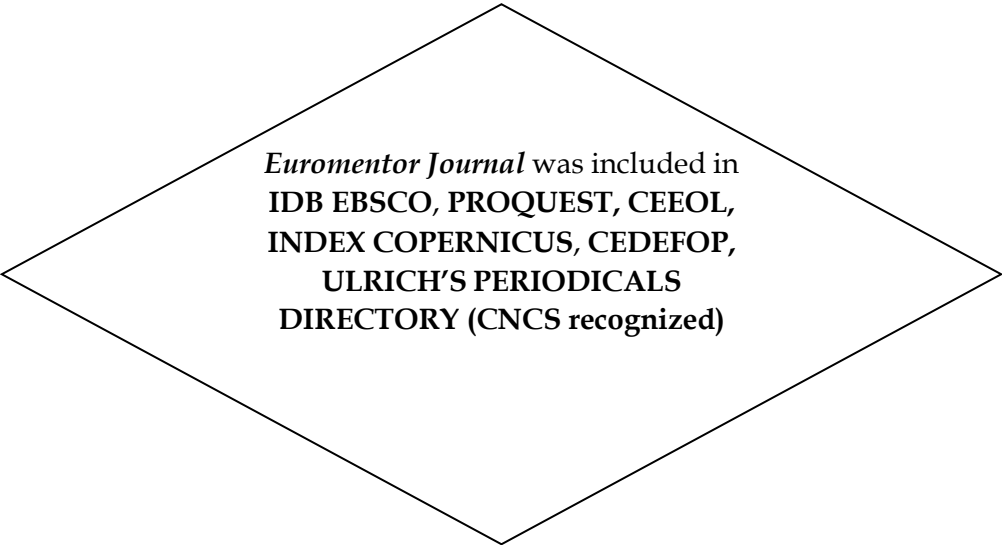


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Phone: (021) - 330.79.00, 330.79.11, 330.79.14
Fax: (021) - 330.87.74
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STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

SIMONA MARIA GLĂVEANU*,

simona.glaveanu@ueb.education

SOFIA BRATU**,

sofia.bratu@valahia.ro

ALEXANDRA COJOCARU***

alexandra.cojocaru@cni.ro

Abstract: *The general objective of the research aimed to investigate the attitude of high school students towards artificial intelligence (AI) from the perspective of descriptive analysis in order to know its particularities at a general level and to identify harmonization steps. The subjects of the research are 87 students from three specialization profiles within two high schools in Bucharest who completed the ATTARI-12 scale (Stein et al., 2024) in adapted form ($0.55 < r > 0.41$, $0.16 < r^2 > 0.29$; $\alpha = 0.72$) via a GoogleForms link. The results of the research, processed by IBM SPSS Statistics v 23, showed that 63% of the students have an open attitude towards AI; over 52% are interested in courses or training in the field of AI, only 20% of students express distrust or serious fears related to AI, the items on dangers and ethics obtain more balanced scores (30–40%), indicating moderate concerns. Although the objective of the research was achieved, due to the small number of subjects ($N=87$), the research represents a pilot study with associated limitations - not being able to extrapolate the conclusions; they only serve to support future studies that include a series of mediating variables and for the formulation of practical steps to harmonize the attitude of high school students towards AI. In conclusion, although the attitude of high school students towards artificial intelligence is mostly positive, it is important to pay increased attention to education regarding the responsible and ethical use of AI.*

Keywords: *high school students, artificial intelligence, types, programs, psychosocial factors, approaches to harmonizing students' attitudes.*

* Lecturer PhD. at the Faculty of Psychology, Department of Psychopedagogical Training-Ecological University of Bucharest and research associates at the “Constantin Radulescu-Motru” Institute of Philosophy and Psychology of the Romanian Academy;

** Associate Professor PhD. at Faculty of Humanities, Valahia University

*** Professor at Iulia Hasdeu National College in Bucharest.

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming increasingly present in everyday life, influencing education, communication and the way people interact with technology. In this context, it is essential to understand how high school students perceive this technological evolution. Their attitude towards AI can influence how they integrate intelligent technologies into the learning process, but also in their choice of future careers.

Recent research shows that high school students display a diverse range of attitudes towards AI. Many of them are excited about the potential of technology to improve their educational experience^{1,2}.

For example, some students believe that AI can provide personalized assistance in learning, reducing knowledge gaps and providing immediate feedback³.

On the other hand, there are also concerns about data privacy, future job losses, and overreliance on technology⁴.

2. Artificial intelligence programs that can be used by High School students

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming increasingly accessible, and various programs and applications are being created to support learning and developing digital skills. For high school students, using these tools can mean not only understanding theoretical concepts, but also the practical application of technology in various fields.

Among the artificial intelligence programs that are suitable for students, providing resources for education, creativity, and programming, we can mention:

1. AI-assisted learning programs

Khanmigo (Khan Academy + Open AI) Khanmigo is an AI extension of the Khan Academy platform, which functions as a virtual tutor. It

¹ A.D. Topal, *High school students' attitudes towards artificial intelligence: An exploratory study*. Education and Information Technologies, 26, 6785–6800. (2021).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10558-6>

² W. Zhong, J. Ding, X. Cai, J. Yan, & F. Zhu, Knowledge, attitude, and practice towards sleep disorders among high school students: a cross-sectional study. *BMC pediatrics*, 25, 106. (2025).

³ W. Holmes, M. Bialik, & C. Fadel, *Artificial intelligence in education: Promises and implications for teaching and learning*. Center for Curriculum Redesign. (2019). <http://curriculumredesign.org/wp-content/uploads/AI-in-Education.pdf>

⁴ J.E. Cohen, I. Ruthven, & G. Buchanan, Understanding teenagers' attitudes towards artificial intelligence. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 4(CSCW2), 1–22. (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1145/3415197>

provides step-by-step explanations, formulates questions, and helps students learn in an active way, adapted to their level of understanding⁵.

2. Machine learning programs and experiments

Teachable Machine (Google) Teachable Machine allows students to create machine learning models for recognizing images, sounds, or gestures. It is an intuitive platform, suitable for interactive lessons and interdisciplinary projects⁶.

Scratch with AI Extensions Scratch is a visual programming language for students. Through AI extensions, students can add facial, voice, or other intelligent features to their projects, developing computational thinking⁷.

3. Programs for developing creativity DALL·E (OpenAI)

DALL·E is a text-to-image generator that can be used for creative projects: illustrations, presentations, or artwork. Students can visualize abstract concepts or create visual materials for school assignments⁸.

Soundraw / Amper Music. These platforms generate original music with the help of AI. They are useful in multimedia projects, educational films, or presentations, encouraging artistic expression through technology⁹.

4. Advanced programs for getting started in AI programming

Google Colab offers a free Python programming environment, with support for machine learning libraries such as TensorFlow. It is ideal for students interested in computer science, Olympiads, or STEM clubs¹⁰.

IBM Watson Studio

Watson Studio is a professional data analysis and AI development platform that offers free accounts for education. Students can work with real-world datasets and learn the basics of AI in a collaborative environment¹¹.

5. Educational AI robots: LEGO Mindstorms and mBot. These robotics kits can be programmed to respond to stimuli or perform intelligent tasks.

⁵ Khan Academy. *Meet Khanmigo, your AI-powered tutor*. (2023). <https://www.khanacademy.org/khan-labs>

⁶ Google. *(Teachable Machine*. 2023). <https://teachablemachine.withgoogle.com/>

⁷ MIT Media Lab. *Scratch and AI extensions*. (2022). <https://scratch.mit.edu>

⁸ OpenAI. *ChatGPT & DALL·E*. (2024). <https://openai.com/>

⁹ R. Zhou, Artificial Intelligence in music education: Creative tools and ethical considerations. *Educational Technology & Society*, 24(4), 77–85. (2021).

¹⁰ T. Nguyen, Introduction to machine learning in high school: Using Google Colab. *Journal of Computing in Education*, 9(3), 110–121. (2022).

¹¹ IBM. *Watson Studio for Education*. <https://www.ibm.com/cloud/watson-studio>, (2023).

They are useful in practical STEM activities, combining programming with physical applicability¹².

Artificial intelligence programs offer high school students the opportunity to develop essential skills for the future: autonomy in learning, critical thinking, creativity and digital literacy. Integrating them into school and extracurricular activities not only modernizes the educational process, but also makes it more relevant and adapted to a constantly changing world.

Using these programs develops students' critical thinking, creativity and digital skills. In addition, it prepares them for a future in which AI will play a central role in various professional fields (*ibidem*).

Accessible and intuitive AI programs offer high school students the opportunity to learn through practice, stimulating interest in technology and exact sciences. Integrating them into the educational process can contribute to the formation of generations better prepared for the challenges of the future.

3. High school students' attitudes towards Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the most significant technological innovations of the 21st century, having a profound impact on various fields, including education. In this context, it is essential to understand how high school students perceive this emerging technology. Recent studies suggest that their attitudes towards AI are complex and influenced by multiple factors, including their level of understanding of the technology, previous experiences, and ethical concerns.

A study conducted in Ukraine revealed that high school students consider AI to be a valuable tool for improving the educational process, especially in terms of personalizing learning and assisting with homework; however, they also express concerns about possible risks, such as excessive dependence on technology and the impact on cognitive skills¹³.

In another study, students mentioned that AI can be helpful in managing academic tasks, but there are concerns that excessive use could

¹² M. Johnson, & S. Kumar, Robotics and AI in secondary education: Trends and impacts. *International Journal of STEM Education*, 10(2), 55–69. (2023).

¹³ S. Dovgyi, S. Babiichuk, L. Davybida, & M. Biletska, Teachers' and students' attitudes towards the use of artificial intelligence: All-Ukrainian research. *Information Technologies and Learning Tools*, 104(6). (2024).

<https://journal.iitta.gov.ua/index.php/itlt/article/view/5890>

lead to decreased creativity and critical thinking¹⁴. This duality in perception highlights the need for a balance between technological integration and the development of fundamental human skills.

3.1. General factors influencing students' attitudes towards Artificial Intelligence

Several factors can influence how students perceive AI. These include their level of digital literacy, access to technology, family influences and social environment. A study conducted in Greece showed that students with a higher level of digital literacy tend to have a more positive attitude towards AI, while those with limited knowledge are more reluctant¹⁵.

Ethical perceptions also play an important role. Students who are aware of the potential biases and inequities generated by AI, such as gender or racial discrimination, may develop a more critical attitude towards the technology¹⁶.

Regarding the use of AI in education, students show a mixed attitude. On the one hand, they recognize the benefits of AI in personalizing learning and providing rapid feedback. On the other hand, there are fears that AI could replace teachers or diminish human interaction in the educational process¹⁷.

A study conducted in the United States showed that 80% of adolescents believe it is important for authorities to address the risks associated with AI, such as the spread of misinformation and invasion of privacy¹⁸. These concerns highlight the need for ethics education and clear regulations regarding the use of AI in schools.

High school students' attitudes towards artificial intelligence are complex and influenced by a variety of factors. While there is growing

¹⁴ U. Macar, B. Castleman, N. Mauchly, M. Jiang, A. Aouissi, S. Aouissi, X. Maayah, K. Erdem, R. Ravindranath, A. Clark-Sevilla, & A. Salieb-Aouissi, Teenagers and artificial intelligence: Bootcamp experience and lessons learned. (2023). *arXiv*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2312.10067>

¹⁵ P.G. Kelley, Y. Yang, C. Heldreth, C. Moessner, A. Sedley, A. Kramm, D.T. Newman, & A. Woodruff, *Exciting, useful, worrying, futuristic: Public perception of artificial intelligence in 8 countries*. (2019). *arXiv*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2001.00081>

¹⁶ J. Buolamwini, *AI bias and gender equity*. (2023). Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joy_Buolamwini

¹⁷ R. Hanebutt, & S. Revanur, Youth talks: Students reveal their hopes and fears for AI. *Financial Times*. (2023). <https://www.ft.com/content/4f258140-ec75-411e-9d24-deb2755df13a>

¹⁸ S. Gulati, & J. Hausenloy, What teenagers really think about AI. *Time*. (2023). <https://time.com/7098524/teenagers-ai-risk-lawmakers/>

interest in the use of AI in education, it is essential that it is integrated in a way that supports the development of students' critical and creative skills. Digital and ethical education plays a crucial role in shaping informed and responsible attitudes towards AI.

3.2. Psychosocial factors influencing students' attitudes towards Artificial Intelligence

High school students' attitudes towards artificial intelligence are influenced by a complex network of psychosocial factors: from digital skills, to the influence of the social environment and personal values. A clear understanding of these factors is essential to integrate AI into education in a way that supports students' autonomy, responsibility and critical development.

Among the psychosocial factors that can influence students' attitudes towards AI, we mention:

Level of digital literacy. Students' digital skills significantly influence attitudes towards AI. Students who master technological tools tend to show enthusiasm and confidence in the benefits of AI, while those with low skills may feel frustration or fear¹⁹. Also, a lack of understanding of how AI works can fuel myths or unrealistic expectations.

Influence of parents and teachers. The family environment and school play a key role in shaping attitudes. If parents and teachers have a positive attitude and promote responsible use of technology, students tend to imitate these behaviors²⁰. Conversely, contradictory or negative messages about the "dangers of AI" can generate reluctance and resistance.

Peer pressure and social belonging. Students are strongly influenced by the opinion of their peers. If the use of AI is perceived as "cool" or advantageous for school results, the attitude is more likely to be positive. Conversely, in groups where the idea that AI is deceptive (e.g. replaces one's own effort) prevails, it may be rejected or used passively²¹.

¹⁹ O. Zawacki-Richter, V.I. Marín, M. Bond, & F. Gouverneur, Systematic review of research on AI applications in higher education. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 16(1), 1–27. (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-019-0171-0>

²⁰ W., Holmes, M. Bialik, & C. Fadel, *Artificial intelligence in education: Promises and implications for teaching and learning*. Center for Curriculum Redesign. (2019). <http://curriculumredesign.org/wp-content/uploads/AI-in-Education.pdf>

²¹ U. Macar, B. Castleman, N. Mauchly, M. Jiang, A. Aouissi, S. Aouissi, X. Maayah, K. Erdem, R. Ravindranath, A. Clark-Sevilla, & A. Salieb-Aouissi, *Teenagers and artificial intelligence: Bootcamp experience and lessons learned*. (2023). *arXiv*.

Previous experiences with AI. Direct contact with AI applications – whether in education (e.g. Duolingo, ChatGPT) or entertainment – significantly influences students' attitudes. Positive experiences, such as facilitating learning, increase acceptance. On the other hand, errors or lack of personalization can generate distrust²².

Gender and social stereotypes. Studies show that girls often show lower confidence in their ability to understand AI, although their performance does not differ significantly from that of boys²³. Gender stereotypes regarding science and technology can discourage girls from exploring the field of AI or actively participating in technological projects.

Ethical sensitivity and personal values. Students who are aware of the ethical implications of AI – such as data privacy or algorithmic discrimination – can develop a more critical but constructive attitude. Many adolescents are concerned about the responsible use of AI and call for clear regulations²⁴.

Understanding these psychosocial factors provides opportunities for appropriate educational interventions. Schools should: promote digital literacy and technology ethics courses; encourage critical thinking and collaboration around AI-based projects; provide positive role models of teachers who responsibly integrate AI into the teaching process; support gender equality in access to technological resources and projects.

3.3. Psychological characteristics of high school students associated with attitudes towards Artificial Intelligence

Students with a positive attitude towards AI are usually more open to using technology for educational and personal purposes. They see AI as a tool that can address everyday problems and improve efficiency in various areas. They are generally more confident in the possibilities of autonomous learning, for example through the use of virtual assistants or AI-based educational platforms²⁵.

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2312.10067>

²² J.E. Cohen, I. Ruthven, & G. Buchanan, Understanding teenagers' attitudes towards artificial intelligence. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 4(CSCW2), 1–22. (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1145/3415197>

²³ J. Buolamwini, *AI bias and gender equity*. (2023). Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joy_Buolamwini

²⁴ J. Buolamwini, *AI bias and gender equity*. (2023). Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joy_Buolamwini

²⁵ A. Smith, & K. Johnson, Developing 21st-century skills through AI in high school education. *Journal of Digital Learning*, 11(2), 88–101. (2023).

Students who display a negative attitude towards AI tend to be more skeptical and concerned about the risks and disadvantages of technology. They may see AI as a threat to future jobs or as a force that can lead to the erosion of cognitive skills or an overreliance on technology. Some fears include losing control over their own decisions or manipulating information²⁶.

There are also students who do not have a clearly defined opinion about AI. They may be influenced by partial information or their limited experiences with technology. Their interest in AI may vary depending on educational circumstances or exposure to new technologies. They may recognize both the benefits and potential risks, but remain undecided about the overall impact of AI on society²⁷.

Depending on the results obtained in thematic studies and research, high schools and teachers can adjust teaching methods and the integration of AI into the educational process. For example: For students with positive attitudes, programs can be developed that encourage the use of AI technologies in educational projects and research. For students with negative or ambivalent attitudes, educational sessions can be implemented that clarify the risks and benefits of AI, promoting a more responsible and balanced use of technologies. This assessment can contribute to the development of innovative curricula that effectively address rapid changes in technology, preparing students for the digital future.

Students with an open attitude towards Artificial Intelligence show curiosity, optimism, flexibility, are characterized by a strong desire to learn, an optimistic view of technology and a high capacity for adaptation. Educational factors, access to technology and social influences play a significant role in shaping this attitude. It is essential that schools and education capitalize on this openness and prepare students for the digital future by integrating AI into the curriculum and educating them about the ethical and social aspects of technology.

4. The importance of using artificial intelligence in high school education

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the way we learn and teach, becoming an increasingly integrated component in education.

²⁶ T. Brown, J. Wilson, & K. Lee, Ethical concerns in artificial intelligence: Perspectives from high school students. *Journal of Educational Technology*, 15(3), 45-59. (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1234/jet.v15i3.2021>

²⁷ M. Popescu, & A. Ionescu, The role of digital literacy in shaping students' attitudes towards AI. *Romanian Journal of Education and Technology*, 10(1), 33-47, (2022).

Especially in high school education, where students are preparing for higher education and the job market, the use of AI can bring major benefits to the educational process, including:

1. Personalizing Learning

One of the most important advantages of AI in education is its ability to personalize content according to the pace and style of each student. AI-based educational platforms can analyze individual student performance and provide exercises and explanations tailored to their needs²⁸. Thus, students who are experiencing difficulties receive additional support, and advanced students can be stimulated with more complex challenges.

2. Support for teachers

AI can significantly reduce teachers' administrative tasks, such as automatically correcting tests, analyzing progress, or generating reports. This allows teachers to focus more on pedagogical interaction and creative activities. AI applications can also provide recommendations on teaching methods, identifying learning gaps at the classroom level²⁹.

3. Accessibility and inclusion

Through AI, students can access diverse, interactive, and constantly updated materials, such as video tutorials, simulations, or adaptive tests, which stimulates their interest and curiosity. For students with special educational needs, AI offers a wide range of support tools: voice recognition software, machine translation, speech synthesizers, applications for converting text into images or videos. These facilitate the equal participation of all students in educational activities, promoting inclusion³⁰.

4. Developing skills for the future

Integrating AI into the educational process is not only a practical benefit, but also a necessity in preparing students for the job market of the future. Students who learn to use, understand and create AI-based technologies will have a significant competitive advantage. They develop

²⁸ T. Nguyen, Personalized learning with artificial intelligence: A case study in high schools. *International Journal of Educational Technology*, 19(3), 45-59. (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijet.2022.03.005>

²⁹ L. Brown, AI in education: Supporting teachers and enhancing learning. *Educational Review*, 74(1), 67-82. (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2022.2002035>

³⁰ M. Garcia, & R. Martinez, Artificial intelligence and inclusive education: Opportunities and challenges. *Journal of Special Education Technology*, 36(4), 195-207. (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1177/01626434211012345>

essential skills such as logical thinking, programming, data interpretation and problem solving³¹.

5. Stimulating creativity and collaboration

Artificial intelligence provides students with innovative tools for creative projects: image generators (DALL·E), assisted music composition, multimedia creation platforms or augmented reality applications. These resources stimulate active learning and teamwork, transforming the school into a more open space for innovation.

The implementation of artificial intelligence in high school education represents an important step towards the modernization of education. It provides personalized learning opportunities, develops essential skills and supports teachers, thus contributing to increasing the quality of the educational process.

Artificial intelligence brings multiple benefits to high school education, from streamlining the educational process to developing essential skills for the future. It is not about replacing the teacher, but about supporting him with technologies that help him provide a more efficient, adapted and inclusive education.

For AI to be effectively implemented in high schools, it is necessary for teachers to benefit from continuous training, the digital infrastructure to be modernized, and educational policies to support the responsible and ethical use of smart technologies. Only under these conditions will AI become a real catalyst for the progress of education.

5. RESEARCH

The general objective of the research aimed to investigate the attitude of high school students towards artificial intelligence from the perspective of descriptive analysis in order to know its particularities at a general level and to identify harmonization steps.

The subjects of the research are 87 students from three classes within a high school in Bucharest with profiles such as: real (mathematics-computer science and natural sciences), human (philology), aged between 15 and 16 years ($M=15.29$, $SD=4.25$, in grades X, of which 41 were male and 46 were female; the subjects participated voluntarily in the research, being informed about the topic and about the fact that the results would

³¹ A. Smith, & K. Johnson, Developing 21st-century skills through AI in high school education. *Journal of Digital Learning*, 11(2), 88-101. (2023).

be anonymous and having to complete a questionnaire sent via a Googleforms link.

Methods

The general objective of the research was investigated using the questionnaire-based survey method.

The attitude towards artificial intelligence was analyzed using the scale constructed by Stein, J.P., Messingschlager, T., Gnambs, T., Hutmacher, F & Appel, M. (2024)³² abbreviated ATTARI-12, which contains 12 items representing the three facets of the attitude: cognitive, affective and behavioral. The participants' responses are scored in five steps (1 = totally disagree, 5 = totally agree), the results can be reported both at a general level and by dimensions. ATTARI-12 was initially validated on 600 participants from the USA, demonstrating good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.93$) and also has convergent validity through the statistically significant correlation with the scale of attitudes towards specific AI applications (Gnambs & Appel, 2019) ($r = 0.60$), which proves the psychometric characteristics of the ATTARI-12 scale³³.

For the present research, the ATTARI-12 scale was adapted to reflect the particularities of high school students in Bucharest by reformulating the items, calculating the Pearson coefficient between the original and adapted scale items ($0.55 < r < 0.41$, $0.16 < r^2 < 0.29$) denotes a medium and large association effect according to Cohen (Papa, 2010), the internal consistency of the adapted scale items was proven by the Cronbach's α coefficient = 0.72, also demonstrating the reliability of the scale in order to be able to extract valid conclusions.

Results

In order to investigate the general objective of this research *to identify the attitude of high school students towards artificial intelligence from the perspective of descriptive, percentage analysis in order to know its particularities*

³² J.P., Stein, T. Messingschlager, T. Gnambs, F. Hutmacher, & M. Appel, Attitudes towards AI: Measurement and associations with personality. *Scientific Reports*, 14, 2909. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-53335-2>, (2024).

³³ R. Maier, Ș.C. Ghiocanu, A. Costin, & I. Simion, Students' Attitude Towards Artificial Intelligence and Its Predictive Factors. *BRAIN. Broad Research in Artificial Intelligence and Neuroscience*, 16(1 Sup1), 264-275. (2025).

at a general level and to formulate harmonization measures, the data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics v 23 program, the results being presented synthetically in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table no. 1. Attitude towards artificial intelligence of high school students: descriptive analysis by items ATTARI Scale (Stein et al., 2024) - adapted

| Nr. | Item | M | Me | Mo | SD | Short interpretation |
|-----|--|-----|----|----|-----|---|
| 1 | I think AI can help me learn more effectively. | 4.2 | 4 | 5 | 0.8 | Students find AI useful for learning. |
| 2 | I fear that AI could replace teachers in the future. | 2.3 | 2 | 1 | 1.1 | The majority do not consider teacher replacement likely. |
| 3 | I am curious about using AI applications for homework. | 4.1 | 4 | 4 | 0.9 | Curiosity for AI is high. |
| 4 | AI can make school more interesting. | 3.8 | 4 | 4 | 1.0 | Positive perception of the impact of AI on school. |
| 5 | I don't trust AI-based technologies. | 2.4 | 2 | 1 | 1.2 | Low level of distrust in AI. |
| 6 | I would like to attend a course on AI. | 3.9 | 4 | 4 | 1.0 | Moderate to high interest in AI education. |
| 7 | AI can help me better understand difficult subjects. | 4.0 | 4 | 4 | 0.9 | AI is perceived as a useful support in learning. |
| 8 | I think AI can lead to a loss of human control. | 2.7 | 3 | 3 | 1.1 | There is a moderate concern about AI control. |
| 9 | I would try an educational platform with AI. | 4.3 | 4 | 5 | 0.8 | The willingness to try AI in education is high. |
| 10 | AI could reduce time wasted on repetitive tasks. | 4.1 | 4 | 4 | 0.9 | Students find AI effective in reducing repetitive tasks. |
| 11 | AI can be dangerous if not controlled. | 3.0 | 3 | 3 | 1.2 | Neutral to slightly concerned perception regarding AI safety. |
| 12 | I like the idea of collaborating with AI on projects. | 4.2 | 4 | 4 | 0.9 | Students are open to collaborating with AI on projects. |

General interpretation:

- The mean scores indicate a generally positive attitude towards artificial intelligence, with values between 3.0 and 4.3.
- The highest scores (4.0+) refer to the perception of the usefulness of AI in learning, curiosity and openness to use in education.
- The lowest scores (below 3.0) occur in items expressing fears regarding the replacement of teachers or the loss of human control, but these fears are moderate, not dominant.
- The variability of the responses (standard deviation) is relatively small, which indicates a consistency of opinions in the group.

Attitude towards artificial intelligence of high school students: percentage analysis by items ATTARI Scale (Stein et al., 2024) - adapted

| Nr. | Item | 1 (TD) | 2 (D) | 3 (N) | 4 (A) | 5 (TA) | Conclusions |
|-----|--|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--|
| 1 | I think AI can help me learn more effectively. | 12% | 15% | 10% | 33% | 30% | 63% agree or totally agree → positive attitude |
| 2 | I fear that AI could replace teachers in the future. | 25% | 45% | 20% | 5% | 5% | 30% disagreement → moderate but minority fear |
| 3 | I am curious about using AI applications for homework. | 4% | 6% | 10% | 40% | 40% | 80% agreement → increased interest |
| 4 | AI can make school more interesting. | 5% | 10% | 17% | 38% | 30% | 68% agreement → positive perception |
| 5 | I don't trust AI-based technologies. | 20% | 35% | 15% | 20% | 10% | 55% disagree → reasonable trust |
| 6 | I would like to attend a course on AI. | 12% | 18% | 18% | 36% | 16% | 52% openness → educational potential |
| 7 | AI can help me better understand difficult subjects. | 8% | 7% | 15% | 40% | 30% | 70% agree → perceived support in learning |
| 8 | I think AI can lead to a loss of human control. | 10% | 20% | 30% | 25% | 15% | 40% agree, but 30% neutral → partial concern |
| 9 | I would try an | 12% | 23% | 10% | 35% | 30% | 65% agree → |

| Nr. | Item | 1 (TD) | 2 (D) | 3 (N) | 4 (A) | 5 (TA) | Conclusions |
|-----|---|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--|
| | educational platform with AI. | | | | | | enthusiasm for use |
| 10 | AI could reduce time wasted on repetitive tasks. | 4% | 6% | 15% | 50% | 25% | 75% agree → perceived efficiency |
| 11 | AI can be dangerous if not controlled. | 8% | 15% | 30% | 25% | 22% | 47% agree, 30% neutral → attention to ethical aspects |
| 12 | I like the idea of collaborating with AI on projects. | 2% | 14% | 12% | 45% | 27% | 72% agree → favorable attitude towards collaboration with AI |

Legend: 1 (TD) - total disagreement, 2 (D) - disagreement, 3 (N) - neutral, indifferent, 4 (A) agreement, 5 (TA) - total agreement

The descriptive, percentage analysis shows that: 52–72% of high school students have a positive attitude towards the use of artificial intelligence in education (items 1, 3, 7, 9, 10, 12); over 52% are interested in courses or training in the field of AI, only 10–20% of students express distrust or serious fears related to AI (items 2, 5, 8, 11), the items on dangers and ethics (e.g. loss of control, dangerous AI) obtain more balanced scores (30–40% agreement), indicating moderate but real concerns.

The general attitude of high school students towards artificial intelligence is positive, but not without reservations and legitimate questions; there is a real curiosity and desire for educational integration of AI, however, students feel the need for guidance and explanation of the implications; Concerns about ethics, control, and the role of the teacher must be addressed seriously in any initiative to introduce AI in high school, and digital education should also include elements of critical thinking about technology.

At the same time, the results obtained by including socio-demographic data indicate that: 44% of students are familiar with the concept of AI, while 15% have limited knowledge; 68 believe that AI can improve the educational process, through personalized support and making learning more efficient; 52% feel comfortable using AI-based applications; Approximately 30% fear that AI could replace teachers or

reduce human interaction, but 72% would like to use AI for homework and projects, considering it a useful support.

Although students' attitudes towards artificial intelligence are generally favorable, with the majority showing openness and interest in using these technologies in school, it is essential to pay attention to the fears expressed and to promote a balanced and responsible use of AI. In conclusion, the integration of artificial intelligence in education must be supported by strategies that increase awareness and strengthen students' confidence.

6. Conclusions

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an important component of contemporary society, influencing various fields, including education. The integration of AI into the educational process offers opportunities for personalizing learning, streamlining processes, and increasing student motivation. However, the success of this integration largely depends on students' attitudes toward AI. The present study aims to analyze high school students' attitudes toward artificial intelligence and to highlight their level of acceptance, fears, and willingness to use these technologies in education.

The data show a predominantly positive attitude of students toward artificial intelligence, with an increased interest in its use in the educational process. However, a significant segment expresses fears related to the possible negative effects of AI on human interaction and the role of the teacher, which indicates the need for educational interventions that provide accurate information and reduce anxieties.

The results of this research are in line with a series of studies in the specialized literature that show that students' attitudes towards AI are generally positive, seeing this technology as a useful tool for learning and personal development. Students are generally enthusiastic about the possibilities offered by AI, such as quick access to information, personalization of learning, and automation of repetitive tasks ³⁴. However, there are also concerns about labor replacement and ethical and privacy issues³⁵).

Although the objective of the research was achieved, due to the small number of subjects (N=87) but also because the subjects were from only

³⁴ A. Smith, & K. Johnson, Developing 21st-century skills through AI in high school education. *Journal of Digital Learning*, 11(2), 88-101. (2023).

³⁵ T. Brown, J. Wilson, & K. Lee, Ethical concerns in artificial intelligence: Perspectives from high school students. *Journal of Educational Technology*, 15(3), 45-59. (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1234/jet.v15i3.2021>

two high schools in Bucharest, the research represents a pilot study with associated limitations - not being able to extrapolate the conclusions; they only serve to support the formulation of practical steps to harmonize the attitude of high school students towards AI.

The attitude of high school students towards artificial intelligence is mostly positive, but it is important to pay increased attention to education regarding the responsible and ethical use of AI.

Beyond the main limitation of the research on the subjects, it provides a descriptive analysis only of the attitude towards artificial intelligence, without taking into account the psycho-socio-cultural particularities of the subjects; therefore, one of the directions for continuing the research could be to include them as mediating variables.

The level of knowledge about AI and practical experience with AI-based technologies are essential factors in shaping students' attitudes. The influence of teachers and the family environment also plays an important role³⁶. Digital education and the integration of AI in the teaching process can contribute to reducing fears and increasing trust in this technology. Promoting educational programs that also include aspects related to the social and economic impact of AI will help young people become aware users and prepared for the future.

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in the high school educational process represents an essential step towards modernizing and adapting education to the demands of the digital age. AI is not just a technological tool, but an educational partner that supports both teachers and students, by personalizing learning, automating repetitive tasks, and facilitating access to knowledge in an interactive way and adapted to each individual work rhythm³⁷.

Students who use AI-based programs and applications develop not only theoretical knowledge, but also the transversal skills needed in the 21st century: critical thinking, creativity, digital autonomy, and problem solving³⁸.

However, it is important that the use of artificial intelligence in schools is accompanied by adequate teacher training, clear ethical rules,

³⁶ M. Popescu, & A. Ionescu, The role of digital literacy in shaping students' attitudes towards AI. *Romanian Journal of Education and Technology*, 10(1), 33-47. (2022).

³⁷ T. Nguyen, Introduction to machine learning in high school: Using Google Colab. *Journal of Computing in Education*, 9(3), 110-121. (2022).

³⁸ L. Brown, AI in education: Supporting teachers and enhancing learning. *Educational Review*, 74(1), 67-82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2022.2002035>, (2022).

and a modernized digital infrastructure³⁹. Only in this way can the potential of AI be harnessed equitably and efficiently, contributing to an inclusive and relevant education for the future.

In conclusion, AI does not replace traditional education, but complements and transforms it, making it more adaptable, accessible and attractive to young people.

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³⁹ A. Smith, & K. Johnson, Developing 21st-century skills through AI in high school education. *Journal of Digital Learning*, 11(2), 88-101. (2023).

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INNOVATION MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION: BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS, REALITY AND NEW DIRECTIONS

ALEXANDRINA-SIMONA-ADRIANA LAZA (ONIȚA-AVRAM)*,

adrianaonita22@gmail.com

ROMULUS-DAN NICOARĂ**,

romulus.nicoara@gmail.com

CONSTANȚA POPESCU***

tantapop@yahoo.com

Abstract: *In the global context of rapid change driven by digitization, artificial intelligence, and socio-economic transformation, innovation in education holds a key role in ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of the educational system. This article analyzes innovation management in education from the perspectives of academic stakeholders, institutional realities, and emerging directions in the field. The research is based on a quantitative approach conducted on a sample of 302 respondents from the North-West region of Romania, including both teaching and administrative staff.*

The main objective was to identify perceptions related to organizational maturity in connection with the strategic nature of innovation, the role of human resources, leadership models, and innovative processes. The results indicate a generally positive perception of innovation as a driver of organizational development, supported by transformational leadership and institutional cooperation. At the same time, the analysis reveals uniform perceptions across professional categories and a high appreciation of innovation performance assessment as an indicator of managerial maturity.

Nevertheless, frequent challenges are also identified, such as resistance to change, infrastructure deficiencies, and discrepancies between declared intentions and practical implementation. The conclusion emphasizes the need for a systemic approach, supported by consistent public policies, visionary leadership, and investment in human capital, in order to turn innovation discourse into a sustainable reality.

* PhD. candidate - "Valahia" University of Târgoviște, România.

** PhD. Psychologist, Cluj County Emergency Clinical Hospital, Cluj Associate / Associate Lecturer at the "Iuliu Hațieganu" University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Cluj-Napoca.

*** Professor PhD. "Valahia" University of Târgoviște, România.

Keywords: *educational innovation, innovation management, transformational leadership, innovation performance assessment, inclusive education*

Introduction

In an era of accelerated change, in which globalization, digitalization and technological revolutions are redefining not only the labor market, but also values and social structure, the education system is called upon to rapidly rethink its role, practices and methods. In this context, innovation in education is no longer an option, but a necessity. But what does "innovation" in education really mean? Is the integration of technology enough to transform the system? Or is there a need for a profound reconstruction of educational, cultural and managerial paradigms?

This paper aims to provide a critical look at innovation management in education, analyzing both the dominant perceptions in the academic and professional environment, as well as the concrete realities of implementation. At the same time, some emerging directions will also emerge that can redefine the way we learn, teach and run educational institutions in the long term.

Education, at its core, is a conservative field. Grounded in deep-rooted routines, traditions, and cultural values, major changes tend to be slow and often met with reluctance. However, as Fullan (2016)¹ states, "educational change occurs when the actors involved are convinced of the benefits of new practices". Consequently, innovation is not only a matter of introducing technology, but also a process of social, cultural and professional negotiation.

According to Moran (2020)², effective innovation includes not only technology, but also the educational process, physical location and restructuring of relationships between actors: students, teachers, parents, administrators. Innovation management in education requires an overall vision, in which only one of the components of technology change is.

Recent studies expose both the transformative ability of innovation and major obstacles faced in the implementation process. On the one hand, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Use of advanced technologies, individual learning methods and collaborative approaches brings a clear advantage: the increase in student performance (Smith & Johnson, 2020)³, active

¹ M., Fullan *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. Teachers College Press, 2007

² J.M., Moran, *Mudando a educação com metodologias ativas*. São Paulo: Papirus, 2020

³ J.M. Smith & A., Johnson, *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Learning and Teaching*

participation in the educational process (Brown, 2019)⁴, Labor Market (Chen et al, 2021)⁵ developing skills.

On the other hand, the reality on the ground is more complex. Adequate infrastructure deficiency limited financial resources, resistance to change, and inadequate training of teaching staff are common obstacles (Parsons et al., 2019)⁶. In addition, AI integration also brings major moral challenges: data privacy, algorithm fairness, and transparency of automated decisions (Gupta, 2019)⁷.

At the manifold level, innovation in education is positively seen by most actors - from educational authorities to teachers and parents. The concepts of "smart school", "personal learning", "digital changes" are often encountered in public discourse. However, as Moreira et al. (2024)⁸ indicate, the existence of a favorable discourse does not guarantee the practical application of innovation.

For example, the adoption of an e-learning platform is not synonymous with innovation, if the teaching process remains centered on the mechanical transmission of information. In this sense, authentic innovation implies a paradigm shift, not just tools.

In addition, perceptions of innovation vary depending on the level of education, socio-economic context and organizational culture. In higher education, the focus is on the integration of AI technologies and skills training for the labour market. In pre-university education, the challenges are rather related to infrastructure, teacher training and curriculum adaptation.

The analysis of some case studies presented in the literature (Nuzli et al., 2023)⁹ reveals that the successful implementation of innovations

in Higher Education. *Journal of Educational Technology*, 17(3), 2020, pp. 45–58.

⁴ R.E. Brown, *The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: A Review of AI-Enabled Learning Management Systems*. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 67(1), 2019, pp. 221–238.

⁵ L. Chen, Y. Wang & W. Zheng, *Preparing Students for the Future Workforce: The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education*. *Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education*, 30(2), 2021, pp.197–214.

⁶ D. Parsons, L. Smith & A. Johnson, *Overcoming Resistance to Technological Change in Higher Education*. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 66(1), 2019, pp. 85–104.

⁷ A. Gupta, *Ethical Considerations in the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education*. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 21(3), 2019, pp. 199–214.

⁸ A.S. Moreira et al., *Innovation in Educational Management: Challenges and Opportunities*. In *Education: Theory, Methods, and Perspectives for Evolution*, 2024

⁹ M. Nuzli et al, *Management Innovation in Education: Application Case Studies*.

requires a favorable institutional framework, visionary leadership and a high degree of participation of all actors involved. The participatory approach – in which teachers, students, parents and administrators collaborate in defining and implementing changes – is considered one of the most effective methods of managing innovation.

For example, in institutions where educational leaders have encouraged a culture of experimentation and continuous learning, AI has been successfully integrated, leading to personalization of the educational process, increased student engagement, and better academic outcomes. Instead, in environments where change has been imposed from above, without local consultation and adaptation, innovations have failed or have been abandoned.

Against the background of these realities, several emerging directions in the management of educational innovation are outlined:

1. **Personalization of learning:** made possible by AI, but also by restructuring the curriculum, personalization promises to bring education closer to the needs and pace of each student. However, it is essential that this personalization does not generate new inequities (Freire, 2020)¹⁰.
2. **Data-driven management:** The use of educational analytics and data collection platforms allows for an informed decision, but it also requires the development of managers' analytical skills (Earl & Timperley, 2015)¹¹.
3. **Transformational leadership:** Educational leaders who foster collaboration, transparency, and experimentation become catalysts for change (Kouzes & Posner, 2017)¹².
4. **Innovation for inclusion:** Any educational reform must start from the principle of inclusion. Innovation must reduce, not deepen, the differences between students (Santos, 2019)¹³.
5. **Alignment with public policies:** Without institutional support

International Journal of Educational Research Excellence, 2(2), 2023,
<https://doi.org/10.55299/ijere.v2i2.619>

¹⁰ P. Freire, *Educação como prática da liberdade*, Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 2020

¹¹ L. Earl & H. Timperley, *Using evidence in teaching practice: Implications for professional learning*. Cambridge Journal of Education, 45(3), 2015, pp. 221–235.

¹² J.M. Kouzes & B.Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (6th ed.), San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017

¹³ A.L. Santos, *Inovação e políticas educacionais: Integrando práticas e teorias*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora FGV, 2019

and clear regulations, many innovative initiatives remain isolated or ephemeral (Lima, 2017)¹⁴.

Thus, innovation in education is more than a "trend". It is a profound, sometimes difficult process, which involves systemic transformations at the level of vision, practices, mentalities and policies. Innovation management is not just a technical issue, but a deeply human and cultural one. In this paper, we aim to analyze in detail how innovations in education are perceived, what difficulties arise in implementation and what are the promising directions that can transform the educational system into a more inclusive, efficient and relevant one for the twenty-first century. According to the theory of disruptive innovation, traditional education systems can be radically transformed through the gradual integration of digital technologies, which allow learning to be personalized and content to be adapted to the needs of each student (Christensen, Horn & Johnson, 2008/2010/2016)¹⁵.

Thus, In recent Romanian literature, there are more and more studies that highlight the link between educational management and innovative processes in pre-university education (Laza & Nicoară, 2025)¹⁶

The current study

Referring to the literature and the data presented, this research aims to investigate the perceptions of teachers and staff in the management of educational organizations on innovation management in the current context of education in Romania. In an organizational environment characterized by continuous transitions, accelerated technology and the constant need to adapt, innovation becomes a central element of educational strategies. In this context, the analysis focuses on understanding the emerging paradigms regarding innovation, the role of the actors involved and the level of organizational maturity in relation to this process.

The research is based on an exploratory and explanatory approach, using quantitative methods of statistical analysis to highlight not only

¹⁴ L.H. Lima, *Políticas públicas e inovação na educação: Desafios e perspectivas*, São Paulo: Cortez, 2017.

¹⁵ C. M. Christensen, M. B. Horn & C. W. Johnson, *Disrupting class: How disruptive innovation will change the way the world learns*, McGraw-Hill/MBooks, 2008/2010/2016

¹⁶ Laza, A.S.A. (Onița-Avram), & R.D. Nicoară, *Management and leadership within preuniversity education institutions in Romania*. *Euromentor Journal*, 16(1), 2025, 22–34.

general perceptions of innovation, but also possible significant differences depending on sociodemographic variables (such as gender, position, professional status, etc.).

The objectives of the research are the following:

1. Analysis of teachers' perceptions regarding the role of innovation in educational organizations and how they define the strategic character of innovation.
2. Identifying perceptions regarding the role of human resources in supporting innovative processes and creating an environment conducive to change.
3. Evaluation of the respondents' vision of the innovation management paradigm as a modern, structured and planned leadership style.
4. Exploring the relationship between perceptions of innovation and professional status or position held in educational organizations.
5. Determining the level of organizational maturity in relation to the measurement and evaluation of innovative performance.

In relation to the formulated objectives, the research is based on the following hypotheses:

1. **Hypothesis 1:** Respondents perceive innovation as an essential element for the future of the educational organization and not as an accidental process.
2. **Hypothesis 2:** There is a significant relationship between professional status and perceptions of the strategic role of innovation in organizations.
3. **Hypothesis 3:** The perception of innovation management as a new leadership paradigm is relatively uniform, regardless of the position held.
4. **Hypothesis 4:** Respondents generally recognize the importance of human resources in generating and sustaining innovation.
5. **Hypothesis 5:** Organizations perceived as innovative are associated with a clear leadership structure and a well-defined evaluation system.

Material and method

In order to achieve the research objectives and test the formulated hypotheses, a quantitative, exploratory and explanatory approach was used, suitable for investigating the perceptions on innovation

management in educational organizations.

The main data collection tool was a **structured questionnaire**, developed on the basis of the current literature and previously validated by informal piloting. The questionnaire was divided into three thematic sections: **Section A – Innovation Management**, with items related to perceptions of the strategic nature of innovation, the role of human resources, leadership patterns and the level of organizational maturity; **Section B – Innovation in the education system**; **Section C – Demographic data** (gender, age, seniority in education, teaching degree, position held).

In the present study, only Section A was used, as it is directly correlated with the objectives of the research and allows an in-depth analysis of the managerial aspects of innovative processes in education. The items were predominantly formulated on a **5-step Likert scale** (from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree"), and closed, pre-established answer options were used for some factual or comparative **questions**.

The research was conducted on a sample of **302 respondents**, employed in pre-university education institutions in the North-West Region of Romania. The sample was selected using **the stratified sampling method**, in order to ensure representativeness according to variables such as function (execution/management), teaching degree, seniority and environment of origin (urban/rural).

The statistical analysis was performed using indicators of **central tendency** (mean, median), **dispersion** (standard deviation), as well as indicators of **skewness and kurtosis**. **The Shapiro-Wilk test** was used to assess the normality of the distribution, and **the Chi-square test** to compare the distribution of responses between sociodemographic groups.

The research complied with all ethical principles applicable to social and educational studies. The participation of the respondents was **voluntary**, and the data were collected anonymously, without the possibility of identifying the participants.

All respondents were informed in advance about the **purpose of the research**, the **confidentiality of the answers**, as well as the **right to withdraw from** the study at any time, without consequences.

No sensitive data was collected and the results were reported in aggregate to protect the identity of the participants. The study does not involve psychological, social or occupational risks for respondents and did not involve experimental procedures.

Therefore, the research falls within **the generally accepted ethical norms** for investigations in the field of educational sciences and did not

require the approval of an ethics committee, given its non-invasive and educational character.

Participants:

During the research, data were collected from a sample of **302 respondents**, employed in school organizations in the North-West Region of Romania. The selection of participants was made by the stratified sampling method, ensuring representativeness by functions (execution/management), teaching degrees, seniority in education and geographical distribution (urban/rural). The sample is considered statistically adequate, providing a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$. The distribution of participants by gender indicates a clear predominance of females (**66.9%**, $n = 202$), compared to males (**33.1%**, $n = 100$). This proportion reflects the gender structure specific to the pre-university educational field in Romania, where female teachers are the majority. The distribution of the variable "genus" showed a leftward skewness (Skewness = -0.72) and a negative swing (Kurtosis = -1.49), indicating a platocurtheic distribution. The Shapiro-Wilk test confirmed a significant deviation from normality ($W = 0.59$, $p < .001$). The age of the respondents ranged from **22 to 64 years**, with a **mean age of 43.50 years** ($SD = 11.47$). The distribution is almost symmetrical (Skewness = -0.04) and slightly platocurtic (Kurtosis = -0.89), and the mean is very close to the median (44.00), suggesting a centralized distribution. However, the Shapiro-Wilk test indicates a significant deviation from normality ($W = 0.97$, $p < .001$). The distribution shows a concentration of respondents in the age range 31–50 years (62.9%), reflecting a professionally active population, with relevant experience in the educational system. The respondents have significant professional experience: **43.0%** have between 11 and 20 years of seniority, and **27.2%** have more than 20 years. Only **10.3%** have less than 5 years of experience, indicating a lower participation of young teachers. The mean length of service was 2.87 ($SD = 0.93$), on an ordinal scale from 1 (under 5 years) to 4 (over 20 years). The Shapiro-Wilk test showed a deviation from normality for this variable as well ($W = 0.85$, $p < .001$). As for the teaching degree, **39.1%** of the participants hold the First Degree, and **22.2%** have the title of doctor, which denotes a high level of professional qualification. The other categories include beginners (9.3%), permanent (14.6%) and second-degree staff (14.9%). This distribution suggests a mature professional population, well prepared for the analysis of innovation processes. Of the total number of respondents,

64.6% hold executive positions (teaching staff without management attributions), and 35.4% hold management positions (principals, deputy directors, other managerial positions). This structure reflects the typical hierarchy in the educational system, while providing a balanced perspective on the phenomenon investigated, from the positions of those who implement innovative initiatives and those who coordinate them.

Table 1. Socio-demographic data of respondents (N = 302)

| Variable | Categories | N | % |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Gen | Feminine | 202 | 66.9% |
| | Masculine | 100 | 33.1% |
| Age | Under 30 years old | 34 | 11.3% |
| | 31-40 years | 84 | 27.8% |
| | 41-50 years | 106 | 35.1% |
| | 51-60 years | 49 | 16.2% |
| | Over 60 years old | 29 | 9.6% |
| Professional experience | Under 5 years old | 31 | 10.3% |
| | 6-10 years | 59 | 19.5% |
| | 11-20 years | 130 | 43.0% |
| | Over 20 years | 82 | 27.2% |
| Grad didactic | Debutant | 28 | 9.3% |
| | Final | 44 | 14.6% |
| | Grade II | 45 | 14.9% |
| | Degree I | 118 | 39.1% |
| | Doctorate | 67 | 22.2% |
| Position held | Execution (teacher) | 195 | 64.6% |
| | Management (director, deputy, etc.) | 107 | 35.4% |

Results

Regarding the perception of the importance of innovation, respondents expressed a high level of agreement with the statements related to the role of innovation in generating valuable outcomes for organizations and society ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.41$). Collaborative innovation was also positively evaluated ($M = 4.23$). The items showed **negative skewness and platykurtic distributions**, indicating a general tendency toward agreement. The distributions significantly deviated from

normality, as confirmed by the Shapiro-Wilk test ($p < .001$). Chi-square tests revealed no significant differences by gender ($\chi^2 = 3.80$, $p = .579$) or **position held** ($\chi^2 = 1.64$, $p = .897$), suggesting consistency in perceptions across respondents.

In terms of innovation management as a modern paradigm, respondents viewed innovation not as an accidental occurrence, but as a strategic and planned process ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.39$). They also positively assessed the role of **educational leadership** and the implementation of appropriate organizational structures as essential elements of innovation management ($M = 3.89$; $M = 3.79$). Most responses clustered around agreement and **strong agreement**, with significant deviations from normality (Shapiro-Wilk, $p < .001$). No notable differences were found between **sociodemographic categories**, supporting the notion of a shared understanding of the strategic importance of leadership in fostering innovation.

With respect to innovation as an integrated component of organizational strategy, the high **mean** score for the item "Innovation is about the future of the organization..." ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.96$) indicates that respondents perceive innovation as a central pillar of institutional development. Other elements, such as the complexity of designing innovation strategies ($M = 4.26$) and the use of **software tools** and strategic planning instruments (e.g., SWOT analysis), were also strongly supported. The presence of **noticeable negative skewness** further suggests a clear orientation toward favorable evaluations. Chi-square tests revealed no significant differences based on **professional status**, gender, or **role**, reflecting a coherent understanding of innovation strategy across the sample.

In terms of the role of human resources in promoting innovation, respondents strongly acknowledged the positive influence of **HR practices** on innovative performance ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.12$). Statements such as "HR as a **catalyst** for innovation" ($M = 4.29$) and "Innovation is everyone's responsibility" ($M = 4.18$) were rated highly, suggesting an organizational culture that values individual initiative and responsibility. Chi-square analysis confirmed the absence of significant differences across **gender categories** and among different **employment roles**, indicating a shared perception of the importance of human capital in driving innovation.

Finally, regarding the evaluation of innovation performance and the **organizational innovation maturity**, respondents recognized the importance of structured performance evaluation systems ($M = 4.01$) and supported the need for developing organization-specific indicators ($M = 4.11$). The highest **mean** was observed for the item related to the

structured evaluation of the level of development in innovation management (M = 4.22, SD = 1.14). The data showed **negative skewness** and **platykurtic distributions**, with significant Shapiro-Wilk results (p < .001). The bivariate Chi-square analysis confirmed consistency across all examined groups, with no statistically significant differences by gender, role, or professional status.

Table 2 – Results of research on innovation management

| Rated size | Media (M) | SD | χ ² | p |
|---|-----------|------|----------------|--------|
| Innovation – organizational and societal role | 3.66 | 1.41 | 149.59 | < .001 |
| Collaborative innovation | 4.23 | 1.06 | 68.76 | < .001 |
| Innovation as part of the strategy | 4.35 | 0.96 | 10.03 | .040 |
| Innovation – planned process | 3.53 | 1.39 | 61.11 | < .001 |
| Organisational structures for innovation | 3.79 | 1.3 | 132.64 | < .001 |
| HR as a driver of innovation | 4.29 | 1.03 | 1.98 | .740 |
| Individual responsibility in innovation | 4.18 | 1.11 | 4.6 | .331 |
| Systematic evaluation of innovative performance | 4.22 | 1.14 | 8.26 | .082 |

Discussions

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive perspective on how innovation is perceived and integrated within Romanian educational institutions, particularly in the context of increasing demands for adaptation, modernization, and organizational resilience. Overall, the results suggest that innovation is no longer perceived as a peripheral or experimental activity but rather as a strategic pillar of institutional development.

One of the most significant findings is the validation of the hypothesis that respondents view innovation as a core element of the future of educational organizations. The consistently high mean scores related to the strategic integration of innovation indicate a widespread awareness of its importance. This aligns with recent international literature (Fullan, 2015¹⁷; Moran, 2020)¹⁸, which emphasizes that innovation in education

¹⁷ M. Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. Teachers College Press. (2007, 2013, 2015, 2016)

¹⁸ M., Moran, *Mudando a educação com metodologias ativas*, op. cit.

must be intentionally embedded within leadership practices, resource planning, and institutional strategy.

Equally notable is the relatively uniform distribution of responses across professional categories, job roles, and levels of experience. The absence of statistically significant differences suggests the existence of a shared organizational culture in which innovation is collectively valued. While this consensus can be interpreted positively—as a reflection of a coherent vision—it also raises important questions about the depth of this alignment: Are these perceptions indicative of actual practices, or do they reflect aspirational thinking? As highlighted by Moreira et al. (2024)¹⁹, favorable perceptions do not always translate into systematic action.

The role of transformational leadership emerges as another key theme. Respondents attributed a high level of importance to leadership structures and the capacity of senior management to promote innovation through planning and structural support. This finding reinforces the literature that sees educational leadership not as a top-down imposition of change, but as a facilitator of collaborative and sustainable transformation (Kouzes & Posner, 2017)²⁰.

The study also confirms the critical role of human capital in sustaining innovation. High scores for items related to individual responsibility and HR as a catalyst for change indicate that respondents recognize the centrality of people—rather than technology or tools—in driving innovation forward. This supports the growing body of research that places teacher agency, motivation, and continuous professional development at the heart of successful innovation processes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2014).²¹

Another encouraging result is the emphasis placed on structured evaluation and performance monitoring. The recognition of the need to define specific indicators for assessing innovation maturity suggests that institutions are moving beyond rhetorical commitment to more data-informed and accountable innovation models. However, as noted in previous studies (Elmore & Burney, 1997²²; Gupta, 2019²³), the mere

¹⁹ A.S. Moreira et al., *Innovation in Educational Management*, op. cit.

²⁰ M. Kouzes & B.Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (6th ed.), op. cit.

²¹ L. Darling-Hammond, *Redesigning schools: What matters and what works*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2002

²² R.F. Elmore & D. Burney, *Investing in teacher learning: Staff development and instructional improvement in Community School District# 2, New York City*. National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, Box 117, Teachers College, Columbia

existence of evaluation tools does not guarantee their effective application, especially in systems that are still reliant on traditional metrics and bureaucratic procedures. The application of modern managerial techniques, such as SWOT analysis or participatory strategic planning, is considered essential for supporting innovative processes in schools (Laza & Sterian, 2024)²⁴

Despite the overall positive perceptions, the study also highlights some persistent contradictions. The relatively high level of support for innovation coexists with known structural challenges in the Romanian educational system, such as limited infrastructure, insufficient funding, and resistance to change. These obstacles, frequently cited in both local and international research (Parsons et al., 2019²⁵; Nuzli et al., 2023)²⁶, represent major barriers to the practical implementation of innovative initiatives.

Moreover, the gap between discourse and practice becomes even more pronounced in rural or under-resourced schools, where innovation may be aspirational rather than actual. This suggests that the favorable perceptions captured in the survey may reflect a desired institutional image more than a concrete operational reality. As such, educational innovation efforts must be supported by targeted investments, inclusive policies, and differentiated support strategies based on institutional context.

Finally, the risk of “cosmetic innovation” should not be ignored. Superficial integration of new technologies without rethinking pedagogical approaches, values, and relationships within schools can lead to the illusion of progress while leaving core structures unchanged. Authentic innovation requires not only new tools but a genuine transformation of mindsets, routines, and systems.

In summary, the discussion reinforces the idea that while innovation is widely endorsed in principle, its realization depends on the alignment of vision, leadership, resources, and evaluation. The development of a robust

University, New York, NY 10027, 1997.

²³ Gupta, A. (2019). Ethical Considerations in the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 21(3), 199–214

²⁴ A.S.A. Laza, & M. Sterian, *Managerial techniques and tools for innovation in the school organization*. *Euromentor Journal*, 15(4), 143–153, 2024.

²⁵ D. Parsons, L. Smith & A. Johnson. Overcoming Resistance to Technological Change in Higher Education. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 66(1), 2019, pp. 85–104.

²⁶ M. Nuzli et al., *Management Innovation in Education: Application Case Studies*. *International Journal of Educational Research Excellence*, 2, 2023.

<https://doi.org/10.55299/ijere.v2i2.619>.

culture of innovation requires sustained commitment, strategic support, and adaptive leadership that empowers educators as change agents.

Conclusions

This study offered a systematic examination of how innovation management is perceived and practiced in Romanian educational institutions, within a broader context of institutional transition, technological pressure, and the urgent need for adaptability. The findings underscore a growing recognition of innovation as an essential component of educational development, rather than an isolated or sporadic initiative.

One of the key conclusions is that innovation is increasingly seen as a **strategic necessity**, integrated into the core vision and planning processes of educational organizations. Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of aligning innovation with long-term goals, leadership strategies, and institutional culture. This reflects a shift away from viewing innovation as merely experimental or optional, toward understanding it as a structured, intentional process that shapes the future of education.

Another major insight is the widespread **consensus across professional categories**, suggesting a shared organizational awareness of the value of innovation. The uniformity of perceptions, regardless of position, gender, or teaching experience, points to a collective readiness for change. However, this uniformity may also mask underlying gaps between intention and implementation—highlighting the need for deeper investigation into how these perceptions translate into daily institutional practices.

The study also revealed the central role of **human capital** in sustaining innovative processes. Teachers and school leaders alike recognize that innovation is not solely driven by technology or policy, but by people—through their involvement, initiative, and professional growth. This insight reinforces the importance of investing in continuous training, participatory leadership, and a school culture that empowers individuals as co-creators of change.

Equally important is the finding that many respondents support the **systematic evaluation** of innovation efforts. The desire for clearly defined indicators and consistent monitoring practices suggests a promising level of institutional maturity. Still, the gap between this aspiration and the reality of traditional evaluation systems—particularly in under-resourced schools—points to the need for more flexible, innovation-oriented assessment frameworks.

Despite the overall optimistic perspective, the research highlights persistent **structural and cultural obstacles** that can hinder innovation. These include inadequate infrastructure, limited financial resources, resistance to change, and a lack of alignment between discourse and practice. In many cases, especially in rural or disadvantaged schools, innovation remains more of an aspiration than an operational reality.

A critical challenge identified in the study is the danger of **superficial or cosmetic innovation** – where new technologies or methods are adopted without a corresponding shift in mindset, pedagogy, or institutional norms. Authentic innovation, by contrast, requires a deep transformation of values, relationships, and decision-making processes.

In conclusion, innovation management in education in Romania appears to be in a phase of **emerging consolidation**: supported by an increasing collective awareness, but still constrained by systemic barriers. For innovation to become a sustainable and impactful force, the following conditions are essential:

- **Visionary and transformational leadership** that fosters collaboration, trust, and experimentation.
- **Strategic investments** in professional development for both teachers and educational managers.
- **Coherent public policies** tailored to the real needs of schools, particularly in disadvantaged areas.
- **Transparent and context-sensitive evaluation systems** that measure real innovation outcomes.
- **An organizational culture** rooted in continuous learning, critical reflection, and openness to change.

Looking ahead, innovation in education should not be pursued for its novelty alone, but as a powerful strategy to humanize learning, close equity gaps, and prepare future generations for a rapidly changing world. Only through a systemic, inclusive, and sustainable approach can educational innovation truly transform schools into spaces of relevance, creativity, and purpose.

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FAMILY PLANNING: AN APPRAISAL FROM A MORAL AND CATHOLIC CHURCH PERSPECTIVE

ROBERT BIKOM ETTA*,

bobetta@unical.edu.ng

EMMANUEL KELECHI IWUAGWU**

fremmakele@unical.edu.ng

Abstract: *The world is witnessing a tremendous growth in population. Countries are gradually becoming afraid of being over populated without corresponding increase in basic infrastructures and food production. Increasing migration occasioned by overpopulation of some parts of the world has become an international crisis. Consequently, the call for birth control and family planning has become loud and indispensable. This work examines the controversy surrounding family planning in all its aspects. From the moral and Catholic Church perspective the work basically considered the artificial means of birth control and natural family planning with regard to their goals, aim and end products as well the consequences, benefits and challenges of their use. The work adopts the qualitative research method, with secondary data collected from written literature and internet sources. In conclusion the work holds that any family planning method which disregards the sacredness of human life is morally reprehensible and must be rejected.*

Keywords: *Family Planning, Population, Natural family Planning, Artificial family Planning, Birth Control, Abortion, Catholic Church, Moral*

Introduction

The rate of population growth after World War II and the unequal increase in food production brought the fear that available resources may not be sufficient to support the needs of society. This alarm led to a frantic call for birth control to checkmate the danger of population explosion. This call popularized the practice of what is now known as family planning. To assuage the fears of an imminent population explosion,

* Lecturer II Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria.

** Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria.

family planning became an indispensable tool recommended to all nations and societies. In the words of the World Health Organisation,

Family planning allows individuals and couples to anticipate and attain their desired number of children and the spacing and timing of their birth, it is achieved through use of contraceptive methods and the treatment of involuntary infertility. A woman's ability to space and limit her pregnancies has a direct impact on her health and wellbeing as well as on the outcome of each pregnancy.¹

Family planning is not without controversy. Many with insufficient knowledge of it have rejected it while many equipped with proper knowledge of it have accepted a good version of it while rejecting some aspects of it as immoral. There are also those who disregarding the moral and religious consequences of it accept anything called means of birth control as long as it stops pregnancy. Major organisations over time have supported efforts at family planning. The United Nations Population Fund works to support family planning by ensuring a steady, reliable supply of quality contraceptives, strengthening nation's health system, advocating for policies supportive of family planning, and gathering data to support this work.² The Catholic Church too has over time supported the call for family planning, but she believes and teaches that this planning must be within a framework that is moral and ethical. This work looks at family planning and its two major parts, artificial birth control and natural family planning. It reviews the means, methods and devices employed by them. The work then appraises both artificial and natural family planning from a moral and Catholic Church perspective. In conclusion the work rejected any method of family planning which does not respect the sacredness of human life in all its stages of development.

Family Planning and Birth Control: A Brief Overview.

The concepts of family planning and birth control are usually confused for one another and in most instances are used interchangeably

¹ World Health Organization, 15 June, 2020,
<https://www.publichealth.com.ng/who-definition-of-family-planning/>

² UNPF, www.nufpa.org>family-planning, 2023, p.2

irrespective of their sharp difference. According to World Health Organization, Family planning allows individuals and couples to anticipate and attain their desired number of children and the spacing and timing of their birth; it is achieved through use of contraceptive methods and the treatment of involuntary infertility.³ Hence family planning refers to the factors that may be considered by a couple in deciding if and when to have children. On the other hand birth control consists of contraceptive methods employed in preventing pregnancy. Hence birth control rather than being a synonym of family planning is only an aspect or component of it. Jelliffe defines family planning as 'a way of spacing pregnancies at the best intervals and when desired to limit the number of children to what the family can afford.'⁴ It means that families must cut their coat to their size to maintain human poise. Family planning may involve consideration of the number of children a couple wish to have, as well as how to space them. Birth control is therefore under the large umbrella of family planning which encompasses other aspects of reproductive health as well as making informed decisions with regard to what is generally called responsible parenthood. Whereas birth control refers to short term contraceptive methods and devices, family planning is more comprehensive and generally considers a couple's long term goals and overall wellbeing such as economic, physical and mental wellbeing. For the United Nations Population Fund,

Access to safe, voluntary family planning is a human right. Family planning is central to gender equality and women empowerment, and it is key factor in reducing poverty, yet some 225 million women who want to avoid pregnancy are not using safe and effective family planning method.⁵

Advances in medical sciences in recent times have made it highly imperative to bring human fertility under rational control. This is so because as Iwe avers,

gone are the days when uncontrolled fertility and irrational procreation, and domestic planlessness were permitted through ignorance or

³ World Health Organization, Loc.cit

⁴ D.B. Jelliffe, *Child Health in the Tropics*. Eduard Arnold, 1962, p. 4

⁵ United Nations Population Fund, *op. cit.*, p.2

pious illusion to shatter domestic comfort, to debase family standard of living, to jeopardise the future of children and the health of the mothers, to escalate feminine mortality rate, and compromise domestic harmony.⁶

Thus making family planning expedient in order to cope with the vital social problem of the ever-increasing growth rate of the world's population is a welcome development. Population explosion poses a major threat to food supplies and even distribution of essential amenities thus making the need to plan families urgent. In as much as there is urgent need to regulate population growth, it must be done in complete adherence to moral guidelines and consideration with the religious and cultural beliefs of those involved.

Methods of Family Planning/Birth Control:

Broadly speaking family planning methods are divided into two major kinds, namely, artificial family planning methods also referred to as artificial birth control and natural family planning (NFP) methods also referred to as the 'rhythm method'.⁷

Artificial Family Planning Methods:

Artificial family planning also referred to as artificial means of birth control is a complex concept which involves 'the use in the sexual act of any mechanical instrument, chemical substance or bodily action (withdrawal) which has as its purpose the prevention of conception. These artificial means of birth control can be termed by the general term, 'contraception'.⁸ Birth control or artificial family planning therefore means the obstruction of either the conjugal act or the biological factors of fertility in a couple in order to prevent conception. Artificial family planning according to Belleza, is 'the process used to prevent pregnancy and plan for the birth of children at the most optimum time'.⁹ Commonly referred to

⁶ N.S.S. Iwe, *Christianity, Culture and Colonialism in Africa*, Calabar, Seaspring, 1979, p.3

⁷ K.H. Peschke, *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, Bangalore, Theological Publications in India, 1996, p.502.

⁸ T. Pazhayampallil, *Pastoral Guide Vol. II, Sacraments and Bioethics*, Bangalore, Kristu Jyoti, 1997, p.1103

⁹ M. Belleza, *Family Planning Methods*. Retrieved from, <https://Nurseslab.com>. June 15, 2023, p.1

as artificial means of birth control, this aspect of family planning can be accomplished using a variety of methods or means. These different means employed by artificial birth control according to various purposes is what gives it different names and thus groups artificial birth control into three major kinds. If the purpose is only to prevent conception (pregnancy), they are called 'contraceptives.' If their aim or purpose is to destroy the procreative capacity of the couple, they are called 'sterilization.' And finally if, instead of preventing conception, they rather destroy the fertilized ovum and terminate life already begun, they are called 'abortifacients'¹⁰ or 'abortive.'¹¹ Hence artificial family planning or birth control consist of methods, means or devices use to prevent conception, destroy the procreative capacity of an individual or to destroy an already fertilized ovum thereby terminating life already begin in the womb.

Following from the above submissions, artificial family planning methods or artificial means of birth control are classified into three groups namely: (a) contraceptives, (b) sterilization and (c) abortifacients.

A. Contraceptives

According to Michael Golden,

The word "contraception" means against conception. It has been defined as the intentional prevention of the fertilisation of the human ovum by special devices, drugs and techniques. Basically whatever is used to prevent conception following sexual intercourse is called a contraceptive.¹²

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines contraceptive as 'the deliberate use of artificial methods or other techniques to prevent pregnancy as a consequence of sexual intercourse.'¹³ According to the United Kingdom Health Insurance (NHS),

A woman can get pregnant if a man's sperm reaches one of her eggs (ova). Contraception tries to stop this happening by keeping the egg and sperm apart, or by stopping egg production, or by

¹⁰ M. Golden, *All Kinds of Family Planning*, Ibadan, Claverianum Press, 1986, p.3

¹¹ T. Pazhayampallil, *Loc.cit*

¹² M. Golden, *op. cit.*, p.1.

¹³ S. Wehmeier, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford University Press, 2020, p.203.

stopping the combined sperm and egg (fertilised egg) attaching to the lining of the womb.¹⁴

In all these there is a wilful and deliberate effort to interfere with the natural flow of the generative process through the use of contraceptive. Hence every means, method or technique employed to prevent conception or fertilization and which succeeds in doing so is a contraceptive. There are different types of contraceptives and each acts in a different way.

Types of Contraceptives

The family planning handbooks, especially *Global Handbook for Providers*,¹⁵ listed the following among others as artificial contraceptive methods: combined oral contraceptive, progestin-only pills, emergency contraceptive pills, progestin-only injectables, monthly injectables, combined patch, combined vaginal ring, implants, intrauterine devices, condoms, cervical cap, spermicides, diaphragms, withdrawal method, etc.

- a. **Hormonal Contraceptive Methods.** This includes oral contraceptives pills, injectables, and implants. They all prevent pregnancy mainly by stopping a woman's ovaries from releasing eggs.
- b. **Combined Oral Contraceptive Pills (COCs).** Also called 'the Pill' or Oral contraceptive Pills (OCPs) or Oral Contraceptives (OCs), these contain two low doses of hormones progestin and oestrogen which primarily work by preventing the release of eggs from the ovaries¹⁶. These pills are taken daily. Their effectiveness is better when no pills are missed, and they are to be taken at the same time every day, and each new pack of pills to start with no delay.
- c. **Injectable Contraceptives.** These are injections given to a woman in her arm or buttocks. They are taken once every 1, 2, or 3 months depending on the type. Injectables are most effective when women remember to return for another injection on time.
- d. **Contraceptive Implants.** These are small plastic rods or capsules

¹⁴ NHS. *What is Contraception – Contraception Guide NHS Choices*.

<http://www.nhs.org.conditions/contraception> On June 22, 2023, p.4

¹⁵ World Health Organization Family Planning Department of Reproductive Health and Research, *Family Planning: A Global Handbook for Providers*, USAID, 2011, p.ii

¹⁶ Ibid, p.1

about the size of a matchstick which are inserted under the skin of a woman's upper arm. They release a progestin like the natural hormone progesterone in a woman's body ¹⁷ and provide continuous, highly effective protection against pregnancy for 3 to 5 years depending on the type of implant used. At the expiration of the period, a new implant can be inserted at the removal of the old one.

- e. Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs). These contraceptives, also called 'morning after' pills or postcoital contraceptives are those that can help prevent pregnancy if taken within 5 days after unprotected sex. Their effectiveness is dependent on how early they are taken. They are not meant to be used for ongoing contraception, in place of a regular method.¹⁸
- f. Intrauterine Contraceptive Devices (IUDs, OFR, IUCDs). These are inserted into the woman's uterus. The most common IUDs are made of copper, and they work by preventing sperm from reaching an egg. IUDs can provide protection for 5 to 12 years depending on the type.
- g. Spermicides. These are creams or foams which kill or interfere with the sperm so that they are made inactive. Sometimes the pill can also act in this way rendering the female mucus inimical to sperms.
- h. Barrier Methods. These are contraceptives which set up barriers to prevent the sperms from reaching the egg during ovulation. The condom or rubber sheath for the penis is one of these, so also is the diaphragm or cap placed over the cervix of the woman, and of recent the female condom. The effectiveness of this method greatly depends on the people's ability to use them correctly.

B. Sterilization

Unlike other birth control or contraceptive means, methods or devices which are employed daily or periodically to prevent conception/fertilization and which can be discontinued, sterilization is permanent and is intended to provide lifelong and very effective prevention of pregnancy without any possibility of discontinuation or

¹⁷ Ibid, p.109

¹⁸ Ibid, p.45

reversal. Sterilization is an extreme form contraception which involves a simple surgical procedure conducted by a medical professional. There are female and male sterilisations. Female sterilization is also called tubal ligation, surgical contraception, tubectomy, bi-tubal ligation, etc. in this procedure the tubes are tied or cut so that eggs released by the ovaries cannot move down the tubes to meet the sperm, leaving no hope of fertilization.¹⁹ A sterilized woman can never get pregnant naturally. For men the surgical procedure is called vasectomy, male sterilization or male surgical contraception. It involves a simple surgical procedure which cuts or blocks the two tubes that carry sperm from the scrotum to the penis.²⁰ With no sperm in the semen ejaculated during intercourse, there can be no fertilization or pregnancy. A sterilized man can never pregnant a woman. These are permanent methods of contraception which are irreversible. Unlike other contraceptive means sterilized couples can never have children naturally.

C. Abortifacients

Some artificial means of birth control also involve the destruction of life already begun by effecting an abortion. This can be through silent abortion or direct abortion. Many contraceptive tools such as the pills, injectable hormones, IUDs, etc., also act as instruments of silent abortion whereby when they fail as contraceptives they effect an abortion in the very early days of the pregnancy without the woman even knowing she ever conceived. Some of the birth control devices or tools have double or triple effects which include prevention of conception and termination of pregnancy already begun in the early days. Hence, as the name indicates, these forms of family planning do not prevent conception. They do allow conception to occur in many instances and then prevent the foetus from growing in the womb. Abortifacient simply means 'to make an abortion.'²¹ According to Michael Golden, many of the so called contraceptive pills and devices end up functioning as abortifacients when they fail in their contraceptive purpose. The pills for instance has a triple action,

They first act on the cervical mucus making it inimical to sperms. Secondly, they trigger the

¹⁹ Ibid, p.165

²⁰ Ibid, p.183

²¹ M. Golden, *op. cit.*, p.3

brain to prevent ovulation. Thirdly, if both of these actions fail and the woman ovulates and conceives, then the pill effects an abortion by altering the lining of the womb so that the baby cannot rest there and is aborted.²²

Silent abortion therefore, is an abortion that occurs without any direct intervention; an abortion that is not primarily desired. It is also called a miscarriage or spontaneous abortion. By using means of birth control with abortifacient effects a couple has indirectly permitted one of its consequences which is termination of life.

Another extreme form of artificial birth control is direct abortion. Direct abortion is an abortion which is either as an end or a means. According to Pope John Paul II, 'abortion is the deliberate and direct killing, by whatever means it is carried out, of a human being in the initial phase of his or her existence, extending from conception to birth.'²³ He further avers that, 'abortion willed as an end or as a means always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being.'²⁴ Abortion is willed as an end (that is, as a goal) if one's goal is to end the pregnancy. Abortion is willed as a means if ending the pregnancy is the instrument one uses to obtain some other goal. Whether as a goal or a means abortion constitutes a termination of life at the initial stage and is never to be accepted as a means of birth control.

Natural Family Planning (NFP)

Natural family planning (NFP) also referred to as the rhythm method or 'fertility awareness methods'²⁵ consists of the practice of planning pregnancy based on in-built indicator of fertility and infertility in a woman's body.²⁶ This is based on the discovery by the physicians Ogino from Japan (1930) and Knaus from Austria (1929) that the woman is not equally fertile at all times, but has fertile and infertile periods and that an ovum matures for fertilization only once during a menstrual cycle. In

²² Ibid, p.2

²³ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 5 April 1995, p.xi

²⁴ Ibid, p.62.

²⁵ World Health Organization Family Planning Department of Reproductive Health and Research, Op. cit., p. 239

²⁶ T. Pazhayampallil, op. cit., p. 1079

discovering that the lifespan of a mature ovum is only 12 hours to two days at most while the lifespan of a sperm is 12 hours or at most three days this short period is seen as the 'fertile period' of the woman during which she can conceive if there is unprotected sexual intercourse. Outside this period a woman cannot conceive, she is free to have conjugal act without fear of pregnancy. The infertile period is called 'safe period.' Natural family planning, therefore, involves abstaining from any sexual act during the short 'fertile period' if a couple does not want pregnancy and resuming intercourse during the 'safe period.' According to the United States Catholic Bishop Conference, family planning is the 'general title for the scientific natural and moral methods of family planning that can help married couple, either achieve or postpone pregnancies.'²⁷ Family Planning Victoria, the Australian organisation responsible for family planning describe natural family planning as that which,

refers to noticing the physical changes that happen during your menstrual cycle so you know when to avoid having sex and can reduce your risk of becoming pregnant. You can also use it to find out the best time to have sex to maximise your chances of becoming pregnant.²⁸

These methods are based simply on the observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of a woman's menstrual cycle. No drugs or surgical procedures are used to avoid pregnancy. Natural family planning therefore refers to a variety of methods used to plan or prevent pregnancy, based on identifying the woman's fertile days. For all natural methods, avoiding unprotected intercourse during the fertile days is what prevents pregnancy. Consequently,

Natural family planning reflects the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life. It promotes openness to life and recognises the value of a child. By respecting the 'love-giving' (unitive) and 'life giving' (procreative) nature of marriage, natural

²⁷ USA Catholic Bishops (USCBC), *Natural Family Planning*, <https://www.usccb.org/issues.and.actions/marriageandfamily>, June 20, 2023, p.1

²⁸ Family Planning Victoria. *Contraception*, <https://www.fpv.org.au/foryou/contraception>, June 22, 2023, p.5

family planning enriches bond between husband and wife.²⁹

Natural family planning methods do not include the use of any chemical, or the introduction of foreign elements into the human body. Most people who are very conscious of their religious beliefs are more inclined to use the natural method of birth control.³⁰ The philosophy behind natural family planning is the conviction that life 'is sacred, mysterious and unending. It does not belong to man, but comes to him each day as a free gift from God so that no man has the right to take his own life or that of another. Neither can man show disrespect for life.'³¹

Methods of Natural Family Planning (NFP)

Each Natural Family Planning (NFP) method is focused on one or more signs of female fertility. They can be grouped into the following:

- a. Calendar Method also called the rhythm method. This method involves refraining from *coitus* during the days that the woman is fertile.³² Therefore, starting from the first fertile day, she should avoid intercourse to avoid conception. This method involves a proper calculation of the fertile and infertile periods during a menstrual cycle and acting accordingly.
- b. Basal Body Temperature (BBT) method is based on the fact that BBT falls at 0.5°F before the day of ovulation and during ovulation, it rises to a full degree because of progesterone and maintains its level throughout the menstrual cycle. The woman takes her temperature early every morning, when she notices a slight decrease and then an increase in her temperature, it signify she has ovulated. She is to abstain from sex for the next 3 to 4 days.
- c. Cervical Mucus Methods (CMM). This method which observes mucus sign is commonly called 'ovulation method'(OM). In natural family planning education, a woman learns how to identify the everyday ever present mucus which signifies infertile days and then the abnormal cervical mucus which only appears for few days within a menstrual cycle. This second type of cervical

²⁹ USCBC, *op. cit.*, p.4

³⁰ M. Belleza, *op. cit.*, p.4

³¹ M. Golden, *op. cit.*, p.9

³² M. Belleza, *op. cit.*, p.2

mucus which lasts only for few days are called ovulation mucus and they indicate the fertile days when sexual intercourse is most likely to result in pregnancy. The basis of this method is the changes in the cervical mucus during ovulation. To know if the woman is ovulating, the cervical mucus must be copious, thin and watery, it can be stretched up until at least 1 inch and feels slippery. According to Leonie McSweeney, the most important sign of the ovulation mucus which indicates the presence of the mature ovum is the 'very slippery' nature of the mucus and its 'stretching nearly always' without breaking.³³ To avoid pregnancy a couple must avoid intercourse when this mucus appears.

- d. Symptom-thermal Method (STM) is the method that observes several signs of fertility and cross-checks two or more of the signs to pinpoint ovulation. Symptom-thermal method typically combines charting of the basal body temperature (BBT) and cervical mucus with other optional indicators like changes in the cervix and secondary fertility signs.
- e. Sympto-Hormonal Method (SHM) observes several signs of fertility and adds the use of an ovulation predictor kit (OPK) or fertility monitor that can predict ovulation through the surge of luteinizing hormone that happens 12-24 hours before ovulation. Similar to the symptom-thermal method (STM), this approach add the self-detection of reproductive hormone in the woman's urine with the assistance of an OPK or fertility monitor (Marquette University Institute of Natural Family Planning promotes this method). The kit is 98% to 99% accurate and is fast becoming the method of choice by women.
- f. Lactation Amenorrhea Method or LAM is the contraceptive protection provided by exclusive breastfeeding of the infant the first 6 months after delivery. This helps suppress ovulation.
- g. Coitus Interruptus. This is one of the oldest methods of contraception. Here the man withdraws during sex and ejaculates outside the vagina. The disadvantage of this according to Belleza is that the pre-ejaculation fluid that contains a few spermatozoa may cause fertilisation.³⁴

³³ L. McSweeney, *Love and Life: Natural Family Planning*, 10th Edition, Ibadan, African Universities Press, 2012, p.67

³⁴ M. Belleza, *op. cit.*, p.3

How Does Natural Family Planning Work

Natural family planning has instructors across most Dioceses in the Catholic World. These instructions help married couples learn how to observe, interpret and chart a woman's signs of fertility. It enables married couples to identify the fertile and infertile periods in the wife's menstrual cycle. By getting both involved, it brings unity in marriage.

When husband and wife wish to attempt pregnancy, they will understand that intercourse during the fertile period of the wife's menstrual cycle will likely result in pregnancy. When they wish to postpone pregnancy, husband and wife would abstain from sexual intercourse and any genital contact during the fertile period. No artificial methods are used during the fertile period.

Natural family planning (NFP) is unique among methods of family planning because it helps its users to work with the body rather than against it. For NFP users 'fertility is viewed as a gift and a reality to be live, not a problem to be solved.'³⁵ Natural family planning methods respect God's design for married love, and represent a unique approach to responsible parenthood. Being a product of scientific research about the signs of fertility, it maximizes the possibility of achieving pregnancy when intercourse takes place during the fertile period of a woman's menstrual cycle and is effective in avoiding pregnancy by abstaining during the fertile period. This method also promotes and respects the unitive and procreative nature of conjugal love, calls for shared responsibility by husband and wife and has no harmful side effects.

Family Planning Appraised from a Moral Perspective

Family planning or birth control has been critically viewed from various perspectives such as religious perspective, legal perspective, socio-cultural perspective, economic perspective as well as moral perspective. Several conspiracy theories have also been put forward to incite a rejection of birth control just as many theories have emerged in defence and propagation of it. Morally speaking it has been argued from a relativistic, consequentialist, objectivistic and deontological biases. The arguments with regard to the morality of family planning will be considered from two broad approaches namely: the concept of morality being employed and secondly the methods of family planning being considered.

³⁵ USBC, *op. cit.*, p.7

The words morals, morality and ethics are interchangeably used because of their Latin and Greek etymological origins. The Latin word *mos* (plural *mores*) translated 'custom' or 'habit' is equivalent to the Greek word *ethos* which also means 'custom' or 'habit'. According to Fagothey, ethics and morality deals with human conducts which are not merely habitual or customary but principally are considered as right or wrong. Hence ethics or moral philosophy is the study of right and wrong, of good and evil in human conduct.³⁶ In this light Iwuagwu sees morality as

a system of principles and values in regards to standards of right or wrong behaviour which has as its constituents, moral standard with regard to proper behaviour, moral responsibility referring to our consciences and a moral identity with regard to every right thinking moral agent.³⁷

Going further Iwuagwu insists that a proper understanding of morality requires that it be considered from two distinct broad senses, namely the descriptive and normative senses. From the descriptive sense morality refers to certain personal or cultural values, codes of conduct or social mores held by a society or group (be it cultural, religious, philosophical or political group) or accepted by an individual to regulate human behaviour in their society. In this descriptive sense morality only refers to that which is considered right or wrong without any objective connotation. On the other hand, morality in the normative sense refers to whatever is actually right or wrong universally independent of the values or customs held by any particular people or cultures. Morality in the normative sense is objective and refers to a code of conduct that would be acceptable everywhere by anyone who is rationally and volitionally stable.³⁸ The above assertions notwithstanding, moral judgements do give consideration to the subjective, relative, consequential and cultural dispositions of the moral agents.

A proper assessment of the morality of family planning will therefore approach it from the understanding of morality as that which is concerned with the rightness or wrongness of

³⁶ A. Fagothey, *Right and Reason: Ethics in Theory and Practice*, St. Louis, The C.V. Mosby Company, 1976.

³⁷ E.K. Iwuagwu, *Privatization of Conscience Vis-a-Vis Objective Moral Norms*, IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, vol. 23, no.7/4, 2018, p. 23.

³⁸ Ibid.

behaviours, that is to say, whether such actions ought to be performed or ought not to be performed. The actions that man ought to perform are considered right or good actions while those that he ought not to perform are considered wrong or bad actions.³⁹

With regard to the morality of family planning, when family planning is considered strictly as that practice which allows individuals and couples to anticipate and attain their desired number of children and the spacing and timing of their birth...through use of contraceptive methods and the treatment of involuntary infertility,⁴⁰ when it strictly refers to the factors that may be considered by a couple in deciding if and when to have children, it is morally unobjectionable. When family planning gives a prime place to the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life in all its stages, when it employs the natural family planning methods, it is morally praise worthy. But when family planning employs artificial means or methods of birth control which shows an open disregard for the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life, it is considered as morally reprehensible. Family planning is not evil in itself, but some means, methods or devices used in family planning are morally unacceptable.

The moral burden of family planning accrues mainly from the various artificial means of birth control it employs. These artificial family planning methods are both unnatural and immoral. Since no artificial method of family planning, except sterilization, is 100 percent effective and since none is foolproof, there is always the possibility of continuing to achieve the expected goal through an immoral means, notably silent abortion or induced abortion. It is known that the hormonal contraceptives such as the oral pills, the implants, the injectable hormones, the combined patches, the vaginal rings, the IUDs, etc., have triple actions which enable them to effect an abortion when they fail to prevent conception. This aspect of their working as abortifacients, in many instances, makes them morally reprehensible.

³⁹ E.K. Iwuagwu, 'The Relationship Between Religion and Morality: On Whether the Multiplicity of Religious Denominations have Impacted Positively on Socio-Ethical Behaviour', *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol.6, no.9, 2018, p.45.

⁴⁰ World Health Organization, Loc.cit

Abortion is the destruction or expulsion of a fertilized ovum or foetus from the womb before it can survive outside the mother. Unlike miscarriage which is nobody's fault, induced abortion is a voluntary act. When this is carried out with the intention of terminating the life of a foetus for family planning purpose, it is direct killing and is morally evil and unacceptable. According to Iwuagwu,

a directly willed and procured abortion has been rejected as intrinsically evil and wrong. Therapeutic abortions are merely permitted since the danger to the life of the mother is also a danger to the life of the child. Hence operations, treatments, and medications during pregnancy having as its immediate purpose the cure of a proportionately serious pathological condition of the mother are permitted when they cannot be safely postponed until the fetus is viable, although they indirectly cause an abortion.... Hence since abortion is the direct taking of the life of an unborn child, directly willed and procured abortion is a fragrant violation of the right of a child to life and this action cannot but be intrinsically wrong.⁴¹

Hence the whole abortion argument is principally premised on whether the foetus is a human person or not as well the right of the woman. However one argues, the fact that life has started after fertilization and as expected is gradually developing, that life is not the life of any other thing than a human person who has a right to live irrespective of the fact that it is at the initial stage of its existence.

When family planning is considered from the moral perspective therefore, natural family planning is morally acceptable since it is purely contraceptive and does not in any way do any harm to the life of the woman nor does it in any way terminate the life of a foetus. On the other hand, artificial family planning with its various artificial means of birth control is morally reprehensible and unacceptable because its methods, devices and goals voluntarily and explicitly promote the termination of

⁴¹ E.K. Iwuagwu, 'Kant's Absolute Goodwill and its Implications for some Current Ethical Issues like Suicide, War and Abortion,' *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, vol.7, no.8, 2019, p.12

human life at its initial stages through direct and indirect induced abortion. This flagrant disregard for the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life makes this component of family planning morally unacceptable.

Family Planning Appraised from the Perspective of the Catholic Church

There is a wrong impression that the Catholic Church is against family planning. This is not correct and is clearly a misinformation. The Catholic Church is not against family planning in the correct understanding of it but is only against the artificial means of birth control. This rejection of artificial family planning is on moral and religious grounds premised on the fact that the various means, methods and devices it employs are not only unnatural but also act as abortifacients.

The Catholic Church accepts, upholds and promotes natural family planning which is morally praiseworthy and does not go against the will of God. It is the position of the Church that natural family planning is sinless and by its rejection of directly induced abortion as well sterilization natural family planning manifest utmost respect for the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life both of the foetus and the mother. Natural family planning is cheap and without any adverse side effects. It is easily accessible and simply require the couple to abstain for the few fertile days of the menstrual cycle. In consenting to the use of natural family planning Pope Paul VI wrote:

If then there are serious motives to space out births, which derive from the physical or psychological conditions of husband and wife, or from external conditions, the church teaches that it is then licit to take into account the natural rhythms immanent in the generative functions, for the use of marriage in the infecund periods only, and in this way to regulate birth without offending the moral principles....⁴²

The Catholic church promotes natural family planning methods because of its many benefits which include: teaching couples to understand and live God's design for married love; promoting a holistic

⁴² Pope Paul VI, *Humane Vitae*, Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, no.16.

approach to family planning which both respects procreation and deepen the intimacy of husband and wife; supporting reproductive health as it is devoid of the harmful side effects associated with artificial contraceptives such as the pills, implants and chemical substances; helping in pre-sex selection of the baby with its ability to pinpoint the actual ovulation peak and finally, fostering intimacy, communication as well as cooperation among husband and wife in the most intimate area of their life. Husbands are encouraged to “tune into” their wife’s cycles, and both spouses speak openly and frankly about their sexual desires, hope for the number of children, and God’s will in their marriage.⁴³ The church also exhorts natural family planning because

Natural family planning more than a mere method, is a way of life that is highly praiseworthy. It enhances and intensifies the relationship between the spouses; it promotes marital harmony and equality; it educates for continence and demands a continual effort through which husband and wife develop their personalities and are enriched with spiritual values.⁴⁴

Consequently, human life is to be allowed to develop to its full potential and its mystery respected. The Holy Koran expresses this conviction too, it says, ‘Do not kill your children from fear of poverty. We provide for you and for them; killing them is a great sin Do not kill anyone, except in the course of justice, for God has made human life sacred.’⁴⁵

Christianity and Islam share the conviction that the entire universe was created by God for human kind to live in as children of God and forever. The Koran expresses this when it said ‘whoever kills a single person except for manslaughter has equivalently killed all mankind, and whoever saves the life of a sinful person has equivalently saved the life of all mankind.’⁴⁶ The Holy Bible is very conscious of this sacred origin of human life, the Prophet Jeremiah expresses it thus ‘before I formed you in

⁴³ Family Planning Victoria, *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁴ T. Pazhayampallil, *op. cit.*, p.1088.

⁴⁵ The Holy Koran, 17:31.31

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, 5:32

the womb, I knew you before you were born, I consecrated you.’⁴⁷ In the incarnation, God choose the same medium of human birth. He was born of a woman ‘and the word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.’⁴⁸ Natural family planning is supported by great religious organisations of the world for whom, God is alive and very real and to whom all are accountable.⁴⁹

Natural family planning is based on the cardinal principle of the dignity and sacredness of human life. Pope John XXII in the encyclical *Mater Magistra* put it thus, ‘Human life is sacred From its very inception it reveals the creating hand of God.’⁵⁰ Since it is sacred, the Catholic Church teaches that it should not be interrupted. Pope Paul VI in the Encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* states,

The direct interruption of the generative process already begun and above all, directly willed and procured abortion, even if for the therapeutic reasons, are to be absolutely excluded as licit means of regulating birth Equally to be excluded ... is direct sterilisation, whether perpetual or temporary, whether of the man or of the woman.⁵¹

The Catholic Church therefore supports the methods of natural family planning because they respect God’s design for married love. The second Vatican Council in *Guadium et Spes* puts it thus, ‘Marriage is oriented to the good of the spouses and to the creation and nurture of new human life.’⁵² Making decisions therefore, about when and how many children to have in marriage is a sacred responsibility that God has entrusted to husband and wife. This call to discern God’s will for your marriage while respecting His design for life and love is the foundation of what the Catholic Church calls ‘responsible parenthood.’⁵³

The Catholic Church explicitly and unequivocally rejects artificial

⁴⁷ The Holy Bible, Jeremiah, Chapter 1, verse 5

⁴⁸ The Holy Bible, John, Chapter 1, verse 14

⁴⁹ M. Golden, *op. cit.*, p.10

⁵⁰ John XXII Pope. *Mater et Magista*, Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1961, Liii

⁵¹ Paul VI Pope. *Humanae Vitae*. Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1968, no.14.

⁵² ‘Gaudium Et Spes’, *Vatican II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Austin Flannery, (Ed.), Ireland Dominican, 1975, no.7

⁵³ USBC, *op. cit.*, p.2

means of birth control. It is the position of the Catholic Church that life begins at conception when the ovum is fertilized by the sperm after sexual intercourse. Artificial means of birth control, because they permit the termination of life already begun after fertilization, are considered by the Church as unacceptable and against the moral order and the will of God. The Church holds that God is the creator of life and only God has the right to take life. It is not right, therefore, for man to usurp the place of God by taking human life even at the initial stage of its development in the womb.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the document – Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its origin and on the dignity of procreation writes,

From the moment of conception the life of every human being is to be respected in an absolute way because man is the only creature on earth that God has ‘wished for himself’ and the spiritual soul of each man ‘is immediately created’ by God; his whole being bears the image of the creator. Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves ‘the creative action of God’ and it remains forever in a special relationship with the creator, who is its sole end: no one can, in any circumstance, claim for himself the right to destroy directly an innocent human being.⁵⁴

In strongly rejecting any form of family planning which tampers with human life and in promoting the inviolable sanctity of human life which must be safeguarded by all men of goodwill the Second Vatican Council document *Gaudium Et Spes* avers,

For God, the Lord of life, has conferred on men the surpassing ministry of safeguarding life in a manner which is worthy of man. Therefore, from the moment of its conception life must be guarded with the greatest care while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crime All should be

⁵⁴ The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, (), *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation*, no.10

persuaded that human life and the task of transmitting it are not realities bound with this world alone ... but always have a bearing on the eternal destiny of men.⁵⁵

The Catholic Church through numerous pronouncements of the popes has out rightly condemned artificial birth control as intrinsically evil. Pope Pius XI in the encyclical *Casti Connubii* (1930) while upholding the ovulation method of natural family planning rejected artificial birth control for not conforming to the demands of the law of nature. In the encyclical *Humane Vitae* Pope Paul VI condemned all artificial means of birth control as intrinsically evil regarding them as an error and insists that every conjugal act in marriage must be open to the transmission of life and retain its essential relationship to procreation.⁵⁶ Reiterating the position of his predecessors, Pope John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) and his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (1995) condemned artificial birth control as a 'moral disorder'⁵⁷ which offend against the procreative significance of conjugal act and which compromise the value of a total safe-giving. From the above and many other documents of the Catholic Church it is clear that the Church approves natural family planning and condemns and rejects artificial birth control.

Conclusion

This work not oblivious of the visible challenges of population explosion in some parts of the world occasioned by cultural and religious beliefs, irresponsible parenting and juvenile unplanned pregnancies; also very much aware of the corresponding pressure the ever increasing population growth puts on the available resources, insists that the dignity of human life must not be sacrificed on the altar of population growth. The fear of inadequate resources to cater for the increasing world population is unfounded. The world's uncultivated arable land is far more than the cultivated ones. The world's untapped natural resources are far more than the ones already explored. Industrial revolution occasioned by advancement in science and technology makes available to humanity

⁵⁵ *Gaudium Et Spes*, *op. cit.*, no.9

⁵⁶ Pope Paul VI, *op. cit.*, no.11

⁵⁷ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, no.32

abundant means of survival. Employing the principles of subsidiarity and participation as advocated by Iwuagwu⁵⁸ will address this fear. Poverty and lack witnessed in the present day world is nothing but a consequence of man's inhumanity to man. Poverty abounds because of the uneven distribution of the world's resources, a structure which makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. Poverty is a consequence of greed, selfishness and corruption. Further in addressing the imbalance in the society Iwuagwu advocates for solidarity towards the less privileged strata of the society by engaging them on what they can do better.⁵⁹ When these anomalies are addressed, the complaint about population explosion will cease and the complaint will be that the world is underpopulated. Even in the prevalent situation of addressing the problem stemming from the fear of having the world being overpopulated, family planning should be done in a way that the value and sacred character of human life from its conception to the conclusion at birth is not interrupted. Family planning must have a moral and religious face which respects the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of life in all its stages of development. This work submits, therefore, that any method of family planning or birth control which disregards the sacredness of human life, as artificial means of birth control does, is morally reprehensible and must be rejected. Natural family planning, however, which respects the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of life should be upheld and promoted for its moral and religious integrity.

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⁵⁸ E.K. Iwuagwu, 'Employing the Principles of Subsidiarity and Participation as Veritable Catalysts for Africa's Socio-Political and Economic Development', *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences*, vol. 9, no.1, 2016, p. 150

⁵⁹ E.K. Iwuagwu, 'The Socio-Ethical Principle of Subsidiarity: A Philosophical Appraisal of its Relevance in the Contemporary World', *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 6, no.12, 2016, p. 182.

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PREVENTING AND REDUCING VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS BY FORMING PROSOCIAL BEHAVIORS

ALEXANDRU GABRIEL NEGOIȚĂ*

alexgabrielnegoita@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The general aim of this paper is to form and develop prosocial behaviors in order to prevent school failure and to promote a unified and positive school environment, with no social exclusion, with the purpose of improving students' academic and social results. Recent research shows that educational institutions should concentrate not only on students' cognitive development but also their socio-emotional skills. In doing so, teachers consistently aim developing student socio-emotional competences therefore building a positive learning environment favorable to academic learning. Social and emotional development should be on the teacher's agenda, they need to understand the great importance of social competence, and the strong link between cognitive, emotional and social competences to better implement them will foster the development of a healthy and inclusive educational climate. In other words, students that are not happy in school are not able to easily focus or learn. Results show how such projects that develop social skills and behaviors are necessary and implicitly lead to school performance.*

Keywords: *Prosocial behavior, school failure prevention, inclusive education, socio-emotional skills, academic performance, social competence, emotional development.*

Introduction

Seen in society, and especially in the educational environments all over the world, violence is a phenomenon on the rise particularly in Romania, where social changes have favoured an emergence and spread of new patterns of aggressive acts. Traditional approaches on school discipline continue to be mostly based on punitive and exclusion policies. While teachers used to be perceived as authority, now their authority is questioned, and they face a series of problems especially when dealing with these students that contest their authority. When dealing with students' challenging behaviours, traditional education uses punitive actions and reactive practices, in other words discipline was associated with punishment. As we seek to assure inclusive and positive learning environments, the views and positions regarding disciplining students must evolve. In modern society, teaching students should focus on the

* Ph.D. in Political Science, University of Bucharest.

process, on the path that leads them to success and responsibility. This is based on the belief that positive behavior, the socially appropriate behavior can be taught.

At school level, the new teaching philosophy aims to positively discipline students, therefore fostering an inclusive and positive educational settings and climate that supports the students' emotional social and cognitive growth and development. Disciplining consists of teaching strategies, aiming at preventing and correcting the present paradigm on education, it is a new approach on behavior management, replacing the traditional paradigm that is founded on punishment, harassment, angst, intimidation, or any kind of aggression¹.

Using behavior corrective and preventive techniques, educators are able to impede the acceleration of conflicts in classrooms with students that have socio-emotional and behavioral problems². In these situations, it is the educator's task to concentrate on students' energy in positive activities, towards proper, socially appropriate behaviors for the rest of their life. Engaging students in various activities will have positive effects, by reducing disruptive behaviors resulting from lack of activity³. Discipline does not mean sanctioning the child, and its long-term purpose is that of helping the child to self-control is and making them understand boundaries, showing them the right path, following us as a sign of love and determination, not just to avoid the pain and the punishment. To positively discipline a child means to apply some fundamental principles and deeds (actions), some to encourage and other to correct. It specifies the boundaries and the limits in a firm but loving manner. Positive and inclusive approach to discipline process praises good behavior and corrects bad behavior, encourages respect for the child, for every child's

¹ M. Constantinescu, C. Constantinescu & C. Dumitru, *Development Of Parenting Skills by Implementing Strong Families Program. The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences*, XXIII, Google Scholar Crossref European Proceedings, 2017, pp. 1346-1354.

² R. Folostina, C. Dumitru, C.I. Iacob & Syriopoulou-Delli, *Mapping Knowledge and Training Needs in Teachers Working with Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Comparative Cross-Sectional Investigation. Sustainability*, 2022, 14(5), 2986. DOI:Google Scholar Crossref.

³ C. Dumitru Tăbăcaru, *Beneficiile terapiei ocupaționale la adulții cu dizabilități în Implicații psihologice ale terapiei ocupaționale la persoanele cu dizabilități*. R. Folostină (Coord.) [The benefits of occupational therapy in adults with disabilities. In Psychological Implications of Occupational Therapy in People with Disabilities.], Publishing House of Bucharest University, 2021.

uniqueness, it assumes understanding the needs, the temper and habits of the child without trying to change them too much.

Under the influence of social consequences most children show change in their behavior. Also, it was shown that, when social changes are applied by a hostile person, the chance for a positive influence is reduced. For example, when a student makes a mistake and the teacher is not satisfied to disapprove using fair methods, but uses aggressive and offensive methods, it may lead to opposite results, the student thus “becoming troublesome”.

Problem Statement

Teacher-student interaction has a strong impact on the climate school and on the student’s academic performance. If the interaction is positive, build up on a mutual respect and trust, students improve their mindset on the learning process and on the attitude towards school. School success is supported by the academic involvement of students. “Managing disruptive behaviors in the classroom to ensure a positive school climate is a concern expressed by teachers in Romanian schools, confirming the growth of problematic behaviors and the need to seriously address them”⁴.

Research Questions

Will school results and prosocial skills improve if the values and expectations of prosocial skills are defined in a clearer manner?

Are inappropriate, unwanted behaviors expected to decrease, if specific social skills are taught to and mastered by students?

If teachers implement the principles of the framework programs to support appropriate behaviors, are those expected to increase and inappropriate behaviors to decrease?

Purpose of the Study

The research purpose was to prevent school failure and to promote a positive, unified school environment, without social exclusion, in order to improve the academic and social results of students.

The general objective: Optimizing the educational climate by implementing an experimental program aimed at training social skills and behaviors in the school environment.

⁴ M. Constantinescu, G. Chirleşan, C. Dumitru Tabacaru, *School climate and behavior management in Romanian schools*, Social Sciences and Education Research Review, (6), 2, 2019, pp. 149-164.

Specific objectives:

- Preventing unwanted behaviors and improving the educational environment turning it into a positive and safe one by implementing an experimental program, a support system for positive behavior in order to reduce aggression / violence in school.
- Building and developing a vision of the school and clearly defining common values and expectations regarding social behaviors in the educational institution.
- Monitoring the implementation quality of the framework system (adequate and quality procedures).

Research Methods

We used the sociological survey based on the questionnaire as research method. The research design is experimental for the development of students' social skills and is based on a framework program to support teachers in developing students' social skills. The assessment of the initial situation is based on the evaluating sociological survey which establishes the existence of social skills in school, how to learn the social rules and norms (within the school) and was applied to a group of 300 students and 40 teachers from two schools. The two variables work in the experiment: the independent variable (the experimental program) and the dependent variable (the learning outcomes following the implementation of the framework program). If teachers implement the principles of the framework programs to support appropriate behavior, it is expected that good behavior will increase and inappropriate, violent, aggressive behavior will decrease. Teachers are taught to repeat with students the basic values of the school (respect, tolerance, responsibility), to master and apply them through a desirable behavior.

Prosocial behaviors – meaning and definition of the concept

When talking about prosocial behavior, we find a wide range of conducts, defined within the interaction between individual and society, manifested by people in their social activity based on social norms and values. Our behaviours have more or less direct consequences for others, and depending on these results they can be prosocial (in case of a positive result) or antisocial (in case of a negative result). Those who do not bother through their behavior, but on the contrary, they strengthen social norms and values, are defined as people that have a prosocial behavior.

In the broad sense of the word, prosocial conduit represents a positive social conduct as opposed to an antisocial one. The phenomenon of helping behavior generates a series of fundamental problems, such as discovering relationships that make people behave in a prosocial manner, ways that can raise the level of prosociality in common groups and communities, identifying ways to encourage alternatives to selfishness (so that selfishness no longer seems normal, and selflessness becomes deviant), outlining some patterns that encourage prosocial attitudes in such forms as mutual assistance, philanthropy, charity, intervention in urgent situations, discovering factors that inhibit helping behaviors, and how people develop a sense of responsibility for others and for society.

The psychosocial issue of prosocial behavior is presented by Chelcea⁵, Chelcea and Iluț⁶. Analyzed within the social action theory, it is worth noting that Chelcea offers a new perspective on prosocial behaviour considered to be the most adequate analysis of this type of behaviour.⁷

Prosocial conduct is one of the most noble behaviours in the repertoire of human activities⁸. Sometimes, people act in a manner that apparently goes against their own interests. The phenomenon of helping behavior generates a series of fundamental problems, such as discovering relationships that make people behave in a prosocial manner, ways that can elevate the level of prosociality in common groups and communities, identifying ways to encourage alternatives to selfishness (so that selfishness no longer seems normal, and selflessness becomes deviant), outlining some patterns that stimulate prosocial attitudes in such forms as mutual assistance, philanthropy, charity, intervention in urgent situations, discovering factors that inhibit helping behaviors, the ways in which the sense of responsibility for others and for society develops. Also, the prosocial behavior refers to some of the most diverse actions: starting with the least important, such as greeting, helping an old man get off the bus, etc., continuing with other more important, such as risking their own life to save someone from drowning or from a fire.

⁵ S. Chelcea, *Dicționar de psihosociologie* [Dictionary of psychosociology], INI Publishing House, 1998.

⁶ S. Chelcea & P. Iluț, *Enciclopedie de psihosociologie* [Encyclopedia of psychosociology], Economic Publishing House, 2003.

⁷ S. Chelcea, *Psihosociologie, teorii, cercetări, aplicații* [Psychosociology, theories, researches, applications], Polirom Publishing House, 2008.

⁸ C.M. Evertson & K.W. Neal, *Looking into Learning-Centered Classrooms Implications for Classroom Management*, National Education Association, 2006.

Prosocial behaviour includes the helping behaviour, selfless behaviour, interpersonal attraction, trust, sympathy, sacrifice, cooperation. One thing that these actions have in common is their purpose, which is helping the ones around us, the prosocial behaviour targeting to protect and support the others without waiting for external rewards.

According to Constantinescu⁹, through prosocial behaviours we understand those meaningful actions that would have positive consequences for others, without an anticipated reward. To these actions,¹⁰ adds "two more conditions that are necessary to identifying prosocial behaviours, such as: intent (the intention of helping others); freedom of choice, offering help outside professional obligations, without waiting for external rewards".

Other specialists in the field of psycho-sociology¹¹ Constantinescu consider that this type of behaviour can be defined as the action that only brings benefits to the person receiving the help. Therefore, prosocial behaviour could be understood as being "that intentional behaviour, performed outside professional obligations and oriented towards supporting, preserving and promoting social values"¹².

Defined as such, the term prosocial behaviour indicates a wider category, that includes both the helping conduct and selflessness and it refers to deeds positively valued by society, it acquires a greater extension, comprising very varied forms: helping others, property protection, self-sacrifice for freedom, for the independence of the homeland. However, helping, protecting and supporting others are the central elements in the system of prosocial behaviours.

Within prosocial behaviour, the act of helping others occupies a central spot. This - has both biological roots and sociocultural significance - is, unlike unilateral help, a type of prosocial conduct that is based on mutual, simultaneous or alternative granting of benefits and services between two or more interaction partners. Help may be insignificant, like

⁹ M. Constantinescu, *Competența socială și competența profesională [Social competence and professional competence]*, Economic Publishing House, 2004.

¹⁰ L. Giblin, *Arta dezvoltării relațiilor interumane [The art of developing interpersonal relationships]*, Curtea Veche (Old Court) Publishing House, 2000, p.113.

¹¹ M. Constantinescu, C. Constantinescu & C. Dumitru, C. (2017), *Development Of Parenting Skills by Implementing Strong Families Program*, The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences, XXIII, pp. 1346-1354.

¹² S. Chelcea, *Dicționar de psihosociologie [Dictionary of psychosociology]*, INI Publishing House, 1998, p. 439.

when we help pick up an object that someone dropped on the floor, or may be significant, when a person is risking their life by repeatedly returning to a burning house to save children and adults inside. It can be voluntary – through a series of actions to raise charitable funds – or instinctive, when someone runs and dives in the water to save somebody from drowning. Human behavior annalists try to explain its prosocial dimension and, particularly selflessness. The latter refers to the helping conduct that benefits other people, but which requires self-sacrifice from the helper: to grant someone help, as in the parable of the good Samaritan, who was beaten, robbed of all his belongings, by taking care of his wounds and transporting him to the nearest inn where he was hosted on his expense. Altruism refers to some good deeds that are done not out of an obligation imposed by the law, but from an inner sense, which does not allow you to do otherwise when someone's fate depends on your own actions. The cost is high and the results of such selfless deeds appear only for the benefit of the partner.

In terms of scope of the term “prosocial behavior”, we believe that it should not be restricted only to supporting other people, but it should comprise all actions meant to preserve and develop social values, among which, of course, man is the central value.

Forming and developing prosocial behaviors in the educational environment

In the specialty literature there are numerous studies and research on reducing violence in schools, concern for explaining its causes and effects. In our approach to the implementation of a framework support program for teachers and parents, we relied on specialized studies such as the research conducted by authors specializing in the field¹³.

We foresee the following results in a school that successfully implements the system: learning outcomes increase, school climate becomes positive and enjoyable, families actively participate in school life, teachers express satisfaction with their work, classroom management for discipline improves, students are happy in school as shown in the programs The decrease of violence among children. We can choose!¹⁴

¹³ M. Constantinescu & C. Constantinescu, (*Socializare și educație în Sociologie* [Socialization and education in Sociology], Prouniversitaria Economic Publishing House, 2006.

¹⁴ M. Fraser, J. Nash, M. Galinsky & M. Abell, *Reducerea violenței între copii. Programul “putem alege”* [Reducing violence between children. The “making choices” program], Cluj University Press, 2010.

Every school must have a vision that defines its purpose. School should respond to the needs of all students in order to help them develop social behaviors and cognitive skills. School values contribute to creating a clear, positive and consistent academic culture on the basis of which students' social behavior is formed.

As an institutionalized environment for socialization, school environment must participate not only in cognitive development activities but also in activities that encourage the creation of interpersonal relationships by carrying out activities with a socializing role, promoting social interactions and training students in social skills.

According to Golu¹⁵ the force relation between students' intellectual development and social development must be balanced by participating not only in cognitive development activities, but also in processes that establish interpersonal relationships, by carrying out activities with a socializing role, promoting social interactions and training students in social skills.

In school we work with the class of students, a social group made up of a number of members equal between themselves and a coordinator, by following common rules and principles. Unlike other social groups, the class of students is an educational group par excellence and aims to meet the needs of all students, in the sense that it proposes structured activities to stimulate development in the social, cognitive, affective and career fields. The interaction in the school group aims at forming behaviors that allow the student to explore their personality traits and specific abilities, to take responsibility for personal behavior, to develop a positive attitude towards themselves and the way of harmoniously interacting with others throughout life.

From a methodological perspective, in the context of the new educational paradigm, where the student represents, according to Neacsu¹⁶, together with the teacher, one of the, agents of educational action, social skills refer to the student's relationship with peers, teacher, family, society and aims to develop the capacity for action and appreciation in the social fields, through a range of social and life skills.

Life skills highlight the development level of the individual's personality, his emotional intelligence, directly related to social and

¹⁵ P. Golu, *Fundamentele psihologiei sociale [Fundamentals of social psychology]*, Ex Ponto Publishing House, 2000.

¹⁶ I. Neacsu, *Psihologia educației [Educational psychology]*, Polirom Publishing House, 2018.

thinking skills. With the help of social skills, we integrate ourselves in different group formations; social development highlights the fact that individuals have acquired appropriate behaviors that are fit to initiate and maintain relationships with others, and reach goals. The immaturity of social interactions leads to poor perception of social indices, to difficulties in regulating emotions and behaviors, to limited understanding of social risks, to immature social judgments. Throughout life we need the social skills in order to: communicate, know ourselves, listen, exert influences on other people, collaborate and cooperate with others, work in a team, maintain relations.

In the category of social skills that are formed and developed at school age, we can list:

- approaching other people in a positive and agreeable way.
- free expression of desires and preferences as well as the tendency to act.
- expressing both positive and negative feelings in a clear way, but without directing them towards someone ("not taking it out on others").
- gaining access, receiving and offering invitations to play with other children.
- making outstanding contributions to a group project, a play idea or an activity carried out with others.
- showing interest in obtaining information, in order to know more, finding out new aspects, from as many fields as possible.
- being capable to work and perform an activity in a group that is not homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, religion or age.
- being capable to express oneself non-verbally (through gestures, facial expressions, posture).

According to Neacșu¹⁷, social skills are skills acquired through an extremely complex process, in which the behavioral model has a decisive role, and the role of teachers is to create opportunities for students, to help them have inner freedom and the ability of conducting themselves in their own way (autonomy), taking into account the rules set in the social environment.

Didactic activities are put into value by using active-participatory methods, able to mobilize the student's energies, to focus their attention, to

¹⁷ I. Neacșu, *Psihologia educației [Educational psychology]*, Polirom Publishing House, 2018.

make them follow the lesson with interest and curiosity, to gain their logical adherence and affection towards the new teachings, able to urge them to put into play their imagination, understanding, anticipatory power, memory and strategies that involve teamwork, cooperation, coordination, division of tasks and produces interactive contexts, in which experience is gained and skills are formed based on social abilities: communication, empathy, emotional intelligence, social intelligence.

Controlling and preventing antisocial behaviors in school

More and more professionals in the field of education claim that a universal trend of the current generation of children is to have many more emotional problems than in the past¹⁸. They are lonelier and more depressed, angrier and more out of control, more emotional and more inclined to become anxious about anything, more impulsive and aggressive.

The solution depends on how we consider preparing young people for life. It is becoming more and more obvious that the school leaves to chance the emotional education of students, unilaterally overbidding (only the cognitive component) academic instruction.

Therefore, a new vision is needed, a new curriculum regarding what schools can do to ensure a complete training of students that will allow them to better adapt to everyday realities. Unlike aptitudes, abilities are the product of activity and learning. Ability is also “a quality synonymous with skill, dexterity, handiness, highlighting the ease, speed, accuracy with which the student, the man performs certain activities, involving self-organization appropriate to the specific task, supple and efficient adaptation”¹⁹

Starting with social skills, one can develop, defined as the characteristic of people capable to produce desirable social influence on other people. Social competence is a type of behavior that leads to social performance. Being socially competent means being sensitive, especially having the ability to get positive feedback from others; being flexible, including the ability to adapt to both the primary and to the dominant culture, having empathy, communication skills, and a sense of humor.

In the opinion of Bandura (1989), social learning aims to assimilate certain behavioral patterns, new behavioral patterns, new forms and

¹⁸ L. Giblin, *Arta dezvoltării relațiilor interumane [The art of developing interpersonal relationships]*, Curtea Veche (Old Court) Publishing House, 2000, p.113.

¹⁹ A. Giddens, *Sociologie [Sociology]*, All Publishing House, 2000, p.198.

outlines of interpersonal interaction and thus new personality traits. In a broad sense, all human learning is social because it takes place in cultural contexts and is guided by educational standards. In the narrow sense there is a social learning specialized in making the experience of connection with reality, with the interpsychological values and norms. Regarding the applicability of this learning pattern for the educational act, it goes from the acquisition of some verbal behaviors to the assimilation of some motor skills and to the achievement of some social behaviors, of some attitudes, by identifying with the appreciated adult.

In school, prosocial behaviors are based on the following patterns:

- the learning pattern of prosocial behavior through imitation,
- through observation,
- through cooperation and working in groups or teams,
- the model of the good Samaritan,
- by watching movies with altruistic language and content,
- by organizing team games, in groups of students,
- by presenting positive, desirable examples, actions and social facts (in family, at school)

Aggression is learned through a process called behavioral modeling. The individual itself does not inherit these violent tendencies but shapes them.

In most cases, children learn violent reactions by observing others, personally or through the environment and the media. Referring to patterns and imitating the observable behavior of the model is a form of learning, present from an early age, being later encountered in various contexts of everyday life. In the childhood cycle (3-10/11 years), the models are significantly represented by adults (parents, family members, teachers). Starting with pre-adolescence (11-14/15 years) and later in adolescence (14/15-18/ 19 years), family models step into the background, being replaced by the same age group (classmates, friends), which gives them specific rules, benchmarks and opinions. Often, teenagers choose models amongst the most popular celebrities of everyday life (sports, music or media). Models can be real, but also symbolic (words, ideas, behavioral acts that are socially valued, images or events with a certain cultural impact). Bandura was able to establish an exact number of steps in this behavioral modeling process:

- shaping social processes;
- attention, including modeled events (affective valence, complexity, functional value) and observer characteristics

(physical and sensory abilities, level of perception);

- memory, including symbolic coding, cognitive organization;
- reproduction: physical abilities, self-observation, accuracy of feedback;
- external and temporary motivation or reward.

Findings

The scientific approach provided some key moments. In a first stage, we carried out the documentary analysis of the theoretical studies on the manifestation of the phenomenon of violence with a certain thematic grid that aimed: the explanatory theories of aggressive, violent behavior, focusing on understanding the etiology of the phenomenon, the types and forms of manifestation, the actors involved and the methods of reduction and prevention; the analysis of the main international and national programs, aiming to identify directions for addressing and managing aggressive behavior that disrupts the learning environment; the analysis of the main ways of detecting and identifying the aggressive potential. In order to carry out the proposed research and aiming to achieve the targeted goals, we used a series of research methods to gather relevant data that would support the confirmation or refutation of the established hypotheses.

A study that captures the effects of implementing a positive behavioral approach promotes the achievement of a healthy learning environment, because it is often positively correlated with a positive school climate²⁰.

Behavior management techniques are useful for educators especially when working with students with vulnerabilities, such as students with emotional-behavioral issues or problematic behaviors²¹. To positively discipline a child means to apply some fundamental principles and deeds (actions), some to encourage and other to correct. Positive approach is effective in preventing disruptive behaviors, encourages respect for the

²⁰ M. Constantinescu, G. Chirleşan, C. Dumitru Tabacaru, *School climate and behavior management in Romanian schools*, Social Sciences and Education Research Review, (6), 2, 2019, pp. 149-164.

²¹ C. Dumitru Tăbăcaru, *Beneficiile terapiei ocupaționale la adulții cu dizabilități în Implicații psihologice ale terapiei ocupaționale la persoanele cu dizabilități*. R. Folostină (Coord.) [The benefits of occupational therapy in adults with disabilities. In Psychological Implications of Occupational Therapy in People with Disabilities.]. Publishing House of Bucharest University, 2021.

child, for every child's uniqueness, it assumes understanding the needs, the temper and habits of the child without trying to change them too much.

It was found that most students had practice deficits in social behaviors. To reduce the frequency of inappropriate social behavior (e.g., screaming in the classroom) and to increase the frequency of appropriate behavior (e.g., the use of an appropriate voice level), students need practice, exercise, repetition²²

The determination, that underpinned the idea of conducting this research, is the belief that any education system can be improved by implementing programs or by finding appropriate ways to change.

Conclusions

The proposed study is based on the analysis of education from a microsociological perspective, this being emphasized on the one hand by highlighting the main ideas of ethnomethodology that offers "a special microsociological approach to the phenomenon of education and on the other hand by capitalizing on microsociology in the activity of (re)defining the school organization and the class of students

At present, schools are considered both an "educational space for personal development, transfer and preservation of knowledge" and an "educational institution, a protected environment, a living space, a realm of experience, a socializing authority, a selection tool and an institution for the reproduction of the company"²³. Discussions with professionals, concerned with the well-being and safety of students, confirmed the need for further research into the problems that children face.

Within the research project our concern is to minimize the imbalance by emphasizing both sides of the child's needs, based on a systemic sociological approach. In this sense, we list some of the representative sociological theories about education: the theory of systemic analysis, the theory of structural analysis, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology. The first two are representative theories of macrosociology, which try to provide an explanation of education from an institutional perspective, while symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology are theories in the field of microsociology, concerned with the study of student-student

²² C. Dumitru, R. Ciucă, *Understanding school bullying. The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences*, EpSBS, LXVII, 2019, 437-444. DOI: 10.15405/epsbs.2019.08.03.52

²³ A. Gorun, *Sociologia Educației [Sociology of Education]*, Polirom Publishing House, 2006, p. 120.

interactions; students - teachers etc. in contexts and sequences of life, of concrete education, which we will also try to achieve in the sociological research undertaking undertaken.

The determination that underpinned the idea of conducting this research is the belief that any education system can be improved by implementing programs or by finding appropriate ways to change.

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INNOVATION IN EDUCATION: COLLECTIVE VISION, SYSTEMIC BARRIERS, AND STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR TRANSFORMING THE ROMANIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

ALEXANDRINA-SIMONA-ADRIANA LAZA (ONIȚA-AVRAM)*,

adrianaonita22@gmail.com

ROMULUS-DAN NICOARĂ**,

romulus.nicoara@gmail.com

CONSTANȚA POPESCU***

tantapop@yahoo.com

Abstract: *In an educational context in continuous transformation, marked by accelerated digitization, pressures related to social inclusion and institutional responsibility, educational innovation can no longer be seen as a secondary option, but represents a strategic necessity. The present study investigates how innovation is perceived, supported and experienced in schools in the North-West region of Romania, with a focus on pre-university education within the Eastern universities of the country. The research was carried out through a quantitative methodology, using a questionnaire applied to a sample of 302 respondents – teachers and educational leaders – who provided perspectives on strategic directions, systemic barriers, organizational culture and the professional dimension of innovation. The results indicate a common perception of innovation as a flexible, necessary and continuous process, supported by a high level of institutional autonomy, collaborative leadership and professional motivation. Digitalization and collective participation were identified as the most appreciated strategic directions. At the same time, the conclusions highlight persistent structural challenges, including the discrepancy between available resources and reform intentions, as well as between planning and implementation. The study highlights the importance of a coherent strategy, authentic leadership and a favourable organizational culture for innovation to become a sustainable and systemic reality in Romanian education.*

* PhD. candidate - "Valahia" University of Târgoviște, Romania.

** PhD. Psychologist, Cluj County Emergency Clinical Hospital, Cluj Associate / Associate Lecturer at the "Iuliu Hațieganu" University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Cluj-Napoca.

*** Professor PhD. "Valahia" University of Târgoviște, Romania.

Keywords: *educational innovation; innovation management; school leadership; institutional change; digital transformation; Romanian education system*

Introduction

In the face of global uncertainty and accelerating technological, environmental, and socio-economic transformations, the role of innovation in education has become a critical lever for institutional resilience and societal sustainability. As UNESCO (2020)¹ asserts, education must not only transmit knowledge but must also empower learners to actively participate in shaping a sustainable future. Innovation is therefore increasingly framed not as an auxiliary option, but as a core principle guiding educational reform, system-level adaptation, and human capital development (Fullan, 2015²; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2015)³.

International studies highlight that educational innovation is most effective when it is holistic—encompassing digital tools, pedagogical methodologies, organizational structures, and leadership practices (Christensen et al., 2016⁴; Moran, 2020⁵). For instance, the recent ChopMelon Net study (Tian, Liu & Tang, 2024)⁶, conducted in the context of Chinese higher education, demonstrates how integrating real-world social issues into online learning environments enhances students' critical thinking, problem-solving capacity, and behavioral change toward sustainability. This empirical evidence supports a broader theoretical trend advocating for context-based, interdisciplinary, and participatory approaches to educational innovation (Brown, 2019⁷; Earl & Timperley, 2015)⁸.

¹ UNESCO, *Education for sustainable development: A roadmap*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020

² M. Fullan, *The new meaning of educational change* (5th ed.). Teachers College Press, 2015

³ A. Hargreaves & M. Fullan, *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. Teachers College Press, 2015

⁴ C. M. Christensen, M. B. Horn & C.W. Johnson, *Disrupting class: How disruptive innovation will change the way the world learns* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill, 2016

⁵ J. M. Moran. *Mudando a educação com metodologias ativas*. São Paulo: Papirus, 2020

⁶ X. Tian, J. Liu, J., & Y Tang, Liaoning University ChopMelon Net project: Innovative research on sustainable education based on real social issues. *Sustainability*, 16(3781), 2024. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16093781>

⁷ R.E. Brown, *The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: A Review of AI-Enabled Learning Management Systems*. Educational Technology Research and Development, 67(1), 2019, pp. 221–238.

⁸ L. Earl & H. Timperley, *Using evidence in teaching practice: Implications for professional*

However, the implementation of innovation remains uneven across educational systems. In Romania, despite significant policy discourse on school modernization, digital transformation, and inclusion, innovation often remains fragmented and symbolic (Laza & Sterian, 2024)⁹. The public education system continues to be constrained by centralized governance, limited institutional autonomy, insufficient funding, and resistance to change at both cultural and operational levels (Lima, 2017;¹⁰ Parsons, Smith & Johnson, 2019)¹¹. These systemic barriers create what scholars term a “discourse–practice gap,” wherein strategic aspirations are not consistently translated into effective institutional change (Moreira et al., 2024)¹².

Given these challenges, the present study aims to explore how innovation is perceived, supported, or hindered in Romanian pre-university education institutions, with a specific focus on the North-West Region. This region, while relatively diverse in terms of educational infrastructure and professional profiles, provides a relevant case for analyzing the extent to which innovation is collectively understood and pursued within schools. The study is grounded in a quantitative methodological framework and investigates a series of key dimensions: perceived characteristics of innovation, strategic directions, contextual facilitators and inhibitors, levels of staff motivation and awareness, and the role of systemic conditions such as institutional autonomy and resource allocation.

By integrating international theoretical perspectives with local empirical evidence, the study contributes to a more grounded understanding of what constitutes meaningful innovation in education. It seeks to identify patterns of perception among teachers and school leaders, test correlations between sociodemographic variables and innovation-related attitudes, and generate strategic recommendations for

learning. Cambridge Journal of Education, 45(3), 2015, pp.221–235.

⁹ A. Laza, & M. Sterian (Onița-Avram), *Managerial techniques and tools for innovation in the school organization*. Euromentor Journal, 15(4),2024, pp. 143–153.

¹⁰ L.H. Lima, *Políticas públicas e inovação na educação: Desafios e perspectivas*. São Paulo: Cortez,2017

¹¹ D. Parsons, L. Smith & A. Johnson, *Overcoming Resistance to Technological Change in Higher Education*. Educational Technology Research and Development, 66(1), 2019, pp. 85–104.

¹² A.S. Moreira et al., *Innovation in Educational Management: Challenges and Opportunities*. In Education: Theory, Methods, and Perspectives for Evolution, 2024

fostering a more inclusive, adaptive, and forward-looking educational system in Romania. Ultimately, this research situates innovation not as a set of isolated initiatives, but as a systemic and cultural process – one that requires alignment between vision, leadership, policy frameworks, and everyday school realities.

This study seeks to explore how educational innovation is perceived, understood, and supported within Romanian pre-university school organizations. Starting from the assumption that innovation is a systemic process – shaped not only by technology, but also by institutional culture, leadership practices, and individual agency – the research aims to provide a comprehensive view of the drivers, perceptions, and strategic directions of innovation. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. **To identify the perceived characteristics of educational innovation** as expressed by teachers and school leaders, while analyzing differences based on role, professional status, and gender.
2. **To explore the preferred strategic directions and innovative approaches** in educational management, with particular attention to digitalization, collaboration, and participatory leadership models.
3. **To analyze internal and external contextual factors** that influence institutional change processes, including organizational culture, leadership style, policy frameworks, and social expectations.
4. **To assess the level of awareness, motivation, and engagement** of teaching staff in innovative initiatives, including their openness to teamwork and collaborative educational practices.
5. **To examine perceptions regarding systemic conditions and resources** that facilitate or hinder innovation – such as institutional autonomy, infrastructure, funding, human resources, and information flow.
6. **To determine whether significant differences exist** in perceptions of innovation based on sociodemographic and professional variables, including gender, role, and status.

Based on the relevant literature and relevant knowledge of the Romanian education system, the following research hypotheses have been prepared:

H1: Educational innovation is mainly considered as a flexible and adaptable procedure, regardless of the professional status or professional role of the respondents.

H2: Educational quality improvement is considered as a central

objective of managerial improvement, which represents a strategic priority at institutional levels.

H3: Digital changes and collaborative partnerships are most often preferred approaches to implement innovative educational management.

H4: No statistical significant difference between the categories (executive/leadership roles, men/women, professional rank) is expected in terms of institutional change factors, actors and their perceptions of obstacles.

H5: A positive correlation is expected between the employees' awareness and the level of motivation and their desire to engage in innovative activities.

H6: Institutional autonomy, organizational support and team quality is considered as necessary conditions to start and maintain innovation processes.

H7: The construction of innovative objectives is considered as a rational and necessary process, equally in respondents, regardless of their professional experience.

Materials and methods

The present study was designed as a descriptive and exploratory investigation, aiming to understand how educational innovation is perceived and experienced within Romanian pre-university schools. The focus was placed on exploring collective representations, strategic orientations, and systemic conditions that support or hinder innovation processes at the institutional level.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, developed in accordance with the existing literature on innovation in education and validated through informal piloting. The questionnaire was distributed both in printed form and electronically, ensuring accessibility for all participants. Its structure was divided into several sections, but only the section referring to systemic and organizational dimensions of innovation was used in this study, as it corresponded directly to the research objectives.

The research targeted teaching and management staff from pre-university education institutions located in the North-West Region of Romania, specifically from the counties of Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj, Maramureș, Satu Mare, and Sălaj. The final sample consisted of 302 respondents, selected through stratified sampling in order to ensure diversity and representativeness. Participants varied by gender, teaching rank, years of professional experience, and professional role (teaching vs. managerial positions).

Most participants were women (66.9%), reflecting national trends in the Romanian education system. Regarding age and experience, the majority were aged between 41 and 50 and had over 11 years of professional activity in education. From a professional standpoint, 39.1% of the respondents had achieved the highest teaching grade, and 22.2% held doctoral degrees, suggesting a well-trained and experienced population capable of offering informed insights on institutional change and innovation.

The questions in the survey were mostly formulated using a five-point Likert scale, allowing respondents to express their level of agreement or disagreement with various statements related to innovation. The questionnaire also included closed-response items for collecting factual or comparative data.

Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous, and data collection was conducted in compliance with ethical standards regarding informed consent, confidentiality, and the exclusive use of information for scientific purposes. The high response rate (86%) reflects the interest and engagement of the educational institutions involved.

The data gathered allowed for both descriptive and comparative analyses, aimed at identifying trends, shared perceptions, and possible differences between categories of respondents. By focusing on how innovation is perceived in context and how it is supported or challenged by institutional realities, the study provides a grounded perspective on the readiness for change within the Romanian school system.

Results

The research sample consisted of 302 participants, comprising both teaching staff and management personnel from pre-university education institutions located in Romania's North-West Region. In terms of gender distribution, the majority of respondents were women (66.9%), which reflects broader national trends in the Romanian educational system, where female staff are predominant.

Regarding age, most respondents were between 41 and 50 years old (35.1%), followed by those aged 31 to 40 (27.8%). This age distribution indicates a mature population in a stable stage of their careers, with substantial professional experience. This is further supported by seniority data, as over 70% of respondents reported more than 11 years of experience in education, lending credibility and depth to the perspectives expressed throughout the research.

The level of professional training was also high: 39.1% of participants had attained the highest teaching grade (Grade I), and 22.2% held a doctoral degree. This composition suggests a well-prepared population, capable of critically analyzing the dynamics of innovation in the educational context.

From an organizational perspective, 64.6% of respondents held teaching (non-managerial) roles, while 35.4% were in leadership or management positions. This relatively balanced distribution enabled the study to capture insights from both those involved in policy coordination and those responsible for its direct implementation.

The findings support Hypothesis H1, which stated that educational innovation is predominantly perceived as a flexible and adaptable process. This perception was shared by the vast majority of respondents and was supported by Chi-square analysis, which indicated a statistically significant result: $\chi^2(2, N \approx 302) = 133.56, p < .001$. The lack of significant differences based on gender, function, or professional grade reinforces the collective nature of this vision.

Hypothesis H6 was also confirmed: institutional autonomy, team support, and the quality of human resources were identified as key conditions for supporting innovation. Respondents expressed strong agreement with these factors, and the statistical analysis confirmed their significance ($p < .001$), demonstrating that innovation success depends heavily on a favorable systemic context.

Hypothesis H2, suggesting that the central objective of managerial reform is to improve the quality of education, was validated. This direction emerged as dominant in the respondents' answers, and the Chi-square test showed a significant difference: $\chi^2(2, N \approx 302) = 149.53, p < .001$. Notably, managers placed greater emphasis on "access and student success," while teaching staff tended to adopt a more balanced perspective.

Hypothesis H3 was confirmed through the identification of two preferred strategic directions: the digitalization of educational processes and collaborative participation. These approaches were consistently supported by all professional categories, without significant differences based on status, function, or gender, indicating a shared orientation toward efficiency, inclusion, and modernization.

Hypothesis H4, which proposed that there are no significant differences between staff categories in terms of perceptions related to institutional change, was largely confirmed. Respondents identified both

internal factors (leadership style, team dynamics, organizational culture) and external ones (educational policies, the pandemic context, societal expectations) as relevant drivers of change. The responses were supported by relevant statistical tests ($p < .001$), suggesting that perceptions of change are collectively shared and reflect a mature, systemic understanding of institutional transformation.

Hypothesis H5, which posited a positive correlation between awareness and motivation to engage in innovative activities, was also confirmed. Mean response values ranged between 4.1 and 4.3 on a five-point Likert scale, indicating a high level of agreement with the idea that innovation is necessary and welcomed. Statistical tests highlighted significant differences ($p < .001$), and the data show that staff who are aware of the need for change are also more willing to engage actively. Moreover, managers tended to assess their teams' motivation more optimistically, and the notion of the team as a driver of innovation was broadly accepted.

Hypothesis H6 was further validated in this section, as respondents consistently emphasized the importance of institutional autonomy, adequate infrastructure, funding, human resource quality, and external partnerships. These dimensions were rated in the upper range of the scale (medians of 4 and 5). Chi-square tests indicated high statistical significance ($p < .001$), and the lack of notable differences between analyzed groups confirms the cross-cutting nature of these perceptions. These results reinforce the idea that innovation cannot be implemented in isolation, but requires a solid institutional foundation and adequate resources.

Finally, Hypothesis H7 was validated: the formulation of innovative objectives is perceived as a rational and necessary process, regardless of professional experience or occupational role. No statistically significant differences were recorded between groups, suggesting that this perception is uniformly shared.

Nevertheless, some meaningful nuances were observed: managers evaluated team motivation and awareness more favorably, while women placed greater importance on institutional analysis and problem identification. Although these differences were not statistically significant, they add interpretive depth and highlight the diversity of experiences within an overall shared vision.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide a broad and versatile insight on how educational innovation is considered in Romanian East-University schools, valued and implemented. By analyzing the approach of both teaching and managerial employees, research reveals a relatively consistent and collective understanding of innovation, as well as systemic and cultural conditions that shape it. The discussion below explains in detail on these findings, highlighting their relevance to the current educational challenges and change strategies.

One of the most important results is a widespread perception of educational innovation as a flexible and adaptable process, which crosses the difference in professional role, gender or institutional status. This collective vision suggests an openness for high levels and changes of organizational cultural maturity. This perception aligns with the international literature, which emphasizes the complex, evolving, and context-dependent nature of innovation in education (Fullan, 2015¹³; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2015)¹⁴. Innovation is not considered as a unique technical intervention, but rather as a continuous process of improvement and accountability for local needs.

Equally important is the verification of the idea that institutional autonomy, team support and human resource quality are considered basic conditions for successful innovation. Respondents' strong agreement on these factors reflects a deep understanding of the link between organizational capacity and innovation outcomes. These findings strengthen the calls for increased decentralization, school -leading manufacturing of school leadership and creating auxiliary institutional environment (Parsons et al., 2019¹⁵; Moran, 2020)¹⁶.

The confirmation of improving the quality of education as the central aim of managerial reform demonstrates a meaningful alignment between practitioners' expectations and public policy discourses. However, the slight differences between management and teaching staff—where managers emphasized access and student success, while teachers maintained a more balanced view—may reflect differing practical

¹³ M. Fullan, *The new meaning of educational change* (5th ed.). Teachers College Press, 2015.

¹⁴ A. Hargreaves & M. Fullan, *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. Teachers College Press, 2015.

¹⁵ D. Parsons, L. Smith & A. Johnson, *Overcoming Resistance to Technological Change in Higher Education*, 66(1), 2019, pp. 85-104.

¹⁶ J.M., Moran, *Mudando a educação com metodologias ativas*. São Paulo: Papirus, 2020.

priorities or understandings of reform. These divergences suggest the need for better alignment between decision-making levels and those responsible for implementation.

A particularly revealing result is the preference for two strategic directions: digitalization and collaborative participation. These choices reflect current global trends and highlight a dual aspiration: enhancing efficiency and accessibility through technology while maintaining a human-centered approach grounded in collaboration and shared responsibility. Digital tools are increasingly perceived not just as means of content delivery, but as catalysts for personalized learning and institutional agility. Meanwhile, collaborative leadership and team-based approaches reflect an evolution toward professional learning communities and shared accountability (UNESCO, 2020¹⁷; Earl & Timperley, 2015)¹⁸.

There is a strong positive correlation between awareness of the need for innovation and the motivation to actively engage in innovative practices. The respondents who accepted the need for innovation were also keen to participate in such an initiative. This underlines the necessary role of professional development, contemplative practice and inspirational leadership in promoting relationship changes. Interestingly, school leaders tended to evaluate their teams' motivation more positively. This could reflect genuine confidence in their teams or, conversely, suggest a possible discrepancy between leadership perception and actual team dynamics—an aspect worth exploring in future research.

In the process of institutional transformation, leadership plays an essential role in stimulating the organizational culture oriented towards innovation. In this regard, Laza and Nicoară (2025)¹⁹ highlight that "effective educational leadership involves a synergistic approach between inspirational vision and strategic management, contributing significantly to increasing the quality of education and reducing school dropout. "This perspective confirms the idea that the development of a shared vision, accompanied by a participatory and coherent leadership, is a key condition for the success of innovative processes in the pre-university environment.

¹⁷ UNESCO, *Education for sustainable development: A roadmap*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020.

¹⁸ L. Earl & H. Timperley, *Using evidence in teaching practice: Implications for professional learning*. Cambridge Journal of Education, 45(3), 2015, pp. 221–235

¹⁹ A.S.A Laza, (Onița-Avram) R.D. & Nicoară, *Management and leadership within preuniversity education institutions in Romania*. Euromentor Journal, XVI(1), 20025, 22–28.

In addition, the absence of significant differences between the categories of employees about their perceptions of institutional change indicates a shared organizational culture and a systemic understanding of change. Both internal (leadership style, team harmony, organizational ethos) and external factors (educational policies, social expectations, disruption related to epidemic) were recognized as relevant forces. This shared understanding enhances the ability of coordinated action and strengthens the need for overall and reference-incredible strategies.

The confirmation of the hypothesis that setting innovative objectives is viewed as rational and essential—regardless of professional experience—reflects widespread support for strategic planning in education. This shared assumption reflects professional maturity and a readiness for systemic improvement. Nonetheless, some subtle distinctions emerged: for instance, managers assessed team motivation and awareness more positively, while female respondents placed greater emphasis on institutional analysis and problem diagnosis. These differences, although not statistically important, reflect the diversity of living experiences and attitudes within the shared structure of innovation.

Taken together, the findings of this study confirm a strong collective potential for innovation within the Romanian educational system, at least at the level of values, intentions, and discourse. However, the question remains as to whether these perceptions are being translated into concrete, sustainable, and systemic practices. Literature on educational reform warns against the common phenomenon of the "discourse–practice gap," where innovation is celebrated rhetorically but obstructed in implementation by structural constraints or cultural resistance (Moreira et al., 2024)²⁰.

To bridge this gap, policy-makers and institutional leaders must move beyond rhetoric, supporting innovation through tangible and consistent measures. These include investments in infrastructure, high-quality professional development, real decision-making autonomy for schools, and formative evaluation mechanisms. Furthermore, the development of a culture of institutional learning, where experimentation is encouraged and failure is viewed as a step in the learning process, is essential to nurturing long-term change.

This study is limited by its regional scope, focusing exclusively on the North-West Region of Romania, which may affect the generalizability of the

²⁰ A.S. Moreira et al., *Innovation in Educational Management: Challenges and Opportunities*. In *Education: Theory, Methods, and Perspectives for Evolution*, 2024

findings to other educational contexts in the country. Additionally, the use of self-reported data may be subject to social desirability bias, particularly in responses related to motivation and engagement in innovation.

Future research could expand the geographic scope to include other regions, enabling comparative analysis across diverse educational environments. Moreover, incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups could deepen the understanding of institutional dynamics and provide richer insights into the barriers and enablers of educational innovation. Longitudinal studies may also help capture the evolution of innovation practices over time and their real impact on school transformation.

Conclusions

In today's rapidly evolving educational context—shaped by digital transformation, equity demands, and institutional adaptability—this study offers a valuable perspective on how innovation is perceived and practiced in schools in Romania's North-West Region. Although the analysis was regularly anchored, as a result the implications are relevant at the national level, to change the openness of teachers and educational leaders, as well as highlight structural challenges. One of the most important results is the positive collective perception of innovation, whether it is the position or the professional experience of the respondents. This shared vision reflects a high degree of awareness about the need for institutional changes and underlines a solid ability for mass engagement in innovative processes. Innovation is no longer seen as uniform intervention, but as a continuous process, is relevant and adaptable to school needs.

At the same time, studies show that institutional autonomy, team support and quality of human resources are considered essential factor in the success of any innovative approach. This confirms that innovation cannot be separated from organizational context, but requires a solid infrastructure, effective leadership and a professional culture that supports cooperation and continuous learning.

The preference for strategic directions focused on digitalization and collaborative participation signals a balanced orientation between technological efficiency and the human dimension of education. Teachers no longer see technology as just a tool, but as a catalyst for personalized learning and institutional flexibility. At the same time, the focus on collaboration indicates the importance of professional learning communities and co-responsibility.

The positive correlation between awareness of the need for innovation and the desire for active involvement confirms the essential role of continuous training, inspirational leadership and an organizational climate based on trust and professional recognition.

Despite these encouraging findings, the study draws attention to a potential dissonance between intention and practice. While openness to innovation is obvious, there is a risk that concrete implementation will be limited by systemic barriers. Thus, it becomes essential that education policies are supported by coherent and enforceable measures, including real investments in infrastructure, quality professional development and genuine decision-making autonomy for schools.

In conclusion, the transformation of the Romanian educational system cannot take place without a collective, sustained and well-coordinated effort, in which politics, leadership and professional culture are truly aligned. Innovation is not a luxury, but a systemic necessity, and this study provides clear benchmarks for building a relevant, adapted and sustainable education.

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THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT SYSTEM THROUGH THE PRINCE OF THE MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL

MARIA PAPANA*,

mariaplaton97@gmail.com

ANDREI MULIC**

andrei.mulic@usm.md

Abstract: *In the contemporary period, public procurement represents a strategic policy to support sustainable development, by integrating environmental, social and economic criteria into the procurement process at the national level. The purpose of the article is to estimate the impact of the implementation of sustainable public procurement on the national economy of the Republic of Moldova, by applying the linear regression model. To build a multiple regression model, the authors collected several relevant economic and social data from reliable and official sources.*

In conclusion, the sustainable public procurement system can bring considerable economic benefits, contributing to the development of an efficient circular economy. The success of developing a sustainable public procurement system depends on the correct implementation of policies, the allocation of resources and the continuous monitoring of results. Thus, through the lens of the multiple regression model, the authors will try to identify the challenges and risks associated with its implementation.

Keywords: *public procurement, sustainable public procurement, multiple regression model, dependent variable, independent variable*

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* PhD. student at the Doctoral School of Law and Economic Sciences of USM.

** PhD., associate professor, Faculty of Economic Science, Moldova State University.

Introduction

Sustainable public procurement is a strategic process that integrates the principles of sustainable development. This process includes meeting the needs of public institutions for goods, works and services with the aim of achieving an optimal ratio between costs and benefits in the long term, while reducing the harmful impact on the environment.

Public procurement processes that include social, economic and environmental factors are essential for transforming markets in a more sustainable way. These processes are part of the concept of sustainable procurement, which aims to respond to global challenges such as the climate crisis, environmental degradation and social problems. The sustainable procurement approach is not limited to the environmental impact of products or services, but also includes aspects such as respect for human rights, working conditions, diversity, inclusion and gender equality.¹

Public procurement plays a crucial role in achieving global sustainability goals. Representing approximately 20-30% of global GDP annually, governments have considerable purchasing power, which can influence market demands, promoting products and services with a reduced environmental impact. Thus, developing sustainable public procurement can significantly contribute to solving the three planetary crises identified by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): climate change, biodiversity loss and increasing pollution.²

The data collected and analyzed in this research confirms that sustainable procurement is becoming a widespread practice at both global and local levels. Most governments, international organizations and development banks have implemented or are in the process of developing policies that support the development of sustainable public procurement systems.

¹ SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT; The World Bank, Published June 2023—Second Edition, p. 13-15; available at:

<https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/01802d374f64ff681613cff8ccad3576-0290012023/original/Sustainable-Procurement-August-2023.pdf>

² United Nations Environment Programme; GLOBAL REVIEW. P.11 ISBN No: 978-92-807-4000-4, 2022; available at:

https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sites/default/files/from-crm/300_I_UNEP_Global_Report_2022.pdf

Literature review

In the research "Sustainable Public Procurement: A New Approach to Good Governance"³, the author mentions that sustainable procurement involves the integration of social and environmental aspects into the procurement process of public and private organizations. They are based on the concept of "value for money," which includes not only the initial cost of a product, but also long-term costs, such as its use, maintenance and disposal. In this sense, the quality-price ratio is made through a cost-benefit analysis that takes into account the entire life cycle of the product. Sustainable procurement takes into account the social, economic and environmental impact on society, thus contributing to the objectives of sustainable development, promoting long-term benefits for the community and the environment.

In recent years, capacity building and digitalization of procurement processes have become essential to improve their efficiency and transparency. These changes have allowed for better resource management and a reduction of risks associated with traditional procurement processes. A significant milestone was the explicit inclusion of sustainable procurement in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. This step underlined the importance of integrating sustainability into government policies and the public procurement process. These initiatives contribute to accelerating the implementation of sustainable procurement, emphasizing the social and environmental responsibility of governments and the public sector.

According to a report by the Boston Consulting Group, public procurement generates approximately 7.5 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions, representing 15% of the global total in 2023.⁴

At the national level, the action plan regarding the development of a sustainable public procurement system can be found in the National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030".⁵

³ Academic Scholarly & Scientific Research Society, Sustainable Public Procurement: A New Approach to Good Governance, Adjienim Boaterng, Vol. 4, Issue 7, P: 1-5, July 2019, ISSN: 2343-674 Journal DOI: 10.15373/22501991

⁴ Boston Consulting Group, CENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT, 2020 available at:

<https://web-assets.bcg.com/cb/e0/ab581bfc43b3a154dd1eed0518a1/centralizing-government-procurement.pdf>

⁵ National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030"; available at: <https://cancelaria.gov.md/ro/apc/snd-moldova-europeana-2030>

However, measuring the impact of sustainable procurement remains a challenge. In the research, the authors aimed to analyze the complex relationships between the economic variables involved in the sustainable public procurement process and their impact on the economy, by applying the multiple regression model.

The multiple linear regression model is a statistical technique used to evaluate the relationships between a dependent variable (continuous) and several predictors (independent variables). Essentially, this model helps to understand how the independent variables influence the dependent variable, by building an equation that describes this relationship.⁶

A multiple regression model is essential for analyzing the impact of sustainable public procurement, as it allows assessing the relationships between economic and social variables, such as costs, economic growth, forced employment and green investments. Thus, by establishing these factors, public authorities can contribute to the development of more efficient strategies for allocating resources and adopting appropriate public policies.

Data sources and used methods

The research methodology is based on the study of specialized literature, as well as reflections, observations from the research of international and local authors.

In implementing a multiple regression model, the essential steps include collecting and preparing data, correctly choosing dependent and independent variables, using appropriate statistical techniques and evaluating the performance of the model. Data are fundamental for building the model, and they must be processed and analyzed to provide a relevant result.

The application of the linear regression model involves several methodological steps:

Data collection: involves selecting relevant data for dependent and independent variables, coming from internal or external sources and collected over a 10-year period, 2013-2023. Economic, social and environmental data were collected by the authors from the platform of the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, national regulations, as well as various international sources: World Bank, UN,

⁶Multiple Linear Regression, Yale University; available at:
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511778643>

UNEP, Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI), environmental reports.

1. **Data filtering and analysis:** The collected data must be processed to eliminate errors. They must be transformed into a numerical format, without collinearity between them. To verify the relationships between the dependent and independent variables, scatter plots, histograms are used. To implement multiple regression, various statistical analysis programs are used, in the research the authors use Microsoft Excel, which can be used for simple multiple regression analyses.
2. **Interpretation of the result:** The coefficients indicate the change in the dependent variable when an independent variable increases by one unit, keeping the other variables constant. Statistical significance: If the p-value of a coefficient is less than 0.05, then the respective variable is considered statistically significant.

Results and discussion

Multiple linear regression (MLR) is a statistical method used to predict a dependent variable based on multiple explanatory (independent) variables. Its goal is to establish a linear relationship between the explanatory variables and the response variable. Multiple linear regression extends simple linear regression (OLS), which assumes a single explanatory variable, by adding more such variables to improve predictions and better analyze the complexity of the relationships between the variables.⁷

Multiple linear regression analysis is the most powerful statistical tool.⁸ The purpose of using the linear regression model is to determine the usefulness of a set of variables for predicting an outcome, which is generally an important event or behavior, in the case of the current research, this is the economic impact of developing sustainable public procurement.

The calculation formula for a multiple linear regression is represented by the equation:

$$Y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \dots + \beta_n X_n + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

⁷ Basics of Multiple Regression and Underlying Assumptions; CFA Institute, available at: <https://www.cfainstitute.org/insights/professional-learning/refresher-readings/2025/multiple-regression>

⁸ Mendenhall William and Terry Sincich, A Second Course in Statistics Regression Analysis. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2003, ISBN 0-321-69169-5, p. 90-109.

Where:

Y_t – represents the independent variable;

β_0 – represents the intercept, the value of Y_t when all independent variables are 0;

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3 \dots \beta_n$ – represents the regression coefficients and measures the impact of the independent variables on Y_t ;

$X_1, X_2, X_3 \dots X_n$ - represents the independent variables;

ε - is the error and represents the difference between the actual and estimated values of Y_t .

Next, creating a forecasting model of the economic impact of implementing sustainable public procurement involves defining the variables.

According to the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), public procurement is an essential economic policy instrument, with the role of supporting the implementation of countries' development objectives. In the European Union, government spending on goods, services and works represented approximately 15% of GDP, in the Republic of Moldova approximately 4%, while in developing countries, public procurement reaches almost 30% of total GDP. These significant proportions position public procurement as an important lever for promoting sustainable development⁹

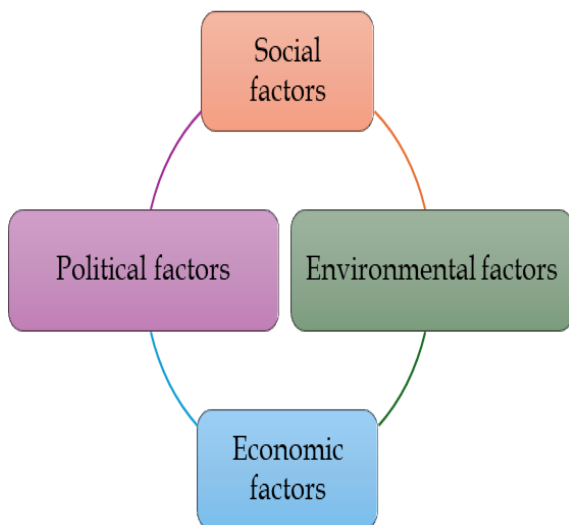
Therefore, the Gross Domestic Product, hereinafter GDP, was chosen as the dependent value of the Multiple Linear Regression Model.

Y_t - Gross Domestic Product (GDP), data regarding this indicator were selected from official sources, such as the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.

In this situation, the selected independent variables include economic, social, political, and environmental factors, which could contribute to more sustainable economic growth and the integration of sustainable public procurement at the national level.

⁹ Monitoring Progress in Green Public Procurement: Methods, challenges, and case studies, 2024 International Institute for Sustainable Development; available at: <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/2024-03/monitoring-green-public-procurement.pdf>

Fig.1 „ Factors of interest in selecting independent variables”



Source: Elaboration by authors based on the literature studied"

The independent variables investigated are:

X₁ – Proportion of sustainable public procurement in Total public procurement (SPP);

X₂ – Level of public investment in infrastructure (PII);

X₃ – Unemployment rate (Ur);

X₄ – Human Development Index (HDI);

X₅ – Environmental policy (Ep);

X₆ – Governance effectiveness (Ge);

X₇ – Share of energy from renewable sources in final energy consumption (Ers).

The multiple linear regression equation can then be represented by the formula:

$$\text{GDP} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{SPP} + \beta_2 \text{PII} + \beta_3 \text{Ur} + \beta_4 \text{HDI} + \beta_5 \text{Ep} + \beta_6 \text{Ge} + \beta_7 \text{Ers} + \epsilon \quad (2)$$

To demonstrate the importance of sustainable public procurement, the authors focused on variables that directly and indirectly reflect their impact on GDP. With their help, a solid model was formulated, which can certainly demonstrate how sustainable public procurement will influence economic development.

X₁ is the main independent variable, it represents the share of sustainable public procurement in Total public procurement and reflects

the exact objective of the analysis. Currently in the Republic of Moldova there is no exact percentage of public procurement that includes sustainability criteria. However, national legislation allows authorities to include sustainability criteria in the public procurement process. Thus, data on this indicator were selected based on the reflections and research of the Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) "Viitorul" in the field of public procurement¹⁰ and based on the study of the Activity Reports of national public institutions. Therefore, we will examine the direct relationship between X1 and GDP, in order to analyze to what extent the development of sustainable public procurement influences economic growth.

The other variables represent additional explanatory variables, these are indicators that can influence both economic development and the sustainable public procurement process.

X₂ – To reflect the values regarding the level of public investment in infrastructure, the authors analyzed and collected data from the National Public Budget, from the official website of the Ministry of Finance¹¹, for the researched period. Infrastructure investments are closely linked to sustainable public procurement because they include investments in renewable energy, green transport, energy efficient buildings, etc., thus having a significant impact on economic growth, reducing dependence on finished natural products. Analyzing this variable in the model can demonstrate how the level of public investment in infrastructure correlates with sustainable public procurement and influences GDP.

X₃ – The unemployment rate is an indirect variable that could influence sustainable public procurement and GDP. Developing a sustainable public procurement system can contribute to job creation and supporting a circular economy. In turn, job creation in sustainable sectors (renewable energy, waste management, sustainable construction, etc.) can reduce the unemployment rate and contribute to increasing the Gross Domestic Product. Data referring to this indicator were collected from the

¹⁰ Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) "Viitorul" in the field of public procurement, Experience of the National Bank of Moldova in implementing sustainable procurement, available at:

<http://viitorul.org/ro/content/experien%C8%9Ba-b%C4%83ncii-na%C8%9Bionale-moldovei-%C3%AEn-implementarea-achizi%C8%9Biilor-verzi-%C3%AEmp%C4%83rt%C4%83%C8%99it%C4%83-%C3%AEn>

¹¹ Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova, National Public Budget; available at: <https://mf.gov.md/ro/buget/bugetul-public-na%C8%9Bional/bugetul-de-stat>

official website of the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.

X₄ – The Human Development Index reflects a broader picture of a country's well-being, in addition to economic well-being, it targets quality of life, various educational and health aspects. Improving public services, such as education, infrastructure, medicine directly contributes to increasing life expectancy, this aspect contributes to more responsible governance that integrates economic, social and environmental objectives and influences the growth of Gross Domestic Product. The values of this variable were collected by the authors from the UNDP Human Development Report.¹²

X₅ – Environmental policy refers to the assessment of the efficiency of environmental and natural resource management, taking into account the impact of macroeconomic, energy, fiscal policies and incentives for public authorities that integrate sustainability criteria in the public procurement process. The extent to which the Government implements policies, strategies, regulations to promote sustainable development can stimulate investments in the field of sustainability and can contribute to increasing GDP, by creating jobs, increasing productivity. Data on environmental policy for the Republic of Moldova were taken from the report "Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI)"¹³.

X₆ – Governance effectiveness refers to the assessment of the quality of public services, their independence from political pressure, the quality and implementation of public policies and regulations, as well as the Government's commitment to declared policies. The data reflecting the values for the Republic of Moldova, in the researched period, are measured through global governance indicators, according to the World Bank.¹⁴

X₇ – Share of energy from renewable sources in final energy consumption. The development of sustainable public procurement and economic growth are directly linked to the promotion of renewable

¹² Human Development Report, Republic of Moldova, 2020, UNDP, available at: <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/md/ac10f2664b36d9cd575e111704eee90cf1858092d6ada1a259858747243f3a5e.pdf>;

¹³ The Transformation Index, BTI 2024; available at: https://atlas.bti-project.org/1*2024*CV:CTC:SELMDA*CAT*MDA*REG:TAB

¹⁴ FY 2025 USAID Country Roadmap Methodology Guide, 2024; available at: https://roadmaps.usaid.gov/docs/FY_2025_USAID_Country_Roadmap_Methodology_Guide.pdf

sources, renewable energy sources. Increasing the share of renewable energy can support the development of a sustainable economic sector and stimulate long-term Gross Domestic Product growth. Data on the Share of energy from renewable sources in final energy consumption were collected in accordance with the Energy Balance of the Republic of Moldova, a statistical compilation of the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.¹⁵

Table 1,, Data for analysis of the Republic of Moldova 2013-2023"

| | X ₁ Share of APD | X ₂ Level of public investments in infrastructure, billions of lei | X ₃ Unemployment rate | X ₄ Human Development Index | X ₅ Environmental policy | X ₆ Governance efficiency | Share of energy from renewable sources in final energy | Y, GDP billion lei |
|------|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|--------------------|
| 2013 | 0,00% | 1,20 | 4,20% | 0,70 | 0,44 | 0,38 | 14,00% | 112,00 |
| 2014 | 0,00% | 1,50 | 4,10% | 0,74 | 0,44 | 0,26 | 15,00% | 121,90 |
| 2015 | 0,00% | 1,80 | 3,90% | 0,74 | 0,44 | 0,28 | 16,00% | 134,50 |
| 2016 | 0,00% | 2,00 | 3,60% | 0,74 | 0,44 | 0,31 | 17,00% | 150,30 |
| 2017 | 1,00% | 2,50 | 2,90% | 0,75 | 0,44 | 0,34 | 18,00% | 190,00 |
| 2018 | 2,00% | 3,00 | 3,20% | 0,75 | 0,44 | 0,36 | 19,00% | 210,00 |
| 2019 | 3,50% | 5,65 | 4,50% | 0,70 | 0,44 | 0,34 | 18,50% | 206,30 |
| 2020 | 4,00% | 2,80 | 3,20% | 0,77 | 0,44 | 0,36 | 22,28% | 242,00 |
| 2021 | 4,50% | 3,20 | 4,40% | 0,76 | 0,44 | 0,41 | 25,00% | 272,50 |
| 2022 | 5,00% | 3,50 | 5,00% | 0,76 | 0,46 | 0,44 | 26,00% | 300,40 |
| 2023 | 6,00% | 4,00 | 3,60% | 0,70 | 0,48 | 0,46 | 27,00% | 323,00 |

Source: Prepared by the authors based on bibliographical sources

For the research in question, the authors identified three hypotheses:

1. *The development of sustainable public procurement in the Republic of Moldova will generate long-term economic growth, by promoting the circular economy, creating new markets for ecological products and increasing efficiency in resource consumption.*

2. *Sustainable public procurement will contribute to increasing the human development index by developing aspects that comply with social protection standards, which in turn will favor economic development.*

3. *The implementation of sustainable public procurement will stimulate the*

¹⁵ Energy Balance of the Republic of Moldova, statistical collection of the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova; available at: https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/balanta_energetica/Balanta_energetica_editia_2023_rom.pdf

creation of new jobs in sustainable institutions, thus contributing to the economic growth of the Republic of Moldova.

Following the analysis of Multiple Linear Regression, using the Microsoft Excel platform, several statistics were obtained, which provide relevant results about the independent variables ($X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5, X_6, X_7$) and the dependent variable is annual GDP (Y).

The results obtained are interpreted through the following statistics:

R- multiple - This is the correlation coefficient between the dependent variable and the independent variables. A value close to 1 suggests a very strong correlation between GDP and the independent variables. This is related to R^2 and is calculated as the square root of:

$$R = \sqrt{R^2} \quad (3)$$

R^2 or the coefficient of determination, it measures how well the model explains the variability in the data. R^2 is calculated according to the formula:

$$R^2 = \frac{SSR}{SST} \quad (4)$$

Where: SSR represents the regression sum of squares and SST the total sum of squares.

It ranges from 0 to 1. A value close to 0 means that the model explains no variation in the data. A value close to 1 means that the model explains 100% of the variation in the data.

R^2 adjusted, this is similar to R^2 , but adjusted for the number of independent variables in the model and the sample size. If the model contains multiple explanatory variables, adjusting this value is useful to prevent overestimating the model's performance. A large value (close to R^2) suggests that adding variables did not introduce significant error and that the model remains significant.

$$R^2 \text{ adjusted} = 1 - \frac{(1 - R^2)(n - 1)}{n - p - 1} \quad (5)$$

Where: R^2 is the coefficient of determination, n - the number of observations and p - the number of explanatory variables.

The standard error, this represents the average deviation of the prediction errors. A small standard error suggests that the model has high accuracy.

$$SE = \sqrt{\frac{SSE}{n - p - 1}} \quad (6)$$

Interpretation of coefficients includes:

Intercept (constant): It represents the value of Y when all the values of the X variables are zero. This represents the point where the regression line intersects the Y axis.

Variable coefficients X: It represents the expected change in Y for a unit change in X, provided that the other variables remain constant.

$$\beta = (X^T X)^{-1} X^T Y \quad (7)$$

Where: X is the matrix of independent variables; Y is the vector of observations of the dependent variable; $(X^T X)^{-1}$ is the inverse of the product of the transposed matrix with the original matrix of independent variables.

P-value and significance level represents the statistical significance of the coefficient associated with each independent variable (X).

The p-value represents the probability that the coefficient is different from zero, its value is obtained from the t-distribution.

If the p-value is less than 0.05, it means that there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, and the coefficient is statistically significant.

If the p-value is greater than 0.05, then the coefficient is not statistically significant, indicating that the respective variable does not have a significant impact on the dependent variable.

Value t (t-statistic) represents the ratio between the estimated coefficient and its standard error. Each coefficient β is tested using a test t.

$$t = \frac{\beta}{SE(\beta)} \quad (8)$$

Where $SE(\beta)$ is the standard error of the coefficient

The larger the t-value (in absolute terms), the more statistically significant the coefficient. In general, if the t-statistic is greater than 2 (or less than -2), then the coefficient is considered statistically significant.

Test F, for the overall significance of the model tests the overall significance of the multiple linear regression model, if there is a significant relationship between Y and at least one of the X variables.

$$F = \frac{\frac{SSR}{p}}{\frac{SSE}{n-p-1}} \quad (9)$$

Where: SSE is the sum of squares of the residuals, n- the number of observations and p- the number of independent variables.

If the p-value associated with the F-Statistic is less than 0.05, this indicates that the model is significant and can explain the relationship between the variables.

Analysis of variation It contributes to understanding the total variation in the data and is essential for demonstrating the effectiveness of the model and assessing how well the independent variables (X) explain the variation in the dependent variable (Y).

The analysis is carried out through three indicators: Calculation of total variation, Calculation of explained variation (Regression), Calculation of unexplained variation (Error).

Calculating total variation - represents the total dispersion of the values, relative to the general mean, in other words it demonstrates that the total variation in the data can be explained either by the regression model applied or by the errors. This is also called the sum of total squares (SST) and is calculated as follows:

$$SST = \sum(Y_i - \bar{Y})^2 \quad (10)$$

Where Y_i are the observed values of the dependent variable and \bar{Y} is the mean of the observed values of Y .

Calculation of explained variation (Regression) - represents the variation that can be attributed to the independent variables. This can also be called the regression sum of squares (SSR) and is calculated as:

$$SSR = \sum(\hat{Y}_i - \bar{Y})^2 \quad (11)$$

Where \hat{Y}_i represents the values predicted by the model.

A higher value for the Calculated Variance (Regression) compared to the Calculated Variance (Error) suggests that the regression model explains a significant part of the variation in the data, therefore this indicator demonstrates the effectiveness of the model.

Calculation of unexplained variation (Error)-represents the estimation error and measures the variables that cannot be explained by the regression model. It is measured by the sum of the residual squares (SSE):

$$SSE = \sum(Y_i - \hat{Y}_i)^2 \quad (12)$$

A small value for the Estimate of Unexplained Variance (Error) indicates a high fit of the variables to the model. Therefore, such a model is well-adjusted to the observed data and provides reliable predictions.

A large value for the Estimate of Unexplained Variance (Error) suggests that the regression model does not fit the variables and it is necessary to adjust the model or modify the independent variables.

As a result, in the context of the data presented in *Table 1*, the practical significance of statistical relationships will be interpreted, through the lens of the Linear Regression Model that argues the impact of sustainable public procurement on economic growth.

To calculate the linear regression, the authors used the Microsoft Excel platform, the *Data – Data Analysis – Regression*, insert *Y values and X values*, select confidence level, 95%. As a result, the generated results were exposed in Table 2.

Table 2 „ Regression statistics”

| Statistical indicators | Result |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| Multiple R | 0,999 |
| R ² | 0,998 |
| Adjusted R ² | 0,994 |
| Standard Error | 5,17 |
| F Test | 0,03 |
| SST | 52 713,37 |
| SSR | 52 632,89 |
| SSE | 80,48 |

Source: Developed by the authors based on data generated by the Microsoft Excel platform

The value of 0.999 for the multiple R suggests a strong correlation between GDP and the explanatory variables, which demonstrates that the model is efficient. The closer the value of this statistical indicator is to 1, the stronger the correlation.

R² with a value of 0.998 indicates that 99.8% of the variations in GDP are explained by the independent variables selected for this model. The value close to 100% once again demonstrates the performance of the regression model.

R² adjusted correlates with R², thus the value of 0.994 demonstrates that the regression model is robust and even if several independent variables are used, they are relevant for explaining GDP.

The standard error for the regression model in question is quite small, the value of 5.17 suggests that there is an average deviation of 5.17 units in the GDP estimates made in the model. This demonstrates that the estimates for the dependent variable are precise, given the range of possible values. The smaller the standard error, the more reliable the results.

A value of 0.03 for the F-Test suggests that the model is statistically significant. If the p-value associated with the F-Test is less than 0.05, it means that at least one of the independent variables has a significant impact on GDP.

SST represents the sum of squares of deviations from the GDP mean. The value obtained indicates the total amount of GDP variation that must be explained by the model.

SSR measures what share of the GDP variation is explained by the regression model. The value of 52,632.89 suggests that most of the GDP variation (over 99%) is explained by the variables included in the model.

SSE represents the model error, so the lower this value is, the more efficient the model is. The value of 80.48 suggests that there is a very small error in the predictions of the multiple regression model.

Statistical tests of the regression model demonstrate that the explanatory variables have a significant impact on GDP. The regression model created has an extremely strong correlation and explains 99.8% of the GDP variations. Thus, at the current stage of research, this model is well adjusted to analyze the impact of the development of sustainable public procurement on the development of the national economy.

Table 3 „ Interpretation of coefficients”

| | Coefficients | Value p | Value t |
|---|---------------------|----------------|----------------|
| X₁ – Proportion of sustainable public procurement in total public procurement | 483,3066973 | 0,050047247 | 3,172710438 |
| X₂ – Level of public investment in infrastructure | 12,55322864 | 0,032555664 | 4,438386783 |
| X₃ – Unemployment rate | -841,707294 | 0,041262835 | -3,126327134 |
| X₄ – Human Development Index | 463,6035848 | 0,0722142 | 2,631455116 |
| X₅ – Environmental policy | 859,1336915 | 0,098227315 | 2,441064666 |
| X₆ – Governance effectiveness | 190,9246462 | 0,05412426 | 3,119025895 |
| X₇ - Share of energy from renewable sources in final energy consumption | 700,3624709 | 0,072511294 | 2,651506038 |

Source: Developed by the authors based on data generated by the Microsoft Excel platform

The Y-intercept, or intersection, represents the expected value of GDP when the values of the independent variables ($X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5, X_6, X_7$) are equal to 0. The value of this coefficient has no economic significance, since in practice it is impossible for all explanatory variables to be 0 simultaneously. It is important from the point of view of formulating the mathematical model and estimating the results.

Coefficient X_1 (Proportion of Sustainable Public Procurement in Total Public Procurement) suggests that for each unit increase in the share of sustainable public procurement in total public procurement, the Gross Domestic Product of the Republic of Moldova will increase by 483.31 units (billion lei).

The value obtained is 0.05, a relevant value and the t-value is greater than 2, this indicates that the effect of the explanatory variable is statistically significant. Therefore, sustainable public procurement has a significant impact on economic growth.

Coefficient X_2 (Level of public investment in infrastructure), for each unit increase in the level of investment in infrastructure, GDP increases by 12.55 units (billion lei). With a high t value (4.44) and a low p value (0.03) this coefficient becomes statistically significant. Although significant, the coefficient is smaller than the other variables.

Thus, the values obtained demonstrate that investments have a positive effect on economic growth, and each additional sustainable investment will contribute to a significant increase in GDP.

Coefficient X_3 (Unemployment rate) the negative coefficient suggests that an increase in the unemployment rate negatively influences the Gross Domestic Product. For each unit of growth, the GDP will decrease by 841.71 units. The p and t values are statistically significant and directly contribute to the dependent variable GDP. The t value is negative (-3.13) but still high (in absolute value) this fact reports that the unemployment rate has a significant negative effect on the GDP.

Thus the results obtained demonstrate that the integration of sustainable public procurement will contribute to reducing the unemployment rate, by creating new and sustainable jobs, in this way they will contribute to a sustainable economic growth of the country.

Coefficient X_4 (Human Development Index), increasing the human development index by one unit will contribute to increasing GDP by approximately 463.60 units (billion lei). This suggests a significant positive relationship between human development and GDP, which is understandable, since human development includes economic, social, and

environmental factors.

The p-values for the human development index are slightly above the significance threshold (0.07), but both the p-value and the value are statistically significant in the regression model.

Coefficient X_5 (Environmental policy) a one-unit improvement in environmental policy is associated with an increase of 859.13 units (billion lei) in annual GDP. The results of the p and t values suggest that they are efficient and significant within the model.

Coefficient X_6 (Government effectiveness) for each unit of increase in government effectiveness and performance, the Gross Domestic Product of the Republic of Moldova will increase by 190.92 billion lei. Therefore, the value of the coefficient and indicators p and t demonstrates that the government plays an important role in supporting economic growth.

Coefficient X_7 (Share of energy from renewable sources in final energy consumption), a unit increase in the share of energy from renewable sources in final energy consumption would result in an increase of 700.36 billion lei in annual GDP. This coefficient suggests a fairly significant relationship.

Following the data analysis, we conclude that the Multiple Linear Regression Model, which demonstrates the impact of the development of sustainable public procurement on economic growth, is significant. All selected independent variables influence the Gross Domestic Product of the Republic of Moldova.

There is a positive correlation between GDP and the variables X_1 (sustainable public procurement), X_2 (infrastructure investments), X_4 (human development index), X_5 (environmental policy), X_6 (governance effectiveness), X_7 (renewable energy). This indicates that the improvement of these variables directly contributes to GDP growth. However, the greatest impact on GDP growth was recorded by the coefficients X_1 (sustainable public procurement), X_4 (human development index), X_5 (environmental policy), X_7 (renewable energy), obtaining values of 483,31; 463,60; 859,13 and 700.36 units.

All explanatory variables have significant p and t values, each of which directly influences the Gross Domestic Product.

In conclusion, the model suggests that sustainable public procurement and all other explanatory variables, which they integrate into the procurement process, contribute to the economic development of the country. By including sustainability criteria in the public procurement process, authorities can create a competitive business environment, by

protecting natural resources, reducing long-term costs and negative environmental impacts. The development of sustainable public procurement contributes to the creation of new business opportunities and jobs, such as recycling, green transport, green construction, renewable energy. These sectors can stimulate the reduction of the unemployment rate and contribute to the diversification of the economy, providing employment opportunities in sustainable fields. As a result of the adoption of sustainability criteria in public procurement, authorities can demonstrate their commitment to sustainable development. This can contribute to increasing citizens' trust in public institutions and improving the image of the public sector, thus increasing the effectiveness of governance. The development of sustainable public procurement is supported by several EU and international funding programs, which contributes to the development of sustainable and innovative economic projects and strategies.

Therefore, based on the interpreted results, the regression model formulated explains the three hypotheses. The model demonstrates that the variables associated with sustainable public procurement directly influence the economic and environmental indicators that we are tracking.

We will analyze the three hypotheses from a statistical point of view:

- Null hypothesis (H_0) states that there is no significant relationship between the dependent variable (Y) and the independent variable (X) ($\beta=0$).
- Alternative hypothesis (H_1) is opposite to the null hypothesis and states that there is a significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables ($\beta\neq0$).

Hypothesis nr. 1: *The development of sustainable public procurement in the Republic of Moldova will generate long-term economic growth by promoting the circular economy, creating new markets for ecological products and increasing efficiency in resource consumption.*

In statistical terms it follows that Hypothesis No. 1 is alternative (H_1), introducing sustainability criteria into the public procurement process has a significant positive effect on circular economic growth in the long term.

Hypothesis nr. 2: *Sustainable public procurement will contribute to increasing the human development index by developing aspects that respect social protection standards, which in turn will favor economic development.*

The coefficient for the human development index is significant and positive, thus Hypothesis No. 2 is alternative (H_1). The human

development index includes economic, social and environmental development, as all of these implicitly contribute to improving living conditions. Public investments in projects that promote health, education, social equity, and environmental protection can directly contribute to the sustainable development of the economy at the national level.

***Hypothesis nr.3:** The implementation of sustainable public procurement will stimulate the creation of new jobs in sustainable institutions, thus contributing to the economic growth of the Republic of Moldova.*

The results of the Multiple Linear Regression Model analysis eloquently demonstrate the negative effect of the increase in the unemployment rate on economic growth, thus with certainty Hypothesis No. 3 is an alternative one (H_1).

Thus, the implementation of sustainable public procurement will facilitate a significant increase in jobs, supporting industries through constant demand for sustainable goods, works and services. Therefore, a decrease in the unemployment rate will contribute to increasing the Gross Domestic Product of the Republic of Moldova.

Conclusions

In the Republic of Moldova, the development of sustainable public procurement is supported by the national development strategy, Moldova 2030, which is aligned with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustainable economic development focuses on sustainable economic growth that is inclusive and beneficial to society. To support economic growth, the strategy aims to reduce corruption, increase sustainable investment and stimulate innovation.

Following the analysis of the Multiple Linear Regression Model on the impact of the development of sustainable public procurement on economic growth, the following conclusions were established:

- Sustainable public procurement can contribute to the growth of the national economy in the long term. By integrating sustainability criteria into the public procurement process, efficiency is increased, innovation and the development of sustainable industries are encouraged. Research shows that the implementation of public procurement will have a significant impact on the growth of the Gross Domestic Product. The regression model highlights that the implementation of clear regulatory policies and strategies in the field of sustainable public procurement can have a positive impact on the economic

development of the Republic of Moldova, but their support from the authorities can reduce economic risks.

- Developing a sustainable public procurement system can help reduce costs in the long term, even if the initial costs are higher. Investments in sustainable and robust industries favor the reduction of operational costs throughout the life cycle and prevent future expenses related to maintenance, environmental protection and health.
- The regression model demonstrates that the implementation of public procurement in the Republic of Moldova will have an impact on the local market and job creation. Sustainable procurement supports job growth and contributes to the formation of human capital adapted to the requirements of a sustainable economy.

The analysis through the multiple regression model favored obtaining relevant data to support strategic decisions in the field of public procurement. The results obtained highlighted the fact that sustainable public procurement, although it involves some high administrative costs, barriers and the lack of clear regulations or normative acts that limit the efficiency of implementation and the scope of the procurement system, can bring considerable economic benefits in the long term, including financial savings, sustainable economic growth and a positive impact on society and the environment.

Therefore, an appropriate involvement of public authorities is needed to integrate sustainability practices in the Republic of Moldova in an effective way. Some key elements established within the research are:

- Setting clear objectives and policies aligned with national priorities;
- Formulating a clear legal framework for the use of sustainable public procurement, which would include the mandatory use of sustainable assessment criteria, mandatory reporting requirements and incentives for adoption.
- Establishing flexible and well-defined procurement processes, providing institutions with clear solutions for including sustainability in each stage of the procurement process.
- Developing e-procurement that allows tracking of sustainable public procurement results from selection to contract management, at the national level.

- Setting long-term or multi-year budgets, to allow for the inclusion of life-cycle cost considerations.
- Monitoring the performance of the sustainable public procurement system, through the use of electronic systems that can demonstrate the contribution of procurement to national policy objectives.

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GLOBALIZATION AND RELIGION. ADAPTING THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH TO THE CONTEMPORARY NEEDS OF ITS FOLLOWERS

MĂLINA-MARIA RÎNDAȘU*

malina.rindasu@ubbcluj.ro

Abstract: Religion is fundamental to the study of communities and sectoral understanding of social behaviour. It is often mentioned in the public space by politicians to strengthen their electoral capital. The paper aims to analyse the practices and strategies addressed by the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) to adapt to the new realities generated by the phenomenon of globalization. In addition to the implications of technology on perceptions and beliefs, the study will also look at the communication process carried out by religious institutions to promote participation in collective events. The relevance of the paper lies in the contribution it makes to the literature by analysing the institutional practices adopted by the BOR in communicating with followers.

Keywords: globalization, religion, followers, communication, social networks

Introduction

Religion and religious orientation are one of the oldest subjects shaping human interactions, the way communities relate to what 'otherness' represents. It contributes to the formation of collective identity and individual processes of association; it has generated a growing interest in sociology¹ due to its shaping of the social life of individuals. While some scholars have sought to highlight the "unique of religion in shaping identity formation" and its interaction with ethnicity in generating development², others have focused on its contributions to "the formation and legitimation of economic globalization"³. Another striking dimension in the context is the individual dimension of religion in a changing world. Because globalization is metamorphosing cultural structures through a

* PhD. Student, Doctoral School of International Relations and Security Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, România

¹ Steward Harrison Oppong, *Religion and Identity*, American International Journal of Contemporary Research, vol. 3, nr. 6, 2013, p. 10.

² *Ibidem.*

³ I. Strenski, *The Religion in Globalization*, Journal of the American Academy of Religion, vol. 72, no. 3, 1 September 2004, p. 632.

process of homogenization⁴, it is important to highlight the impact on religion and on religious institutions. Their flexibility in dealing with diversity, their contact with other religions and pluralism, their adaptability to emerging technologies, all these topics concern the intertwining of religion and globalization.

The research question that the analysis section attempts to answer is entitled "What tools does the Romanian Orthodox Church use to maintain contact with parishioners in the context of globalization?".

The first section will outline the theoretical framework (defining concepts, reviewing literature and outlining directions of analysis) to contextualize the research topic. The second, methodology, will briefly cover: case selection, data collection method and data analysis. The third section, analysis, will operationalize the designed analytical dimensions.

Theoretical framework

Defining religion

The concept "religion" has multiple definitions in the literature, with no consensus among researchers. The lack of consensus derives from the "diversity of religions, diversity of religious experiences, and diversity of religious origins", an element that provides differentiated perspectives on institutions, practices and adherents.⁵ At the same time, the etymological meanings of the concept support different meanings:

(...) religion is derived from the Latin word 'religare' which means to "to bind back" or "to rebind". This implies that etymologically speaking religion entails a process of reconnecting by worship a missing or broken intimacy between God and worshippers. Alternative less known and used etymological origin of religion is the Latin word 'relegere' denoting "to re-read"⁶

We speak of religion as a "system of beliefs and practices"⁷ in which practitioners are anchored in two environments simultaneously: the

⁴ Daniel Golebiewski, *Religion and Globalization: New Possibilities, Furthering Challenges*, SSRN Electronic Journal, 2014, p. 1.

⁵ Steward Harrison Oppong, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ Dwight N. Hopkins, Lois Ann Lorentzen, Eduardo Mendieta, & David Batstone, *Religions/Globalizations: Theories and Cases*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001, p. 9.

surrounding reality (marked by collective as well as individual practices) and the inner reality (in which the relationship with the Demiurge is established). It is important to emphasize that religion interferes with the way of life of its followers in terms of both activities and beliefs. Depending on the religious denominations they follow, individuals relate to a range of elements, from symbols and repercussions⁸, to institutions or group activities that contribute to a sense of belonging. Some explanations associated with the concept of 'religion' are circumscribed by the status of dependence associated with the individual.⁹ They argue that the challenges posed by social life validate on the one hand, the limitation of human thought "to explain some of the mysteries of the world"¹⁰, and on the other hand, the psychological desire to be protected by a superior entity.

Religious practices and the way individuals relate to them, also bring to the fore the existence of norms that serve to constrain behaviour. They play a vital role in identity formation among young people, especially when they experience confusion and hopelessness (caused by a lack of concrete answers to fundamental questions).¹¹ Although limited in the number of studies, the literature dealing with the relationship between 'religion' and 'identity' points to the fact that 'religion is correlated with identity formation' through the processes of internalization of related practices, rituals and beliefs.¹² Moreover, these realities are not of a general nature, differing from one community to another, influenced by the dynamics of development, but also by the time span analysed.¹³

Individuals have multiple identities depending on their interactional or situational environments. Hallahmi differentiates between three conceptual levels that are stratified according to internal processes: ego-identity, social identity and collective identity.¹⁴ The researcher further concludes that religion is associated, for a large proportion of individuals, with a 'social identity label' due to group practices that place the individual within a community.¹⁵ Belonging to this community is

⁸ Steward Harrison Oppong, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁹ *Ibidem.*

¹⁰ *Ibidem.*

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 14

¹² *Ibidem*, pp. 14–15.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 15

¹⁴ Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *Religion and Identity: Concepts, Data, Questions*, Social Science Information, vol. 30, no. 1, March 1991, pp. 86–87.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

mediated by the impact of the family, by the primary education offered within this first restricted group. To summarize, religion is a multifaceted concept that offers several sub-dimensions of related identity. Operationalized at the level of social identity, religious identity is formed through the teachings acquired within the family in the early years of life. If we relate the process of identification to different life stages (Piaget's developmental stages are a good benchmark) we can also identify prominent changes in religious identity, more so when cultural contexts are versatile or flexible.

Defining globalization

The first use of the concept 'globalization' dates to 1951, and etymologically it has its roots in the term 'global'.¹⁶ Like religion, globalization has received multiple definitions depending on its implications in distinct areas such as economics, politics¹⁷ or communication. Known as a "movement of capitalism spreading across the globe"¹⁸, globalization has enabled both the transnational dynamics of people, ideas and finance, and the identity elements that define a community or more broadly, a society. Certainly the most striking element in the latter context is represented by the "homogenizing exports of the US" built through the activities of Nike or McDonald's.¹⁹ In sociology we even identify the term 'McDonaldization' defined as a 'continuum from a case (the firm), to a model (the social phenomenon), to an icon of an entire culture (modernity): meanings that are interrelated but also distinct'.²⁰ This phenomenon, which interferes with macro but also micro-cultural identity elements, has acquired over time three main approaches: Weberian (with an emphasis on rationality in expansion), Durkheimian (focusing on symbols and meanings), and Marxist ("pivots around capitalism, exploitation, and alienation").²¹ Whatever the view, the McDonaldization phenomenon (seen as part of globalization) brings to the

¹⁶ Pankaj Ghemawat, *The Laws of Globalization and Business Applications*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK; New York, NY; Port Melbourne; Delhi; Singapore, 2017, p. 11.

¹⁷ Daniel Golebiewski, *op. cit.*, p. 1

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ Uri Ram, *McDonaldization*, in George Ritzer (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization*, vol.1, Wiley, 2012, p. 1.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

fore a pattern of cultural interaction but also of cultural adaptability.

Going back to the definition of globalization, its meaning can be concentrated in what we call "n convergence/divergence, homogenization/heterogeneity, and local/global issues".²² In fact, its implications transcend the national spectrum, reaching right down to the everyday lives of individuals, which are becoming more multicultural, modern and diverse.

The relationship between religion and globalization

The impact of globalization on religion is a multidimensional topic. Researchers approaching the subject are polarized into multiple categories, each constructing situations that maximize or minimize the benefits. A relevant example is Daniel Golebiewski's thesis on the future relationship between religion and globalization.²³ He argues that "Globalization brings a culture of pluralism, meaning religions "with overlapping but distinctive ethics and interests" interact with one another"²⁴, thus forming behaviours that exude respect for otherness. The relationship between representatives of religions within organizations is another important aspect to highlight. The World Council of Churches is an edifying example that brings together common interests of peace, justice and solidarity²⁵, irrespective of denomination or church affiliation.

The impact of globalization on religion is not just about the dynamics of religious identities or the interactions between them. The widening economic spectrum has allowed "more financial resources for religions to spread their beliefs" and to practice mission.²⁶ Third World countries, in particular, are concerned by this phenomenon which, in addition to spreading faith traditions, is also transposing modern ways of life.²⁷ Through donations, faith-based organizations offer support to vulnerable groups, a practice that institutions in this area have also adopted in recent decades.

In communicating with their own followers, church representatives have over time shifted from the oral to the written dimension of online media. Websites, television or social media applications, all of which are

²² Karen Monkman, *Globalization and Education: Integration and Contestation Across Cultures*, Second edition, Rowman & Littlefield Education, Lanham, Maryland, 2014, p. 1.

²³ Daniel Golebiewski, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ *World Council of Churches*, <https://www.oikoumene.org/>, accessed May 4, 2025.

²⁶ Daniel Golebiewski, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

tools that allow messages to be conveyed and debates to be organized, are used as communication tools by religious institutional representatives.²⁸ The implications of globalization have even led to a rethinking of the fields of analysis of religion. As a result, the sociology of religions, philosophy or even the history of religions allow different perspectives and methodologies to be brought together to better understand societies, individuals or even their interactions in specific contexts. Because religious affiliation is constantly becoming a polarizing topic, some studies concluded in the late 1980s that religion "presents major challenges and opportunities to social scientific explorations of globalisation".²⁹ The territorial aspect has shaped theoretical developments and the building of models of perceptions of religion. One of these stems from the American milieu, where religious markets and services mark a significant competition for adherents.³⁰ This approach explains religious vitality in terms of an economic or market model in which:

(...) which stresses the supply rather than demand side of religion, and treats religious membership as the outcome of rational choices about interests.³¹

In the spectrum of the sociology of religions we also find a prominent interest in the globalization of religion, especially on topics such as terrorism and political Islam. Although the secularization theory has been adopted by many authors, "there is ample evidence that religion plays a major role in society, culture and politics".³² The level of involvement may differ from one cultural space to another but may also be shaped by the ethnic distribution of societies.

Analytical framework

The literature investigating the applicability of the market model to religions in former communist countries has concluded that democratic principles will lead to a diversification of denominations and "ultimately

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ Beckford and Demerath in Bryan S. Turner, *Reshaping the Sociology of Religion: Globalisation, Spirituality and the Erosion of the Social*, *The Sociological Review*, vol. 57, no. 1, February 2009, p. 188.

³⁰ Bryan S. Turner, *Religion and Contemporary Sociological Theories*, *Current Sociology*, vol. 62, no. 6, October 2014, p. 771.

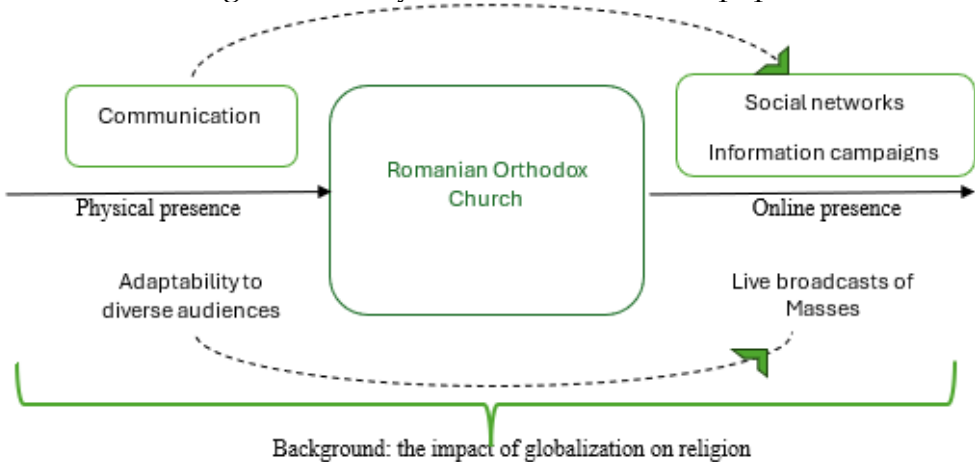
³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 771.

³² *Ibidem*.

led to an increase of religious vitality".³³ At the opposite pole, the secularization perspective portrayed an initial intensification of religious sentiment followed by a return to constant values.³⁴ In order to analyse the relationship between religion and globalization, this paper aims to identify the success or failure of the technologization of communication at the level of the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR).

In an era of globalization, communication and other activities of daily life are directly influenced by technology. Messages can reach their recipients in real time, debates can be organized on various topics, territorial boundaries are minimized. In addition to the cultural exchanges mediated by technology, access to information and favouring communication media, religious institutions can adapt to all these transformations or refuse them, in the idea of preserving religious practices and traditions. As we will observe in the analysis part of the paper, the Romanian Orthodox Church is a religious institution that is constantly adapting to new developments in the technological environment to generate a more transparent relationship with its followers. The main analytical directions that will be followed are represented by live broadcasts of Masses, communication in social networks and the launch of awareness campaigns with an educational purpose.

Figure 1: Analysis dimensions in the paper³⁵



³³ Mihaela-Alexandra Tudor, Stefan Bratosin, *The Romanian Religious Media Landscape: Between Secularization and the Revitalization of Religion*, Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture, vol. 7, no. 2, August 14, 2018, p. 223.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ Source: Author's own elaboration based on literature review.

Methodology

From a methodological point of view, qualitative research can operate with one or several cases, depending on the topic addressed. This study uses the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) as a representative case for adapting to new contexts of interaction mediated by the effects of globalization. Translating communication into the online environment, as well as religious practices (attending Sunday services) have become recurrent activities for both religious institutions and followers. They are two elements that are reflected in the dimensions proposed by Hoover and Echchaibi on the overlap between religion and online:

(...) the new forms of religious activities and practices emerging within the digital cultures, the traditional religions and religious authorities who establish a strong online presences to maintain their traditions and their belief systems and a "wide range of old traditions, new traditions, non-traditions, hybrid traditions, and aggressively 'anti' traditions, are finding a place in digital space".³⁶

The period chosen for the paper focuses on the changes since 1989, and the macro developmental stages that interface the church-addresser relationship with the online environment. For example, regarding the transition from the original means of communication, the transition was systematic: initially it was the transition of printed pages into PDF format, and "later with online editions designed according to the canons of new communication technologies, different from the more classic ones of printed publications".³⁷

The data collected for this work will consist of documents and images. They will be taken from the main source of information used by the Romanian Orthodox Church (<https://patriarhia.ro/>). At the same time, to observe the relational dimension between the institution and its followers, I will analyse the activity of the Romanian Patriarchate's television channel (Trinitas TV) and the YouTube channel, the Facebook page

³⁶ Hoover and Echchaibi in Dragoș Șamșudean, *Towards Digital Orthodoxy: Analytical Frameworks in the Study of Orthodox Bloggers Motivation*, Teologie în actualitate: Perspective și (Re)Interpretare, 2022, p. 35.

³⁷ Nicolae Dascălu, *The Orthodox Religious Publications in Romania from the Classical Printing to Online Editions*, Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai-Theologia Orthodoxa, vol. 65, no. 2, 2020, Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai, p. 76.

associated with the institution.

Due to the existence of different typologies of data, I will use deductive thematic analysis as the main evaluation method. The main recurring themes portrayed in the analytical framework are meant to visualize the level of adaptability of the BOR institution to the implications of technologization.

Table 1: Example of data coding³⁸

| Theme | Codes/Subjects | Sentences that match the codes |
|---------------|-----------------|--|
| Communication | Social networks | <p>"Message of condolences addressed to the family of Mr. Corneliu Vadim Tudor - The Patriarch of Romania addressed a message of condolences to the family of Mr. Corneliu Vadim Tudor, following his passing away on Monday, September 14, 2015 (...)"</p> <p>"Regarding the alleged accounts of the Patriarch of Romania registered on some social networking sites, including Facebook, the Romanian Patriarchate specifies none of these accounts belongs to His Beatitude and does not have his consent or blessing, all of them being exclusively private initiatives of some users of these social networking sites."</p> |
| | Campaigns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His Beatitude Daniel, Patriarch of Romania, has announced that the Romanian Orthodox Church will disseminate informational materials on vaccination in the dioceses through a booklet entitled "Vaccination against COVID-19 in Romania. Free. Voluntary. Safe." (Facebook post Ministry of Health) • In solidarity with the families in Oltenia! - humanitarian campaign initiated by the Romanian Patriarchate and Romanian Television³⁹ |

³⁸ Source: Author’s own elaboration based on collected data.
³⁹ <https://patriarhia.ro/solidari-cu-familiile-sinistrate-din-oltenia-campanie-umanitara->

Analysis

The Romanian Orthodox Church is seen in Romania as one of the central religious institutions governing the religious life of citizens, as well as other initiatives in the humanitarian spectrum. In addition to its majoritarian character, the BOR assumes a "visible impact on all her religious and social actions"⁴⁰, mediated using technology. The synergy between "different media (online radio, online magazine, online TV, online books etc.)" not only ensures a rapid dispersion of information⁴¹, but also generates unity in the transmission of official content. However, from the analysis of the three-communication media (social networks, website, YouTube channel for the transmission of religious services), I noticed some discrepancies related to the actual reporting of the institution to the interactions with followers (or even to those who criticize certain aspects). According to the three dimensions portrayed in the analytical framework, I will try to characterize how the BOR relates to the technologies used and to the social media it uses in its communication with followers.

Social networks

Although there is a wide range of users in social networks and entertainment apps such as Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, we chose the "most popular social network in the world"⁴², namely Facebook, to visualize the interaction between the official BOR account and users. A first aspect related to the quality of the content is the formality of the messages conveyed, most of them in gratitude to clerical officials. In this respect, exhaustive descriptions are made of their activities and their role for the community, examples of good practice for the Orthodox world. The comments section dedicated to each post captures a diversity of opinions, some of which are provided with limitations to this effect.

The official page also has a mentions section where users can highlight certain content for the community. Performing a netnography on these we concluded that about 75% of them denote irrelevant or offensive content about the work of the BOR institution. At the same time, unlike

initiatade-patriarhia-romana-si-televiziunea-romana-6075.html, accessed May 5, 2025.

⁴⁰ Agnos-Millian Herțeliu, *A Brief Comparative Study between the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church Regarding (Online) Religious Worship during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Religions, vol. 14, no. 11, October 25, 2023, p. 2.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁴² Top 20 Global, *Stirileprotv.ro*, <https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/ilikeit/cele-mai-cunoscuterețele-sociale-ale-anului-2023-top-20-global.html>, accessed May 5, 2025.

YouTube (where the uploaded content has multiplied in number⁴³), the pandemic period has not generated a dynamization of the messages transmitted in this social media. The Romanian Orthodox Church propagated its positions on certain topics in informative television spaces, and less using Facebook. There are other studies that analyse the behaviour of users and the messages propagated by the institutions of different confessions. Their findings show the versatility in the use of media communication tools, especially during the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic:

(...)there are major variations in new media that religious communities have embraced, starting from television, Facebook Live, YouTube, WhatsApp, Zoom, etc., "and all have their different affordances, limitations, privileged publics, and algorithms of access, that have been exploited in order to reproduce presence."⁴⁴

In this section, we have broadly analysed the activity of the BOR in the social networking site Facebook, rather than the local dimensions of the communities of followers. The main conclusion edifies the institutional tendency to adapt to this medium across an informational spectrum. The area of communication with followers is minimized and the emphasis is placed on informative notes of the delivered content.

Campaigns and live broadcasts of services

The two elements of the analysis focus on the process of adaptation of the BOR to a new dynamic of religious practices, more specifically through the participation of adherents in services. At the same time, the information campaigns carried out together with other institutions reveal the level of involvement in pressing social issues, as well as the status of moral authority held among the followers.

A television channel associated with the Romanian Orthodox Church, Trinitas TV also has a live online version that broadcasts 24/7⁴⁵ both religious services and lectures by clergy. The associated YouTube channel also records what Herteliu calls a "loyal audience"⁴⁶. Translating religious

⁴³ Agnos-Millian Herteliu, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

practices online presents, in addition to an adaptation to the imminent implications of globalization, more pragmatic rationales. The pandemic context generated by COVID-19, the increasing number of people with disabilities, these factors have targeted the rapid growth of religious podcasts⁴⁷, but also other teachings in this spectrum.

Conclusions

The contrast in the use of digital and interactive media at the level of the BOR reflects a gradual adaptation to the new contexts generated by globalization. By offering accessibility, spiritual continuity and practical alternatives to its followers, the Romanian Orthodox Church can expand its audience both at home and abroad. In the context of globalization, we can also discuss the activity of Romanian churches in the diaspora which, in addition to their primary role of ensuring a connection with the divinity, also represent elements of community unity and the preservation of national values.

Adapting religious institutions to new communication contexts provides opportunities for followers to maintain robust interactions on specific topics. Future work may address the perceptions of Romanian citizens about the official ways in which the Romanian Episcopal Church is present online. Visualizing how followers interpret these changes in vision and reporting may provide religious institutions with benchmarks for future communication changes.

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⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p.15.

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THE RIGHT TO HISTORICAL MEMORY: THE CONCEPT, NATIONAL PROTECTION AND GAPS IN THE LEGISLATION OF ROMANIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA¹

VERONICA CHEPTENE*

veronicapozneacova@gmail.com

Abstract: *This article analyses the concept of the right to historical memory as an important part of national culture, highlighting its importance for social cohesion and the formation of national identity. The study examines the legal framework of Romania and the Republic of Moldova that protects the right to historical memory through different rights such as the protection of cultural heritage, the right to education, free access to information, and freedom of expression. The objective of the research is to determine the way of protection of the right to historical memory in Romanian and Moldovan legislation and to identify the gaps in the existing legal mechanisms. In this study we have outlined the following objectives: 1. to define and conceptualize the right to historical memory; 2. to analyze the current legal framework in Moldova that protects the right to historical memory, focusing on laws related to the protection of cultural heritage, education, free access to information, and freedom of expression; 3. to identify gaps and shortcomings in the existing Romanian and Moldovan legislation regarding the protection and promotion of historical memory; 5. to propose recommendations for the development of a comprehensive policy on historical memory that is tailored to Romanian and Moldova's political and social realities; 6. to highlight the importance of historical memory in fostering social cohesion, national identity, and cultural continuity in contemporary Romanian and Moldova.*

Keywords: *right to memory, legislation, guarantees, national policies, collective memory, heritage*

Introduction

The UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights notes that the narration about historical events represents an element of cultural heritage

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* Scientific researcher, PhD. student, Institute of Legal, Political and Sociological Research, Moldova State University, Chisinau. Republic of Moldova.

and plays a crucial role in the formation of collective identity, which is expressed in people's tendency to know their past, to receive recognition of it from others and to contest interpretations of historical events. The way we study the past and the amount of knowledge we possess can fortify peace and respect for human rights, or it can lead to tensions and social group divisions².

The Council of Europe said: Society needs to "remember" its own history in order to learn from the past and not to repeat mistakes or crimes for which it may well be responsible. Remembrance, when it is done properly, can serve as a alarm signal: it can show us that human action or inaction, intolerance, racism and other relatively common attitudes are unacceptable in themselves; and that they can lead, in certain circumstances, to truly terrible events³.

In this context, the right to historical memory, as one of the natural human rights, has a special significance. The right to historical memory is a right derived from other fundamental rights, such as the right of access to information, the right to education, freedom of expression and the protection of cultural heritage, which refers to the right of individuals and communities to know their past and to keep alive the memory of historical events that have marked their existence. This concept is related to recognizing, commemorating and protecting the collective memory about some significant events in history, such as wars, genocides, political persecutions or other tragedies that have affected a group of people. In this article we aim to define the right to historical memory as a fundamental human right, to determine other rights through which is protected the right to historical memory, to examine the importance of the right to preservation of cultural heritage, the right to education, the right of access to information and freedom of expression in the realization of the right to historical memory.

Literature review

The concept of the "right to historical memory" has been increasingly recognized as an essential element in preserving national culture, fostering

² United Nations, Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. (n.d.). History and Memory: Interpreting the Past through the Lens of Cultural Rights. Retrieved from История и сохранение памяти: толкование прошлого через призму культурных прав | OHCHR

³ Ellie, K., & Gomes, R. (Ed.). (2017), *Right to Remember: A Handbook for Education with Young People on the Roma Genocide (Second edition)*. Retrieved from 168070309f (coe.int)

social cohesion, and developing a unified national identity. According to Almeida⁴, historical memory serves as a critical framework through which societies reconcile with past injustices, especially in transitional justice contexts. This right to memory, as discussed in international scholarship, is not only a matter of cultural preservation but also an issue of human rights^{5,6}. Many scholars emphasize that the recognition and protection of historical memory empower communities to contextualize their past and build a future founded on mutual respect and understanding. Various dimensions of the right to historical memory are examined through the protection of cultural heritage, freedom of expression, and the right to education. Keen and Gomes⁷ highlight the importance of historical memory education, particularly in addressing historical injustices.

The existing Romanian and Moldovan legislation, specifically the Constitution, cultural heritage laws, and education policies, provide some foundation for safeguarding historical memory. However, these laws often treat historical memory indirectly, addressing it primarily within the scope of broader rights such as access to information and cultural protection rather than as a distinct right. International frameworks, as suggested by the United Nations' guidelines on cultural rights⁸, also emphasize the importance of historical memory as part of the right to culture, which serves as an inspiration for strengthening Romanian and Moldovan legislation.

Key gaps exist in Romanian and Moldova's approach to historical memory, including an absence of comprehensive policies that prioritize it directly. Current laws—such as those on cultural heritage, freedom of expression, and education—offer fragmented support but fail to present an integrated legal structure specifically for historical memory⁹.

⁴ B.R. Almeida, *Culpa, ressentimento e memória: traços problemáticos de um pensar transicional da justiça*. Revista da Faculdade de Direito, 34(2), 97–114, 2013.

⁵ F.S. Dantas, *O direito fundamental à memória*. Recife: Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 2008.

⁶ E. Jelin, *Los trabajos de la Memoria*. Texas: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 2002.

⁷ Ellie, K., & Gomes, R. (Ed.). (2017). *Right to Remember: A Handbook for Education with Young People on the Roma Genocide (Second edition)*. Retrieved from 168070309f (coe.int)

⁸ United Nations, *Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights*. (n.d.). History and Memory: Interpreting the Past through the Lens of Cultural Rights. Retrieved from История и сохранение памяти: толкование прошлого через призму культурных прав | OHCHR

⁹ Law No. 58 of 29 March 2012 on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Published in the Official Gazette No. 76–80, Art. 255, on 20 April 2012. Amended by LP52

Furthermore, while Romanian and Moldova's legal framework provides for free access to information¹⁰ and freedom of expression¹¹, these rights could be leveraged more strategically to promote and protect historical memory.

Methodology

The methodology for this study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining legal analysis with historiographical analysis to achieve a multi-dimensional understanding of Romanian and Moldova's approach to protecting historical memory. A primary component involves the detailed examination of national legislation, focusing on legal documents such as the Romanian and Moldovan Constitution, cultural heritage laws, and educational policies that indirectly safeguard historical memory. This legal analysis aims to uncover specific provisions, protections, and shortcomings within current legislation that impact the right to historical memory.

Complementing the legal analysis is a historiographical approach that analyses the most important studies which formulate the concept of the right to memory and its importance in the formation of the national and cultural identity of the nation. In this context, right to memory is analysed both from the human rights, historical memory education dimensions. The analysis also incorporates insights from international standards, such as those proposed by the United Nations, to compare Romanian and Moldova's polities to determine the common problems in the guarantee the right to historical memory.

Research results and comments

The concept of the right to historical memory

In order to analyze the right to historical memory, it is crucial to formulate the concept of memory. The Portuguese researcher Dantas stated: 'memory is the human ability to retain and evoke experiences, allowing awareness of the passage of time, as well as conferring on the

din 16.03.23, MO97-99/24.03.23 art.150; în vigoare 24.03.23 Retrieved from LP58/2012 (legis.md)

¹⁰ Law No. 982 of 11 May 2000 on Access to Information. Published in the Official Gazette No. 88-90, Art. 664, on 28 July 2000. Amended by LP143 *din 19.07.18, MO309-320/17.08.18 art.482 Retrieved from LP982/2000 (legis.md)*

¹¹ Law No. 64 of 23 April 2010 on Freedom of Expression. Published in the Official Gazette No. 117-118, Art. 355, on 9 July 2010. Amended by LP95 *din 14.05.15, MO139-143/05.06.15 art.261 Retrieved from LP64/2010 (legis.md)*

individual and the collectivity a unique past that characterizes that community¹². In this context, the right to memory is fundamental and corresponds to the individual and collective necessity of self-affirmation and knowledge of the past. The right to memory can also be seen as an important part of the fundamental right to inheritance¹³.

The right to memory represents a collective right, which implies the right to participate in the development of public policies for the conservation of cultural heritage and the use of the public property that constitutes it. This right is part of the fourth generation of rights, including as subjects collectivities and future generations, which are linked by solidarity¹⁴. In this context, the declaration, regulation, protection and effective realization of the right to memory contribute to the formation of national identity, the maintenance of links between generations, and the protection and preservation of cultural heritage.

Memory, in this sense, connects the past and the present to build the future, learning the lessons of the past in order to contribute to a more prosperous society. In this context, we consider opportune to mention that the concept of 'humanity' itself is linked to the specific human capacity to learn, remember and transmit knowledge through 'cultural heritage'¹⁵. The transmission of historical memory in this context is an axis on which is based the social development of a community, representing a link between the past, the present and the future.

The researcher Jelin stated that collective memory embodies different individual ideals expressed in an event or person known to all. For the author, the concept of collective memory is related to "social landmarks", which are expressions in time of relevant facts and emphasize the memories of all people in a community, leading to a common reflection¹⁶. Therefore, collective memory encompasses the life experiences of people living in a community that refer to some historical events that have marked their existence. The lived experiences become common to the

¹² F.S. Dantas, *O direito fundamental à memória*. Recife: Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 2008.

¹³ F.S. Dantas, *O direito fundamental à memória*. Recife: Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 2008.

¹⁴ F.S. Dantas, *O direito fundamental à memória*. Recife: Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 2008.

¹⁵ F.S. Dantas, *O direito fundamental à memória*. Recife: Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 2008.

¹⁶ E. Jelin, *Los trabajos de la Memoria*. Texas: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 2002.

people in that community, gradually developing into ideas, which become defining for these people.

Beyond the state level, collective memory is also present in other social organizations such as family, religion and others. At the same time, the right to memory includes cultural aspects of each locality, according to the researcher Huyssen¹⁷: "The geographical spread of the culture of memory is as wide as the political use of memory is varied, from mobilizing the mythical past to explicitly supporting chauvinist or fundamentalist policies." The link between the right to memory and local history, according to Jelin¹⁸, shows that memory is closely linked to the identity of a people and that the essential core of the existence of each people is linked to the sense of permanence and defense of its "local universe". For the author, the act/action of remembering and commemorating is what ensures the maintenance of national identity. History, politics and social relations only matter when they are linked to a common identity.

Collective memory represents a constituent element of national identity, which is a red thread that binds people together within a community, and the right to historical memory is a fundamental right that guarantees the right of every community to know its past, to transmit knowledge to future generations and to preserve its cultural heritage.

The right to memory is closely linked to the notion of justice, as there is a link between remembering the events in which a community of people suffered significantly in order to compensate for those crimes in the present or near future. The historian Almeida¹⁹ said: To do justice is thus to actualize forgetting, to make it present and to deactivate it, to prevent a wound from remaining open and being blocked in time. Justice deals not only with crimes but also with wounds. Justice tries to deal with what the course of time has left open, unhealed and unrepaired. Justice is a look that denounces and criticizes: to do justice means to close the course of time, to do justice in time, with time and through time. Justice is therefore memory. And, unlike memory, forgetting, according to the author, is a generalized tool that undermines this fundamental right to memory²⁰.

¹⁷ A. Huyssen, *Sedu zidos pela memória: arquitetura, monumentos, mídia*. Rio de Janeiro: Aeroplano: Universidade Cândido Mendes, 2004.

¹⁸ E. Jelin, *Los trabajos de la Memoria*. Texas: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 2002.

¹⁹ B.R. Almeida, *Culpa, ressentimento e memória: traços problemáticos de um pensar transicional da justiça*. Revista da Faculdade de Direito, 34(2), 97-114, 2013.

²⁰ B.R. Almeida, *Culpa, ressentimento e memória: traços problemáticos de um pensar*

Therefore, the role of justice is to condemn the crimes, deportations and genocides that have taken place in contemporary history, in order to offer protection to the victims of these tragic events. In this context, the state is obliged to assume its responsibility to do right to the victims of recent historical events through justice.

Protection of the right to historical memory in national legislation

In national legislation the right to historical memory is protected through other rights such as: the right to protection of cultural heritage, the right to education, the right of access to information, freedom of expression.

Cultural heritage, whether tangible (historic buildings, monuments, artifacts) or intangible (traditions, customs, language), plays a crucial role in preserving and transmitting historical memory. Through the protection of cultural heritage, communities can ensure the preservation of these essential elements that reflect their historical experiences, values and identity. The protection of cultural heritage as a realization of the right to historical memory implies the preservation of those elements which constitute testimonies of the past and is a tool through which societies maintain and reaffirm their historical continuity.

The legislation of with refers to the protection of right to memory is represented by such laws as: the Constitution of Romania²¹, Law No 341/2004 in gratitude to the heroic martyrs and fighters who contributed to the victory of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989²², Law no. 217/2015 amending and supplementing Government Emergency Ordinance no. 31/2002 on the prohibition of fascist, racist or xenophobic organizations and symbols and the promotion of the cult of persons guilty of crimes against peace and humanity²³, Law no. 422/2001 on the

transicional da justiça. Revista da Faculdade de Direito, 34(2), 2013, 97-114.

²¹ The Constitution of Romania October 31, 2003 In force since October 31, 2003 Published in the Official Gazette, Part I No. 767 of October 31, 2003. Retrieved from <https://www.presidency.ro/en/president/constitution-of-romania>

²² Law No 341 of July 12, 2004 (*updated*) in gratitude to the heroic martyrs and fighters who contributed to the victory of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989 (updated until December 28, 2006*) Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/90176>

²³ Law no. 217 of 23 July 2015 amending and supplementing Government Emergency Ordinance no. 31/2002 on the prohibition of fascist, racist or xenophobic organizations and symbols and the promotion of the cult of persons guilty of crimes against peace and humanity Published in the OFFICIAL MONITOR no. 558 of 27 July

protection of historical monuments²⁴, Law no. 182/2000 on the protection of national mobile cultural heritage²⁵, Law no. 26/2008 on the protection of intangible cultural heritage²⁶, Law No. 5/2000 on the Approval of the National Spatial Plan - Section III - Protected Areas²⁷, Law no. 311/2003 on Museums and Public Collections²⁸.

A first common element across these regulations is the affirmation and legal protection of historical memory, particularly in relation to major democratic milestones and traumatic pasts. For instance, *Law No. 341/2004*²⁹ honors the victims and heroes of the 1989 Revolution, embedding their memory into national consciousness. Similarly, *Law No. 217/2015*³⁰ and the original *O.U.G. 31/2002* prohibit the glorification of individuals guilty of crimes against humanity and ban the use of fascist, racist, or xenophobic symbols, ensuring that public memory is not distorted or used to justify totalitarian ideologies. This legislation protects both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. *Law No. 422/2001*³¹ provides

2015 Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/170057>

²⁴ Law no. 422 of July 18, 2001 (**republished**) on the protection of historical monuments Published in the OFFICIAL MONITOR no. 938 of November 20, 2006 Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/29761>

²⁵ Law no. 182 of October 25, 2000 (*republished*) on the protection of national mobile cultural heritage*) Published in the OFFICIAL MONITOR no. 259 of April 9, 2014 Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/24761>

²⁶ Law no. 26 of February 29, 2008 on the protection of intangible cultural heritage Published in the OFFICIAL BULLETIN no. 168 of March 5, 2008 Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/90098>

²⁷ Law No. 5 of March 6, 2000 (*updated*) on the Approval of the National Spatial Plan - Section III - Protected Areas (updated until September 6, 2016*) Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/21860>

²⁸ Law no. 311 of July 3, 2003 (*repealed*) on Museums and Public Collections Published in the OFFICIAL BULLETIN no. 207 of March 24, 2014 Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/45161>

²⁹ Law No 341 of July 12, 2004 (*updated*) in gratitude to the heroic martyrs and fighters who contributed to the victory of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989 (updated until December 28, 2006*) Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/90176>

³⁰ Law no. 217 of 23 July 2015 amending and supplementing Government Emergency Ordinance no. 31/2002 on the prohibition of fascist, racist or xenophobic organizations and symbols and the promotion of the cult of persons guilty of crimes against peace and humanity Published in the OFFICIAL MONITOR no. 558 of 27 July 2015 Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/170057>

³¹ Law no. 422 of July 18, 2001 (**republished**) on the protection of historical monuments Published in the OFFICIAL MONITOR no. 938 of November 20, 2006 Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/29761>

the legal framework for the classification, conservation, and restoration of historic monuments, while *Law No. 182/2000*³² regulates the protection of movable cultural assets such as artworks, manuscripts, and artifacts. Complementing this, *Law No. 311/2003*³³ focuses on the role of museums and public collections in preserving and displaying national heritage. These laws also define the institutional responsibilities of public authorities at central and local levels, including the Ministry of Culture, the National Institute of Heritage, and local councils, all of which play a role in managing, cataloguing, and safeguarding cultural and historical assets. The legislation also reflects a strong commitment to public education and civic responsibility, promoting access to culture and awareness of historical events through museums, memorial sites, and education programs. This contributes to the transmission of collective memory and the strengthening of democratic values.

On the other hand, the legislation of the Republic of Moldova, which regulates the protection of cultural heritage includes: the Law on the Protection of Monuments No. 1530-XII/1993³⁴, the Law on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage No. 218/2010³⁵, the Law on Museums No. 262/2017³⁶, Law No. 280/2011 on the protection of movable national cultural heritage³⁷. These normative acts share several common aspects

³² Law no. 182 of October 25, 2000 (*republished*) on the protection of national mobile cultural heritage*) Published in the OFFICIAL MONITOR no. 259 of April 9, 2014 Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/24761>

³³ Law no. 311 of July 3, 2003 (*repealed*) on Museums and Public Collections Published in the OFFICIAL BULLETIN no. 207 of March 24, 2014 Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/Detaliidocument/45161>

³⁴ Law No. 1530 of 22 June 1993 on the Protection of Monuments. Published in the Official Gazette No. 326-333, Art. 624, on 21 October 2022. Amended by LP132 din 26.05.23, MO186-189/08.06.23 art.319; în vigoare 08.06.23 Retrieved from LP1530/1993 (legis.md)

³⁵ Law No. 218 of 17 September 2010 on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage. Published in the Official Gazette No. 235-240, Art. 738, on 3 December 2010. Amended by LP52 din 16.03.23, MO97-99/24.03.23 art.150; în vigoare 24.03.23 Retrieved from LP58/2012 (legis.md)

³⁶ Law No. 262 of 7 December 2017 on Museums. Published in the Official Gazette No. 7-17, Art. 42, on 12 January 2018. Amended by LP156 din 09.06.22, MO194-200/01.07.22 art.358; în vigoare 01.07.22 Retrieved from LP262/2017 (legis.md)

³⁷ Law No. 280 of 27-12-2011 on the protection of movable national cultural heritage Published: 27-04-2011 in the Official Gazette No. 82-84 art. 270. Amended by LP285 din 06.10.22, MO326-333/21.10.22 art.636; în vigoare 21.11.22 Retrieved from https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=133811&lang=ro#

that reflect a coherent national policy on safeguarding both cultural and natural heritage. They emphasize the classification and registration of heritage assets, including the creation of inventories and registers for monuments, archaeological sites, and museum collections. The *Law on the Protection of Monuments* ³⁸ specifically outlines the procedures for identifying and listing monuments, while also introducing a national register of monuments. All three laws define the roles and responsibilities of public authorities, particularly the Ministry of Culture and other state institutions, in the preservation, administration, and restoration of heritage. They establish the legal basis for conservation activities, such as protection measures, restoration works, and scientific research, while also stipulating procedures for reparation of damages to heritage sites. These laws highlight the importance of public access to cultural values and support the role of museums and archaeological institutions as custodians of collective memory and promoters of cultural identity. Additionally, the legislation ensures that heritage protection is integrated into urban planning and development policies, and includes sanctions for violations, such as unauthorized excavations or damage to protected sites. Altogether, these acts contribute to the formation of a legal and institutional framework that safeguards Moldova's cultural heritage in alignment with international norms and best practices.

In the Romanian legislation the protection of monuments is regulated by the Law no. 422/2001 on the protection of historical monuments³⁹. Law No. 422/2001 provides the fundamental legal framework for the identification, classification, preservation, restoration, and protection of historical monuments in Romania. It affirms that historical monuments are part of the national cultural heritage and are protected in the public interest. A historical monument is defined as a building, ensemble, site, or structure with historical, artistic, archaeological, architectural, or technical value. The law applies to both immovable cultural heritage (e.g., buildings, ruins, sites) and movable elements associated with protected structures. Historical monuments are classified into group A – of national and international

³⁸ Law No. 1530 of 22 June 1993 on the Protection of Monuments. Published in the Official Gazette No. 326-333, Art. 624, on 21 October 2022. Amended by *LP132 din 26.05.23*, *MO186-189/08.06.23 art.319*; *în vigoare 08.06.23 Retrieved from LP1530/1993 (legis.md)*

³⁹ Law no. 422 of July 18, 2001 (**republished**) on the protection of historical monuments Published in the OFFICIAL MONITOR no. 938 of November 20, 2006 Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/29761>

importance, group B – of local importance. All monuments must be registered in the National Register of Historical Monuments, which is maintained and updated by the Ministry of Culture. Once classified, historical monuments receive legal protection, and owners (whether public or private) have the obligation to: preserve the monument in good condition, allow inspections by specialized authorities, notify authorities before initiating any works. Unauthorized demolition, alteration, or degradation of monuments is prohibited and subject to penalties.

In the legislation of the Republic of Moldova the protection of monuments is released by the provisions of the Law on the Protection of Monuments⁴⁰, that was adopted in order to classify monuments, to introduce the register of monuments, to strictly regulate the competence of state bodies in the field of monument protection, preservation, record, study, enhancement, conservation, restoration, as well as reparation of damage to monuments. The law defines monuments as immovable cultural and natural heritage objects of historical, artistic, scientific, architectural, religious, or social value. It applies to: archaeological and architectural sites, historical buildings, cultural landscapes, monuments of public memory (e.g., memorials). Monuments are classified according to their significance and nature. The law establishes a National Register of Monuments, which serves as the official inventory of protected heritage objects. The register includes detailed information on location, classification, legal status, and protective measures. Owners or holders of monuments are legally obligated to maintain them in good condition, prevent degradation or unauthorized alterations and allow inspection and expert evaluations. Conservation and restoration works must be approved by the competent authority and carried out according to heritage standards.

At the same time, another aspect of the protection of the right to memory refers to the protection of archaeological heritage. In the Romanian legislation this subject is regulated by Law No. 5/2000 on the Approval of the National Spatial Plan - Section III - Protected Areas⁴¹. This law is a strategic planning instrument that sets the legal framework for the

⁴⁰ Law No. 1530 of 22 June 1993 on the Protection of Monuments. Published in the Official Gazette No. 326-333, Art. 624, on 21 October 2022. Amended by *LP132 din 26.05.23*, *MO186-189/08.06.23 art.319*; *în vigoare 08.06.23 Retrieved from LP1530/1993 (legis.md)*

⁴¹ Law No. 5 of March 6, 2000 (*updated*) on the Approval of the National Spatial Plan - Section III - Protected Areas (updated until September 6, 2016*) *Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/21860>*

delimitation, classification, and protection of various categories of protected natural and cultural areas across Romania. It integrates cultural heritage into national spatial planning, promoting sustainable territorial development while safeguarding irreplaceable values. The law aims to ensure the preservation of natural and cultural heritage through spatial planning and land-use policies. It regulates the inclusion of protected areas into national and local planning documents, integrating heritage protection into urban and regional development. Law No. 5/2000 establishes and officially recognizes several types of protected areas, including: 1. Natural protected areas, such as a) national and natural parks, b) scientific reserves, c) nature monuments, d) biosphere reserves; 2. Cultural protected areas, which includes a) historical monuments and archaeological sites and b) protected built heritage areas (e.g., historical city centers, architectural ensembles). The law includes an annexed list of over 9,000 protected sites, detailing their location and category. These sites are included in the National Spatial Plan, serving as a legal basis for urban and territorial planning, infrastructure projects and environmental and heritage conservation measures

From another point of view in the legislation of the Republic of Moldova the Law No. 218/2010 on the protection of archaeological heritage⁴² contributes to the protection of the right to memory by defining the concept of archaeological heritage as an essential element that characterizes the age and originality of the culture, history and traditions of each people, state or cultural space in relation to other peoples, states or ethnocultural spaces. In this context, by protecting archaeological heritage, the protection is granted to the distinctive aspects of national culture through which historical memory is transmitted to the younger generation. Therefore, archaeological heritage becomes an essential material tool in preserving and transmitting historical memory and enables knowledge of the past through the study of material objects.

Moreover, the law defines the importance of the protection of archaeological heritage, stating: "Every people has an obligation to preserve its cultural heritage and to use it for the benefit of all humanity. The archaeological heritage of the Republic of Moldova - a basic component of

⁴² Law No. 218 of 17 September 2010 on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage. Published in the Official Gazette No. 235-240, Art. 738, on 3 December 2010. Amended by LP52 din 16.03.23, MO97-99/24.03.23 art.150; în vigoare 24.03.23 Retrieved from LP58/2012 (legis.md)

the national cultural heritage, which is under serious threat of degradation, both as a result of the intensification of the process of realization of major complex development projects, new constructions and land use, and due to natural hazards, illegal excavations or lack of public information - needs to be protected, integrating the policy of protecting the archaeological heritage into cultural, educational, environmental, urban and spatial development, agricultural, soil and forest management policies"⁴³.

Law No 218/2010 ⁴⁴ defines the main risks that may affect the archaeological heritage, such as the modernization of infrastructure and urban development, the presence of natural hazards, clandestine excavations, as well as insufficient public information on the necessity to protect cultural heritage. In particular, infrastructure modernization could have a negative impact on archaeological sites if adequate protection measures are not implemented. Excavations and construction can destroy valuable archaeological sites before they are studied or preserved, leading to the irreversible loss of important parts of national history. Natural phenomena such as erosion, floods or earthquakes can damage or destroy archaeological sites. Climate change could also intensify these risks, affecting the stability and preservation of these sites. At the same time, illegal excavations pose a major threat to archaeological heritage. These activities are often motivated by the desire to make a profit by selling artifacts on the black market, but lead to the destruction of the archaeological context and the loss of essential scientific information. These risks are exacerbated by a lack of education and awareness among the population about the importance of archaeological heritage. When local communities do not understand the value of archaeological sites, they are less willing to protect them or to resist activities that endanger them.

In order to prevent these risks from realization, it is necessary to include the protection of archaeological heritage in the priorities of national policies. Law No. 218/2010⁴⁵ establishes the need to include

⁴³ Law No. 218 of 17 September 2010 on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage. Published in the Official Gazette No. 235–240, Art. 738, on 3 December 2010. Amended by LP52 din 16.03.23, MO97-99/24.03.23 art.150; *în vigoare* 24.03.23 Retrieved from LP58/2012 (*legis.md*)

⁴⁴ Law No. 218 of 17 September 2010 on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage. Published in the Official Gazette No. 235–240, Art. 738, on 3 December 2010. Amended by LP52 din 16.03.23, MO97-99/24.03.23 art.150; *în vigoare* 24.03.23 Retrieved from LP58/2012 (*legis.md*)

⁴⁵ Law No. 218 of 17 September 2010 on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage. Published in the Official Gazette No. 235–240, Art. 738, on 3 December 2010. Amended by

archaeological heritage as a priority in national cultural policies, the incorporation of archaeological heritage topics in the school curriculum and the organization of extracurricular activities; the protection of archaeological sites through environmental measures to prevent their natural degradation, the elaboration of an urban plan taking into account the presence of archaeological sites and the assessment of archaeological impact before the approval of construction projects, as well as the elaboration of land management policies taking into account the need to protect archaeological sites.

The implementation of practical measures for the protection of the national archaeological heritage will contribute to the preservation of the historical memory by informing the general public, including educational projects, about the significance of discovered artifacts and their importance in the knowledge of the past.

In the Romanian legislation the activity of museums is regulated by the Law No. 311/2003 on Museums and Public Collections⁴⁶. This law establishes the legal framework for the organization, functioning, and protection of museums and public collections in Romania. Its provisions ensure the preservation, enhancement, and accessibility of cultural heritage held by these institutions. The law defines a museum as a public cultural institution, with or without legal personality, which collects, conserves, researches, and exhibits items of cultural value for educational and public interest purposes. Museums are classified as: 1. National, 2. Regional, 3. County, 4. Local, 5. Specialized (e.g., thematic or institutional). Public collections are sets of cultural goods grouped thematically, made accessible to the public but not necessarily institutionalized as museums. Museums and collections may be owned by the state, administrative-territorial units (local public authorities), private legal or natural persons. The law guarantees public access to museums and ensures their educational role, especially through exhibitions, programs, and partnerships. At the same time, museums have the obligation to: ensure scientific inventory, conservation, and restoration of heritage items and prevent alienation, degradation, or illegal export of cultural goods.

In the legislation of the Republic of Moldova the activity of museums

LP52 din 16.03.23, MO97-99/24.03.23 art.150; în vigoare 24.03.23 Retrieved from LP58/2012 (legis.md)

⁴⁶ Law no. 311 of July 3, 2003 (*repealed*) on Museums and Public Collections Published in the OFFICIAL BULLETIN no. 207 of March 24, 2014 Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/45161>

is regulated by the Law on Museums No. 262/2017⁴⁷, which was adopted in order to regulate the modalities of organization, operation and financing of museums and public collections, which are essential for the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage. The Law establishes the framework for the management of museum collections and for the protection of cultural heritage held in museums. The law defines a museum as a permanent institution, in the service of society, that acquires, conserves, researches, communicates, and exhibits tangible and intangible cultural heritage for purposes of education, study, and enjoyment. Museums may be public (state or municipal) or private, general or specialized, organized at national, regional, or local levels. According to national legislation, museums may be founded by state authorities, local public administrations, legal entities or private individuals. Museums must be accredited according to criteria set by the Ministry of Culture, including staffing, infrastructure, conservation conditions, and educational programs. The law ensures the legal protection of cultural goods held by museums. Museums are responsible for the security, documentation, and conservation of their holdings and must prevent theft, damage, or illegal alienation. Items of exceptional national value may not be alienated, and their transfer is subject to state regulation.

Museums play a central role in protecting and promoting the right to historical memory. Through their collections, exhibitions and educational activities, they ensure the preservation and transmission of collective history, thus contributing to the realization of this essential right. Museums collect, preserve and exhibit artifacts, documents and other objects of historical value, which are essential for preserving the collective memory. Through these collections, museums protect history from forgetting and decay, ensuring that future generations will have access to authentic testimonies of the past. They play a crucial role in preventing falsification or manipulation of history by providing a source of credible and verified information.

Moreover, museums contribute to historical education by organizing permanent and temporary exhibitions exploring different aspects of national and international history. These exhibitions help the public to understand the complexity of historical events and to reflect on the lessons

⁴⁷ Law No. 262 of 7 December 2017 on Museums. Published in the Official Gazette No. 7-17, Art. 42, on 12 January 2018. Amended by *LP156 din 09.06.22*, *MO194-200/01.07.22 art.358*; *în vigoare 01.07.22 Retrieved from LP262/2017 (legis.md)*

of the past. Through educational programs, workshops and guided tours, museums help to build historical awareness among the younger generation, ensuring that they understand and respect the right to historical memory.

Another important role that museums play as a modality of realizing the right to historical memory is the official recognition of past injustices and the building of a collective memory based on truth. Museums play an important role in the process of national reconciliation and social healing, especially in the context of controversial or traumatic historical events. They provide a space where victims, survivors and affected communities can find recognition and respect for their experiences. At the same time, museums are platforms for intercultural dialog, where the history of different ethnic, religious and cultural groups can be explored and understood in the broader context of human history. These institutions help to promote respect for cultural diversity and understanding of each community's contributions to collective history. By highlighting historical diversity, museums contribute to an inclusive historical memory that recognizes and respects all perspectives and experiences.

Museums are essential for the realization of the right to historical memory, as they ensure the preservation, interpretation and transmission of collective history. Through their activities, they contribute to historical education, social reconciliation, the promotion of diversity and accessibility to historical information. In a world where history can be forgotten or falsified, museums remain faithful guardians of collective memory, ensuring that the right to know and understand the past is respected and protected for all generations.

The protection of the intangible cultural heritage in Romania legislation is regulated by the Law no. 26/2008 on the protection of intangible cultural heritage⁴⁸. This law establishes the legal framework for the identification, safeguarding, preservation, and transmission of Romania's intangible cultural heritage (ICH). It aligns with the principles of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage⁴⁹ (2003), which Romania ratified. The law defines intangible cultural heritage as practices, representations, expressions, knowledge,

⁴⁸ Law no. 26 of February 29, 2008 on the protection of intangible cultural heritage Published in the OFFICIAL BULLETIN no. 168 of March 5, 2008 Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/90098>

⁴⁹ Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Retrieved from <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>

and skills – including instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces – that communities, groups, and individuals recognize as part of their cultural identity. It covers domains such as: oral traditions, performing arts, rituals and festive events, traditional craftsmanship, knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe. The law aims to recognize intangible cultural heritage as a fundamental part of national cultural heritage, ensure intergenerational transmission of intangible cultural heritage, support the active participation of communities in safeguarding their heritage and foster respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. The law establishes the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, an official record of elements recognized at national level. Registration requires community consent, scientific documentation and evaluation by a competent body.

In the Republic of Moldova the Law No. 58/2012 on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage⁵⁰ was adopted in order to define intangible cultural heritage and to determine measures for its identification, documentation, research, protection, promotion and revitalization. The Law emphasizes the role of local communities in protecting intangible heritage and provides mechanisms to support its transmission between generations. Law No. 58/2012⁵¹ ensures the realization of the right to historical memory, as intangible cultural heritage contributes to the transmission of historical knowledge, values and traditions from one generation to another. Through stories, songs, dances and other forms of cultural expression, communities preserve their collective memories and experiences, thus helping to keep historical memory alive. These forms of heritage not only preserve information about historical events, but also about the way these events were perceived and experienced by communities, thus providing a unique and authentic perspective on the past. Intangible cultural heritage plays an essential role in strengthening the cultural identity of communities. It provides a feeling of continuity and belonging that is vital for social cohesion and cultural resilience

⁵⁰ Law No. 58 of 29 March 2012 on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Published in the Official Gazette No. 76–80, Art. 255, on 20 April 2012. Amended by *LP52 din 16.03.23, MO97-99/24.03.23 art.150; în vigoare 24.03.23 Retrieved from LP58/2012 (legis.md)*

⁵¹ Law No. 58 of 29 March 2012 on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Published in the Official Gazette No. 76–80, Art. 255, on 20 April 2012. Amended by *LP52 din 16.03.23, MO97-99/24.03.23 art.150; în vigoare 24.03.23 Retrieved from LP58/2012 (legis.md)*

against external change. By preserving these traditions, communities protect their historical memory and ensure that it is not eroded by globalization or other forces that could threaten their cultural identity, the development of intangible cultural heritage is a practical way of realizing the right to historical memory.

Moreover, oral traditions and other forms of intangible heritage play a crucial role in preserving collective memory, especially in communities where written resources are limited. These traditions keep historical memories alive, ensuring that they are transmitted in an authentic and personalized form. Intangible heritage supplements and enriches tangible heritage, giving context and meaning to historical artifacts and monuments, and thus contributing to a deeper understanding of the past. Intangible cultural heritage is a valuable educational resource that can be used to raise young people's awareness about the importance of historical memory. By participating in festivals, rituals and other traditional practices, young people can learn about the history of their community in a direct and personal way. This type of education contributes to the formation of a strong historical and cultural awareness, which is essential for the protection and promotion of the right to historical memory.

In the Romania legislation the right to historical memory is also protected through the right to education guaranteed by article 32 of the Constitution of Romania⁵² and Law on National Education No. 1/2011⁵³. In the Republic of Moldova the right to education is regulated by the article 35 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova⁵⁴. The legal framework for legal relations concerning the planning, organization, functioning and development of the education system in the Republic of Moldova is established by the Education Code⁵⁵. Education plays a crucial role in the

⁵² The Constitution of Romania October 31, 2003 In force since October 31, 2003 Published in the Official Gazette, Part I No. 767 of October 31, 2003. Retrieved from <https://www.presidency.ro/en/president/constitution-of-romania>

⁵³ Law on National Education No. 1 of January 5, 2011 Published in the OFFICIAL BULLETIN No. 18 of January 10, 2011 Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/259001>

⁵⁴ Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, No. 1 of 29 July 1994. Published in the Official Gazette No. 78, Art. 140, on 29 March 2016. Amended by *HCC8 din 11.03.24, MO104-107/21.03.24 art.42; în vigoare 11.03.24* Retrieved from *CRM1/1994 (legis.md)*

⁵⁵ Education Code of the Republic of Moldova, No. 152 of 17 July 2014. Published in the Official Gazette No. 319-324, Art. 634, on 24 October 2014. Amended by *LP108 din 15.05.24, MO213-215/17.05.24 art.312; în vigoare 17.06.24* Retrieved from *CP152/2014 (legis.md)*

protection and realization of the right to historical memory. Through education, knowledge about the past is passed on to future generations, contributing to the formation of historical awareness and the prevention of forgetting or manipulating history. Education ensures access to truthful and well-documented information about historical events, providing pupils and students with an accurate and balanced understanding of the past. By including national and international history in school curricula, historical memory is protected and its distortion is prevented.

Education helps to strengthen cultural identity by promoting knowledge and respect for a community's cultural heritage, traditions and history. This is essential for maintaining social cohesion and safeguarding cultural diversity. The historical knowledge provided in schools and universities helps young people to understand and appreciate the cultural heritage of their community, which helps to protect this heritage for future generations. Education can play an important role in social reconciliation processes, especially in the context of traumatic or controversial historical events. Through the study of history, young people can learn about past injustices and the importance of recognizing and redressing these injustices. Education promotes dialogue and mutual understanding between different social and cultural groups, thus contributing to a more tolerant and inclusive society.

A strong educational system is one of the most effective ways to prevent the forgetting and manipulation of history. Historical education can combat historical misinformation and revisionism, which can lead to the distortion of collective memory and the perpetuation of conflicts. Education helps to form a critical historical awareness that enables pupils and students to recognize and reject attempts to manipulate history. Education plays an essential role in promoting and protecting human rights, including the right to historical memory. Through human rights education, young people learn about the importance of recognizing and respecting human dignity and the role of history in understanding and protecting these rights.

In another order of ideas, the right to access to information proclaimed by art. 31 of the Constitution of Romania⁵⁶ and Law no. 544/2001 on free access to information of public interest⁵⁷. In the national

⁵⁶ The Constitution of Romania October 31, 2003 In force since October 31, 2003 Published in the Official Gazette, Part I No. 767 of October 31, 2003. Retrieved from <https://www.presidency.ro/en/president/constitution-of-romania>

⁵⁷ Law no. 544 of October 12, 2001 on free access to information of public interest Published in the OFFICIAL NO. 663 of October 23, 2001 Retrieved from

legislation of the Republic of Moldova this right is regulated by the article 34 of the Constitution⁵⁸ and Law No. 982/2000 on access to information⁵⁹ is the right of individuals to seek, receive and share information held by public authorities. This right ensures the practical realization of the right to historical memory by guaranteeing citizens the right to consult historical documents and archives, including those that have been classified or kept in state institutions. These documents may include government records, official reports, legal documents, testimonies and other primary sources essential for understanding history. Access to such information is crucial for researchers, historians, journalists and members of the public who wish to understand and document past events, thus contributing to the preservation of historical memory.

Through access to official information, including information of a sensitive or controversial nature, the right to access for information facilitates the accurate reconstruction of historical events. This is essential to properly understand the causes and consequences of significant events such as armed conflicts, revolutions or political repression. This right also makes it possible to identify and correct historical errors or deliberate omissions, thus ensuring a more complete and accurate historical memory. Access to information contributes to transparency and accountability of governments and other institutions in relation to the past. By opening the archives and official documents, it prevents the concealment or manipulation of information, which helps to combat historical revisionism. Transparency ensured through access to information discourages attempts to rewrite history for political purposes and protects the integrity of collective memory.

Moreover, the right to access to information makes it possible to discover and document facts related to historical injustices, such as crimes against humanity, human rights violations, abuses of power or systemic discrimination. This information is essential for the official recognition of these injustices and for the implementation of reparation and reconciliation measures. In many cases, access to information can be a

<https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/31413>

⁵⁸ Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, No. 1 of 29 July 1994. Published in the Official Gazette No. 78, Art. 140, on 29 March 2016. Amended by *HCC8 din 11.03.24, MO104-107/21.03.24 art.42; în vigoare 11.03.24 Retrieved from CRM1/1994 (legis.md)*

⁵⁹ Law No. 982 of 11 May 2000 on Access to Information. Published in the Official Gazette No. 88-90, Art. 664, on 28 July 2000. Amended by *LP143 din 19.07.18, MO309-320/17.08.18 art.482 Retrieved from LP982/2000 (legis.md)*

crucial piece of evidence in judicial processes, ensuring that justice is done and that the memory of victims is respected.

The right of access to information is closely linked to the freedom of expression declared by article 30 of the Constitution of Romania⁶⁰ and art. 70 of the Civil code of July 17, 2009⁶¹. In the Moldavian legislation this right is regulated by the art. 32 of the Constitution and guaranteed by Law No. 64/2010 on freedom of expression⁶². Freedom of expression allows public debate and diverse interpretation of historical events. This is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the past, as it allows multiple perspectives and interpretations to be raised. Through free and open debate, society can arrive at a more nuanced and complete understanding of historical events, preventing the monopolization of the historical narrative by certain groups or institutions. Freedom of expression allows individuals, including victims and witnesses, to speak out against injustices and to make known historical truths that might otherwise be hidden or marginalized. In many cases, the historical truth has come to light because of the courage of those who have spoken publicly about the injustices they suffered.

Freedom of expression enables the public expression of collective memory, through the organization of commemorative events, the publication of books and articles, the production of documentaries and other art forms. These events contribute to keeping historical memory alive and passing it on to future generations. The culture of remembrance, supported by freedom of expression, helps to preserve collective identity and honor the victims of past tragic events. At the same time, freedom of expression remains a crucial tool for combating censorship and historical revisionism. Without this freedom, authorities or other groups could suppress inconvenient information or rewrite history for propaganda purposes. By protecting freedom of expression, it ensures that all historical perspectives can be heard and that there are no successful attempts to distort or erase parts of collective history.

⁶⁰ The Constitution of Romania October 31, 2003 In force since October 31, 2003 Published in the Official Gazette, Part I No. 767 of October 31, 2003. Retrieved from <https://www.presidency.ro/en/president/constitution-of-romania>

⁶¹ Civil code of July 17, 2009 (**republished**)(*updated*) (Law No 287/2009**) (updated until February 4, 2016*) Retrieved from <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliidocument/175630>

⁶² Law No. 64 of 23 April 2010 on Freedom of Expression. Published in the Official Gazette No. 117-118, Art. 355, on 9 July 2010. Amended by LP95 din 14.05.15, MO139-143/05.06.15 art.261 Retrieved from LP64/2010 (legis.md)

Researchers, journalists and writers rely on freedom of expression to publish critical works, studies and investigations of historical events. These contributions are essential for understanding and documenting the past. The publication of historical materials, articles, books and research allows historical information to be widely disseminated, thus supporting public education and protecting historical memory.

Conclusions

The right to historical memory is crucial in the formation of national identity, expressing the right of a people to know their origins, customs, traditions, and horrors, to which they have become the victim. The right to historical memory expresses the indissoluble connection between predecessors and descendants and guarantees the possibility of descendants to discover the authentic past, without being affected by misinformation and manipulation. Memory about the historical past defines a people and distinguishes it from neighbouring communities contributing to the formation of the national identity shared by all the peoples of the country. The common past represents one of the defining elements of the people and represents a red thread that unites the nation.

Currently, the legislation of Romania and the Republic of Moldova does not regulate the right to memory as a fundamental human right. However, the right to memory is protected by other rights, such as the right to the protection of cultural heritage, the right to education, the right to free access to information, and freedom of expression. The current legislation provides partial protection of the right to historical memory. However, the provisions in force do not regulate the right to historical memory in all its fullness and are not able to withstand the challenges existing in the contemporary era.

In the modern geopolitical context, the importance of the right to historical memory cannot be overemphasized. In the modern geopolitical context, the importance of the right to historical memory cannot be overemphasized. In an amnesia society, memory becomes increasingly important when it is positioned as memorization, in association with the ability to store information and demand it whenever appropriate⁶³. Without the protection of historical memory, society will fall into a pit full of a lot of loneliness: those who do not speak, do not report, and who will

⁶³ Almeida, B. R. (2013). Culpa, ressentimento e memória: traços problemáticos de um pensar transicional da justiça. *Revista da Faculdade de Direito*, 34(2), 97-114.

remain devoid of a sense of participation and historical and moral legitimacy. These people will remain deprived of belonging to memory, which also makes a part of them and will allow them to reflect on sensitive moments of the past, present and future⁶⁴.

Therefore, it is necessary to develop a policy of national memory, focused on the following directions: elaboration of the concept of national memory policy, development of national programs, those present major events major events in national history, through the prism of participants' memories and collective memory, paying increased attention to tragic events in national history, organization of the interactive events aimed at establishing the dialogue between generations and attracting youth to know the national history, development of the local history segment by capitalizing on the testimonies about the way of life, customs and traditions specific to different localities, integration of the concept of national memory into the educational curriculum. Without the implementation of consistent measures, it is impossible to guarantee the realization of the right to historical memory and the formation of national identity in the current geopolitical context.

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⁶⁴ Khan, S. *A pós-memória como coragem cívica: Palavra de ordem: resistir, resistir, resistir*. Comunicação e Sociedade, (29), 2016, 353-364.

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ENSURING WORKPLACE SAFETY: ADDRESSING THREATS AGAINST TEACHERS' MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

MARIA DIANA PIELE*

maria-diana.piele@fpse.unibuc.ro

Abstract: *The present study aims to analyze the factors influencing the mental and physical health of teachers. The teaching profession often becomes a vulnerable work environment, where teachers' needs are not addressed by the necessary interventions. Studies have shown how perceived safety, institutional support, work climate, and victimization are essential aspects in analyzing the quality of the teaching profession. This study proposes a brief overview method, designed as a theoretical framework of the specialized literature, to emphasize the importance of maintaining teachers' mental and physical health. The selection process of the studies was based on the mentioned keywords. Among the conclusions, it was emphasized that perceptions of workplace safety are a fundamental aspect. They refer to the quality of working conditions, being influenced by elements such as institutional support, climate and experiences of victimization. All of these have significant effects on mental and physical health of teachers, sometimes causing severe suffering.*

Keywords: *teachers, safety, health, climate, institutional support, victimization*

Introduction

The effects of unsafe working conditions extend today far beyond individual educators. Teachers face numerous work stressors, including heavy workloads, student behavior issues, low work support, lack of safety, and workplace violence, often resulting in being sick.¹ Reducing all of these requires many resources for staffing, training, equipment, reporting, and investigation.² Moreover, an unsafe environment creates a

* Assistant professor, PhD. candidate, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest, Romania.

¹ N.R. Gomes, C.C. de-Assis-Santos, B.A. Rezende & A.M. de-Medeiros. Psychosocial factors at work and teachers' illness: a systematic review. *Revista brasileira de medicina do trabalho: publicacao oficial da Associacao Nacional de Medicina do Trabalho-ANAMT*, 21(3), e20221014, (2023).

² P. Landsbergis, J. Zoeckler, Z. Kashem, B. Rivera, D. Alexander & A. Bahruth. Organizational policies and programs to reduce job stress and risk of workplace violence among K-12 education staff. *New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*, 27(4), 559-580, (2018).

culture of fear that disrupts the learning experience for students. When teachers are unable to focus on their job due to concerns about their personal safety, students receive a lower quality of education. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged perceptions of safety, reinforcing workplace safety management as a crucial resource for supporting teachers' health and well-being.³ Therefore, the teaching profession often comes with its own set of challenges, especially when it comes to safety and security. Teacher safety includes physical, emotional, and psychological aspects. Physical safety involves protection from threats such as violence in schools or other unsafe working conditions. Emotional and psychological safety, on the other hand, refers to the support and climate within the educational institution that promotes a sense of belonging, respect, and protection from victimization. Psychological safety is a fundamental aspect of a healthy and productive workplace, especially in educational settings. It brings comfort and good collaboration for teachers and it also determines work engagement⁴, being associated with a high level of connectedness at work.⁵ Lack of psychological safety also raises the issue of organizational silence, its impact on burnout and engagement, while highlighting the complexity of the teaching profession.⁶ This indicates that creating an open and supportive school environment can help mitigate the adverse effects of stress and burnout.

The work climate

A positive school environment plays an important role in shaping teachers' experiences by influencing their overall well-being.⁷ Research has

³ G. Guidetti, S. Viotti, I. Sottimano, G. Bacci & D. Converso, The role of workplace safety and personal contribution in sustaining work ability: A pilot study among Italian preschool teachers. *Journal of Health and Social Sciences*. 195-208, (2023).

⁴ B.Y. Dramanu, E.Y. Milledzi & L. Asamani, L., Psychological safety and work engagement of senior high school teachers: Moderating role of psychological flexibility. *European Journal of Educational Sciences*, 7(3), 17-35, (2020).

⁵ C.M. Fleming, H.G. Calvert & L. Turner, L. Burnout Among School Staff: A Longitudinal Analysis of Leadership, Connectedness, and Psychological Safety. *School Mental Health*, 15, 900-912, (2023).

⁶ M. Kassandrinou, O. Lainidi, C. Mouratidis & A. Montgomery, Employee silence, job burnout and job engagement among teachers: the mediational role of psychological safety. *Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine*, 11(1) (2023).

⁷ T. Cumming, S. Wong & H. Logan, Early childhood educators' well-being, work environments and 'quality': Possibilities for changing policy and practice. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 46(1), 50-65, (2020).

shown that a supportive and healthy school environment has a direct impact on job satisfaction⁸ and can lead to significant changes in employees' mental health at work.⁹ When educators feel valued and supported, they are more likely to develop a sense of belonging, which leads to positive interactions among colleagues and to a collaborative atmosphere.

Moreover, a good school climate enhances the effectiveness of emotion regulation strategies, allowing teachers to manage stress and maintaining emotional balance more efficiently. As a result, the educational process becomes more effective and meaningful for both educators and students.¹⁰

Teachers who work in a positive environment are better equipped to handle challenges, adapt to changes, and maintain their motivation in the long run. Another important factor is the relationship with colleagues, as many teachers perceive colleagues as the most significant support in terms of climate, finding help in them often.¹¹ In contrast, relational conflicts at work were shown to decrease teachers perceived psychological safety.¹²

Therefore, the school climate is a key factor in determining teachers' well-being, job satisfaction, and professional success. A good work environment promotes collaboration, reduces stress, and enhances overall performance, benefiting not only teachers but also students and the broader school community.

Institutional Support

Research indicates that insufficient support from administrators harms teachers in various ways: personally, by affecting their emotions;

⁸ O.P. Malinen, & H. Savolainen, The effect of perceived school climate and teacher efficacy in behavior management on job satisfaction and burnout: A longitudinal study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 60, 144–152, (2016).

⁹ M.F. Dollard & A.B. Bakker, Psychosocial safety climate as a precursor to conducive work environments, psychological health problems, and employee engagement. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 83(3), 579–599, (2010).

¹⁰ L. Jeon & K. Ardeleanu, Work Climate in Early Care and Education and Teachers' Stress: Indirect Associations through Emotion Regulation. *Early Education and Development*, 31(7), 1031–1051, (2020).

¹¹ E. Hammar Chiriac, C. Forsberg & R. Thornberg, Teacher teams: A safe place to work on creating and maintaining a positive school climate. *Social Psychology of Education*, 27(4), 1775–1795, (2024).

¹² R. Gerlach & C. Gockel, We belong together: belonging to the principal's in-group protects teachers from the negative effects of task conflict on psychological safety. *School Leadership & Management*, 38(3), 302–322, (2017).

socially, by making it harder to manage conflicts with students, parents, and others; and institutionally, by impacting school policies and structures.¹³ Psychological safety is directly influenced by a supportive work context.¹⁴ Teachers who are supported by the administration and do not work alone are less prone to threats and attacks.¹⁵ A leadership style that encourages collaboration and fosters a pleasant work environment is an important factor in maintaining psychological safety among teachers.¹⁶ When educators feel safe and supported in their workplace, they are more likely to engage in open communication, share innovative ideas, and contribute to a more dynamic and effective learning environment. In other words, institutional support has a positive effect not only on teachers' well-being, but also on their work-life balance.¹⁷

Furthermore, the perception of humble leadership has a positive role in teachers' psychological empowerment and safety.¹⁸ When school leaders demonstrate humility by being open to feedback, acknowledging their limitations, and prioritizing the needs of their staff, they also promote an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. This leadership approach strengthens teachers' confidence in their own abilities and encourages them to take initiative without fear of failure or criticism.

¹³ S.D. McMahon, S. Reaves, E.A. McConnell, E. Peist, L. Ruiz & APA Task Force on Classroom Violence Directed Against Teachers, The Ecology of Teachers' Experiences with Violence and Lack of Administrative Support. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 60(3-4), 502-515, (2017).

¹⁴ M.L. Frazier, S. Fainshmidt, R.L. Klinger, A. Pezeshkan & V. Vacheva, Psychological safety: A meta-analytic review and extension. *Personnel Psychology*, 70(1), 113-165, (2017).

¹⁵ F.L. Huang, C.L. Eddy & E. Camp, The Role of the Perceptions of School Climate and Teacher Victimization by Students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 35(23-24), 5526-5551, (2020).

¹⁶ S. Shahid & M. Din, Fostering Psychological Safety in Teachers: The Role of School Leadership, Team Effectiveness & Organizational Culture. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, 9(2), 122-149, (2021).

¹⁷ V. Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė, J. Duobienė, V. Liubinienė, J. Kasperišienė & I. Tandzegolskienė, I., Impact of institutional support on educators' subjective well-being during the transition to virtual work due to COVID-19 lockdown. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 1-19, (2021).

¹⁸ Y. Qu, J. Zhu & R.D. Goddard, Modesty brings gains: linking humble leadership to knowledge sharing via psychological safety and psychological empowerment in professional learning communities. *Educational Studies*, 50(6), 1444-1465, (2022).

Feeling supported, teachers enjoy better intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy.¹⁹

Beyond institutional support, emotional support within the school environment is essential for maintaining teachers' well-being. Emotional support takes many forms, and one of the most significant sources of it comes from within the classroom, particularly through the quality of interactions between teachers and students.²⁰ In other words, positive and respectful student-teacher relationships contribute to a more rewarding teaching experience.

Teachers' victimization

In recent years, there has been an unsettling rise in the victimization of teachers within educational environments. The gravity of this phenomenon lies not only in the number of reported incidents, but also in the profound and lasting consequences. A significant number of teachers experience violence in schools, making it a pressing and concerning problem.²¹ Additionally, teachers' victimization is one of the causes of insecurity in the educational environment, as aggressions are frequent and they take place in complex forms, becoming quite popular today.²² They are ranging from abusive comments and vandalism to physical assault.²³ More specifically, teacher victimization includes a wide range of harmful behaviors, such as verbal abuse, physical aggression, emotional manipulation, and systemic neglect, all of which compromising the well-being of educators and the quality of education they provide.

The violent behaviors often come from students, but also from parents who challenge the school's authority, sometimes encouraged by a "client"

¹⁹ S.J. Reaves & J.A. Cozzens, J.A., Teacher perceptions of climate, motivation, and self-efficacy: Is there really a connection. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 6(12), 48-67, (2018).

²⁰ K.M. Zinsser & T.W. Curby, Understanding Preschool Teachers' Emotional Support as a Function of Center Climate. *Sage Open*, 4(4), (2014).

²¹ A. Dirzyte, V. Indrašienė, V. Jeglevičienė, O. Merfeldaitė, R. Prakapas, A. Railienė & M. Gušauskienė, Teacher Victimization by Students, Their Parents, and School Staff: Prevalence and Links with Teachers' Life Satisfaction in a Lithuanian Sample. *Education Sciences*, 14(2), 163, (2024).

²² B. Moon & J. McCluskey, An Exploratory Study of Violence and Aggression Against Teachers in Middle and High Schools: Prevalence, Predictors, and Negative Consequences. *Journal of School Violence*, 19(2), 122-137, (2018).

²³ M.G. Scaramuzzino, Powerful and Vulnerable: Workplace Violence Against Swedish Social Workers, Teachers, and Journalists. *SAGE Open*, 14(3), (2024).

culture in education, where the teacher is treated as a provider, not as a trainer or mentor. All these experiences regarding violence have led many teachers to consider leaving their profession, transferring, or retiring.²⁴ Moreover, some teachers may feel that their administration holds them accountable for the violence they have suffered. When school leaders fail to address these concerns or actively dismiss them, it further perpetuates the victimization of teachers' experience. Teachers must be assured that any reports of violence or harassment will be taken seriously, and appropriate action will be taken, whether that be student disciplinary action or legal recourse.

Research showed that those teachers who do not feel secure in their workplace are more inclined to change professions, as they are no longer satisfied with their job²⁵, while safety perception also acts as a potential mediator between student violence against teachers and teacher's burnout and job engagement.²⁶ In other words, the violence that happened in the school is strongly related to the perceived sense of safety.²⁷ When educators feel victimized, unsafe and unsupported, they are more likely to experience burnout, stress, and frustration, which, over time, diminishes their enthusiasm for the profession.

The outdated effect of zero-tolerance

The principle of zero tolerance has been in the field of education for some time and is characterized by its drastic and inflexible disciplinary implications. Zero tolerance policies were originally implemented in schools to maintain order and ensure safety. Those were known to have many disadvantages, the most important aspect being the obvious deprivation of education by suppressing students' rights and

²⁴ E. Peist, S.D. McMahon, J.O. Davis-Wright & C.B. Keys, Understanding teacher-directed violence and related turnover through a school climate framework. *Psychology in the Schools*, 61(1), 220-236, (2024).

²⁵ F. Longmuir, A. McKay, B. Gallo Cordoba, K.A. Allen & M. Phillips, Australian Teachers' Perceptions of Safety, Violence and Limited Support in Their Workplaces. *Journal of School Violence*, 24(1), 1-20, (2024).

²⁶ B. Bass, K.P. Cigularov, P.Y. Chen, K.L. Henry, R.G. Tomazic & Y. Li., The effects of student violence against school employees on employee burnout and work engagement: The roles of perceived school unsafety and transformational leadership. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 23(3), 318-336, (2016).

²⁷ D. Hernandez, L. Floden & K. Bosworth, How Safe Is a School? An Exploratory Study Comparing Measures and Perceptions of Safety. *Journal of School Violence*, 9(4), 357-374, (2010).

opportunities of education²⁸, because it enforces strict punishments for rule violations, regardless of the circumstances or severity of the infraction.

Additionally, it often becomes a challenge to ensure the safety of everyone in school while maintaining a well-structured and ethical discipline.²⁹ However, the zero-tolerance policy was associated with a very low sense of safety among both teachers and students.³⁰ Research highlighted how this has also caused many problems in the educational environment, without truly solving inappropriate behaviors, violence, and addictions in schools.³¹ At the same time, teachers may feel a lack of professional autonomy, being forced to apply sanctions that they do not necessarily consider fair or pedagogically useful. Thus, the school climate becomes tense and hostile rather than safe and inclusive.

However, the zero-tolerance policy is sometimes a measure to stop violence and to save victims in certain cases, but policies must be fair, flexible, and focused on both discipline and prevention in order to create a truly safe and supportive school environment. By combining strict enforcement with educational, emotional, and social support, schools can better protect their educators and students while fostering a culture of respect and responsibility. Therefore, the presence of a School Resource Officer has been shown to be directly related to teachers' perception of safeness, giving them more stability in this regard.³² At the same time, school resource officers make teachers not only feel safe, but more committed and less victimized at work.³³ Despite this form of control, it

²⁸ S.C. Teske, A study of zero tolerance policies in schools: a multi-integrated systems approach to improve outcomes for adolescents. *Journal of child and adolescent psychiatric nursing: official publication of the Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nurses, Inc*, 24(2), 88–97, (2011).

²⁹ F.C. Curran, The Law, Policy, and Portrayal of Zero Tolerance School Discipline: Examining Prevalence and Characteristics Across Levels of Governance and School Districts. *Educational Policy*, 33(2), 319–349, (2019).

³⁰ F.L. Huang & D.G. Cornell, Teacher Support for Zero Tolerance Is Associated With Higher Suspension Rates and Lower Feelings of Safety. *School Psychology Review*, 50(2–3), 388–405, (2021).

³¹ C. Bell, The Hidden Side of Zero Tolerance Policies: The African American Perspective. *Sociology compass*, 9(1), 14–22, (2015).

³² B.J. Wood & E. Hampton, The influence of school resource officer presence on teacher perceptions of school safety and security. *School Psychology Review*, 50(2–3), 360–370, (2021).

³³ J.L. Maeng, D.G. Cornell & F.L. Huang, Teacher Perceptions of School Resource Officers and Associations with School Safety. *Journal of School Violence*, 22(1), 105–121, (2022).

has been shown that students are much more likely to commit inappropriate gestures and engage in reprehensible behavior compared to situations where there is no School Resource Officer.³⁴ contrast, schools that emphasize restorative justice approaches, counseling, and positive behavior interventions tend to experience fewer disciplinary issues. These methods focus on addressing the root causes of misconduct rather than simply punishing students. As for detention, studies have shown that it is not necessarily an efficient solution, but a more holistic and supportive approach—emphasizing students' mental health and constructive alternatives—is essential for fostering a positive and inclusive school environment.³⁵

Mental and physical health

Both the physical and mental health of teachers are essential, contributing to a satisfying professional activity. Poor health generated by the work environment does not only have an impact on professional activity, but also having relevant effects on personal life, in activities and relationships outside the workplace. Due to high levels of stress, well-being, mental and physical health have become global issues. Several factors deteriorate the mental and physical condition of teachers. Poor perceived school climate amplifies other negative factors in the workplace and therefore affects teachers' health.³⁶ Some conditions, such as serious victimization, can even make teachers to abandon their jobs. This trend has serious consequences at the systemic level. The departure of teachers not only worsens the education staffing crisis, but also affects the continuity of the educational process, the quality of teaching, and the stability of school communities. In addition, leaving the profession due to victimization also puts additional pressure on those teachers left behind, who may feel helpless and worried about possible experiences they may also have.

³⁴ P. Bleakley & C. Bleakley, School Resource Officers, 'Zero Tolerance' and the Enforcement of Compliance in the American Education System. *Interchange*, 49, 247 - 261, (2018).

³⁵ R.D. Nicoară & M. Sterian, Evaluating the impact of detention rooms: romanian teachers'views on discipline and relationships. *Euromentor Journal*, 15(4). (2024).

³⁶ L. McLean, T. Abry, M. Taylor, M. Jimenez & K. Granger, Teachers' mental health and perceptions of school climate across the transition from training to teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 65, 230-240, (2017).

All of the conditions mentioned above predispose teachers to burnout, which, in turn, is associated with problems such as headaches, stomachaches, back pain, cardiovascular problems, voice disorders, increased cortisol, and others.³⁷ In addition to burnout, teachers' mental state is often associated with significant levels of stress, anxiety, and depression.³⁸ The phenomenon is no longer surprising if we consider the high workload, enormous social responsibility, and increasing pressures from students, parents, and institutions. Mental suffering is often associated with physical suffering.³⁹ This connection is based on the idea that the mind and body do not function independently, but as a unified whole. In other words, teachers' connectedness to school influences both mental and physical health. Thus, mental disorders – such as chronic stress, anxiety or depression – can trigger or worsen physical symptoms, and persistent pain and physical conditions can contribute to the deterioration of mental health, forming a toxic cycle. Both physical and mental health of teachers are sometimes related to the physical activity they engage in their free time, counteracting the negative effects that may occur.⁴⁰ Good mental health is influenced by a decrease in exhaustion or the desire to work with it.⁴¹ In other words, it's not just the reduction of fatigue that matters, but also the attitude towards professional effort. Teachers who demonstrate a desire to work with themselves, who actively assume their role in the process of personal balancing, manage to preserve their mental health better.

The psychological burden is not always perceived from the beginning, so possible management activities take place in due course. As a result, teachers gradually accumulate stress from many directions until a major

³⁷ D.J. Madigan, L. Kim, H.L. Glandorf, & O. Kavanagh, Teacher burnout and physical health: A systematic review. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 119, 102173, (2023).

³⁸ B. Agyapong, G. Obuobi-Donkor, L. Burbach & Y. Wei, Stress, Burnout, Anxiety and Depression among Teachers: A Scoping Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(17), 10706, (2022).

³⁹ A.M. Doherty & F. Gaughran, The interface of physical and mental health. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 49, 673-682, (2014).

⁴⁰ I. Bogaert, K. De Martelaer, B. Deforche, P. Clarys & E. Zinzen, Associations between different types of physical activity and teachers' perceived mental, physical, and work-related health. *BMC Public Health*, 14, 534, (2014).

⁴¹ M. Braeunig, R. Pfeifer, U. Schaarschmidt, C. Lahmann & J. Bauer, Factors influencing mental health improvements in school teachers. *PLoS One*, 13(10), e0206412, (2018).

burnout occurs. Further, affected teachers may often feel powerless and unvalued, which negatively influences their lives.

Results

Institutional support, work climate and victimization are elements that influence the perception of workplace safety and implicitly the mental and physical state of individuals. Both mental health and physical health must be protected so that teachers can enjoy a beneficial work environment and a balance between personal life and professional activity. Interventions should be based on comprehensive research and the needs of each individual and community, with reservations about overly restrictive practices. Teachers who feel victimized may experience major health changes. It can also impact their willingness to remain in the profession. Additionally, institutional support and the nature of the work climate significantly influence teachers' well-being.

Limitations and future directions

This paper provides a theoretical framework based on a collection of resources in the field of teachers' health, which is why it is limited to conclusions and new data. However, the information highlighted can be the basis for future research, as both health and the working environment are in a continuous dynamic state. Research directions on violence against teachers must also receive special attention as the field has been limited in research, emphasizing the complexity of influences. Studying this issue helps identify the root causes of violent behavior and develop effective prevention and intervention strategies. In addition, highlighting and reporting incidents of violence is essential for implementing policies and security measures that protect both teachers and students. In conclusion, the study of violence against teachers is not only a matter of personal safety and well-being, but also an investment in the health and efficiency of the educational system.

Conclusions

To ensure a stable education system, it is essential to address job security concerns for teachers as well. Unsafe conditions affect teachers' involvement in their daily work, and thus remedial strategies should focus on their experiences, simultaneously promoting a valuable rewarding. Schools and policymakers must implement strategies that foster a supportive work environment, while changing policies should analyze the

degree of instability of each school in question.⁴² A set of precise rules is needed.⁴³ One of the solutions consists in the development of partnerships between teachers and between teachers and researchers and institutions, thus feeling part of a community that collaborates permanently.⁴⁴ School leaders and fellow educators must actively create a culture of solidarity, where teachers feel comfortable discussing safety issues without fear. Many teachers do not believe that their physical and mental health is protected and do not feel supported by the systemic policies they are part of, nor by their school leaders and superiors.⁴⁵ Emphasis must also be placed on professional training⁴⁶.

At the same time, encouraging self-care for teachers through exercise, mindfulness, and work-life balance fosters well-being and can be integrated into the school environment through regular group activities.⁴⁷ Physical activity, appropriate for every age, is also proven to improve the mental and physical state of the individual.⁴⁸ For instance, physical activity has been shown to have beneficial effects on the immune system. In addition to its biological benefits, physical activity can also play an important role in developing psychological resilience. On the other hand, training teachers in listening is also important, as this enhances their workplace relationships, fostering a more positive relational climate and leading to better peer listening, greater autonomy, and psychological safety.

⁴² J.J. Holme, H. Jabbar, E. Germain & J. Dinning, Rethinking Teacher Turnover: Longitudinal Measures of Instability in Schools. *Educational Researcher* (Washington, D.C.: 1972), 47(1), 62-75, (2018).

⁴³ A.G. Negoită & M.G. Roșca, Educational management perspectives on the bullying phenomenon. *Euromentor Journal*, 16(1), 107-121, (2025).

⁴⁴ L. Ebersöhn, T. Loots, I. Eloff & R. Ferreira, In-service teacher training to provide psychosocial support and care in high-risk and high-need schools: school-based intervention partnerships. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 41(3), 267-284, (2015).

⁴⁵ F. Longmuir, A. McKay, B. Gallo Cordoba, K.A. Allen & M. Phillips, Australian Teachers' Perceptions of Safety, Violence and Limited Support in Their Workplaces. *Journal of School Violence*, 24(1), 1-20, (2024).

⁴⁶ G. Pohoată & M. Mocanu, Education in Romania, between politics and policies. *Euromentor Journal*, 14(2), (2023).

⁴⁷ C. Gray, G. Wilcox & D. Nordstokke, Teacher mental health, school climate, inclusive education and student learning: A review. *Canadian Psychology / Psychologie canadienne*, 58(3), 203-210, (2017).

⁴⁸ G.C. Bivol, The Benefits of Sports for Strong Health and Mind. *University Arena*, 1(1), (2018).

Furthermore, providing adequate support systems and counseling is crucial for addressing the aftermath of threats. Schools should offer access to professional counselors or therapists for management practices. For example, after an episode of experienced aggression, prompt and professional intervention can make the difference between effective recovery and the development of long-lasting trauma.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of school discipline should not be measured by the severity of punishment, but rather by its ability to promote a safe and supportive learning environment. While maintaining order is essential, relying on punitive measures such as zero tolerance policies can do more harm than good.

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