can set an approximate monetary value that refers to the formalized (approved) payment measure to make possible estimates.

TABLE 2 . Economic costs according to services for family

Type of service	Average number of times for each type of service Assumed value per unit of service Imputed cost	Average number of times for each type of service Assumed value per unit of service Imputed cost	Average number of times for each type of service Assumed value per unit of service Imputed cost
Medical staff	3	2,500 ALL	10,500 ALL
police	1	500	500
Lawyer	1	10.000 ALL	10,000 ALL
JUDGE	1	1.000 ALL	1,000 ALL
psycho-social	2	-	-
TOTAL			22,000 ALL

In our case study if in a family, it has to spend an amount of 10,500 ALL only for medical services this means that 2.5% of its annual income is lost for “unnecessary” expenses that are added to other expenses which the family needs to live. These expenses go only for health services but if we add to them the other costs of legal services such as police, lawyer, judge then 19.6% of the annual income of the family would go to the mentioned expenses. As it can be seen, the number of reports is very small and in this case we can not leave without mentioning that in our country, where culture is a strong limiting and orienting factor for women’s behavior, being closed to itself is inevitable. The woman tends to seek help within the family (around the circle of acquaintances, more than in specialized structures. This also affects the reports made during family surveys. This is clearly explained by the analysis we do of the reasons why women do not ask specialized help, where concern for the bad reputation of the family ranks third.

CHART 3. Distribution of reasons why women do not seek help



From this graph we understand that women do not seek specialized help because they either do not know where to seek it or because their trust in services is quite low.

Case Study: Regarding the income scenario that the family loses but is unavoidable, an estimated frequency for leaving / leaving work is applied and compared to the average monthly salary of the woman

Number of women who were not allowed to go to work as a result of the violence, according to the level of employment

The consequences did not allow you to go to work	YES	NO	Total
Cases	74	119	193
%	38	62	100

The data show that the percentage of women who had experienced one of the types of violence and who had sought legalized help or service somewhere, did not go to work as a result of the violence, during the last 12 months (about 38% out of 193 women). 48.5% of them lived in the countryside and 52% in the city. Almost all women (99%) have attended even one of the levels of education, which means that education is not an influential factor. To calculate how much the family loses, in this case we study the case with the highest frequency of occurrence. The data show (see table below) that women are most often reported to have been absent for 3 days from work and this is a direct financial loss for the family.

Percentage of women who did not go to work as a result of violence, according to the days of absence

No of days	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	10	14	15	TOT
Cases	6	14	20	10	6	5	7	3	1	2	74
Percentage (%)	8.10	18.9	27	13.5	8	6.8	9.5	4.1	1.4	2.4	100

Because she experiences frequent physical and sexual violence, she quits her job and has no chance of returning to work, as in a market economy where unemployment is high, this chance is even more limited. If we assume that this woman belongs to the lower social strata, which tends to be affected and tolerate more violence as a phenomenon. Income from her work refers to a minimum monthly salary of 14,000 lek. With a simple calculation we can say that the family within a year will be missing 168,000 lek from its budget.

In an Albanian family where the average income turns out to be about 36,000 ALL per month and the average annual income can be estimated at a value of 432,000 ALL per year, we can say that the financial loss caused to the family is about 40% of income its annual. While it should not be forgotten without mention, the loss of productivity that represents the difference between what is produced and what could be produced if interpersonal violence, which in addition to temporary effects, can also have long-term effects.

Further, we assume that this unemployed woman will seek to be supported by the social scheme - unemployment benefit, which is given to the person for a period of 2 years when he declares that he is unemployed and can not find a job, in this case we have a double cost. The monthly unemployment payment has a

measure of 5, 240 lek per month, for a year the cost of a person covered by this social scheme is 62,280 lek and this is a cost for the economy of a country.

In an analysis of real economic costs it would be good to include the contribution to the loss caused to society and the economy. This first contribution from the aspect of losing an active labor force (paid work) but also unpaid work.

The economic structure of our country becomes a challenge for estimating the costs of violence. As in many developing countries the formal labor market is less developed and informal activities are more dominant than in developed countries. According to the International Labor Organization in developing and transition economies, the informal labor sectors comprise half or three-quarters of employment outside the agricultural sector. Women perform a large amount of paid and unpaid work including reproductive work, subsistence work. The wide dimensions of informal and unpaid productivity in the family make it difficult to estimate the losses and reduced output that results from violence against women.

Conclusions

In this study, I tried to explore as much as possible to make an economic cost estimate in Albania and what are the spaces to measure it in terms of increasing the level of expenditures and reducing the level of income. In order to show properly how this impact is measured, we referred to a set of data extracted from a nationally studied sample.

The conclusions and recommendations drawn from this simple and initial effort in this new field of exploration are as follows:

- Shortcomings in the field of study. Given the wide range of methodological changes and major shortcomings in the existing literature on the economic issues of interpersonal violence, the need for real research on the costs of violence is clear. Such research should follow strict methodological principles, including direct or indirect cost, and - most importantly - allow comparisons between different countries and models. In the context of calculating the consequences of violence, the biggest shortcoming observed is the lack of a standardized methodology. Such a methodology should specify parameters for categories and types of costs - indirect and direct - as well as provide an appropriate time to calculate costs from an individual and social perspective. The methodology will apply a consistent value to future depreciation costs and benefits. Also, there is a great lack of studies and analyzes which allow to draw causal conclusions regarding

the links between interpersonal violence and economic inequality, the weakness of the security network (system), unemployment and poverty. It can be said with certainty that these factors contribute to the increase of interpersonal violence.

- Directions for future research. In addition to the individual consequences of the psycho-social cost of pain and suffering, interpersonal violence has a number of economic effects at the population level, including reduced credibility in economic, legal and social structures. The tool to compare the value of losses, caused by interpersonal violence in the country and the economy where the approach to human capital is particularly inefficient, is the need for standardized research referring to indirect costs. There are very few estimates of this kind, which, if quantified, are likely to be several times higher than the value of the direct cost of violence.
- The lack of population-based data limits our understanding of the further impact that violence has.
- Until recently, most searches were conducted by taking a non-representative sample, often women housed in women's shelters or in various centers that provide services to abused women. Indeed, these studies are important to understand the dynamics of abuse, they do not provide data on how many women are affected by this phenomenon, nor do they collect information on individuals who do not seek help. And according to estimates, the number of women who do not seek these services, significantly exceeds the number of women who seek help.
- Determining the most effective unit of study.
- A population-based search or services? This is a question that arises when you consider studying this aspect. The decision refers to the selection of the sample by the population (also called the population-based study) or by service providers, such as health centers, police posts, in an attempt to assess how many of the emergency room patients are victims of violence. In our country, based on the information deficiencies mentioned above, it is thought that the studies are oriented towards the selection of the sample by a certain population or community. A better point from which to estimate the costs of violence is the family given the importance of this cell as a place of production and reproduction. Focusing on the losses created by the cost of labor at the family level, we will have a higher attention from the community and policy makers, because this will include other implications in poverty which is a matter of high interest for this economics.



Recommendations

- It is necessary to create a clearer understanding of domestic violence.
- This attempt provided a context for understanding that this problem is significant and that it is a good reason for further work. A key area where more research can be focused is the area of labor force participation. We need to better understand how the existence of domestic violence affects work behavior. This may require further quantitative studies.
- Improving data collection - in the function of estimating the prevalence of domestic violence but also to better identify the use of services and costs incurred by the victim or family.
- Application of intervention programs using experimental models as an essential factor to perform a cost-effective or cost-benefit analysis
- Theoretical reservations for performing a complete analysis.
- Family surveys risk underestimating the true incidence of violence. It should be clear that economic analysis - or even an estimate for calculating DHNP, is a difficult task. The sources of information are really numerous and the problem of the information system is always present. On the other hand violence of the same character is not always experienced in the same way by all those who are exposed to it.
- In some cases it involves long-term and very serious abuse and in others the case is not so serious.

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How to Conceptualise Power? _____

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Abstract

This article aims at clarifying the medial concept of power, by making use of the work of the eminent German sociologist and social theorist Niklas Luhmann. It will be argued that this medial concept of power has clear theoretical advantage over other attempts at conceptualising power. This is so in that the medial concept of power manages to overcome the challenges of philosophical critique, especially the charge of ontological burden and essentialist presuppositions. On the other hand, the medial concept of power manages to position itself in the interface between sociology and political science, proving useful for both disciplines, something that other concepts of power cannot do. The article starts with Luhmann's critique of the classical theories of power, by identifying eight problems. Then some consideration is given to the analysis of power as medium, where the main ideas of Luhmann and Foucault seem to converge. Next, in order to further clarify the medial concept of power, the article deals with the question of influence, which ought to be distinguished from power. After this, the article takes a sociological twist, by giving an account of the transformation of power in modern society.

Keywords: *power; Luhmann; medium; influence; violence*

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Introduction

Niklas Luhmann's conception of power is formed by his methodological commitment towards constructivism. He argues that concepts, while being instruments that enable us to understand the world, at the same time necessarily blind us towards certain aspects of the world. Consequently, social theory cannot be based on actors' conceptual frameworks, but must construct new conceptual frameworks that enable the sociologist to observe how the actors observe and describe the world. This constructivist commitment towards second-order observation leads Luhmann when he develops the basic assumptions relating to the notion of power, in the critique he develops versus the classical concept of power, i.e., the capacity to act in accordance with individual will even against resistance from others. According to Luhmann, this classical concept of power, initially formulated by Max Weber, is supported by unsustainable ontological assumptions, but, nonetheless, is typically used by actors because of inherent limitations of their perspective on the world (first-order observation). This classical concept of power reproduces the illusion of actors that causality and intentions are true, while, in fact, as witnessed by second-order observation, they are contingent constructions that attribute effects to causes, identifying only two elements, a cause and an effect, in the chain of determinations that is potentially unlimited in both directions. Luhmann's power analysis begins with the critique against what he names "the classical theory of power", thus including a broad range of theories developed from different perspectives, but that have several features in common.

Critique of classical theories of power

The first problematic feature that Luhmann notes in the classical theory is suppositions of *causality*. As a prominent example of the way of conceptualising power and causality in the classical theory of power, Luhmann mentions the claim of Herbert A. Simon, who holds that the statement "A has power over B" can very well be replaced by the statement "A's behaviour causes B's behaviour" (Luhmann 1969: 150). The main implication, not only Simon's, but of the whole classical theory of power, is that power is conceptualised as a decisive event that makes the individual subjected to power act as he does *and* that this individual would have acted differently unless he were subjected to power. Luhmann is critical towards this causal framework. First, the examination of the causes of

power does not tell us the origin of power (Luhmann 1969: 150). Second, every effect has an infinite number of causes and likewise every cause produces an infinite number of effects. (Luhmann 1970: 16). Thus, the determination of the causal relationship is a contingent enterprise, an attribution dependent on observation and, as such, one that might have been different.

The second problem of the classical theory concerns the *intentionality* of exercising power. Luhmann refuses searching for goals or specific motives, which are supposed to stand behind the exercise of power. He states that motivation is no “cause” for action, but only attribution that enables a socially intelligible experience of action (Luhmann 1979: 120).

A third problem refers to the question where one can actually imagine the exercising of power as *decisive* on the actions of the individual subjected to power. Is it causally possible to exclude the possibility that the person subjected to power might have acted differently in all circumstances or, at least, that there were no other reasons for his action except for the power exercise?

The fourth problem of classical theory relates to *conception of time*. Classical theory of power implies a time conception where the future is seen as a determined projection, objective and already fixed by the past, in any case a future poor in alternatives (Luhmann 1969: 151-2). This is particularly obvious in the case of individuals subjected to power, whose future actions are supposed as predetermined before any actual exercise of power. In other words, the causal thought of classical theory must be abandoned, since, as Whitehead says, actual entities in contemporary universe are causally independent from one another (Whitehead 1978: 123).

A fifth problem of classical theory is that it imagines power as a substance that might be *possessed* (Luhmann 1969: 158-9). The question is that a simple reference to power possession, where power is transferred from a person to another and from a situation to another, completely hides the systemic conditions of this modality of power. Also the image of power as possession implies that in order to study power one must look for persons that are believed to “hold” it at a specific moment. In other words, the perspective of possession opens the way for an individualistic explanation, where power is attributed to individuals.

The sixth problem is linked with the supposition that exercising of power is a *zero sum game* where, for example, the increase of bureaucratic power is claimed to happen only if there is a loss of parliamentary power. Luhmann questions this supposition and argues that an adequate theory of power must be able to take into account that power often increases in a place without bringing with it correspondingly loss of power in other places. In fact, as Luhmann himself shows, organisational power increases simultaneously both for superiors and



for subordinates, when their internal relations are intensified (Luhmann 1969: 163; 1979: 179-82).

Luhmann notices a seventh problem of the classical theory of power in the explanations that depart from *anthropological suppositions*, wherein power is conceptualised as something that inhibits realisation of human dignified life. Such analyses for Luhmann are very broad to design specific and clear paths for empirical study and suffer from analytic limitations as long as they depart from existing suppositions about the character of the society analysed. One can also say that they are based on contested philosophical anthropologies, as is witnessed e.g. in the battles over the concept of “real interests.”

The eighth problem of classical theory is the explanation of power as *sovereignty* and the accentuation of the need for limiting its action, for example through constitutional formulae. Luhmann notices an inclination in the Western political tradition to refer to a “unified politico-legal system” (Luhmann 2004: 357). According to him, this conception of a unified system comes from the concept of the state, which is supposed to be simultaneously both legal and political. Luhmann emphasises that the conception of sovereignty and of sovereign power, wherein is based the state since its consolidation in early European modernity, has combined to different ideas of the political power: first, the idea of a *generalised* capacity for ensuring compliance to commands; second, the idea of legal force, which is reflected in the fact that power was presented and imposed in the form of law, i.e. in a form that had always already been *specified* in advance (Luhmann 2004: 359). Therefore, the concept of sovereignty combines law and politics in a single formulation.

Power as medium

The non-causal departure of Luhmann is the double contingency problem, thus, of an interaction situation where both *alter* and *ego* have generalised potential to conceptualise the facts as selections that imply denial, potential to deny these denials, and to construct other possibilities (Luhmann 1976: 509). For Luhmann, several symbolically generalised communication media have emerged historically, such as truth, money, love, power, and each of them, in a functionally equivalent way, treat the principal problem of sociality, i.e. the problem of double contingency. Power, as one of these media, offers a mechanism for coordinating the selections of alter and ego. Luhmann differentiates the symbolically generalised communication media according to the way they link the action or experience of ego to that of alter. In the case of power, of interest is the coordination of ego’s *action* to that of alter’s. Thus, the function of the

medium of power is the increase of probability that ego uses alter's action as a premise for his own action, or, in other words, ego's motivation for conditioning his own action through alter's action (Luhmann&De Giorgi 2003: 120). This conception of power as a relation of action to action is equivalent with Foucault's conception of power (in the form of governmentality) as conduct of conduct, with the important distinction that Luhmann is explicitly interested in regulation of *selections*, of the selected action by a selected action (Luhmann 1976: 517).

But there are also other elements where Luhmann and Foucault converge. For example, the close relationship between power and freedom insisted by Foucault, in Luhmann is implied by the concept of selection. If ego *cannot* act in discordance with alter's demands, then there is no need for power. In contrast to this, power ends the moment ego is constrained to obey. Constraint means that there is no regulation of contingency, i.e. that the principal problem of sociality is not being addressed, or that there lacks the trust that this problem can be addressed through the medium of power. Consequently, constraint can only be exercised with a specific cost: the person who exercises constraint must take upon himself the burden of selection and of the decision at an equal measure with the constraint exercised, in that the responsibility for reducing complexity (the cardinal problem of social systems) is not distributed, but is rather transferred to the person who exercises constraint (Luhmann 1979: 112).

Another feature that unites Luhmann with Foucault is connected with the critique that the latter makes to the sovereignty discourse and to the claim that power can be possessed and transmitted as a substance. Foucault's attempt to get away from this conception of power is to focus on extremely relational character of power (Foucault 1990: 95). Also Luhmann distances himself from understanding power substantially and ontologically, and refers to the medial character of power. Understood as a medium, power is nothing else but code oriented communication (Luhmann 1979: 116), or, as Foucault says, nothing else but the name we give to this communication (Foucault 1990: 93).

However, although Luhmann was against the ontological definition of power, in his earlier work one finds ontological formulations. For example, in his monographic study on power in 1979, he writes that the function of communication medium is transmission of reduced complexity, and also in the case of power the main interest is the transmission of selection (Luhmann 1979: 113). Thus power is presented as a question of transmission of selection, as if these were tangible entities that might be posted. But later Luhmann changes his position, in that he realises the flaws of the "transmission" metaphor. In 1984, when he publishes his principal work on social systems, he gives the argument that the transmission metaphor is unusable, since it implies too much ontology. It suggests that the sender sends something that is then received by the receiver. This is not correct, for the sender does not

send something in the sense that he does not have it anymore. The whole metaphor of possession, having, giving and taking, the whole 'thing metaphor' is inadequate for understanding communication (Luhmann 1995a: 139). Consequently, this metaphor is inadequate for understanding power.

Thus Luhmann reconstructs systems theory in such a way as to liberate its foundational concept, communication, from the idea of a sender and a receiver. Instead, he conceptualizes communication as a triple selection of information, utterance, and understanding. This displacement of conceptual perspective has consequences for the notion of power, too. Now power must be conceptualised without the ontological notion of transmission. Luhmann implements this by using the distinction between *medium* and *form*. The medium of power is described as loose coupling of objectives and sanctions of power, while the form of power is constituted by the distinction between obeying an order and its alternative, viz. the negative sanction. The limits of power are to be found there where ego begins to prefer the alternative of avoiding the sanctions, and also himself demonstrates power to force alter either to give up or to impose the sanctions. Thus, on one hand, there seems to be a loose coupling of elements which, being threats, are not consumed in usage but are rather renewed and, on the other hand, a temporary strong coupling; forms that combine instructions and compliance to them (Luhmann 2012: 212).

By conceptualising power as medium, Luhmann positions himself against the idea that power has the main role in society, or that power must be considered the main notion for constructing a theory of society. Actually, as mentioned above, Luhmann attributes this role to the concept of communication. Moreover, as a medium, thus as product of evolution, power is conceptualised in an evolutionary framework and not within a general and unhistorical theory of power. Power is observed as emergent solution to a specific evolutionary problem, which is linked to the fact that because of escalation of societal complexity, it becomes increasingly difficult to rely on situational convergence of interests in order to regulate and condition contingent selections. In this situation, the development of power as a way to regulate contingency, becomes unavoidable priority for further evolution (Luhmann 1979: 116).

Forms of influence

According to Luhmann power can only emerge in uncertainty conditions, i.e. in conditions that are entirely determined, but also allow for realisation of alternative possibilities. These conditions come from functional differentiation of systems of modern society: autopoietic systems are uncertainty fields in that

they produce themselves their own structure and are not dependent on external determinations. One of these uncertainties is linked to the fact that society members are dependent on one another. Thus, uncertainty concerns how the others will react versus our actions. The ways of taking into consideration the actions of others give birth to *influence*, in other words, to the capacity to act effectively in relation to others.

Luhmann distinguishes three symbolic forms of influence. He names the first form *uncertainty absorption*. This form concerns the attribution that actors, if required, would be able to give reasons for their affirmations. But social power that results in this way remains diffused and can be challenged quite easily. Another and stronger form of influence is based on *positive sanctions*: exchange relations manage very well to structure actions. However, economic power that results from this is limited, since it comes to an end were positive sanctions not to be fulfilled or were they discovered to be illusory. The third symbolic form that influence has taken in modern society is based on *negative sanctions*. Political power that results from this form is stable enough to function as a symbolically generalised communication medium for the political system (Luhmann 2010: 99-100).

But in order for influence to serve as raw material for transformation into power, it needs to be generalised. More concretely, what needs to be generalised is the motivation of ego to accept alter's the selection of action. Acceptation of influence means, for ego, that he must select his own action (as a reaction towards alter's action) and, to do this, he needs to be motivated. These motivations can be generalised in the temporal, fact, and social dimensions.

Temporal generalisation neutralises differences in time: Ego accepts the influence since he has done it before, in that there is a history that tends to be repeated continuously. In the case of fact generalisation differences in content are neutralised: Ego accepts the influence since he has done so in other situations and because he transfers the positive experience towards a communicative content to the likewise positive judgement towards another communicative content. In the case of social generalisation social differences are neutralized: Ego accepts the influence because that is what others do, too. (Luhmann 2010: 80).

Luhmann names these types of influence generalisation in the dimensions of meaning respectively *authority* (influence generalised in time), *reputation* (influence generalised in relation to contents), and *leadership* (influence generalised at the social level). Thus authority, reputation, and leadership are generalisations of motivations to accept influence. Formation of authority is based on differentiation of *chances* supported by previous actions. When a communication that exercises influence has been successful, whatever its motive, expectations are consolidated that raise probability, facilitate acceptance

of communication, and make it hard for rejection to occur. After a period characterised by acceptance without rejection, every rejection generates a surprise, disappointment, and unforeseeable consequences; and, that is why it requires specific reasons. Symmetrically, until the contrary is proven, authority needs no justification, since it is based on tradition.

Reputation is based on the supposition that it is possible to be given other reasons in favour of the justice of influenced action. Generalisation on the level of contents moves in a direction which, more than other types of generalisation go close to cognitive mechanisms. For this reason the very theory of science could make use of the concept of reputation in order to replace the concept of truth. Thus generalisation of motives would be realised by the fact that a general expressive and argumentative capacity is accepted *in a relatively uncritical manner* and is transferred from cases where it has proven fruitful to other cases. Also in this case the basis of the relation is representation of *a possibility*: the possibility to carry out ultimate verifications and to express doubts, which, nevertheless, is not practised. This possibility contains an element of indeterminacy (or better: it is not necessary for it to be completely determined) that accepts generalisation. Therefore, the more evident and universally acceptable are the reasons given for making certain decisions, the lower is reputation.

Leadership is based on the reinforcement of availability to conform, because of the experience that others, too, do conform, i.e., at the bottom line, it is based on *imitation*. Thus the influence is accepted since others accept it as well; and symmetrically the latter accept the influence because that is what the former do. If it is possible to exercise influence on more persons, then the leader is authorised to select the person to influence. He augments his own alternatives, which, from their part become orientation factor for others. The leader becomes independent of the concrete conditions under which a subject might obey. The subject loses the possibility available to himself, thus being forced (but not necessarily) to mobilise the group against the leader. Likewise, the leader must try to preserve a group atmosphere, even if it fictitious, in order to keep the supposition that now and then the others would accept him as leader and in order to isolate the deviant subject (Luhmann 2010: 81-2).

However, for Luhmann these are analytical types, since in reality it is impossible to use only one of them in order to generalise influence. Thus, the leader cannot only rely on the social dimension of expectations based on imitation, but also ought to somehow refer to the validity of motives in time, as well as to reputation that comes from correct and effective decisions in given sectors. And since the validity of influence is relevant in relation to themes and persons, also temporal generalisation (authority) cannot be realised via excluding entirely the reputation and gets close to the social dimension once it begins to be communicated. The

opinion of others and their predisposition to conform has special importance when a demand or an order is not followed by immediate and direct obedience (Luhmann 2010: 82-3).

Transformation of power in modern society

Luhmann formulates three main theses in order to characterise the relations of power in modern society. The first concerns *the law of transformation of positive sanctions in negative sanctions* (Luhmann 1990: 158). This thesis is related to the sources of power. According to Luhmann, the principal social source of power is always control over superior physical violence, whereupon the state is built. Without this control the state would be impossible. Even the law presupposes control over these sanctioning means. The prospect of maintaining an advantage with regard to use of physical violence has specific qualities that seem appropriate for building the foundation of power. This is because (1) physical violence is generalisable in very different contexts, independent of what is enforced through the threat of physical violence; (2) it presents itself as relatively reliable – independent of the type and intensity of motives for resisting it; and (3) it is capable of being organised well – can be transformed into decisions by others about the application of physical violence, and these decisions can be conditioned and programmed.

Luhmann regards these qualities of physical violence as the foundation of law and politics in modern society. However, when he turns to the contemporary welfare state, he says that this state cannot be characterised adequately by taking into account only the power based on physical violence. Actually, by searching for other foundations for politics, the welfare state enters a terrain of power that carries problematic aspects. This is characterised by inclinations to transform positive sanctions into negative sanctions. Luhmann is aware that it is difficult to make the distinction between these two kinds of sanctions and that this is a matter of interpretation, a matter of definition of the situation. Nonetheless, he offers a distinction criterion. If one clearly expects and relies on positive performances, then their withdrawal becomes a negative sanction. For example, when assistance is offered with certain regularity toward a target group that secures its living via it, the possibility of withdrawal of assistance appears as a threat and is thereby transformed into a negative sanction. The same thing may be said about the employees, which can be made to feel the threat of firing, or for partners that have been conducting business for a long time together etc. Thus, the more that one becomes accustomed to advantages, the more that potential power grows as a result of possibilities that have accrued to negative sanctions: the potential power



of withdrawal. In this way social power is increased: as the power of helpers and caretakers; as the power of those who participate; as the power of those who grace an affair with their consent or their presence or who draw attention to this fact through their rejection of it; as the power of all those who can change things by saying “no!” to existing expectations.

Luhmann says that this kind of power is, in part, harmless, in part excluded, through the protection of claims as legal and political maxims. But the chances of transforming positive sanctions into negative ones continually arise through the ever increasing services provided by others. Thus, these become sources of power with politically dangerous properties. They are (1) not capable of being centralised (unless through the centralisation of all assistance) and remain distributed diffusely; (2) their use cannot be controlled; (3) they are suitable mainly for obstructing instead of promoting specific behaviour. The power of withdrawal becomes a political problem as the power to block (Luhmann 1990: 158-160).

Luhmann’s second thesis is that *power in modern society is no longer exercised on the basis of social stratum but on the basis of formal organisation* (Luhmann 1990: 158). The relationships of power in the contemporary societal system cannot be understood if one begins from the concept of a ruling stratum, class or elite. Of course, there are persons who occupy positions of leadership and who have their contacts facilitated within such leadership groups. But leadership in such leadership groups does not manifest itself as family or social refinement but arises out of the perception of organisational positions. Unlike former societies, one cannot assume that a stratum of society creates solidarity among its members. And it is improbable that stratum-specific modes of behaviour direct the process of the exercise of power successfully. This would correspond to a type of society in which political power still resides essentially in the control of access to superior physical violence. For Luhmann, this is no longer the case. Today, any increase, material diversification and refining of power depends on formal organisation. This is notably true in the case of the development of longer and more permanent chains of power, for indirect forms of its use in directing the exercise of power by other and for its increasing effectiveness in the sense that with *one* decision a person can trigger *many* resulting decisions.

The organisation is a mechanism that differentiates and distributes power, but not as a pre-given commodity. The distribution, for its part, creates and changes whatever is distributed. Luhmann says that the bourgeois theory of society had wanted to introduce the mechanism of differentiation into the theory of the separation of power and the theory of economic competition in order to limit power and to reduce it to what is legally permissible or legally rational. But in implementing this programme one unavoidably discovered that the formation of organisations also multiplies power – even if not in centrally controllable forms.

In this way the problem situation was gradually displaced. According to Luhmann, today the question is not so much that of the misuse of power as whether, through organisations, our society does not produce too much unusable power (Luhmann 1990: 161-2).

Also organisational power is nothing but a case of application of transformation of positive sanctions in negative sanctions. It relies on the fact that membership in organisations can be given as an *advantage*, whereas not giving of membership or its withdrawal can be determined as *negative sanction*. This is typical in the organisational reality of hiring and firing. But, nonetheless, power in organisations cannot rely only on this way, for it is too crude and is actually used only to take decisions in cases of serious conflicts. Thus the transformation of membership advantages in a negative sanction that follows from not giving or withdrawing it is only used in extreme situations and generates power only as long as the sanction *is not exercised*. According to Luhmann, one does not allow conflicts to arise that could threaten membership, unless one had already decided to leave the organisation and created a final heroic conflict to serve as a pretext for this (Luhmann 1990: 162). Moreover, power is also refined through control of personnel decisions, which is linked with members' carrier in the organisation. Thereby, how high one's position is in the organisational ladder becomes an instrument of power. And nonpromotion, indeed reorganisation itself accompanied with a redistribution of certain disadvantages, becomes an instrument of power to which one adjusts through anticipating one's superior.

Luhmann's third thesis is related to *the birth of significant differences between real power and attributed power, accompanied by inflationary or deflationary trends in power-communication* (Luhmann 1990: 158). As a consequence of the existence of complex organizational systems within society, organization power is assessed differently from outside the organization and from within. Viewed from outside, the homogeneity of the organization and the ability to implement organizational power is typically overestimated. Power is attributed to the top; while in truth complicated balances of power exist that vary with topics and situations. As a result, more power is attributed to the top than it actually has. This process of causal attribution does not remain without an effect on the actual relationships of power. Outwardly, the organization has to honour the attribution of power, for otherwise persons outside the organization would not be able to see and treat the organization as an order. But for outsiders, to deal with the organization, simplifications are necessary that permit commerce with the outside. For this reason, the prestige of the top's power has to be promoted and sustained. In this way the external attribution of power becomes a power-factor in internal conflicts. Top level persons can threaten to leave the organization or otherwise create situations that make apparent to the environment that the organization

does not function like a decisional and implementational unity. This forms the basis of a kind of informal power of the formal top that rests merely on the fact that power is attributed to it and this attribution, as a symbolically generalizing process, is sensitive to information about facts. According to Luhmann, this applies to individual organizations in quite varying degrees; for political parties more than for universities, for organizations in the area of mass media more than for the postal service, for the military more than for banks (Luhmann 1990: 163-4).

By transferring the concepts of *inflation* and *deflation* from the theory of money to the theory of power (since these are both symbolically generalised communication media), Luhmann says that as with a money economy, there also seems to be a *limitedly meaningful overdraft of resources* in the domain of power that is comparable to credit. The holder of power makes more decisions and has more of his or her decisions complied with than he or she could effect in case of conflict. If the holder of power makes *too little* use of the power attributed to him and limits himself to the power that he “really has”, he triggers a *deflationary* trend. He operates too close to his means of sanctioning. And the danger in this is that he does not escape the zone of threatening to exercise power into that of successfully exercising it. Conversely, if the holder of power relies *too strongly* on the power that is merely attributed to him, he triggers an *inflationary* trend. In this case he becomes dependent on visible successes that demonstrate that he has power. At the same time he is also made vulnerable by crises that show that he cannot cover his decisions with sanctions (Luhmann 1990: 164-5).

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Issues of Moral Development and Education in Gifted and Talented Youth

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Abstract

Morality is a complex, multifaceted aspect of being human. Moral development and moral education are increasingly being discussed by educators, psychologists, counselors, and parents. This paper aims to provide a literature review (books, research paper and gray literature) regarding issues of Morality Development and Education in Gifted and Talented youths. The objective was understanding of moral development in gifted youth and teaching strategies which foster the educational needs in moral issues of gifted students. There is a dearth of empirical research regarding moral development of the gifted. It is known from earlier empirical research that intelligence tends to correlate with high levels of moral reasoning and that gifted individuals tend to grapple with moral issues at an earlier age and more often with more intensity than their peers. However, the relationship between intelligence and morality is a very complex one and needs more detailed study. The results of some studies reveal that there are qualitative differences in the moral reasoning of gifted youths. Hence, high intellectual ability does not predict mature

moral judgment. Research regarding teaching strategies address the traditional approach involving teachers explicitly advocating virtues, separate classes on moral and ethical behavior or educational programs for social and moral abilities enhancement in selected groups of gifted adolescents. Furthermore, research indicates that we need to be able to recognize the moral concerns of children and provide appropriate guidance and feedback, nurturing moral growth. Therefore, we should help the gifted to reach moral excellence together with excellence in specific domains. Recommendations include educational programs for social and moral abilities enhancement in selected groups of gifted youths.

Keywords: *moral issues, development, gifted, talented, education*

Introduction

Morality is a complex, multifaceted aspect of being human. Within the realm of morality itself, there are further differences. Moral development and moral education are increasingly being discussed by educators, psychologists, counselors, and parents. In this paper, we examined the origins of moral thought, theories about moral development and moral reasoning, and the imperfect link between moral thought and moral action. With respect to moral thought, we explored whether gifted children have qualitatively different ways of thinking about what is right and wrong.

There is a dearth of empirical research regarding moral development of the gifted. Mainly scholars of the field tried to answer those questions: Is a morally developed person one who feels strongly about moral issues...or understands moral issues...or acts ethically when dealing with other people? It is known from earlier empirical research that intelligence tends to correlate with high levels of moral reasoning. Gifted individuals tend to grapple with moral issues at an earlier age than their peers, more often and with greater intensity.

However, the relationship between intelligence and morality is a very complex one and needs more detailed study. The results of some studies reveal that there are qualitative differences in the moral reasoning of gifted adolescents. Hence, high intellectual ability does not predict mature moral judgment. Being gifted or creative imposes a special moral responsibility on an individual. Those of extraordinary ability can use their gifts and talents for good or ill so exceptional intelligence, talents, and creativity represent opportunities for both improvement and corrosion of the human condition.

We need to be able to recognize the moral concerns of children and provide appropriate guidance and feedback. Teachers and educators should nurture the

moral growth. Therefore, we should help the gifted to reach moral excellence together with excellence in specific domains.

Definitions of giftedness and talent

What do we mean when we say that a child or an adolescent is “gifted”? This term was once limited to people such as those in Terman’s longitudinal study with IQs of 140 or higher; others have defined “gifted” as those with an IQ of 130 or higher. However, recent definitions of giftedness have been broadened to include not only a high IQ, but also singular talents in particular areas such as music, art, literature, or science (Winner,2000).

Definitions of gifted and talented have many problems. Consequently, there are perhaps 100 definitions of ‘giftedness’ (Freeman, 2008) but there is not yet a wide accepted definition. Winstanley (2006) concluded that because gifted students were a heterogeneous group, it is not possible to have only one comprehensive definition. Additionally, there are different concepts of giftedness across cultures (Phillipson & McCann,2007).

A more widely used definition within the field of gifted education comes from the 1991 meeting of the Columbus Group, and highlights the unique needs of this population:

“Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modification in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally.” (Columbus Group, 1991)

Sternberg and Zhang (1995) have proposed a “pentagonal implicit theory of giftedness”, including five different aspects. The first criterion is that gifted individuals are superior to their peers in some dimension or set of dimensions (excellence criterion). The second criterion is that they must show a high level of an attribute that is rare among their peers (rarity criterion). The third criterion is that the dimension(s) along which the individual is evaluated as superior must lead or potentially lead to productivity (productivity criterion). The fourth criterion is the demonstrability criterion which states that an individual’s superiority in the dimension or dimensions that determine giftedness must be demonstrable through one or more tests or valid assessments. The fifth criterion is the value criterion, i.e., the person must show superior performance on a dimension that is valued by his or her society.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996), has emphasized the importance of context in giftedness. He believes that giftedness is not a personal trait but rather an interaction between an individual and the environment.

Francois Gagné (2000, 2005) has proposed what he refers to as the DMGT model, standing for Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent. Gagne believes that those labeled as gifted have the potential for extraordinary work and that those who are subsequently identified as talented develop their inherent potential for contributions (Sternberg & Kaufman, 2011).

The No Child Left Behind definition states: “The term “gifted and talented,” when used with respect to students, children, or youth, means students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.” (U.S. Department of Education, 2001, p. 544)

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) has proposed a new definition of giftedness: “Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. . . . As individuals mature through childhood to adolescence, however, achievement and high levels of motivation in the domain become the primary characteristics of their giftedness. . . . A person’s giftedness should not be confused with the means by which giftedness is observed or assessed. . . . a high IQ score [is] not giftedness; [it] may be a signal that giftedness exists.” (NAGC,2011).

Definition of morality

What is morality? Morality implies a set of internalized principles or ideals that help the individual to distinguish right from wrong and to act on this distinction (Shaffer, 1994). Scholars agree that morality implies a capacity to (1) distinguish right from wrong, (2) act on this distinction, and (3) experience pride in virtuous conduct and guilt or shame over acts that violate one’s standards (Quinn, Houts, & Graesser, 1994; Shaffer, 1994).

Theories of moral development ask why and how individuals come to pursue goals that promote the interests of other people. And those of society in general, rather than only acting in their own narrow self-interests. Most of the foundational work on children’s moral development emphasizes the cognitive component of moral thought and the child’s growing understanding of rules and principles for guiding moral reasoning.

Jean Piaget's stage theory of moral development: Piaget argued that moral thought is not a separate cognitive domain with its own patterns of reasoning and developmental course. Instead, he believed that moral development shares the same broad features that he attributed to other areas of cognitive development, including the notion of stages. Thus, according to Piaget, some patterns of moral reasoning are simply unavailable to children until they reach the relevant stage of moral development. Piaget proposed three stages of moral development, roughly corresponding to his stages of preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational thought.

Most of the studies in the area of moral development have been based on the cognitive-developmental theory of Lawrence Kohlberg (e.g., 1969).

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development & The Heinz Dilemma: Lawrence Kohlberg, a student of Piaget's, attempted to extend Piaget's theory of cognition to explain the development of moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1981, 1984). To assess changes in moral reasoning, Kohlberg presented children, adolescents, and adults with a number of ethical dilemmas. Kohlberg believed that children construct morality by developing a system of beliefs about concepts like justice and individual rights. He thought that it takes a long time for children to develop accurate beliefs and reasoning patterns about morality and that early on, they confuse moral issues with other issues, such as power, coercion, and authority. This process of discovering which issues are truly moral formed the basis for Kohlberg's model.

One of the criticisms is that Kohlberg's assessment of moral development involves asking people what they think should be done in hypothetical moral dilemmas. What people say they will do and what people actually do when faced with a real dilemma are often two different things.

Neo-Kohlbergian approach: According to the neo-Kohlbergian approach of James Rest and his colleagues (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999), moral development and functioning are the result of a conglomeration of cognitive, behavioral, and affective forces that can be represented in four component processes: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character. Rather than thinking of moral development as a step-like procedure as in Kohlberg's theory, neo-Kohlbergians emphasize the more fluid overlapping of ways of thinking about moral issues that characterize individuals as they move from more primitive ways of thinking to more advanced. Finally, neo-Kohlbergians believe that morality is a social construction that reflects the community's experiences, particular institutional arrangements, deliberations, and aspirations that are supported by the community (Gibbs, 2013, based on McInerney & Putwain, 2017).



Elliot Turiel's domain theory of moral development: Within domain theory a distinction is drawn between the child's developing concepts of morality, and other domains of social knowledge, such as social convention. According to domain theory, the child's concepts of morality and social convention emerge out of the child's attempts to account for qualitatively differing forms of social experience associated with these two classes of social events. Although developing a sense of morals is a complex process, children appear to be able to have an understanding of morality by the age of five (Helwig & Turiel, 2002).

Dabrowski Theory of Disintegration: Yet another complex theory of moral and character development was explored by Kazimierz Dabrowski, and resulted in his philosophy of positive disintegration and asynchrony (Cash, 2009). Based on his studies of sensitive, highly intelligent and creative individuals, Dabrowski identified hypersensitivities in five areas: psychomotor, sensual, imaginal, intellectual, and emotional. He termed them overexcitabilities (OE), and concluded that the greater the intensity of the OE, the greater the individual's potential for ethical and compassionate behaviors as an adult (Cash, 2009).

Other theories. Some answers emphasize the importance of natural biological processes, others the role of learning and experience: some theoretical positions focus on cognitive growth, others on social and cultural influences.

Coles stated that children's moral character is greatly influenced by their social environment, upbringing, and examples from their parents (Sisk, 2009). He said that the moral character of a child is often developed in the early years, sometimes as young as one year of age. He stressed the internal struggle in the adolescent years as individuals are involved in testing and challenging the value system that they were brought up with, and the formation of their own personal moral system (Sisk, 2009).

Psychologist Jonathan Haidt (2003, 2012) believes that much of our morality is rooted in moral intuitions - "quick gut feelings, or affectively laden intuitions." In this intuitionist view, the mind makes moral judgments as it makes aesthetic judgments—quickly and automatically. Our moral thinking and feeling surely affect our moral talk. But sometimes talk is cheap and emotions are fleeting. Morality involves doing the right thing, and what we do also depends on social influences.

Bebeau (2002) stated that morality is built upon four basic components. These include moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character. The components of moral sensitivity, moral motivation, and moral character have been less studied than the component of moral judgment.

According to Muriel Bebeau (2002), *moral sensitivity* is about the awareness of how our actions affect other people. Thus, without possessing a moral sensitivity it would be difficult to see the kind of moral issues that are involved

in life. However, to respond to a situation in *amoral way*, a person must be able to perceive and interpret vents in a way that leads to *ethical action*. A morally sensitive person notes various situational cues and is able to visualize several alternative actions in response to that situation. He or she draws on many aspects' skills, techniques, and components of interpersonal sensitivity. These include taking the perspective of others (role taking), cultivating empathy for others, and interpreting a situation based on imagining what might happen and who might be affected.

Morality and giftedness

The research and writing of Kohlberg, which links moral and cognitive development, has had a considerable influence on psychologists and educators studying the psycho-social development of the intellectually gifted (Gross, 2004).

Many researchers involved in the field of character and moral development have focused on its link with highly able learners. There is a dearth of empirical research regarding moral development of the gifted. Andreani and Pagnin (1953) provided a comprehensive review of the then-current literature in their article. Gifted and talented students often display high levels of sensitivity, which they may direct to a strong sense of right and wrong and social justice. In the classroom they may have a preoccupation with social, moral, and ethical issues and will often act on their own convictions in these areas.

Overall, studies findings underscore the strong correlation between high levels of intellect and strong moral development, including emotional intensity and sensitivity, compassion for others, and a preoccupation with right and wrong (Cash, 2009). Researchers studying the highly and exceptionally gifted have noted that these children are frequently found to have unusually accelerated levels of moral development(Gross,2004).

We know from earlier empirical research that intelligence tends to correlate with high levels of moral reasoning (Narvaez, 1993; Tirri & Pehkonen, 2002). According to these authors, the gifted are presumed to have a privileged position in the maturation of moral thinking because of their precocious intellectual growth. According to researchers, intellectually gifted children appear to reach a relatively high stage of moral reasoning earlier than their chronological peers. It is important to note at this time the general agreement among previous researchers studying the exceptionally and profoundly gifted (McElwee, 1934; Hollingworth, 1942; Zorbaugh et al., 1951) that these children develop, at an early age, a precocious interest in matters of morality and religion (Gross,2004). Again Sisk (2009) show that gifted children and adults seem to have a unique perception of themselves and



the world that includes heightened idealism and a sense of justice that appear at an early age

Researchers such as Linda Silverman, Michael Piechowski, and Annemarie Roeper have noted that gifted individuals frequently express an interest in humanitarianism, global events, and altruism at an early age; they are in tune with their inner voice that helps them to dialogue and advocate for those in need (Cash, 2009). Gifted individuals tend to grapple with moral issues at an earlier age than their peers and more often and with more intensity. There are many personal accounts by parents, teachers, and researchers of precocious 5- and 6-year-old children who read newspapers and cry over articles depicting man's inhumanity to man, who are disturbed by radio accounts of war, or who become vegetarians as a reaction to killing animals (Cash, 2009). Intellectually gifted children appear to reach a relatively high stage of moral reasoning earlier than their chronological peers (Karnes & Brown, 1981). Using the DIT, Janos & Robinson (1985) also found significantly advanced moral judgement (compared with standards) in older gifted students (up to 18 years old) than their age peers as a group (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000).

However, the relationship between intelligence and morality is a very complex one and needs more detailed study (Tirri & Nokelainen, 2007; Tirri, Nokelainen & Mahkonen, 2009). The results of some studies reveal that there are qualitative differences in the moral reasoning of gifted adolescents. High intellectual ability does not predict mature moral judgment. More even, those of extraordinary ability can use their gifts and talents for good or ill (Tannenbaum, 2000) so exceptional intelligence, talents, and creativity represent opportunities for both improvement and corrosion of the human condition.

Terman's (1925) sample of gifted children showed superior maturity in moral development in choosing socially constructive activities and in rating misbehavior. Terman (1925) reported that, on tests of 'trustworthiness' and 'moral stability', the average child of 9 years of age in his gifted sample scored at levels more usually attained by children aged 14. Thorndike (1940), studying the moral judgement of 50 highly gifted children aged 9–12, found that the levels of moral development exhibited by these children correlated much more closely with their mental ages than with their chronological ages. Hollingworth (1942) noted, in her subjects of IQ 180, a passionate concern for ethical and moral issues, and a deep and unusually mature interest in questions of origin, destiny, and man's relationship with God (Gross, 2004). Janos and Robinson (1985) report on an earlier, unpublished study in which, using the Defining Issues Test (DIT) (Rest, 1979) as a measure of moral judgement, they compared a group of 24 radically accelerated university students aged 11–18, and two groups of gifted high school students who had not been accelerated, with a group of typical university students. All three groups

of intellectually gifted students exhibited significantly higher levels of moral judgement than did the typical undergraduates (Gross,2004).

In the 1980s, Karnes and Brown (1981) made an initial investigation into the moral development of the gifted using Rest's DIT. Their sample included 233 gifted students (9–15 years in age) who were selected for a gifted program. The results of the DIT were compared to the students' performance on a test that measured their intellectual ability (WISC-R). The empirical results of the study showed a positive correlation between the two tests.

Gifted children have emotional intensity and advanced levels of moral judgment, and these two characteristics coupled with their advanced cognitive ability enables them to understand social and moral issues (Sisk, 2009). Several of the research studies on the highly gifted (Burks et al., 1930; Hollingworth,1942; Zorbaugh et al., 1951) have noted that exceptionally gifted children display high standards of truth and morality, and can be overly judgmental towards other children or adults who do not appear to be measuring up to these standards (Gross,2004).

Several studies (Arbuthnot, 1973; Grant et al., 1976; Maccoby, 1980) have found significant correlations between scores on individual or group tests of intelligence and high scores on measures of moral development. While the majority of adults do not progress beyond the second, or conventional, level of moral judgement, Boehm (1962) and Kohlberg (1964) found that intellectually gifted children were able to make complex moral judgements much earlier than their age-peers, while some highly gifted elementary school children functioned at the 'principled', post-conventional level normally attained by fewer than 10 per cent of adults.

However, the data from studies with high-achieving adolescents has indicated that the relationship between apparent academic talent and moral judgment scores is more complex. According to Narvaez's study, high academic competence is necessary for an unusually high P-score, but it does not necessarily predict it. The high achievers can have average to high moral judgment scores, whereas low achievers cannot be high scorers in moral judgment.

Moral development includes other components besides moral judgment as measured by DIT scores. Real-life moral dilemmas also require moral sensitivity and moral motivation (Narvaez,1993). Before an individual can make responsible moral judgments, he or she needs to identify real life moral dilemmas in different contexts. A broad conception of morality requires more than just skill in abstract reasoning. Affective and social factors play a vital role in moral conduct.

The few empirical studies available have contradictory results on the relationship between general intelligence, social competence, and altruism (Abroms,1985). Earlier studies on deviant behavior and crime among the gifted have also shown that there is no necessary relationship between morality and intelligence (Brooks, 1985; Gath, Tennent, & Pidduck, 1970).

According to Andreani and Pagnin (1993), some gifted adolescents tend to neglect their immediate feelings of empathy and common moral inhibitions and focus on logical coherence in their moral judgments. The high level of ability and formal thinking of gifted students might favor intellectual egocentrism and abstraction from both real life and the concrete problems of people. Being gifted or creative imposes a special moral responsibility on an individual.

Characteristics of students gifted in Moral Intelligence based on literature found these elements:

1. Acute moral awareness.
2. Enjoy ethical debates.
3. Have a heightened understanding of moral issues.
4. Show asynchronous moral development.
5. Display moral values in action.
6. Display advanced moral judgment.
7. Have the ability to act on their morality.
8. Have an early sense of right and wrong.
9. Have deep moral systems.
10. Display moral character.

However, they lack the ability to cope with the issues emotionally, and they may feel frustration over not being able to address them. In addition, their advanced level of moral judgment makes them highly critical of injustice and the lack of integrity in individuals and society, which can cause them to become overwhelmed by their knowledge of societal issues and problems, and their inability because of their youth to address them in a meaningful manner (Sisk,2009).

Therefore, we should help the gifted to reach moral excellence together with excellence in specific domains (Andreani & Pagnini,2000).

Moral Education and Gifted Students

This section focuses on the contribution of education to the growth of moral creativity. The influence of formal education on moral judgment development has been the focus of much research in the last 20 years (Derryberry et al., 2005). Dabrowski emphasized the importance of the early identification of these gifted individuals because their asynchronous development (young age vs. advanced development) left them vulnerable; he saw the need for them to receive encouragement and nurturing for their successful development (Cash, 2009).

High cognitive ability and high education are the main contributors to high level of moral judgment: most researches find strongest relations between intelligence (or general cognitive ability) or educational achievement and measures of moral judgement (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000).

Many data were found supporting those assumptions. For instance, years in college are the strongest predictor of moral judgement (Finger, Borduin & Baumstark, 1992); intellectual perspective taking in academic settings accounts for more of the moral judgement variance than does any other factor (Mason & Gibbs, 1993); stages of logical and socio-moral judgement are strongly related to each other (Gibson, 1990). At least, above-average cognitive ability is necessary for higher scores in moral judgement, as higher cognitive achievement ability appears to provide a foundation for higher scores in moral judgment, even if it is not the only element needed (not every high achiever obtains a high score on moral judgement) (Narvaez, 1993); creative gifted give more original solutions to the dilemmas (Andreani & Pagnin, 1993).

Piaget argued that educators should provide students with opportunities to discover morals themselves, rather than simply being indoctrinated with norms. Piaget concluded from his work that schools should concentrate on cooperative decision making and problem solving to nurture moral development (Sisk, 2009).

Kohlberg argued that moral education also requires more than individual reflection, and should include students functioning within a community. The goal of moral education according to Kohlberg is to encourage individuals to move to the next stage of moral development (Sisk, 2009). Kohlberg demonstrated his concept of moral education in schools within-schools in which students participated as community members and sought consensual rather than majority rules. The role of teachers is crucial in the “just community” schools in that they promote rules and norms that reflect a concern for justice and rights in the community, and ultimately enforce the rules (Sisk, 2009). This could be done by emphasizing cooperative decision-making and problem solving, in order to make it possible for them to work out for themselves ethics based on fairness, consideration for others, altruism, loyalty, and the like (Cropley, 2011). The ‘infusion’ approach emphasizes that, rather than simply being an add-on, education offering such experiences should permeate the entire school experience. It is not a competitor with or an ancillary to the acquisition of academic knowledge and skills, but supports this process: responsibility, respect for others, self-control and diligence foster academic learning (Cropley, 2011).

Implications to Education of gifted in moral issues (Tirri, 2011) could be:

- Persons of good character have better developed skills in four areas: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral action

- Teachers should guide their students to discuss:
- Better and worse interpretations of the moral issues discussed (moral sensitivity)
- Better and worse justifications for actions (moral judgment)
- Expectations for behavior in particular contexts, for example, “the good citizen” (moral identity)
- Indicators to judge courage, persistence, and follow through (moral character)

The traditional approach involved teachers explicitly advocating virtues such as honesty, kindness, patience, or strength, for instance through direct communication of their belief in such virtues, by personal example, and by giving students opportunities of practicing these virtues and rewarding such expression (Cropley,2011). This process was frequently supported by separate classes on moral and ethical behavior, such as religious instruction or civics. A common teaching method for doing this was to present a moral dilemma to students and ask them to work out an appropriate moral course of action. Class discussion would then focus on deviations from justice, fairness, or other moral principles (Cropley,2011).

Coles stressed that children look to parents and teachers for clues on how to behave, as they go about their lives demonstrating in action their assumptions, desires, and values (Sisk,2009). Kidder (2001) said moral courage can be developed using his three principles: being committed to moral principles, being aware of the danger involved in supporting these principles, and being willing to endure the danger.

Sisk and Torrance (2001) advocated helping gifted students to develop a sense of responsibility and awareness of their gifts, and ways to give those gifts back to society to live at a level of moral development that includes a sense of purpose. Educating for moral development has within it the hope of developing the capacity of gifted students to discover what is essential in life; particularly, in their own lives, and in the words of E. Paul Torrance, “to nourish the world.”

Moral education assumes the same possibilities and limits of intellectual education: you can't develop by simply memorizing norms or by repeating prescribed and positively reinforced actions, but is necessary to develop a broader comprehension of nature of rules, difference of perspectives, relations between different aspects, both through intellectual and social stimuli: this was done in the ‘just community’ approach by Kohlberg and other researchers (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000).

In the meanwhile, other theorists (especially social learning theorists) focused on moral behavior as influenced by reinforcement and modeling procedures (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000) .

On the other hand, we note that findings regarding favorable social adjustment come from studies of moderate rather than extremely gifted children: the most talented are more vulnerable, as they are 'out of synchrony' with others (Janos & Robinson, 1985); as Freeman (1985, 1991) notes, highly gifted children are particularly sensitive and reactive to social stimuli they meet, and so are exposed both to most positive, highly intellectually and socially developed experiences, both to negative ones; and their development is inhibited--at any level--without adequate material and psychological conditions (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000). An educational program for social and moral abilities enhancement in selected groups of gifted adolescents was carried out by Pagnin and Zanetti (1997): it was based on exercises of dilemmas discussion, role-taking, social inferences, free expression of personal values, social behavior strategies discussion and dramatized simulation. The outcome of such intervention, analyzed by classic stage scores analysis and by an analysis of verbal expressions and meanings, showed the reaching of higher moral reasoning level (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000).

Pagnin & Andreani (2000) stated that the efficacy of interventions in enhancing levels of moral reasoning is pointed out by many studies (for instance Erikson et al., 1976; Whiteley, 1982; Willging & Dunn, 1982): a good review of them (comprehensive of unpublished dissertations) is in Rest & Thoma, 1986, that conclude the meta-analysis stating that "moral education programs emphasizing dilemma discussion and those emphasizing personality development both produce modest but definite effects." (Rest & Thoma, 1986, p. 85).

Conclusions

Educators, counselors, and mentors who work closely with today's brightest young minds must be aware of the ethical dimensions of high ability because they should be nudging the development of impressive talent toward positive purposes (Ambrose & Cross, 2009).

Overall, research findings underscore the strong correlation between high levels of intellect and strong moral development, including emotional intensity and sensitivity, compassion for others, and a preoccupation with right and wrong, but high intellectual ability does not predict mature moral judgment. Often, they lack the ability to cope with the issues emotionally, and they may feel frustration over not being able to address them.

Therefore, we should help the gifted to reach moral excellence together with excellence in specific domains, through educational programs for improving social and moral abilities.



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The Impact of Covid-19 on Severe Mentally ill Patients in One Mental Health Center in Kosovo

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Abstract

Immediately after the onset of the pandemic some scholars speculated that people with serious mental illnesses would be at uniquely high risk during this period. Recent studies show that people with serious mental illness are at increased risk of being infected by Covid-19 and have higher subsequent rates of hospitalization, morbidity, and mortality. There are studies that also show that stress caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictive measures can precipitate and worsen psychotic symptoms.

Our aim was to understand the mental state of the mentally ill people at one Mental Health Center in Prizren, Kosovo as a result of the situation created by Covid-19.

It's a cross-sectional study. 91 patients diagnosed with severe mental illness (Schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders) and 47 their primary caregivers were interviewed via phone calls or directly about their mental state.

Findings showed that 15.2% of the sample didn't use medication regularly while 27% didn't follow the pandemic rules / restrictions. The level of self-care was not present in about 24.6 % of the sample. Also participants reported the presence of somatic complaints (26.1%), aggression (23.2%), nervousness (21%), fear (20.3%) and suicidal thoughts (2.9%). Moreover, 13.8% of patients were not in a good mood and 12.3% did not sleep well. Our findings are in line with studies reporting that schizophrenic patients are unimpressed by Covid-19 situation.

A quarter to one fifth of patients with severe mental illness showed signs of deterioration. It is difficult to conclude on the extent of their suffering and further studies are needed. Further studies should determine the level and modes of impact of Covid-19 on this vulnerable category of the population.

Keywords: COVID-19, Severe Mentally Ill Patients, Mental Health Center, Prizren, Kosovo

Introduction

There is a widely accepted consensus by now that Covid-19 pandemic has heavily affected people's lives and communities. This is a mental health emergency, too, which presents substantial challenges for our patients, their families, our multi-disciplinary teams and our psychiatrist colleagues (Kelly, 2020). Global health authorities as the World Health Organization are concerned over the pandemic's mental health and psycho-social consequences (World Health Organization, 2020). The world was poorly prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic and this crisis has disrupted the delivery of psychiatric services worldwide (Kola et al, 2020). Even, the WHO general director Ghebreyesus noticed that COVID-19 is likely to exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions, while limiting access for those in need of services because in many countries, community mental health services have stopped functioning (Ghebreyesus, 2020). Druss (2020) in the same line with other scientific opinions, speculates that people with serious mental illnesses will be at uniquely high risk during this period; (e.g., see Shigemura et al., 2020; Montemurro, 2020; Kaufman et al, 2020; Lai et al, 2020 and Rohde et al, 2020).

But Hao et al (2020) in an article published online in April 2020 states that the psychological impact on people with mental disorders remains unknown because there is still little research on the psychological impact and mental health of psychiatric patients living in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet in June (2020) Kahl and Corell stated that the number of inpatient and outpatient contacts with severe mental illness has largely reduced during the

COVID-19 outbreak. Another important aspect refers to the great challenges for psychiatrists in managing psychiatric patients during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hao et al, 2020).

Two nationwide cohort studies in the US (Wang, et al 2020; Taquet, et al 2020) show that there is an increased incidence of COVID-19 among individuals with mental disorders. Increased risk of being infected by coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and having higher subsequent rates of hospitalization, morbidity, and mortality is stated also by Wang, et al (2020) and Li et al (2020). Nemani et al (2021) in a cohort study of 7348 adults with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 in a New York health system found that the premorbid diagnosis of a schizophrenia spectrum disorder was significantly associated with mortality (odds ratio -2.67).

Individuals with psychiatric disorders might experience worsening symptoms (Gunnell et al, 2020; Sønderskov et al, 2020; Haider et al, 2020) and also may be at higher risk of relapse or new episodes due to the high stress levels associated with the COVID-19 outbreak (Yao et al., 2020; Fischer et al., 2020; Sommer et al, 2020) which might act as a trigger into the manifestation of psychotic symptoms in patients with pre-existing mental illnesses. Finally stress related to a pandemic may also precipitate, exacerbate or impact the content of the psychotic symptoms (Li, 2020; Fischer et al 2020).

However, findings of previous studies on the impact of a natural and manmade disaster on individuals with mental illness were inconclusive (Muruganandam et al, 2020). Muruganandam et al, (2020) reported levels of relapse as high as thirty percent during the lockdown period. A recent study in Italy (Isaevoli et al, 2020) found results indicating that patients with serious mental illness had higher levels of COVID-19-related perceived stress (four times), anxiety (two to three times), and depressive symptoms (two to three times) compared to non-psychiatric participants. Findings from Spain reveal a similar picture; González-Blanco et al (2020) reported that patients with severe mental disorders reacted to the pandemic and the lockdown restrictions with higher anxiety levels as compared to the general public. Liebreuz et al (2020) and Duan et al (2020) assert that prevention measures such as isolation and quarantine, produce fear, anxiety, and uncertainty to patients, causing exacerbation of pre-existing mental disorders. There are also studies indicating a differential effect of the global crisis for patients with affective and psychotic disorders (e.g., Hölzle et al, 2020); more specifically patients with affective disorders showed the strongest correlations of symptoms, while patients with schizophrenia are occupied with serious intrinsic issues and unperturbed by pandemic. Along the same line, a longitudinal study (Pinkham et al, 2020) of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of 148 individuals with pre-existing severe mental illnesses has shown

that they have some degree of resilience in the face of the pandemic particularly during the early stages.

However, a major issue of concern has to do with adherence to pandemic protection measures and adherence to treatment. Shinn and Viron (2020) reported that severely mentally ill patients may have lower rates of adherence to treatment for medical conditions. In a rapid review (Brown et al, 2020) including three studies, authored concluded that psychotic patients' adherence with protective measures was revealed as markedly more problematic in people with psychosis. Sukut and Balik (2020) pointed out that patients receiving outpatient treatment due to serious mental illness have difficulty maintaining their treatment regimen.

As might be noted from the studies reviewed above, research from the Balkans on this specific topic is still missing, although the problematic might be the same if not worse than the data from other European countries.

The context of study: COVID-19 pandemic in Kosovo

As regards Kosovo, authors managed to find only one study addressing the mental health at the time of the pandemic in the general population in Kosovo. This study (Fanaj & Mustafa, 2021) has reported that 63% of online participants agreed that the situation had adversely affected their psychological state; 35.6% had a mild to severe form of depression and 18.7% had minimal symptoms. These figures show a high level of negative experience from the pandemic compared to other studies cited here (Fanaj & Mustafa, 2021). In this study significantly higher depression resulted for females (as compared to males) and the young age-group of 18 to 24 year olds.

The first case with COVID-19 in Kosovo was identified on 13th of March 2020 and three days later a Public Health Emergency was announced with strict lockdown restrictions put in place. The health system services in Kosovo as expected, were predominantly focused on prevention of infection and provision of treatment for those infected. In mid-March, the Ministry of Health declared a public health emergency due to COVID-19, but did not include any specific guidelines for mental health services. Few efforts were made through the provision of counseling lines for anxiety and stress were launched by the Ministry of Health and several other institutions. Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that mental health workers in these services were mostly volunteer psychologists, graduate students and last year students, some without proper experience and without adequate training. Community Mental Health Centers despite growing challenges have continued to provide reduced psychiatric and psychological services through home visits, follow-up of people with serious mental illness, and telephone counseling. An example is the Mental Health Center in Prizren, which functions as a community service for a region that comprises approximately

300,000 inhabitants. The multidisciplinary team includes psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, nurses and social workers. Faced with the pandemic in Kosovo, the Mental Health Center in Prizren continued the provision of essential mental health services to the population in the form of home visits, emergency psychiatric visits, telephone lines of psychological assistance, etc.

There had been a substantial increase in the number of infected individuals and overall deaths in Kosovo's population in the period when data were collected for this study, i.e., 8th to 22nd of May, 2020; this marks a period after the phase of relief begins after very restrictive initial restrictions.

After the war, Kosovo, like many other post-war societies, has experienced many challenges, including economic stagnation, widespread poverty, high unemployment, the movement of population from rural to urban areas, and poor quality of life, according to many agency reports. CIA The World Factbook (2017) reported that Kosovo's citizens are the second poorest in Europe, after Moldova, with a per capita GDP (PPP) of \$9,600 in 2016; population below poverty line -30% (2013 estimated); an unemployment rate of 33%, and a youth unemployment rate near 60%, in a country where the average age of the population is 26 years old. Mental Health system based in community is considered as success story in Kosovo, despite many challenges of course and several things which need to be improved.

The aim of this study was to understand the mental state of mentally ill patients as a result of the situation created by COVID-19. To our knowledge this is the first study on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on patients with severe mental illness in Kosovo.

Materials and methods

The present study has a cross-sectional research design. Participants were patients diagnosed with severe mental illness (Schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders) or their primary caregivers. We were aware of fact that studies have proved high rating concordance between caregiver and persons with psychotic illness about the patient's functioning level, which supports that reliable information can be obtained from their primary caregivers (Chand et al., 2014; Dickerson et al., 1997). Participants gave consent that their participation was voluntary, confidential and unidentifiable. The authors assert that all procedures contributing to this work comply with the ethical standards of the relevant authorities on human studies and with the Helsinki Declaration. The questionnaire was delivered and filled by nurses via phone calls or directly during home visits/ MHC visits. The data were processed from the responses

received in the time period of 14 days (08.05.-22.05.2020). Socio-demographic information was obtained regarding age, gender and place of residence. The questionnaire designed by the authors elicited issues like medication, sleep, appetite, nervousness, agresivity, anxiety, suicidal ideation, mood, self care, somatic pain, speaking about pandemics and following rules during restrictions phase. Scoring was based on a Likert type scale with range responses from from 0-3; where 0 (no), 1 (somehow/sometimes) and 2 (yes). The highest score means presence of changes in items asked. Data processing was performed with SPSS 21.0 and Microsoft Excel 2007.

Results

Participants were 138 respondents (91 patients, 47 caregivers). Mental health was assessed for 138 patients with psychotic disorder. The age of the evaluated patients was from 17 to 81 years old ($M_{age} = 46.97$, $SD = 11.58$). In terms of gender composition there were 100 men (72.5%) and 38 women (27.5%). As regards place of residence –the classification was: 81 individuals (58.7%) living in urban areas and 57 (41.3%) individuals living in rural areas. The assessment was conducted by direct meetings at Mental Health Center or home visits to 99 patients (71.7%) and by telephone to 39 patients (28.3%) (Tab. 1).

TABLE 1 Demographic characteristics of the participants in the survey.

Participants(n=138)	N	%
Gender		
Male	100	72.5
Female	38	27.5
Residence		
Urban	81	58.7
Rural	57	41.3
Interview type		
Face-to-face	99	71.7
Phone call	39	28.3
Interviewee		
Patients	91	65.9
Caregivers	47	34.1

Results showed that 84.8% of participants had used medication regularly while

73% of them had followed the rules / restrictions during the pandemic closure period. The level of self-care was also present in about 75.4% of the sample. Regarding the presence of symptoms / signs that would be taken as aggravation of the existing psychiatric disorder, results showed that only about 1/4-1/5 of them have shown problems such as, somatic complaints (26.1%), aggression (23.2%), nervousness (21%), nutrition (21%), fear / anxiety (20.3%), mood (13.8%), sleep (12.3%). One positive finding was that self-harm thoughts were reported in very low rates (2.9%).

TABLE 2 Percentages of questionnaire item responses and mean of the participants in the survey.

Item response	0 (No)	1 (somehow / sometimes)	2 (yes)	Mean
	%	%	%	
Medicaments take regularly	6.5	8.7	84.8	1.78
Has been in a good mood	13.8	34.1	52.2	1.38
Fear presence	63	16.7	20.3	.57
Has been more nervous than before	64.5	14.5	21	.56
Pain complaints	64.5	9.4	26.1	.61
Sleep well	12.3	15.9	71.7	.59
Has eaten as before	21	15.2	63.8	1.42
Saying that he would hurt himself	91.3	5.8	2.9	.11
Has there been aggressive behavior	67.4	9.4	23.2	.55
Self-care taken	8	16.7	75.4	1.67
Has he talked / asked about the situation - the virus - the pandemic	35.5	12.3	52.2	1.16
Has complied with the rules and prohibitions during this period	14.6	12.4	73	.58

As regards gender specificity male patients showed more fear, nervousness, aggression and talk/ask for pandemic situation; while female patients showed more good mood, good sleep, good appetite, took medication regularly, adhered to the rules / restrictions but showed even more suicidal ideation and complaints of pain. Mann-Whitney test revealed significant gender differences only for item of self-care scores ($Md_{females}=2, N=38; Md_{males}=2, N=100; Z=-2.374, p<.01$); whereas females showed higher mean ranks scores than males (Tab. 3).

TABLE 3 Mean scores and significance based on gender

Item response / Gender	Male		Female		<i>p</i>
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Sig.
Medicaments take regularly	1.74	0.59	1.89	0.38	.14
Has been in a good mood	1.35	0.73	1.47	0.68	.37
Fear presence	0.61	0.81	0.47	0.79	.30
Has been more nervous than before	0.63	0.84	0.39	0.71	.13
Pain complaints	0.54	0.84	0.82	0.92	.09
Sleep well	1.62	0.67	1.53	0.76	.54
Has eaten as before	1.38	0.83	1.55	0.76	.26
Saying that he would hurt himself	0.11	0.39	0.13	0.41	.65
Has there been aggressive behavior	0.63	0.87	0.37	0.75	.09
Self-care taken	1.60	0.66	1.87	0.41	.02
Has he talked / asked about the situation - the virus - the pandemic	1.17	0.93	1.16	0.91	.91
Has complied with the rules and prohibitions during this period	1.57	0.71	1.63	0.78	.31

As regards the urban-rural distinction, patients from urban areas reported more complaints of pain, and suicidal ideation. However they reported better sleeping and eating regimes and better care of themselves. Also they revealed increased interest and more talking about the pandemic situation and have respected the rules more. Patients from rural areas had higher levels of fear, nervousness, and aggression. Despite these findings they have been in a good mood and have taken medication more regularly than patients in urban areas. Despite these specifics Mann-Whitney test revealed no significant differences for all items of questionnaires, based on the urban-rural distinction (Tab. 4).

TABLE 4 Mean scores and significance based on residence

Item response / Residence	Urban		Rural		<i>p</i>
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Sig.
Medicaments take regularly	1.77	0.55	1.81	0.54	.47
Has been in a good mood	1.36	0.73	1.42	0.70	.62
Fear presence	0.54	0.77	0.61	0.86	.77

Has been more nervous than before	0.48	0.74	0.68	0.90	.26
Pain complaints	0.65	0.88	0.56	0.86	.49
Sleep well	1.64	0.69	1.53	0.71	.20
Has eaten as before	1.49	0.77	1.33	0.87	.30
Saying that he would hurt himself	0.17	0.49	0.04	0.18	.07
Has there been aggressive behavior	0.52	0.83	0.61	0.86	.45
Self-care taken	1.73	0.59	1.60	0.65	.14
Has he talked / asked about the situation - the virus - the pandemic	1.23	0.91	1.07	0.94	.31
Has complied with the rules and prohibitions during this period	1.65	0.67	1.48	0.80	.22

In terms of modality of data collection, i.e., face to face interview or phone call some specifics were also noted. Patients who were interviewed face-to-face admitted being more afraid, but also said that they slept well, ate well, had a good mood, took medication regularly, took better care for themselves and were also more compliant to rules / restrictions. Conversely, patients interviewed by telephone indicated that they had more nervousness, aggression, suicidal ideation and also talked / asked more about the pandemic situation. Mann-Whitney test revealed significant differences in responses only for two items based on the modality of data collection. The first difference was in self-care scores ($Md_{direct}=2$, $N=99$; $Md_{phone}=2$, $N=39$; $Z=-2.751$, $p<.00$); and the second for compliance with the rules / restrictions during the pandemic closure period scores ($Md_{direct}=2$, $N=98$; $Md_{phone}=2$, $N=39$; $Z=-2.221$, $p<.02$). Patients interviewed directly showed higher mean rank scores than those interviewed by phone in both cases (Tab. 5) .

TABLE 5 Mean scores and significance based on interview type

Item response / Interview type	Face-to-face		Phone call		<i>p</i>
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Medicaments take regularly	1.79	0.54	1.77	0.58	.95
Has been in a good mood	1.40	0.71	1.33	0.73	.60
Fear presence	0.58	0.80	0.56	0.82	.91
Has been more nervous than before	0.55	0.81	0.62	0.84	.65
Pain complaints	0.62	0.87	0.62	0.87	.98
Sleep well	1.62	0.68	1.54	0.75	.62
Has eaten as before	1.51	0.74	1.23	0.95	.17

Saying that he would hurt himself	0.10	0.36	0.15	0.48	.66
Has there been aggressive behavior	0.48	0.80	0.74	0.93	.13
Self-care taken	1.76	0.55	1.46	0.72	.01
Has he talked / asked about the situation - the virus - the pandemic	1.10	0.95	1.33	0.83	.22
Has complied with the rules and prohibitions during this period	1.66	0.68	1.38	0.81	.03

As regards the data collection modality based on self versus caregiver report, results revealed higher mean scores in almost all items reported by the patients themselves as compared to those reported by Caregivers. Caregivers gave the highest average responses only to nervousness, pain complaints as well as suicidal tendencies. However, Mann-Whitney tests revealed significant differences based on whether the interview was done with patients or primary caregivers only for item of self-care scores ($Md_{patients}=2, N=91; Md_{caregivers}=2, N=47; Z=-2.864, p<.00$); Patient is interviewed they showed higher mean ranks scores than when caregiver was interviewed (Tab. 6).

TABLE 6 Mean scores and significance based on Interviewee

Item response / Interviewee	Patients		Caregivers		<i>p</i>
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Medicaments take regularly	1.84	0.50	1.68	0.62	.63
Has been in a good mood	1.46	0.65	1.23	0.81	.14
Fear presence	0.59	0.81	0.53	0.80	.64
Has been more nervous than before	0.52	0.78	0.66	0.89	.43
Pain complaints	0.55	0.87	0.74	0.87	.12
Sleep well	1.64	0.67	1.51	0.74	.29
Has eaten as before	1.48	0.78	1.32	0.88	.33
Saying that he would hurt himself	0.10	0.33	0.15	0.51	.97
Has there been aggressive behavior	0.59	0.89	0.49	0.74	.78
Self-care taken	1.79	0.48	1.45	0.77	.00
Has he talked / asked about the situation - the virus - the pandemic	1.26	0.92	0.98	0.89	.07
Has complied with the rules and prohibitions during this period	1.66	0.68	1.43	0.80	.07

Finally, to assess any possible effect of age, on the results, Spearman's correlation analysis was also performed between the age variable and the respondents' answers to the questions. It turned out that none of the questions showed any significant relationship with the age variable (Tab. 7).

TABLE 7 Spearman's correlation analysis between age and item responses

Spearman's rho / Items responses	Age
Medicaments take regularly	-.106
Has been in a good mood	-.016
Fear presence	-.084
Has been more nervous than before	-.093
Pain complaints	.097
Sleep well	-.068
Has eaten as before	-.041
Saying that he would hurt himself	.150
Has there been aggressive behavior	-.064
Self-care taken	-.077
Has he talked / asked about the situation - the virus - the pandemic	.127
Has complied with the rules and prohibitions during this period	.076

Discussion

The present study aimed to understand how Covid-19 pandemic impacted patients with psychotic disorders in Prizren Mental Health Center. It is difficult to make comparisons and arrive at conclusions when we lack a basic previous assessment in similar settings and conditions.. However, findings indicating that 20%-25% of participants showed the presence of pronounced signs / symptoms, indicate that this group of patients was not severely affected. These results are in line with the studies of Hölzle et al, (2020) and Pinkham et al, (2020) who did not report a deterioration of the patients' basic condition and at least not anymore than other categories of mental disorders. Nor can we find in this sample evidence of worsening or new episodes of underlying disease predicted by studies according to which stress from the Covid-19 pandemic may trigger the manifestation of psychotic symptoms in patients with previous mental illnesses or that stress related to a pandemic may precipitate, exacerbate or impact the content of the psychotic symptoms (Gunnell et al, 2020; Sonderskov et al, 2020; Haider et al, 2020, Yao et al., 2020; Fischer et al. al., 2020; Sommer et al, 2020) (Li, 2020; Fischer et al 2020). However it must

be considered that the course of psychotic disorders is known for the stages of exacerbation which might occur. The finding that 84.8% of patients have taken medication regularly is very positive, particularly because non-adherence to prescription drug treatments is recognized as a worldwide problem and may be the most challenging aspect of treating patients with schizophrenia (WHO, 2003). For example, Dolder et al (2003) found that 12-month drug compliance ranged from 54 to 62%. This finding is also contrary to the emphasis of Sukut and Balik (2020) that patients with serious mental illness have difficulty maintaining their treatment. Results on the presence of fear and mood swings are also at low levels as compared to the results in the general population as reported in the literature. Nonetheless these findings should be carefully considered particularly as regards comparisons with studies from other countries (e.g., studies of Isaevoli et al, (2020) in Italy and González-Blanco et al (2020) in Spain) due to important differences the research design and the measuring instruments. Regarding the finding that 73% of the sample have adhered to protective anticovid measures, discrepancies are observed with other studies such as the review of Brown et al (2020) and Shinn and Viron (2020) reporting that patient adherence with protective measures was markedly more problematic in people with psychosis. Therefore it seems that present study reports a quite satisfactory level of compliance, which requires further understanding and investigation particularly as regards the understanding of positive reinforcers. Our findings by signs / symptoms can only be compared with a study found in 132 psychotic patients in India through telephone evaluation (Muruganandam et al, 2020). In almost all similar items our sample has lower results. So while in our study 6.5% did not take medication regularly in India it was 22%. Other similar measures compare between the two studies as follows: as aggression (23.2% vs 28%), intake food (21% vs 23%), fear / anxiety (20.3% vs 27%), sleep (12.3% vs 37.9%), self-care (8% vs 20%), thoughts of suicide (2.9% vs 14.4%).

That the pandemic did not greatly affect psychotic patients of this sample is also shown by the fact that only half of them (52.2%) discussed the situation with family members or other people around. This can be understood when we consider the limited level of awareness for the situation as a result of the disease from which they suffer. Maybe this is protective factor against Covid-9 pandemic stress. Moreover, the greater family support of patients, which characterizes the predominantly collective Kosovo society, might act as an additional protective factor to pandemic stress.

Limitations

Limitations of the present study include a relatively small sample size, proxy (caregiver) report, lack of control groups, and lack of a structured systematic



clinical assessment. These limitations though are quite common in research studies with clinical samples, or psychiatric patients (eg. see Muruganandam et al,2020) .

Conclusions

The present study concluded that only 20%-25% of patients with severe mental illness of the Mental Health Center showed signs of deterioration. Authors speculate that the greater family support of patients, which characterizes the predominantly collective Kosovo society, might act as an additional protective factor to pandemic stress. Despite the apparently optimistic findings, particularly as compared to research from other countries, it is still difficult to conclude exactly on the extent of their suffering. Further studies are needed to determine the level and modes of impact of Covid-19 on this vulnerable category of the population. Continuing to provide mental health services to people with serious mental illness should be a priority of the health system in Kosovo and elsewhere.

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Does the Communist Mentality Explain the Behaviour of Albanian Politicians During the Transition Period? _____

_____ **Dr. Gerti SQAPI** _____

Abstract

During the three decades since Albania overthrew the communist dictatorial system and began its democratic changes, the existence of a line of thought in Albanian society has been noted, which tends to explain the behaviour of Albanian politicians during the transition period based on the assumption of a “communist mentality” carried by them. This line of thought has often been dominant and has been reflected in the Albanian media and public space as a form of “main” explanation to show many of the failures that Albanian democracy has faced during these 30 years, the authoritarian behaviour of political elites, the “state capture” by political parties, the crisis of state institutions, etc. Applying the concept of “communist mentality” in the Albanian media and public space and explaining through it (almost) any kind of negative phenomenon, problem, or behaviour that contradicts the idea of democracy or prevents it from developing, is very problematic, therefore it has served as an impetus in undertaking this study. In this paper, a critical approach will be offered to this discourse that has often dominated the Albanian media and public space, questioning whether is this “communist mentality” the determining factor for the behaviour of Albanian politicians and the failures of Albanian democracy or there are other factors that may explain these phenomena.

Key Words: *Communist Mentality, Political Culture, Political Elites, Political Behaviour, Democracy, State Capture.*

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“You do not know what it means to do six months in prison. Not them, but even if I had been there instead of them, not six, but even just two months in prison, I would have become a communist and surpassed the communist. “This means that they have now become hardened communists, and if they get out of there who knows what they will do?”².

Introduction

The year 2021 is an important jubilee date for Albania, as it marks the 30th anniversary of the beginning of its democratic changes after the overthrow of the communist regime. However, in these 30 years, Albania, unlike some other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, has not managed to institutionalize a well-functioning democracy in its environment and still faces today large deficits in its functioning, with authoritarian behaviour of its political elites, lack of political accountability, “state capture” by political parties, etc. In general, during these 30 years, to explain the difficult transition and the many problems faced by the defective functioning of democracy in Albania, one of the main reasons given is the legacy of the previous regime that materializes in the “communist mentality” of political elites in post-communism. Therefore, one explanation that has been given the most, and that has often been dominant in the Albanian public opinion, is that the “faults” of the defective functioning of the Albanian democracy belong to this “communist mentality” of the Albanian politicians. Thus, in essence, the problems of Albanian democracy stems from this communist mentality of our leaders. Likewise, there is a tendency that any kind of behaviour of Albanian politicians considered negative, which contradicts the ideal of democracy, tends to be equated or identified with the Bolshevik, Stalinist, Enverian methods of these politicians.

The introductory citation of this work belongs to a one-liner from a famous Albanian telecomedy that was played during the communist regime, but it has also circulated as a kind of metaphor in the Albanian public opinion, to show or explain what happened with Albanian political elites during the period of democratic transition. So, the fact that since these political leaders have spent a good part of their lives under the communist regime (where they were formed culturally, intellectually, and morally under that regime), still after their release from “prison”, they do not they could do nothing but reflect the same mentality and the same traits of behaviour as the communists. Of course, since they were now operating in a different political, social and economic context, as the “curtains” were already raised for the world, these politicians had to somehow

² Excerpt from the Albanian telecomedy “*The Prefect*”, which has as its main character Qazim Mulleti, a former prefect of Tirana region during the years of fascist occupation of Albania.

moderate their behaviours and strategies. But, in essence, no matter how “democratic” they try to appear, they continue to remain communists or neo-communists in their mentality.

Applying this concept (communist mentality) or explaining through it (almost) any kind of phenomenon, problem, behaviour that contradicts the ideal of democracy and prevents it from developing, is problematic in itself. The aim of this paper is to highlight, through a systematic analysis, the shortcomings and weaknesses of the use of the concept of “communist mentality”, a concept so much used in Albanian public, political and journalistic life that it is taken for granted and not even questioned by anyone. This paper aims to undertake a critique of this existing line of thought, arguing that the concept of communist mentality is not valid to explain the behaviour of Albanian politicians and the lack of their democratic culture in general.

The Concept of “Communist Mentality” as a Culturalist Explanation

Regarding the concept of “communist mentality” it must be said that there is no precise and single definition of this concept, for which it is generally agreed by scholars what it means. Likewise, there is no agreement in the literature on any particular characteristic of what it means to be a communist, to have a communist mentality, etc. Therefore, this does not help us in our intention in this paper to analyse the application of this concept as something that generally explains the behaviour of Albanian politicians, and which is thought to be an obstacle to the democratization of Albania. In the absence of a precise and “scientific” definition, accepted as such by scholars, to which we could refer and compare it with the way the “communist mentality” is used in Albania, the main task/aim of this paper is to analyse in itself the use (or misuse) of this concept in the Albanian case.

The concept of “communist mentality” was developed in the Albanian public, media, and political discourse (but also in other former communist countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union) to explain the idea that the long years lived under the communist system has produced a kind of inherited personality or mentality, with some values or norms of behaviour that are typical for the time of a totalitarian (communist) regime, but that continue to appear characteristically even in other regimes (in this case, in democratic systems. It should be noted that the “communist mentality” in itself does not constitute a specific academic analytical category but is a concept that is treated under the framework of political culture and the “communist legacy” of countries that have experienced this form of regime. So, we will treat the idea of the communist



legacy as part of the culturalist paradigm, which views the development of democracy as linked to political culture. Thus, in this aspect, the concept of “communist mentality” must be seen and understood in the context of political culture.

The concept of political culture refers to the predisposing traits, the inner state of individuals, which predisposes them to react to certain stimuli in particular ways (Mayer et al., 2003: p. 14). In summary, the dimensions of the concept of political culture include *attitudes* (a psychological orientation towards political objects, which often incorporate normative conceptions of *how things should be*); *beliefs* (concepts of how things are, which may or may not be correct); *feelings*; *values*, etc. (Mayer et al., 2003: p. 16). In the cases of Eastern and Central European countries that had experienced decades under communist rule, it is assumed that a certain communist mentality manifested in certain attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs was rooted. Thus, it was argued that a pattern of attitudes and behaviours in the recently freed, post-communist countries is hypothesized as a post-communist syndrome [or mentality] ... The syndrome is viewed as a direct result of long-lasting, oppressive rule and suggests a host of individual and social disorders: learned helplessness, specific manifestations of immorality/incivility, lack of civic culture and civic virtues (Klipcerova & Feierabend & Hofstetter, 1997: p. 39). In the same way, Willemans expresses the idea that, “the communist doctrine succeeded in shaping a specific mentality amongst the people, to deform their thinking... This mentality has had and still has a lot of influence on economics and politics in the former socialist countries. Till today mistrust, unreliability, lack of confidence and looking for protective umbrella’s is to be traced in specific events” (Willemans, 2000) of the past that continue to influence the present.

Furthermore, in their famous comparative study of five different nations, Almond and Verba, in the model they offer for *Civic Culture*, which basically according to them should essentially distinguish the cultures of “successful” democracies those that are less successful, they mention some important cultural components, such as - *the ways in which political elites make decisions, their norms and attitudes, as well as the norms and attitudes of the ordinary citizen, his relation to government and to his fellow citizens* (Almond & Verba, 1963, p. 3). In general, the purpose of this comparative study of these culturalist authors is to address the attention and highlight the importance of these attitudes, norms, and subjective values, of the elites and the population as a whole, for the stabilization of democratic regimes and the participation in democratic model. After all, these authors tell us that to achieve this goal, - “it will require more than the formal institutions of democracy – universal suffrage, the political party, the elective legislature” (Almond & Verba, 1963, p. 3). Preconditions or cultural qualities

are also needed, which are necessary or, at least, supportive of the structures of political democracy. The structures sanctioned and defined in the constitution, after all, do not operate in a vacuum, but in a context of social and cultural factors, which influence how those political structures function (Mayer et al., 2003: p. 40).

Generally, in the case of the difficult Albanian transition during these three decades, these cultural factors (inherited from the previous communist regime) of the political elites are given as an explanation to show the failures of democracy in this country. The purpose of this paper is to make a theoretical and ideological analysis of this discourse that exists in the public debate on the “communist mentality” of Albanian politicians, aiming to show: what is meant by this communist mentality in the Albanian case by authors/analysts who are considered in the section below; what are the different dimensions/characteristics that they attach to this concept, etc. And a second regard here would be what aspects of Albanian democracy threaten or hinder this “communist mentality” of politicians, therefore what are its consequences?

A Review of the Dimensions of the “Communist Mentality” of Albanian Politicians and the Consequences It Produces for Democracy According to Analysts / Authors

In general, the implicit or even explicit presupposition advocated by various authors is that there is a communist mentality or syndrome inherited from the previous totalitarian regime, which has influenced with all its distortions the “new” political elites who lead democratic changes in post-communist countries. Thus, “totalitarian societies produced a ‘totalitarian syndrome’, a specific pattern of cognitions, attitudes and behaviours developed in order to adapt to life under totalitarian circumstances” (Klipcerova & Feierabend & Hofstetter, 1997: p. 39). Regarding this political culture inherited from the previous regime, one author states: “Albania’s political culture was built over the course of 50 years through the use of propaganda, press, music, art, literature, cinematography and was preserved and cultivated through the organizations and unions that were the extension of the Communist Party. The existing political culture today has not changed obstructing the country’s democratization” (Pajo, 2017: p. 132). The influence from this totalitarian past, or this inherited communist mentality/syndrome, has been the main factor, according to the various authors/analysts we take in the analysis in this section, that has hindered the building of a well-functioning and institutionalized democracy in Albania. Meksi emphasizes this when he says that: “The survival of the people in politics and of the communist



mentality, the nostalgia for that time is making a prolongation of the transition with all its negative aspects, making the Albanians to lose hope for a better life” (Meksi, 2009).

Fatos Lubonja, an Albanian analyst and opinionist, expresses this idea through a metaphor: “*whoever has lived in slavery [under the communist system] will inevitably have undergone such distortions which will not allow him to be fully worthy of another system*” (Lubonja, 2006, p. 16-17). Through this metaphor, Lubonja tries to explain what happened to the Albanian political elites in the period of democratic transition. He states: “*We built the worst democracy and the worst possible capitalism, precisely because the people who took it over had suffered such psychological, cultural and moral distortions that they display to this day, often in same ugly and evil forms*” (Lubonja, 2006, p. 16-17).

Concerning the different dimensions attributed to the communist mentality of Albanian politicians of the post-communist period and the various consequences it has produced, the authors (quoted below) list: *The rise of the cults of political leaders; the mindset that unites the party with the state; the desire for unlimited power and to suppress any dissenting voice (the authoritarianism of political leaders); the treatment of the political opponent as an enemy, the extreme polarization of the political life in the country; misuse of public funds and corruption, etc.*

Regarding what can be mentioned as the first dimension of the “communist mentality”, the authors state the creation or re-fabrication of new cults of the individual in the leaders of the main political parties. These cults characterize the main political leaders of the transition period in Albania, just as in the past they characterized figures like Enver Hoxha. And this is what Andrea Stefani means when he addresses the figures of Fatos Nano and Sali Berisha by saying: “*For leaders with a sculpted, iron, and ruthless cult as that of Enver Hoxha. People who show the same thirst and need for cheers of crowds as the dictatorship propaganda did yesterday*” (Stefani, 2005: p. 74). And with these cults of new leaders is emphasized the idea of their infallibility, the idea that they are irrefutable or that those who follow them must obey them. “*They [the cults] exert pressure for submission to the people who surround the “prominent” man ... by suffocating to the last cell if possible, all that spirit of opposition and freedom that is the soul of any democracy*” (Stefani, 2005: p. 138).

What is most often understood through these “cults” that the chief leaders of the dominant Albanian political parties have built around them, is the authoritarian behaviour they carry. Thus, their authoritarian tendencies, both in how they run their parties and the affairs of the state, are explained as a consequence of “*their sophisticated carrying of communist mentalities, which makes them to strive not for freedom, but to rule*”. (Stefani, 2005: p. 69). The profile of the leader in these 27 years of democracy is the same: the one of the authoritarian type (Pajo, 2017: p. 134). And the authoritarianism of Albanian politicians,

in this case, a consequence of the communist mentality to rule everything and absolutely, according to the ideas of the authors has also caused the lack of real democracy in the internal life of Albanian political parties (lack of real competition inside the party); the fact they are run authoritatively by a single hand or a very small group of people around the leader (excluding party forums or their membership); that there is a tendency to exclude or “stifle” critical voices within the party; or that there is a spirit of submission and servility within these parties. Andrea Stefani expresses this idea when he talks about the organization of the two main parties in the country and says that: *“the two largest and dominant parties of life in Albania (SP and DP) remain invincible castles of Nano and Berisha. Leninist-type parties with new names, parties of monolithic unity around the leader, parties of subjugated majorities, and servant party forums have been the powerful weapon of the invincible survival of Nano and Berisha.”* (Stefani, 2005: p. 22-23). It is assumed from these words of the author, his attempt to highlight that spirit of authoritarianism and submission that exists in the inner life of Albanian political parties, and the attempt to explain them through that communist mentality inherited from the past of Albanian politicians.

Another element of the concept of “communist mentality”, from which Albanian politicians are presumed to suffer, is the mentality according to which it identifies or unites the party with the state. Hence, using the same methods or practices of the former (communist) state party. Fatos Lubonja describes this when he talks about the ruling Socialist Party: *“It is difficult to say that it [SP] is detached from the mentality that identifies the party with the state and from the practices of the state party. The shadow of the state party which controls everything, although not brutally and directly as Berisha did [in the years 1992 -1997] remains in Albania”* (Lubonja, 2000: p. 13). Another author, Mustafa Nano, adopts the concept of the former party-state to explain (in his way) the failures of Albanian democracy. *“The concept of the state party is the most visible part of the legacy that the Hoxha regime passed on to us nowadays. Infection with this political theory has spared almost no one. All politicians do not leave a chance without proving this. ...In the years of the Democratic Party rule, its devaluation and political degeneration, went in proportion to the attempts to turn it into a state party. There came a moment when this party was merged with the state to such an extent that the overthrow from the power of the DP could not but bring the fall of the state”.* (Nano, 2001: p. 15). Here, too, we note the elaboration of the idea by the author that the lack of division between party and state, viz, the fact that party militants are employed in the state administration, or that state institutions are dependent on or controlled by the party, is a consequence of the communist legacy. And this is part of the communist mentality of Albanian politicians. In Andrea Stefani, we also find explicitly this idea of the communist mentality of the state party. *“Historical” leaders have become an obstacle to the democratization of the*

country because they carry the communist mentality of the state party; they want to rule everything by giving power only to their followers. They implement where they can and as much as possible the practices of the state party by distributing their loyalists at the strategic points, all over the top of the state, to rule it ” (Stefani, 2005: p. 144). So, we can also see here the attempt to explain militancy in the state administration with the practices of the former (communist) state party.

Likewise, another element of the “communist mentality” inherited from the communist past, according to the authors, is the desire for power of politicians, or their tendencies to control or usurp all power they can. Andrea Stefani argues this when he says: “At the beginning of pluralism when they felt the taste of power, the “democratic” leaders (without having any new philosophy or vision) began to copy what they overthrew: the Communist Party of Enver Hoxha. “This is a ‘betrayal’ to the principles of democracy, as the author calls it, as a consequence of their communist mentality” (Stefani, 2005: p. 136, 148). This idea is also put forward by Miranda Vickers and James Petiffer when they try to explain the actions of Berisha in power during the years ‘92 -96. “His tendencies to grab all power, relying only on a few loyalists, led him to savage measures against his political opponents, who many remembered the actions of Enver Hoxha. “Many saw in Berisha another one-party ruler” (Vickers & Petiffer, 2007: p. 137-138). While Mustafa Nano comments on this argument: “Sali Berisha [even after he came to power in 2005] has been, is and will remain an exalted, pathetic and incorrigible Bolshevik, a man who lustfully bleeds power, a paranoid dragged by wild passions, a dangerous prime minister, a machine that produces enemies one by one” (Nano, 2006: p. 17). We can understand from these words of the author his idea about the communist mentality. So, first, it is a lust for power on the part of politicians, to control it. Second, he is also an aggressive lust that is ready to “bleed” to retain power. And third, the communist mentality, according to this author, also means political paranoia that produces endless enemies. So, there is a return to the mentality or the inquisition that frequently produces enemies.

And here we can come to another dimension of the “communist mentality” of politicians: the mentality according to which it sees the opponent, or treats him as an enemy, seeks him to disappear from the “face of the earth”. And this is another important element that the authors elaborate on when talking about the communist mentality of Albanian politicians. Thus, e.g., Elez Biberaj, referring to the May 1996 parliamentary elections in Albania, said: “Under the influence of the culture inherited from communism, the leaders of the government and the opposition showed that they did not understand the rules of representative democracy, seeing politics as a zero-sum game, in which the winner takes it all and the loser loses it all” (Biberaj, 2001: p. 471). And with the same argument, the author, in his book “Albania in Transition”, explains the events that occurred in the Albanian political scene during the period of social unrest in 1997. “Inspired by the communist traditions of

intolerance and fierce class struggle, they (politicians of the time) showed no respect for democratic procedures or discussions and saw politics only as a war arena. “The instincts of the former elites, their communist mentality, customs, and views had remained almost intact” (Biberaj, 2001: p. 498). We can understand from these lines the argument of the author, who also tries to explain the behaviour of Albanian politicians, the lack of respect for democratic procedures, the spirit of intolerance or lack of cooperation between them, in the context of their communist mentality.

Another significant outcome produced by the “communist mentality” of Albanian politicians, according to the authors, is what we can call the polarization of political life in the country. A political polarization that goes to the limits of hostility between the parties, and which is not infrequently explained by these authors as *a direct inheritance of the communist mentality of class warfare* and the spirit of intolerance it produces. Andrea Stefani notes this idea when he says: “*One of the most disgusting features of today’s Albanian politics - a direct inheritance of the communist mentality of class warfare - is the accusation “enemy of the people” that party leaders make to each other*” (Stefani, 2005: p. 73). A primitive phase of political struggle, according to the author, that takes the form of class warfare with pronounced doses of nationalism. Similarly, Rexhep Qosja, another author perhaps more important because of his personality as an academic, does not hesitate to explain in the same way the behaviour of Albanian politicians in the Assembly (referring to the period in May 2010). “*There is no doubt that a Stalinist mentality prevails in the Albanian Parliament, both in the behaviour and in the discussions of the protagonists of this Assembly. What are those lynchings of political opponents in this assembly, other than the typical Stalinist lynchings of political opponents? The Albanian Parliament has not forgotten to behave like the Politburo of the USSR, that of communist Albania, and other former communist countries. When the communist leader decided to settle accounts with his main opponent, when he saw him as a competitor in the power struggle, he first buried him politically and morally in the Politburo. The hand of the law, the iron of the law, the iron of the will are how these “democrats” will settle accounts with the political opponents, declared enemies of Albania ... Typical Stalinist political linguistic cattle*” (Qosja, 2010: p. 19-20). We can see in these lines of these authors, their attempt to explain the behavior of Albanian politicians towards each other, the spirit of intolerance that exists between them, the mutual accusations they exchange, or even the language they use, as a consequence of the communist mentality that they “possess”.

Finally, another problem of the Albanian society during the period of its transition, which has to do with the endemic corruption spread at all levels and political institutions, also is often treated as a consequence of the “communist mentality” inherited from Albanian politicians. Misuse of public funds and corruption are also explained by the legacy of the communist mentality of Albanian politicians. Fatos Lubonja explicitly expresses this in one of his writings

when he emphasizes that: *“What continues to be fed by the old feudal-communist trunk in this monster is the mentality of the ruler who does as he pleases with the public funds, the privileges he enjoys, even that of not being equal with other citizens in front of the law”* (Lubonja, 2004b: p. 11). So, the roots of the problem of abuse and the benefits associated with the public office continue to be “fed by the old feudal-communist trunk” according to Fatos Lubonja. After all, “Communism, with the privilege of a minority, with the disruption of equality in rights and opportunities, created the idea that some favors are allowed to some peoples and not to others” (Meksi, 2009).

A Critique to the Discourse on the “Communist Mentality” and Some Alternative Explanations for the Behaviour of Albanian Politicians

So far, through the discourse analysis, we have made a summary of the main ideas and dimensions that different authors or analysts in the Albanian public discourse and media have made for the concept of “communist mentality”. It can be said that the argument of the “communist mentality” in the Albanian media and public space is so “alive” and dominant, that it has “extinguished” any other explanatory alternative for the behaviour of Albanian politicians and the lack of democratic culture in them. This section offers a critique of this dominant discourse in the Albanian public space, arguing that the concept of communist mentality is not very valuable in explaining the behaviour of Albanian politicians and their lack of democratic culture in general. This critique is based firstly on the conceptual plane, so it will be a critique “from within” of the argument that it is the communist mentality that explains all the other variables (consequences), highlighting the gaps, ambiguity, the incoherence of the argument, as well as the lack of clear evidence in this discourse which proves the cause-and-effect relationship (how do we know that it is precisely from the communist mentality that the behaviour of our politician’s stems?). This critique “from within” of the application of this concept of communist mentality will be followed by a second part, a critique in the empirical plan, which will try to argue through alternative explanations where do these negative effects attributed to the “communist mentality” come from (such as the behaviour of our politicians, their authoritarianism, the lack of a healthy democratic culture in them, etc.).

Conceptually, the “communist mentality” can be said to be an empty concept in itself, not clearly defined by those who use it in public or media debates. In most cases, we can understand or imply from the use of this concept simply *a mental predisposition, or behavior of Albanian politicians with authoritarian tendencies,*

but nothing more than this. It is a tautological concept in itself: the communist mentality is defined as an authoritarian mentality (a predisposition of authoritarian behaviour of politicians) and then it is argued that the communist mentality produces authoritarianism. This is an empty argument in itself, a circular and tautological thought that at the end of the day gets to the conclusion that authoritarianism is produced by the authoritarian mentality of politicians. Here, actually, it is highlighted only the authoritarianism of Albanian politicians, or it is identified their authoritarian tendencies, but this does not mean that the “truth” of the communist mentality has been found.

Thus e.g. whether authors and analysts try often in their writings to explain the lack of internal democracy in the life of Albanian political parties (submission, exclusion of critical voices, or the lack of real competition in these parties) as a consequence of “*communist mentalities carried by their leaders*” [Nano, Berisha, Rama], or through “*the cults they have raised and their metastases*” (Stefani, 2005: pp. 69, 111), at the end of the day, the same authors, come to conclusions with phrases such as: “*Authoritarian control of Berisha and Nano are currently the spirit of PD and SP*” (Stefani, 2005: p. 262); or that “*with Berisha’s personality we mean the phenomenon of authoritarianism in the form of concentration of power in the hands of one man*” (Lubonja, 2004a). Hence, we see in this public and media debate that exists in Albania, to equate the communist mentality with the authoritarian mentality of politicians, and then it is argued that the communist mentality produces authoritarianism, or even simpler, that the authoritarianism of Albanian politicians is produced by their authoritarian mentality. And exactly this makes it an empty argument, a circular reasoning, which does not help us much to understand and explain the reality of democracy that exists in Albania.

Also, another argument I would like to present here to show the invalidity of the concept of “communist mentality” as a factor to explain the behaviour of Albanian politicians, is the lack of evidence or proof that proves this cause-and-effect relationship. As evidenced from the references above in this paper, the argument that the communist mentality explains the behaviour of Albanian politicians, or that it produces the failure of democracy in Albania is taken for granted by the authors who raise this issue, but none of these authors (beyond simple rhetoric) does not give us a clear and evident proof to prove this cause-and-effect relationship, e.g. the fact that it is precisely the “communist mentality” of politicians that hinder the democratization of Albania, or the fact that Albanian politicians of the transition period have borrowed their behaviour from the previous communist period.

Often in the literature on the “communist mentality” by these authors, it is argued by making historical analogies between the behaviour of Albanian politicians of the transition period and those of the ruling communists from

1945 to 1991, that there are similarities in some behaviours between them. In this paper, it is not denied that there are some similarities between them, although in subtle forms. Here we can mention: the authoritarianism of the party leaders in the way they run their parties and the affairs of the state, the “suffocation” of critical voices within the party, lack of development of parliamentarism, the banishment from the party of those who do not “obey”, the lack of a culture of tolerance in general instead of finding ways to compromise with the political opponent, attempts to set up personal dictatorships surrounded by their loyalists, thirst for power, attempts to usurp the independence of institutions and other uncontrolled powers, misuse of public funds, corruption and other negative phenomena in this regard. But, these similarities in these behavioural habits do not necessarily tell us that they are borrowed exactly from the former communists, that these behavioural characteristics have their source precisely in this communist legacy, and thus, also in the communist mentality. Similarity and borrowing are two different concepts, which do not necessarily coincide with each other.

Thus, to give some alternative explanations regarding the meaning of the features of the authoritarian behaviours of the politicians or the above-mentioned negative phenomena, we could begin by arguing that such behavioural traits of our politicians attributed to the communist mentality have existed even before, much earlier the communist period to which the authors refer. Thus e.g. *the Bolshevik lust and mentality of our politicians, the re-fabrication of individual cults by them, the state party concept* (as constituent elements of the inherited “communist mentality” of politicians) are not very valuable to explain to us phenomena such as authoritarianism, political monopoly of the rule by leaders, their attempts to set up personal dictatorships surrounded by their loyalists, usurpation of independent institutions, etc., as these phenomena existed even before the communist period in Albania.

Thus e.g., Ahmet Zogu, the former ruler of Albania before the communist period, was also a man who “created a personal dictatorship, in which he represented the only way to success for all who wanted to make a political career” (Fischer, 2004, p. 171). Likewise, we can see in Zogu’s period that he showed the same authoritarian tendencies as “the concentration of power in his own hands and in the people he trusted, the centralization and strengthening of executive power” (Fischer, 2004, p. 89), or “the control he exercised entirely over the cabinet, appointing and dismissing all ministers at his discretion; he also controlled the Assembly, the Senate (appointing half of the latter members), as well as appointing all state officials, controlled the judiciary by appointing and dismissing judges at his will” (Fischer, 2004, p. 90). All these features authoritarian behaviour existed even before the communist period and

miss their meaning when they try to be explained by the inherited communist mentality of Albanian politicians.

The lack of political culture or democratic values in the way politicians run their parties or the government cannot necessarily be associated with the “communist mentality” inherited by them. Thus, if there is a lack of democratic culture in our politicians (e.g., the fact that they behave in an authoritarian way, are intolerant to each other, create conflicts in the struggle for power, etc.) this does not necessarily tell us that it equates to their “communism”. The opposite of this “lack” of democratic culture in Albanian politicians cannot be just their “communist mentality”. Moreover, such features of authoritarian behaviour, submission, “obedience” to leaders can be seen even in the younger generations who enter politics and who have not experienced at all (or were too young) the period of communism in Albania.

Beyond this discourse on the “communist mentality”, we could see the authoritarianism of Albanian politicians, or the tendencies they have to rule, deeper as a reflection of the patriarchal social structure of Albanian society. So, we could see them as a reflection of this patriarchal social structure of Albanian society, of its system of social relations and social institutions. Fatos Lubonja emphasizes this idea in one of his writings when he says that: *“Berishism and nanoism are simply a reflection of the structure of our institutions, starting from the family. In an anthropological or a cultural way of understanding, Berisha and Nano are none other than the patrons of the Albanian patriarchal clans that, according to custom, must rule until they die to hand over power to the eldest son. Of a culture, according to which, it is enough to be a member of the clan led by this godfather and you are a good man and protected no matter what you do. “And this is not a feature of communism, but much earlier and, also, it is not just a feature of Nano and Berisha” (Lubonja, 2004a). Therefore, we have the emphasis of the idea by the author that we should look in this patriarchal structure of Albanian society, in its system of social relations, where among other things we can mention clientelism (if you are with me, you are protected; or if you vote for me, you will benefit!), the roots of the authoritarianism of Albanian leaders.*

In the same way, it could be argued that the high conflict that exists between the main political actors during the transition period in Albania (extreme polarization of political life) has nothing to do with the “communist mentality” inherited from Albanian politicians rather than with other explanatory factors. Thus, the high conflict existing among Albanian politicians can be explained as a consequence of de-ideologization between political parties in Albania. Hence, the fact that Albanian political parties are so similar to each other, that they do not have any clear ideological differences between them, whether in their domestic or foreign policy, they consequently in a way “create” this conflict to distinguish

from each other. This argument is best emphasized by Kajsiu: *“Unable to build a vision of society based on certain groups or social strata, or based on an ideological universe, Albanian political parties build the vision of society in relation to a threat, symbolized by the opposing party. It is in the face of this threat that they articulate and represent the “people”. The political opponent is the negativity that does not allow society to do as it imagines itself”* (Kajsiu, 2007, p. 18). Therefore, according to the author, we must find in this lack of difference in ideology between the parties, to the “need” they have to create this difference between them and in the articulation that they make to the “people” in relation to the threat or danger that is presented by the opponent, the reasons from where this high conflict in Albanian politics originates. Also, it is understood from this point of view why politics often degenerates into fierce and banal conflicts. Furthermore, the author continues this argument by saying: “This is where the high levels of polarization, conflict, and exclusion in Albanian politics lie, more than in the essence of an anti-democratic culture or the psychology of particular politicians” (Kajsiu, 2007, p. 18).

Conclusions

In this paper, I argued that the thesis proclaimed by various Albanian authors or analysts to explain the behavior of Albanian politicians of the transition period based on their “communist mentality” is not valid in itself. This thesis of the “communist mentality” of politicians that is presented in the Albanian media and public debate is not only misused in a good part of the cases by the authors or analysts (sometimes it even ends up explaining [almost] everything with the logic of “communist mentality”), but also shows enough ambiguity and shortcomings to explain the reality of politics and democratization in Albania. First, the concept of “communist mentality” is not clearly defined by those who present it in the media and public debate. In most cases, we can understand from the use of this concept simply a mental predisposition, or behaviour of politicians with authoritarian tendencies, but nothing more than that. Thus, the application of this concept highlights the authoritarian tendencies of Albanian politicians of the transition period, but this does not necessarily mean that the “truth” of their communist mentality is found. The lack of clear evidence to prove this cause-and-effect relationship, ie the fact that - it is precisely this communist mentality that determines their behavior, or that Albanian politicians of the transition period have borrowed their behavior from the period former communist - is another point that was emphasized in this paper. We saw in the case of the aforementioned authors that this cause-and-effect relationship was taken for granted, without showing us a clear proof of it. Likewise, in this paper, it was

pointed out that many of the negative features or phenomena that are attributed to the “communist mentality” (ie seen as a consequence of it), existed even earlier in time, before that communism that the authors themselves refer to. And this tells us that these features of behavior can not necessarily be explained by the concept of “communist mentality”. It also tells us the invalidity of the use of this concept as a factor that can explain the behavior of Albanian politicians or the failures in various aspects of Albanian democracy.

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How pandemic has influenced the game between interest groups and politics.

A theoretical Model _____

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Abstract

When parties and interest groups interact, they can do so in several ways which could be on an informal level, lobbying for a party candidate, or group representatives approach party leaders in the parliament to lobby them on an issue. There is a plethora of studies on the extent to which major political parties and major interests have related in the past and continue to relate or interact at the organizational level. Researchers have investigated to what extent parties and groups had formal organizational ties, cooperated in elections, or worked in concert on developing and implementing policies. Factors that for decades have determined the relationship between political parties and interest groups in liberal democracies are political system and subsystem development, political culture and political ideology, centralization of government and policymaking, nature of the party system, political party dependence on interest groups, encompassing characteristics of the interest group system, interest group development, ideology and leadership. However, the pandemic has influenced to a great extent the relationship between interest groups and politics. While Covid-19 crisis has consolidated power within governments, leaving opposition parties in a bind, on the other hand it has galvanized interest groups and businesses to mobilize. The pandemic has opened up the lobbying playing field to many new players. The paper aims to investigate to what extent the pandemic has influenced the relationship between political parties, government and interest groups and what strategies have these last ones used to get heard in a time when social distancing has reduced the opportunities for face-to-face lobbying.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected policy making process, the relationship between government and opposition, government and civil society and government and interest groups. It had a negative impact on the incomes of individuals and business. Government had to address the crises and interest groups “volunteered” to offer their expertise in a time when government was in need for that since there was a lack of knowledge and infrastructure to address the crises. Under the circumstances, government has consolidated its power, while opposition parties remained in shadow with little opportunity to engage in the policymaking process. Governments took special emergency measures and recovery funding measures thus expanding its power over society and economy.

Even though one could expect that social distancing rules would reduce the opportunities for interaction between interest groups and government, this did not happen, at least not in US and EU. Reports indicate that lobbying spending has increased under COVID-19. According to Open Secrets, Coronavirus stimulus spurred near-record first-quarter lobbying spending. The same report shows that in the first quarter of 2020, 3,200 clients lobbied on issues related to coronavirus and 1,500 lobbying clients attempted to influence the House version of the CARES Act (Recovery Bill on Coronavirus) and clients that had never lobbied before hired lobbyist to influence on policy making. The same situation is observed in EU. Lobbying activities have attempted to influence decisions on aid packages, ‘air bridges’, international travel and when and how to re-open different sectors of society. At the outset of the crises the interaction between government and interest groups was marked by emergency. Open hearings were either canceled or held with compressed deadline. Closed consultations substituted open ones. The pandemic changed not only the framework of interest group-government cooperation, but also the way that interest groups choose to act and to what extent the level of their access to decision makers was changed (increased or decreased) (Rasmussen, 2020).

The pandemic has increased digital interest representation. In Albania, for the period 13 April 2020- 12 October 2020 the meetings of the committees and subcommittees are held online. In the framework of transparency of the work of MPs all the meetings of the committees and subcommittees conducted online are registered on webex. It resulted that there are held 177 online meetings. The distribution of meetings is as follows: 9 meetings of the CEM, 13 meetings of the CEI, 17 meetings of the CPATE, 2 meetings of the Commission of Inquiry to control the legality of actions performed by the President of the Republic, 34



meetings of the CEF, 11 meetings of the CLSAH, 45 meetings of the CLAPAHR, 3 meetings of the CNS, 7 meetings of the FPC, 5 Joint meetings of the Council for Legislation and the CLAPAHR, 3 Joint Meetings of the Council for Legislation and the CLA, 15 meetings of the CNS, 1 meeting of SGEPVW, 2 joint meetings of the SHR and SGEPV . The rest of the meetings are hearings and speeches.

There are 58 registered lobbyists or interest groups at the Parliament of Albania, which participate at the meetings of the committees and subcommittees of parliament. There are eight standing committees in the Albanian Parliament: Committee on Legal Affairs, Public Administration and Human Rights (CLAPAHR), Committee on European Integration (CEI), Foreign Policy Committee (FPC), Committee on Economy and Finance (CEF), Commission for National Security (CNS), Commission for Production Activities, Trade and Environment (CPATE), Committee on Labor, Social Affairs and Health (CLSAH), Commission for Education and Media (CEM). There is also a Special Commission for Electoral Reform (SCER). In addition to the standing committees there are seven subcommittees: Subcommittee on Diaspora and Migration (SDM), Subcommittee on Local Government (SLG), Subcommittee on Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence against Women (SGEPVW), Subcommittee on Human Rights (SHR), Subcommittee on Public Administration (SPA), Subcommittee on Supervision of Law Enforcement for Policy Vetting (SSLEPV), Subcommittee on Monitoring the Implementation of the State Budget and its Control (SMISBC).

According to the Statistical Bulletin 2017-2021, since the inception of the pandemic there are approved 225 laws aimed at addressing the pandemic, distributed as follows: 147 in 2020 and 78 for the first half of 2021. In addition to these there are approved 69 laws to address issues emerged because of the pandemic (even though it is hard to distinguish between the first and the second) distributed as follows: 32 laws in 2020 and 37 in the first half of 2021. For the same period, the parliament of Albania has approved 403 laws. Thus, laws approved to address issues related to the pandemic (294 in total) comprise 73% of the total laws approved during this period. This is indeed a very high percentage, and it is worth to investigate the procedures followed and the nature of the laws approved since the inception of the pandemic. It is equally important to investigate the interplay between interest groups and MPs in the process.

The aim of the paper is to design a theoretical model for analyzing the influence of the pandemic on the interaction between interest groups and government. The papers is organized in the following sections: I. Introduction; II. What are interest groups and the legal framework that regulate their activity in Albania; III. Current state of research on the relationship between interest groups and parties; IV. A Theoretical model to analyze the role that interest groups play in the policy process.

What are interest groups and the legal framework that regulate their activity in Albania

There is a vast literature on interest groups and equally vast on their definition (Baumgartner and Leech 1998, 25–30). Some place more focus on concepts such ‘formal organization’, ‘influencing of public policy’ (Zeigler 1992, pp.377-380), ‘open membership associations’ (Walker 1991) and some others pay more attention to the ‘policy participant’ element (Jordan and Maloney 1992) who contend that interest groups are not necessarily membership organizations, but rather institutions such as universities, cities and corporations. In United States, some scholars define interest groups purely on legal grounds: those who are registered by law (Gray and Lowery 1996; Hunter, Wilson, and Brunk 1991; Schlozman and Tierney 1986 in Thomas 2001, p.7). The definition even though easy to understand, leave out of the focus the plethora of policy participants (major government entities that lobby), informal groups (*ad hoc* groups formed to deal with problems like crime, education, or environment (Thomas 2001, p.7). To avoid such problem, Thomas and Hrebenar (1995) use the following definition “An interest group is an association of individuals or organizations, usually formally organized, that attempts to influence public policy” (p.114). As Thomas (2001, p.7) points this is a catch all definition which allows all types of interest groups such as traditional interests of business, labor, agriculture, environment, education in addition to voluntary organizations mainly concerned with social welfare issues as well as governmental bodies at all levels to be included, thus leaving no one outside.

The number and role of interest groups has increased since their inception and is often considered as one of the factors that has caused the decline of the role and importance of political parties in the Western world. The reason behind this is that both political parties and interest group aim to represent society or different groups within society and in this context they fight for ‘clientele’ (Thomas 2001, p.12).

The entitlement to have interest groups, their role and functions are defined in the Constitution of the Republic of Albania (1998). The Constitution specifies that the economical system of the Republic of Albania is based on the private and public property, on the market economy and it ensures the freedom of economic activity (Article 11). The freedom of the economic activities makes inevitable the birth of economic and social interests which could be even conflicting with each other. The Constitution foresees also that citizens have the right to get organized in collectivities in order to protect their lawful interests and it guarantees the

liberties and political, social and economic rights of the citizens of Albania (Article 45-58).

Beqiri (2017) identifies the following interest groups:

- syndicates or labor unions (law.7516, dt.7.10.1991) which could get organized in line with their branches, professions and territorial distribution, in the private and public sector;
- Business groups: Trade Chambers are examples of business groups. They are present in all the cities of the country. Their role is to protect the economic interests of traders, entrepreneurs, and business community at large. Legislation such as fiscal packages that government enact every year and influence taxes and tariffs that business groups pay to government should be compiled in cooperation with them.

It is clear that in order to understand the role that interest groups have played during the pandemic we should know which are the members of the Chambers of Commerce and whether they have participated in the meetings held by the parliamentary committees and subcommittees after the outbreak of the pandemic.

Current state of research on the relationship between interest groups and parties

There is a plethora of studies on the link that exist between political parties and interest groups. Scholars such as Lipset and Rokkan (1967), Michels (1917), Przeworski and Sprague (1986) contend that mainstream political parties focus on a small set of issue areas during their electoral campaign. New issues, whose electoral benefit is unknown, are left outside of the public discourse. The reason behind this is that political parties, being organizations, whose purpose is to win elections and form a government (alone or in coalition) choose strategies which will help them maximize their electoral support and thus they attempt to concentrate voter attention on issues they are in line with the electorate, and which contribute positively on their reputation.

Political parties and interest groups are the most important organizations that link citizens with their government (Thomas 2001, p.1). While scholars have analyzed them separately in numerous works their role in the political sphere, the number of studies that have investigated the relationship among them is not small either. Left wing parties have traditionally stronger links with labor organizations and trade unions, while right wing parties with business,

even though the degree of such alliances exhibits different shades and strengths in the various countries of liberal democracies. In addition to the traditional links between party wings and interest groups, the ones made public, the general tendency for interest groups is not to establish formal relationships with political parties, but rather seek political influence through other channels (Thomas 2001, p.2).

Parties and groups interact in different ways, formal and informal. Informal relationship occurs when an interest group help individual party candidates during elections, when it approaches party leaders in the parliament or executive to lobby them on an issue or when it is the government itself, or rather the party in public office brings several groups together on an *ad hoc* basis to deal with issues pertaining to the interest groups summoned (Thomas 2001, p.3). Formal relations are easier to recognize. They are written in the statutes of parties and groups and formalized through regular meetings, financial contributions and public appearances. The formal relationship could manifest itself during elections and/or when parties and interest groups cooperate on developing and implementing policies.

Scholars of pluralist theory approach and of rational choice contend that the relations between interest groups and parties are important and influence power relationship, policy processes and outcomes, campaign funding, political recruitment and candidate selection and promotion in elections (in Thomas 2001, p.11-12).

While they 'cooperate' they also compete with each other. In the early years of scholars' studies, the general contention was that when parties were strong, interest groups were weak and the other way around (Schattschneider 1942). However, further studies and changes in the social and economic landscape proved that such relationship among parties and interest groups were not always true (Thomas and Hrebenar 1999, pp.121). Strong parties and strong interest-groups could co-exist and even precisely because interest groups are strong, parties strengthen themselves in order to not become overcome by them.

Research on political party – interest group relationship identifies nine factors that define such relationship. These factors are political system and subsystem development, political culture and political ideology, centralization/ decentralization of government and policymaking, nature of party system, political party dependence on interest groups, encompassing characteristics of the interest group system, interest group development, present group goals and ideology and group leadership (Thomas and Hrebenar 1995 in Thomas 2001, pp. 15-18). The nature of the relationship develops in different ways. When party system has developed as the result of strong ideological cleavages in a society, interest groups are more likely to ally with certain parties (labor parties or capital



parties). When the attitude toward government is sceptic, the relationship between parties (especially parties in public office) and interest groups is weak. Another relationship pattern is observed in unitary and federal systems. Unitary system tends to centralize interest groups, closing thus the avenues to regional and local interest groups, which could flourish in federal systems. The nature of the party system influences the strength of party-interest group relationship as well. Strong party systems encourage strong ties between groups and political parties in line with political parties' ideological orientation in terms of left-right dimension and weak party systems encourage neutral and pragmatic interest groups. Financial regulations of party funding are important factors that influence party-group relationship. The extent to which interest groups are legally allowed to finance and actually finance political parties' campaign, provide technical information to parties and influence policy enactment define also how dependent are political parties on interest groups and thus to what degree interest groups can influence policy process.

The encapsulation of society in interest groups and the number of interest groups are factors that influence the relationship strength between parties and interest groups. The greater the number/percentage of people belonging to interest groups and the smaller the number of interest groups representing these people the stronger is the influence of interest groups on policy process. The reason behind this is that high percentage of population encapsulated within interest groups increases their leverage on policy making and the smaller the number of interest groups, the easier it is to coordinate among them and agree on desirable outcomes of policy making. The origin of the interest group is also important in defining the attitude of interest group toward political parties. Thus, labor groups have built close alliances with left wing parties (radical or socialist parties) and professional groups and trade associations not having ideological origins have neutral or pragmatic approaches towards parties. In line with the logic of interest group origin is also the present group goals and ideology factor. Following this, if the group's goals are strongly ideologically positioned than the interest group will very likely tend to cooperate with parties with which it shares its ideological stances. Lastly, group leadership influences the relationship between parties and interest groups drawing from personal networks and past experiences, which could result in building alliances with parties which not necessarily share the same ideological stances with those of the said interest group (Thomas and Hrebenar 1995).

Yishai (1995), Wilson (1990) and Thoms and Hrebenar (1995) have identified five specific forms of party-group relationship which are based on ideological affinity or adversity, organizational linkage or lack of them and similarities or differences in strategy. The five-model designed are integration/strong partisan

model, cooperation/ideological model, separation/pragmatic involvement model, competition/rivalry model and conflict/confrontation model.

The integration/strong partisan model denotes a relationship model where the political party and the interest group are almost identical or very close organizationally. Such proximity could come because of the interest group is a spin-off the party and could have ideological affinity with it. The Cooperation/Ideological model happens when the connection between a political party and an interest group is strong because they share the same ideology, policy orientation and historical circumstances. This is the case when interest groups represent the interests of the business, professional groups, conservative parties, farmer's organizations, and rural parties. The third model is that of separation/pragmatic involvement model in which the interest group is independent of any party and due to the fact, that has no partisan attachment to any party it is willing to work with any party, being that an incumbent party or a party in opposition regardless of policy orientation and ideological positioning. In this model the cooperation occurs on an *ad hoc* basis and is characterized by pragmatism. Professional technical and nonideological groups (architects, airline pilots) and social issue and public interest groups (children's rights groups) fall into this category. The fourth model is the competition/rivalry model in which interest groups and political parties compete for members and funds. It occurs when parties and groups have similar ideology and policy goals like green parties and environmentalist or socialist parties and labor unions. The last model is that of conflict/confrontation. Differences in ideology and policy orientation are major drivers of conflict. Usually, parties and groups are positioned at opposite ends of the political spectrum, even though cases when a party and group have the same ideological bases but disagree over a policy or its implementation happen as well.

Policy orientation and ideological positioning in the political spectrum is one of the factors that condition the relationship between parties and interest groups. However, organizational capacity and willingness of political parties to perform political functions play an important role in this relationship. The activity of interest groups is constrained and limited when parties are strong and fully use their capacity. When parties are less willing to perform their political functions, interest groups have a wider spectrum of functions and are more active and present in the political domain (Thomas 2001, pp.22).

According to Farrer (2014) 'proportional representation electoral rules (PR) force policy-making to be more responsive to political competition, whereas corporatism and centralization lower this responsiveness of policy-making to political competition (pp.632). Jordan and Maloney (2001) contend that the trend toward the "catchall" party model has weakened the relationship between



parties and interest groups, because parties tend to appeal to various segments of society often with conflicting interests with each other and interest groups on the other side try not to pursue a strategy which identifies them with one major party (pp.29). Following this line of reasoning since Albania has either had mix electoral system or proportional one, it is thought to be more responsive towards political competition among various interest groups, assuming such groups bring their competitiveness in the public arena.

Theoretical model to analyze the role that interest groups play in the policy process- Affecting public policy

Literature identifies inside and outside lobbying as strategies pursued by interest groups to influence policymaking. Inside lobbying is the process of influencing policymakers through direct interactions such as advisory boards, consultation, or personal contacts (Beyers 2004, pp.213). Outside lobbying, as the term indicates, seeks to influence policymaking from outside, indirectly, by garnering public support (Kollman 1998, pp.3). Outside lobbying strategies of interest groups comprise tactics such as protesting, holding press conferences, making public speeches, and organizing petitions. By using these tactics interest groups aim to garner public support in their efforts to influence public policy making (Tresch & Fischer 2015, pp.356).

In order to address the pandemic the government sought to address a wide number of issues and problems such as preventing transmission, ensuring sufficient physical infrastructure and workforce capacity, providing health services effectively, paying for services and issues related to governance. Thus it dealt with health communication, physical distancing, isolation and quarantine, monitoring and surveillance, testing, physical infrastructure and workforce, planning health services, managing health cases, managing essential services in the health sector, health financing, entitlement and coverage, centralization or decentralization of government services, in and out of lockdowns, engagement or not of civil society, travel policies, strategies and approaches implemented within schools and the like (COVID-19 Health System Response Monitor).

Following this analysis, I propose a theoretical model which first defines which kind of interest groups are in Albania and what is their relationship with political parties. Being a new democracy with vague political cleavages, the expectation is that the separation/pragmatic involvement model in which the interest group is independent of any party and that the cooperation occurs on an *ad hoc* basis and is characterized by pragmatism. Another important element in the theoretical model is to disentangle the web of laws approved during and

for the pandemic so that we could identify who are the interest groups that have benefited and or consulted during the pandemic. Comparison between the registered lobbyists and the actual interest groups that have benefited from the laws approved will indicate the real state of the relationship between interest groups and government.

Third, it is important to evaluate whether special interests have prevailed and conditioned policy making and whether specific groups have benefited more than the others and/or have been privileged. A fourth and a last element is the analyzes of the strategies that interest groups have used to affect policy in terms of inside lobbying or outside lobbying. Inside lobbying is more difficult to measure, unless meetings are recorded, but outside lobbying is easier to track by analyzing strategies that interest groups have pursued to make known their interests and to garner public support.

The literature on the role that the pandemic has played on the government-interest groups relationship is in its making. New avenues will come soon. However, this paper has set a new path in the analysis of the policy making and how it is influence by interest groups.

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