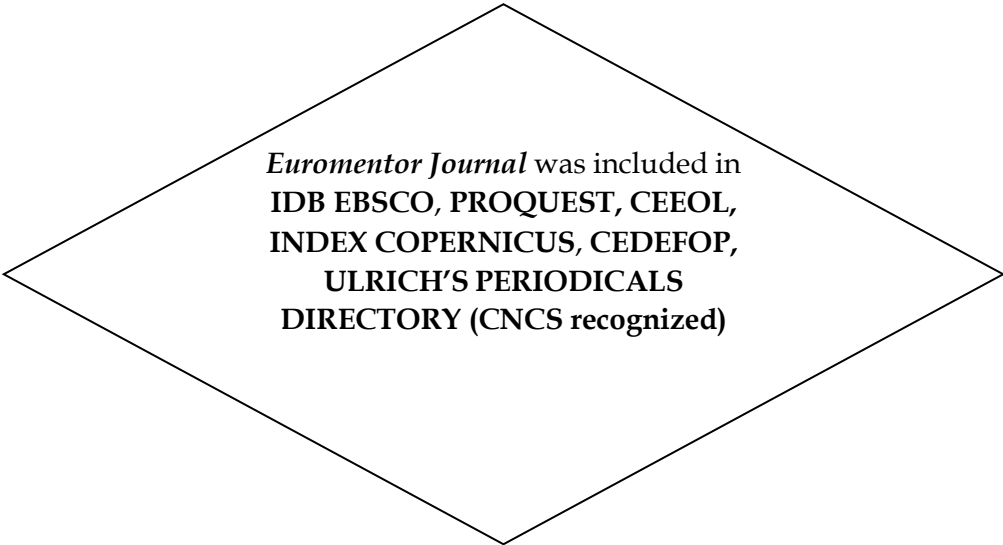


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EMINESCU - THE THINKER "ELATED WITH GOD"

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*"Then the mirror cleared up
and the eternity in the sky looked into itself
... and marveled at its beauty.
(Eminescu, Avatars of Pharaoh Tla)¹*

Abstract: *This article focuses on the research of Eminescu's relationship with God, as it emerges from his work. We do not envisage a mystical approach of Eminescu's work, because Eminescu was not a mystical thinker. On the other hand, Eminescu does not conceptualize God like Aristotle or Spinoza as the Romanian thinker refers to the Christian God, to the divine Trinity, invoking him and dedicating verses either to the Gentle Nazarene or worshipping the Mother of God. Undoubtedly, from this perspective, for Eminescu, God is the Creator, he is transcendent, but he is also immanent, because he is a permanent Presence in human innerness. The two aspects of Eminescu's relation to divinity are not contradictory, but complementary. This is because in Eminescu's thought reason is harmoniously combined with faith. Thus, the path towards divinity, chosen by the Romanian thinker, regardless of his ways of expression, is the **philosophical-theological path, that of self-knowledge**, which synergistically combines knowledge, faith and self-awareness.*

Keywords: *God, the Absolute, Longing, Sacrality, Religiosity, Faith.*

The thrill of the Absolute that dominates Eminescu's metaphysics can be found in the title phrase that somehow expresses Eminescu's state of mind and the close link with the ontology² of creation in his work. God is omnipresent all over his work, both in poetry and in his theoretical writings, in prose and manuscripts. From this perspective, **Longing for the Absolute** coincides with Longing for God, which embraces, in Eminescu's work, different manifestations, whether it is the longing for his

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¹ M. Eminescu, *Avatars of Pharaoh Tla*, apud. G. Călinescu, Iași, Junimea, 1979.

² G. Pohoăță, *The Ontological Dimension of Eminescu's Creation*, *Cogito*, no.3/2017, Bucharest, Pro Universitaria Publishing House, p. 7-17.

Homeland or for his forebears, for his people, the longing for nature, for knowledge in its whole... There is a spirit in everything!

Is **Eminescu's longing** the same with the will to live for Schopenhauer or the vital zeal for Bergson?! The first idea I would dare to express in connection with the proposed topic is concentrated in the following question: How does Eminescu's pessimism, sometimes dissolved, at certain moments in life, into a fatalistic view of existence, reconcile with his aspiration to divinity?! This would be the first question when faced with such a topic of analysis. Eminescu saves himself from the moral and metaphysical suffering that dominated his existence through love³ and faith in God, which is not constant, beginning with a denial, continuing then with an almost permanent invocation. All his creation springs from both love and suffering. His entire work is marked by a deep awareness of transcendence, but we appreciate that Eminescu is not a mystical thinker. Eminescu's relationship with God bears the mark of his romantic genius. A genius lives in a continuous search for the essence of the world, and Eminescu was permanently dominated by the longing for infinity, this being "the deepest aspiration of Eminescu's aesthetics".⁴ It is worth mentioning in this context the assertion of Petre Țuțea who draws the attention that "Metaphysically, man can seek, religiously, he receives", a truth that was not alien to M. Eminescu (see the Poem, *Oh, wisdom, you have wax wings! Or Memento Mori*).⁵ In *Memento Mori* we can notice⁶ "a real culmination of Eminescu's thought on the subject of divinity", because the poet feels "*Elated with an eternal song, beloved by a holy ray*". We can appreciate Eminescu's condition as comparable to what Spinoza identified at the highest level of knowledge.⁷ Eminescu is "elated with the longing for God."⁸

This fundamental state of mind of Eminescu's metaphysics can be related, as shown above, both to the condition of the man of genius and to the longing for death... "*The story of longing in life and death* is pervasive in

³ G. Pohoacă, "*The Philosophy of Love*", *Cogito*, no. 1/2017, Bucharest, Pro Universitaria Publishing House, p. 19-26.

⁴ Rosa Dell Conte, apud. Ion Țicalo "*Longing... in Eminescu's Conception and the Infinity of His Genius*", in *New Moon*, January 30th, 2013, p. 1/6.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 123.

⁶ Doru Scărlătescu, "*Eminescu and Religion in the Context of Critical Reception*", Iași, Timpul Publishing House, 2000, p. 122

⁷ B. Spinoza, *Ethics*, chapter *On the Power of the Intellect*, Bucharest, The Scientific and Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1981.

⁸ G. Pohoacă, *The Philosopher 'Elated by God'*, *Cogito*, no. 1/2014, Bucharest, Pro Universitaria Publishing House, p. 7-14.

Eminescu's lyrics and refers to the whole theme of his poetic work, from the transient and eternal nature, to the love that unravels and consecrates, from existence itself, in the primordia, to history in its panoramic unfoldings or, in other words, from the hypostases of the ontological-existentialist finality. ("infinite longing") to those of a return to a cosubstantial cosmicity.⁹ "The last longing is, in fact, a unique, supreme longing," *the longing-longing as a way of nature's transcending into being*, because not in vain did the poet write: "*The Lord has placed in you a whole myriad of thoughts ...*"¹⁰.

Sacred and Sacrality in Eminescu's Thinking

The researcher finds that Eminescu had the feeling of the world's sacrality, perceived through a symbolic dialectic. But this process is considered to be obscure, diffuse, characterized by a deep ambiguity, because the symbolic transcendence was reached in a consciousness laden with the world's suffering.¹¹ Eminescu had, Sergiu Al-George says, the vocation of the absolute accompanied by the same feeling of immanence, by the awareness that the world is a symbolic way of acquiring the absolute".¹² He did not value the symbolism of the world through the idea of the veil (Maya) and nor through the paradoxical dialectic of Blaga, although this romantic formula was not unknown to him: "... *What is sacred thinking / Masterful combination / Of some non-existent things; Sad and tangled book / The more he encrypts it, he who wants to decipher it ...*".¹³ In *Poor Dionysus*, when the hero manifests his desire to see the face of the supreme divinity, an angel replies, "*If you do not have Him in you, /If it is not in your inner self, it does not exist for you, and you are seeking Him in vain.*"¹⁴

⁹ T. Țicalo, *Longing... in Eminescu's Conception*", Cămpulung Moldovenesc, Miorița Publishing House, 2012, p. 122.

¹⁰ M. Eminescu., *The Story of the Magus Reading in the Stars, also known as: The Starless Emeror's Son, Of Long Past-Times...* in *Works. Poems*, Perpesicius Edition, Bucharest, The Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2013 and in *Essential Studies, Posthumous Poems*, Râmnicu-Vâlcea, Fortuna Publishing House, 2002, p.252.

¹¹ Sergiu Al-George, *Archaic and Universal. India in the Romanian Cultural Consciousness*, Bucharest, Eminescu Publishing House, 1981, p. 270.

¹² Mihai Vasile, *Archaic and Universal in Eminescu Archetype*, the Romanian Sociology Journal, new series, year XI, no. 3-4, p. 275-281, Bucharest, 2000.

¹³ M. Eminescu, *Epigones*, in *Selected Poems*, Bucharest, I. Creangă Publishing House, 1980, p. 35.

¹⁴ Idem, *Poor Dionysus*, in Mihai Eminescu, *Literary Prose*, Bucharest, the Publishing House for Literature and Art, 1964, p. 167.

Eminescu was righteously said to have considerably possessed "the vocation of perfection and truth"¹⁵, manifested consistently and with dramatic intensity, which, in other words, is a "requirement of the divine", that is a need for religious knowledge, also stated by those who knew him, a fervor of the absolute which so deeply imprinted in his work as an obvious feature that Rosa Del Conte called him a "religious genius".¹⁶ The poet's Christianity, integrated or not into his specific religiosity, was researched and argued differently by various analysts: Lucian Boz, Radu Dragnea, Gala Galaction, D. Murărașu, Valeriu Anania, I.M. Rascu, Mihai Cimpoi, Tudor Nedelcea, Lucian Cifor, Ioan Deșidan, Mihai Alin Gherman and so on. As far as Eminescu's relationship with religion is concerned, Mircea Eliade claimed that Eminescu is an "essentially religious being", the Romanian thinker arguing that *the religious man periodically bathes in the mythical and sacred Time to find the time of origin, beyond any duration or flow*.¹⁷ Eminescu's faith is the prerogative of a natural revelation, through which he discovers that "the world is enlightened in man and through man", because the world "is made for a meaning, so it is the product of a Creator who confers meaning". Our categorical imperative is the responsibility for the fact of existing, for the wholeness of Creation. For Eminescu, the highest axiology that responds to this ethical imperative is not the divinity, which he doubted to the point of denial, but the sacred. The invariance of ethical ideality is the sacred. For Eminescu, the a priori of the sacred was the criterion of the supreme axiology, in his creation, the most frequently used asset being the holy word. He assigns this word, first of all, to nature with its various components, as well as to human life in its various manifestations: childhood, beauty, love, suffering, death, saint being, dream and poetry, harp, song, drama of deed, genius, Romanian speech, his mother's tomb, the history of antiquity, Dacia, the visionary threads of the first writings of our literature, etc. Sacrality was indentified with his own life and work.¹⁸ The religiosity of sacrality, the essentially ethical character of Eminescu's

¹⁵ Aurel Jivi, *Mihai Eminescu's Religious Thinking*, Sibiu, Andreiana Publishing House, 2019.

¹⁶ Rosa Del Conte, *Eminescu or on the Absolute*, Cluj, Dacia Publishing House, 1990, p. 269.

¹⁷ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2017, p. 82.

¹⁸ George Popa, *Eminescu and Religion*, in *Eminescian Studies*, vol. 9, Cluj-Napoca, Clusium Publishing House, 2007, p. 46-67.

creation is in tune with that of the author of Ethics¹⁹, one of the great moralists of human loftiness.²⁰ Not by coincidence did we associate Eminescu with the philosopher "elated with God"²¹. But, unlike Spinoza, who is not a Christian thinker, being a pantheistic philosopher, Eminescu had a Christian spirit, although his thinking is the prerogative of a free Christianity, not dogmatically enslaved. Here is a text revealing the very lofty meaning which Eminescu conferred to being a Christian: "I am a Buddhist. Not being a simple Christian, but a Christian raised to the power of 10 [-a], I feel pity not only for my family, I feel pity for every living thing, be it a beetle, or an animal, or a Greek, or a Serb, or a Bulgarian. My religion commands me to say only as much as it can raise a being to self-knowledge, to that intellectual flash that will make him see that in vain does envy struggle, in vain does wickedness trouble, in vain does lie strive, for the struggle is against a constant power, which always exists, against Brahm, against the truth²² (Ms.2275B, 89r). For Eminescu, his religion was his ethics: that of goodness, of Christian mercy and of truth. In this sense, significantly for his universal intellectual openness - along with his Christian faith in tenfold power, Eminescu invokes as witnesses, through what is the noblest morally - Buddhism and Hinduism - in an ideal synthesis with Christianity.²³ It is interesting to analyze the way in which Eminescu relates to religion in general. If in the poem "Emperor and Proletarian" he defined religion as an "invented phrase of theirs" in the article *And I Knock Again at the Gate*, published in the *Time*, on April 12, 1881, he explained the religious phenomenon with great sensitivity "Sad and comforting legend! It has been almost two thousand years since it raised peoples from darkness, formed them on the principle of kindredness, two thousand years since the biography of God's son is the book on which mankind has based his growth ... Man must have in front of him a man as a prototype of perfection after which he can shape his character and deeds. Just as modern art owes its rebirth to ancient models, so does the new world owe its growth to the prototype of the moral man, Jesus Christ."²⁴ The eschatological vision belonging to the man of genius, in Eminescu's creation, covers two aspects - a corollary of

¹⁹ Bh. Spinoza, *Ethics*, *op. cit.*

²⁰ G. Popa, *op. cit.*

²¹ G. Pohoată, *op. cit.*

²² M. Eminescu, *Fragmentarium*, Bucharest, The Scientific and Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1981, p. 360.

²³ G. Popa, *op. cit.*

²⁴ M. Eminescu, *The Time*, 12th April, 1881, in vol. *Political Work* (1880-1883), Bucharest, Eminescu Publishing House, 2000.

cosmogony (*Letter I, The Prayer of a Dacian, Lucifer*) and the drama of collective extinction (*Mememto Mori, Egypt, Mureșanu*) or individual extinction (*One Wish Alone Have I, Demonism*) which takes on some cosmic proportions. The examples set in support of our analysis lead us to the idea that Eminescu did not have a simple faith, irrationally lived, but practised a natural faith that sought the meanings of existence by discovering the reasons of the world. In fact, Eminescu's poetry is not deeply religious, it has evolved starting from popular beliefs and various myths to the spiritualization of nature and man. The poems written towards the end of his life are true hymns dedicated to the Mother of God and to the Savior Jesus Christ, here Eminescu highlighting the essential Christian virtues in the plan of salvation - faith, hope and love. In a significant note, Eminescu states that religion is a tangent, namely to the circle of mystery, a tangent carried by infinite illusion, by the metaphysical instinct (ms.2258, 360r). Therefore, the metaphysical instinct will always revolve around the unknown, but only in the tangent, without being able to enter into the secant with the heart of the mystery, so that any philosophizing on the cosmic mystery remains an infinitely repeated illusion. But Eminescu did not regard the problem of knowing God as a mere means of enriching the theme of his work, but rather as a matter of life, being painfully turmoiled in his consciousness, a turmoil conveyed throughout his work, even starting with his first creations.²⁵ From this perspective, we can appreciate that all Eminescu's creation is like a permanent prayer, which emanates the effort of raising his soul to God, through conversation with HIM. It is not by mere coincidence that Cioran, following into Eminescu's footsteps, claims that there is no "self-knowledge without HIM"²⁶.

The relationship between man and God

The answer to the question: what was in Eminescu's conception the relationship between man and divinity - is expressed in the following two "pantheistic" texts. One of them is a note (ms.2262, f, 2v) in which the poet states "I am God". Eminescu does not refer here to his own self, but to the human self in general, which he considers one and the same with God. ²⁷. The other text is in a letter to Veronica Micle, where the poet wrote, "God is not in Heaven, and God is not on Earth, God is in our heart." Eminescu's

²⁵ Aurel Jivi, *op. cit.*

²⁶ Emil Cioran, *About God*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 1997.

²⁷ G. Popa, *Eminescological Studies, op. cit.*

religiosity finds certain points of support in the poem *God and Man*,²⁸ depending on how the relationship religion-culture or religion-literature is evaluated. Structured on such a system of antitheses, the poem presents the birth of the Savior Jesus Christ according to the model narrated in the Holy Gospels (“I saw you born on straw, your face small and ugly, / you, Christ, a hieroglyph with a frowned forehead,...”), finally presenting him as a Judge. “Today the artist conceives you as a king on his throne”. God is everywhere in Eminescu's creation, not as a concept, as an idea, but as a permanent Presence to which he refers, but which he approaches differently according to his spiritual experience. Divine or sacred, that is everything that deserves to be seen in the light of this valorization above everything else, even above some gods or an entire pantheon guilty of negative actions towards man. In Eminescu's work we encounter various attitudes regarding divinity, the fundamental criterion being the axiological one, that is, depending on the way in which the Creator behaves towards his creature. Thus, his relationship with divinity evolves from the negative, gloomy attitude towards divinity inaugurated in the youth poem *Mortua Est* to the edifying poems *The Prayer of a Dacian*, *Mureșanu* or *God and Man*, in which one can observe and feel a clarification of the thinker in relation with divinity. Undoubtedly, one can see several levels of revelation that somehow correspond to his degrees of life experience or to the stages of his spiritual life. As shown above, Eminescu does not conceptualize God like Aristotle or Spinoza, because the Romanian thinker refers to the Christian God, to the divine Trinity, invoking him and dedicating verses either to the gentle Nazarene or worshipping the Mother of God. Undoubtedly, from this perspective, God is the Creator, he is transcendent, but he is also immanent, because he is a permanent Presence in human innerness. The two aspects of Eminescu's relation with divinity are not contradictory, but complementary. This is due to the fact that in Eminescu's thought reason is harmoniously combined with reason. On the other hand, we can understand, in our opinion, Eminescu's relationship with God, from the perspective of the accordance between his ontology and the gnoseology of his thinking. The permanent dialectical correlation between one and multiple, potency and act, general and particular, infinite and finite, between extra-human and

²⁸ Eminescu, *God and Man*, in *Essential Studies*, Posthumous Poems, Râmnicu-Vâlcea, Fortuna Publishing House, 2002, p. 362-370.

human, etc., supports Eminescu's ontological edifice.²⁹ A thought from *Poor Dionysus* states, "...this is the difference between God and man." Man has in him only the *string*, the being of other future and past people, God has *at the same time* all the nations that will come and that have passed man occupies a place in time, God is time itself with everything that happens in it, but the times altogether, like a spring whose waters return to itself, or like the *wheel* that suddenly embraces all the spokes, which return forever. And our soul has eternity in itself, but *only piece by piece*. Imagine that a speck of dust would stick to a wheel rotating on the spot. This speck will pass through all the places through which the wheel passes, turning, but only in a row, while the wheel at the same moment is in all the places it covers.³⁰ The Eminescian monism strongly links the idea of the circularity of the material course of nature with human immortality, the *form* as the *essence* of beings and the *passage* as the *essence of life*. Everything is in an eternal relationship, like the problem and its answer, a "close coadaptation". "The spirit of the universe is put to trial in every man, it strives again, arises like a new ray from the same water, somewhat a new assault on the Heavens. But it remains on the road, it is true that in a very special way, here as a king, there as a beggar. But is the shell useful to the caries if they have simply got stuck in the wood of life? The assault is youth, legging behind - disappointment, the relapse of the suffering animal - the old age and death. People are problems that the spirit of the universe poses to itself, their lives - attempts to solve them."³¹ One and the same principle of life sprouts in thousands of flowers, adds Eminescu, the same immortal being in man.³² Man catches a glimpse of the presence of the Eternal in his inner self, he feels its call. When it is the cry of the soul, elated by the stars, he finds again in himself the infinity of God: "*But there is something inside us that deeply resembles you, Just like you, his space reaches eternity/And in our limited world he is an icon of you - the Soul*".³³ The idea that the divine shrine is only in the heart of man can be revealed. God is interiority and mystery: "*we are the ones with fine hearing / And we*

²⁹ *History of the Romanian Philosophy*, Bucharest, the Romanian Academy Publishing House, 1985, chap. Eminescu, p. 590.

³⁰ M. Eminescu, *Poor Dionysus*, in Works, vol. VII, The Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 1977, p. 93-113.

³¹ Idem, *Archeus*, in vol. cited. p. 278-383

³² Tudor Ghideanu, *Mihai Eminescu*, in *History of Romanian Philosophy*, op. cit., p. 591.

³³ Eminescu, *Letter I*, in Works, vol. II, 177, Bucharest, The Academy Publishing House, 2000.

understand the whisper of the divine mystery ...", Eminescu had written.³⁴ It seems that Eminescu shares the same vision with Augustine³⁵ regarding divinity, "Deus interior intimo meo God inside in the depths of my soul", his religiosity being dominated by the same idea according to which the true God is only the one that identifies himself in the very interior of consciousness. From here, we can infer which was, in the end, the path to divinity for which the Romanian thinker opted, regardless of his ways of expression. It is, undoubtedly, the philosophical-theological path that synergistically combines knowledge, faith and self-awareness. The poem "God and Man" (whose first edition can be considered *Christ*, because the thematic core is unchanged) is, together with the *Resurrection*, the most authentic lyrical testimony of what we will call Eminescu's "religiosity".³⁶ It is especially "memory, mysterious connection that joins any authentic artist with the authentic spirituality of his people and inserts him into the distant experience of a Byzantine Orthodox tradition that has become "Romanian". Even if Eminescu's relationship with God has known moments of denial, revolt, doubt depending on his metaphysical struggles and the intense living of time in this world, in his work, God does not die, as the sun does not perish when it falls behind the limit of our visual horizon: "No one stops the sun from setting in the twilight / No one from God rests from the sky of thought" ...³⁷ Both in Brahmanism and in the religion of Adonis, whatever the name of the revelation to which we adhere may be, it is the forms of the divine that set and not God himself.³⁸ And the "old child" man, who deceives himself that he can replace Him and who thinks that he can take responsibility for the universe and guide its history, does not realize that a deep and divine thought sustains reality and its course.: "Many old children thought that they ruled the world, Not feeling that they alone got carried away by a nameless veil, / That the planet that carries them thinkst deeply and holily ..." ³⁹ Regardless of the perspective from which we approach the ideas that emerge from Eminescu's creation, the above

³⁴ Idem, *Priest and Philosopher*, in Works, IV, p. 218.

³⁵ St. Augustin, *Confessions*, III, VI, 2, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1998 - "Deus interior intimo meo.... God deep inside my heart"

³⁶ Rosa Dell Conte, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

³⁷ Eminescu, *Memento Mori*, in Works IV, p. 147 and in *Essential Studies, Posthumous Poems*, Râmnicu-Vâlcea, Fortuna Publishing House, 2002, p. 86.

³⁸ Cfr. I. Wahl, *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1951, p. 71.

³⁹ M. Eminescu, *Memento Mori*, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

arguments warn us about the topicality of Eminescu's thinking, although it is not a political text. But his ontological depth, his deep intuition, and his faith led him to the Absolute Truth to which those who lead the world today are incapable of ascending!

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ASPECTS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN JAPAN AND RELATED ISSUES IN EFL EDUCATION

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Abstract: *The aim of this article is to present recent research on intercultural communication in Japan and its deep connection to certain characteristics of the Japanese mindset, as well as some issues in the formation of intercultural competence through English language education in Japanese high schools. Certain aspects of the use of English in Japan – katakana English, that is the use of a foreign language to make Japanese words, or juken eigo, that is English education oriented not towards communicative language teaching but only towards making the foreign language an entrance exam subject – suggest that intercultural communication is still a desideratum for the attainment of which there is much work to do. The present article is the first of a series that will present our research in this field.*

Keywords: *intercultural communication competence, nihonjinron, EFL in Japan, intercultural education, Japanese society.*

Introduction

Research on intercultural communication and its relevance for Japanese society today

The media - television travel shows, like the American *Passport to Europe*, YouTube channels that focus on travel experiences or documentaries on unfamiliar areas and customs like those of Japan bring intercultural travel into our living rooms. Many people have had intercultural experience through travel or contact with diverse cultures in their community. Researchers have wondered what is the motivation for learning more about other cultures. Judith N. Martin and Thomas Nakayama have come up with six intercultural imperatives articulated in the following way: the demographic, economic, ethical, peace, self-awareness and technological imperatives for intercultural awareness¹. We

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¹ J.N. Martin, & T.K. Nakayama, *Intercultural communication in contexts*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007, pp. 17-18, 26-27.

would like to comment on only two of them, which seem particularly relevant for the Japanese case.

The Self-awareness imperative. Gaining self-awareness can be a trigger that attracts young people to intercultural encounters. Peter Adler, a noted social psychologist quoted by Martin and Nakayama, proposed a model for viewing intercultural encounters, or what he terms *culture shock*, as a transitional experience that takes the subject through five phases into a process of experiential learning² (Contact, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy and independence). Through this process one ultimately realizes that no one culture, is inherently better or worse than another since every culture is its own unique system for dealing with the question of being. There is no single scale for rating a successful or unsuccessful, good or bad culture. The individual then, also learns that all persons are, to some extent, culture-bound; they are of the culture in which they have lived. Every culture provides the individual with some sense of identity, some regulation of behaviour, and some sense of personal place in the scheme of things. More directly, the transitional phenomenon gives rise to a heightened sense of self. According to Adler, the intercultural “experience is, finally, a journey into the self. Paradoxically, the more one is capable of experiencing new and different dimensions of human diversity, the more one learns of oneself. Such learning takes place when a person transcends the boundaries of ego, culture, and thinking.”³

The Technological imperative. There are still large inequalities in the world regarding access to internet and to various sources of information. “The implications for intercultural communication are enormous. How do people relate to each other when one is information technology rich and the other is not? When there is increasing use of English on the Internet, what happens to those who don’t speak English”⁴. The language barrier for Japanese is a major obstacle in their access to multi-faceted, non-biased information, as they are limited to what is translated into Japanese, as for the speed and financial accessibility of internet, Japan is below Romania.⁵

² P. Adler, “The Transitional Experience: An Alternative View of Culture Shock”, in *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 15, 13-23, 1975, p. 16.

³ Idem, p. 22.

⁴ Martin and Nakayama, p. 27.

⁵ Although Japan is, with the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and the United Kingdom, in the group who “own” 80% of Internet hosts, according to 2010 data given by Martin and Nakayama, p. 27.

Intercultural understanding and communication become crucially important when one is in Japan, or dealing with the Japanese in business, diplomatic or other contexts – misunderstandings and lack of real communication can easily occur if one is not familiar with the rules and characteristics of Japanese society.

As it has been widely accepted, during the past two or three decades, the development of intercultural competence when learning a foreign language has come to be recognized as an important objective in foreign language education programs around the globe. Cultural elements are integrated in the curricula and syllabuses of language programs because they are acknowledged to facilitate the development of communicative competence in the target language. Language teachers not only provide the students information about other cultures but also help them understand their own culture better⁶, as Adler demonstrated as early as 1975.

Theoretical framework of intercultural studies about Japan.

The first important sociological research that provided basic concepts for a foundation of intercultural studies in Japan was done by the Japanese academic Nakane Chie (*Tate shakai no ningen kankei: tan-itsushakai no riron* [Human relations in vertical society: A theory of a unitary society], 1967), who demonstrated the importance of the group in Japanese society and vertical/hierarchical characteristic of the typical Japanese group. Nakane argues that all modern societies have an identical formal structure, with institutions like school, administration, companies, etc. But, in opposition to this there is an informal structure that regulates the human relationships within society, which is the driver that actually puts in motion the respective society and gives it its particular flavour⁷. In her attempt to analyse this specifically Japanese social structure, Nakane came across a methodological problem – Western sociological concepts did not match a society with other traditions and foundation. Nakane considered that the theoretical model was not in tune with objective reality (“*ron to genjitsu to no zure*”). She put in the spotlight some concepts which became famous in what we could term the *nihonjinron* community: *shudan* (social group), *shikaku* (status or qualification) and *ba* (place). In her analysis social groups can be formed of people united by a common status or

⁶ Jeremie Bouchard, *Ideology, Agency and Intercultural Communicative Competence. A Stratified Look into EFL Education in Japan*, Singapore, Springer, 2017, pp. xii-xiii.

⁷ Nakane, *Tate shakai no ningen kankei*, p. 185.

qualification (caste, guild) or by the fact that they share the same territory (family, company). The common territory which unites this second type of group is called *ba*. Japan is a society which stresses *ba*, the heterogeneous group (from the point of view of qualification) which shares a common place. Thus the family, village, company are groups where people with different statuses share the same space, hence a vertical hierarchy forms within such groups. The importance of the shared space (*ba*) had, in Nakane's opinion, consequences that gave Japanese society its specificity, illustrated by such dictums as „the company where you work is more important than your position in it". This reality described by Nakane in the 1960-ies is now a thing of the past.

One of the "parents" of intercultural communication was Edward T. Hall who - with his *The Silent Language* (1959) has virtually created the concept with the idea that people's actions communicate more information than their words. In the textbook for diplomats created by Hall and Trager in the 1950-ies- *The Analysis of Culture* - there appears for the first time another important concept - *the analysis of a culture*. In their textbook Hall and Trager made a 10 by 10 feature matrix for analysing a culture (reproduced also in Hall's 1959 *The Silent Language*, pp. 190-191). The authors' purpose was to facilitate the communication across cultures, based on the premise that "Culture is communication and communication is culture"⁸.

Hall also divided cultures according to their way of communicating into high-context versus low-context⁹. In this kind of classification Japan ranks as highly contextual, but Hall's distinction overlaps with the traditional versus modern society division.

The social psychologist Geert Hofstede proposed model for classifying cultures based on five dimensions originally to which dimensions he later (2010) added a sixth one, "indulgence/vs. restraint". These were power distance (acceptance of hierarchy)/ individualism/ masculinity/ uncertainty avoidance/ long-term orientation/ indulgence (vs restraint). Japan fits within this framework somewhere along the lines of high distance to power, i. e. accepting openly that a boss is higher than oneself, non-individualistic, masculinity (materialistic, success oriented and with well-defined gender roles), high uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and relatively high indulgence.

⁸ E.T. Hall, *The Silent Language*, Anchor Books, 1973, p. 186.

⁹ in *Beyond Culture*, 1976.

During a long research period, working with IBM staff around the world, and after replications by other researchers using the same questions with other cross-national populations (between 1990-2002), Hofstede's six dimensions and country scores were validated¹⁰.

The empirical/personal approach to intercultural communication

There is also an empirical approach to intercultural communication - we all collect data from our personal encounters, internet sources detailing foreigners' observations on their experiences in Japan, documentaries on Japan that give concrete instances of communication situations. We know that all cultures and countries have their own rules and taboos but there is a common perception that because it is a collectivist society Japan has many rules and taboos that regulate behaviour in the home, in public spaces such as trains, offices, schools and so on. These rules generally place the other person above oneself and the bottom line is not to bother those around you and to make coexistence in a crowded space as smooth as possible. Japan is a crowded island country and the feeling of privacy is not very strong among the Japanese.

Moreover, rules can be written - such as *Set your mobile phone on silent mode and refrain from using it* - which is written everywhere in trains or unwritten (such as keep quiet, or do not stand near the doors unless you get off at the next station, in trains, or the person near the door press the button in elevators for everybody else). If we consider three important rules for train manners (or for any other type of public transportation): keep as quiet as possible, mind your position (do not cross legs or spread them, do not place bags on the chair beside you), and do not stand near the doors if you do not get off at the next station (when trains are crowded people near the door get off to let others pass and then re-enter the train if that was not their station) the underlying reason is not to bother others, as we have previously mentioned.

However, there are arguments that Japanese can be as individualistic as the Americans, and some psychological research to prove it. Proverbs can be used as arguments for, or against the collectivist hypothesis. The American "The squeaky wheel gets the grease" recommends to be individualistic in order to be greased (a good thing) while the Japanese proverb *deru kugi ga utareru* ("The nail that sticks out gets banged down") suggests the Japanese not to stand out. But there are also English proverbs

¹⁰ Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 35.

that recommend harmony (*When in Rome do as Romans do, Don't rock the boat or Tall trees get the wind*, which is similar to *The nail that sticks out gets banged down*) and Japanese proverbs that encourage individualism (*Going first beats others and Hated children thrive*).

Researchers who conducted empirical cross-national comparisons on individualism vs. collectivism like Hofstede depict the Japanese as collectivists who maintain harmony within an in-group by willingly conforming to the group and sacrificing themselves for its sake, but others like Takano Yotaro and Sogon Shun'ya demonstrated, by replicating Asch's (1956) conformity experiment with 40 groups of 140 Japanese college students belonging to the same college clubs, that Japanese "conform no more than Americans even in in-groups"¹¹.

Challenges to intercultural competence in the Japanese education system

According to international rankings in English language competence – for example the EF English Proficiency Index, Japan ranks 78 out of 112 countries whose native language is not English, as of 2021. Its level used to be higher around 2012-2015, but it has fallen dramatically since. And, as far as Toefl iBT rankings are concerned, Japan was 26 out of 29 Asian countries. The question why Japanese have poor competence in speaking English despite the fact that they have at least six years of English study in school and a good level of education seems to be a perennial unsolved problem. Jeremie Bouchard, who has extensive experience in teaching English in Japan, has given one of the best answers to this problem in his 2017 book, with his presentation of *nihonjinron* and native-speakerism and their influence on Japanese education, especially English language education¹².

In the following we will summarize what is *nihonjinron* and what was its negative influence on the intercultural and English competence of the Japanese. A type of nationalist discourse termed *nihonjinron* emerged from the end of the second World War until the burst of the economic bubble at the beginning of the 90-ies¹³. Defined by E. Reischauer as a "discussion of

¹¹ Y. Takano & S. Sogo, "Are Japanese More Collectivistic Than Americans? Examining Conformity in In-Groups and the Reference-Group, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 39 (3), 2008, pp. 237-238.

¹² in Chapter 2 of his book where he reviews the criticism of Japanese EFL system made by the *nihonjinron* and native-speakerism critics.

¹³ Bouchard, *op. cit.*, p. 2, quotes Reischauer's definition of *nihonjinron* from his *Japan: The Story of a Nation*, 3-rd edition, p. 371.

being Japanese” within the larger discussion of Japan’s role in the world¹⁴ *nihonjinron* could be explained as ‘a theory of Japanese culture’, or of Japanese society, perceived as having unique features due to racial, geographical, climatic, linguistic and psychological factors. “First, *nihonjinron* adherents hold that the Japanese race is distinct from other races. The roots of this belief are explained ... thus: ‘Japan’s postwar intellectual history has lacked an actively conscious refutation of genetic determinism,’ thus leading *nihonjinron* supporters to construct a discourse around the notion of a distinct Japanese race.”¹⁵

Then, the geographic argument of *nihonjinron* – the unique geography of Japan – “concerns the notion of the Japanese nation as an ‘island country’. The ‘Japan-as-island’ argument suggests that (a) it is geographically improbable for Japanese culture to have been influenced from outside, and (b) the Japanese archipelago, over time, produced a homogeneous society. ... this argument has also been extended to suggest that Japanese people are, in essence, poor foreign language learners.”¹⁶

The fourth argument – the uniqueness of Japanese language – has the corollaries that, with “no parallel in the rest of the world ... (a) only people of Japanese blood can comprehend the subtleties of the language, and (b) Japanese people are poor foreign language learners.”¹⁷

Japanese psychologists like Takeo Doi, or H. Kawai argue that the psychological structure of the Japanese mind is unique. “Groupism, or the primacy of the community over the individual, is also seen by *nihonjinron*-influenced psychologists as a uniquely Japanese trait. Doi (1986) concludes that this peculiar characteristic of the Japanese comes from the complex and unique term *amae*, which he believes is without equivalent in any language.”¹⁸

Nihonjinron writers considered certain customs or behaviours to be reflections of a Japanese essence which makes the Japanese population act in a unified manner – which is a debatable argument, as various research in psychology shows¹⁹, but most importantly, they advocated that this national unicity needs to be protected from outward influences. As a cultural nationalism *nihonjinron* was more acceptable and Bouchard refers

¹⁴ Idem, p. 37.

¹⁵ Bouchard, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹⁶ Bouchard, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Bouchard, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹⁹ professor Y. Takano’s research referred to above.

to Harumi Befu's argument "that *nihonjinron* has effectively replaced other more controversial national symbols, such as the flag, the national anthem, and the imperial system."²⁰ It represents "the ideology of the ruling class in Japan - the leading industrialists, bureaucrats and politicians - who wish to promote a sense of nationalism that disguises internal inequalities of age, gender, geographical region and class, and encourages economic growth through propounding the idea that all will benefit equally from Japan's new wealth (p. 11)."²¹

Other scholars have found that age is a good indicator of nationalist attitudes in Japan: older middle-class people agree with *nihonjinron* tenets while people aged 18-29 are more tolerant of foreign cultures and of language contact with English, as of 1997 studies. Also, higher educational background and higher occupations are indicative of *nihonjinron* adherence²².

As for measuring the support for *nihonjinron* outside Japan, H. Befu in his 2001 *Hegemony of Homogeneity* states that "one out of seven *nihonjinron* books published in the 33-year period since the end of World War II was contributed by a foreigner"²³

Many recent studies show that the policy makers of the Japanese Ministry of Education and Scientific Research (MEXT) intentionally complicate the creation and implementation of communicatively oriented curricula for English courses, in an attempt to protect national identity, and this trend can be attributed to the *nihonjinron* mentality of bureaucrats. Although it can be argued that such an affirmation is based more on interpretation than empirical evidence, the fact remains that EFL classes in Japan do not aim at creating communicative competence, and remain simply an activity that gives material for test subjects - the whole education system being primarily test-oriented.

Moreover, young people who have studied English in school cannot find at home an environment where English is required. All movies are doubled in Japanese and the rate of students being able to travel and study abroad has fallen dramatically in the past 10-15 years, and the whole country has been closed completely since the pandemic.

²⁰ Bouchard, *op. cit.*, p. 39, refers to Befu's 1992 study "Symbols of nationalism and *nihonjinron*" and his 2000 book, *Hegemony of homogeneity*.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 51, Bouchard quotes R. Goodman, "Ideology and practice in Japan: Towards a theoretical approach" in R. Goodman & K. Refsing (Eds.), *Ideology and practice in modern Japan* (pp. 1-25). London: Routledge, 1992.

²² Ibidem, p. 44.

²³ ibidem

A *nihonjinron*-informed policy of foreign language education, distancing the learners from the authentic knowledge about a foreign country because the latter is considered a corrupting force seems far-fetched at the dawn of the 21st century, but, as the many studies cited in Bouchard's Chapter 2, *ICC, Nihonjinron and Native-speakerism* show, there are arguments in support of such an assertion.

What are the negative consequences of such policies? A narrow view of the world. As a Japanese intern at my university said about the benefits of her internship abroad – it helped her realize how *semai* (narrow) her world-view was before coming to Europe. As Aswill and Duong, cited by Bouchard, put it: “Nationalism and the sense of cultural superiority that accompanies it naturally leads to a static and narrowly framed view of the world. The task of creating globally competent citizens cannot be accomplished without first debunking certain cultural myths”²⁴. But this situation is not limited to Japan, many American university students having “a cultural mythology infused with a deep-seated sense of cultural superiority and an inability to critically reflect on their own society ... a very limited knowledge of their own history and culture, and of world history and of the role of the U.S. in foreign affairs”²⁵.

On the other hand, native-speakerism is an ideology that puts the native speakers, considered to be endowed with emic knowledge, above non-native speakers, at the same time while privileging the knowledge of a mother-tongue over other languages. It too gives a simplistic and biased view of the world. In the language classroom, native-speakerism means that teachers require learners to imitate ‘native speakers’ in order to attain ‘near-native’ L2 skills. This language policy was extensively used in Japan, where many native teachers were hired in middle and high schools. There are many unreal expectations attributed to these native speaker English language teachers – many times they do not have a real understanding of linguistic theory, and cannot conceptualize their native tongue's characteristics from a contrastive point of view. A contrastive approach is a valuable asset in teaching a foreign language and the Japanologist academic world starts to understand its value. In the absence of a ‘healthy’ contrastive approach to language teaching, it is only an immersion approach that could be effective, but is not possible in Japan.

²⁴ Bouchard, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

An interesting opinion from a Japanese blogger who grew up in the US, regarding the negative consequences of the low level of English language proficiency in Japan is that it also lowers the IT level in Japan; and young people's lives become poorer as, not knowing English well they cannot go abroad to seek for a better life²⁶ (in the conditions of rising child poverty in Japan – the child poverty rate was 14% in 2015, and among G-7 nations, only the U.S. and Italy recorded higher levels.²⁷).

Conclusion

Theoretical frames such as Hofstede's sixfold classification of cultures or E. T. Hall's concepts are stemming from a practical need in the business or diplomatic world to understand other cultures. Therefore, they do not have such deep theoretical concerns as other scholars who were more involved in ideology critique and other aspects of critical theory. Hofstede and Hall, working for business organizations or other institutes were interested in a hands-on, realist social approach.

Critics of *nihonjinron*, both Japanese and Western, have argued that its peak was in the late 1970-ies and against the idea that *nihonjinron* is still influential in Japan. However, the recent policy of *sakoku* adopted by Japan during the pandemic, and the severe rules that apply to any entries in Japan even as we speak, while other parts of the world have dropped all restrictions show that insularity, orderliness as a canonical part of Japanese civilization, the aversion to pathogens and need for cleanliness as a biological survival tool are important driving forces in Japanese society.

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²⁶ Why Japanese are Unwilling to Improve their English – YouTube.

²⁷ Japan needs to address its child poverty problem - Nikkei Asia.

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INTERCULTURALITY: SOLUTION TO THE DILEMMA OF ETHNICITY IN NIGERIA

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***Abstract:** As a dense ethnically varied society, the beauty in our diversity seems not to be maximally positioned for appreciation because the adverse effect of our ethnicity is quite glaring and profound. Amongst other factors militating our unity as a nation, ethnic and cultural identity is a strong contender. While culture is a consummate world view of a society, ethnicity is centered mostly on shared single ancestry or lineage amongst other things. Thus, even amongst culturally relative groups, ethnicity often plays out as tool for conflict amongst them. This conflict is not some simple disagreement on opinions but complex matters of superior/inferior and majority/minority appropriations of liberal and social matters. The rising trend of interculturality, if applied as a prescriptive tool, may restore unity to our society while also maintaining the identity that is so important to each group. It is therefore, the position of this paper that, interculturality carries a new order for human interactions that is capable of unifying seemingly divergent groups and orientations. Seeing that the adverse effect of ethnicity has become a threat to our corporate existence as a country, every scholarly attention it is receiving is worth it, until a sustainable solution is reached. Using a descriptive method, this paper will show how interculturality bears solution to the problem of ethnicity in Nigeria and can promote a peaceful climate and unity for further growth.*

***Keywords:** Ethnicity, Interculturality, Nigeria, Culture, Unity.*

Introduction

The position of this research is that, ethnicity is among chief factors that continues to pull the nation Nigeria back in her journey to achieving unity. We point to ethnicity as leader amongst other factors such as religion because, while most religions primarily preach peace with and love for one's creator and one's Neighbor, ethnicity seems to tow the path of indoctrination. In most cases, people question the doctrines and teachings of religion but, rarely ever question the doctrines of ethnicity.

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Where questions are not asked for clarity, people only move blindly. This is the reason we consider ethnic indoctrination dangerous and chief of disintegrating factors in Nigeria. At first, ethnicity appears to be a tool employed by some to gain certain political or economic gratification, thereby suggesting that the application or relevance of ethnicity is not situated with the masses but with a few elites and as such a farce. U. Ukiwo noted of Sklar that, the 1960's and 1970's intellectual traditions felt that ethnicity was of secondary importance as an explanatory variable; at best an epiphenomenon and at worst a mask for class privilege.¹ But, in today's reality, we find that even the masses engage in discriminative ethnicity. When we look at the existence and activities of 'major' ethnic groups in Nigeria, we can confirm that their relationship as it concerns our existence as a country is barely tolerant. It is also clear that what informs their disposition and actions on matters is their cultural values and heritage, at its core is their ethnicity. At this point, this research has suggested that there is or are some differences between culture and ethnicity. Indeed, that is the position of this research. The discourse of K. Desmet et al. portrays the difference this research holds. According to them;

In poor countries, often characterized by a high level of ethnic diversity, concerns arise that groups with heterogeneous values, norms, and attitudes—the broad set of traits that we will refer to as “culture”—may be unable to agree on policies, the provision of public goods, and the broader goals of society. In rich countries, debates rage over multiculturalism and whether population movements brought about by globalization and modernity will result in cultural divisions and the breakdown of social consensus. Underlying these debates is an assumption that people agree within groups and disagree across groups, so that cultural heterogeneity and ethnic heterogeneity are two sides of the same coin.²

¹ R.L. Sklar, “Political Science and National Integration- a Radical Approach”, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 5/2 (1967) cited in U. Ukiwo, ‘On the Study of Ethnicity in Nigeria’, *Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE)*, (2005), 1.

² K. Desmet, I. Ortuño-Ortín, & R. Wacziarg, Culture, ‘Ethnicity, and Diversity’, *American Economic Review*, 107/9 (2017), 2479, <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20150243>

The position of this research from the above discourse is that, even amongst groups of similar cultural values in Nigeria, there is conflicts along ethnic divide. In most cases, intra-ethnic divide is taken for granted, paying more attention to inter-ethnic divide for the purpose of politicizing a delicate matter. According to U. Ukiwo who shares this view, analysts have paid more attention to inter-ethnic than intra-ethnic conflicts because the cohesion of ethnic groups is often taken for granted.³ For clarity, while culture refers to norms, values and traditions, ethnicity refers to same with some additions. This addition includes shared single ancestry and lingua. According to K. Desmet et al., if most of cultural heterogeneity occurs within groups rather than between groups, then the correlation between ethnic diversity and cultural diversity will tend to be low.⁴ In most cases, ethnicity accounts for cultural heterogeneity within groups as is the case in Nigeria despite the seemingly shared cultural traits across groups. This suggests that the effect of ethnicity reaches farther, since it can defy the cultural relationships to achieve its aim.

The aim of this research therefore, is to elucidate the dynamics of interculturality, explore the complexity of ethnicity in Nigeria and how interculturality can be a useful tool in militating the negative effects of ethnicity in Nigeria. Employing an analytical method, this research will give an evaluative understanding and recommendations through which we can achieve unity from the tenets of interculturality.

Dynamics of interculturality

Interculturality appears to be gaining more attention by scholars and nationalists across the globe because of its unifying and peace enhancing nature. However, the concept is not exactly new or recent as some may think, according to Pieterse as noted by F. Dervin, Interculturality has been with us since the beginning of time. People have always interacted across borders, be they national, regional, linguistic, religious, and/ or social.⁵ The nature of that interaction as we have also seen over the years

³ U. Ukiwo, 'On the Study of Ethnicity in Nigeria', *Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE)*, (2005), 1, DOI:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13600810500099592>

⁴ K. Desmet, I. Ortuño-Ortín, & R. Wacziarg, Culture, 'Ethnicity, and Diversity', 2480.

⁵ J.N. Pieterse, *Globalization and culture: Global mélange*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004), cited in F. Dervin, *Interculturality in Education: A Theoretical*

have also been problematic and sometimes chaotic, thus the need for scholarly debates and appropriations of the concept interculturality. Consequently, there has been several definition, description and interpretation of the concept, mostly similar except in its application. This perhaps, is the reason why Blommaert says of interculturality that, it is a travelling discourse. He says that, whenever discourses travel across the globe, what is carried with them is their shape, but their value, meaning, or function do not often travel along'.⁶ This therefore gives interculturality a simplified definition of diverse cultural interactions without a giving much attention to the more complex issues of the concept like that of its nature, value and use.

As an indicator of the nature of relationship amongst people of diverse ethnicity and also, as a tool to encourage harmony amongst ethnically and culturally diverse people, interculturality can be described and applied in two ways. According to G. Dietz, interculturality is defined and classified in anthropological and social science literature according to three different but complementary semantical axes.⁷ The first and second axes cuts it for this research, they look at the normative meaning and use of the concept and a functionalist application respectively. In the normative sense, interculturality as seen in several works can be approached descriptively or prescriptively. For G. Dietz,

When it is used as a descriptive and analytical tool, interculturality is defined as the ensemble of interrelations that structure a given society in terms of culture, ethnicity, language, religious denomination, and/or nationality, an ensemble that is perceived through the articulation of different "us" versus "them" groups that interact in often changing majority-minority constellations.⁸

In this sense, interculturality defines the diversity amongst members of society or across societies on different basis including race, religion, ethnicity etc. in a descriptive sense, interculturality exposes the prevailing

and Methodological Toolbox, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-54544-2.

⁶ J. Blommaert, *Discourse*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), cited in F. Dervin, *Interculturality in Education: A Theoretical and Methodological Toolbox*, 7.

⁷ G. Dietz, 'Interculturality', *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology.*, Edited by Hilary Callan (2018), 1, DOI: 10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea1629

⁸ G. Dietz, 'Interculturality', 2.

relationship amongst groups which appears to be discriminatory based on the idea of 'majority-minority' attributions or just membership sentiment. The prescriptive meaning of the concept on the other hand, has emphasis on the value and use of the concept in society. According to Gundara as cited in Dietz, interculturality is sometimes coined as interculturalism a transformative program aimed at making contemporary societies more conscious about their internal diversities and more inclusive and symmetrical with regard to their so-called minorities.⁹ In a prescriptive sense therefore, interculturality evokes a sense of harmony in the relationships amongst diverse groups. In this sense, interculturality is more practical in its use. It is practical in the sense that, it promotes the capacity to embrace all and sundry irrespective of ethnic, religious or cultural divide. The result of a study carried out by B. K. Ashdown et al. on the relationship between two ethnic groups in Guatemala proves that an application of the concept yields a more positive result. According to them,

In several studies both adolescents and emerging adults held more favorable attitudes toward their own ethnic group. Statistical analysis revealed in-group favoritism among Ladino and Indigenous people... However, those with an intercultural identification were unique. Their attitudes toward the two ethnic groups fell in-between...¹⁰

They therefore implied that, Interculturality seems to have played the role of tempering Intercultural peoples' attitudes toward both groups.¹¹ The functionalist concept of interculturality as it appears in Dietz work, stems from a broader interpretation of the concept with regards to its descriptive and prescriptive connotation. In this context, the definition of interculturality aligns itself with either of the normative definition of the concept. According to Dietz, Interculturality in the functionalist interpretation is viewed as a programmatic, political-educational strategy for smoothing over, softening, or mitigating relations and, on the other

⁹ J. Gundara, *Interculturalism, Education and Inclusion*, (London: Paul Chapman 2000), Cited in G. Dietz, 'Interculturality', 2.

¹⁰ B.K. Ashdown, J.L. Gibbons, & Y.D. Baessa, 'Group Identity and Attitudes in Guatemala: The Role of Ethnic Interculturality', M.J. Rozbicki, ed., *Perspectives on Interculturality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 77.

¹¹ B.K. Ashdown, J.L. Gibbons, & Y.D. Baessa, 'Group Identity and Attitudes in Guatemala: The Role of Ethnic Interculturality', 77-78.

hand, a view of interculturality as a transformative strategy to unveil, question, and change historically rooted inequalities within society.¹² The first view of the concept as a political-educational strategy seems to be the reality in most societies, Nigeria inclusive, and it fits in the descriptive understanding of the interculturality. The second functionalist interpretation which appears more radical seems to be the new focus and demand of use for the concept today. The concept as it is implied in the second meaning of functionality suggests that, interculturality should be approached with the philosophical rigor of scrutinizing societal systems and events for the purpose of finding answers and solutions. In the words of Dietz,

In the first case, intercultural competences are defined as functional tools and resources for increasing tolerance for, mutual understanding with, and empathy with others, whereas in the second case these intercultural capacities are interpreted and/or acquired in terms of anti-discrimination, consciousness raising, and dealing with conflict.¹³

Working with the prescriptive functionalist interpretation of interculturality, I will define interculturality as an inevitable tool and process for a long-lasting solution to the challenges of discrimination and violence resulting from the density of diversity amongst any people who seek continuous coexistence. Anything short would be a quick fix headed for more destruction. Interculturality promotes a people's ability to relate with those outside the ethnic, cultural or religious divide with respect and hospitality.

Complexity of ethnicity in Nigeria

To say that Nigeria is one of the world's most ethnically diverse countries would not be an exaggeration at all. According to Wikipedia report, Nigeria is a very ethnically diverse state with over 370 ethnic groups.¹⁴ There has been discussions on the meaning of ethnicity and what elements marks the concept, is it culture, language or ancestral identification? Agreeing with Nwadiakor and Uzoigwe, most scholars

¹² G. Dietz, 'Interculturality', 3.

¹³ G. Dietz, 'Interculturality', 3.

¹⁴ 'List of Ethnic Groups in Nigeria, WIKIPEDIA, (2020), 1, http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ethnic_groups_in_Nigeria, accessed 25th August, 2021.

agree that ethnicity often involves assigning importance to perceived affinities among individuals and some sense of differences among groups.¹⁵ It has been noted in several research that ethnic diversity is one of the major causes of civil violence and instability in countries with several ethnic variables. Research by K. Desmet et al. noted that,

Some recent papers have explored not just the effect of diversity, but also that of between-group income inequality (...) Our paper shares with these various contributions a focus on between-group diversity. However, instead of focusing on income inequality between groups, we focus on cultural heterogeneity between groups.¹⁶

This means that, ethnicity comes with some levels of inequality and domination, owing to the factors of majority-minority constellations, wealth and political power distribution, social, cultural and language recognition and acceptance etc. Ethnicity therefore, takes the front row of factors that causes conflict and instability in societies. For a country such as Nigeria, all the afore mentioned factors and more have at different points resulted into national crisis. For instance, the Nigerian civil war of 1967 to 1970 and more recently, the Fulani herdsmen attack from 2018 to date. Both crises have strong ethnic tones of marginalization, superiority or inferiority complex to them, the agitation usually about recognition, acceptance or domination. Little wonder K.L. Nwadiolor & A.M. Uzoigwe opine that, Nigeria's experience of ethnic and communal violence has caused many lives to be lost and many others internally displaced with their corresponding destruction of properties.¹⁷ The issue of ethnic intolerance in Nigeria is further elevated by political and economic power distribution asides cultural and lingual factors. This is more so in Nigeria, due to the current security crisis across the country and the response of government at every point. Let us consider the IPOB agitation for instance and the Boko Haram gunmen, it is common knowledge that both groups are dominated by certain ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Igbos and the

¹⁵ K.L. Nwadiolor & A. M. Uzoigwe, 'Ethnicity and Social Stability in Nigeria: The Place of Religion', *UJAH UNIZIK Journal of Arts and Humanities* (2014), 67, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v14i3.5>

¹⁶ K. Desmet, I. Ortuño-Ortín, & R. Wacziarg, Culture, 'Ethnicity, and Diversity', 2501.

¹⁷ K.L. Nwadiolor & A.M. Uzoigwe, 'Ethnicity and Social Stability in Nigeria: The Place of Religion', 66.

Fulani's. Both groups also have records of creating violence and causing mayhem at different points, but, the approach of the federal government has succeeded in creating the impression that ethnic identity equals favoritism or inequality regardless of the similarities in crime. According to a special report by A. Walker for the United States institute of peace, Boko Haram is an Islamic sect that believes politics in northern Nigeria has been seized by a group of corrupt false Muslims. It wants to wage war against them, and the federal republic of Nigeria generally, to create a "pure" Islamic state ruled by sharia law.¹⁸ The Boko Haram group over the years have over the years adopted or rather been tagged several nomenclatures, Bandits, Unknown gunmen etc., and devising more strategies to achieve their aim(s). The IPOB's on the other hand is believed to be an Igbo separationist agitation, IPOB has criticized the Nigerian federal government for its poor investment, inequitable resource distribution, ethnic marginalization, and heavy military presence in the south east region of the country.¹⁹ Both groups have in recent years engaged in violence of different sort in the bid to push their agenda, however, one group is being granted amnesty, while the other is being charged to court or executed by military power. In an interview with the governor of Kaduna state, El-Rufai, he said, those accusing the federal government of giving preferential treatment to 'Northern bandits' have no basis for comparing such 'gunmen' with the re-arrested leader of IPOB.²⁰ This situation in the eyes of some Nigerians appears to be a play of ethnicity in bringing criminals to justice. Politics has now become a thing of ethnicity as major ethnic groups are agitating for the presidential seat in the next elections, despite the fact that there is a 'system' of zoning. It therefore becomes more difficult for so called minority ethnic groups who are already disadvantaged, and feel invisible to be heard at all. This breeds further contempt and intolerance amongst people of ethnic diversity in Nigeria.

¹⁸ A. Walker, 'What is Boko Haram?', *United States institute of Peace* (2012), Para. 1, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/SR308.pdf>, accessed 26th August, 2021.

¹⁹ 'Indigenous People of Biafra', *WIKIPEDIA* (2020), Para. 2, https://en.m.wikiedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_People_of_Biafra, accessed 26th August, 2021.

²⁰ Nation Online, *Why Boko Haram, Bandits Can't be Treated like IPOB*, by El-Rufai (2021), Para. 1, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/thenationonlineng.net/why-boko-haram-bandits--cant-be-treated-like-ipob-by-el-rufai>, accessed 26th August, 2021.

The issue of ethnic identity in Nigeria has become more toxic than pleasant. When we look closer at how woven or interwoven some ethnicities are, in terms of similarities of cultural practices, religion etc., we will agree that clashes amongst such groups bothers on identity and the need for recognition, respect and acceptance. The level which Nigeria has gotten to, due to ethnic hatred and intolerance requires a grassroot overhauling because, asides political and economic clashes, some families in Nigeria at not at peace with some other members of their family because of their marriage to a particular ethnic group. As a matter of speaking, it is a taboo to marry from certain ethnic group when you belong to another, even in this 21st century, people still hold on to it. As E. Erhagbe rightly noted, The Nigerian state, has often been compelled to deal with the issue of national integration, especially in moments of intense ethnic disagreements which have sometimes degenerated into violent conflicts.²¹

The possibility of inter-ethnic unity through interculturality

There is the urgent need to restore peace and balance to the Nigeria society before the situation deteriorates any further. As stated earlier, an overhauling is now mandatory, an approach to cut across all aspects of society is requisite. It is not impossible to achieve peace, recognition and acceptance in an ethnically diverse society, as a matter of fact, it is achievable if we desire it enough to give what it requires which is respect. To respect or appreciate anything will require some level of knowledge of such thing, and this knowledge will come through patience to observe, inquire, understand and appreciate the object of our respect. This whole process is what is contained in interculturality. With the right approach, interculturality can become the essential tool that will transform the minds and attitudes of many Nigerians towards those of a different ethnic group from them.

Having seen the dynamic use and reference of the concept 'interculturality', this research draws upon its prescriptive use to establish our position. Our position is that, inculcating the value and use sense of the meaning of interculturality can help reorientate the minds of individuals towards accepting and co-existing peacefully with other non-

²¹ E. Erhagbe, 'Ethnicity in the Matrix of Peace and Reconciliation in Nigeria', *European Scientific Journal*, Vol. 8/16 (2012), 82,
<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/236408831.pdf>

ethnic members of our society. As a matter of fact, we are optimistic that, interculturality in its prescriptive meaning can make ethnic identity a matter of subjective inclination to which other inclinations are permissible and intelligible as well. It is important to note at this point that, our notion and application of interculturality is not to suggest that personal or group identity be thrown out the window, rather, our position is that we do not sacrifice the well-being and existence of humanity on the alter of extremities arising from an insistent take of personal or group identity. Having said that, let us look at the ways through which intercultural knowledge can be spread through our nation Nigeria. The idea is to close the gaps amongst 'privileged' and 'less privileged' ethnic groups. As Dietz notes of interculturality that it,

emphasizes changes in the nature of the relations between these groups, which implies not only empowering certain groups but also altering majority perceptions and promoting reciprocal processes of identification between groups that have been historically privileged and groups that have been historically excluded.²²

To achieve this, we suggest the approach of intercultural education and competence. Using education and political will or goodwill as tools to promote intercultural relationship is something we believe will bring about tremendous changes that we would love to see. It is therefore not enough, to teach about the Nigerian's people and culture and leave it at that, we should teach also, the importance and value of intercultural relationships in enabling a unified and peaceful co-existence.

Intercultural education

Education as an enlightenment of the mind is capable of liberating an individual from the shackles sentimental prejudice capable of bring harm both to the individual and others. Being that, People shape their emotional experiences within their culture, through their upbringing and in their relationships with the people around them.²³ Most societies tend to

²² G. Dietz, 'Interculturality', 2.

²³ J. Nias, 'Thinking about feeling: the emotions in teaching', *Cambridge Journal of Education* (1996), cited in S. Hosoya, M-T. Talib & H. Arslan, 'Finnish, Japanese and Turkish Pre-Service Teachers' Intercultural Competence: The Impact of Pre-Service Teachers' Culture, Personal Experiences, and Education', in L. Vega, ed., *Empires, Post-Coloniality and Interculturality* (Netherland: Sense Publishers, 2014), 236.

mistake or substitute indoctrination for education, the major difference is that, while one is conditioning (mostly with bias), the other is illuminating. The process of shaping and informing the minds of those within an ethnic group, especially those being born into those groups usually requires obedience and conformity. Obedience and conformity do not always give room for questioning and in such instances, it becomes indoctrination. That is the case with the Nigerian society and indeed many African societies. If we choose and adopt intercultural or inter-ethnic education instead of ethnic indoctrination, what would happen is that, the negativity in, or tendency towards violent ethnic conflicts will be dealt away with. Intercultural education can develop one's sensitivity and competence in inter-ethnic relations, this would be the right step towards promoting inter-ethnic integration and reducing inter-ethnic tension. From the research of B. K Ashdown et.al., on the behavior of two ethnic groups towards each other, they saw that those with an intercultural understanding behaved differently in a positive way. This goes to show that, intercultural education has great potentials in resolving or dealing away with interethnic hostility. According to them, since the attitude of those they refer to as 'interculturals' (as opposed to identifying with either of the ethnic groups being studied), "Future explorations should address this intersectionality, and the way in which interculturality impacts the way different types of group identity interact on an individual and societal level".²⁴ If intercultural information could produce positive effects in a few, imagine what intercultural education would do? Basically, education is an important tool in the development of people and society, thus, its relevance in a matter such as this can not be over emphasized. Educators can be change agents for ethnic peace and stability in Nigeria, starting with themselves and then others.

Politics and political involvement

The political setting and system of a society is like the engine that drives such society, therefore, politics and political leaders in Nigeria have important roles to play to see to the end of ethnic violence across the country. There are several factors in politics that directly affects the ethnic relations amongst ethnic groups in Nigeria. The way the politics is played captures everything that is wrong or right about the society. According to

²⁴ B.K. Ashdown, J.L. Gibbons, & Y.D. Baessa, 'Group Identity and Attitudes in Guatemala: The Role of Ethnic Interculturality' 80.

C. Büschges, the reference to ethnic differences between human groups has become a common starting point for political debate. The justification of political viewpoints, actors and practices using ethnic arguments has led to lasting changes in the political sphere.²⁵ It is obvious that, politics and ethnicity are entangled further suggesting the relevance of politics and political involvement in tackling the challenges of ethnicity in Nigeria.

The Zoning of important government offices is a reflection of the density of ethnicity in Nigeria and it is meant to help reduce the tensions of ethnic discrimination in politics. However, it seems to further pronounce our ethnic differences in negative ways. Over the years, we have seen political leaders overly favoring their ethnic group to the point of almost neglecting others completely. This narrative can be changed and this is why the nature of politics has to change. There has to be a political will on the part of the leaders to change this pattern for the sake of national interest and peace. As B. Archibong noted, Horizontal inequality by ethnic group has remained remarkably persistent for wealth, education and access to certain public services in Nigeria.²⁶ Therefore, we need the political will of leaders across different ethnic groups to bridge the gaps of wealth and social service distribution across the country. We need political leaders to make decisions and take actions on national issues and policies that are favorable to all. This means that, political leaders have to leave the realm of appealing to ethnic sentiments to achieve political power and transcend into the climate of intercultural politics.

It appears in most elections held across the country that, politicians vying for government positions tend to acquire prominence and acceptance from the people on the basis of ethnic sentiments rather than responsibility, qualification and sense of duty. We need for politicians and leaders today to genuinely approach the public with an intercultural knowledge. Decisions and actions should be made with interculturality in mind, when this approach comes from the head, its easy for the followers to adopt. Therefore, certain things need to change in the political practice of Nigeria today.

²⁵ C. Büschges, 'Politicizing Ethnicity - Ethnicizing Politics Comparisons and Entanglements', in B. Verlag, ed., *Ethnicity as a Political Resource Conceptualizations across Disciplines, Regions, and Periods* (Germany: Transcript, 2015), 108.

²⁶ B. Archibong, 'Historical Origins of Persistent Inequality in Nigeria', *Oxford Development Studies* (2018), 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2017.1416072>

Conclusion

Interculturality as a concept and aspect of human understanding is of importance to solving some of humanity's problems today in ways that have not been expressed in this research. We have seen how the concept can be understood and the advantage that we stand to benefit from its application. That is why, on the issue of ethnicity, employing the concept across the various aspects of human activities is considered a viable option in this research. Since we cannot change the facts of our ethnic diversity as a people, we need to employ means of living with it and also make progress with it. To achieve this, for the long run, an approach such as this becomes necessary.

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STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS AT THE CROSSROADS

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Abstract: *The purpose of the present paper is to review the importance of study abroad programs within the larger framework of internationalization of higher education and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon student mobility in Japan. Furthermore, it will examine a few reports of the students who completed virtual study abroad programs in Canada, Netherlands and Taiwan and will offer a few comments regarding the future of study abroad in times of crisis.*

Keywords: *study abroad, internationalization, virtual mobility, Japan*

Before the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020, the number of international students had reached 5.6 million, a twofold increase compared to 1998 (2.2 million).¹ After U.S., Canada, China, Australia and U.K., Japan is one of the leading host countries for international students, achieving a substantial growth of inbound international students from 132,720 in 2010 to 228,403 in 2020.² Since 2008, Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has made sustained efforts towards the advancement of internationalization in Japanese higher education, aiming to increase the number of international students to 300,000 by 2020.³ To attract international students, a number of universities in Japan have revised their curricula and teaching to accommodate the needs and requirements of partner schools and their students. The introduction of English medium programs,⁴ as well as a

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¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. Retrieved from <http://data.uis.unesco.org>

² Leah Mason, *International Student Mobility Flows and COVID-19 Realities*, Special Release, Annual IC3 Conference, Delhi, India, Aug. 25-26, 2021, Retrieved from <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Publications/IntlStudent-Mobility-Flows-and-C19-Realities>

³ MEXT, *Outline of Student Exchange System: Study in Japan and Abroad 2010*, Retrieved from

https://www.mext.go.jp/component/english/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2011/12/14/1303740_1.pdf

⁴ <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Publications/IntlStudent-Mobility-Flows-and-C19-Realities>

plethora of governmental or private scholarships, Japanese language support programs and other initiatives are aimed to attract international students and make their experience in Japan worthwhile.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected student mobility and academic partnerships worldwide, bringing the internationalization of universities to a temporary halt. According to a survey conducted by the International Association of Universities among higher education institutions in 109 countries, student mobility in 89% of universities was negatively impacted by the pandemic.⁵ In Japan, a MEXT survey conducted between Nov. 2 -13, 2020 among 50 universities in the “Top Global University Project” and “Inter University Exchange Project” found that international student enrollment in tertiary institutions decreased by 4.9% overall. The relatively minor decrease was due to the fact that graduate students were already in Japan when the pandemic broke out.⁶ Likewise, the expected drop in international student enrollment was not as steep as initially feared in other major host countries such as U.S. (16%), Canada (17%), Australia (12%), and U.K. (21%).⁷ A more substantial decrease affected short-term programs, as visa restrictions, delays or health policies forced students to postpone or cancel their study plans altogether. Thousands of international students hoping to study at Japanese universities had to cancel their plans, and the numbers of Japanese students expecting to study abroad on short-term study abroad programs dropped by 98.6% from 107,346 in 2019 to 1,487 in 2020, the lowest level ever recorded since 2003.⁸

The importance and benefits of student mobility have been widely discussed in the literature within the larger framework of internationalization in higher education. Knight defined internationalization as “...the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching/learning, research and service functions of a university or college. An international dimension means a perspective, activity or service which introduces or integrates an

⁵ Giorgio Marinoni, Hilligye van't Land, and Trine Jensen “The Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education Around the World: IAU Global Survey Report.” Paris: International Association of Universities, 2020.

⁶ MEXT, Questionnaire results (2nd), 2020, Retrieved from <https://tgu.mext.go.jp/en/symp02/pdf/2-2.pdf>

⁷ Mason, *op. cit.*, 2021, pp. 14-15.

⁸ The Asahi Shimbun, March 31, 2022, Retrieved from <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14586836>

international/intercultural/ global outlook into the major functions of an institution of higher education.”⁹ With its two basic pillars, ‘at home’ and ‘abroad’, internationalization incorporates into teaching and program contents area studies, foreign language learning, as well as international and intercultural competences, global and comparative perspectives.¹⁰

‘Internationalization at home’ is a concept developed at the beginning of the 2000s, and was defined by Beelen & Jones as “...the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments.”¹¹ On the other hand, ‘crossborder education’ is defined as “the movement of people, programs, providers, policies, ideas, projects and services across national boundaries”.¹² Crossborder education encompasses short- or long-term abroad programs, collaborative degree programs (double or joint degrees), as well as internships, research and fieldwork.¹³

Study abroad programs benefit participants, their host and home universities, as well as their communities and societies.¹⁴ On the one hand, they help develop students’ personalities by providing cultural knowledge, understanding and flexibility, allowing them to respond adequately to unfamiliar situations.¹⁵ Crossborder mobility contributes to the acquisition of foreign language competencies and professional qualifications which conduct to better employment opportunities for students¹⁶, allowing them to pursue international careers.¹⁷ Moreover, cultural exchanges between international students and local students

⁹ Jane Knight, *Internationalization: Elements and checkpoints* (Research monograph) (Vol. 7). Canadian Bureau for International Education, 1994, p. 3, Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED549823.pdf>

¹⁰ Jane Knight, *Student Mobility and Internationalization: Trends and Tribulations*. Research in Comparative and International Education. Vol. 7, no. 1, 2012, pp. 20-33.

¹¹ Jos Beelen & Elspeth Jones, Redefining internationalization at home. In A. Curaj, L. Matei, R. Pricopie, J. Salmi, & P. Scott (Eds.), *The European higher education area: Between critical reflections and future policies*, Springer, 2015, p. 69.

¹² Knight, *op. cit.*, 2012, p. 23.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 20-33.

¹⁵ Barbara M. Kehm, *The Contribution of International Student Mobility to Human Development and Global Understanding*. Online Submission 2.1, 2005, p. 18.

¹⁶ Rita Koris, Francisco Javier Mato-Díaz, and Núria Hernández-Nanclares, *From real to virtual mobility: Erasmus students’ transition to online learning amid the COVID-19 crisis*, European Educational Research Journal 20, no. 4, 2021, p. 465.

¹⁷ Kehm, *op. cit.*, 2005.

contribute to the latter's 'internationalization at home', providing opportunities for students who cannot or would not study abroad to interact with a diverse student body and become acquainted with other cultures and languages on campus.¹⁸

Secondly, in terms of benefits derived by higher education institutions, study abroad programs contribute to the internationalization of universities, facilitating not only fruitful student and faculty exchanges between partner universities, but also helping universities gain a competitive edge, advance in university rankings, and increase enrollments. Moreover, as in the recent years the competition for global talent is growing fierce, many host countries have in place strategies and recruitment targets aimed at attracting and training highly qualified workforce who would pursue employment in the host country after graduation¹⁹.

After the breakout of the pandemic, universities worldwide were fast to rise to the new challenge and transitioned their study abroad course offerings online. Classes were taught synchronously or asynchronously using online conference tools, and extra-curricular activities were added in order to increase authentic language and culture exchanges among participants. One of the important lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is that when student mobility becomes unfeasible due to pandemic, political or regional conflicts or natural disasters 'internationalization at home' may be the solution for keeping strategic alliances alive and thriving. Back in 2012, Knight cautioned that 'internationalization' and 'study abroad' had become almost interchangeable, while the benefits of 'internationalization at home' had been overlooked. She advised that universities should elaborate an internationalization framework to integrate campus based and virtual learning (or 'internationalization at home') with study abroad experiences.²⁰ Indeed, as the COVID-19 crisis has hampered the free circulation of students and faculty, Moscovitz suggests a refocusing on 'internalization from within', or teaching foreign language and global competencies in the students' home country, without the hassle and added costs of cross-border mobility.²¹ Liu and Shirley discuss the

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

¹⁹ Knight, *op. cit.*, 2012.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

²¹ Hannah Moscovitz, *The "International University" in an immobile world: rethinking internationalisation in the COVID-19 era*, 2020, Retrieved from:

transformation of a traditional study abroad into an online version utilizing an innovative approach which integrated Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and virtual reality (VR).²² Nevertheless, although the participants were overall satisfied with the learning outcomes, the authors point out that the VR cannot replace the experience of a country or culture in person. Another perceived hurdle was the time difference and the necessity to adjust the course to suit the international students' time zone.

As virtual study abroad has been brought into focus as an alternative to the limited student mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is worth examining its benefits in comparison with the conventional study abroad, especially in terms of student perception and learning outcomes. It is popularly believed that study abroad, by virtue of "immersion in the native speech community, integrated with formal classroom learning", is the best strategy to become fluent in a second language.²³ This may be true to the extent that the students become actively and consciously involved in linguistic interactions with native speakers of the second language in authentic situations.²⁴ However, immersion without meaningful interaction does not guarantee achievement of fluency. Likewise, cultural sensitivity, which is another of the expected benefits of study abroad, does not increase with the simple exposure to another culture without actually experiencing the culture and interacting with the local people.²⁵ Experiential learning is an essential process of learning "whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience".²⁶ Students who experience various cultures during their overseas stay demonstrate a more substantial change in intercultural communication

<https://postpandemicuniversity.net/2020/09/13/the-international-university-in-an-immobile-world-rethinking-internationalisation-in-the-covid-19-era/>

²² Yingjie Liu & Thomas Shirley, *Without crossing a border: Exploring the impact of shifting study abroad online on students' learning and intercultural competence development during the COVID-19 pandemic*. *Online Learning*, Vol. 25, no. 1, 2021, pp. 182-194.

²³ Barbara F. Freed, ed. *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context*. Vol. 9. John Benjamins Publishing, 1995, p. 5.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

²⁵ George Kelly, *A Theory of Personality*. New York: Norton, 1963.

²⁶ David A. Kolb, *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984, p. 41.

skills compared to students who did not go abroad.²⁷ Moreover, since study abroad integrates readings for abstract conceptualization, writing for reflection, service instruction for experimentation and local visits for concrete experience, it has been suggested that study abroad may be beneficial for students' professional development.²⁸

On the other hand, 'virtual study abroad' provides convenient and affordable study abroad solutions to students who would otherwise be unable or unwilling to enroll due to high costs of tuition, travel and living in the host countries. In addition to the effective use of distance education and cost-effectiveness, a virtual mobility program provides an enhanced experience for distance learning students.²⁹ Some of its outcomes are comparable to traditional study abroad programs. Thus, Lee and Song found that students enrolled in a virtual study abroad program demonstrated similar degrees of improvement in the affective and behavioral intercultural communicative competence as students who participated in study abroad programs.³⁰ Helm also found that virtual exchanges contribute to developing students' digital, linguistic and intercultural competence by providing extended academic experience.³¹ The reception of virtual exchange programs among students in response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic has been generally positive.³² Suleri found that students at several Dutch universities reported higher levels of satisfaction with virtual learning compared with conventional

²⁷ Williams, Tracy Rundstrom, *Exploring the Impact of Study Abroad on Students' Intercultural Communication Skills: Adaptability and Sensitivity*. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, Vol. 9, no. 4, December 2005, pp. 356-71.

²⁸ Emily A. Greenfield, Rebecca T. Davis & James P. Fedor, *The Effect of International Social Work Education: Study Abroad Versus On-Campus Courses*, *Journal of Social Work Education*, Vol. 48, no. 4, 2012, pp. 739-761.

²⁹ Hooman Estelami, Michael H. Slotkin, Christopher J. Durie, Jarin R. Eisenberg, *The benefits of short-term study abroad as a blended learning experience*. *Journal of International Education in Business*, Vol. 5, no. 2, 2012, pp. 163-173.

³⁰ Juhee Lee & Jayoung Song, *Developing intercultural competence through study abroad, telecollaboration, and on-campus language study*. *Language Learning & Technology*, Vol. 23, no. 3, 2019, pp. 178-198.

³¹ Francesca Helm, *Languages and international virtual exchange: Introduction to the special issue*. *European Journal of Language Policy*, Vol. 11, no. 2, 2019, pp.139-142.

³² Rita Koris, Francisco Javier Mato-Díaz, and Núria Hernández-Nanclares, *From real to virtual mobility: Erasmus students' transition to online learning amid the COVID-19 crisis*. *European Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 20, no. 4., 2021, pp. 463-478.

learning.³³ Nevertheless, in their study of the international students' perceptions of the transition to virtual study abroad, Koris et al. found that reduced social interaction was one of the major challenges faced by the participants in the Erasmus+ Study Mobility Program in Europe.³⁴

Case study: Virtual study abroad experiences of NUCB students

During 2020-2021 a number of students from Nagoya University of Commerce and Business participated in online study abroad programs at universities in the Netherlands, Canada, and Taiwan. The programs were exchange programs (with a focus on business disciplines) offered by universities with which NUCB has partnership agreements, and one English language learning program. The duration of the programs ranged from three months (one semester) to one year. The students enrolled in exchange programs were Economics or Management majors, while those participating in the language study program were majoring in English. After the completion of the programs, they were required to submit a report of their study abroad experience, detailing their reasons for choosing the program, description of courses (title, frequency, teaching method), their daily schedule, difficulties faced, skills acquired during their program, second language progress, vision and comments. The reports were written in English or in Japanese (see Table 1).

The participants had various reasons for enrollment. International exchange students were more interested in experimenting with other kinds of learning, wished to expand their network of connections, and were motivated to learn about new disciplines in business and management. On the other hand, students enrolled in the language program, some of whom without prior study abroad experience, hoped to improve their English skills by gaining exposure to authentic English, deepen their inter-cultural understanding, or wished to acquire relevant skills for their future career.

Regarding learning outcomes, the participants in exchange programs reported multiple academic gains (learning about other business disciplines, encountering new perspectives and teaching styles), personal growth such as development of interpersonal skills (leadership, cooperation, team work), and a deeper understanding of culture and

³³ Javed Suleri, Learners' experience and expectations during and post COVID-19 in higher education. *Research in Hospitality Management* 10(2), 2020, 91-96.

³⁴ Koris et. al., *ibidem*.

language of the host country. However, since in most of the cases English was the medium of instruction, and because the participants in exchange programs were already fluent in English (working fluency in English being a requirement), most of them did not report substantial improvements in their English language skills. One participant reported studying Chinese at his host university in Taiwan. On the other hand, most of the students who enrolled in the language program reported higher post-program TOEIC scores, increased communicative confidence and competence, as well as improved English listening and reading skills. Moreover, from the viewpoint of personal development, the language program students reported increased self-confidence, better collaboration and higher resilience.

Finally, regarding difficulties and challenges encountered during their program, the most notable was adjusting to a different time zone, especially when most of the courses offered were taught in synchronous mode, which left most students sleep deprived and struggling with fatigue. Another challenge was adapting to online teaching and learning, which although most students found academically fulfilling, failed short of meeting their expectations of being immersed in a new environment and experiencing authentic interactions with the local people. Adding to it were the initial difficulties caused by miscommunication with the host university or due to the students' insufficient mastery of the digital tools used during the program. Some students reported feeling disappointed, isolated and slightly depressed with the lack of face-to-face social interaction due to the pandemic. Still, all of them considered their virtual study abroad experiences worthwhile and were positive in recommending them to the next participants.

Conclusion

Study abroad programs have been a staple of internationalization in higher education worldwide for decades. The sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions in international student mobility that followed afterwards forced universities to transition their study abroad programs online and to take stock of the lessons learned during these times of crisis. As the world continues to struggle with multiple issues, from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to regional wars and growing social disparities, a new and more inclusive approach is needed, which would ideally integrate 'internationalization at home' using the

affordances of technology, and ‘cross border internationalization’ to meet the students’ expectations of better learning experience and opportunities.

Name	Country	Program type	Duration (months)	Motivation to study abroad	Outcomes (Skills acquired, benefits)	Difficulties & Challenges
Ami	Canada	Exchange	3 months	-Opportunity to see the bigger world	-Statistics, human resources management - Online team work	-Time difference -Fatigue, exhaustion
				-Interested in North American business culture	-Knowledge of culture & people through events and online games	- Face-to-face interactions are preferable -Virtual interactions did not feel real
Mari	Netherlands	Exchange	1 year	-Experience other learning methods	-Technology Management, Leadership, Business Information Mgmt.	-Problems Adjusting to European Time zone
				-Widen connections and meet people from all over the world	-Teamwork & time management	-Experience limited due to pandemic
					-Became aware of new possibilities - Became familiar with new types of learning -Able to compare curriculum and learning at home university with host university	-Face-to-face interaction preferable
Yuto	Canada	Language	3 months	-No prior overseas experience		-Time zone difference issues – free Time between morning and evening classes
				-To improve English skills	-Improved English listening skills and communication skills - Higher TOEIC score	-Technical problems -Anxiety at first
				-Interested in the online format of the program	-Cooperation with other international students -Participated in Student Life Club	-Not really disconnected from Japan – still working part time
					-Time management	-Many assignments
Sarina	Canada	Language	3 months	-Interested in other cultures	-Improved language skills	-Unfamiliar with technology and online learning
				Wanted to study English in Canada	-improved TOEIC score	-Isolation at home, slightly depressed
					-Resilience -Self-confidence	-Hardly interacted with the other international students outside the class -Felt frustrated at not being able to participate in person
Taka	Taiwan	Exchange	3 months	-Wanted to challenge himself	-International trade, marketing, information technology and Taiwanese culture	-Technical problems
				-To broaden his knowledge -To learn about the implication of information in business	-Team work and leadership -Improved language skills -Learned Chinese	(internet connection, online learning software)
Rina	Canada	Language	3 months	-To take advantage of studying at a university abroad	-Renewed understanding of Japanese culture	-Lifestyle changes due to time zone difference
				-Length of program	-Improved English pronunciation	-Stressful (miscommunication)
				-To gain exposure to authentic English	-Improved reading comprehension	
				-To gain fluency in English for the future job (English teacher)	-Improved communication skills -Ability to share what she learned with the class	
Masa	Canada	Language	3 months	-Wanted to experience the culture and atmosphere of an English-speaking country	-Learned to communicate in English with people from various cultural backgrounds	-Difficult level
					-Positivity & self-confidence	-Hesitation to speak in class -Frustration at inability to participate in person
					-Learned to be proactive	-Difficult to experience a culture online

Table 1. Student reports of virtual study abroad programs 2020-2021*

* Students’ names were changed to protect their privacy.

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THE ROLE OF THE HOUSEHOLD SOCIETY “STATIVELE” FROM BOTOSANI COUNTY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY

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***Abstract:** The survival to this day of some traditional processes and techniques in the domestic industry is an illustration of the conservatism of the local peasants, a proof that these procedures and techniques were related to the identity of the nation that used and cherished them. They illustrated, along with other aspects of traditional life, a way of existence circumscribed to the natural and cultural environment in which God intended to live the Romanian nation. Such societies, such as the one in Botosani, were on the verge of extinction, becoming with time only a memory.*

***Keywords:** domestic industry, traditions, textiles, crafts, school.*

In this article we tried to present the main areas in which the domestic industry has consolidated and specialized, providing goods and services needed to local communities.

By domestic textile industry is meant the activity carried out in the household, with relatively simple tools, having as object the production of products intended mostly for their own needs¹.

At the end of the 17th century and in the first half of the 18th century, the culture of technical plants, namely flax and hemp, (which although they were known on Romanian territory since ancient times), experienced only a modest development in the Romanian country and a little more intense in Moldova. In Transylvania, however, it is given greater attention, exporting to other Romanian territories fabrics and garments at prices without competition.

In the conditions of the social and economic development of the Romanian people, in the feudal and capitalist ages, when the peasant

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¹ Gheorghe Bulgăr, Dobridor Gheorghe Constantinescu, *Dictionary of Archaisms and regionalisms*, 2000, Bucharest, Saeculum Visual Publishing House, p. 36.

household generally had a low purchasing power, the objects made and perfected by those who used them were quite numerous.

Both the rural and urban populations needed food and clothing, necessities of life that every people had to provide for themselves by their own means. These requirements were met by processing of vegetable textile fibers obtained by processing flax, hemp and cotton. Raw material was the most important chapter of the country's import, with raw cotton found in countries such as America, Egypt, Turkey or India. The textile products made from these materials were hemp yarn and thread, flax and cotton, sacks, sisal, twine and various manufactured. Of all these, cotton yarn accounted for 50% of total imports, followed by 20%² of gross cotton. By developing flax and hemp crops and processing them systematically, they will largely replace cotton that was either alone or blended as needed.

The woven cloth of cotton warp, mechanically spun and hemp weave, toiled by the village, gave that specific peasant cloth, beautiful and durable, resistant to the labors of the field³. Cotton culture was quite important and represents a main stage in the economic development of the country, because its culture will be one of the main agricultural products of the country. The cotton fiber harvested in our country was quite long, durable, silky elastic and of a clean white color, which met the standards of mechanical torches that were found in our country.

On average, a peasant household needed an annual quantity of 40-45 kg of flax or hemp fiber, for clothing, bags, ropes, etc. this amount of fiber could be produced on a cultivated area of 400-500 square meters. Just as the villager had to produce for himself what was necessary for food, so he had to do for clothing. It was necessary for every land grower (large or small) to produce his own flax or hemp, to melt them in the nearby pond or river, or by association to fit or to stop a natural water drain or extraction. Then the molting, combing, and torso with the traditional hand or wheel will give use to the long days of winter, as well as those in which the labor of the field gave respite⁴. No occupation was more suitable for the domestic industry than textile processing. This required the improvement and distribution of tools for the domestic industry, namely the wheel-and-two-roller wheel, the classic wheel for cleaning the hair, the

² *Ibidem*, p. 131

³ Muscel Iosif Ionescu, *Textile fibers at the end of the millennium*, 1990, Bucharest, Technical Publishing House, p. 210.

⁴ Emilia Paveel, *Bark and popular fabrics*, 1989, Bucharest, Technical Publishing House, p. 87.

manufacture of the comb, etc. The fibers, not being well-elementarized for combing, could not give a good record of being spun thin and easily. To a large extent this was one of the reasons that led some housewives to depart from the tradition of purring. All these phases of the domestic textile industry could be perfected by using the energy from the village mill, which in time was intended to replace the labor of the arms largely with the power of the water drops from the mill, or the power of the explosion engines.

Throughout the traditional material life of our people, these objects were used alongside handicrafts, produced by the consumer himself, as well as those produced by the craftsman. The craft products had to correspond not only to the needs, but also to the taste, views, customs of the population in each area.

The craft industry moves toward the village, but also toward fairs or small towns. This activity gradually diversified through the development of specific services (such as tailors, fur coats, or boots).

The domestic industry also played a cultural role, namely to export, based on the mastery of artisans, products specific to the local area. Thus, the production of linen, carpets, ii, national costumes, handmade carpets, handicrafts, small furniture and other products specific to Romanian folk traditions and customs were appreciated not only in the country but also abroad.

A peculiarity of the household industry activity is that the specifics of the vocational or high school have achieved positive results in terms of training teachers but also providing people with an inclination toward craft activity, from this point of view it is a net superior element to the other sectors of cooperation in our country⁵.

The domestic industry in the Romanians has occupied a prominent place in the Romanian peasant's economy. It partially maintained its significance by practicing it in those areas where the tradition of wearing the traditional folk port and arranging the interior of the house with traditional pieces was still preserved.

Household objects have been splendid artistic achievements, being made with a special craftsmanship from the industrious hand of the Romanian woman, from under the knife of the one who skillfully and painstakingly shrimps the wood or from the peasant's loom.

⁵ The County Service of the National Archives, *Prefecture Botosani Fund*, ds.18/1926, f. 32.

In the village environment, domestic industry remained predominant mainly for linen, hemp, cotton, or for the production of cloth, carpets and rugs, peasant clothing, or tanned skins⁶. The penetration and expansion of factory production led to the restriction of the other two manufacturing areas with the domestic and the handicraft sectors, respectively. It was present mainly in rural areas, by processing plant fibers and wool, but also to cover local needs (households, fairs, armaroas), using only own resources.

In the traditional archaic village, among the objects for interior and exterior a special interest were the tableware woven in war, table-cloths with cleft, wipes woven in war, the faces of pillows and dricars, woven linen earrings, etc.

In addition to the canvas needed by the villagers and the braids for agriculture, household industry and some fiber needs for state authorities (such as the army, C.F.R., post office or city needs) could be met. These textile products could only be procured by industrial means, for only in this way could one obtain fine, good and homogeneous twisted fibers, much more durable after use.

For the development of domestic industry, the Ministry of Agriculture procured machinery for melting and processing hemp and flax, encouraged and subsidized cooperative torso and weaving workshops, set up systematic regional smellders, organized propaganda of the culture and processing of raw materials by publishing and spreading brochures, maps, magazines technical and practical instructions, collaboration with growers, cooperatives, or enterprises aimed at textile plant processing. For the valorisation of the products were organized fairs or scholarships for the sale of flax, hemp, ginning cotton or natural silk.

Domestic industry can be considered in us as an occupation of women alone, the man not taking part, except with rare exceptions to certain operations of transformation of raw material through finished product. The basic raw materials used in the manufacture of various pieces of clothing, or for the interior of the houses, were wool, goat hair, hemp, flax, borangic or cotton.

In the research of the household industry in Botosani County, it has experienced a remarkable development due to the geographical and

⁶ Tudor Pamfile, *The Romanian textile household industry: Its past and its present state. Contributions of folk art and technique*, 1910, Bucharest, Co-operative Typography Publishing House, p. 25.

social-economic conditions specific to the area but also the early development of some exchange relations with the market. Textile products were mostly made within the household and were intended to meet the needs of the household and family members.

On May 14, 1909, a Romanian domestic industry company known as *Stativale*⁷ was founded in Botosani for the first time. The purpose of this company was to develop, capitalize and market all domestic products of Romanian origin, both locally and nationally.

The main aim of society was the regeneration of domestic occupations where they had disappeared, as well as the undefiled preservation of ancestral traditions, with the main purpose of training young housewives. This society prevented as much as it could the migration of villagers to the cities, and sought to reach the idea that all the food, but also some of the clothes or ornaments of the Romanian house, were the works of the woman, who was considered the mistress of the house.

The society has still pursued the complete education of the Romanian woman of the people, but also of the bourgeoisie, in order to make them good wives, ideal mothers and true patriots.

The main means for pursuing the intended purpose were as follows⁸:

- encouraging and helping all rural and urban households where the ancestral household occupations were practiced, such as: fabrics of bark and sails, linen, hemp and cotton, wool and borangic, things that adorned the Romanian house, but also objects that were used in the ancestral port;
- the use of national fabrics and national art springs in modern garments;
- Preparation of autumn food preserves as well as of the merinds that were on the Romanian table on the occasion of Christmas and Easter holidays;
- supply of craftsmen and housewives directly from the producer (with whom the company had a contract) with raw materials of a textile nature, as well as with food;
- crediting raw materials and facilitating the payment in monthly installments or the sale of more expensive products entrusted to the company.

⁷ *Statutes of Stativale Botosani society*, Botosani, Revive Publishing House, 1909, p. 5.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

This society encouraged and helped in all ways, with the schools of adult women existing in villages and cities participating and contributing to their creation. He set up at the schools of adults, theoretical courses for company, practical works for a modest household, tailoring courses, clothes and peasant clothes, with the purpose of spreading the fabrics and the national embroidery streams, the habit of the villagers with the preparation of ghebs, muzzle, manna, as well as with the decoration of the cojoils with embroidery, applications and fringes of silk or wool according to oltenia, banat and transylvanian models. It aimed to spread books from existing popular libraries, which had subjects that interested housewives and teachers their children, tried to print other subjects of public interest, taking advantage of all the experiences accumulated over time, so as not to lose anything of the traditions and customs of the nation. Even though some of the theories and experiences of housewives were considered primitive and obsolete, in principle they were somewhat cheaper economically, and were otherwise very well put into practice.

Not long after its establishment, the founders of the society printed a brochure, with the consent of Grigore Tzigara Samurcas, the director of the ethnographic museum in the capital, in which the detailed description of the Romanian ancestral port is attempted⁹. The brochure contained tailoring theories, regarding the clothing items from all the lands inhabited by Romanians, such as: skirts, breasts, vests, muzzle, bunds, manines, manna, the balls, the ghoules, the thylines, the wedges, the sardines, the cetavens, the sweet ones, the ipingas, the whirlwinds, the oprets, the forts, the otrepels, quindees, conciurities, geese, maramels/wipes, sludges, cornered rags, son-in-law rags, beatlets, tuelles, scuffles and more.

With the establishment of the Stativele society, other sections of the subsidiary of the society were created, such as the society of Tesetoarea, which was mainly concerned with the spread of sericulture and borangic fabrics, the society of Lady Maria, which supported the national arts, The Red cross society, which cared for the wounded in the war and the sick who were afflicted, having as purpose the moral elevation of the Romanian woman, the elevation of our national dignity and the improvement of the life of the Romanian families in the country and in the Romanian countries subjected to foreigners.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p.7.

The first location of Stativele society was in a school workshop in Botosani. Its role was to learn, refine and process national fabrics and seams, as well as other household occupations in rural households. This school workshop in Botosani was administered according to a special Regulation drawn up by the Board of Directors. The practical works and theoretical courses were carried out according to the analytical curriculum, drawn up by the Ministry of instruction from 1904 and published in the Official Gazette no. 79 of 29 June 1904¹⁰.

The board had recommended that the school workshop be run by a woman, who had been the chairman of the board since the first year of operation. It was designed to collect all gifts and donations received from ministries or other charitable societies in the capital, donations from cultural and public hygiene establishments, as well as aid in money or raw materials from the communes, as well as donations of money or valuables from philanthropic persons.

The financial management of the workshop was completed weekly by the council and monthly by the president, two sensors and the secretaries of the respective committees.

In the school, besides the theoretical classes, there were also some workshops such as: laundry, tailoring, corsets, fashion, flowers workshop, workshop for children's clothing, for national embroidery, for artistic embroidery, workshop for lace, weaving webs and weaving scores and velvety¹¹. The main subjects to be studied in the lower vocational schools for girls were: religion, Romanian, French of choice with German, mathematics (especially accounting), calligraphy and drawing and were included in a special curriculum¹².

Free weaving and household courses were created at the school workshop for the primary classes of girls, especially for the fourth grade, for the pupils of the secondary schools in the locality, but also for the adult women in the city, in order to participate in the domestic services.

At the lower schools of crafts were taught one or two trades from which we remind that in the schools of boys were practiced locksmiths, carpentry, tinikingery, sculpture, ceramics, braid, while girls' schools taught tailoring, ruphery, embroidery or carpet weaving, etc.

¹⁰ *Official Gazette of the Kingdom of Romania* no. 71, of June 29, 1904, p. 3449-3454.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² *Ibidem*, pag. 3444.

In the preparatory course for the first and second classes, all sorts of sewing courses were carried out by the teachers or foremen that served in tailoring (such as corsets, tilters, circles, simple lampshades on etamine, peasant cloth and thick pottage, where national drawings were scored in crosses, bias, flyers and buffers). These activities mainly involved studying the sewing machine as well as its operation, but also how to make stitches by taking measures, explaining and forming patterns, and showing how to cut and make objects made by hand or machine. According to the master's teachings, the students had to tailor the patterns in muslin, which they tried on the body or on the mannequin, after which the exact measures were taken.

For the ladies and ladies from the Stativale society, within the school workshop, a course of drawing and painting (Romanian folk art) was created for them, with applications for wood, leather decoration, plastic molds, works in verni-martin, scandinavian wood sculpture, metal decoration, sculpted horn, decoration of fabrics, as well as other light artistic occupations that a woman could perform, a course that will later be taken over by the "Lady Maria society"¹³. Within the society was created a course of hygiene and folk medicine under the auspices of the "Red cross society", with practical works of childbearing carried out at the "Cradle society" (founded for children under 4 years).

Evening classes, readings and advice were also established on topics useful for the duties of women in general and housewives in particular.

At the end of the school graduation, the students were given a loom, a small library, useful tools for a simple kitchen (a cooking machine with hob, saucepans and pots, not to prepare and prepare food) as well as a sum of money for graduates to be able to purchase other objects necessary for a modest house, and supporting documents for the granted amounts are presented. Girls from villages who graduated from the workshop were paid maintenance for 2-3 years while they were housed in the course.

The Board of Directors delegated a member of the committees¹⁴ of the branches of the communes to crown the graduate of the workshop who was getting married, provided that the dress of the bride and groom was national, and the wedding was done according to the ancestral custom, and the dances were only national.

¹³ *Statutes of the Statifs Botosani Society*, p.13.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

In the name of the society Stativale the firstborn he will be baptized and will be given a notebook of the people's bank of the commune with a sum of money for the purpose of increase and fruition.

Company management committed that all household products should be sold at the most advantageous price for amateurs, but also with a profit for producers. Thus organize an exhibition in the autumn of each year, in the capital of the county or in another city or town in the county, with the household products of the school workshop. On this occasion, encouragement prizes were awarded for esthetic, durable works as well as those that better preserved the seal of antiquity and tradition.

On the occasion of the exhibition¹⁵, which coincided with the end of the harvest of the fruits of the field, married couples were invited to this activity, who took part in certain popular celebrations with folk dances and songs, on this occasion, prizes were distributed to those who had more beautiful peasant costumes and to those who knew how to play the national dances better.

The management of the company published at the end of the year a magazine containing the situation of the works carried out, as well as useful advice for the peasant households. She also opened a bazaar store in the capital of the county, for the sale of household products and household agriculture. The selected products were paid for at the presentation, and the most important ones were paid for a refund, after the price was agreed.

The first social year of the company was considered to be the one that started on the day of voting the statutes, namely the date of the establishment of the company and ended the following year, on one of the days of May when the general meeting was also convened.

The main funds of the Stativale society were made up of donations and linked, in compliance with the will provisions; from subsidies from the state through the Ministries of industry and trade and the Ministry of public instruction; from registration fees, contributions of active members and founding members; money gifts paid on the spot or by gradual payment; from the benefits of sales, commissions, fees charged at exhibitions and celebrations organized by the company during the year.

After the full organization the society created a reserve fund called the national fund for the great needs of the nation. This fund was used to pay the fines to which Romanian fighters were sentenced by foreign courts, to

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p.15.

grant subsidies to Romanian schools to purchase technical means for the proper functioning of ambulances belonging to the Red cross society in case of war, to provide food for poor peasants in difficult agricultural years, in case of floods or fires, to create pensions for the servants of society who, because of old age or illness, have left the service.

The society was under the protection of the High Metropolitan of Moldova, appointed honorary president, and the Minister of industry and Trade and the Minister of public instruction were appointed honorary vice-presidents.

The prefect of Botosani County was proclaimed president, and the proclamations were made nominally for the entire period of their endorsement on these positions, at each general meeting each year. The vice-presidents were proclaimed mayor of Botosani and commander of the Botoșani division, who could replace the president in case of his absence¹⁶.

The company was made up of founding members, of Romanian origin, who gave the company at least 100 lei or monthly installments of at least 5 lei. Then followed the active members, also of Romanian origin, who paid an annual fee of 6, 12 or 24 lei, amounts payable in four installments, each quarter, at which time they were issued a receipt from a royal register. The founding members who wanted to be active members could do so, only if they paid a fee.

The following persons were proclaimed members of society and exempt from contributions: Teachers, teachers, teachers, drawing artists, artists in music and dance painting, masters in activity or retirement, and any educators of any degree and from any public or private school, as well as priests, provided they are of Romanian origin. The members of the company took part in the vote in the general meeting, but could not be part of the committees or the board of directors, except those corporate members who were either founders or active members.

Teachers and priests in rural communes could be considered founding members if they paid once and for all a monthly fee of one leu in the first year of the creation of their commune branch.

Corresponding members in the country or abroad were exempt from the levy, while teachers and priests in the country paid one leu for enrollment, and those in the cities paid only 50 money.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p.16.

The honorable committee of the Stativele society was composed of all the deputies and senators of Botosani and were proclaimed nominally by the annual general assembly.

The committee of honor included the wife of the prefect of the mayor of the city, the wives of the deputies and senators of Botosani, the wife of the army general, the wives of the army colonels, as well as their sons and major daughters. These people on the honor committee were present at all the celebrations organized by the society.

The number of committees will increase according to the needs of the specializations of the different branches of household products and three sections will appear.

The main duties of the section committees were¹⁷:

- The first Section Committee took care first of the sericulture and then of all branches of domestic agriculture, as well as of the weaving and household works attached to the school workshop in Botosani city;
- Section II Committee took care of the Romanian weaving and the preservation of the treasures of national art and in other branches besides the textile industry of any kind;
- Section III Committee was responsible for preparing romanian women for raising children and for caring for the sick and the wounded. The main concern of this section was the creation of a school of infirmary of the Red cross at the monastery of nuns Agafton, for which it was requested the envoement of his Eminence to the Metropolitan of Moldova, As well as that of the Ministry of instruction asking for their approval in order to allow nuns to train for the care of the wounded and sick¹⁸.

Four censors were also appointed for the control of the monthly financial management (for the School workshop) and annual financial management (for the accounting check of the Stativele society). The censors were appointed in the General Assembly and could be the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, the director of the branch of the national Bank, the secretary of the craftsmen Corporation and the financial administrator of Botosani County.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p.17.

¹⁸ Sjanbt, *Fund The prefecture of Botosani*, ds.14/1929, f.32.

Once a month the President of the Council convenes the President, two censors, the President and the Secretary-General of a section to report on the work done and to report on the monthly financial management at the school workshop. All these monthly financial statements were recorded in the minutes, after which they were sewn into a special file.

The weaving masters could be only of Romanian origin, and the masters and the heads of works could be at first of a different nationality, than the Romanian one. In the first year the weaving masters were paid monthly, and the masters were paid once before the Easter holidays and the second time before the feast of Saint Dumitru. In the second year the commitments for the masters were made with an annual contract, thus providing for the monthly payment.

Every state official was cut off 10% of his salary, a percentage for the national Fund. Thus, sections and subsidiaries of Stativale society were created in each rural commune in Botosani County.

The active members of the branches were all Romanian villagers and villagers, who paid 2, 4 or 6 lei annually, in four installments at the beginning of each quarter. Contributions could also be paid in textile or other domestic products. These products were sent to the subsidiaries of the Management Board, if there were no workshops of the company's subsidiaries in the respective municipalities. Villagers who did sericulture, who grew hemp or flax, or who made products from these fibers were awarded the annual exhibitions.

The aid applications of the villagers or villages of Romanian nationality from the communal branches were communicated one month before the general meeting was convened so that they could be studied and approved by the central administration board, in order to be proposed for approval.

If the company dissolves, its capital was divided equally to the societies of Tesătoarea, Miss Maria and the Red Cross in Bucharest, apart from the national Fund that was paid to the House of the cultural League in Botosani or Bucharest.

As a conclusion, we can say that Romania has enough material resources, and the domestic industry system has enough financial resources for this structural activity to become increasingly important in the national economic activity.

The textile household industry in Botosani appears as a characteristic element of material culture. The development of industry in this region and the establishment of exchange relations with some twinned States

have accelerated the natural process of transformation of traditional forms of production.

Correlated with the ethnography research, the research of the textile household industry in Botosani offers the possibility of more in-depth knowledge of some aspects of the material culture of the Romanian people.

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PROMOTING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE AMONG STUDENTS: RESPONDING TO PANDEMIC CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS

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***Abstract:** The article deals with the problem of promoting a healthy lifestyle among youth, which is very relevant for present-day society and requires a comprehensive study. An increasingly important role in a healthy lifestyle promotion is played by the online media, which influences young people's behavior model and building a system of life values. The purpose of the study is to determine whether the content of the website of a particular university contains elements of promoting a healthy lifestyle among students. Empirical research was conducted using content analysis as a method, which suggests text quantification with the subsequent interpretation of the results. We used a complete sampling of documents, articles, and reports posted on the website of the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine in 2021. The analysis confirmed the presence of promoting healthy lifestyle elements and the quantification identified the points of targeted communication impact on the audience – these are the categories "Physical activity" (54% of the total number of documents related to health), "Health control" (21%), and "Rational nutrition" (10%).*

***Keywords:** healthy lifestyle, promotion, online media, content analysis, university website, youth audience.*

Introduction

At the present stage, in conditions caused by additional physical and psycho-emotional stress due to pandemics and other global risks the problem of maintaining health is particularly acute. The physical and mental well-being status of young people is of particular concern. According to research, almost 80% of young people in Ukraine have health problems, and the number of young people with risky behaviour is growing. There are many objective reasons for this, among which researchers point out a lack of awareness of health risks, lack of health priorities and motivations, aggressive social environment, etc. Despite the challenges, attitudes on understanding health as human capital in society

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are insufficiently formed, the mass media continue to promote harmful habits, and little attention is paid to harmonious personal development.

An increasingly important role in promoting a healthy lifestyle is played by the media, which influence young people's behaviour, decision-making, and building a system of life values. According to a survey among young people on the mass media influence on lifestyle, 59% of respondents believe that the promotion of a healthy lifestyle through the media is possible, 25% – express doubts about this possibility, and 16% – categorically reject it. 84% of respondents believe that the reason for the inability to promote a healthy lifestyle through the media is a lack of interest and inconsistency of information that is not able to attract the attention of young people. Research shows that in the opinion of modern youth, in a third of cases, the media can influence the formation of a healthy lifestyle. The positive influence of the media, according to the survey, outweighs the negative¹.

It is worth noting that in recent decades the effectiveness of the influence of certain types of media on young people has changed. If according to a 2001 research², TV (60%) ranked first, radio broadcasting (23%) ranked second, information booklets and leaflets (17%) – thirds, but periodic press (non-specialized newspapers and magazines), social advertising, and the Internet (4%) were in the last position in the ranking of media outlets where young people take information on healthy lifestyles, then according to recent research the most influential media of disseminating information about healthy lifestyles for young people are the Internet (29%), TV (26%)) and social advertising (26%)³.

So, today young people get information about health from mostly online sources. Modern online media, as a component of mass culture, easily transcends borders, connecting the most remote corners into a single network. It is through the mass media that certain values, worldview stereotypes and patterns of behavior are promoted among

¹ N.P. Ieremenko, *Features of influence of different factors on forming of healthy way of life of student youth*, Bulletin of the Chernihiv National Pedagogical University named after Taras Shevchenko, 143, 2017, p. 269.

² O. Yaremenko [Ed.], *The influence of the media and other sources on the formation of a healthy lifestyle of children and youth*. Kyiv: UISD, 2000. Retrieved from: <http://www.health.gov.ua/health.nsf/441242b97-e1ad79cc125678d003fbb2/8a78e33492dd9b5ec-22569fa002f2a01?OpenDocument>.

³ N.P. Ieremenko, *cited article*, p. 271.

people, as a result of which common tastes and forms of “cultural consumption” are spread among different segments of the population⁴.

The role of online media in promoting healthy lifestyle

Today, theoretical and practical aspects of the problem of healthy life promotion in media are studied by L. Abrams, J. Allegrante, K. Angus, L. Bauld, K. Walsh-Childers, R. Gold, S. W. Katikireddy, M. Campbell, T. Langley, S. Lewis, M. Stead, J. Thomas, K. Hinds, S. Hilton, B. Young, and many others. Research is being developed in several areas, the most relevant of which are: psychological, sociological, and communicative aspects of the impact of media content on human health and behaviour, specific of online media impact on healthy lifestyles, methods and mechanisms of social media influence on beliefs and behaviour youth, the effects of peer-to-peer communication and health promotion, digital health, case studies of the impact of the media on the formation of a healthy lifestyle in the audience of specific regions, social groups, the effectiveness of media influence of healthy lifestyles, etc. However, the media sphere is developing rapidly, as is the audience that consumes content that needs new research in this area.

To advantages of online media, including online publications, individual author projects, blogs, online radio and online TV, news aggregators, digests, etc. researchers consider multimedia, interactivity, mass reporting, hypertextuality, the availability of electronic archives (a quick search for the information) and some others.

Researchers note that a person, being in the information field from an early age, cannot live without information, and perceiving it through a large number of channels, develops and shapes their own behavior. Mass media create a certain information world in which a person builds and forms a worldview about life, lifestyle, types of behavior, etc.⁵

Online media have a great potential to influence the formation healthy lifestyle, both purely informative and through the demonstration of practical examples of this lifestyle.

The spread of online media has created a new situation for the formation of personal needs. If earlier such formation was carried out based on real living conditions and, as a rule, needs were slightly ahead of opportunities for their realization, now this process has undergone

⁴ O. Yaremenko, *cited article*, p. 23.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

significant changes. Online media reveals the attractiveness of different lifestyles, as a result, a person may develop needs that do not correspond to the possibilities of meeting them.

It is the online media that open up a new understanding of how young people can use technology to expand their knowledge, fostering their freedom and development. In fact, online media is a kind of system of non-formal education and enlightenment of various segments of the population.

The young audience want to see in the media more information about the harmful effects of bad habits – 33%, the impact of improper lifestyle on disease – 21%, premature aging – 10%, the positive effects and benefits of exercise – 23% and information about the balanced diet – 13%⁶.

At the same time, a systematic review of research on electronic media influence on a healthy lifestyle shows that they have an ambiguous effect on diet, exercise, and sexual activities. Gaidhane et al. note, that exposure to electronic media may be beneficial as well as harmful and emphasize:

There is a need to find methods to improve the role of media among adolescents, taking benefit of their desirable qualities, and minimalizing their undesirable ones... Although the current evidence suggests that electronic media has mixed effects, we provide recommendations for clinicians, policymakers, and educators in partnering with caregivers and youth to support electronic media use that promotes positive outcomes in these areas⁷.

Most members of younger audience spend a lot of time on social media. The rapid development of social media, which includes such formats of individual communication as social networks and microblogs, dictates the need for their more active involvement in promoting a healthy lifestyle. Today, social media are markers of the attitude of target audiences to various changes in the public sphere, as well as triggers for the formation of interest in social innovations and trends. Moreover, members of the social network are connected informally, without obligations. There are many various online communities of interest,

⁶ N.P. Ieremenko, *cited article*, p. 272.

⁷ A.M. Gaidhane, A. Sinha, M.N., Khatib, P. Simkhada, P.B. Behere, D. Saxena. & Z.Q. Syed, *A Systematic Review on Effect of Electronic Media on Diet, Exercise, and Sexual Activity among Adolescents*, Indian Journal of Community Medicine, 43 (Suppl 1), 2018, p. 56. DOI: 10.4103/ijcm.IJCM_143_18

including a healthy lifestyle. The average number of participants in the largest English-speaking communities is 3,418 800. The Health Digest community has a record number of members – 8,769 627 (51.3%), Health – 4,676 880 (20%), Daily Health Tips – 2,437 488 (14.3%), Everyday Health – 1,138 667 (6.7%), Health Central – 71,343 (0.4%)⁸.

A study conducted by M. Plaisime et al. showed that the “social media’s dynamic ability to engage and maintain large audiences helps create an incredible potential to increase knowledge and awareness and promote health behavior change related to fitness and physical activity”⁹. Respondents (young people) mentioned social networks as a means to “increasing awareness”, “getting the word out”, “promote advocacy”, “rallying people together for a cause”, and among the methods that can be used to promote health on social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) named “posting images”, “facts”, “outcomes you can see”, “sharing stories and resources” and “info graphics”.

Chen & Wang concluded that social media has been widely used for health-related purposes, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, scientists have pointed out that “research gaps exist regarding advancing strategic use of social media based on audience segmentation, evaluating the impact of social media in health interventions, understanding the impact of health identity development, and addressing privacy concerns”¹⁰.

Scientists emphasize that mass media have a dualistic character regarding the problem of spreading harmful habits. On the one hand, the media and advertising promote attitudes that demonstrate the various substances use as a sign of modern lifestyle. On the other hand, mass media are the most effective tool of influencing the prevention of further development of drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse¹¹.

⁸ A. Sophronia & B. Sophronia, *Role of social networks in promoting healthy lifestyle*, International Research Journal, 2(80), 2019. DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.23670/IRJ.2019.80.2.017>.

⁹ M. Plaisime, C. Robertson-James, L. Mejia, A. Núñez, J. Wolf & S. Reels, *Social Media and Teens: A Needs Assessment Exploring the Potential Role of Social Media in Promoting Health*. Social Media and Society, 2020. DOI:10.1177/2056305119886025

¹⁰ Chen Junhan, Wang Yuan, *Social Media Use for Health Purposes: Systematic Review*. Journal of Medical Internet Research, Vol. 23, Issue 5, 2021, DOI: 10.2196/17917

¹¹ S.D. Maksymenko (Ed.), *Psychological substantiation of measures to promote psychohygienic education and healthy lifestyles among modern youth*. Kyiv: IAA, 2012, p. 111.

However, not all information in online media is reliable. For example, advertising aims to increase revenue from the sale of goods, so often highlights only best qualities and hides the shortcomings. Mass culture, due to the influence of the Internet, mostly causes the destruction of existing norms of behavior and consumption of established ideas and orientations, replacing them with new myths and fetishes. Appeal to prestige stimulates the development of envy, pride, the spirit of rivalry, appeal to fear increases anxiety, appeal to sexuality leads to spreading immorality¹².

Not all authors who write about a healthy lifestyle in the online media are competent in this topic. And the mass character of some erroneous judgments forces young people to accept them as the truth. Thanks to social networks, such phenomena as detox, workout, veganism and raw food diet, crossfit, vaping, etc. have become popular. Looking at bright photos and reading emotional texts, young people mistakenly believe that extreme measures should be taken to quickly achieve the results shown by idols.

Recent research in the United States has shown that the use of social media is associated with decreases in physical and mental well-being. "In addition, social media sites have been implicated in facilitating drug sales that have fuelled the opioid epidemic, promoting thin body style ideals and the anorexic communities to support them, and spreading misinformation about vaccines and other established public health practices"¹³.

There is also a distortion of motivation to follow a healthy lifestyle only as a fashion, based on a demonstrative desire to imitate successful social groups and in any manner identify with them. In addition, a person long staying in virtual reality has the impression that he is directly involved in events, rather than passively staying away and just watching other people's successes. Often, online media users obtain information on a variety of topics from sources that contain contradictory, inconsistent, and unsystematic information that can cause cognitive dissonance. This highlights the need to develop health literacy¹⁴.

¹² O. Yaremenko, *cited article*, p. 43.

¹³ L.C. Abrams, R.S. Gold & J.P. Allegrante, *Promoting Health on Social Media: The Way Forward*. Health Education & Behavior, 46 (2 suppl.), 2019, p. 9-11. DOI:10.1177/1090198119879096

¹⁴ E. Truman, M. Bischoff, Ch. Elliott, Which literacy for health promotion: health, food, nutrition or media? *Health Promotion International*. 2020. Vol. 35(2). P. 432-444. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daz007>

The study of theoretical aspects of the problem allowed us to formulate the common principles of promoting a healthy lifestyle in online media: objectivity, reliability, availability, scientific character, systematicity, complexity, practicality, multimedia¹⁵.

Methodology and Research questions

For the empirical research we chose content analysis as a method, which suggests text quantification with subsequent interpretation of the results. Luo states:

Content analysis can be used to quantify the occurrence of certain words, phrases, subjects or concepts in a set texts. It has various possible goals:

- finding correlations and patterns in how concepts are communicated;
- understanding the intentions of an individual, group or institution;
- identifying propaganda and bias in communication;
- revealing differences in communication in different contexts;
- analysing the consequences of communication content, such as the flow of information or audience responses¹⁶.

Content analysis is often used in research on the focus, value characteristics, effectiveness and other aspects of the functioning of the media. This method is used for a large volume of unsystematised array of information, it is effective when the categories important for the purposes of the study are characterized by a certain frequency of appearance in the documents, materials.

The empirical research was conducted during 2021 at the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine (NULES) and included the following stages:

1. Task statement and research questions setting.
2. Choice of type of research design.

¹⁵ O. Balalaieva, *Analysis of theoretical and methodological approaches to design of electronic textbooks for students of higher agricultural educational institutions*. Information Technologies and Learning Tools. 2017. Vol. 59, Issue 3, p. 39-48.

¹⁶ Amy Luo, *Content Analysis. A step-by-step Guide with Examples*. Retrieved from: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/content-analysis/>

3. Study of documents (texts, pictures, videos):
 - 3.1. Defining an array of information.
 - 3.2. Sampling design.
 - 3.3. Development of a system of categories.
 - 3.4. Definition of units of analysis and units of account.
 - 3.5. Data collection and analysis.
4. Data processing and interpretation.

The purpose of the study is to determine whether the content of the website of a particular university contains elements of promoting a healthy lifestyle among students. So, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

Question 1 (Q1): Does the content of the official university website promote a healthy lifestyle among students?

Question 2 (Q2): If it does what are the points of target impact on the audience?

Question 3 (Q3): If it does, what are the basic promoting methods and techniques?

Research design and Data collection

Since the direct object of content analysis is the flow of information, there are limitations in the study: we choose for the analysis materials are not the whole site, but the rubric “News”¹⁷, which contains relevant information and is constantly updated. According to the procedure, the sampling in the study of large data sets is random. The minimum sample size in media research is 200-600 units.

Determining the time interval is also important for content analysis. In this study, we use a complete sampling of materials posted in the “News” section of the NULES website during one whole calendar year – from January 1 to December 31, 2021. The complete sample size is 2573.

An extremely important stage is the development of a system of categories of content analysis – key concepts that reflect a certain aspect of the research object. Their combination forms a conceptual scheme of content analysis¹⁸. Categories of analysis should be clearly defined,

¹⁷ National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine. Retrieved from: <https://nubip.edu.ua/>

¹⁸ V.F. Ivanov, & N.V. Kostenko, *Content analysis* in Great Ukrainian encyclopedia. 2018. Retrieved from: <https://vue.gov.ua/Kontent-analiz>.

comprehensive, mutually exclusive, objective and independent, and can be divided into smaller units – subcategories.

Defining categories depends on the objectives of the study. Since the study focuses on the problem of healthy lifestyle promotion, eight categories have been selected to correlate with the basic components of the concept of “healthy lifestyle”:

1. Physical activity (subcategories: exercise, fitness, sports, active recreation, play, elements of various health systems, hardening, recreation, etc.).

2. Rational nutrition (subcategories: balanced diet, quality of food, food processing methods, culture of consumption, diet, modern food trends, etc.).

3. Rejection of bad habits (subcategories: smoking, drug addiction, alcoholism, substance abuse).

4. Personal hygiene (the category includes norms, rules and recommendations for self-care, that helps to maintain and promote health).

5. Mental hygiene and psychological prophylaxis (the category includes a system of scientific knowledge and practical measures aimed at maintaining mental health).

6. Favourable living conditions (the state of the living environment, in which there is no harmful effects of its factors on human health and there are opportunities to ensure normal and restore impaired functions of organism. Subcategories: living conditions, quality of housing, conditions for passive and active recreation, the level of mental and physical safety in the livelihood area, appropriate conditions for study and work).

7. Safe sexual behaviour (subcategories: hygiene of sexual behaviour, prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, sexual culture).

8. Health control (subcategories: attentive and conscious attitude to health, health literacy, medical and social activity, awareness of the epidemiological situation in the country, potential risks, new methods of prevention and treatment of diseases, etc.).

An important stage of research is to determine the units of analysis that should be studied, looking for references to semantic categories or their verbally/visually expressed features. Units of analysis should have identifiable indicators, be recurrent, and identifiable features that

determine their quality, as well as be convenient for measurement, calculation and comparison, i.e. subject to formalization¹⁹.

Scholars believe that the units of analysis can be words, phrases, terms, topics, concepts, parts of the text, judgments and more. For this study, the unit of analysis is news article, that has important and relevant information related to a certain areas of university life, other institutions, society as a whole or some social groups. Such messages contain not only textual, but also graphic and combined information (photos, pictures, audio).

According to the procedure, besides unit of analysis, it is also necessary to determine the unit of account – a quantitative measure of the relations between textual and non-textual phenomena. Units of account may or may not match the units of analysis. In the first case, the analysis procedure is carried out on the basis of calculating the frequency of mention of the unit, in the latter – the researcher offers his own system of units of account. Common approaches to determining the units of account in content analysis are as follows: counting system “time-space”; the appearance of a category or the presence of features in the text or flow of information; the frequency of occurrence of the category in the information flow or separate document²⁰. In this study, the units of account correspond to the units of analysis, so the procedure is to count the category frequency of occurrence in the information flow.

Data analysis and research findings

The next stage involves quantification of the elements of analysis. During quantification, the points of targeted communication impact on the audience are identified. Quantitative values that characterize a category are crucial for drawing conclusions, in this study it is the frequency of occurrence of the category.

During the study, 2573 units obtained by the method of complete sampling were analysed. The content analysis found that the number of mentions related to a healthy lifestyle is 208, which is 8.1% of the total number of messages. The table 1 shows frequency of categories of healthy lifestyle.

¹⁹ N.V. Kostenko & V.F. Ivanov, *Content analysis experience: Models and practices*. Kyiv: Tsentr vilnoi presy. 2003.

²⁰ V.F. Ivanov & N.V. Kostenko, *Content analysis in Great Ukrainian encyclopedia*. 2018. Retrieved from: <https://vue.gov.ua/Kontent-analiz>.

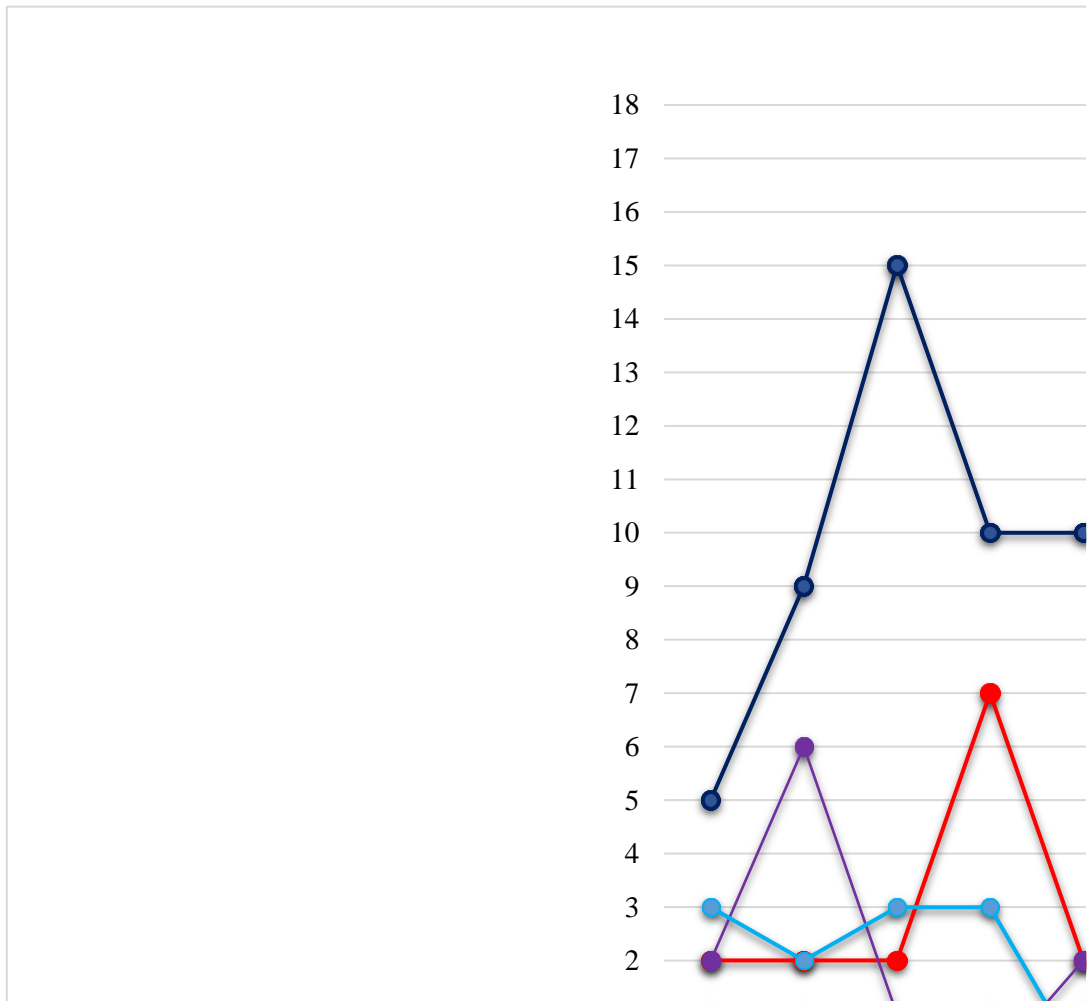
Table 1.
Frequency of categories of healthy lifestyle on the official web-site of NULES

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Physical activity	113	54%
Health control	44	21%
Rational nutrition	20	10%
Favourable living conditions	15	7%
Mental hygiene and psychological prophylaxis	9	4%
Rejection of bad habits	3	2%
Personal hygiene	2	1%
Safe sexual behaviour	2	1%
Total	208	100%

Thus, more than half of the mentions of a healthy lifestyle accounts for the category of “Physical activity” – reports on sports competitions of various levels, both at university and outside, personal achievements, leisure activities, dynamic games and outdoor activities, elements of various health systems, invitations to sport sections etc. 21% fall into the category that reflects health control. This high percentage is partly due to the epidemiological situation in Ukraine during 2021, a broad vaccination campaign, the need to comply with preventive sanitary and hygienic regimes and anti-epidemiological norms. Another 10% fall into the category of “Rational nutrition”, mostly reports on the quality and safety of food, their processing, specific rules of balanced diet, current trends in consumption. The other categories did not pass the 10% barrier. The lowest number of reports (1% each) concerned “Personal hygiene” and “Safe sexual behaviour”.

As for the regularity of news on the topic of healthy living, it is also heterogeneous, due to the mode of functioning of the university as an educational institution, so the dynamics of publications varies according to academic year, not calendar one (the smallest number of publications is during the summer holidays: July-August). The dynamics of the frequency of articles related healthy lifestyle in all categories during the year is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Dynamics of frequency of healthy lifestyle categories on the official website of NULES during 2021



Conclusions. Content analysis of the NULES of Ukraine website confirmed the relevance of the problem of promoting a healthy lifestyle.

The study led to the following conclusions:

(Q1) The content of the university website has elements of promoting a healthy lifestyle among students.

(Q2) The quantification identified the points of targeted communication impact on the audience – these are the categories “Physical activity” (54% of the total number of messages related to health), “Health control” (21%), and “Rational nutrition” (10%).

(Q3) The most common methods of promoting a healthy lifestyle in online media are explanatory and illustrative. The following techniques of promoting a healthy lifestyle are identified: dissemination of theoretical and factual information on physical activity, balanced diet, personal hygiene, etc.; regular and systematic messages, which contribute to the understanding of information about an active lifestyle as a behavioural norm; formation of positive motivation for sports, healthy nutrition through personal examples, demonstration of success, achievements, ambitions and satisfaction. A powerful promotion technique is the visualization of content; photos and videos emphasize the documentary, add dynamism and entertainment. Multimodality, involving the integration of verbal text, graphics, photos, and videos, is an effective tool for influencing the young audience on the perception of information, emotional evaluation, building behavioural strategies, and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

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PRESENT AND FUTURE EFFECTS OF CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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***Abstract:** The COVID-19 has left us with a disrupted education system that needs. This pandemic caused an unprecedented situation, and one of the most affected areas was education and training, when educational institutions have had to close their doors, exams have been canceled, and millions of students have been forced to go through online or distance learning. The measures on long term for the recovery of the learning process when returning to normality envisage a system of operation for the improvement of policies in this area, with their immediate and effective implementation in order to create a resilient education system at the national and international level. This paper investigates the present and future effects of Coronavirus pandemic on higher education by analysing the current situation after closing a difficult time of distant, online and hybrid teaching as well as the prospects of the learning system reconstruction and development in the future. Even though the short, medium and long term objectives of such process may differ from country to country, the principles of planning and organizing it are presumed to be general and feasible for all universities. Although crisis situations are hard to predict, a general prevention plan and more flexible study programs are envisaged for a faster and better adjustment to unexpected events in all aspects of life. Resilience in the education system not only will mitigate the adverse effects of pandemic like hinders in institutional instruction, but will ensure a renewal of the old ways and outdated methodologies towards digital technology, psychological comfort, social change and welfare.*

***Keywords:** COVID-19, pandemic, recovery, planning, higher education*

Introduction

The decision-making factors in the of field of education involved in addressing learning losses after the closing of education institution strive to diminish the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the didactic act and at the same time to ensure greater preparedness for possible future crises. Thus they will make a significant contribution to improving high quality

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inclusive education for all undergraduates and graduates since the classroom is not only a place for academic education, but also for developing better social and emotional skills in interaction with the necessary social support. The pandemic has amplified the factors of social exclusion: low income, unemployment, poor health. The recovery of education systems has started by addressing the urgent need to reduce dropout rates and manage learning losses, and disruptions in educational processes caused by the closure of schools, the connection of all educational institutions to the Internet, the efficient management of the recovery and modernization of logistics, sanitation and materials infrastructure in education institutions, and the development of a long-term action plan focused on restoring national education to the studies of students from socially vulnerable backgrounds. The adverse effects of Covid-19 are being fought by professionals in all domains of work and study based on new policies and methodologies, more suitable for this transition period.

The pandemic has severely affected education and exacerbated social inequities. The most affected categories were the students from low-income families living in areas with a poor infrastructure, from ethnic and linguistic minorities, or with disabilities, migrant and refugee and other marginalized young people living in difficult conditions who were already facing barriers to getting good and constant education. That is why, if urgent restorative measures cannot meet the post-pandemic challenges, the impact of Covid-19 may be felt by instructors and learners throughout their lives. Therefore, the top priority for the coming years is rebuilding an efficient education system that will be more flexible, based on a variety of methods and strategies, and aided by high technology, better equipped to deal with possible crises. These considerations presented in a general framework are benchmarked in the processes decision making, planning and policy making at the level of every specialized institution. They will stimulate educational communities to address major inequalities in what concerns access to quality education and significant learning gaps between different groups of learners after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, every university has its own specific strategies and implements particular activities properly planned ahead.

The essential premise of this paper is that education systems need to examine, plan, develop, review and support strategies in the interconnected critical areas such as: safety, psychological and emotional well-being, and quality assurance of the didactic act with on-going efforts

to increase its progress and success. The new education policies emphasize the need for various complementary approaches like the health and social ones in order to provide adequate assistance as remedy to learners at all times for a greater self and social awareness. All efforts converge towards recovering learning in the shortest time possible with maximum efficiency so that the studies at university can be normalized and stabilized.

The recovery of the learning process

Recovery involves steps and interventions for the elimination of learning gaps and losses due to the pandemic. This stage is about coming back to normal, if possible, in better ways than it was before the Covid-19 regression period with the help of adaptation measures and determination. Planning is the initial stage for the remedy of disruption after quarantine, a scenario that will take into consideration the adverse psychological effects on people caused by isolation. A major concern is to transform pedagogy by developing a more inclusive and flexible curriculum and instructional practices, so as to meet individual needs of learners while providing care, respect and support. Planning in the context of uncertainty will be in accordance with the mission to reach full potential of the teaching-learning process. Even if it is not possible to foresee all possible circumstances future may have in store, a good planning will cover though the most likely problems to occur and design preventive and remedial solutions to each of them. Restoring a better education requires a vision shared by society as a whole. A broad involvement of education decision-makers at all levels and at all stages of the planning cycle is essential to necessary interventions and to ensure their readiness to actively support them, especially in times of uncertainty, with a continuous monitoring of the proposed measures. The focus will be on the controllable factors, and the major items of short, medium and long-term objectives.

While the pandemic significantly disrupted teaching and deepened inequalities at all levels, it also provided opportunities for the transformation of educational environment by creating new ways of approaching education. There are also better and more diverse ways of communicating with students as well as wider opportunities for increasing the general level of well-being in an inclusive, favourable environment, wherever and however support is necessary:

“The possibilities that open up for students and educators alike to engage with the pressing needs of our time while also increasing their own wellbeing is an exciting new frontier for wellbeing education to continue evolving in ways that ensure its relevance in today’s disrupted world”.¹

There will be valuable experiences, important lessons will be learned, which can be incorporated into planning and reform of education for the coming years. This is an opportunity not to be missed, it requires a process to continuously assess the situation, which intends to address inequalities, which encourages recording and documenting intervention processes and results and monitoring and evaluating practices, to improve their effectiveness and support successful actions by observing what does not work and supporting what works.

The main opportunities to rebuild better refer to identifying students who do not attend classes and those at risk of dropping out school by including student tracking systems during inter-university transfers, education cycles and by strengthening management practices for a better cross-sectorial coordination.

The key planning priorities address issues regarding access to digital devices by:

- adapting support for the transition between education cycles;
- configuring the university networks to exchange practices; and
- assessing the impact of the crisis on the allocated budget.

Skills development programs are more widely implemented, whereas policies and investments for the Information System for sensitive data and monitoring systems for good practices need to be collected and shared with local authorities to support re-enrolment. Formative assessment methodologies are strengthened with the aim to fill educational gaps urgently. This requires the adjustment of curriculum and support programs for learning recovery, which help update standards that match them. Therefore, the gaps in students' knowledge caused by periodic interruptions of courses and home study can be compensated by intensive, restorative synthesis recaps. By creating learning recovery programs based on innovative strategies that support education, new opportunities

¹ *Wellbeing and Resilience Education COVID-19 and Its Impact on Education*, ed. Mathew A. White and Faye McCallum (2021), Routledge, Francis & Taylor Group, pp. 28.

become available for the teaching staff to provide guidance and training. Therefore, online educational environments can be associated with a better use of resources for both efficient teaching and safe examinations.

Challenges of the transition back to face to face education

The need for rapid digitization, the challenges of developing a new curriculum adapted to online teaching, the negative psycho-social impact felt by students, generated by isolation, anxiety, insecurity, but especially the increase in dropout rates due to lack of access to online learning, are some among the realities facing the global education system because of Covid-19. Consolidation of educational institutions together with teachers can be an essential condition for the recovery of education in the post-pandemic period, undoubtedly, with the support of central and local public authorities. The bridge programs when the exams have been postponed or adjusted had to be implemented. Planning will reflect the need for coordination with flexibility to comply with safety measures during exams.

The efforts converged to raise awareness and reduce the impact of pandemic with training support programs. The new evaluation strategies help to adapt and personalize the instructions in order to avoid stress and anxiety by adding self-assessment, student's portfolio and peer review.

„The teaching approaches adopted for remote learning depended on whether the goal of the teacher was for the student to learn facts or for the mind to be stimulated: the first approach lending itself to memorisation, the second to the setting of open ended projects also known as ‘rich tasks’ which draw on knowledge from a range of disciplines”.²

The pressure of distance learning is estimated due to the complexity and multitude of tasks received daily by students. The pandemic situation can turn into an opportunity to rethink the curriculum, teaching-learning-assessment processes and develop students' skills in order to strengthen their online learning skills and support their motivation. Emphasis should be placed on maintaining the continuity of education.

² Marilyn Leask, and Sarah Younie, *Education for All in Times of Crisis Lessons from Covid-19*, NY, Routledge, Francis & Taylor Group, 2022, pp.103.

However, in the event of a pandemic, students' health is prioritized, even if the learning process will suffer by going online. In this regard, in order to minimize the impact of online or mixed types of education, the challenges posed by the online system need to be analyzed, while countries that have already implemented online education need to be looked at, and the methodology that has proven to be effective should be applied. Only by looking for solutions together, central and local public authorities, united and supportive, will be able to offer students the best possible education system. If they strengthen collaboration in education, along with the professional development of teachers and the promotion of online safety measures can be taken to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic. Investments in post-pandemic education recovery solutions need to be guided by actions towards a safer future. Instructors can organize and participate in thematic webinars, exchange experiences and receive informational support.

As the pandemic changed people's lives, with a psychological impact affected by the limitations generated by the new circumstances. In this context that was marked by restrictions on movement, communication with others and leisure needed adjustments. All this affected the psychological state of students and hence anxiety was a fairly common problem during the quarantine because of lacking social interaction. However difficult it may be, losses will be recovered while innovation awaits.

Effects for the future

The pandemic has revealed several problems in the field of education, such as: lack of infrastructure, protocols and online working methods and the need for reforms for the rapid improvement of learning opportunities, as well as international collaboration for open online educational resources and digital learning platforms, in line with the needs of our century, by the diversification of teaching methodology and learning environment.

The pandemic period showed us that we can no longer imitate competence, we must be competent, now you can no longer theoretically talk about what it means to have a computer and how to handle it. Bringing digital technologies into authentic education, face to face with the student, requires a high level of knowledge of digital tools. Even though it was extremely difficult during the pandemic, instructors made significant efforts to maintain the quality of education, they showed

solidarity, they helped each other by disseminating their own digital elaborations, by exchanging the online learning experience.

„The lessons learned from this will lead to opportunities to further exploit. Look for growth in online education tools and services, especially when it comes to distance learning management and delivery. Parents and students will screen institutions for these capabilities if they do not do so already. One must wonder if the days of the brick and mortar college campus will soon be history”.³

It is certain that the future evolution of education systems will no longer be conceivable outside the extremely dynamic technological context. On the other hand, this incorporation of technology in education raises a multitude of questions both theoretical and practical, questions that will certainly be able to find answers by conducting such research at the national level. Focus efforts on building a resilient education system for the future that requires a system that is not only more robust and better equipped to deal with potential new crises, but also more flexible, thus providing a wider range of alternative ways and technologies of learning for all students so that studies take place in safe learning environments, with appropriate support for their learning and well-being. Instructors strive to overcome the learning losses and focus on flexibility, equity and inclusion, while strengthening risk management capabilities and implementing innovative solutions.

The lesson learned during this period must certainly be taken seriously so that post-pandemic universities capitalize on the skills, competencies and digital resources now developed and such research can become a decisive support for future educational policies made by the decision-makers, providing an accurate and consistent diagnosis of the situation. The level of the whole education system is upgrading day by day. If digital skills can be formed in a short time and through personal effort, the digitization of content requires a wider and lasting effort, but during this period this process has been accelerated. The teaching experience in the online environment has produced changes in the methods attitudes, competencies and teaching skills that will certainly be capitalized.

³ Lawrence Knorr, *After the Pandemic, Visions of Life Post Covid-19*, Sunbury Press, Mechanisburg, PA, USA, 2020, pp. 189.

Given that the future of the pandemic is difficult to predict, all institutions recognize the need to develop action strategies for the various scenarios we may face in the next academic year, this opportunity can be used to identify the best and most innovative emerging pedagogical practices in online education to create a pole of expertise on appropriate digital solutions for distance learning. As the technological challenge is addressed accordingly, attention is turned to the pedagogical challenges and perspectives of testing pedagogies on the occasion of participating in recovery process of the challenging educational aims:

“Due to the lack of adequate preparation of both human and non-human infrastructures, and the digital divide, educators, and learners are likely to suffer from gaining access to quality educational processes and outcomes. Finally, reimagining educational processes during COVID-19 and post-COVID contexts require addressing a host of hardware and software challenges and myths associated with alternative modes of educational processes in general and online/digital education in particular”.⁴

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education tends to affect not only learning, but also other social issues such as mental health, violence or pronounced social inequalities. The reaction of the government, civil society and development partners has been prompt and decisive, but there are still gaps and challenges that need to be addressed. Distance learning experiences have so far provided valuable lessons, including on the importance of rapidly adapting the education system to a variety of realities. Not only must traditional education be adapted and reformed, but this reform process must include opportunities for innovation and thus become more open to meeting the current needs of children, young people, including those in groups vulnerable members of society at large.

„Our key aim (...) is to explore how learning and teaching might be transformed, for both learners and teachers, as a result of our experiences teaching under the pandemic. For the three of us the pandemic has reminded us of what lies at the heart of our passion for education, for learning and for teaching”⁵.

⁴ *Exploring the Consequences of the Covid-19 Pandemic - Social, Cultural, Economic, and Psychological Insights and Perspectives*, ed. Usha Rana, Jayanathan Govender, USA, Canada, Apple Academic Press Inc., 2022, pp. 458.

⁵ Lucy Cooker, Tony Cotton, and Helen Toft, *Transforming Teaching, Global Responses to Teaching under the Covid-19 Pandemic*, Routledge, Francis & Taylor Group, 2022, pp.13.

The pandemic situation can turn into an opportunity to rethink the curriculum, teaching-learning-assessment processes and develop students' skills in order to strengthen their online learning skills and support their motivation. According to international data, despite global efforts to support the recovery of education systems, they continue to face disruptions and major obstacles. Emphasis should be placed on maintaining the continuity of education as priority for world governments. A tangible solution would be for the responsible authorities to focus on recovery education systems, addressing the urgent need to reduce drop-out rates and manage learning losses, and to focus in four directions:

1. generating a response to disruptions in educational processes caused by school closures;
2. inclusive scaling of distance learning systems, connecting all students and all educational institutions to the Internet.
3. efficient management of the recovery and modernization of logistics infrastructure in schools;
4. data collection, knowledge distribution in order to increase the resilience of educational systems;
5. elaboration of a long-term action strategy focused on the recovery of national education, facilitating the access to studies of students from socially vulnerable families and with health problems, mainly.

Interventions need to be based on the implementation of new initiatives to support educational institutions in the recovery phase, focusing specifically on three important areas: providing support to children through the education system, managing learning losses and accelerating digital education, for which recommendations have been given for a smooth transition from home study to face to face courses:

„Recommendations

1. Schools ought to be encouraged to take a diagnostic approach to ensure that both the learning losses and the learning gains of lockdown are captured.

2. Catch-up programmes need to be tailored to the needs of specific cohorts and individual students.

3. Funding streams need to be affirmatively structured so that provision is targeted at those with the greatest need.

4. External interventions, such as mentoring programmes, should complement the work of schools in addressing identified gaps in learning.

5 School-level practitioners need to be enabled to work with those providing tutoring services, to deliver bespoke solutions in a cohesive manner”.⁶

Another solution to the recovery of the educational field after the pandemic is a reform of the system of training and evaluation of teachers, from a psycho-pedagogical module to all stages, the elimination of bureaucracy by digitizing schools and providing tools, so that we can have a classroom management with a high-performance digital system, which would also mean improving the educational process.

Conclusions

Online education has led to an innovation of the education system, which has managed to take the step towards digitization. Moreover, once they have discovered how effective technology can be in the teaching process, many teachers say they are going to improve. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the digitalisation of the education system, and teachers and students have had to adapt to the new, challenging reality as a consequence of major, global impacts. All transformations in the society mark the transition from stage to another in dealing with its effects on education and learners’ psychology. For future, an acceleration of technology-aid methodologies is envisaged, with a view to creating a more flexible and resilient social environment, as a response to the urgent needs of a prosperous development in all affected work and study areas.

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⁶ Tony Breslin, *Lessons from Lockdown, The Educational Legacy of COVID-19*, London, NY Routledge, Francis & Taylor Group, 2021, pp. 100.

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THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PISA: THE VISUAL SOCIOLOGY COURSE AS A GOOD PRACTICE IN E-LEARNING

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***Abstract:** Following the pandemic emergency of February 2020, the University of Pisa adopted various strategies and solutions to allow teaching courses to continue.*

Within these guidelines, addressed to the entire academic community, each lecturer, also on the basis of his or her past experience, has adopted real 'survival strategies' to be able to continue their lectures. In this article we will examine the general measures adopted by the university and a particular case related to the Visual Sociology course held at the Department of Political Science of the University of Pisa.

***Keywords:** distance learning, e-learning, digital divide, covid-19, University of Pisa, Visual Sociology*

On 10 March 2022, the University of Pisa Rector's Decree no. 506: "...as of Monday 9 March 2020 and until 3 April 2020 (date then extended at later dates), all frontal teaching activities, with the physical presence of students, are suspended in all the University's study courses (such as Bachelor's, Master's and Combined Bachelor and Master of Science degree courses, Master's, PhD., postgraduate courses, foundation courses and specialisation courses), with the exception of specialisation courses in the health area. In order to avoid further opportunities for the possible dissemination of COVID-19, students must not gather in groups to follow distance learning lessons. If this is found to have taken place in University facilities, consequential measures will be taken. Article 2 of the same Decree went on to state that: "It is entrusted to the University Information System, with the support of the Telecommunications Sector, the prompt provision to teachers assigned teaching assignments in the second semester in the academic year 2019/2020 of suitable tools to enable, as of 9 March 2020, the distance delivery of face-to-face lectures, receptions, profit examinations and final examinations for the awarding of degrees."

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The academic reaction was therefore prompt and immediate, but it clearly had to come up against an infinite variety of concrete situations, the availability of telematic tools, the connectivity of the sites, etc. etc., including the different predisposition and willingness of a part of the teaching staff that is anagraphically and ideologically more distant from the prevailing digitalisation of our lives. More than two years have passed since that first decree concerning the Covid-19 pandemic, and today the University of Pisa's website,

<https://www.unipi.it/index.php/documenti-ateneo/item/18932>,
also hosts:

- 31 Rectoral Decrees (the last one is dated 4 April 2022);
- 3 guides for studying and working at the University of Pisa
- 24 anti-contact safety protocols (contained in the Rectoral Decrees)
- 14 complementary instructions #ioripartosicuro
- Measures of the Director General
- Temporary regulations
- Notes, summaries, measures, notices etc. etc.

Visiting that page is interesting in order to understand, even visually, the large number of governmental, regional and academic measures that have tried to buffer the objective difficulties in order not to stop teaching, while at the same time creating a great deal of confusion in order to manage a constantly changing situation (in relation to the trend of contagions, hospital admissions, etc.). Many teachers have tried to “carve a way” through this jungle of changing measures, using common sense and clearing the dense bureaucracy created for health reasons. During the pandemic, we have witnessed an unstoppable spread of technologies facilitating long-distance communication, in particular the Internet, but the profound disparities between those who have the concrete possibility of accessing these tools and those who are excluded from them have become increasingly evident: the 'digital divide' has manifested itself even more concretely, becoming one of the most significant causes of marginalisation in contemporary society.

The Capgemini Research Institute has produced a report entitled 'The Great Digital Divide: Why bringing the digitally excluded online should be a global priority', which separates the online population from the offline population, a study conducted on 5,000 people between December 2019 and February 2020: even before the pandemic, 69% of people without online access lived in poverty and 48% of the offline population wished

they had access to the internet. The research explains that the digital divide is linked to three main factors: age, income and skills. Almost 40% of the offline population live in poverty and have never used the internet due to unaffordable costs, while the age group with the highest percentage of offline members in the sample was found to be between 18 and 36 years old (43%).

As governments increasingly rely on online resources, this leads to the inability of a large segment of the population to access public services, such as their essential health information, and the conclusions are clear: being offline leads to social exclusion and hinders access to public services, as well as limiting professional mobility.

Universities, in this general context, regardless of their geographical location, fearing to lose enrolments, have set up both face-to-face and online courses, arriving in the current academic year 2021/2022 at a mixed form, with students in the classroom and others connected remotely (with all the problems this entails). Distance Learning (DAD) has certainly avoided closure but has left two issues open: infrastructural limitations in some areas and, in some cases, the impossibility for students to purchase telematic supports, due to limited financial possibilities. The serious economic crisis, also the result of the pandemic blockade, has certainly had an influence on this aspect, which has also caused university abundance rates to rise in both advanced and developing countries. In Pisa, the Consorzio Interuniversitario Sistemi Integrati per l'Accesso (CISIA), which deals in particular with admission tests, is noting in some degree courses a drop of around 50% in the number of examinations taken by some lecturers, which shows how distance teaching has buffered the emergency but has not been sufficient to maintain quantitative data (number of examinations taken) close to the pre-pandemic period.

The Internet and the entire ICT world have once again demonstrated, if ever there was a need, how essential digital technology is for the liquid post-modern society, useful for creating communication networks by shortening distances through the use of social networks and the various videoconferencing platforms, a dissemination tool, useful for creating portals and interactive maps thanks to which it is possible to study and learn about the spread of the virus, a tool for DAD and smart working, or for creating new support tools for the diagnosis and treatment of the disease. The DataReportal platform of the marketing consultancy agency Kepios, has compiled a report (Digital 2020: April Global Statshot) that analyses how Internet use has changed over the past year globally: in

2020, there has been an 8% increase, compared to the previous year, of Internet users worldwide, reaching a total of 4.57 billion people, with an average of 11 new users every second as of July 2019.

The term digital divide, originally created to give a name to the difference that exists between those who have and those who do not have access to digital technologies (especially personal computers and internet), has expanded to encompass any form of discrimination or "inequality, barrier, limitation existing in the access to new information and communication technologies"¹. The causes of this problem, which is so complex in its entirety, cannot be attributed to the simple possibility or impossibility of access to the devices but, rather, to "a system of inequalities of a social nature".

The literature proposes three levels of *digital divide*²:

1) access to computers and internet (economic and social privileges).

Twenty years ago being able to access was an important source of distinction between citizens, but today, in developed economies, there is no longer a great division between social groups. In less developed economies, however, access is still limited and unequal. Currently 3.8 billion people have no access to the web.

2) Skills and the use of technology.

Personal skills are important for the use of technology and the Internet, especially for more creative uses. The factors that determine one's skills are usually similar to those that enable access to digital devices: socio-economic status, age, gender, geographical location and ethnicity³.

3) the effects of having access, having advanced skills and being able to make the best use of digital technology on factors such as employment, education, social and political connectedness and health⁴. In the educational context, the cited article explains that digital skills improve

¹ F. Zanetti, *Nuove tecnologie e disuguaglianze digitali. Processi di inclusione ed esclusione nella rete*, in "Tecnologie dell'educazione e innovazione didattica", (a cura di) L. Guerra, Bergamo, Junior, 2010.

² A. Scheerder, J. Van Dijk, A. Van Deursen, *Determinants of Internet Skills, Uses and Outcomes. A Systematic Review of the Second-and Third-Level Digital Divide*, in "Telematics and Informatics 34 (8), 2017, July.

³ E. Hargittai, G. Walejko, *The participation divide: Content creation and sharing in the digital age*, in "Information Communication and Society", Vol. 11, n. 2, 2008, pp. 239 – 256.

⁴ A.J.M. Van Deursen, E.J. e Helsper, *The Third-Level Digital Divide: Who Benefits Most from Being Online?*, in "Communication and Information Technologies Annual: Digital Distinctions and Inequalities. Studies in Media and Communications", Volume 10, 2015, pp. 29-53.

the performance of students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds⁵.

These three perspectives on analysing the *digital divide* all focus on the users of technology, whether they have access, have the skills, use technology and benefit from it in other areas of life. However, there is also a 'fourth level' of digital divide related to the context, to the educational system (schools and universities), which creates an environment conducive to the realisation of personal goals, where it is not only the readiness and skills of individuals that determine the outcomes of digital technology use. Schools and universities are seen as 'environments' in which the emphasis on digital learning is a 'strategy' for the advancement of students: attending educational institutions rich in technological resources offers the opportunity to learn in a 'digital environment' that develops skills and knowledge at an advantage over less organised schools.

These differences are therefore multilevel in nature and policies to reduce digital inequalities should take this into account: consider not only individual access, skills and uses, but also the contextual level (schools and universities).

In Italy, the digital divide arises mainly in relation to cultural and generational factors and is assessed on the basis of certain international indices such as the DESI (Digital Economy and Society Index), drawn up by the European Commission every year. An index that monitors the level of digitalisation of European countries through (statistical) indicators that measure the digital efficiency of states, structured around five dimensions

- 1) Connectivity, as broadband coverage but also readiness for 5G;
- 2) Human capital, on the diffusion of digital skills among citizens;
- 3) Use of Internet services, concerning activities carried out online;
- 4) Digital technology integration, which looks at the use of technology as an entrepreneurial tool for streamlining activities and expanding business;
- 5) Digital public services (e-government).

The DESI 2020 report, covering the year 2019, measured the level of digitisation of the EU member states (including the UK in the sample) and found a general improvement in digital performance. The highest score

⁵ L. Pagani, G. Argentin, M. Gui, L. Stanca, *The impact of digital skills on educational outcomes: Evidence from performance tests*, in "Educational studies", 42 (2), 2016, pp. 137-162.

was achieved by Finland, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, which remain world leaders in digitisation.

Italy, on the other hand, ranks 25th out of the 28 member countries, losing positions "in the rankings" compared to the DESI 2019 report, with a score 9 points below the EU average (43.6 vs. 52.6). The only positive fact is the good position in terms of 5G readiness (Finland, Germany, Hungary and Italy are the most advanced countries in terms of 5G readiness) while on digital skills and human capital Italy is even last.

These shortcomings are reflected in the modest use of online services, despite the fact that the country ranks well in terms of public services offered (e-government), only 74% of Italians habitually use the Internet. Similarly, Italian companies lag behind in the use of technologies such as cloud and big data, as well as in the adoption of e-commerce. The digital divide in Italy takes on the connotations of the historical divide between northern and southern regions in terms of economic development and infrastructure.

In Italy, only 5.6% of the population does not have ADSL coverage, but unfortunately ultra-wideband coverage ranges between 20% and 40%. According to an ISTAT (Higher Institute of Statistics in Italy) study on citizens and ICT, which investigates the percentage of households that have a broadband connection, the highest percentages are in Trentino-Alto Adige (79.4%), Veneto (79.2%) and Lazio (79.2%), while the southern regions have much lower percentages. Campania is the only one to exceed 70%, while all the others record percentages of just over 60% (in Puglia and Basilicata, the connectivity rate even decreased between 2018 and 2019).

ISTAT also estimates that only 29% of users between the ages of 16 and 74 have high digital skills while the majority have only basic digital skills, while 3.4% have no digital skills at all, which in absolute terms is equal to 1,135,000 people, a worrying figure in a historical context in which connectivity and access to digital services has become essential.

Another problem related to the digital divide is the cultural divide: a portion of Italians have chosen not to take out an internet subscription and do not even use the mobile network to access the web. Among the population groups most prone to the cultural digital divide are the elderly (intergenerational digital divide), women who are not employed or in difficulty (gender digital divide), immigrants (linguistic-cultural digital divide), those with low levels of schooling and education, and people with disabilities.

Italy's lack of digitalisation and its slow progress towards full development became even more evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, at a time when connectivity became essential for the exercise of fundamental rights such as the right to study, the right to participate and the right to work. From a technological point of view, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused massive, immediate and unprecedented changes in the use of digital technologies and media by the population⁶: before, access to and use of the Internet was not necessarily a priority for everyone, a part of the population was able to proceed normally in most aspects of social life without connecting. With the global lockdown, the status of digital virtual spaces has become a necessity without alternative. The four proximal factors⁷ that affected the University of Pisa's academic community's ability to use technology efficiently and effectively during the pandemic were:

1) The Technical Tools, made available by the University due to the emergency: tablets, laptops, software, of better quality favoured low-income students, who were initially less equipped in terms of technological devices. Better-off students, who were already equipped, on the other hand, had a strong incentive to upgrade their tools, both for study and also, in the case of working students, for smart working.

2) The autonomy of use, i.e. the place where one was able to access technology and the relative perception of freedom, accessing lessons from one's own home, a situation that continued in the 2021/2022 academic year with mixed teaching (distance and in-presence). The confinement at home, or the choice to stay at home, created an unprecedented data traffic load on the network, which resulted in slower connections for more Internet users.

However, this has not impacted everyone equally: low-income households have not always been able to afford the best connection in terms of both speed and data usage, being unable to sacrifice more essential expenses, and also having to share devices in many cases. The ease of access to technologies also affected those who could connect from home and those who could connect from public spaces such as schools, universities, libraries or Wi-Fi hotspots in public places, considering also,

⁶ M.J. Guitton, *Cyberpsychology research and COVID-19*, in "Computers in Human Behavior", 111, 2020, p. 106357.

⁷ E. Hargittai, *The digital divide and what to do about it*, D.C. Jones, New Economy Handbook, Academic Press, 2003, pp. 822 – 841.

that due to the pandemic, government authorities had to close these places.

3) Social support networks: assistance from other experienced users.

The 'social support network' factor contributes to improving digital skills: having assistance in the form of recommendations or advice from more experienced Internet users in the event of problems increases the knowledge of the user. Isolation has clearly made this kind of support more difficult to implement, creating an unprecedented paradox for the digitally disadvantaged population: how can one find useful support in the use of digital technology, having only digital technologies as a means of action?

4) The growth of experience, i.e. the time dimension employed with digital technologies, has allowed teachers and students to be more familiar with the technologies and retain the benefits of its use. With the pandemic, the time spent online has increased and, for those who have been able to access it, not excluded by the aforementioned causes, the ability to find information has improved.

In the context of the distance learning (DAD) course in Visual Sociology, held in the first semester of the 2020/2021 academic year, the Moodle Open-source learning platform was used, a tool provided by the University, which allowed constant interaction with students and the sharing of audiovisual content related to the objective of describing the pandemic period through the images taken by students.

From an initial series of images (shooting scripts), a number of analysis categories were derived: 1) domestic dimension, 2) study and work, 3) leisure, 4) time and space, 5) health, 6) Evasion. In this way, the field of investigation was better defined and twenty photographs per category were selected in order to give a visual representation of how the lockdown period was experienced.

The experience gained, despite the sheer drama of the social and economic consequences, stimulated a reflection on the organisational weaknesses within the university with regard to the digital divide and the use of technologies useful for distance learning, forcing immediate action to cope with the emergency that made it possible to make better use of technological tools that had already been available for years (platforms for didactics and agile work) and to speed up the modernisation of the digital infrastructure, also bringing out hidden potential, particularly in digital skills, where there is a digital culture shock linked to the forced digital literacy linked to the health emergency. The Euridyce network

(www.eurydice.indire.it), a body set up by the European Commission to deal with educational policies, has launched a monitoring exercise to understand how the Member States have reacted to this unprecedented situation, which will need to continue to be monitored over the next few years in order to fully verify its effects.

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THE LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES CONCERNING DIAGNOSING AND TREATMENT OF PATIENTS BY PHARMACISTS IN NIGERIA

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***Abstract:** Health is wealth; in this regard, it suffices to state that, legally and ethically, a trained medical doctor must prescribe and treat an individual that is diagnosed with any illness. However, in Nigeria, the low standard of living has resulted in most individuals who cannot afford hospital bills to patronize pharmacists for diagnosing and treatment of various degrees of illness. Concerning this medical abnormality, this study employs a hybrid method of research to ascertain the causes and legal regulation concerning pharmacists diagnosing and treating a patient in Nigeria. Concerning the non-doctrinal, the study used online questionnaires sent to 304 respondents residing within Nigeria. Descriptive and analytical statistics were used to analyze the data generated. The study found that there are incidences of pharmacists diagnosing and administering treatment to a patient in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study also found that it is legally and ethically wrong for a pharmacist to diagnose and administer treatment to a patient. The study, therefore, concluded and recommended that there is a need to set the law and medical ethics in motion in curtailing the incidence of pharmacists who are not trained medical doctors to diagnose and administer treatment to a patient in Nigeria.*

***Keywords:** Legal, Ethical, Diagnosing, Treatment, Patients, Pharmacists, Nigeria*

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Introduction

Medically, in Nigeria, when an individual is feeling sick, it is required that such an individual should report to the nearest hospital to officially make a complaint concerning his/her ill health¹. Furthermore, it is further required that a patient must make his/her complaint concerning their ill health to a qualified practicing medical doctor for proper care and treatment². In this regard, it suffices to state that the medical doctor, having received or listened to the patient complain, is required to medically diagnose the patient and commence treatment where necessary or prescribe drugs for the treatment of the patient, having spotted the nature of the illness the patient is suffering from as complained³. Also, the medical doctor has prescribed the drugs for the patient, and it is further required by the patient to purchase such drugs from a qualified and satisfied pharmacy whose primary duty is to manufacture and dispense pharmaceutical drugs to the general public⁴.

However, given the rising cost of living and the high rate of poverty ravaging most individuals in Nigeria, most pharmacists have degenerated in performing the function of a medical doctor by diagnosing and treating patients or individuals of various degrees of illness⁵. Most pharmacists indulging in the illegal act of diagnosing and treating a patient concerns

¹ R. Adepu, and B. Nagavi, "General practitioners' perception about the extended roles of community pharmacists in the state of Karnataka: A study", *Indian J Pharm Sci.* (2006), Vol. 68, 36-40.

² C.P. Babalola, S.A. Awoleye, J.O. Akinyemi, and O.A. Kotila, "Evaluation of prescription pattern in Osun State (Southwest) Nigeria", *J Public Health Epidemiol.* (2011) Vol. 3(3), 94-98; Alo A. "Pharmacy in Nigeria", *Am J Health Syst Pharm.* (2006), Vol. 63, 670-679; A. Aauta, and J. Maz, "Strickland-Hodge B. Perceived facilitators to change in hospital pharmacy practice in England", *Int J Clin Pharm.* (2015), Vol. 37(6), 1068-1075.; Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards for Undergraduate Programmes in Nigerian Universities, Pharmaceutical Sciences. Nigerian University Commission. 2018.

³ Ibid

⁴ P.J. Kaboli, A.B. Hoth, B.J. McClimon, and J.L. Schnipper, "Clinical pharmacists and inpatient medical care: a systematic review", *Arch Intern Med.* (2006), Vol. 166(9), 955-964; W.O. Erhun, T. Osigbesan and J. K. Awogbemi, "Study of pharmacists' and physicians' views on pharmacists prescribing in Nigeria", *West Afr J Pharm.* (2013), Vol. 24(2), 76-82; A. Aauta, E. T. Bala, and Shalkur D. "Generic medicine substitution: a cross-sectional survey of the perception of pharmacists in North-Central, Nigeria", *Med Princ Pract.* (2014), Vol. 23(1), 53-58.

⁵ J. Wingfield, P. Bissell, and C. Anderson, "The Scope of Pharmacy Ethics: Ann Evaluation of the International Research Literature, 1990-2002" *Soc Sci Med.* (2004), Vol. 58(12), 2383-2396.

the fact that most patients are peasants who cannot afford hospital bills, given the economic hardship in Nigeria⁶. Furthermore, it suffices to state that most often, most pharmacists portray themselves as qualified personnel who can cheaply manage a patient illness by diagnosing and commencing treatment on the patient⁷.

In this regard, it suffices to state that it concerns the above, that this study tends to explore a hybrid method of research in ascertaining the causes, legal and ethical regulations concerning diagnosing and treatment of a patient by a pharmacist in Nigeria. The study will further suggest possible ways of curtailing the unwholesome practice of pharmacists diagnosing and treating a patient with various degrees of ailment.

Methodology

The study employs a hybrid method of research. The doctrinal research method will enable the researcher to critically analyze and examine relevant legal frameworks and ethical guidelines as it relate to regulations concerning diagnosing and treatment of a patient by a pharmacist in Nigeria. In this regard, the study will rely on various scholarly literature in textbooks, journal articles, internet articles, and relevant materials that will be useful to this study.

However, non-doctrinal methods of research will enable the researcher to collate extensive data through the use of questionnaire surveys. The essence of non-doctrinal research is to enable the researcher to ascertain the incidence and causes of pharmacists diagnosing and treating a patient of various degrees of ailment in Nigeria and how to salvage the abnormally. In this regard, the study adopts an analytical and descriptive method in analyzing the data obtained via the questionnaire.

⁶ S. Hasan "Teaching Ethics to Pharmacy Students Using a Team-Based Learning Approach", *Pharmacy Education*, (2011), Vol. 11(1), 99-106; D.C. Stewart, J. George, C.M. Bond, H.L. Diack, D. J. McCaig, and S. Cunningham, "Views of pharmacist prescribers, doctors and patients on pharmacist prescribing implementation", *Int J Pharm Pract.* (2009), Vol. 17(2), 89-94.

⁷ H. Tekiner "Why Teach Pharmacy Ethics through Literary Fiction?" *World J Pharm Sci.* (2017), Vol. 5(6), 203-206; K. Sultana, M.A. Jeraisy, M. Al Ammari, R. Patel and S.T.R. Zaidi, "Attitude, barriers and facilitators to practice-based research: cross-sectional survey of hospital pharmacists in Saudi Arabia", *J Pharm Policy Pract.* (2016) Vol. 9(4), 34-56; L. Gilbert "Pharmacy's attempts to extend its roles: a case study in South Africa", *Soc Sci Med.* (1998) Vol. 47(2), 153-164.

Ethics concerning Diagnosing and Treatment of Patients by Pharmacists in Nigeria

It is apt to state that having a code of conduct or ethics, which is based on virtues and moral obligations concerning the practice of pharmacy, is very sacrosanct⁸. This is concerning the fact that code of conduct or ethical guideline for pharmacists pertaining to their relationships with patients and the society they operate⁹. Therefore, it suffices to state that a pharmacist's core ethical duties are mainly the recognition of consumers' health and well-being when manufacturing and selling drugs¹⁰. However, some of the ethical issues a pharmacist is required to observe in Nigeria as it relates to diagnosing and treatment of the patient are summarized in the following headings:

i. Counseling Patients concerning Medications

Although section 1(a) of the Code of Professional Ethics in Pharmacy¹¹ stipulates that a pharmacist owes a patient's duty to provide vital information concerning drugs and medicinal products sold to them. However, pharmacists are prohibited from providing any form of counseling that suggests treatment different from a patient diagnosed by a doctor. Therefore, it suffices to state that a pharmacist lacks the required training to proffer any form of treatment to a patient, and it will be ethically wrong to indulge in diagnosing and treating a patient. However, they can render proper explanations relating to information printed on the said drugs or medicine labels.

⁸ M.M. Abkhtar, A. Waheed, D. Sheikh and A. Hussain, "Role of pharmacist in improving health related quality of life (HRQoL) in hypertensive patients in Pakistan", *Am J Pharmacol Sci.* (2014) Vol. 2(5B), 17-22.

⁹ R.A. Buerki and L.D., *Vottero Ethical Responsibility in Pharmacy Practice*. 2nd ed. Madison: American Institute of the History of Pharmacy. 2002; M. Kroezen, L. Van Dijk, P.P. Groenewegen, A. L. Francke. "Nurse prescribing of medicines in Western European and Anglo-Saxon countries: a systematic review of the literature", *BMC Health Serv Res.* (2011), Vol. 11, 127-144; D. Stewart, K. MacLure and J. George, "Educating nonmedical prescribers", *Br J Clin Pharmacol*, (2012), Vol. 74(4), 662-6687.

¹⁰ O.M. Acl-Quteimat and A.M. Amer, "Evidence-based pharmaceutical care: The next chapter in pharmacy practice", *Saudi Pharm J.* (2016), Vol. 24(4), 447-451; A. Adwaisu and N. Alsalmiy, "Pharmacist's involvement and attitudes towards pharmacy practice research: A systematic review of the literature", *Res Social Adm Pharm*, (2015) Vol. 11(6), 725-748.

¹¹ Code of Professional Ethics in Pharmacy by Pharmacy Council of Nigeria.

ii. Compliance with Legal Framework concerning the operation of Pharmacy

Ethically a pharmacist has to be compliant with or concerning any legislation regarding pharmaceutical practice, which includes; the production, storage, and distribution of drugs to a patient when needed or prescribed by a doctor. In this regard, section iv(e) of the Code of Professional Ethics in Pharmacy further provides that a pharmacist has the duty and obligation to observe the law and advocate the honor and dignity of the profession. They are also obligated to accept the profession's ethical principles by not engaging in any activity that will bring disrepute to the pharmacy profession or be found wanting of unethical or illegal conduct that affects the profession.

iii. Patient refusal to comply with Doctor's Prescription

Furthermore, it suffices to state that pharmacists will frequently and always contact patients who may choose not to adhere to the directions of their doctors. However, ethically, it must be noted that when a patient discontinues the required treatment or medications due to any reason, thereby requesting a pharmacist diagnosing and treatment, it's important for such pharmacist to assist such patient in understanding the risks of non-compliance with his/her doctor diagnosing and treatment. This is concerning the fact that section iv(b) Code of Professional Ethics in Pharmacy¹² stipulates that a pharmacist should not be found wanting of having an interest in or be associated with diagnosing and treating a patient.

It suffices to state that those who are interested in practicing as a pharmacist in Nigeria must adhere strictly to the code of conduct and ethics concerning the operation of a pharmacy.

Legal Regulation of Pharmacist Operation in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the operation pharmacy by a pharmacist is regulated by laws. In this regard, it suffices to state that where a law provides for the regulation of a particular act, failure to comply with the said law is said to be an aberration and an offense. However, in Nigeria, the law that regulates the operation of a pharmacy and stipulates the duties of a pharmacist is the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria Act CAP P17 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria¹³. Sections 1 and 2 of the Act¹⁴ provide for the

¹² Ibid

¹³ Pharmacy Council of Nigeria Act CAP P17 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria.

¹⁴ Ibid

establishment of the Nigeria pharmacy council as the recognized regulatory body of those operating a pharmacy or pharmaceutical company in Nigeria.

However, the relevance of the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria Act as it relates to the operation and practice of pharmacy in Nigeria is as provided under section 20 of the Act. Section 20 of the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria Act¹⁵ provide thus;

“A person shall or is deemed to practice as a pharmacist if he engages himself in the practice of pharmacy or holds himself out to the public as a pharmacist, or he renders professional services or assistance in or about matters of principles or details relating to pharmacy.”

Given the above provision and a cursory review of all sections of the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria Act, reveal the fact that the Act did not define who a pharmacist is or specifically spell out the functions or duties of a pharmacist as it relates to the practice of pharmacy. However, section 20 (1)(b) of the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria Act¹⁶ seems to stipulate that a pharmacist is an individual who renders professional services as it relates to a pharmacy.

However, concerning the purport of section 20 (1)(b) of the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria Act, it suffices to further state that the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary¹⁷ defined who a pharmacist is as thus; “A person whose job is to prepare medicine and sell or give them to the public in a shop/store or hospital.” Furthermore, the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary¹⁸ further defined a pharmacy to mean thus; “A shop/store or part of one, that sells medicines and drugs, the study of how to prepare medicines and drugs.”

Furthermore, it is apt to state that although the Pharmacist Council of Nigeria Act is ambiguous concerning the duties and functions of a pharmacist. However, section 8 of the Medical and Dental Practitioner Act¹⁹ stipulates that be registered as a medical practitioner in Nigeria, and

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 6th Edition

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Medical and Dental Practitioner Act CAP M8 LFN 2004

such an individual must have been trained in an approved institution by the Nigeria medical council of Nigeria to practice as a medical officer. Furthermore, the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 6th Edition stipulate that a medical practitioner is an individual, usually a doctor, who is trained to handle medical and health issues, such as diagnosing and treatment of patient of various degree of ailment.

Given the above, it suffices to state that the duties and functions of a pharmacist are clearly one who is trained to manufacture and sells pharmaceutical drugs. In this regard, it is a legal and ethical misnomer and an offence for a pharmacist to indulge in diagnosing and treating a patient with various degrees of ailment. This is concerning the fact that section 17(1)(a) of the Medical and Dental Practitioner Act²⁰ stipulates that where an individual or any person who is not a trained or registered medical practitioner, in expectation of reward practices or perform the duties as a medical practitioner is regarded as an offence and such individual is liable to punishment.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Concerning the data obtained from the online questionnaire survey, the following data is at this moment analyzed as follows:

Sample Size and Techniques

The study used a survey questionnaire generated through the use of Google Forms. The essence of using an online Google form is to enable the researchers to disseminate the questionnaire to the respondents residing in the various states in Nigeria. In this regard, the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents through various social media platforms. The respondents were selected by using a simple random sampling technique. The essence of using a simple random technique concerns the fact that Aidonojie et al., in several of their studies²¹, have argued that it is

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ P.A. Aidonojie & O.A. Odojor, "Impact and Relevance of Modern Technological Legal Education Facilities amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of Law Students of Edo University Iyamho", *KIU Journal of Humanities*, (2020), Vol. 5(4), 7-19a; P.A. Aidonojie, O.O. Ikubanni, N. Okoughae, A.O. Ayodeji, "The challenges and relevance of technology in administration of justice and human security in Nigeria: Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic", *Cogito Multidisciplinary Journal*, (2021), Vol. 13(3), 149 - 170; P.A. Aidonojie, O.O. Anne, and O.O. Oladele, "An Empirical Study of the Relevance and Legal Challenges of an E-contract of Agreement in Nigeria" *Cogito Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, (2020) Vol. 12(3), 181; P.A. Aidonojie, O.A. Odojor, O.O. Ikubanni, A.A. Oyejade,

suitable in selecting respondents from a heterogeneous population like Nigeria. Furthermore, it has been argued that a simple random sampling technique is hassle-free in sampling a heterogeneous population, and there is no chance of influencing the outcome of the result.

Concerning the sample size, 304 of respondents living in the Federal Republic of Nigeria were randomly selected by the study to respond to the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The data obtained through the questionnaire (using Google form) is, at this moment, analyzed as follows:

Research Question One

What State do you reside in Nigeria?

304 responses

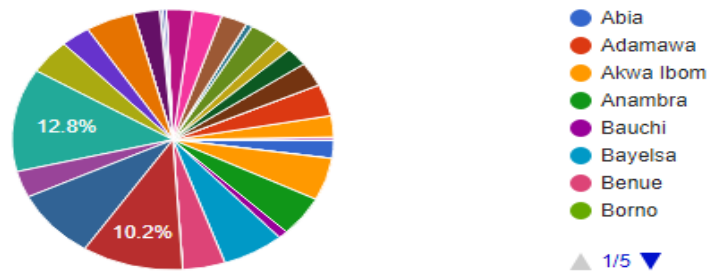


Figure 1: Identification of the various states the respondents reside in Nigeria

S/N	States in Nigeria	Responses Respondents	of	Percent
1	Abia	7		2.3%
2	Adamawa	Nil		Nil
3	Akwa Ibom	16		5.3%
4	Anambra	15		4.9%

A.I. Oyedeji and N. Okuoghae, “The Challenges and Impact of Technological Advancement to the Legal Profession in Nigeria given the Covid-19 Pandemic”, *KIU Journal of Humanities* (2020), 6 (4), 5-19; P.A. Aidonojie, N. Okuoghae, O.P. Agbale and M.E. Idahosa, “Supervisor and Supervisee Relationship: The Legal and Ethical Issues Concerning Academic Theft in Nigeria Tertiary Institution”, *Euromentor Journal* (2022), Vol. 13(1), 113-138; P.A. Aidonojie, A.O. Odojor, and O.P. Agbale, “The Legal Impact of Plea Bargain in Settlement of High Profile Financial Criminal Cases in Nigeria”, *Sriwijaya Law Review*, (2021), Vol. 5(2), 161-174.

5	Bauchi	3	1%
6	Bayelsa	19	6.3%
7	Benue	13	4.3%
8	Borno	Nil	Nil
9	Cross River	31	10.2%
10	Delta	26	8.6%
11	Ebonyi	10	3.3%
12	Edo	39	12.8%
13	Ekiti	13	4.3%
14	Enugu	9	3%
15	(FCT) Abuja	15	4.9%
16	Gombe	Nil	Nil
17	Imo	8	2.6%
18	Jigawa	Nil	Nil
19	Kaduna	1	0.3%
20	Kano	1	0.3%
21	Katsina	Nil	Nil
22	Kebbi	Nil	Nil
23	Kogi	8	2.6%
24	Kwara	9	3%
25	Lagos	8	2.6%
26	Nassarawa	Nil	Nil
27	Niger	2	0.7%
28	Ogun	9	3%
29	Ondo	5	1.6%
30	Osun	7	2.3%
31	Oyo	9	3%
32	Plateau	Nil	Nil
33	Rivers	12	3.9%
34	Sokoto	8	2.6%
35	Taraba	Nil	Nil
36	Yobe	1	0.3%
37	Zamfara	Nil	Nil

Table 1: Valid responses of respondents identifying the states residing in Nigeria

Figure 1 and Table 1 above is a data presentation representing the valid responses of respondents identifying the various states they reside in Nigeria.

Research Question Two

Have you ever been sick in the past two (2) years?

298 responses

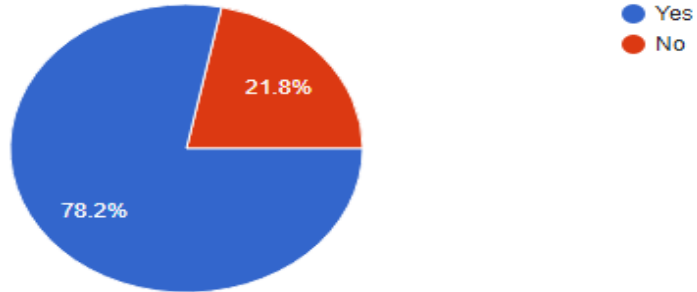


Figure 2: Respondents identifying if they have fallen sick in the last two years

	Response	Percent
Valid Yes	233	78.2%
Valid No	65	21.8%
Total	298	100%

Table 2: Valid response of respondents identifying if they have fallen sick in the last two years

Figure 2 and Table 2 above are respondents identification if they have fallen sick in the last two years.

Research Question Three

What ailment were you diagnosed with? you can click more than one option

Copy

252 responses

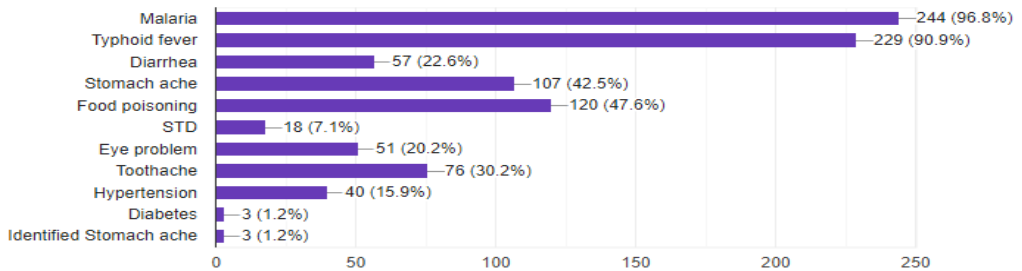


Figure 3: Respondents cluster of responses in stating or identifying the ailment they were diagnose

Various forms of Ailment	Cluster of Response	Percentage
Malaria	244	96.8%
Typhoid fever	229	90.9%

Diarrhea	57	22.6%
Stomach ache	107	42.5%
Food poisoning	120	47.6%
STD	18	7.1%
Eye problem	51	20.2%
Toothache	78	30.2%
Hypertension	40	15.9%
Diabetes	3	1.2%

Table 3: Valid Respondents cluster responses in stating or identifying the ailment they were diagnose

Figure 3 and Table 3 are a cluster of responses by respondents identifying some of the ailments they have been diagnosed with when sick.

Research Question Four

Which of the following did you approach to diagnosing and treating the ailment?

255 responses

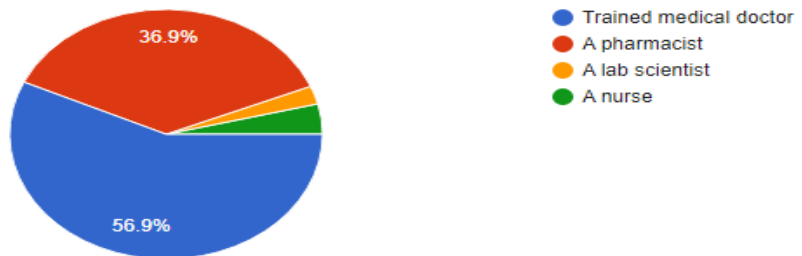


Figure 4: Respondents cluster of responses identifying who diagnosed and treated them of the said ailment

Persons who diagnose and treat them	Cluster of Response	Percentage
Trained medical doctor	145	56.9%
A pharmacist	94	36.9%
A lab scientist	6	2.4%
A nurse	10	3.9%
TOTAL	255	100%

Table 4: Valid Respondents' cluster responses identifying who diagnosed and treated them with the said ailment

Figure 4 and Table 4 are a cluster of respondents' responses identifying the persons who diagnosed them and treated them of the said ailment.

Research Question five

Are you aware that it is legally and against medical ethics for a pharmacist to diagnose and treat a patient?

302 responses

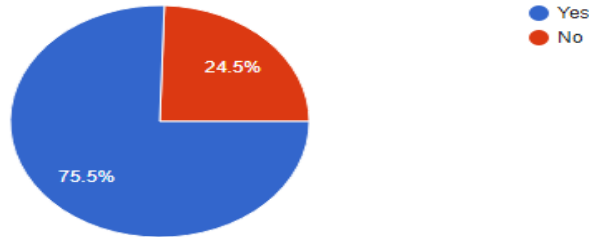


Figure 5: Respondents stating if they are aware that it is legally and ethically wrong to be diagnosed and treated by a pharmacist

	Response	Percent
Valid Yes	228	75.5%
Valid No	74	24.5%
Total	302	100%

Table 5: Valid respondents' responses stating if they are aware that it is legally and ethically wrong to be diagnosed and treated by a pharmacist

Figure 5 and Table 5 are valid respondents' responses identifying if they are aware that it is legally and ethically wrong to be diagnosed and treated by a pharmacist

Research question 6

Which of the following reasons often propel most persons to patronize a pharmacist to diagnose and treat their ailment? you can click more than one option



303 responses

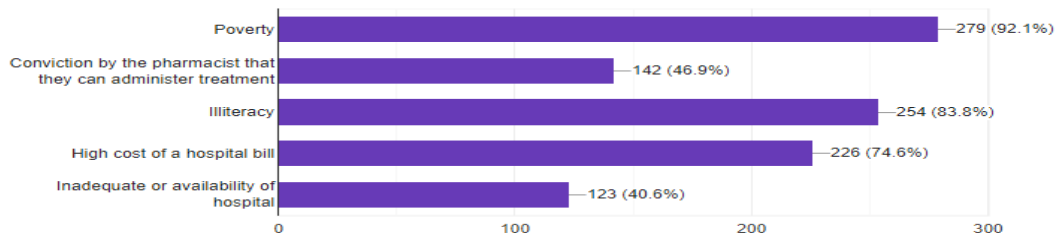


Figure 6: respondents identifying reasons for patronizing pharmacists for diagnosing and treatment of an ailment

Reasons for patronizing pharmacists for diagnosing and treatment	Responses of respondents	Percentage
Poverty	279	92.1%
Conviction by the pharmacist that they can administer treatment	142	46.9%
Illiteracy	254	83.8%
High cost of a hospital bill	226	74.6%
Inadequate or availability of hospital	123	40.6%

Table 6: Valid respondents' responses identifying reasons for patronizing pharmacists for diagnosing and treatment

Figure 6 and Table 6 are respondents' valid responses identifying or stating reasons some persons prefer to patronize pharmacists for diagnosing and treatment of an ailment.

Research question 7

Which of the following could aid in regulating the operation of pharmacists in the pharmaceutical business in Nigeria? you can click more than one option



303 responses

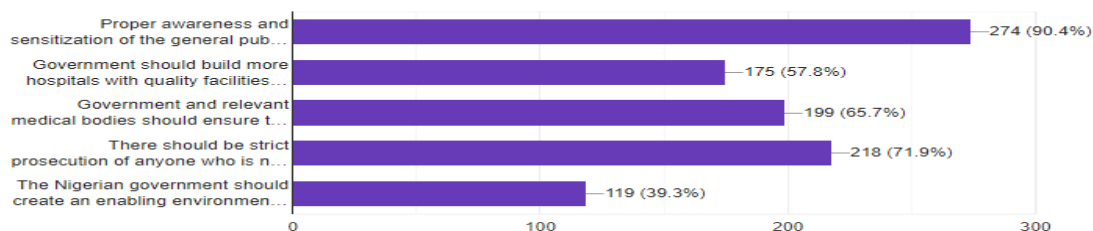


Figure 7: Identification of possible remedies in curtailing the incidence of pharmacists indulging in diagnosing and treating a patient

Possible solution	Cluster of Responses	Percentage
Proper awareness and sensitization of the general public concerning the need to be diagnosed and treated by a qualified medical doctor	274	90.4%
Government should build more hospitals with quality facilities most especially in the rural area	175	57.8%
Government and relevant medical bodies should ensure there is effective regulation of hospitals concerning the flagrant hike in hospital billing in Nigeria	199	65.7%
There should be strict prosecution of anyone who is negligent in the diagnosis and treatment of a patient	218	71.9%

not a trained medical indulging in diagnosing and treating a sick person		
The Nigerian government should create an enabling environment that will enhance a better standard of living to be able to afford things of necessity, such as paying a hospital bill	119	39.3%

Table 7: Valid cluster of respondents identification of some possible remedy in curtailing the incidence of pharmacists indulging in diagnosing and treating a patient

Figure 7 and Table 7 represent respondents' valid cluster of responses in stating some of the possible remedies in curtailing the incidence of pharmacists indulging in diagnosing and treating a patient.

Discussion of Findings

Concerning the data presentation and analysis above, it suffices to opine that figure 1 and table 1 represent the fact that the respondents were carefully randomly selected from the various states in Nigeria. In essence, it gives credibility to the fact that the respondents are well knowledgeable to give an informed response concerning the issues as they relate to pharmacists diagnosing and treating a patient of various degrees of ailment.

In this regard, in ascertaining if the respondents have fallen sick in the last two years, a significant (78.2% of the respondents) number of the respondents, as represented above in figure 2 and table 2, responded yes. However, figure 3 and table 3 represent the respondents' identification of the various degree of ailment they were diagnosed with, and they are as follows;

- i. 96.8% stated malaria
- ii. 90.9% stated typhoid fever
- iii. 22.6% said diarrhea
- iv. 42.5% identified stomach ache
- v. 47.6% stated food poisoning
- vi. 7.1% said eye problem
- vii. 20.2% stated Toothache
- viii. 30.2% stated STD
- ix. 15.9% also identify hypertension
- x. 1.2% stated diabetes

Though, in figure 4 and table 4, the study reveal that majority of the respondents do approach doctor when sick, however, 36.9% of the respondent identify the fact that they often approach a pharmacist who often diagnoses and treat them for their ailment. These findings offend the medical ethics and legal section 8 and 17(1)(a) of the Medical and Dental Practitioner Act, which stipulate that it is only a trained medical doctor that is permitted to handle health issues as they relate to diagnosing and treatment of patient of various degree of ailment. Although, figure 5 and table 5 further represent the fact that some of the respondents (75.5% of the respondents) identify the fact that they are aware that it is legally and ethically wrong for a pharmacist to diagnose and treat a patient. However, there are several reasons that are beyond most patients control that propel them to approach a pharmacist. Figure 6 and Table 6 represent some of these reasons as identified by the respondents as follows;

- i. 92.1% stated that poverty often propels most persons in patronizing a pharmacist to diagnose and administer treatment
- ii. 46.9% stated that the conviction by the pharmacist that they can diagnose and administer treatment
- iii. 83.8% identified Illiteracy on the part of a patient
- iv. 74.6% stated the high cost of a hospital bill
- v. 40.6% further stated that it is as a result of inadequate or availability of hospital

Given the above, it suffices to state that there is a need to curtail the incidence of a pharmacist indulging in diagnosing and treatment of a patient in Nigeria. In this regard, the respondent in figure 7 and table 7, as represented above, further identify a possible solution as follows;

- i. 90.4% stated that proper awareness and sensitization of the general public, most especially in the rural areas concerning the need to be diagnosed and treated by a qualified medical doctor.
- ii. 57.8% stated that government should build more hospitals with quality facilities most especially in the rural area.
- iii. 65.7% also stated that government and relevant medical bodies should ensure there is effective regulation of hospitals concerning the flagrant hike in hospital billing in Nigeria.
- iv. 71.9% also identified that there should be strict prosecution of anyone who is not a trained medical indulging in diagnosing and treating a sick person.

- v. 39.3% also stated that the Nigerian government should create an enabling environment that will enhance a better standard of living to be able to afford things of necessity, such as paying off a hospital bill.

Conclusion/Recommendation

It is not just a witty saying but medical ethics that the well-being of every given individual is his/her wealth. In this regard, the various tertiary institutions have a well-established medical school to train an individual to be a qualified and equipped medical doctor specializing in diagnosing and administering treatment to sick persons. However, the study identifies the fact that pharmacists are mainly trained to manufacture and sell drugs to sick patients diagnosed and the required drugs prescribed to them by a medical doctor. However, the study also identifies the various reasons captured in this study, why most pharmacists have been indulging in diagnosing and treatment of sick persons.

However, this study further identifies that it is legally and ethically wrong for a pharmacist to indulge in diagnosing and treating sick patients. This is concerning that a pharmacist is not a trained or licensed medical personnel to diagnose and administer treatment to sick persons. In this regard, they are mostly unable to cater to sick persons but rather often complicate the health issues of the sick person.

Concerning the above, the study, therefore, postulates that in order to curtail the incidence of a pharmacist or sick individual patronizing a pharmacist for diagnosis and treatment, the following are hereby recommended as follows;

- i. Provision and assessment of the National Health Insurance Scheme.
- ii. Sensitization and education of the general public concerning the need to be diagnosed and treated by a qualified medical doctor.
- iii. Build more hospitals with a quality facility.
- iv. Strict prosecution of anyone not being trained medical personnel indulging in diagnosing and treating a sick person.
- v. An enhance the better standard of living.

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EDUCATION AS A FACTOR OF PROFESSIONAL MOBILITY IN THE LABOR MARKET: THE CASE OF UKRAINE

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***Abstract:** The article considers the factors of formation of professional mobility of the labor market and summarizes its main characteristics. Different approaches to assessing the impact of mobility on the efficiency of the labor market in today's challenges are justified. It is revealed that one of the main contradictions of the modern world is the discrepancy between rapid social progress and professional training of future workers in the labor market.*

***Keywords:** professional mobility, structural imbalance, labor market, factors, structural transformation.*

Rapid scientific and technological progress due to the processes of globalization and integration has a significant impact on social development, creates new challenges and challenges. Political, socio-economic changes in modern society lead to new demands on the workforce, one of which is mobility. Employee mobility is one of the important self-regulators of the labor market and in the rapid dynamics of the economic system increases their ability to adapt to structural and market changes in the field of employment, maximize their work skills and knowledge and increase their income. At the same time, labor mobility is an important factor in the development and preservation of labor potential, productivity growth, is one of the important conditions for the effective functioning of a market economy.

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Mobility helps to reduce tensions in local and state labor markets, helps meet the needs of economic agents in the workforce. Current priorities of the labor market determine the need for training professionals capable of creative work, professional development and improvement, development and implementation of new educational technologies. Therefore, the issue of formation of professional mobility becomes especially relevant. Different approaches to understanding professional mobility have been developed in foreign practice. In European countries, the task of developing professional mobility is a priority in improving the education system and is mainly provided by the fundamentalization of higher education and improving the quality of vocational education. The American School of Science supports the crucial role of education in the process of ensuring professional mobility. The educational sphere forms specialists who are able to assert themselves and develop themselves, make informed decisions in non-standard situations and strive for continuous professional development. Such specialists, effectively using the acquired knowledge and skills, successfully realize personal interests in combination with public and public. Researchers at the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development recognize occupational mobility as a crucial factor in sustainable economic growth and living standards and interpret it as society's ability to create, adapt, transform and use knowledge. The European Commission has proposed an effective tool for the development of professional mobility - lifelong learning (Lifelong Learning)¹. It is worth agreeing with the statement that modern quality education and training should enable everyone, depending on their age, aspirations, interests and opportunities to receive full, continuous education and training at the appropriate level in all its forms².

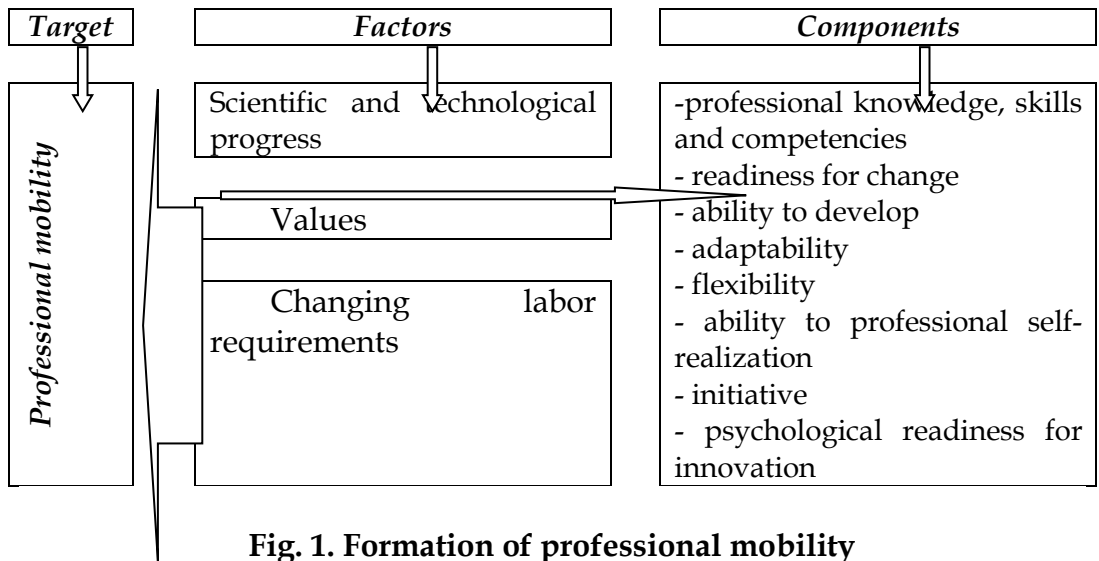
Professional mobility is characterized by the possession of generalized professional techniques and the ability to effectively apply them to perform any tasks in related fields, as well as a high level of generalized professional knowledge. The ability of a specialist to quickly adapt to various changes in the professional sphere, the ability to think outside the box and act professionally determines the willingness to quickly select and implement optimal ways to perform various tasks within their profession.

¹ A.Y. Ishchenko, *Global trends and problems of education: consequences for Ukraine*, NISS, 2014, 8 p.

² N. Dyachok, *Pedagogical education: Theory and practice, Professional mobility as an indicator of the quality of pedagogical education*, Kyiv, 2020, vol. 33. pp. 70-75.

Professional flexibility in the labor market depends on the psychological readiness to accept and apply various kinds of innovations in professional activity, initiative and the ability to quickly learn new types of work, new specialties. Skills for self-realization in life and profession determine key competencies and key qualifications, as well as the professional field and living environment^{3 4 5 6}.

Scientific and technological progress accelerates the emergence of new professions and determines the requirements for quality characteristics and professional and practical training of a competitive specialist. All this changes the needs, values, moral qualities of employees, determines the desire for freedom, personal self-improvement based on stable values and the need for self-organization, self-determination and self-development, ability to quickly adapt to changes in society through literacy, education and modern professional competencies. Fig. 1).



³ K.V. Aymedov, S.M. Strelbytska, Professional mobility of future specialists in the process of studying at the university: competence approach, Scientific works of the Petro Mohyla Black Sea State University of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy complex, Kyiv, 2014, vol. 239 (251), pp. 49-52.

⁴ M.I. Dyachenko, *Psychological dictionary-reference book*, Harvest, 2004, M. 576 p.

⁵ E.A. Ivanchenko, *Formation of professional mobility of future economists in the process of studying in higher educational institutions*, South Ukraine. state ped. Univ. K.D. Ushinsky, Kyiv, 2005, 20 p.

⁶ L.L. Sushentseva, *Professional mobility as a modern pedagogical problem*, *Creative pedagogy*, Kyiv, 2011, vol. 1, pp. 129-136.

The level of professional mobility and its implementation is related to the requirements for the workforce, which are formed in the process of qualitative and structural changes in the economic system⁷. Motivational factors in a market economy have a significant impact on the formation of professional mobility. Mechanisms for motivating professional mobility are directly related to the state strategic regulation of the formation and development of the workforce. In this regard, the issue of development and regulation of areas of educational and vocational training, competitive in the labor market, and the emphasis in economic policy on solving social problems becomes especially important. Important in this context are the effectiveness of incentives in the field of employment; policies aimed at creating favorable conditions for socialization, focus on free choice in personal development and employment; to implement the principle of social justice. The intensity of professional mobility in modern conditions is growing due to the flexibility of the labor market, structural changes in the economy and global competition.

The model of socio-economic development that developed in Ukraine before the war did not ensure full inclusiveness of economic development, effective use of human potential and implementation of the principles of social justice. Structurally deformed, disproportionate, deprived of its own stable drivers of development, the domestic economy is not able to properly respond to both crisis fluctuations and the usual stimulants of economic development. This situation made it impossible to achieve sustainable and dynamic development, create favorable conditions for decent employment and achieve high living standards without significant changes in the structure of the economy and outdated means of its regulation. The war, as a result of which enterprises, transport and social infrastructure, logistics are destroyed, mass migration of the population takes place, causes new risks in the socio-economic sphere and increases the emphasis on the existing problems. During the period of military aggression and post-war reconstruction, the priority remains the most rational use of labor and ensuring a favorable level of adaptability of the working population to changes in the labor market, which requires balanced decisions in this area.

⁷ Ya.I. Yurik; V.V. Blyzniuk, Yakist robochoi syly yak kliuchovyi faktor innovatsiinoho rozvytku Ukrainy [The quality of the workforce as a key factor for innovative development of Ukraine]. *Ekonomika i prohnozuvannia* [Economy and Forecasting], 1, 67-86 [in Ukrainian], 2014.

In order to increase employment in wartime and the period of economic recovery, the issue of ensuring labor mobility remains extremely important, which will help strengthen its adaptability, competitiveness, as well as increase the level of its use. Professional mobility, which determines the qualitative characteristics of the workforce, its potential ability to change functions in the production of tangible and intangible goods, readiness for professional growth, development of new professions, ability to adapt to dynamic production conditions should ensure the ability of enterprises outside the zone hostilities and displaced from dangerous areas. In the postwar period, the need for labor mobility will be due to the prospect of structural transformation of the domestic economy, changes in regional specialization in the postwar economic recovery and modern economic conditions, when technological processes and labor market requirements for functional responsibilities are changing dynamically.

Failures in the labor market of Ukraine in recent decades (structural imbalances, low labor costs, excessive expansion of informal employment, lack of adequate social protection of workers, insufficient job growth and unsatisfactory quality characteristics) increase the volatility of the domestic labor market and tensions in society. With the deployment of Russian military aggression in 2014, among the main factors deteriorating the economic situation were: the destruction of infrastructure in industrial areas where hostilities are taking place, and the disorganization of established industrial ties and critical supply of resources; complication due to the aggravation of the political situation in relations with major trading partners, which led to a partial loss of foreign markets; deterioration of the investment climate, which led to a decrease in investment flows; reduction of domestic demand due to the decline in production processes and falling purchasing power of the population. The most tangible for society consequences of military aggression in this period were social, measured primarily by quantitative and qualitative losses of the most valuable resource of the country - human potential.

Qualitative components of human potential are determined primarily by the provision and maintenance of opportunities and access to educational services. At present, Ukraine's education system has suffered significant damage to its educational infrastructure. As of June 4, 2022, shelling and bombing damaged 1939 educational institutions, 184 of which were completely destroyed. 1170 educational institutions are located in the temporarily occupied territory. So the first task is to restore

as many schools as possible by September 1. Simultaneously with the destruction of the educational infrastructure, the education system also lost users of educational services. Reliable statistics on the loss of the number of users of educational services are currently lacking, there are various data from several sources on certain categories of users, ranging from about 0.7 to 3 million people (so, according to the MES, as of 20.05.2022 left more than 670 thousand students, according to UNICEF in March - more than 1.5 million children; according to other estimates, almost half of the more than 6 million people who left - are school-age children). Thus, ensuring the educational process in places where users remain and institutions are destroyed or damaged, it is necessary to restore the infrastructure or provide training in other ways or to ensure the physical relocation of students.

In connection with the war, the issue of access and digitalization of educational services is relevant. First of all, it is necessary to introduce electronic documents on education, which is considered in the draft resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers "On the use of public electronic service" eDocument on Education "during martial law." In addition, the current labor market will need technical and engineering professionals. The Concept for the Development of Natural and Mathematical Education (STEM-education) has already been approved, an action plan until 2027 has been approved, and 361 schools have been provided with modern laboratories.

The war and the unavailability of educational services for many applicants has led to a decline in the quality of education and the need to develop tools to make up for lost and lost knowledge. Monitoring and diagnosis of the education system is needed to determine the number of children who have lagged behind in education for various reasons that will require additional time and special teaching methods. Ukrainian students displaced mostly do not speak the language of the host country, so they adapt to integration classes (where they exist) and do not study fully according to the local school curriculum (which is different from Ukrainian curricula). Some study in Ukrainian and foreign schools at the same time, but of course this affects the quality of education. Some educational institutions have not resumed the educational process, so students from these schools who are abroad have problems receiving Ukrainian education. All these are educational losses that need to make up for lost knowledge.

Despite the very different living and learning conditions of children in different countries, there is one unifying factor - there is a "natural selection of the stronger." Who will not be able to sufficiently adapt / integrate in the host country (for various reasons - lack of motivation, linguistic and other intellectual abilities, mental stability, physical health, digitization skills, persistence in overcoming bureaucratic obstacles, lack of favorable logistics, household, transport conditions, etc.), he will not receive sufficient knowledge and skills for further education after school, or for employment in skilled labor. Instead, most host countries have sufficient opportunities for unskilled work. It is currently impossible to predict how many families not adapted to local conditions will return to Ukraine. At the same time, we can predict that those families who will be able to adapt in the host countries are more likely to stay in the host countries due to the possibility of continuing children's education after school and a higher standard of living and security than at home. So, the biggest problem right now is to motivate students and families displaced abroad to return to Ukraine

Due to the difficult situation in the field of employment in Ukraine and the significant outflow of labor from the labor market, including the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, territorial defense forces, volunteer organizations, there is a growing need for the most rational use of labor and a favorable level of adaptability. able-bodied population to changes in the labor market. In particular, the issue of minimizing structural inconsistencies in employment is acute. According to official data from the State Employment Service of Ukraine, there is a significant imbalance between labor supply and demand in the labor market. Thus, as of May 1, 2022, on average in Ukraine, 11 unemployed people applied for one vacancy. The greatest discrepancy between the demand for labor and its supply in terms of professional qualifications was observed among employees and managers, 28 people applied for 1 vacancy, technical staff (22 people), trade and services workers (18 people), skilled agricultural workers (14 The greatest shortage of vacancies was observed for the following professions: for 2.5 thousand unemployed sales managers (managers) there were 109 vacancies, for 1.5 thousand unemployed economists - 87 vacancies, for 1.9 thousand unemployed administrators - 119 vacancies, for 3.7 thousand unemployed specialists of the civil service (local self-government) - 68 vacancies, for 717 unemployed lawyers - 32 vacancies (Table 1). system), pharmacist's assistant, trolleybus driver,

electrician of the operational and exit brigade, bypass of hydraulic structures, lathe-borer.

Table 1. Number of vacancies and number of unemployed as of May 1, 2022 (by occupational groups)

Professional group	Number of vacancies, units	Number of unemployed, persons	Load per 1 vacancy, persons
Legislators, senior civil servants, managers	1 303	36 942	28
Professionals	3 327	28 065	8
Specialists	2 249	29 224	13
Technical staff	848	17 499	21
Trade and service workers	2 830	50 106	18
Skilled agricultural workers	856	12 190	14
Skilled workers with tools	5 575	24 631	4
Workers for maintenance, operation of technological equipment	5 398	45 219	8
The simplest professions	2 940	39 480	13
The coefficient of asymmetry	1,7274		

Source: Compiled according to the State Employment Service and the authors' calculations

By type of economic activity, among the unemployed who had professional experience, 20% had previously worked in agriculture; 18% - in wholesale and retail trade; 16% - in public administration and social insurance; 13% - at the enterprises of the processing industry. The structure of vacancies in terms of economic activities was as follows: 24% of vacancies were offered in agriculture; 18% - at the enterprises of the processing industry; 13% - in wholesale and retail trade; 7% - in the field of transport; 7% - in the field of education; 6% - in the field of health; 6% - in public administration and defense (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of vacancies and number of unemployed as of May 1, 2022 (by type of economic activity)

Type of economic activity	Number of vacancies, units	Number of unemployed, persons	Load per 1 vacancy, persons
Agriculture	3 918	41 179	11
The mining industry	465	2 630	6
Manufacturing industry	5 973	36 004	6
Electricity supply	854	5 931	7
Water supply	580	2 558	4
Construction	876	10 158	12
Wholesale and retail trade	3 178	48 555	15
Transport	2 084	14 554	7
Catering	575	7 122	12
Information and telecommunications	135	3 386	25
Financial activities	157	5 763	37
Real estate transactions	247	2 091	8
Professional and scientific activity	495	5 244	11
Administrative and support services	834	5 703	7
Governance	1 267	37 248	29
Education	1 044	8 891	9
Health care	2 221	13 634	6
Art	205	1 705	8
The coefficient of asymmetry	1,9033		

Source: Compiled according to the State Employment Service and the authors' calculations

The depth of disparities is estimated using the asymmetry coefficient based on the use of the load indicator per vacancy in terms of occupational groups and economic activities. The value of the asymmetry coefficient from 1.1 to 1.3 and from 0.9 to 0.7 indicates the presence of a low level of asymmetry of the professional structure of the labor market, in which the

degree of differences is insignificant and can be adjusted by implementing a number of government measures labor market. The value of the indicator in the range from 1.3 to 1.5 and from 0.7 to 0.5 indicates the observation of the average level of asymmetry of the labor market and the beginning of significant distortions in the professional structure of the market. The value of the asymmetry coefficient from 1.5 to 1.8 and from 0.5 to 0.3 indicates a high level of asymmetry of the labor market and the presence of very significant distortions of the professional structure. Values of more than 1.8 and less than 0.3 indicate a critical imbalance in the labor market and a very high level of asymmetry.

The results of calculations by professional groups and types of economic activity allowed us to assess the depth of the existing disparities in the labor market of Ukraine. The obtained values show that the depth of disparities in professional groups is high, and in the types of economic activity it has reached a critical level. Solving the problems of the modern Ukrainian labor market in terms of overcoming existing disparities largely lies in increasing the level of professional mobility.

Therefore, for Ukraine, increasing employment and providing enterprises with labor during the war and the period of economic recovery remains extremely important to ensure professional mobility of labor, which will strengthen its adaptability, competitiveness and increase its use.

An important role in the formation of professional mobility belongs to educational institutions of all levels, vocational training and retraining, which should form in their graduates not only knowledge, skills and abilities of professionals, but also to ensure the ability and willingness to apply them in practice. Due to continuous changes in the scientific and technical sphere, production needs such qualified personnel who are able to perform functions with new content, it is the customer of educational services and makes specific demands on potential employees.

The focus of the educational process should be a graduate adapted to work in the dynamic world of science, technology, technology, communications and relations, able to find solutions in any situation due to professional activity. Accordingly, the approach to the training of future qualified specialists should change.

Today, the prerequisite for guaranteed employment is the quality of qualifications. Formation of the content of education and vocational training on a competency basis in accordance with the needs of the economy, professional standards, the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework, implementation of internal and external

quality assurance system - tasks to be solved by each educational and vocational training institution.

Solving the problem of training a competent, flexible, experienced specialist who is able to achieve a certain goal in a dynamic environment, requires the implementation of an effective methodological tool, which, in our opinion, is a competency approach. This approach involves the transition from information as a subject of memorization to the school of thinking, action and development of personality abilities and provides a more complete, personal and socially integrated outcome of education and training ⁸.

Ensuring the training process is impossible without modernizing the educational environment and training, which provides innovation, accessibility, transparency, flexibility and openness of the educational process to obtain professional qualifications for different categories of the population, taking into account gender equality; creation of a multilevel quality system of teacher training with the involvement of highly qualified workers in the educational process of production or services; introduction of motivational mechanisms to stimulate the professional development of teaching staff and new approaches to the organization of the educational process, modern forms and methods of acquiring qualifications. In this context, the optimization of the introduction of innovative teaching methods and tools in the educational process through the maximum consolidation of resources of the educational organization, development of scientific and methodological and logistical base, providing regulatory, informational, statistical and didactic support.

Stimulating the development of public-private partnership in the field of educational and vocational training in Ukraine will promote the modernization of educational and industrial technologies by combining the potential of the state with the resources of private business; diversification of sources of funding for education at all levels; improving the quality of educational services of educational institutions through the introduction of progressive practices of cooperation between business and the education system.

⁸ I.I. Drach, *Competence approach in the preparation of undergraduates in higher school pedagogy*, "Dorado-Print", Kyiv, 2013, 456 p.

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COVID-19-ASSOCIATED DISCRIMINATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

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Abstract: *The current research aimed to investigate the influence of COVID-19 in relation to social stigma against COVID-19 suffered people in educational institutions. The author shares her experience of developing the project "Assisting Moldovan English-Speaking Community's Social Awareness 2020-2021", implemented in the Academy of Economic Studies from Moldova (ASEM), aimed to avoid discrimination and stigma around coronavirus. Based on the results of the project, the present article delves into stigma associated with the COVID-19 pandemic among student. It reveals that only integrated activities of the students, the management staff, lecturers and parents can bring expected results - university that is free of discrimination.*

Keywords: *COVID-19, higher education, discrimination, stigma, pandemic outbreak.*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had a wide and immediate impact on higher education, forcing institutions to make an urgent transition to emergency distance learning. UNESCO estimates that over 1.5 billion students in 165 countries were out of school due to the COVID-19 pandemic¹.

Although Higher Education institutions were quick to replace face-to-face activities with video conferencing and online learning, these closures affected learning and assessments, as well as relationships between students, work teams, projects etc. The pandemic was stressful for both students and educators, who had to deal with the emotional, physical and economic difficulties. The challenges facing teachers and students at the university were complex and diverse. They have already been described in a number of researches².

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¹ G. Marinoni, H. Van't Land, and T. Jensen, *The Impact of Covid-19 on Higher Education Around the World. IAU Global Survey Report*. Available at: https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iau_covid19_and_he_survey_report_final_may_2020.pdf

² See, for example: OECD (2020), *Trends Shaping Education. Coronavirus special edition*. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/Spotlight-21-Coronavirus-special->

All these (and many other) numerous works reveals that the COVID-19 related university closure affected not only learning but also other social aspects such as mental health, violence or deepening social inequalities. The response by the government, civil society and the development partners has been swift and resolute, but there are still gaps and challenges that remain to be addressed.

Against this background, this study offers a preliminary assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education within the framework of a selected university, with a special focus on equity and non-discrimination, based on the results of the project "Assisting Moldovan English-Speaking Community's Social Awareness 2020-2021". The project was designed to develop awareness about COVID-19 associated discrimination and to mobilize action against this discrimination in students' communities. While it is too early to form a clear picture of the COVID-19 multiple effects and consequences, it is possible to analyze the main challenges it presents and to see the range of responses from university students. The study seeks to evaluate, in particular, the special hardships encountered by students from a given group and the effectiveness of policies and measures put in place to protect and support them at the institutional level.

Of course, the results cannot be generalized due to the limited number of participants. Thus, the project results can be replicated on a larger sample as a recommendation.

Education and COVID-19 in the Republic of Moldova

The global COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented crisis and one of the greatest tests that Moldova has ever faced. Although it started as a

edition-Back-to-school.pdf; UNESCO (2020), *COVID-19 and higher education: Today and tomorrow. Impact analysis, policy responses and recommendations*. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375693>; García-Morales, J. Víctor; Garrido-Moreno, Aurora & Martín-Rojas, Rodrigo, *The Transformation of Higher Education After the COVID Disruption: Emerging Challenges in an Online Learning Scenario*: *Frontiers in Psychology* 12. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.616059>; P.D. Le; S. Misra; D. Hagen; S.M. Wang; T. Li; S.G. Brenneke; L.H. Yang, & E. Goldmann, (2022), *Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) related discrimination and mental health in five U.S. Southern cities. Stigma and Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sah0000351>; Salmi, J. (2020), *COVID's Lessons for Global Higher Education: Coping with the Present while Building a More Equitable Future*. Lumina Foundation. Available at:

<https://www.luminafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/covids-lessons-for-globalhigher-education.pdf>

health crisis, it resulted in major repercussions on the social protection and assistance system, causing large disruptions in economic activity and limiting social life to dangerous levels. Since March 2020, the public administration system operated in a continuous state of emergency to provide solutions to the problems generated by the crisis. The government implemented a series of countermeasures to reduce the rate of infection with the new virus³.

Thus, on 11 March 2020, Moldovan authorities closed all educational institutions in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Approximately 434,000 students⁴ in all academic institutions at all levels were asked to stay at home, and schools were mandated to provide distance learning opportunities.

The MECR (Ministry of Education, Culture and Research) undertook many activities to ensure that learning continued under the new conditions. MECR, supported by national and international partners, developed a COVID-19 preparedness and response plan, as well as methodologies and regulations for remote education. MECR also launched teachers' training on remote education. MECR also developed an "Instruction on the organization of psychological assistance for children/pupils, parents and teachers during the suspension of the educational process"⁵, methodological guidelines on healthy lifestyle during quarantine, and subsequently launched an educational programme for psychological assistance for young people, parents, teachers and psycho-pedagogues. To deal with the lack of appropriate IT equipment and connectivity to internet, MECR distributed educational packages for children with disabilities and for children with no access to technologies

³ UNICEF (2020), *Education and COVID-19 in the Republic of Moldova: Grasping the opportunity the learning crisis presents to build a more resilient education system*. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/4231/file/Working%20Paper%20Education%20and%20COVID-19%20in%20the%20Republic%20of%20Moldova_FINAL_English%20version.pdf%20.pdf

⁴ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. (2020), *Education in the Republic of Moldova. Statistical Publication 2019/2020*. Available at:

https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Educatia/Educatia_editia_2020.pdf

⁵ Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. (2020, March 27), *Instrucțiunea privind organizarea asistenței psihologice copiilor/elevilor, părinților și cadrelor didactice pe perioada suspendării procesului educațional*. Available at:

https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/ministerul-educatiei-culturii-si_cercetarii-aprobat-instrucțiunea-privind-organizarea

and on-line informational materials on free on-line resources for distance learning and positive parenting during pandemics and recovery period.

Students life in the Time of COVID-19

But the COVID-19 pandemic has also severely impacted the entire higher education sector in psychological aspect. Lives of students have changed, new issues have emerged and new practices have developed. In the context of the pandemic, many people suffered from social and psychological issues, but students were especially impacted by this distress. Data from a recent survey ⁶ of provide an indication of the main problems they face during the pandemic. The results suggest that, globally, the main concerns are social isolation, financial issues, internet connectivity and, generally-speaking, pandemic-related anxiety.

Findings from several studies ⁷ revealed that students were experiencing more academic and psychological difficulties during “digital” semesters. They were concerned about the quality of online course delivery, unsure about the courses’ contents, and untrusted the guidance received from lecturers distantly. Furthermore, many students reported technical difficulties, financial problems, social isolation, and motivation and concentration problems, which are associated with a higher risk of delaying studies or even dropping out of studies.

Because of the online format of classes, some students have developed a feeling of being inferior, of being an imposter, following classes without being really present for their studies, and thus feeling they lack credibility regarding their professional future. There was no separation between studies and personal time, and for many students both were reduced to a lonely and monotonous daily life.

Next aspect is social behavior. University provides structure and routine to the lives of students. Following the routine of getting up at a

⁶ OECD (2021), *The State of Higher Education: One Year into the COVID-19 Pandemic*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/83c41957-en>.

⁷ OECD (2020). *Trends Shaping Education. Coronavirus special edition*. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/education/cei/Spotlight-21-Coronavirus-special-edition-Back-to-school.pdf>;

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Nicoleta Duță, *Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on motivation for learning in the students*: Euromentor Journal Volume XII, No. 4/December, 2021, p. 27- 37;

certain time, going to classes at specific times and coming home at a certain time provides a sense of normalcy in their lives. Expectations for behavior and academic performance are known and familiar. During lockdown students lost this structure and routine. Many were sent home with packets of assignments to complete but it is up to them to decide when and in what order they will do the assignments. At first, this greater amount of freedom and choice feels good – “Finally I get to decide what I want to do!” In short time though, it is easy to fall behind, to be distracted by other more desirable options (Netflix, video games, social media), or to become bored.

For most students school isn't just about academics, it is also about social interactions. Many friendships started by sitting next to each other in class. The highlight of a student's day might be walking down a certain hallway between fifth and sixth period because that's when she can reliably expect to see the person she has a crush on. Groups of friends eat lunch together every day. Through their interactions with teachers and other personnel young people learn to interact with non-family authority figures. In the hallways and classrooms, young people are exposed to a variety of different cultures, perspectives and ways of living that may be different than their own.

Inevitably, the loss of social contact and socialization routines which are part of the daily experience of a higher education student, took its toll. The isolation that invariably comes with confinement had an effect in terms of socio-emotional balance that left its mark, particularly on those students with pre-existing problems of this nature. The more vulnerable students participating in qualifying and remedial programs were more affected by isolation.

Extracurricular activities were also affected by universities closures. Many students enjoy participating in sports, music, school plays, robotics and a variety of other activities. Participation in these activities helps students to be more attractive applicants to colleges, universities and future employers. More importantly though, participation in these activities is an important part of students' identities. They provide a “tribe” of others with whom a common interest and skill set is shared.

The Covid-19 crisis has also exacerbated existing inequalities, putting students in extremely difficult economic situations. Many students have jobs at local restaurants, stores, movie theaters, gyms or other businesses that have closed, reduced the services being offered or reduced their hours of operation. The young people working at these establishments count on

their pay checks to help with household expenses, to pay for things that are important to themselves (e.g. clothes, music, activities), to provide for transportation (e.g. gas, car insurance, car payments), or to save for college or other future endeavors. If their parent(s) or other members of their family have lost jobs or income due to closures, the student may feel even more stress over losing their ability to contribute to the family's financial situation.

The COVID-19 associated stigma and prejudice

One of the most dangerous consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic was a rise in stigma and prejudice.

Stigma refers to a mark of humiliation and shame that sets a person apart from others⁸. Most stigma researchers consider stigma to be a social construction and point to differences in stigmatization throughout time and cultures in terms of which characteristics, actions, or groups are stigmatized⁹.

Stigma in the context of health is the negative association between a person or group of people who share certain characteristics and a specific disease. In an outbreak, this may mean people are labelled, stereotyped, discriminated against, treated separately, and/or experience loss of status because of a perceived link with a disease. Such treatment can negatively affect those with the disease, as well as their caregivers, family, friends and communities. People who don't have the disease but share other characteristics with this group may also suffer from stigma. The COVID-19 outbreak has provoked social stigma and discriminatory behaviours against people who have the virus, people from countries where the virus originated or that are considered hot zones, people who have travelled recently, people who have come in contact with someone who has the virus¹⁰.

Stigma often arises because of fear or uncertainty about something we don't fully understand. Because COVID-19 was new and there were still

⁸ B.A. Pescosolido, *The public stigma of mental illness: What do we think; what do we know; what can we prove?:* Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 54(1), 2013, p.1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022146512471197>

⁹ J. Crocker, B. Major, and C. Steele, *Social Stigma*. In: Gilbert, D.T., Fiske, S.T. and Lindzey, G., Eds., *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, 4th Edition, Vol. 2. Academic Press, New York, 1998, p. 504-553.

¹⁰ See, for example: Muna Abdullah Al-Ghuraibi & Theeb M. Aldossry, *Social Stigma as an outcome of the cultural repercussions toward COVID-19 in Saudi Arabia*: Cogent Social Sciences, 8, 2022, DOI: 10.1080/23311886.2022.2053270

many unknowns, people were anxious. The mass of information flowing through social media and other channels created misconceptions about the disease that caused anxiety.

Stigma hurts everyone by creating more fear or anger toward ordinary people instead of focusing on the disease that is causing the problem. The person infected with COVID-19 tends to hide in order not to turn into a stigmatized person who complies with the community principles and values.

Stigma can also make people more likely to hide symptoms or illness, keep them from seeking health care immediately, and prevent individuals from adopting healthy behaviors. This means that stigma can make it more difficult to control the spread of an outbreak.

The discrimination that results from stigma can appear in various ways, such as:

- referring to COVID-19 as the “foreign virus,” or Asian or Chinese flu.
- blaming a person or group of people who may have the virus for “being careless and spreading the illness”.
- avoiding places associated with myths about the virus, such as Asian restaurants and grocers.
- verbal or physical attacks on certain ethnic groups.
- different treatment of stigmatized people in health care, schools and workplaces.

Stigma obviously affects the people who are targeted, but it can also have a wider impact. For example:

- Stigma can make people feel guilty or bad about themselves if they have the virus.
- It can lead people to become isolated to avoid discrimination.
- People may be less likely to get tested or seek treatment for the virus if they fear they will face discrimination.
- People who have COVID-19, or think they may have come into contact with someone who is infected, might avoid a quarantine to hide the fact they are sick.
- Stigma and discrimination can also increase anxiety, as the person has to worry about how to manage the discrimination.

Stigma is associated with a lack of knowledge about how COVID-19 spreads, a need to blame someone, fears about disease and death, and gossip that spreads rumors and myths.

“Integrating Civic Engagement in Teaching English - Taking Action!” project and higher education and students’ equality

We cannot allow the COVID-19 to serve as a vehicle for xenophobia. So, within the framework of Business English course, taught at the Academy of Economic Studies from Moldova (ASEM), we decided to participate in the project *“Integrating Civic Engagement in Teaching English - Taking Action!”*, which was the part of the international project *“Assisting Moldovan English-Speaking Community’s Social Awareness 2020-2021”*.

The project was designed to develop awareness about COVID-19 associated discrimination and to mobilize action against this discrimination in students’ communities. It investigated the adverse emotions against the infection of COVID-19, reports the features of social stigma, and makes recommendations to limit this wave in societies. The key aspect of the project was collective action for change, project work and active involvement of the students at each and every level of the process, as well as personal commitment. The project was implemented in group MKL -204, Business and Administration Department of the Academy of Economic Studies from Moldova (ASEM).

To achieve the main objectives of the project we did the following:

1. Analyzed the existing educational regulation about COVID-19 (in Moldova and ASEM) in order to identify if it complies with Declaration of Human Rights;
2. Identified cases of micro-aggressions against persons who have or had the COVID-19 witnessed in the classroom and on campus;
3. Co-created with students culturally sensitive mechanisms for disclosing instances of discrimination COVID-19 suffered people;
4. Drafted surveys questionnaire for people who tested positive for COVID-19, have recovered from being sick with COVID-19, or were released from COVID-19 quarantine;
5. Carried out surveys and interviews with people who tested positive for COVID-19, have recovered from being sick with COVID-19, or were released from COVID-19 quarantine (anonymous);
6. Based on the results of the survey and interviews assessed and evaluated the extent of discrimination and stigma around coronavirus;

7. Designed the main messages aimed to combat xenophobia against persons who have or had the COVID-19;
8. A video presenting best practices was produced to help disseminate the project outcomes.

The video reveals the students experience and their attitude to COVID-19 associated discrimination. Students were offered to answer the questions such as:

- How did they feel when they first heard that they had tested positive?
 - Did they immediately tell their family and university mates?
 - Have they had problems with their self-confidence or self-esteem?
 - Is it embarrassing to be sick with COVID-19?
 - Have they felt during that period of great pressure and tension?
 - What was the reaction of respondents' social networks?
 - Have they exposed to bullying, physical violence or harassment?
 - Have they been blamed for being infected?
 - Have they discussed their disease with university friends?
 - Have they ever felt or experienced that they were ignored, labeled, discriminated, or stereotyped for being infected with COVID-19?
- Do they feel that people avoid them because of their infection even after recovery?
 - Have students refused to visit their home because of this condition even after their recovery?
 - Do they think that patients with COVID-19 are rejected by society?

So, some fragments from the video are quite representative. For example, some interviewee talked about how he/she saw himself after being infected with COVID-19:

"I did not take it seriously, and it was a shock to know that I was infected. How did it happen just like that?! I guess it is not my fault. (...) This is a disease, there is nothing wrong about it and there is nothing shameful for me."

"I was committed to all the announced precautions (...) I am surprised why people are embarrassed by it as if they have done something wrong or something that harms their reputation. I see myself as innocent, but if others do not accept it, it is their problem."

According to an interviewee who had recovered from COVID-19:

"I am disgraced towards friends and colleagues. Instead of giving me their support, they have become more hurtful than corona. I do not know if I transmitted it to others, and actually, I no longer care. I do not like to be in places where there are a lot of people and I would rather be alone."

Another participant says:

"Yes, my group mates congratulate me on recovery, but I realize that they care only about themselves and they are not checking on me at all. I was taken by surprise when I saw their reactions while I was sick. Believe me, people's reactions to my sickness are something that I cannot forget; it was harsh. In the beginning, I kept apologizing; but in the end, I stopped caring. Furthermore, I can tell now false friends from true friends, and they are many."

Another view was presented by an interviewee:

"The support for students from both the university and the government has been exceptional. If a pandemic similar to Covid-19 ever happens again, I am confident that ASEM will be able to keep everyone safe."

A participant described his view of society ideal reaction:

"We need to be more aware of and sympathetic towards patients and less fearful by attacking, making up rumors, and accusing people of lack of awareness. We need to be more supportive and compassionate than ever before."

To support it, one of our female interviewees says:

"Instead of gloating or cursing the infected, people should be more sympathetic even after recovery. Everybody wants to leave behind the pain of illness and the pain of stigma, as it is called. After recovery, we all need social rehabilitation from the shock of being infected. "

For overcoming social stigma, a male participant suggests:

"Active bullies on social media should be punished. It is unacceptable, whether on social media platforms or in private WhatsApp groups, to publish false news about a person who is infected for not staying in quarantine and claim that they transmitted it to the family of another person. The patient is in a critical state and needs support, rather than judgment, stigma, and being cut off. I call for punishment for people who publish lies and rumors."

The key aspect is how participants became much more aware of their active appraisal and monitoring of friendships during COVID restrictions. As a student explains:

"I really noticed who my friends were and who I probably would not speak to after lockdown was over who I would not go back and socialise with because it yeah."

A student, for example, stresses friendship's importance to maintain her mental health:

"Because I think friendship over this lockdown like saved my life. Because you need people just to talk with them and like to share with you your future plan [...] So they became more important than my past life."

One answer shows how COVID-19 restrictions have made him/her revisit his/her own expectations and sense of duties as a friend:

"I think these times obviously highlighted the true friendship"

The context of COVID-19 restrictions seemed to distil the value of friendships and enable participants to learn and grow:

"So let us say that we lived in the normal world, no pandemic and these people suddenly started drifting away, that would have really bothered me."

The participants emphasized the importance of their realization that support, especially in times of crisis, could help to alleviate anxiety and improve mental health.

"Any forms of communication with friends and loved ones can be very helpful, whether that be via phone calls, Zoom calls, or social media. This also allows the student to communicate changing or worsening symptoms, and get further help if necessary."

One student summed this up saying:

"So, I think it's just really, the importance of the friendship and the support system has just been highlighted throughout the pandemic."

As we can notice, the students' answers show a tendency to feel compassionate. This compassion arises from a concern for the person with the infection. However, some individuals view people with COVID-19 as a threat to themselves, their families, and society. Some of participants indicating they had experienced everyday slights or insults due to perceptions of having the coronavirus. The strongest associations were between everyday discrimination and psychological distress, and for major discrimination with worsened mental health since the pandemic began.

Of course, the results cannot be generalized due to the limited number of participants. Thus, the project results can be replicated on a larger sample as a recommendation.

Conclusions

Distance learning experiences so far have provided valuable lessons, including the criticality of the educational system to be able to quickly adapt to various realities. Traditional education should not only be adapted and reformed, but this reform process should embrace opportunities to innovate, and thereby become more open to respond to the current needs of students.

It is clear that the future of higher education needs rethinking in many ways. International and multilateral cooperation within the higher education sector and with policymakers, communities and other stakeholders will need to be increased and strengthened. The short term consequences of COVID-19 are an eye-opener and a start for addressing the long term consequences to be faced. The lessons learned so far must guide future developments of the sector as a whole.

In this context, the project “Assisting Moldovan English-Speaking Community’s Social Awareness 2020-2021”, implemented in the Academy of Economic Studies from Moldova (ASEM), seems to be quite relevant. The outcome of the project was sensitising students of higher education to the issue of discrimination and mobilizing them to undertake activities aiming to combat discrimination. Thanks to the project implementation, a group of young people aged 19-20 were learned how to recognize violations of human rights and how to design activities aiming to counteract unequal treatment.

The project suggests that efforts to respond to COVID-related stigma and discrimination and its impacts on mental health should consider the potentially long-lasting impacts of both preexisting and COVID-related stigma and discrimination even after the immediate pandemic ends.

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HUMANISM AND TRANSHUMANISM—SHAPING AN IMPOSSIBLE DIALOGUE?

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***Abstract:** The term "transhumanism" has emerged in connection with the development of artificial intelligence and, more recently, with the robotization of thinking and communication. It imprints a new concern with philosophical debates on new topics related to transhumanism. Extensive fields of socio-humanistic sciences and disciplines are involved in these debates: ethics, aesthetics, axiology, communication sciences, psychology, psychosociology, anthropology, linguistics etc. One can also perceive the possible concerns of philosophers with the new status that man could have in relation to future forms of technological improvements of the human body, as well as to the robots created for various interactions with humans. A possible dethronement of Man from the position of supreme value of the known universe, of center of all approaches to knowledge, evaluation and transformation of reality — the ancient status of man, i.e. "measure of all things" (Protagoras) is quite debatable. Is this a reasonable concern? Is there enough data to suggest the "end of humanism"? Our paper tackles these questions.*

***Keywords:** human condition, technological determinism, philosophy, transhumanism, humanism.*

Historical avatars of humanism

Humanism does not exist as such, but rather as a plurality of humanisms; in the twentieth century people talked of speculative and scientific, rationalist and religious, existentialist or Christian, evolutionist or aesthetic humanism — finally, real, revolutionary, Marxist or integral humanism. In the 21st century, a new perspective on the human condition emerged: transhumanism. The "dialogue of the humanisms" (Roger Garaudy) unfolded, so far, as a confrontation of the humanisms, which

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makes it rather difficult, in our opinion, to reach a consensus on a common future. The revolutions of the late twentieth century, which led to the collapse of the communist regime in many countries around the world, allowed us to see that the alignments of the struggle for a better society and for the safeguarding of civilization are not those drawn during the Cold War. The true alignments separate the manifestations that lead to a full development of man-specific capacities, favoring Life, from those that paralyze the exercise by billions of people of the essentially human faculties, impeding Life.

All "progressive ideologies" were variants of humanism. They are constituted as answers (systematically elaborated) to a perennial question: "How is the humanization of man and of his world possible?". The answers to this question differed and still differ depending on the vast diversity of practical behaviors, conceptions about the world, ways of thinking and cognitive styles. Therefore, we are talking about a plurality of humanisms. This plurality led, in our century, to what Roger Garaudy called, six decades ago, the "dialogue of humanisms", in *Perspectives de l'homme*. Unfortunately, the lack of real dialogue, the replacement of confrontation with conflict, led to "the quarrel of humanisms" (the same Garaudy)¹.

We consider that the return to dialogue is a *sine qua non* condition for the future foundation of a broad alliance against anti-humanist tendencies, against all forces which, by their actions, demean man and endanger his life and the civilization he has created. Three decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, it has become clear that the decisive battle for the future of civilization is being waged on the barricade that separates the contempt for man and his life from the love for what he represents and could represent — in short, the separation of the contempt for life from the "reverence for life" (Albert Schweitzer).

The collapse of the Berlin Wall (itself a diversionary barricade, for it did not separate what it claimed to separate) allows us to see that most of the alignments of the struggle for a more humane society were either illusory (tributary to the "wartime" psychology) or circumstantial (required by the logistics of the "behind the front line organization"). The following question thus arises: is one of these alignments the struggle between humans and robots — in other words, between the *humanity* in us and the technology created by some of us? Does the creature ends up

¹ Garaudy went back on this idea in Garaudy, Roger, *The Marxism of the 20th Century*, 1969, pp. 35-74, 106-168).

dominating the creator to the point where the latter has to fight his creature? So far we have been told that Pygmalion falls in love with his creation, being led to believe that he falls in love with himself, with a Self objectified through creation (Pygmalion as a disguised Narcissus!).

In cases where idiosyncrasy towards other ideologies is elevated to the rank of constitutive principle or derived statement of the ideology in question (for example, the "new right"), we are dealing with an *explicit* assumption of the paradigm of conflict. In other cases (for example, Christian humanism), the representatives in the position of conflict are prisoners of other ideologies, at least in some "areas" of their philosophical thinking and conception — a completely subjective and random fact in relation to the internal logic of the conception they claim to represent.

In our view, the approach within the paradigm of conflict is equivalent to the framing in full ideological alienation; the attitude of resistance represents, in this case, an alienated attitude, determined by the *alienated and alienating character of the very ideology* which generates it.

We shall further present our own forming model of the *conception*. Regardless of their degree of generality, they are the most complex ideological formations (Popper would generically call them "theories"); humanisms are among them. The hierarchical model of conceptions will allow us to define some of the conditions of possibility of the *alliance of humanisms*.

In the case of humanism, its various theoretical forms share the same fundamental attitude: the care for man, the concern to humanize the world, to transform it into a world in which individuals can live humanely. As one contemporary thinker writes, "all the norms of the major humanistic religions, such as Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islamism, or those of the great humanistic philosophers, from pre-Socrates to contemporary thinkers, are specific elaborations of this general principle of values. Overcoming cupidity, loving one's neighbor, knowing the truth (which means something other than uncritical knowledge of the facts) are common goals of all religious systems and all humanistic philosophies of the West and the East"². Trying to find the common root of various progressive ideologies, Chombart de Lauwe concludes that the spiritual aspirations themselves are independent of churches and an economic or political regime: "identical points of view are more and more often supported by representatives of different denominations and by

² Erich Fromm, *Selected Texts*. Bucharest, Political Press, 1983, p. 345.

supporters of atheism"³. In the militant action, for example, some "believers" may be just as active and sometimes even more active than "unbelievers"; the French author gives the example of Buddhist monks in Vietnam during the American occupation, or Catholics who fought in the Anti-Fascist Resistance in France (referred to by Louis Aragon when he wrote the famous poem about "those who believe in heaven and those who do not"). From a sociological point of view, argues Chombart de Lauwe, these convergences have a meaning: *aspirations for change, for new forms of action and thinking are manifested everywhere, regardless of the old traditional affiliations*⁴. When he says "aspirations", he means what we mean when we say "fundamental attitude."

In his paper presented at the World Congress of Sociology in Toronto (1974), entitled "The Contradictions of Industrial Civilization"⁵, Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe drew attention to the fact that the authors who fought humanism so far have fought, in fact, a myth — without understanding either its relationship to practice or the need for a new humanism. A methodical analysis of the different types of humanism is necessary, taking into account the historical conditions in which we place our observations.

In fact, Chombart de Lauwe proposes a propaedeutics for the implementation of an integral humanism: "No general reflection is valid if the researcher is not aware of the conditions in which it occurs and of the influence that these conditions exert on him. The best way to avoid misunderstandings is to show in what particular conditions the author worked and how he developed the hypotheses of a certain type of culture and in a certain historical period". Confessing that "this is the only objectivity he believes in", Chombart de Lauwe tells us, in fact, that if he wants to discover the truth about man, the researcher must apply to himself the same criteria that he applies in the analysis of other philosophical currents, which — more often than not — he likes to "reveal" as being socially-historically conditioned: "Only the deepening of observation in these conditions which get better and better controlled can provide a guarantee for valid methodical transpositions and the discovery of some fundamental mechanisms"⁶.

³ Chombart de Lauwe, Paul-Henry, *For a Sociology of aspirations (Elements for New Perspectives in Human Sciences)*. Cluj, Dacia, 1972, p. 49.

⁴ *Idem, op. cit.*, pp. 49-50.

⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 35-59.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

Is it possible to find convergent aspirations in the populations of all societies — despite opposing economic systems, material and social inequalities, different ideologies? If so, then there is a chance to find a solution to the disintegration that is likely to jeopardize the very existence of mankind. In order to go this way, however, an obstacle must be overcome: "the betrayal of humanisms." According to the French author, four humanistic illusions should be denounced: 1. Technocratic humanism; 2. Idealistic humanism; 3. Naturist humanism, and 4. "Scientific" humanism⁷.

In "The Profits of a New Humanism"⁸, George Uscătescu states that almost all humanisms today in fashion are in conflict. Therefore, philosophical speculation feels, more dramatically than ever, the need to reconcile the conflicts between different humanisms in a *fruitful and current synthesis*; to open a path toward understanding in the confusing and interwoven fields of contemporary humanisms. "All humanisms — says Uscătescu — imply, in fact, a vital attitude, a concrete mentality, a philosophy understood as praxis"⁹. In the spiritual climate inaugurated by Goethe and continued by Marx, Nietzsche, etc., the plurality of humanisms emerged, a fairly recent phenomenon, "apparently contemporary with the discovery of man by philosophy"¹⁰.

If the conflicts between humanisms were limited to the field of dialectics, it would be more appropriate to speak of a "huge confusion" between humanisms, rather than of conflicts. But today's humanism is no longer able to distinguish between its limits and the limits of terror: "The adventures of dialectics lead intentions, although animated by the ideologies of humanism, to the dark realms of terror"¹¹. That is why, says Uscătescu, we must move away from the adventure of contemporary humanism and move towards its "authentic core". What is new in all current forms of humanism is the ideological basis. "This basis always implies the presence of man in his most diverse hypostasis, but of a man as rhetorical element. Not of the real man, with his real problems, with his real profile, with his real existence, with his humanity"¹².

⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 55-58.

⁸ Uscătescu, George, *Trial of Humanism*. Bucharest, Political Press, 1987, pp. 35-55.

⁹ *Idem*, *op. cit.*, 1987, p. 36.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 40-41.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 41.

In George Uscătescu's view, the protection of the European culture, the rediscovery of its unity entail the capitalization of its deepest idea, prior to humanism and human sciences: the idea of Freedom. The issue of culture is the issue of freedom or, more precisely, it is the issue named by Paul Hazard "the eternal conflict between authority and freedom"¹³, if not the one that can be formulated, and more precisely, in Glucksmann's terms: the opposition between the real freedom of the "common people" and the "authority of knowledge" that can give rise to an ideology definable as "the science of authority, the science of all methods, ideas and behaviors that allow the conquest, preservation and consolidation of power in the twentieth century"¹⁴.

This perspective, open to Culture and Freedom, presupposes a new philosophy, a new "metaphysical conscience" (Uscătescu). Didn't Max Scheler announce, in the *Sociology of Knowledge*, a new "metaphysical age", a new cultural synthesis that would make possible the *universal man* as essence?

The impossible dialogue

As we believe, between the various humanisms and the new transhumanist philosophy there is no common ground of concepts and worldview; that's why it is hard to believe that a fruitful dialogue could take place. This is because the current coordinates of the technical evolution in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Human Enhancement Technologies (HET) seem to outline, through transhumanism, a new "science of authority". But it sounds more like a strange ideology (although it is considered a philosophy), as long as the very concept of *consciousness*, along with other main concepts, is eluded in the discourse of specialists in these fields. As an ideology, trans- or post-humanism presents a perspective on man just as a precarious organism, a "human" as *soma*¹⁵, which can and must be improved in terms of longevity and cognitive abilities. Of course, anyone would agree with this need of the human being to be helped, assisted, improved in sanity, for the sake of the quality of human life. But anyone still agrees that a human being is far more than a *soma*, a simple mortal body.

To point this out, in this paper we are focusing not on the multiple benefits of AI and HET, which obviously are very precious to our life, but

¹³ Hazard, Paul, *Crisis of the European Conscience. 1680-1715*, Bucharest, Univers, 1973, p. 79.

¹⁴ Glucksmann, André, *The Cook and the Man Eater*. Bucharest, Humanitas, 1991, p. 59.

¹⁵ The ancient Greek word for "body".

on the possible problems and risks, which already arise and will grow, if they have not been addressed wisely; by this, we understand a large media platform dedicated to social dialogue and debate, with the participation of top specialists in various domains, including philosophy and research ethics. Of course, this dialogue would be followed by some publications, the result of which would be of strategic interest for the authorities enabled to decide on the implementation of the new technologies. As we believe, the implications of the new technologies and devices are too important for the humankind to be let at the disposal of only a few technicians, administrators and very rich owners.

Unfortunately, by now, the transhumanist “philosophical” perspective seems a perspective devoid of the essential attributes of man, undoubtedly recognized in the universal culture for millennia—reason, common sense, personality, moral conscience, wit, wisdom, unconscious behaviour, affectivity, free will, intuition, creativity, religiosity, sense of humor, inspiration, fantasy etc. This futurist orientation seems to be outlined around only two elements: memory and intelligence; and the fact that human memory and human intelligence have been far surpassed by the performance of new artificial systems seems to lead transhumanist technicians not only to neglect the other precious attributes of human being, but also to consider that future transhuman people will be superior to mankind. More than that, also in a desirable utopic perspective, the transhuman people will be immortal. This seems to function as the main attraction mentioned in most discourses which are promoting trans- or post-humanism.

It is the case of the American-Iranian futurist philosopher who adopted the name FM-2030, in order to erase any trace of human identity (such as nationality, age, gender, ethnicity etc.). FM-2030 was publicly cultivating this aspiration and belief that, by 2030, when he would be 100 years old, people will be able to travel around the Solar System, and their organisms will be improved and adapted to living in space, and the human lives could be extended much more, ultimately reaching "physical immortality"¹⁶.

¹⁶ *Larry King interviews futurist FM-2030*, film posted at January 9, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkMVzEft7Og>; *Getting ready: the 1990's: An interview with FM-2030*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrnIV0Pn9Wk>

Another case is the British futurist philosopher Max More¹⁷, who coined the current term "transhumanism". He depicted transhumanism as an ideological replacement of any religious belief: "Now that we understand the functions of religion, we can see that a narrow scientism will not succeed in replacing it. (...) The growth of humanism over the decades has begun this job, but now it is time to utilize the more inclusive and memetically attractive option of transhumanism. (...) No more gods, no more faith, no more timid holding back. Let us blast out of our old forms, our ignorance, our weakness, and our mortality. The future is ours."¹⁸

As a matter of fact, these two transhumanist perspectives are not descriptive scientific considerations, although they intend to strongly endorse the aspiration to immortality; they are nothing but desires to surpass our human weaknesses as a species, as human nature, and to go beyond it, backed by technological implants.

Now, leaving aside this naïve philosophy and all the possible advantages of these new revolutionary technologies, we will cite a document which emphasizes certain risks and future conflicts that they could entail. It is the *SIENNA* project¹⁹ on emerging technologies, an international research program developed at the University of Twente, the Netherland²⁰, being published in 2020 under the auspices of the European Commission and under the title: *SIENNA Report*. This document addressed ethical issues in the emerging technologies (human genomics, human enhancement, human-machine interaction), raised issues related to human rights, and developed tools for the ethical management of new technologies, research ethics protocols and professional ethical codes.

Here are some of the possible future risks and problems highlighted in this report: the right to privacy; the ownership and censorship of expensive HET; expansion of social inequalities and discrimination; freedom to be "imperfect"; the military misuse of emerging technologies; addiction to emerging technologies; problems of security, safety and liability etc.

¹⁷ Max More has the Alcor Life Extension Foundation, where there is the cryogenized body of FM-2030, who died by a terminal disease in 2000.

¹⁸ More, Max, *Transhumanism—Towards a Futurist Philosophy*, 1990, <https://web.archive.org/web/20051029125153/http://www.maxmore.com/transhum.htm>

¹⁹ In section "D3.4: Ethical Analysis of Human Enhancement Technologies —WP3 Human Enhancement", *SIENNA Report*, 12.05.2020, pp. 77-88, <https://www.sienna-project.eu/about-sienna/>

²⁰ *SIENNA Report*, <https://www.sienna-project.eu/about-sienna/>

Maybe the most concerning would be the possible weaponization of enhancements. It is known that, throughout history, the military domain has first benefited from technological innovations and inventions, so that only after their moral wear and tear and their upgrade they were disseminated to the general public. The same can be predicted in connection with HET, even until the design of what the SF films called *The Universal Soldier*, *Robocop*, *Terminator* etc.

Finally, the reshaping of human nature would predictably lead to a new form of man's alienation, by amputating his ability to decide autonomously, to exercise his free will, to be, essentially, free. No matter how appealing, at some point, this "overcoming" of the human condition may be, it still casts a long shadow over too many essential aspects that make human life worth living, determining man to reasonably pursue happiness.

Also, on its positive, promising side, this overcoming of the human condition does not go beyond the appearance of a long-awaited miracle; if we didn't manage, by some miracle, to happily surpass ourselves as species, as human nature, then we are likely to witness a new metaphysical illusion: that of believing we can jump over our own shadow and become immortals.

However, at some point, the report says that SIENNA partners conducted limited studies of academic literature and media articles on the topic of ethics of human enhancement in their institution's country and received studies from eleven countries: Brazil, China, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. But the task "has managed, however, to demonstrate how sporadic the study of HET is at present around the world"²¹.

Final considerations

Our initial concern at the beginning of this paper was if there have been gathered certain data in the field of AI and HET to suggest a future "end of humanism"? Or, on the contrary, we could ask ourselves if the new status of the human being rather force us to rethink the values of humanism? Can we outline a more realistic, more active and more efficient humanism, as a complement to the humanism known so far, which has been, in our opinion, quite narcissistic, contemplative and rather powerless?

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

These questions marked our paper which was trying to tackle the defining coordinates of humanism up to the twentieth century, as well as those of transhumanism, at least as they come to light from certain recent texts and statements of some of its promoters, in the public space. Our opinion is that we cannot be unresponsive to the chasm between the two perspectives on man, on human nature and on human condition. The way the future of our civilization will look like will also depend on the answers we seek, and the one each of us will embrace in the future. It is an open, very complex issue, which is becoming growingly intricate, given the new technical achievements in the field of Artificial Intelligence and their fast pace. However, the implications in everyone's daily life cannot be left to the debates and decisions taken only in the small groups of AI specialists. It is a topic that requires specialists with diverse skills, in all areas, to speak out, for the sake of all members of the human species.

In order to save the future, a shift in paradigm is needed, which would allow the understanding of the directions of evolution of our contemporary society in new, contemporary terms, and not in terms in which the former issues of the human condition were articulated. In this context, we consider that the debates on transhumanism have two shortcomings: on the one hand, a deficit of actuality and, on the other hand, the absence of the ethical referential proposed by Judeo-Christianity.

In this paper, we tried to answer the question of whether robotization and hyper-technologicalization could endanger humanism itself; it seems that they endanger just one of its historical forms, for example, the ideological or "rhetorical humanism" (George Uscătescu). As such, we think that by approaching transhumanism within the old paradigm, built around a "man as rhetorical element" (G. Uscătescu), we come close to an ideological alienation. Disalienation presupposes a "new metaphysics" (Max Scheler), without which we will not be able to understand and benefit from the current technological progress and, consequently, we will not be able to take advantage of its good fruits. Furthermore, it would be desirable that the "new metaphysics" help us avoid biting in its poisoned fruits, becoming prisoners of a new alienation. This "new metaphysics" is a term that seeks to include the most important philosophical conclusions of ethical, psychological, anthropological, social, religious etc. debates on the future interactions between man and robot. Of course, as we have stressed before, shaping it is a task for many communities of specialists in the years to come.

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