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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN HUNGARIAN FAMILIES UNDER THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC - THE EFFECTS OF RESILIENCE AND STRESS ON THE WELLBEING OF ADOLESCENTS, THEIR INTERCONNECTIONS WITHIN THE FAMILY .....</b>	<b>11</b>
CSIKÓS GÁBOR	
TÖRŐ KRISZTINA	
RÓZSA SÁNDOR	
HADHÁZI ÉVA	
KÖVESDI ANDREA	
FÖLDI RITA	
<b>RESILIENCE OF URBAN INFRASTRUCTURES IN A PANDEMIC SCENARIO .....</b>	<b>19</b>
MARTA MARÇAL GONÇALVES	
FRANCISCO VILLENA-MANZANARES	
<b>A RESILIENCE FOR SURVIVAL: REIMAGINE. RECONFIGURE. RESTART .....</b>	<b>28</b>
MARTIN DEEPAK RAJU CHEKURI	
<b>"YOU HAVE BEEN LIKE FAMILY TO US": NON-FORMAL LANGUAGE EDUCATION ADDRESSING ADULT REFUGEES DURING THE COVID19 LOCKDOWN .....</b>	<b>50</b>
THALIA DRAGONAS	
MARIA IAKOVOU	
EVDOKIA KARAVA	
BESSIE MITSIKOPOULOU	
<b>"STAYING AT HOME, STAYING STRONG": CTL'S AUDIOVISUAL EXPRESSION AND CREATIVITY WORKSHOPS DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN .....</b>	<b>56</b>
MARIA PESLI	
STELIOS OIKONOMIDIS	
CHRISTOS PIERIDIS	
ANASTASIA VLAHAKI	
EVANGELIA KOURTI	
THALIA DRAGONA	
<b>SCHOOL CULTURE AND INNOVATION: DOES THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD COVID-19 INVITE TO TRANSITION OR TO RUPTURE? .....</b>	<b>63</b>
MARILI MOREIRA DA SILVA VIEIRA	
SUSANA MESQUITA BARBOSA	

**MEASURES AND POSSIBLE SUPPORT SOLUTIONS OF THE SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN ECONOMY  
IN THE CONTEXT OF ACTUAL CRISES ..... 75**

OTILIA MANTA

**A MIND GENOMICS CARTOGRAPHY OF SHOPPING BEHAVIOR FOR FOOD PRODUCTS DURING  
THE COVID -19 PANDEMIC ..... 88**

ARIOLA HARIZI  
BRUNELA TREBICKA  
AZETA TARTARAJ  
HOWARD MOSKOWITZ

**THE VALUE OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AS A LEARNING PROCESS TO INCREASE RESILIENCE  
IN HEALTHCARE TEAMS..... 97**

JANET DELGADO  
SERENA SIOW  
JANET M. DE GROOT

**CHALLENGES FACING FINANCIAL INCLUSION DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ..... 114**

TEA KASRADZE

**MEXICAN AIRLINES IN THE CURRENT SITUATION OF COVID 19. EVOLUTION AND PROSPECTS 126**

MTRO. SERGIO SOLÍS TEPEXPA  
LUIS FERNANDO MUÑOZ GONZÁLEZ

**THE COVID-19 BETWEEN STATE OF EMERGENCY AND EXCEPTION IN ITALY AND ITS  
CONSEQUENCES ON HUMAN RIGHTS ..... 137**

MARCO OMIZZOLO  
PINA SODANO

**DIGITAL CULTURE AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION AFTER COVID19: A COLLABORATIVE  
APPROACH IN A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT ..... 148**

ANA LÚCIA DE SOUZA LOPES  
MARILI MOREIRA DA SILVA VIEIRA

**THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE SYSTEMS SCIENCES: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FUTURE  
WORLD ..... 162**

GEORGE MOBUS  
SHANKAR SANKARAN  
GARY SMITH

<b>CHARACTER SKILLS AND PATIENCE TO PROMOTE RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN - EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AFTER PANDEMIC.....</b>	<b>175</b>
EMANUELA GUARCELLO	
<b>THE CONTEMPORARY VISION OF UNIVERSAL STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR FACING (COVID-19) CRISIS IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION VIA VIRTUAL LEARNING &amp; TRAINING .....</b>	<b>190</b>
DINA ALI MOHAMED EL-BESOMEY	
<b>POLITICAL BORDERS ARE NOT NATURAL ORDERS – THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN FRANKFURT ON THE MAIN AND ITS REFUGEES .....</b>	<b>204</b>
HOMAYUN ALAM	
<b>EPIDEMICS IN MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY AGE IN A BACKWARD AREA OF EUROPE: THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS IN SOUTHERN ITALY .....</b>	<b>215</b>
VITTORIA FERRANDINO MARILENA IACOBACCIO VALENTINA SGRO UNIVERSITY OF SANNIO, BENEVENTO (ITALY)	
<b>COVID-19 AND INEQUALITY: A GENDER PERSPECTIVE.....</b>	<b>229</b>
ELISABETTA FRONTONI	
<b>RESILIENCE: A “PSYCHOSOCIAL” COMPETENCY AND ITS ROLE IN THE PATHWAYS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN INTERCULTURAL RESEARCH (PRE AND POST-COVID19) .....</b>	<b>237</b>
MIRIAM APARICIO	
<b>ALBANIA’S PLAN: RESPONSE TO COVID-19 .....</b>	<b>257</b>
RUDINA DEGJONI ILIRJANA LOXHA	
<b>DIGITALIZATION OF FINANCIAL SERVICES IN ALBANIA UNDER RESTRICTED MEASURES COVID-19 .....</b>	<b>263</b>
REZANA BALLA MARIN BARLETI	
<b>CORRELATION OF SOCIETY STRINGENCY/OPENNESS MEASURES WITH TIMELY TREND OF COVID-19 CASES - CASE STUDY – ALBANIA VERSUS ITALY .....</b>	<b>275</b>
GAZMENT KODUZI FABIAN CENKO	
<b>COVID AND CHRIST: REMOTE, FAITH-BASED ACTIVITIES USING RELIGIOUS TECHNOLOGY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH .....</b>	<b>283</b>

STEPHEN J. MCNEILL

**DISTANT TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE - GEORGIAN UNIVERSITIES' STUDENTS AND PROFESSORS PERSPECTIVE ..... 292**

MAIA AKHVLEDIANI

SOPHIO MORALISHVILI

LEVAN KUPRASHVILI

**EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY OF ATTENTION IN TIMES OF (POST-) PANDEMIC..... 301**

SIAVASH BAKHTIAR

**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH IN PANDEMIC EMERGENCY: WHAT METHODOLOGY FOR RESILIENCY?..... 315**

ELEONORA VENNERI

**STRONG ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE – AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR COMPANIES TO SURVIVE IN A PANDEMIC WORLD ..... 321**

NINO ZARNADZE

TEA KASRADZE

**RESILIENCE IN COVID-19 TIMES - IS THERE A PLAN B FOR THE FUTURE? A STATE OF ART..... 333**

AUGUSTO RENATO PÉREZ MAYO

NOHEMÍ ROQUE NIETO

FERNANDO ROMERO TORRES

FELIPE DE JESÚS BONILLA SÁNCHEZ

**EXPLORING THE LABYRINTHS OF *RESILIENCE*: A CONCEPT ANALYSIS..... 354**

ANGELA BUSHATI

**COVID-19 RESILIENCE FOR SURVIVAL: OCCURRENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING LOCKDOWN AT A RURAL ACS VERIFIED LEVEL ONE TRAUMA CENTER ..... 368**

P.I. SAPTARSHI BISWAS

**HIGHER EDUCATION AND GLOBALIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS ..... 370**

ION STAVRE

MONICA ILIE-PRICA

**SPIRITUAL RESILIENCE AND TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS MODEL – HOLISTIC PARADIGM FOR FACING A GLOBAL CRISIS ..... 371**

ANGELINA ILIEVSKA

NAUM ILIEVSKI

<b>THE PROTECTIVE ROLE OF SELF-EFFICACY FOR RESILIENCE IN THE COVID-19 PERIOD.....</b>	<b>372</b>
ANDREA KÖVESDI	
ÉVA HADHÁZI	
SÁNDOR RÓZSA	
KRISZTINA TÖRŐ	
GÁBOR CSIKÓS	
RITA FÖLDI	
<b>FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITY: A STRATEGY OF RESILIENCE FOR SURVIVAL.....</b>	<b>373</b>
MOLLY ZHOU	
<b>PSYCAP INTERVENTIONS WHILE TELECOMMUTING: A RESPONSE TO COVID-19-RELATED SCARF .....</b>	<b>374</b>
SAMANTHA COLEMAN	
<b>BUILDING RESILIENCE IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY (COVID19); STRAINS AND ASPIRATIONS IN WESTERN BALKANS .....</b>	<b>375</b>
ELIRA LULI	
<b>HEART RATE VARIABILITY IN PATIENTS WITH MILD AND ASYMPTOMATIC COVID 19.....</b>	<b>376</b>
WIREKO ANDREW AWUAH	
ABDUL-RAHMAN TOUFIK	
ALBINA ZHARKOVA	
<b>INNOVATING HUMANITY - OPIOIDS TO COVID-19, LEARNINGS AND HEALTH NEEDS FOR OUR FUTURE .....</b>	<b>377</b>
DR SEAN HALL MD	
<b>STOP IT! CONSUMER RESILIENCE AS A BUFFER AGAINST DAILY STRESSORS ACCOMPANYING COVID-19 .....</b>	<b>378</b>
ALENA BERMES	
<b>SPIRITUAL RESILIENCE AND TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS MODEL – HOLISTIC PARADIGM FOR FACING A GLOBAL CRISIS .....</b>	<b>379</b>
ANGELINA ILIEVSKA	
<b>A FASHIONABLE MASK: BRANDED VALUE PROPOSITION DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC.....</b>	<b>380</b>
VICTORIYA LARCHENKO	

---

<b>ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS A RESILIENT TOOL FOR FIGHTING INEQUALITIES IN THE COVID-19 CRISIS .....</b>	<b>381</b>
LUÍS CAPUCHA NUNO NUNES ALEXANDRE CALADO	
<b>PUBLIC HEALTH COMMUNICATION IN FRANCE DURING THE SPANISH FLU AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE ROLE OF EXPERTS .....</b>	<b>382</b>
KLARA DANKOVA	
<b>SECOND LANGUAGE DISTANCE LEARNING: THE ISSUE OF LANGUAGE CERTIFICATION IN THE TIME OF COVID-19 .....</b>	<b>383</b>
MARIA VITTORIA LO PRESTI	
<b>WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE ISLAMIC TRADITION ABOUT THE PANDEMIC? .....</b>	<b>384</b>
EMINE ÖZTÜRK	
<b>ALGERIAN UNIVERSITY DURING THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC: COVID-19 - BECHAR UNIVERSITY AS A SAMPLE .....</b>	<b>385</b>
SOUAD GUESSAR	
<b>COVID-19 AND TRUST IN ORGANIZATIONS .....</b>	<b>386</b>
SANDRO SERPA CARLOS MIGUEL FERREIRA	

# Psychological Factors in Hungarian Families Under the Coronavirus Pandemic - The Effects of Resilience and Stress on the Wellbeing of Adolescents, Their Interconnections Within the Family

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## Abstract

The period of coronavirus pandemic caused psychological stress for the families. An important factor in coping with such stress is resilience that can be described as a successful adaption to circumstances. **Aims:** The current study aims to investigate stress, resilience, and their interactions within Hungarian families. **Methods:** 346 parent-child dyad participated in the research by filling out online surveys that included demographic sheet and validated scales (CD-Risk, WHO, PSS). **Results:** The explanatory model for the children's well-being is constructed to explain the connections among these psychological factors. Higher stress level predicts lower wellbeing both among parents and their children. The higher resilience of the child predicts higher wellbeing. However, parental resilience shows a weak negative correlation with the wellbeing of the child. **Discussion:** In accord with other studies the level of perceived stress was high. A surprising result of our research is that the parent's resilience directly reduces their child's well-being. However, a higher level of parental wellbeing (that is affected by their resilience) altogether leads to a higher level of well-being among the children too. These results can be useful for the professionals as the expected second wave of the pandemic will be surely burdened by psychological challenges.

**Keywords:** well-being, resilience, family, adolescents, perceived stress, well-being model

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Resilience of the adolescents

Resilience helps adolescents to improve their health-protecting behaviors that promote quality of life. (Kiss, 2015) According to a study (Dowrick et al 2008), the support from family and friends, changes in lifestyle and self-help attitudes helped the most in coping with anxiety or depressive symptoms. According to research (Haase et al 1999 cited by Ahern 2006)

resilience and quality of life seem to be pivotal in effective coping under a crisis. These factors are shaped by three main components: the personal characteristics of the adolescent, the family support, and the quality of their social network. Another study (Rew and Horner 2003 cited by Ahern 2006) suggests that sociocultural factors can also carry risk: they are protective only if the level of resilience is satisfying.

## **1.2. Stress and resilience**

Survey-based research that explored the connections among perceived stress, coping, and psychological adaptability found frequent occurrences of maladaptive coping strategies among adolescents. These predicted a low level of resilience and raised the chance of the appearance of adjustment disorders. (Hampel – Petermann 2006)

The most maladaptive coping mechanisms were acts of avoidance and dissociation that predispose adolescents to both internalizing and externalizing disorders. (Liu et al 2004 cited by Pikó and Hamvai 2012) The study of Pikó and Hamvai (2012) explored the connections between the coping mechanisms and resilience among Hungarian adolescents. They found that maladaptive coping mechanisms and low-level resilience were in connection with high levels of perceived stress. It might be assumed that the lack of avoidant coping mechanisms strengthen resilience. (Hjemdal et al 2011)

Norwegian research that focused on the relationships among depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety, and resilience found that higher resilience correlated with a lower level of all the aforementioned disorders. Their results show that the existence of protective factors reduced stress and the occurrence of psychiatric symptoms. (Hjemdal et al 2011)

## **1.3. Family and resilience**

The way how a family as a microsystem faces a crisis that is mainly set by how the family members as individuals cope with unexpected and stressful life events. Resilient families tend to communicate openly about feelings and they try to cooperate for problem-solving. They also strive to interpret the situation positively and find meaning. Interpersonal connections in these families encourage adaptability and mobilizing inner or outer resources. (Walsh 2003) Resilience on the family level is affected by the economic stability of the family, the shared free-time activities. (Black, Lobo, 2008). Hence, children of highly controlling parents tend to respond reactively and impulsively to sudden events. (Bonanno, 2004; Hillaker, Brophy-Herb, Villarruel, Haas, 2008 cited by Theiss, 2018). As the COVID 19 pandemic was a stressful period for the Hungarian families (Csikós et al 2020), the current study focuses on how resilience shaped well-being among adolescents and their parents.

## **2. Aims**

- 1.The examination of resilience, stress level and wellbeing among parents and their adolescent children under the Covid-19 pandemic
- 2.The investigation of the interconnections among the aforementioned psychological factors

## **3. Methods**

The current research is part of a longitudinal project.

### **3.1. Participants and data collection**

An anonymous, voluntary online questionnaire was used for data collection and convenience sampling was used. The surveys were filled out by 346 Hungarian parent-child dyads. (For detailed demographic information please see Table 1.)

Parent		Children
Gender	Female	313 (90%)
	Male	33 (10%)
Age	44.15 ± 5.50 years	14.23 ± 2.21 years
Location	Village	64 (19%)
	Small city	56 (16%)
	Medium city	130 (38%)
	Large city	18 (5%)
	Capital city	78 (23%)
Household income	Often having financial problems	15 (4%)
	Sometimes having financial problems	34 (10%)
	Overall not having financial problems	168 (49%)
	Never having financial problems	89 (26%)
	Not answering	40 (12%)

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the demographic variables of the subjects. Overall 346 parent-child dyads participated in the study. The mean and standard deviation of age is shown. For nominal variable number and percentage of participants is reported.

Both the parent and the child received the same psychological questionnaires. First, the parent answered to the questions then the child answered the questions either alone, or with the parent's assistance. Data collection period endured from March 30 2020 to April 27 2020, when restrictions were in force in Hungary.

### 3.2. Tools

#### a. Demographic sheet

Participants first provided basic demographic information, such as the genders and the ages of the participants, their place of residence and the subjective financial situation of the family. The question of whether the parent had any seriously ill family member was also asked.

#### b. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

The Hungarian version of the scale was used that can identify (chronic) stress as a risk factor. The higher the participant's score, the more stressed they are (Stauder - Konkoly Thege, 2006).

#### c. WHO Five item wellbeing survey

To measure wellbeing, the five-item WHO Wellbeing Scale (WBI-5) was used. A higher score on this scale represents better mental wellbeing (Susánszky et al 2006).

#### d. Ten item Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale

Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) was developed to measure resilience and positive adaptation after a stressful situation. The higher score on this scale represents higher level of resilience. (Járai és mtsai, 2015; Kiss et al 2015).

### 3.3. Statistics

The data analyses were carried out using R (R Core Team, 2017). As the data is not normal non-parametric statistical methods (Spearman correlation, Kruskal-Wallis Rank Sum Test, Pearson's chi-squared test and Wilcoxon rank test) were applied.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Perceived stress, well-being and resilience among parents and their children

Scores on PSSS, WHO and CD-RISC are presented in Table 2. In both groups perceived stress is significantly higher than it might be expected based on previous researches. Level of well-being is slightly higher among children than their parents. Resilience remained on normal level.

	<i>Parent</i>		<i>Children</i>	
	<i>Mean ± std deviation</i>	<i>Cronbach alpha</i>	<i>Mean ± std deviation</i>	<i>Cronbach alpha</i>
<i>Stress level (PSS)</i>	9.32 ± 3.01	0.677	9.68 ± 3.08	0.819
<i>Wellbeing (WHO-5)</i>	9.96 ± 3.29	0.83	10.61 ± 3.23	0.82
<i>Resilience</i>	32,36± 5,28	0.884	29,73± 6,08	0.862

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the psychological questionnaires of the parents and the children.**

### 4.2. The connections among the psychological factors.

#### 4.2.1. The effect of resilience on well-being

The results show that the resilience of the parent affects their children's well-being in a slightly negative way. In other words: the highly resilient parent reduces the well-being of their child. However, this is only a direct effect because overall the well-being of a resilient parent raises their child's well-being. (See Figure 1) The resilience and the perceived stress of the child was a significant predictor in their well-being. Our model presented in Figure 1 explains 50% of the variation in the dependent variable. The correlation in the resilience of parents' and children's ( $r=0,39$ ) is also presented there.

#### 4.2.2. The effect of stress on well-being

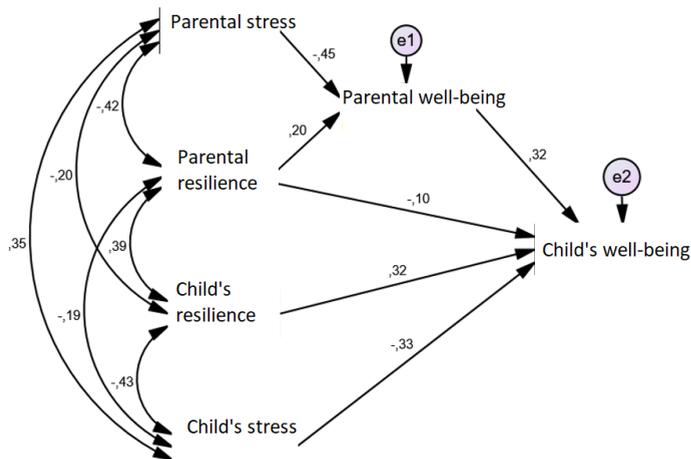
Stress perceived by both the children and their parents has a negative effect on the children's well-being. (Figure 1)

#### 4.2.3. Stress and resilience

Higher resilience correlates with lower levels of perceived stress among parents and their children. (Figure 1)

#### 4.2.4. Stress and resilience among parents and their children

Parental scores on both the resilience and the perceived stress scale correlate with the children's. (Figure 1)



**Figure 1: Explanatory model of children's well-being**

#### 5. Discussion

In accord with previous European researches our study found a higher level of perceived stress among both parents and their children than in the normal population (Stauder 2006). An Italian study demonstrated that half of the participant children experienced irritability and intolerance toward rules. 25% of them expressed fear and regressive symptoms in their needs of parental physical closeness and 20% of the participants reported changes in moods and sleep disorders. (Pisano 2020)

Resilience remained in the normal zone both among the parents and the children. Our results show that the higher level of perceived stress correlates with a lower level of resilience in both groups. This enforces the previous findings on the anxiety-reducing effect of resilience. (Hjemdal et al 2011) Literature regards a person resilient if he/she can manage well despite the unfavorable circumstances (Ahern, Ark, Byers, 2008) and can reduce the negative effects. (Zimmerman, Arunkumar in Fergus, Zimmerman, 2005)

Surprisingly, our results show that parental resilience has a slightly negative effect on the well-being of the child. However, this direct effect melts in the great picture: parental well-being (increased by parental resilience) positively influences the children's well-being. This direct effect can be probably explained by the openness of a resilient parent who leaves room for experiencing even the negative feelings of the child.

General decrease in the well-being of the children is registered by other studies too. According to the British Youngminds survey, the majority of the children reported the decline of their life quality due to school closing, social isolation, and the disorganization of their daily routine. Isolation also rose the risk of domestic violence. (Joyce 2020)

The resilience and the perceived stress of the children prove to a strong predictor in their well-being. Resilience was found pivotal in adapting the restrictions due to pandemic (Pisano 2020). A Pakistani study emphasizes the importance of the improvement of resilience in therapeutic or prevention settings. Improved communicational skills help adolescents to verbalize their fears; physical activity and daily routine contribute to better coping. For the parents, the preservation of their mental health seems to be decisive. They can be role models to their children by using positive coping mechanisms. (Jawaid 2020)

## 6. Conclusions

Connections between the children's and their parents' anxiety were demonstrated by previous researches. First, the accumulation of anxiety disorders within the family has to be mentioned. According to researches, parental (and particularly maternal) anxiety rises the occurrence of anxiety among the children too. (McClure et al 2001) Children with the mater faced social phobia had more chance to develop social anxiety. (Bögels, Oosten, Muris, Smulders, 2001). Parental anxiety and avoidant coping influence children through social learning mechanisms. (Bögels, van Dongen, Muris, 2006). If the parent reacts to a situation with anxiety, the child tends to decode the situation dangerous and develop maladaptive coping. (Rapee, Schniering, Hudson, 2009). Furthermore, verbalized fear of the parent can rise the occurrence of anxiety symptoms among children. (Field, 2006).

Our findings add contributions to the field by describing the interactions between resilience and perceived stress among parents and their children. These results draw the attention to familiar relations that deeply affect the elaboration of stress. Our model suggests that parental psychological factors directly influence the children's coping mechanisms during stressful periods. (Fergus, Zimmerman, 2005). This carry practical importance for professionals, and can serve as a theoretical background for family counselling. Information and increased knowledge are tools for coping more effectively with stress.

## 7. Acknowledgments

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## Resilience of Urban Infrastructures in a Pandemic Scenario

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### Abstract

Most of the work on resilience of urban infrastructures focuses on their technical performance and reliability in disaster situations. In general, when we link urban infrastructure and Civil Engineering, we think of technology, engineering, constructions and technical or control buildings. In a state of pandemic like the current one, the study of the relationship between urban infrastructures and resilience is a phenomenon scarcely studied in the literature. The main objectives of the article are to analyse, from a Civil Engineering and actors' perspective, the role and behaviour of urban infrastructures for the maintenance of the wellbeing of the community in a pandemic situation, and to fill a gap in the existing bibliography. The authors argue that the human factor is the most important element for infrastructure to be resilient in a Covid-19 situation. To achieve the objectives, a review of the literature was carried out considering the works published in the last 10 years. Then, a reflection is made about the influence of the resilience in infrastructures during a pandemic situation considering the relevant sustainability factors. As practical implications of this article, the drawn conclusions are expected to represent value for the societies of the future.

**Keywords:** urban infrastructures, resilience, pandemic, civil engineering, sustainability.

### Introduction

The present work intends to show and to outline how to face the analysis of resilience in a state of global pandemic in critical infrastructures of mobility and transit of passengers and goods, based on a review of the bibliography of the last 10 years. This type of infrastructure is going to be essential to controlling the spread of the disease. Secondly, the dimensions of sustainability in a pandemic situation will be analyzed.

As it is intended to focus on the issue of the resilience of the infrastructures named above in a pandemic scenario, sudden disruptions due to structural collapse, earthquake, tsunami or other catastrophic events that may occur simultaneously are not considered. In the case of pandemics, the role of people is central and important. It is the people who operate the urban infrastructure, who remain in their jobs and who keep them up and running.

When a relationship is made between urban infrastructure and Civil Engineering, common sense leads us to think about technology, engineering and other types of buildings. As a result, most of the work on urban infrastructure resilience focuses on their technical performance in the event of a catastrophe. However, it turns out that, in a pandemic case like the current one, people are the most important element for the whole system to be resilient.

Among natural disasters like earthquakes, many of the world's most destructive catastrophes are centered around water, through floods (excess of water in the wrong places); droughts (lack of water in the places where it is needed); contamination (useless or risky water) (Feagan et al., 2019; Fox-Lent & Linkov, 2018; Heinzlef, Becue, & Serre, 2020; Moatty & Reghezza-Zitt, 2019; Rezende, Franco, Oliveira, Jacob, & Miguez, 2019; Sauter, Feldmeyer, & Birkmann, 2019; Vamvakeridou-Lyroudia et al., 2020; Vitale, Meijerink, Moccia, & Ache, 2020). We are currently experiencing an even more destructive catastrophe than the previous ones, since it affects people's health when a society declares a state of health alarm or pandemic. Therefore, critical infrastructures for the mobility and transit of passengers and goods are going to be essential for controlling the spread of the disease.

The Royal Spanish Academy defines a pandemic as "an epidemic disease that spreads to many countries or that attacks almost all individuals in a locality or region"; this Academy defines resilience as "the ability of a living being to adapt to a disturbing agent or an adverse state or situation", or as "the ability of a material, mechanism or system to recover its initial state when it has ceased the disturbance to which he had been subjected".

Urban resilience is based on the conception of the city as a system of systems, a complex entity that, like the human body, needs the different organs to function properly in order to enjoy good health. The Royal Spanish Academy defines infrastructure as "a set of elements, endowments or services necessary for the proper functioning of a country, a city or any organization"; there is currently talk that infrastructure must adapt to the effects of global warming with a view to the societies of the future. The Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Climate Change (Bernstein et al., 2008), in 2007, defined resilience as "the capacity of an ecological or social system capable of absorbing disturbances while maintaining the same structure and basic forms of functioning, the ability to self-organize and the ability to adapt to stresses and changes". Regarding urban resilience, the most accepted definition (AA.VV., 2020; Masik & Grabkowska, 2020), is the one proposed by Meerow et al. (2016): "urban resilience refers to the ability of an urban system - and all its constituent socio-ecological and socio-technical networks across temporal and spatial scales - to maintain or rapidly return to desired functions in the face of a disturbance, to adapt to change, and to quickly transform systems that limit current or future adaptive capacity" (Meerow, Newell, & Stults, 2016, pp. 39, 45).

To develop resilience in infrastructures, all possible vulnerabilities and risks, whether infrastructural or operational, related to their proper functioning must be identified. Once identified, they would be analyzed and evaluated, through data analysis, projections, modeling and simulations, to establish possible adaptation strategies to apply at the territorial level.

Therefore, we can affirm that the meaning of a resilient infrastructure is the one that must be prepared to provide service in any adverse situation. Urban infrastructure is based on different networks that provide citizens with water, energy, transportation, waste management, healthcare, education, and other basic services. These networks that form the urban infrastructure are fundamental for life in modern cities and when these fail, human

health, well-being, and the economy are endangered putting consequently the pillars of sustainability at risk.

Within urban infrastructures, in this work we will only deal with resilience for critical mobility and transit infrastructures for passengers and goods (elements such as roads, bridges, railway lines, airports and ports) in a pandemic scenario. Infrastructure resilience has been treated in the literature from different aspects, such as from the perspective of terrorism, from the perspective of natural disaster, climate change, etc., but studies of infrastructure resilience from the perspective of a state of a global pandemic such as that currently experienced with Covid-19 are scarce.

As we know, humanity requires useful infrastructures and governments need to invest in road works, bridges, railway lines, tunnels, dams and ports, so that they are resilient, and they need to be operational even in situations of sanitary emergency. It is demonstrated that for the proper functioning of an infrastructure in a state of sanitary alarm, collaboration, control and the involvement of the human factor as the main agent (military control, police control, health control, etc.) are essential. Social fear, family recruitment, military and health control mean that infrastructures need to have action plans to have resilience capacity in migratory movements due to the impacts of a health emergency such as the one we are suffering with the Covid-19. Currently, it has been demonstrated that societies must have contingency plans for critical mobility and transit infrastructures for passengers and goods framework, in order to reduce the problems of their use due to the health emergency, and above all to avoid the spread of the illness.

### **Resilience in urban infrastructures in a pandemic scenario**

Resilience can also be defined as the capacity of a socio-ecological system to anticipate, manage changes and recover from the effects of a disruption when exposed to disturbances and trends, whether economic, environmental, social or political. This can only be achieved by maintaining the long-term absorption, adaptation and transformation capability of the system (Paz, Méndez, & Mukerji, 2017).

The literature has generally focused its resilience analyzes on climatic aspects, calling climatic resilience as the combination of absorption, adaptation and transformation capacities, which can be delineated according to the responses to climatic disturbances and stresses that they provide (Giz, 2014; IUCN, 2014). Regarding the above, we define:

The absorption capacity of a system, as its capacity to repair or recover from the impacts of negative events using predetermined confront responses in order to preserve and restore basic and essential functions and structures (Béné, Devereux, & Sabates-Wheeler, 2012; Cutter et al., 2008). In short, it can be summarized as the system's response capacity to a threat.

The adaptability capacity of a system, such as its capacity to adjust, modify or change its characteristics and actions in order to better respond to existing and future climate shocks and stresses and take advantage of opportunities (Béné et al., 2012; Brooks, 2003; IPCC, 2012).

The transformation capacity of a system, such as the capacity to fundamentally change its characteristics and actions when existing conditions become unsustainable in the face of climatic disturbances and stresses (Béné et al., 2012; Walker, Holling, Carpenter, & Kinzig, 2004).

The previous definitions have been developed in a concept of resilience in infrastructures from a climate change point of view. For example, if we think of a flood-prone area, we should have a levee system. At this point it is worth asking what should the previous capabilities of a mobility infrastructure (absorption, adaptation and transformation) be like if there is a pandemic state?

It should be noted that the concept of resilience is still relatively recent in the field of Civil Engineering, which is why many studies are based on and adapt existing definitions (Wang, Xue, Wang, & Zhang, 2018). This did not restrict the attempt to define infrastructure resilience as "the ability to reduce the magnitude and/or duration of disruptive events. The effectiveness of a resilient infrastructure depends upon its ability to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and/or rapidly recover from a potentially disruptive event" (United States National Infrastructure Advisory Council, 2009 apud Quitana, Molinos-Senante, & Chamorro, 2020).

If we recall the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda, the ninth goal marks us: "To develop reliable, sustainable, resilient and quality infrastructures, including regional and cross-border infrastructures, to support economic development and human well-being, with special emphasis on affordable and equitable access for all".

In a pandemic state, human well-being is diminished by the possible threats of contagion that make it possible to spread the disease, which is why we ask ourselves: has it been considered how a system acts in a situation of pandemic state? The answer is obvious, the only responsible for absorbing, adapting and transforming the infrastructure is the human factor together with technology, for migratory control and preventing the spread of the disease. But are the critical infrastructures of mobility and transit of passengers and goods resilient in a pandemic scenario? They can only be resilient if there are people who operate them. In this situation it is important to have assets that immediately replace operators who become ill. Have you ever imagined a metro network where water is continuously pumped so that the network is not flooded? This is a situation that exists in many cities. Without the man, these pumps could still work for a while, but then they would stop. Why? Because there would be no one to operate or repair them. Despite the computerized world in which we live, the human factor remains fundamental. Table 1 compares the actions of resilience of such infrastructures in climate, war and pandemic scenarios.

Table 1 – Comparison of actions in infrastructures of mobility and transit of passengers and goods (authors)

<i>Critical infrastructure for mobility</i>	<i>Climate scenario</i>	<i>War scenario</i>	<i>Pandemic scenario</i>
<i>Roads/Bridges/Tunnels</i>	<i>Climate changes due to temperature; Environmental disasters (example: Sea level rise, Rains, Seismic problems).</i>	<i>Alternative route</i>	<i>Passenger control (temperature measurement); Isolation of affected people; Social distance; Border closure; Packaging disinfection points; Cleaning and disinfection; Isolation rooms.</i>
<i>Railways/Subways</i>		<i>Panic room</i>	
<i>Ports</i>			
<i>Airports</i>			

<i>Ability to absorb, adapt and transform</i>	<i>Improvement of the infrastructure's stability against unexpected mechanical actions derived from climatic or warlike changes</i>	<i>Human factor and technology</i>
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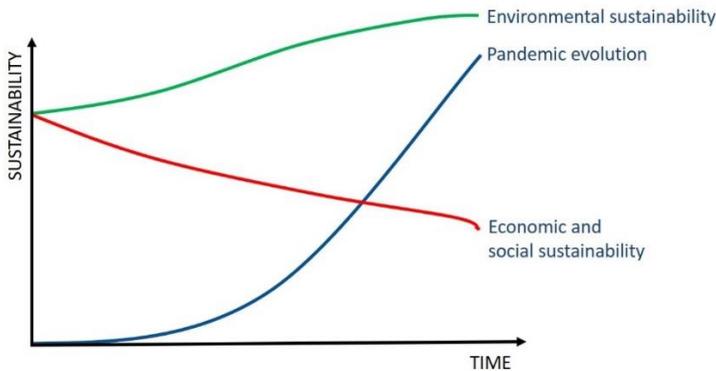
### **Sustainability in a pandemic scenario**

The concept of sustainability was first introduced in 1972 at the United Nations (UN) Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm. Later in 1987, most definitions of sustainability established by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, also called the Brundtland Commission), indicate that sustainable development refers to "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (ONU, 1987), being this the definition of sustainable development that has been used by many researchers. The terms sustainability and sustainable development have varied widely over the years (Kaye, Gabriela, & Nijaki, 2012) and both have multiple interpretations and often mean different things to different people (Illankoon, Tam, & Le, 2016). According to Ross (2009), sustainability refers to things that can be done for longer periods without unacceptable consequences. Therefore, the concept of sustainability and resilience are very similar in that they share "enduring time and responding to changes". Ortiz, Castells & Sonnemann (2009) identified sustainability as a concept to improve the quality of life and, therefore, allow people to live in a healthy environment and improve environmental, economic and social conditions for present and future generations. Weybrecht (2010) defined sustainability as the incorporation of the economy, the environment and equity in political values and objectives.

The United Nations indicates three "pillars of sustainability": economic, social and environmental (ONU, 2002). Akadiri (2011) insists that for a development to be sustainable, social, ecological and economic factors must be considered. Du Plessis (2007) pointed out that the relationship between humans and their environment is determined by a certain number of factors. Therefore, over time, new pillars were added to the three basic pillars, with which sustainable development was fed. To date we can talk about the economic, social, environmental, ecological, technological, competitiveness, equality, eradication of poverty, labor well-being, economic growth, etc. as new pillars of sustainability.

Figure 1 generically represents the economic and social sustainability of a given country or city with a single curve, environmental sustainability with another curve, and depicts an increasing evolution of the pandemic over a certain period of time. The behavior of economic and social sustainability as the pandemic evolves, decreases due to the lack of social integration of the community affecting the economic cycle of the region. However, by reducing pollution due to a confinement state, environmental sustainability is improved.

Figure 1 – Evolution of sustainability in a pandemic state (authors)



## Conclusions

The issue of resilience in a pandemic period has been of fundamental importance in the recent months. This work reflects on the concept of resilience of critical infrastructures for the transit of passengers and goods in times of pandemic. This theme is scarce in the scientific literature, what makes this topic current.

It is verified through this review that the resilience of infrastructure in times of health alarm does not depend on the infrastructure itself, since the capacities for adaptation, absorption and transformation go hand in hand with the human factor and technology.

It has been verified that the infrastructure needs resilience to control the spread of the disease. Countries should develop contingency plans to evaluate options that allow infrastructure to behave appropriately for migratory transit and for disease control.

This study can be used so that stakeholders can make decisions that improve the resilient behavior of cities by optimizing disease control by the human factor and technology at the service of future societies.

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## A Resilience for Survival: Reimagine. Reconfigure. Restart

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### Abstract

Governments, Industrialists and CEOs are agreeing that the COVID-19 crisis will impact us way more than the 2008 crisis (Gurnani, 2020). No one really knows how to solve the financial crisis set into motion by COVID-19. Amidst this, there is mounting pressure on sales teams in organisations to sell products and services without sufficient salespeople. To make any sale, or receive funding, organisations go through a process where they must develop a business proposal. Almost no business in the B2B (business to business) market is won without a formal business proposal. Business proposal management and writing has evolved over the years with best practices and certifications, just like project management, but the COVID-19 crisis has given it a jolt unlike any other. Salesteams, bid and proposal management teams, proposal writers and associated graphic specialists need to use this crisis as a catalyst for change. There is a resounding, echoing bell ring that asks us to reimagine, reconfigure and restart. And the bell does not ring just for teams but also for individuals. The future depends on interactive technologies and proposal teams must think about playing strategic roles if they want to stay relevant. For the investigation and writing of this paper, we have used both primary and secondary research techniques. They are listed as follows: **Primary Research** - Questionnaires and Interviews; **Secondary Research** - Journals, Harvard Business Review, Economic Times, Internationally acclaimed websites, Textbooks

**Keywords:** Sales, Presales, Bid Management, Proposal Management, Strategy, Marketing, Change, Change Management, Future, Collaboration, Virtual Teams, Design, Automation

### Introduction

The word "thrive" has taken backstage, at least for now. Right now, organisations need to have a plan to survive. No one in an organisation can get comfortable in their cubicle chair and let their world spin on autopilot. With a crisis looming that is greater than what we faced in 2008, resilience is key. Reimagining the way we do things, reconfiguring the way we work and restarting our business with a fresh outlook is the order of the day. It may be the only way for organisations to survive this dark phase of human history.

### Scope of The Research

The scope of this research is limited to organisations which have turnovers of over a million dollars and range upto several billions (USD). All of them are B2B. These huge organisations

and the people they employ have a direct impact on how governments operate and international trade across the world runs.

Considering the COVID-19 crisis, it is important that these organisations generate sales, and convince their customers to make purchases in order to restart the global economic cycle.

### Trends Proposal Teams Are Expressing

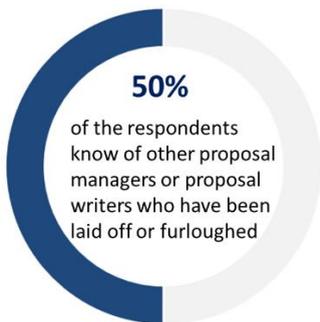


Figure 2: COVID-19 has brought gloomy days to proposal teams

For an industry to not be affected by the COVID-19 scenario is a pipe dream. Despite organisations having risk-mitigation plans, due to crises as tremendous as COVID-19, they began laying off employees.

Sales and presales teams in most industries and companies have dramatically dwindled. However, there is an undeniable demand for someone in the organization to write proposals. This brings us to two frequently asked questions.

What are business proposals?

What makes them so important?

### A Brief Introduction to RFXs and Business Proposals

Customers send a document with a thorough list of requirements to multiple vendors. This document is called the RFX. The X can be replaced with alphabets such as I, Q and P.

The Differences Between an RFI, RFQ and RFP		
Request for Information	Request for Quotation	Request for Proposal
RFI	RFQ	RFP
Market research to adequately identify vendor/ vendors who best meets requirements	Obtain quotations from vendor/ vendors to buy products or services required	Identification of a strategic partner who best meets requirements and fits constraints
Common qualities of RFIs, RFQs and RFPs		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dates and Deadlines</li> <li>List of requirements</li> <li>Terms and Conditions</li> <li>Confidentiality Clauses</li> </ul>		

Figure 2: What are RFIs, RFQs and RFPs?

Customers send a document with a thorough list of requirements to multiple vendors. This document is called the RFX. The X can be replaced with alphabets such as I, Q and P.

While vendors find it hard to respond to RFPs, customers find it equally hard, if not harder to create RFPs.

Once it arrives, sales teams immediately try to gather information about the customer. They try to identify if the customer already has a favourite, or an incumbent vendor- who is currently supplying the product or service.

Then, they prepare the response document, also called a proposal. A business proposal is light years away from a marketing brochure. It is customised to the customer's needs. At its heart, it understands that customers do not care about vendors, their products or their services. Customers care about themselves.

Without doubt, consistently winning proposal teams are doing something radically different from their competition's proposal teams.

### **Proposal Strategy**

**Outline:** "Hope" is never a strategy while creating a business proposal. At least, having an idea of the customer's needs, issues and motivators and identifying sponsors helps create a better strategy. Identifying the degree of competition and therefore developing partnerships gives organisations an extra edge. Proposal teams must work with agility and steadfastness to beat the clock in order to achieve this.

**Getting all roads to lead to Rome:** Proposal teams manage various meetings- the first being the kick-off meeting- where everyone is introduced, and everyone's goals and roles are set. Most importantly, the due dates are discussed, and a thorough plan is developed by the proposal manager that gets everyone to contribute and complete the RFP response.

**RFPs are hot potatoes:** RFPs can be several hundred pages long. Getting even one of the terms and conditions, or making a wrong observation can cause the organisation to lose the deal, or worse, cause the organisation to get into legal and financial obligations.

**Troubles shared are troubles halved:** There can be anywhere between three (3) to three hundred (300) people involved in responding to an RFP depending on its deadlines, value, risk and complexity. Proposal teams assist technical teams in conveying their message to the customer in a clear, succinct, attractive, legally accurate and time-bound manner to ensure organisations win more business.

### **How Important Is a Proposal?**

Proposals are worthless unless they induce a behavioural change in the customer. It is meant to woo, not repulse. It is meant to impress, not bore. It is meant to cause a desire that otherwise was not there.

Hence the name "proposal". It needs to be sought after. It needs to be something the customer wants, not just needs. It needs to be loved. Every page should trigger a sense of anticipation.

How proposals are written is just as important as what is written in them.

## How has COVID-19 Impacted Proposal Teams

Proposal teams are being laid-off, furloughed, or are taking pay cuts in many organisations that are not seeing business opportunities. The work of proposal teams is being passed on to delivery teams in order to reduce costs in these organisations.

However, a few organisations from industries like pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, medical device manufacturing, are growing in these times. Proposal teams are being hired by them.

## Collaboration Has Never Been a Problem

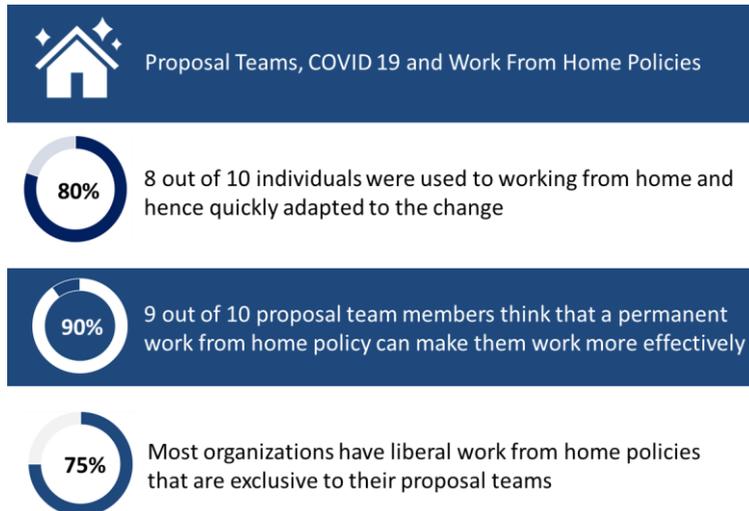


Figure 2: What are RFIs, RFQs and RFPs?

Global collaboration has dramatically increased across organizations in all teams by over 1000% (Samik Roy, 2020). Although other teams across the world have been shaken up by new work-from-home norms, most proposal teams have reported that there is almost no difference in how they worked.

Proposal teams can continue to work-from-home unless of course, it is crucial for a major deal that requires war-rooms. Today, even those can be virtual. However, we only recommend that cameras be turned on so that the human element is not lost.

## Survival of the Fittest

To adapt to COVID-19, some organisations have committed to not lay-off their proposal management teams or change processes. However, most organisations have realised that they might need to shift their modus operandi to a way of work that would continue to keep the company profitable. The ultimate way to win this battle during this crisis is to find solutions and techniques that will:

- Focus on strategy and competitive advantages (offer something unique to customers)
- Develop better partnerships with other organisations
- Reduce costs by reducing employee headcounts and/or remunerations

- Increasing revenues by responding to more RFPs in less time
- Exploring new markets
- Improve effectiveness and efficiency > Bring in automation, tools and techniques
- Reimagining Proposal Management and Sales

## Case Study

Christopher (name changed) has about twelve proposals he was working on simultaneously. Only one of them is winnable and no one is working on it.

The multi-million-dollar company Christopher worked for, faced a massive blow due to the COVID-19 crisis. 60% of their clients were from the tourism and travel industry. As a result, the organisation went into panic mode. They tried to get their hands on every single RFP available- even if they had very limited chances of winning it.

Because of the ensuing crisis, a few proposal managers, writers and graphic designers were laid-off. The graphics team predominantly prepared customised content that clients would find relatable

Suddenly, Christopher's laptop crashed. Along with it went all the information that went into the proposal. Some of the information on the laptop was not saved on the cloud and was not passed on to any team members.

Two candidates who contributed to the proposal had left the organisation. Although their data backup was taken, no one knew how to find it and re-assemble it at such short notice. Christopher now is unable to find the information he needs the most.

Suddenly, an entire proposal had to be built from scratch. With just five days left to submit the proposal, Christopher's fingers tremble, as he visualises incoming migraines. With a cold sweat breaking, Christopher empties a cup of coffee each hour to stay awake. Panic escalates into horror.

He enlists the help of another overworked proposal writer who is based out of a different time-zone to review the styles, fonts, themes and colours. He gets a graphic designer who already has a plethora of work to cater to and pleads with him to create a cover page. The graphic designer tells him he cannot do it and suggests that Christopher can choose from a set of previously created cover pages.

Christopher does the best he can, with the resources he has. And in five days, he submits the proposal to the customer after getting a review done.

The proposal goes to the customer and Christopher finally goes to bed. Barely a minute after he has hit his pillow, he gets a call from his manager telling him it is urgent. He shows Christopher that in several places of the document, there is the name of the wrong client- an indication that sufficient attention has not been paid. In the proposal world, that mistake is a monstrosity. It happened because Christopher copied the content from other proposals he could find. He pasted it without thoroughly checking its relevance.

And then his manager shows him that some content that was placed is old and there is new, better and more mature content available from a technical and a non-technical point of view. Literally, the proposal is a piece of trash. Every single minute spent on it amounted to nothing.

From a graphical point of view, there is nothing that tells the customer that Christopher's proposal was crafted with professional intent. Christopher was forced to focus on submitting the proposal. He did not have the time, nor the resources to win it.

Christopher was living Murphy's law: "Anything that can go wrong- will go wrong"

### **Strategy 1: Bid to Win. Not Just Submit**

Christopher's organisation was trying to grab every opportunity they got to stay afloat, instead of focusing on the one they could win. Also, Christopher was an overworked, confused, and unrested proposal manager who was working without the support of a team. A recipe for disaster- it has been proven, tried and tested that none of these strategies work. It results in limited organisational focus and excessive organisational chaos.

To solve this conundrum, organisations must, at the least, ask themselves the following questions before opening up RFPs and sending them to proposal managers to work on:

Is this within our business area?

Does the customer really intend to buy?

Do we know the customer and the customer's vision?

Have we considered the global crises that can prevent this purchase?

Is there an incumbent who the customer is not satisfied with?

Do we have any competitive advantages that our competition does not possess?

Do we have any competitive disadvantages that we need to tactically manage?

Is there a risk we face if we bid / do not bid for this opportunity?

Can we really win? How and why might we lose?

Is the pursuit worth the effort?

In times like these, sales-persons may be tempted to hunt for any opportunity available. However, a thorough bid validation must be done before engaging proposal teams on a deal, lest it waste their time and wear them down.

When they get involved, proposal managers must be able to showcase compliance rather than finding reasons for non-compliance to customer requirements. They must be able to show an understanding of the customer's pain points and motivation to spend money despite market conditions

### **Strategy 2: Make Proposals Sing**

In his bestseller entitled "Epic Content Marketing", Joe Pulizzi asks, "Your customers are exposed to over 5,000 marketing messages per day. Are your messages cutting through the clutter and making an impact?" (Pulizzi, 2014) Although Pulizzi is talking here about content marketing, one can extend his theory to proposals. With all the clutter of information, will your message matter?

In another study (Nicholas Toman, 2017), where several thousand executives at companies across the world were asked to describe the entire purchase process, out of which, obviously,

reading RFPs from multiple vendors and coming to a conclusion would be one. Some responses included "hard", "awful", "painful", "frustrating" and "minefield".

In a world where 140 characters is all one gets to convey information that is meaningful (Twitter), proposal contributors must aim to keep their messages as short and simple as possible.

### Keeping it Simple

Proposal Teams ought to take the effort needed to make the proposal a joy to read. And yet, almost no proposal evaluator would express that reading proposals is a pleasure, or a joy. Instead, proposals are pompous and boring. Evaluators seldom find them engaging and feel like they are not tailored for them and are corporate mumbo-jumbo.

Proposal contributors are under the impression that a lot of information on a subject will impress the customer. One study (Nicholas Toman, 2017) points out that customers are increasingly overwhelmed and often feel paralysed than empowered by information overload. Information overload births unnecessary questions, inquiries and probes. This causes a 65% delay in purchase decisions, and often, deviations towards other sellers / vendors. Clearly, proposal contributors must learn to respect the time of evaluators.

### The Impact of Good Design in Proposals

A business proposal is like a salesperson. It cannot afford to be shabbily dressed. It is crucial that the first impression be good. People think that they are not bewitched by first impressions, but that is not true. Hence, graphic design is becoming extremely important.

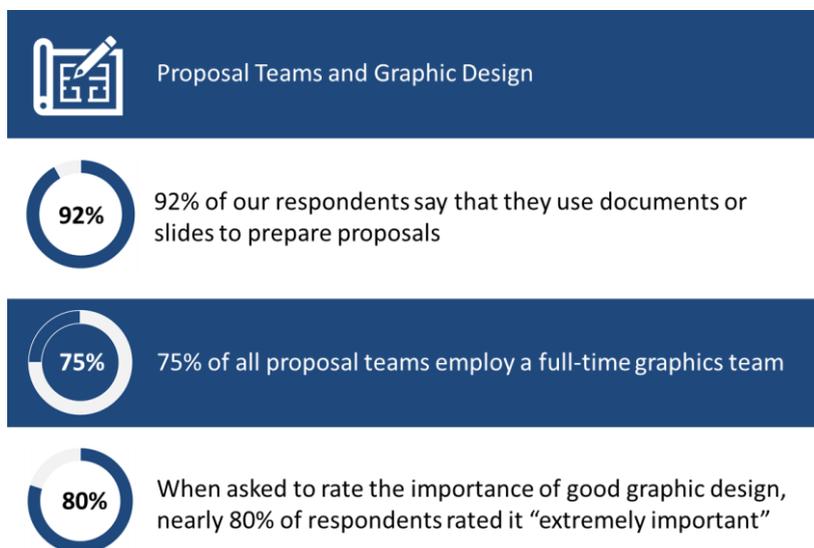


Figure 3: The Impact of Graphic Designers

Although the famous idiom goes "Do not judge a book by its cover", several studies found that people make judgements about the quality of the content in a book by looking at the cover page in just about five seconds. In fact, there are so many proven logical fallacies that the human brain is prone to make based on design such as:

**Implicit Association Bias:** Just because something looks good, we assume it is good.

**Von Restroff Effect:** When multiple options are present, attention is subconsciously directed towards the one that stands out.

**Law of Triviality:** We tend to spend time on trivial, good-looking things- whether or not they are important or are serving our purpose.

### **The Future of Proposals**

Organisations are realising that they need proficient graphic designers to design proposals for them. There are huge indicators of how important graphic design is and how dependent the proposal teams are upon them.

In a world where everyone is using documents and slides, there are organisations which are silently moving towards software and web applications that are far more effective and engaging.

For nearly twenty years, Microsoft's PowerPoint and a few other similar tools have been used to create customer pitches. Multiple presentations attached in a single email, confused evaluators and waste their precious time, thereby sometimes annoying them.

But things are changing. LinkedIn's PointDrive, for example, is changing the way presentations are done. Instead of making content static, it is making it dynamic. Evaluators are also more inclined to read content sent to them via PointDrive is because they can interact with content on any device. From a proposal author's point of view, PointDrive allows them to see which content has been most interacted with. (Burnett, 2017).

PointDrive, and similar tools are already being used to submit proposals. In fact, organisations have started presenting proposals based on augmented reality and virtual reality.

In a world where people prefer engagement, why would anyone want to read? That is why UI (user interface) and UX (user experience) is becoming important. We anticipate UI and UX being given a colossal importance in the future. We have already seen how much importance organisations are giving graphics teams.

We recommend that graphics teams learn more skills and upgrade themselves. At least, they must be able to make customised video presentations and have an idea of how augmented reality and virtual reality works, and what tools can be used to prepare futuristic presentations.

Under anonymity, one proposal manager we interviewed, explained how the organisation he is working with is currently crafting presentations that are designed for presentations on Zoom, GoToWebinar, Skype or MS Teams. "Each platform works differently and streams content differently. So, we design presentations based on the platform. We do not do that for every deal, but we are getting there. We realized that things do not look the way we intend them to look if we do not know the platform they will be streamed on. Customers are beginning to tell us that there is a noticeable difference, and that our presentations look better than our competitors' presentations", he said.

87.5% of our respondents agreed that proposals need to be designed in a manner that needs as little explanation as possible, with minimalism and engagement.

Owing to the COVID-19 crisis, no presentation is being made at the customer's office. Even if a video presentation is recorded, because of its length, customers are not willing to watch them. That is why, the proposal presentations being sent to them must be engaging and interesting enough for evaluators to want to go through them. For this too, a graphic designer supplies life blood.

### **Strategy 3: Exploring Automation**

The word often instils fear and paranoia. According to many, it is a necessary evil, which feeds corporate greed. However, history has proven that whenever automation came, it led to the loss of a few jobs but created several thousands, if not millions more. However, if the question is "will automation take away my job as a proposal manager or a proposal writer?", the answer is most likely "yes".

Proposal managers, for example, need to coordinate a proposal from end to end- which includes not just ensuring compliance, but preparing the proposal, getting proposal contributors to update content, making calls to get information, managing proposal playbooks and getting approvals, to name a few

For example, Amjad and Samina, based out of Maryland, USA are creating a futuristic RFP tool called Zbizlink. The tool can almost effortlessly improve the speed of proposal processes three times over by helping managers. It automatically pulls out requirements from RFPs. It also helps managers create workflows, plug in content, manage collaboration and do a whole host of other things- all over one web-based application that can be accessed both on the proposal teams' laptops and mobile devices.

When it comes to proposal writers, there are tools already available that radically improve the proposal's quality, tone, professionalism and uniformity. Another huge problem that writers face is the famous "writer's block". There are automation tools, which, when fed with bits and pieces of necessary information, literally write content. Shipley ROSE for example, helps proposal authors write anywhere between 50-70% of the executive summary within just ten minutes

We are already seeing automation technology enter the proposal management space helping proposal teams. Instead of asking what automation will take away from us next, we need to ask what work automation will enable us to take on.

### **Content Management**

In organisations where content is diverse and solutions are aplenty, it is important to appreciate and make way for a proper content management system. It is a terrible idea nowadays to maintain all content on a few computer devices or dump content onto a server.

In our survey, 31 out of 40 respondents said that they had some form of organisational content repositories. Among them only 7 had automated content repositories that would use metadata to identify content. In fact, very few organizations have heard of AI driven content management solutions. But they are out there.

Organisations that have systematic content management repositories and teams, also express a greater degree of success. Out of the 40 respondents we interviewed, there were 33 respondents who had content repositories. This meant that they recognized its importance. However, they did not have content management tools and did not invest into content

management teams. They expressed having often used old and irrelevant content and were able to trace it back to not being able to find the right content at the right time.

Do you use content management tools and centralised content repositories in your organization?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0

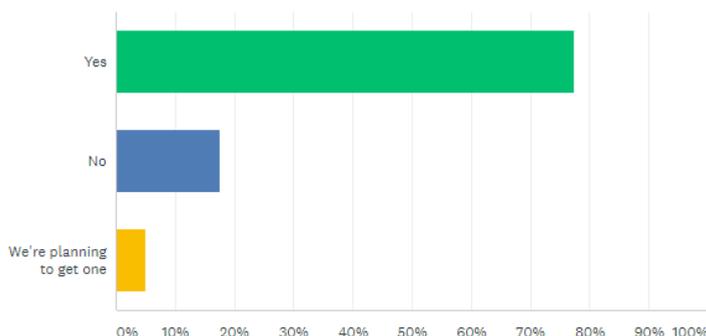


Figure 4: How Teams Are Managing Content

At the least, organisations should attempt to organise data on the cloud- where content would be accessible and retrievable with minimal downtime.

Established organisations have content management teams who curate content and upload content onto the cloud. Better still, they do this using tools that manually or automatically absorb metadata that is tagged to the document. This allows proposal teams to find what they want, when they want it, without having tunnel vision or slowing down. They will have the most recent content that has been curated and pre-approved.

Like other aspects of business, knowledge and content management is moving from traditional human input towards artificial intelligence that reads a document and automatically identifies metadata tags.

This enables proposal teams to be more than cut-copy-paste artists. This gives them time to become strategists, wordsmiths and artisans in their field.

A good content management strategy is not just something “nice to have”. It must become an integral component of the proposal management team’s armour. It is an incredibly important component of the proposal management team’s battle gear when they go to war. Is it expensive? Maybe, yes. But going to battle without it might result in severe damages to reputation, credibility, and reliability in the eyes of the customer.

## Reconfiguring Proposal Management

### Case Study

Typically, customers could not read a proposal that came from the company where Christopher worked without yawning incessantly. Most of them never got to the last page. Although Christopher’s boss got feedback regarding the kind of proposals that went out, he never found enough time to take a stab at them and improve them.

With the advent of COVID-19 however, everyone woke up. The senior management wanted to see more deals being won. Christopher and his boss had to get their act together or bid their jobs goodbye.

**Strategy 1: 4 Step Improvement Model**

Although the COVID-19 crisis is not exactly a crown, it certainly does come with some silver linings. One of them is that organisations are not getting many RFPs to work on. The time could be used for process improvement and eliminate operational waste. There are organisations where for several years, the proposal team has been static with no one looking into the modus operandi- as a result of which, the organisation is not able to open up to its market potential.

We recommend that if organisations find a little extra time, they should not waste it. They must improve their processes, and align themselves with the vision of becoming leaner, stronger organisations. It goes without saying that organisations must do what is necessary without causing any major business disruption.

Proposal teams can follow the proven “Four Stage Model of Operational Improvement”. The model was developed by Professors Hayes and Wheelwright of Harvard University with contributions from Professor Chase of the University of California.

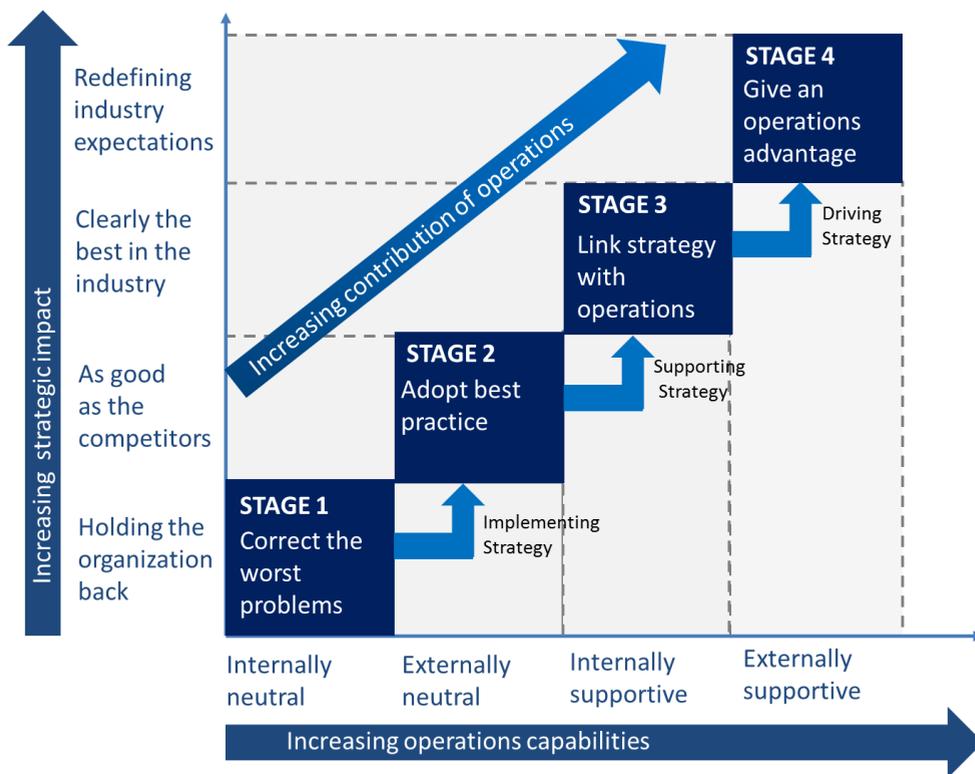


Figure 5: The Four Step Model for Operational Improvement

**During Stage 1**, the proposal team may identify the top three most pressing issues and worst problems they face and use a systematic approach to solving them. Do not go after small

problems. Try identifying problems within the team which are causing genuine pain to the business. The goal is to fix those pains.

**During Stage 2**, now that the team has fixed the worst problems, the team works towards industry best practices. This may include adopting unexplored and relevant APMP best practices for proposal management, reviews, improving quality of executive summaries, and improving content repository capabilities. The goal is to be as good as the competition.

**During Stage 3**, the team develop strategies on becoming industry leaders on how proposals can be written. A simple example would be adopting tools and techniques and develop guidance tools that will assist proposal contributors avoid writer's block. There are so many tools available in the market that can and help write better proposals and present them to customers in a more professional manner. Tools like Shipley ROSE for example, helps proposal contributors write anywhere between 50-70% of the executive summary within just ten minutes. The goal in stage 3 is to become better than the competitors.

**During Stage 4**, the team starts preparing for the next global crisis or the next big scenario that is going to hit their industry; and works towards staying one step ahead of the competitors. Simply put, the goal in stage 4 is to identify the trends of the future before they come and stay prepared.

## **Strategy 2: Create Compelling Content**

A great way to improve a team's proposal writing skills and increase the win ratio is to teach them the art of persuasive proposal writing. HBR recommends using the Who-Why-What-When-How chart (Garner, 2012)

This need not be just for content written afresh, but for boiler-plate content already present in the organization's repositories.

Additionally, we recommend the following steps to creating persuasive and profession content:

**Step 1:** Asking the question, "*Why write this?*" before composing content in any section. helps instil the necessary tone, morale and pace, thereby reaching the goal of the proposal.

**Step 2:** Avoid verbose content, jargon, convoluted sentences and paragraphs that instil boredom in the reader. Understand that poorly written content is a huge waste of the reader's time. If writers do not get to the point quickly enough, the reader might switch-off. Be relentless in achieving this

**Step 3:** Use tables and graphics to keep the proposal engaging. Use them to illustrate something discussed in the text. The goal is to help readers understand in 4-5 seconds via pictures what would take 2-3 minutes to read

Other strategies that would dramatically improve the persuasiveness of proposals include:

Using the customer's name more frequently throughout the proposal

Quantifying benefits of the solution

Keeping the most important ideas first while writing content.

Helping customers perceive differentiators and discriminators.

Composing headings that guide readers rather than using abstract headings.

Adding graphical inputs (such as call-out boxes or figures with action captions) aids readability and increases customer interest.

#### "Make It Easy" Policy

Business proposals are often written by technical teams, who tend to pay less emphasis to strategic details- which help win more business. They often state the features of the product, rather than the "benefits" and "advantages" that customers gain when they purchase them.



Benefits and advantages are compelling, but customers are not persuaded enough to purchase products if these "advantages" are not shared with them. It is crucial that proposal authors make it a point to articulate benefits throughout the proposal.

Consider the following statements.

**Statement 1:** The laptops come with inbuilt 8GB RAM

**Statement 2:** The laptops come with in-built 8GB RAM – *which allows you to work faster and lessens the scope of the laptop crashing by 35%*

The statement above in italics helps customers identify benefits rather than just providing them with features

The Shipley Proposal Guide says, "Benefits have the strongest and most lasting impact on customer decisions as they are explicitly linked to alleviating issues. In short, customers buy benefits." (Newman, 2016)

### Differentiators and Discriminators

Organisations need to be more intelligent in how they sell. Often, proposal teams do not have sufficient input on the strengths and weaknesses of the organization’s competitors.

Amongst those that understand the competition, most proposal contributors focus on *differentiators*, and not enough on *discriminators*. Differentiators are what make organizations different from their competitors.

Discriminators, on the other hand are differentiators that can be acknowledged as important to the customer.

Additionally, proposal teams must deal with a proposal’s weaknesses.

If competitors can articulate features that are beneficial to the customer, which the proposal does not provide, they become negative discriminators and proposal teams need to examine addressing the issue in their proposals.

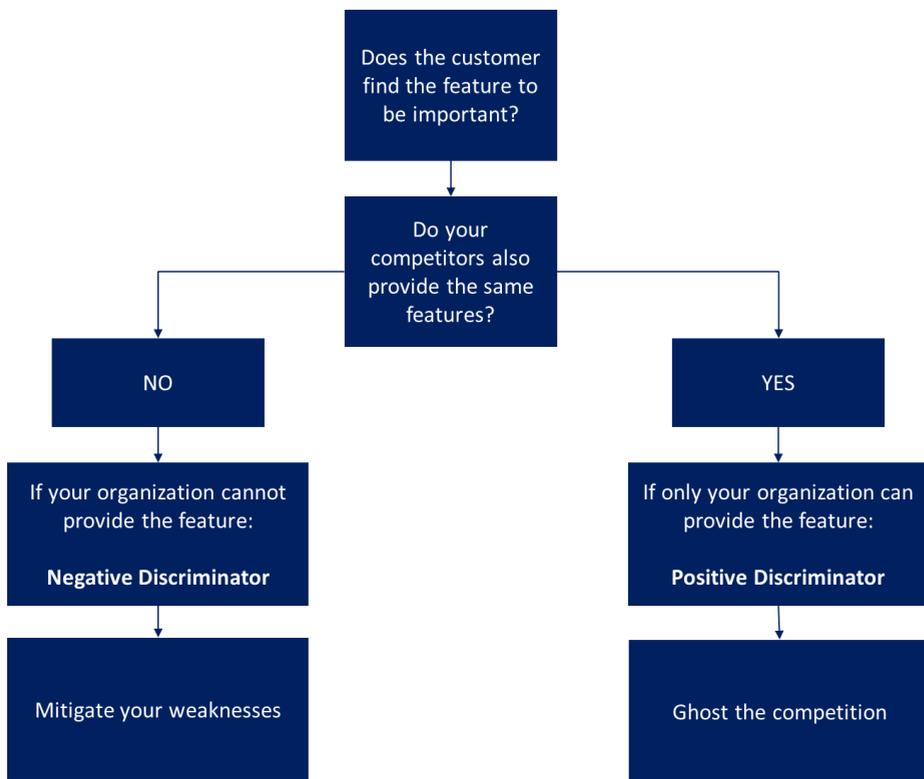


Figure 7: Understanding Discriminators

## Proof Points

While being customer focused, proposals must include relevant referrals and case studies. This helps prospective clients gain more trust that the proposal is more than just a can of empty words.

### Strategy 3: Change Management

*People get into a rhythm that makes them resistant to change. To understand the mindset, try changing hands when you brush your teeth in the morning- Gary Gesme, Deere & Company*

Studies show that anywhere between 70% – 80% of change efforts flop. They either fail to deliver the anticipated benefits, or they are abandoned entirely. (Steven H Appelbaum, 2012)

Before proposal teams work towards radical shift in how operations are run, they should spend time studying them. Do they really need to be improved?

A frequent adage at a multi-billion-dollar organisation goes "In our organisation, change is the only constant". While that might be true, organisations must not make changes that are so dramatic and frequent that chaos would ensue.

The catalyst for change must be the pursuit of value. If there is no tangible value that change would bring, organisations must not pursue radical changes.

According to Kotter, the eight steps to transforming an organization (which can be applied to proposal teams) are:

Establish a sense of urgency about the need to change because people will not change if they do not see the need to do so.

Create a guiding coalition- assemble a group of individuals who have the power, energy and influence to lead the change.

Develop a vision and a strategy. Create a vision of what the change is about. Tell people why the change is needed and how it will be achieved.

Communicate the change vision – tell people, in every possible way and at every opportunity, about the why, what and how of the changes.

Empower broad-based action – involve people in the change effort, get people to think about the changes and how to achieve them rather than thinking about why they do not like the changes and how to stop them.

Generate short-term wins – seeing the changes happen and recognising the work being done by people towards achieving the change is crucial.

Consolidate gains and produce more change – create momentum for change by building on successes in the change. Invigorate people through the changes and develop people as "*change agents*".

Anchor new approaches in the corporate culture – this is critical to long-term success and institutionalising the changes. Failure to do so may mean that changes achieved- through hard work and effort, slip away with people's tendency to revert to the old and comfortable ways of doing things.

Through a process of change, proposal team members' responsibilities are being increased or altered in order to win more business. There is nothing wrong with this. It just needs to be systematic and not an act birthed out of panic.

Efficiency is doing things fast while effectiveness is doing things right. We see proposal teams pursuing value, often focussing on efficiency and not on effectiveness. Organizations can pursuit change but ensure that it does not hamper the effectiveness of proposal teams.

**Preparing for Changes**

Before changing a process, tool or policy within the proposal teams, we recommend that teams develop clarity by using the following screens (Slack, 2009)

Restarting

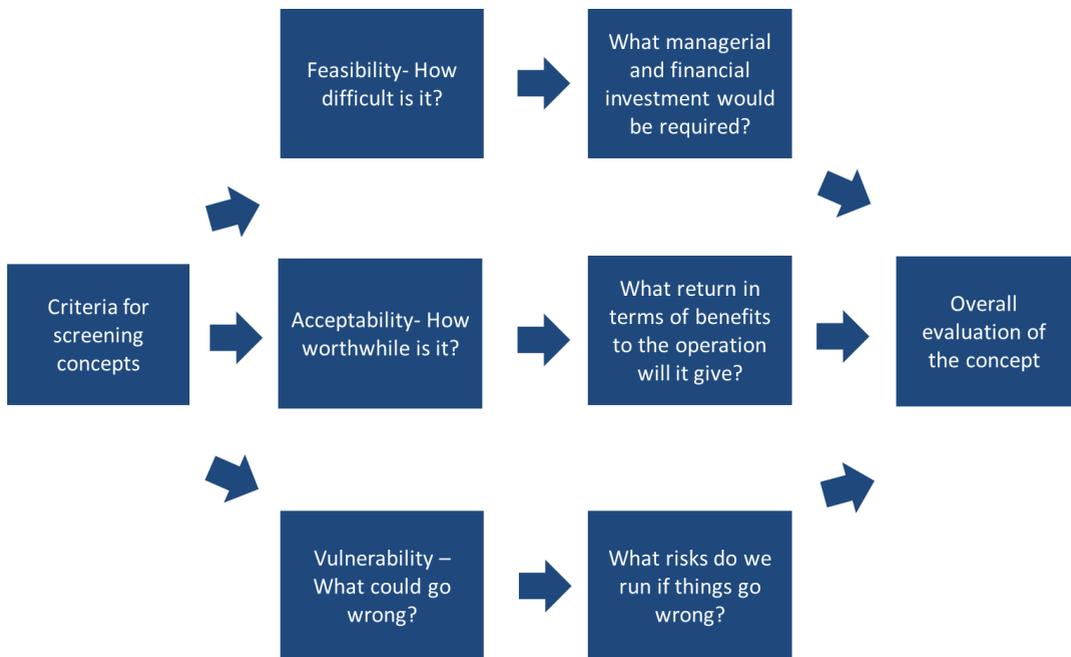


Figure 9: Categories of Evaluation Criteria

**Case Study**

At the turn of the page, Christopher aimed to type in a boisterous business buzz word. But no matter how many fancy phrases went in, his proposals did not win. Christopher worked 15 hours a day, despite frequently earning the wrath of his wife. Since his boss knew of the long hours Christopher spent, he could not understand why they were not winning deals.

So his boss decided to spend some budget and hire someone despite the financial crisis. After three months of head hunting, they realized they hired someone with essentially zero skills. How did that even happen?

**Strategy 1: Changing Modus Operandi**

**Hiring Strategies**

Maybe interviews should be a thing of the past. With all the information available online nowadays, people can falsify resumes, pretend to be really good at interviews and fail miserably once they are working. For the team that is hiring them, it is a terrible waste of time, effort and capital.

Instead, it is advisable to ask prospective candidates to work on a demo proposal, if not a live proposal to assess their management proficiencies, writing abilities and evaluate how well they would fit into the team's environment. That would be a more wholistic approach to hiring proposal teams.

### **Overcoming Workaholism**

Proposal Teams needs to consider if there are individual heroes who get overworked and pulled into every single "major deal" or get to find about it themselves and go vouch for it. IF that is the case, the team needs to consider if workaholism is going to become a problem in the long term. The typical workaholic ends up not sleeping and "burns the midnight oil". Unfortunately, the corporate system rewards them for it.

It takes a toll on the health of the individual in the long term, and at some point, the individual will experience burnout. In their book titled *Rework*, Fried and Hansson remark "Workaholics miss the point. They try to fix problems by throwing sheer hours at them. They try to make up for intellectual laziness with brute force. They even create crises. They do not look for ways to be more efficient because they actually *like* working overtime. They enjoy feeling like heroes. Workaholics are not heroes. They do not save the day. They just use it up. They may claim to be perfectionists but that just means that they are wasting time fixing inconsequential details instead of moving on to the next task" (Jason Fried, 2010)

### **Workforce Training**

Most organisations we interviewed do not take proposal management seriously enough, and do not invest into training proposal management teams. While experience is a good thing, some theory can help teams remember what they may have forgotten or help them arrive at new ideas. It might allow proposal teams to reduce errors, improve proficiency, build confidence and increase overall team morale. This might enable the team to take a leap of excellence and possibly even increase organisational win ratios. Investing in trainings has become less expensive as most of them are happening virtually.

It is important to remind employees that learning new skills and sharpening existing ones is the only way to survive. Cal Newport argues in his bestselling book, "So Good They Can't Ignore You" that "*skills trump passion in the quest for work one loves*" (Newport, 2012). If organisations do not invest in them, employees need to take initiative and invest in themselves.

### **Strategy 2: Kaizen-ing Proposal Management Strategies**

The word "strategy" is used in so many business meetings these days- a pause to think about the meaning of the word. The word has its origins in Greek. "Strategos" means "leading an army". Clearly, there is a military metaphor. It is intense and powerful. Today, it is a word that is almost borderline business jargon.

With businesses finding themselves in such volatility today, effective business proposal strategy is essential.

## Having Any Plan Is Better Than Having No Plan

It may be said that having any plan is better than having absolutely no plan, even if in hindsight, it proves to be the wrong plan. The following story is quoted by Slack and Lewis in their famous textbook for Operations Strategy:

*A group of Hungarian soldiers got lost doing manoeuvres in the Alps. The weather was cold, and the snow was deep. In the freezing conditions, after two days of wandering, the soldiers gave up hope and became reconciled with a frozen death on the mountains. Then, much to their delight, one of the soldiers discovered a map in his pocket. Much cheered by the discovery, the soldiers were able to escape from the mountains. When they were safe back at their headquarters, they discovered that the map was not of the Alps but that of the Pyrenees. The moral of the story? A plan (or in this case, a map) may not be perfect, but it gives some sense of purpose and a sense of direction. If the soldiers had waited for the right map, they would have frozen to death. Yet, their renewed confidence motivated them to get up and create opportunities. (Slack, 2009)*

## Conflicting Strategies

Proposal strategies that conflict with one-another must be discussed and ironed out. For example, a proposal's strategy may be to increase organisational profitability. And in order to increase profitability, the organisation may choose to decide to outsource. Outsourcing decisions may improve profitability but must not hamper quality and reputability of output.

### Strategy 3: Infuse Clarity Into Proposals

Over 77% proposal writers and managers think that the proposals they write are jargon-free and easy to read. Only 15% admit that they only do it when they have time.

A sample study into 30 proposals from 30 different authors has shown us that over 88% of proposals have complex jargon that does not explain itself and have a Flesch Reading Ease<sup>1</sup> score of 10 or less, which proves that content is extremely complex, and authors just do not know how to measure and correct it. A poor writing style makes reading cumbersome.

Writers hope to persuade readers by adding jargon and business buzz words. However, organisations which had been responsible for introducing business jargon are now studying the effect of easy reading.

Deloitte studied thirty people in a Starbucks cafe who were given two documents each. One document was compiled with a lot of jargon and long sentences. The other was radically simple and easy to understand. Both were in effect- trying to share the same message.

Subjects read the two documents, and were given a list of character traits to associate each document with. The list of character traits had fifteen positive ("good") and fifteen negative ("bad") traits. The study found that 100% of the readers associated the document with jargon and complicated sentences with "obnoxiousness, rudeness, stubbornness and unreliability". Not a single positive trait was attributed to the complicated document. (Brian Fugere, 2005)

On the other hand, subjects who read the document without jargon did not associate it with even one negative trait. Instead, they associated with traits like "likability, energy, friendliness,

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<sup>1</sup> Flesch Index scores range from 0-100. A Flesch Index of 0-10 indicates that the document is very hard to read and may at best be understood by university graduates.

inspirational and enthusiastic". Not a single negative trait was attributed to the document that was easy to read.



Figure 8: How Readability Influences Likeability

Donald Murphy, the editor of an agricultural newspaper found that reducing the complexity of his articles from a ninth grade to a sixth-grade level increased newspaper readership by 43% for an article on 'nylon'. There was an increase of 42,000 readers in a circulation of 275,000. Reducing the complexity also caused a 60% increase in readership for an article on 'corn'. (Murali Mohana, 2016)

Easy reading increases readers' perseverance to complete reading the document. In the 1950s, Wilber Schramm, the director of Iowa Writer's Workshop interviewed 1,050 newspaper readers. He found that easier reading styles help decide how much of an article is read. He found that people read fewer long articles than short ones. A story nine paragraphs long will lose three out of ten readers by the fifth paragraph. A shorter story will lose only two. (Murali Mohana, 2016)

Studies like this transformed how American newspapers were written. Most American newspapers are now written at a 11th grade level. A cursory observation of popular novels shows that most of them are written at a 7th grade level. America's most sold publications – TV Guide and Readers' Digest- are written at a 9th grade level. (Murali Mohana, 2016)

In summary, all research points to three things that are prime culprits for making reading difficult and must be avoided in proposals

The lack of logic and focus in writing

Jargon and complicated words

Long Sentences and endless paragraphs

## Conclusion

Proposal management and writing are time-bound and mission-critical activities crucial to the survival of B2B business, and must involve the right people. Involving the wrong people to write a proposal is like asking a steward to fly a plane.

Organizations must hire the right people and train them. Proposal contributors must be able to write compelling content that sets them apart from competition. The presentation of their proposals must thoroughly delight readers.

Proposal contributors must spend their time strategizing and not brooding over rudimentary tasks. They must be enabled with the process and technology required to do so.

We recommend that organizations adopt change gradually, and transform the way they manage, write and present proposals. Organizations must bid to win. Not just submit.

Consistent winning happens through effort and design. It is driven by purpose. If chemistry were to be used to give an analogy, one might say that there are no accidents that bring forth glorious proposals. Each element has to be weighed with precision and its relevance pondered upon. That defines the purity of the compound. Some elements must at all times be avoided- or the compound at the output would be worthless sludge. A complete waste of time, effort, and material of the chemist and not something of significance, beauty or worth.

We believe that effective proposal management and excellent proposal writing is not wishful thinking or a stroke of luck. We believe it needs to be cooked to perfection with a recipe- like a stew at a restaurant that people would want to visit over and over again.

The proposal must only have the right amount of persuasiveness for too much of it will sound suspicious. It must have sufficient evidence to back up claims. It needs to have clarity and not sound obnoxious. It needs to be managed well from end to end without getting anyone overworked (which is why training everyone is necessary).

Like a shrewd diplomat, a proposal emphasizes its strengths and benefits to its customer. In doing so, the proposal adds enough potent content that reveals a competitor's weaknesses and inadequacies.

Finally, it needs to be packaged well to invoke the emotion of persuasiveness and look like a work of meticulous, thoughtful and thought-provoking piece of art.

### **Author Note**

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## "You Have Been like Family to Us": Non-Formal Language Education Addressing Adult Refugees During the Covid19 Lockdown

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### Abstract

This paper is framed within the "Curing the Limbo" project initiated by the Municipality of Athens, Greece, targeting social integration of adult refugees. It focuses on the teaching of Greek and English as a means of helping refugees exit their limbo status, build resilience and become active members of their new host country. Covid-19 seriously challenged the project's competent functioning and teaching shifted to fully remote teaching solutions. This learning experience promoted refugees' and instructors' resilience and demonstrated creative adaptation to a crisis situation.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** refugee integration, Greek and English as foreign languages, Emergency Remote Teaching, Covid-19

### Refugee crisis in Greece: the "Curing the Limbo" project

Greece has, since the early 2000s, been the chief EU entry point for migrants using the Eastern Mediterranean route. While Greece was not migrants' final destination, they found themselves stranded in 2016, when the Balkan borders closed to Northern Europe. Since then, refugees have been living in conditions of economic, social and political marginalization lingering in inactivity, while the native population views them with impatience, wariness and mistrust. The migration crisis has turned into an integration challenge. Yet, effective migration management is in short supply, as is the case in most countries (Papademetriou & Katsiaficas, 2017).

ΒΑΣΙΚΟΣ ΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ΕΤΑΙΡΟΙ



ΔΗΜΟΣ  
ΑΘΗΝΑΙΩΝ



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ  
Εθνικόν και Καποδιστριακόν  
Πανεπιστήμιον Αθηνών  
ΙΔΡΥΣΕΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΒΟΥ



Το πρόγραμμα συγχρηματοδοτείται από το Ευρωπαϊκό Ταμείο Περιφερειακής Ανάπτυξης μέσω της Πρωτοβουλίας Αισθητικής Κανονόμενης Αράσεως

Around 15,000 displaced people live in the Municipality of Athens (with a population of 600,000), in rented apartments, accommodation centers or squat in dilapidated buildings. Several NGOs have been providing healthcare, counseling, legal services, Greek and English language courses, usually taught by volunteers, while the Greek government has set up a scheme for children's school enrollment, short-term housing, cash provision and Greek language learning. Yet these initiatives have been fragmented lacking long-term, cohesive policy.

In 2018 the City of Athens launched a four-year, promising innovative pilot project, funded by the EU Urban Innovative Actions, for refugee social integration, called *Curing the Limbo*.<sup>1</sup> The aim of the project has been to develop a model that can help refugees come out of their limbo state and become active, move from apathy to motivation and create strong bonds with the local community. The project addresses 250 Farsi, Arab and French speaking adult refugees (72% male and 28% female) from 14 countries, who have received asylum but have yet not managed to normalize their lives in Athens. It is implemented with the partnership of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the NGOs "Catholic Relief Service" and "international Rescue Committee, SynAthina an initiative of the City of Athens coordinating citizens' groups, and the Athens Development and Destination Management Agency.

At the core of the project lies the recognition that integration is inseparable from education, employment, housing, community and active citizenship – all brought together in order to address the needs of refugees, to increase their resilience and to empower them to achieve autonomy in their everyday life. While refugees, as a rule, tend to be resistant and resilient in psychological terms, perhaps due to their adaptation over time to multiple stressful situations, resource loss has been shown to contribute to chronic distress. *Curing the Limbo* promotes resilience by helping refugees re-gain important lost material, psychological and social resources, not as passive recipients but as subjects playing an active role in constructing their lives and their identities in their host country.

The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, as a project partner, offers a psychosocial support service, street law informing refugees of their legal rights, a mediator training program, ICT classes, participation in Audio-Visual Workshops, and Greek and English language learning classes. Activities take place in the *Curing the Limbo* Exit Lab which is located in a building provided by the Municipality – a place for gathering and socialization, an institutional but also an informal space. As has been suggested in relevant literature, such an adult learning center can function as a critical stabilizing force for those newcomer refugees who may feel displaced and disoriented (Magro, 2007). This paper deals with the language programme of the project which includes Greek and English courses.

### **Collaborative Participation Action Research Methodology**

A fundamental characteristic of *action research*, as formulated by Kurt Lewin (1946) who was the first to coin the term, is research formulated by social action and leading to social action. The Collaborative Participation Action Research Methodology adopted in the *Curing the Limbo* project is informed by the principle that social interventions, such as ours, aim to work 'with' rather than 'on' communities, building on participants' capacities, on dialogue and bringing center-stage the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://curingthelimbo.gr>

experiences of people who are pushed to the margins of society (Greenfields & Ryder, 2012). Action is taken to improve practice and the research generates new knowledge about how and why the improvements came about.

We adopt a twofold approach in order (a) to solve an immediate problem—that of mobilizing refugee potential, and (b) to engage in a joint reflective process of progressive problem solving, working in teams as part of a “community of practice”, to improve the way issues are addressed and problems get answered—in our case the problem being that of refugee inclusion. Inherent is the notion that the relation between problems and solutions dialectically enfolds and embraces a spiral process (Dragonas & Vassiliou, 2017). In this process we monitor, analyze and continuously redefine the implementation strategy throughout the life span of the project. Each step and decision is planned, implemented, evaluated, readjusted and redefined making the process dynamic and adaptable. The cyclical model offers opportunity for continued joint reflection and improvement of the process. The final product is a model of action into a public policy proposal that can be replicated in the future either in Greece or elsewhere with similar issues at stake.

### **The Greek and English Language Programmes**

The Greek and English Language Programme is the focus of this paper. Co-authors Maria Iakovou from the Department of Greek Philology, and Bessie Mitsikopoulou and Evdokia Karava from the Department of English Language and Literature, based on prior experience in addressing the linguistic needs of adult refugee learners and other vulnerable groups, designed the curriculum for the *Curing the Limbo* project (Mitsikopoulou, Karavas & Iakovou, 2020).

A common language curriculum framework for the Greek and English language courses was developed since both languages are vehicles for bringing people from different cultural backgrounds together and for providing language skills for everyday life and interaction with services and support. Moreover, within this common curriculum framework, languages are not viewed as compartmentalized separate subjects but as components of an individual’s plurilingual repertoire (Dendrinos & Mitsikopoulou, 2004).

The curriculum was designed so as to promote learners’ (a) multiliteracies (Kalantzis & Cope, 2000); (b) intercultural competence (Byram, 1997); and (c) the abilities to connect self with place and community (Gruenewald, 2003). Hence, a place-based pedagogy was adopted integrating learner-centered, experiential and project-based learning promoting incidental learning (unintentional or unplanned learning that results from other activities) and appropriate to the experiences, cultures and needs of the refugee learner population.

The curriculum framework offers teachers freedom and flexibility to design what, how and when to teach. The eight instructors comprising the teaching team, are thus designers of learning, actively involved in the selection of learning experiences, of the units of work that are tailored to the learners’ needs, and of their own materials. For all the thematic categories in the syllabus they use various multimodal text types (illustrated short stories, family photos, personal detail forms, short films in which people present themselves, ID cards, passports, short bios and CVs). These text types become the main organizing principle of their syllabus and lessons. Thus, instead of using off the shelf textbooks, instructors create repositories of resources consisting of worksheets, handouts, texts and projects developed by their students. In line with learner-centered,

experiential and project-based learning instruction also takes place outside the classroom in visits to places of everyday interest (Mitsikopoulou & Karavas, forthcoming).

### **The Covid-19 transition**

And then came Covid-19 and we were all placed in quarantine. Face to face language classes had to be quickly replaced by remote teaching, challenging equally instructors and learners. Instructors were destabilized. They had no prior experience in distance learning. The technological devices refugees afforded were minimal – no computers, no tablets, poor or no internet access, only mobile phones some of which old and some more advanced. A number of refugees had such limited knowledge of Greek or English that could not understand online messages and instructions without the help of translators who were in very short supply. It was clear that a complete virtual learning space was impossible while the project's administrators, accountable to bureaucracy, fantasized a standard e-learning provision of classes in order to fulfill requirements for documentation of what they considered "proper" teaching.

In this crisis situation the only approach possible for ensuring continuity of language classes was Emergency Remote Learning. ERT is not a typical online class. It is very different from planned online teaching and cannot be a replication of face-to-face education (Affouneh, Salha & Khlaif, 2020). Evidence from examples of educational planning in crises and ERT application in countries where education was disrupted by conflict and violence, such as the case of Afghanistan (Bentrovato and Davies, 2011) or of the Zataari refugee camp in Jordan (Motteram, Dawson & Al-Masri, 2020), shows that what is required is creative problem solving and generation of alternate delivery modes in order to meet the needs of learners and their communities.

In our case we had to quickly set up these new delivery modes. Instructors had to make adjustments as to what, how, and when to teach following the action research methodology adopted in *Curing the Limbo*. While they had no experience in distance learning, they could craft their new instructional strategies drawing from the principles informing their face-to-face teaching – that is, the flexibility in designing learning experiences appropriate to their learners' profile and needs. Due to students' lack of technological means, our suggestion during ERT was to draw on mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) and on the use of social media.

Instructors exhibited a lot of motivation and started experimenting with the new methods, new delivery modes and format, making use of social media tools such as WhatsApp and Viber, owing to their students' lack of hardware and software infrastructure. They had to trace individual students; set up teaching hours that would suit the majority of their students or even sometimes contact learners individually; develop multiple teaching materials in order to accommodate diversity in language proficiency. They managed to contact 103 learners in total, in an online and offline virtual learning space. Each one of the designed lessons was very different from face-to-face lessons. The lesson focused on learning activities and its duration was shorter than the regular teaching hour. Instead of a complete lesson, teachers prepared a learning activity placing emphasis of multimodality. Due to our students' limited digital skills, the learning activities needed to be easy in navigation (click and play, if possible). Community building was as important as language learning.

Training sessions or, more accurately, reflective discussions took place every week lasting many hours in an effort to support instructors in making adjustments and in helping them take informed

decisions in planning and implementing. During these sessions, they could express their experiences and their concerns, worrying about the extent to which they were fulfilling their role as instructors. Gradually they became more confident. Suggestions with ready materials to be used were given, as well as educational platforms to be used.

The fact that instructors were able to work through the obstacles presented in ERT, accommodate and embrace e-Learning, and engage effectively and respectfully with their students is due to the training they were exposed to and to their quality teaching during the pre-covid period. Familiarization with the methodological and content guidelines informing the learner-centered, experiential and project-based, flexible curriculum, and their ability to design appropriate syllabi for their learners, allowed teachers to be socially and culturally responsive to the new demands made by ERT.

### Lessons learned

It was a stressful, albeit creative period that fostered closer bonds between the instructors themselves, between the instructors and their supervisors, and between the instructors and their students. Collaborative skills were enhanced. Paradoxically while there was not a face-to-face contact the new mode of contact brought all parties closer, provided a glimpse of each other's home situation, and the instructors felt as if the refugee's were letting them in their private space.

The unprecedented experience of lockdown and of the challenge brought about by ERT contributed to the teachers' and refugees' resilience as well as that of the *Curing the Limbo* project itself.

ERT was a temporary solution to an immediate problem. Once lockdown eased language learning reverted back to the Municipality's space. Yet the lessons learned from the period of confinement, the uncertainty about a new coronavirus wave and in anticipation of future developments have contributed to the current delivery mode which is blended teaching combining physical and virtual learning spaces. The paucity of adequate facilities was rectified and, through a relatively fast procurement procedure, tablets were purchased enabling students to partly work from home.

This experience of the lockdown raised interesting issues concerning alternative modes of teaching and learning, but most importantly, in the context of our project, made us think of what refugee integration consists of. Learners may have missed out during the ERT experimentation as to how much progress they made in achieving language proficiency. Yet they felt psychosocially supported during a very difficult time when their anxieties and insecurities were exacerbated. When they were unable to follow a session properly they would still provide feedback by messages such as "hello teacher" or by sending emojis. They felt that the representatives of the dominant group made room for them and held their hand through the isolation period. They made steps towards feeling more integrated. As a refugee pertinently said "you have been like family to us".

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## “Staying at Home, Staying Strong”: Ctl’s Audiovisual Expression and Creativity Workshops During COVID-19 Lockdown

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### Abstract

The arts, as a powerful container of extreme emotions and an alternative form of communication, have been a bulwark against the dystopian conditions facing humanity. In “Curing the Limbo”, the innovative project for adult refugee inclusion, workshops for “Audiovisual Expression and Creativity”, employing an Action Research methodology, provide the opportunity for refugee engagement, mobilization and empowerment via the media of photography, video and music. In times like the COVID-19 global pandemic, when physical contact was suspended and the most vulnerable social groups immensely affected, the call for art was as imperative as never before. When the workshops were cancelled due to the sudden unprecedented measures taken, we inevitably moved to online meetings and classes with the help of various tools, like LMS (Learning Management Platforms), blogging sites and social media. Since participant refugees were already in a vulnerable position, many different literal and metaphorical connotations were attributed to the notion of home. Educators/facilitators had to urgently re-create a safe virtual environment, in order to deliver a vital creative space for all those involved, to help reduce isolation, improve confidence, combat stress, encourage staying active and at the same time explore new pathways to communication and creativity. These virtual workshops created during lockdown a safe place, a “virtual home” for participants, that enhanced refugee resilience and brought them back stronger and emotionally more connected than before. These (emotional and creative) links were vital both for educators/facilitators and participants, a reminder that despite separations we stayed connected and strong.

**Keywords:** Resilience, refugees, COVID-19, audiovisual workshops, photography, video, music, empowerment

*“Bringing people together, inspiring, soothing and sharing: these are the powers of art, the importance of which has been made emphatically obvious during the COVID-19 pandemic”. Audrey Azoulay<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup>Audrey Azoulay , Director-General of UNESCO, message on the occasion of World Art Day, 15 April 2020, [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373211\\_eng](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373211_eng)

## Introduction

Curing the Limbo (Ctl)<sup>1</sup> is a complex, innovative, multi-layered European pilot project in the city of Athens for the inclusion of adult refugees who have received asylum but have not yet managed to normalize their lives in Athens. It is a project with a lot of different levels of engagement and commitment, which aims to support refugees to exit the "limbo" state, caused by long-time inactiveness and an overall feeling of uncertainty by implementing a dynamic and innovative model for integration that allows them to become socially active.

This is achieved through attending courses in Greek, English and ICT, gaining access to affordable housing, receiving professional counseling services tailored to their needs. Also, it provides workshops for "Audiovisual Expression and Creativity" (A/V workshops). By using art materials for self-expression, creative connection and learning artistically it offers the opportunity for refugees' engagement, mobilization and empowerment via the media of photography, video and music.

Refugees are a vulnerable group exposed to harsh conditions, inequalities, discrimination, social exclusion along with an ongoing feeling of profound loss (safety, home, family, identity), trauma and stress about their future (Kottler et al., 2019). The outbreak of the worldwide COVID – 19 crisis and the social isolation as a crucial measure to reduce its transmission, intensified the anxiety and insecurity in their lives (Júnior et al. 2020). Furthermore, in Greece, the lockdown magnified the lack of effective infrastructure for vulnerable groups and brought to surface problems, social issues and inequalities (Papadados-Anagnostopoulos et al., 2020).

The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress is commonly defined as resilience. It has been described as both an outcome and a process and has been used to refer to both individuals and communities (McCleary & Figley, 2017). As a dynamic psychosocial process it refers to a spectrum of mechanisms that people develop, individually and socially, in order to cope and recover from sudden adversities. Williams and Drury (2010) refer to collective resilience as the way groups of people respond to, cope with, and recover from emergencies and disasters. In that sense, as much as resilience involves "bouncing back" from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal and social growth. The arts, as a powerful container of extreme emotions and an alternative form of communication, have always been a bulwark against the dystopian conditions facing humanity (Kalmanowitz, 2016; Lenette, 2019; McGregor & Ragab, 2016; Shand, 2014).

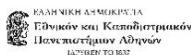
The arts can perform as an alternative form of communication and a powerful vehicle of individual as well as community expression (Lowe, 2000). Art's symbolic language can overcome the barriers of spoken languages and touch people's hearts and minds without any other intervention.

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 ΒΑΣΙΚΟΣ ΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

 ΕΤΑΙΡΟΙ
 

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Το πρόγραμμα συγχρηματοδοτείται από το Εργασιακό Ταμείο Περιφερειακής Ανάπτυξης μέσω της Πρωτοβουλίας Ασιατικές Καινοτόμες Αράξεις

Contemporary art therapists have demonstrated its healing capacity. As S.J. Wolin and S. Wolin (as cited in Worrall & Jerry, 2007) aptly phrase it: "Creativity has the transformative power to shape a person's pain and trauma into something new, through the sheer act of painting, drawing or sculpting" (p. 36). We will take it a step further to include all the possible forms of art and creative expression. In particular, we will exemplify the impact of the A/V workshops of CtL, where refugee participants learn and explore photography, storytelling, video, singing and music, on the lives of everyone involved during the pandemic and the lockdown.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the A/V workshops aimed at retaining levels of good functioning despite the new stressful life conditions and helped the refugee participants, together with the educators/facilitators, cope with the negative feelings of stress, anxiety, fear, isolation and loneliness and remain connected, active and creative. In this respect, we claim that the A/V workshops, acted as a resilience apparatus that motivated the refugee participants to acclimatize to the new hardship and deal with the psychological consequences in a much more and resourceful way.

### **Online A/V workshops as a resilient response to the Covid- 19 pandemic**

The participant refugees in the A/V workshops had already formed strong bonds with the majority of the people in the project and had acquired a sense of belonging and a feeling of community long before the COVID – 19 outbreak<sup>1</sup>. The participants had gradually started feeling at "home" and the people they had close contact with were perceived as extended "family". This trust, mutual feelings and understanding were strengthened and deepened even more during the lockdown. In this context, the educational approach inspired by an Action Research and participatory art methodology applied, took into account the developing group dynamics depending on the active contribution of the participants, and adjusted accordingly its corpus and goals on the basis of their diverse origin, language and culture. The ultimate objective remained support during their adjustment to their host country and their gradual social inclusion in their new life.

We had just started a new cycle of A/V workshops when the lockdown<sup>2</sup> was imposed in Greece. At that time, all three workshops (photography, video, music) included refugees coming from different countries, of different ethnicity, religion and cultural background. Living under various conditions in Athens (family flats, communal houses, shared rooms in camps, homeless) the majority faced digital poverty: inadequate mobile phones and limited access to Internet. The participants viewed our relationship, as something more than a formal class and regardless of whether they could attend the online courses, they wanted to keep in touch purely for the human contact and the communication.

Very briefly, the major priorities and challenges set were to:

remain personally motivated and transmit this to our groups

keep our groups connected and active as frequently as possible

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<sup>1</sup> The lockdown in Greece began gradually on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March when all the educational institutions were suspended followed by a general shut down and restriction of movements on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, which lasted until the 4<sup>th</sup> of May. The A/V workshops opened again two weeks later.

provide easily accessible tools

impart new skills that would encourage refugees and help them stay productive

inspire them to be creative with every means available

be flexible and adjust to the group's dynamics allowing the maximum possible participation

The online technology tools employed for this purpose were:

WhatsApp groups

Messenger

Zoom meetings

Google Class

Wix blogging

Acapella MakerVideo Collage

### **Case studies from the three workshops (photography, video, music)**

All the participants in all three workshops succeeded in producing distinctive artworks, created in harsh conditions and unhappy times. Even those who didn't manage to attend fully they kept in frequent contact. The three works presented below, reveal the diversity, depth and personal engagement of their creators. The connotations and underlying meaning are still being studied.

#### **Photography workshop** (conducted by Maria Pesli)

In the photography workshop we worked on the notion of "home" in a broader sense so as to include also the temporally homeless, in order to explore the new implications and meanings it acquired during the lockdown. Through a number of exercises, the participants portrayed "home" visually and textually as a shelter, a place of security, intimacy, memory, creativity; a place where time passes and allows us to reflect upon our identity and our feeling of belonging.

An Iranian male participant, A., worked on the theme of memory through family albums, childhood pictures and memorabilia from his country. Yet, because he didn't have any photographs from his childhood he found black and white pictures of the 70' in the web. He printed and placed them among his family pictures around a big mirror in the hallway, the coffee table in his lounge, over a carpet and on a rope indicative of those he played with as a child. The installations he created, without even knowing what an installation is, were accompanied by a self – narrative text:

"A journey throughout time, with photographs recalling memories from the past, reminiscent of my childhood, from which I have so many memories and thought to portray them with objects and old pictures.

However, since I left my country many years ago, I don't have access to my old personal photographs, so I searched in the web to find images that would remind me of my own childhood and the games I used to play.

I chose to change the photographs into black and white to be similar to my childhood's images; I printed them and photographed them. Yet, I didn't feel the same emotional bond through this process, so I came up with a new concept.

I hung the photographs on a line with pegs and took shots of them. Furthermore, my inner sense urged me to another creative and inventive idea: I thought that two photos on the foreground should be seen clearly focused and the rest on the line blurred, as an analogy to my strong memories and the faded ones. Naturally, I wanted to take these photographs outdoors, nevertheless because of the corona virus measures, I did this at home"

#### **Video workshop** (conducted by Stelios Oikonomidis)

In the video workshop we gradually set up a virtual class where we shared notes, presentations, and links, regarding the language and the art of video. A main assignment was about short video essays about the participants' favorite things inside their homes.

N. a female participant from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), created a very emotional short clip where she is combing her wigs with a small razor. N. shared an apartment with other people, so sometimes it was hard for her during the lockdown. In this video we can see these feelings being expressed in her unique way. The frame is a low angle shot where we can see N. sitting and holding a black wig, while at the same time a blonde wig is also on her lap. While she takes care of the wigs, she begins talking by saying:

"I am in the house... I am in the process of putting in order my wigs, because I have nothing else to do... We are inside, we sleep, we wake up, we eat. We are looking all the time for something to do, and that's why I am taking care of my wigs. I am confined at home; we can't celebrate [it is Easter time] and we can't do anything. I'm always sleeping and too much sleep is no good. It's like being sick. So instead of sleeping I am right here! And I am in the process of taking care of my wigs. So how are you doing? Are you OK?"

[She is addressing to the facilitator and the other members of the video class, and at the end of the video she looks at the camera and she says:]

"I am fine, with the grace of God I am fine... Thank you"

#### **Music workshop** (conducted by Christos Pieridis)

In the music workshop we saw the period of the lockdown as an opportunity to establish an online musical community to continue our work under these unprecedented conditions. Our task was to record the participants singing their favorite song which later the facilitator would accompany them on the piano using the Acapella Maker Video Collage application. They all felt the need to sing songs from their homelands, bringing out memories and feelings of nostalgia.

S., a woman from Afghanistan, who had moved to the island of Lesvos before the lockdown chose to sing a love song called "Sultan E Qalbam" in Dari. She believed it was composed by the famous Afghan musician Ahmad Zahir. However, through the Zoom meetings, a male participant from Iran, D., explained that it was originally an Iranian song in Farsi, performed also in a 1968 Iranian film named "Soltan Ghalbha". They decided to sing it together in Dari. Their singing was recorded separately and was put together with the help of Acapella Maker Video Collage application and a

video editing program. Along with nostalgia "it is also an expression to the person I love", as D. explained and the lyrics reveal:

"You are the king of my heart,  
You have broken my heart  
You promised to be my love  
I am still waiting for you"

### **Conclusions: creating a safe and brighter environment at unsafe times**

Our reading of the art-work created during the lockdown is still shaping. Reflecting back over our personal experiences we can share a few thoughts of how resilience is being built through the A/V workshops. Our aim from the very beginning of the lockdown was how to keep the refugee participants safe, active and motivated. Our ongoing communication, interaction and exchange of ideas, often on a person – to – person level, transmitted a feeling of personal care and attention, necessary for those who live alone and don't have any family and relatives here in Athens. Likewise, the weekly online group meetings and discussions we held, created the vibrancy of a social life, developed a network and offered a sense of normality and routine we were all missing at that time. The fact the participants devoted time and energy to continue learning and creating is a victory in its own right. But there was one more achievement worth mentioning: a positive attitude and an artistic outlook against inertia and limbo: a "creative boredom" as Stelios Oikonomidis, our video educator, called it.

Regarding the classes and training, the constant adjustment to the dynamics of the group and the individuals' needs and the employment of participatory tools in the whole process, allowed the participants the freedom and time to self-reflect on their work, their identity and their life. Common themes emerged in all three workshops: boredom, family, spirituality, memory, introspection. Our assumption is that the online courses, the creative process and tools we applied contributed to resilience evident in the artworks produced, highlighting the ongoing trauma of loss (of one's country, identity, relatives, memory), their need to preserve their memories, culture and personal history, reconstructing partly their identity.

Finally, it is important to share a few lines of our experience during the lockdown. As the weeks went by and we were faced with our own personal fatigue and insecurities, the fact we had to keep motivated our participants to continue attending the online meetings provided one more goal and purpose to fight for. In other words, our effort to keep them active and endorse resilience in them, feeded back on us and was perceived as a gift from them. Thus mutual empowerment was experienced, a two sided, resilience mechanism. It was very satisfying to know that we contributed to the creation of a safe and brighter environment in an unsafe and dark world.

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## **School Culture and Innovation: Does the Post-Pandemic World COVID-19 Invite to Transition or to Rupture?**

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### **Abstract**

This article discusses the relations between school culture and the innovation processes necessary for schools, inserted in a complex, globalized, plural and technological society, to continue to meet the needs of their students. It seeks to highlight the educational legacies of the twentieth century (SAVIANI, 2017), the paradigmatic transitions in education (PACHECO, 2019; VALDEMARIN, 2017) and the school rituals that constitute the culture, essential to explain the purposes of the school (not the teaching objectives, but the reason for the existence of the school), and consequently, the definition of the curriculum and the strengthening of teacher's identity (SOUZA, 2017). From the explanation of the school's purpose, we begin to discuss the relationship that it should establish with digital culture and with innovational processes. Crises drive innovation because they create different needs for people (PACHECO, 2019; BENITO, 2017). The moment that is being lived, generating new needs, will drive innovations in educational and schools. It is important to have clarity of the school purpose of education, so that the ruptures and innovations are ethical and might meet the welfare of the students (CORNISH, 2019) and the teachers, as well as the educational needs of an ethical citizen, globally and locally.

**Keywords:** Covid19, School culture, Curriculum, Digital culture, Innovation.

### **Introduction**

The pandemic experienced in 2020 due to the spread of the COVID-19 Virus provoked serial reactions from different social and economic sectors. The ease of contagion (air routes) and the rapidity of the manifestation and spread of symptoms, caused sovereign states and international communities to decide on collective measures, in some cases, radical measures of isolation and social distancing, aiming to reduce forms of infection and/or slowing their contagion curve.

The pandemic initially hit health care, shed a severe light on the vulnerabilities and challenges facing humanity in respect to all the social rights. Alongside this loss of social rights, we perceived a clear picture of existing inequalities.

Among the measures taken, one that generated the most social and economic impact was undoubtedly the suspension of educational activities around the world with the immediate cancellation of classes and/or educational adaptations, conducting classes using technological

mediation. More precisely, according to UNESCO data (2020), more than 1.5 billion students had their learning impaired due to the closure of schools.

This situation has raised a series of issues and problems that lead us to reconnect with and rediscover the social role of education; to face and recognize the concrete economic, social and infrastructure inequalities involved in education and, above all, conduct us to reflect upon the very meaning and scope of Education.

In June 2020, UNESCO published a paper intitled "Education in a post-COVID world: Nine ideas for public action" in which it advocates that "We cannot return to the world as it was before" and invites us to think about ways, principles and possibilities to have no educational setback.

Among the guidelines and ideas for post-pandemic education are: 1) The definition of 'right to education' provided special attention to the issue of connectivity and access to knowledge and to information; 2) Protection of the social spaces provided by schools, considered indispensable, but in which new "school practices" should be observed, preserving the space-time of collective life; 3) Ensure that scientific literacy within the curriculum, actively placing ourselves against the empire of disinformation (ignorance or fake news) and, 4) Promoting global solidarity to end the current levels of inequality.

We highlight these ideas because, more accurately, they are also part of the discussion that involves School Culture, and impulses us to think on the complexity, inter-relations and continuity of Education, Society and Curriculum. Therefore, to guarantee continuity and to try to understand what this "new normal" will demand of educators, it is essential to acknowledge how school culture and curriculum relate to society. Souza (2017) also points out the same proposal in Sacristán (1998), Forquin (1993):

[...] studies in school culture that can explain the various dimensions of the internal functioning of schools in their relationship with society, particularly the functioning of the curriculum, are indispensable. Raw material of teaching practice and essential reason for the existence of school, as Sacristán states, the concern and focus in curriculum, "the definition of culture and its conditions for development and meaning" in educational institutions, is at the heart of such an undertaking (Sacristán apud FORQUIN, 1993, p. 21).

Hence society is going through a major crisis, educational institutions are also undertaking this crisis and will suffer these effects in its culture and in curriculum. However, will we be able to acknowledge this? In what dimension will school culture and curriculum be affected by this crisis?

Crises drive innovation processes because they create new and different needs for people (Pacheco, 2019; Benito, 2017). The moment that is being lived, generating new needs, is expected to drive innovations in educational and school processes. However, to do so, it is important to have clarity of the purposes of school, of education, so that the ruptures and innovations brought forth can meet the educating needs of an ethical citizen, globally and locally.

What kind of changes and innovations do we desire in schools or in the teaching-learning procedures? Do we want schools for new types of citizens? What exactly do we need to change in schools? Will this be an opportunity to promote changes in our teaching methodologies? Or in curriculum?

As António Viñao (2007) reminds us, every reform, change, or innovation produces anticipated, or even desired effects. Other times, the changes alter behavior or induce the opposite attitudes or, even antagonistic to what had been originally desired. Therefore, new situations need to be reflected upon, so that we can observe the real changes. There are occasions in that the changes will become authentic educational innovations, in other, curricular ones. However, alternations will only really be considered as part of the new school culture when, on the horizon, we glimpse its consolidation and structure during the process.

Much has been asked about the consequences of the pandemic: we are either facing a rupture, in which we will perceive a paradigmatic revolution in all social areas, including education, or we are observing a moment proper to social evolution, in which we will observe transitions of processes and procedures, but we will keep the model already established.

### **School Culture and Society**

The political, economic, and pedagogical decisions taken in the context of COVID-19 had their implementation in a short period of time but will have long-term consequences. These decisions will impact the analysis of policymakers, the theoretical elaborations of educators and their respective educational communities – which may become transnational.

Since the 1970s, it has been perceived that when we are faced with situations like this, we are led to realize the impact on School Culture. This concept derives from the conception that both school practices and educational processes are part of broader cultural processes (Gonçalves & Faria Fo, 2005, p.32) and, therefore, every time we have changes in cultural macro-structures we will observe their reflections in School Culture.

António Viñao (2007), a Spanish philosopher, points out that school institutions and educational systems constantly change and, in this process, will perceive different types of relationships with external aspects and with the internal aspects of the system. Therefore, we need to understand the measure, the aspect and the march for changes, and the different lessons that we can perceive in them, namely:

It is therefore necessary to distinguish at least two types of educational changes: those that are due to long-term socio-educational processes – in which external aspects or conditions play a relevant role – and those others, more limited to school but also lengthened over time, of an organizational-curricular nature. This is not, of course, an absolute division. Both changes interact with each other, however their outcome outlines the relationship between school culture, reforms, and innovations.

The fact that in both cases these are long-term processes – longer, in any case, the former – is not the result of chance or a discursive strategy. The first lesson that offers a historical view of school reforms and changes is the contrast between the latter – which usually take place in a slow and almost imperceptible way – and the impatient and noisy clamor of reformers with their calendars and their persistent and failed pretensions to "reinvent" the school. (António Viñao, 2007, p.5. Authors' own translation)

We understand, then, that such a conception must recognize that school norms and practices should be understood in aspects related not only to the context of their production, but also to their purpose, to their time and context, and, in a special way, their primary intention, enabling answers to religious, socio-political or economic inquiries, as it turns out today, sanitary

inquiries. Therefore, we are dealing with the identification of different school cultures, in the same space-time (geographically and chronologically considered).

Dialoguing with António Viñao, Dominique Julia (2001), a French historian, develops his thesis to justify the potentialities of understanding the concept from his historiographical perspective. For this, the author defends that the analysis of school culture needs to be done in relation to the set of contemporary cultures. Thus, school culture as "a set of norms that define which knowledge to be taught and the behavior to be inculcated, and a set of practices that allow the transmission of this knowledge and the incorporation of these behaviors" (Julia, 2001, p. 10).

Philippe Perrenoud, a Swiss sociologist, understands that there are situations in which school culture can also be analyzed from the perspective of the construction of teachers' *savoir-faire*, taking into account the possibility that this analysis occurs at times when the "school submits this knowledge, and in a global way, the practices and cultures, to a set of transformations that make it teachable", in a movement ranging from the selection of knowledge, through their didacticization, that is, making it teachable, to the "effective learning of students" (Perrenoud, 1993, p. 25, cited by Gonçalves & Faria Fo, 2005, p.32).

These great conceptions make us realize that school culture is structurally and systematically linked to great social transformations, dialoguing especially with History, Sociology and Anthropology. This complexity allows us to move on a reflection that can be both comprehensive of the great processes of interlocution, and responsive to the most particular aspects of the school routine.

For this reason, Viñao (2007) went ahead in his thesis by warning us that also the educational systems, the teaching institutions experience in addition to external changes, numerous internal changes, especially circumscribed to the curricular organizational scope. These are changes that can be observed with a 'microscope' and readily identified because they objectively alter the school routine, the 'school doing', such as the insertion of a new discipline, the institution of a new working method or a new technological resource. Changes that, because they are surgical, have a profound and immediate impact on all educational processes and school life.

Reflecting on pedagogical and educational changes, considering the category of School Culture, allows us, therefore, to investigate, guiding a proposal of theoretical and methodological renewal of epistemological contexts, organizational contexts, and disciplinary contexts. This perspective allows schools to appropriate themselves of the meaning their practices convey.

Such concern appears in Michel Young (2007), an English educator, who throws the fundamental and always current question of "What is school for?" In addition to being inserted in the discussion of School Culture, this question should be asked repeatedly by the entire academic community and by society in general, permanently, that is, as an agenda. From the perspective of such an agenda, parents, adults responsible for minors, schools, teachers, and politicians become active participants in the powerful construction of knowledge.

More than raising the question, the author reminds us that such an analysis is vital for the Sociology of Education, because the question of the awareness of intentionality (What is it for? ) is what guarantees autonomy, authority and, above all, the trust that schools have for and with society. (Young, 2007)

The complex literature on School Culture reveals "pandora's box of school education", as Julia (2001) would define. Benito (2017), for this reason, reminds us that school culture is a legitimate pedagogical heritage – material and immaterial. The historiography of school culture allows us to reach its biographical and social memory, opening the possibility of processing it as a

Patrimonial education focused on the identity of the narrative of the subjects and the formation of a new citizenship. The investigation of the history and culture of the school, from an archaeological perspective, supported by the study of materiality's, their institutional uses, and the narrative value that the actors attribute to it, suggests the construction of a new subjectivity. (Benito, 2017, p. 25)

In an effort, therefore, to understand the locus of contemporary problems and understanding that school culture dialogues with the great social changes (macro) and internalizes them with changes in pedagogical practices and processes, we will dedicate ourselves to establishing parameters and guidelines to understand the changes caused in school culture due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **The unveiling of the world's sensitivity: reflections on the Pandemic**

We try to surround ourselves with the utmost certainty, but to live is to sail in a sea of uncertainty, through islands and archipelagos of certainties in which we refuel. (Edgard Morin. Certainties are an illusion. 2020)

As stated, the Covid-19 pandemic has generated numerous impacts on global society. UNESCO data inform us that the mere suspension of school activities and processes has directly impacted the lives of more than 1 billion inhabitants of the planet, and alone demonstrates the strength of social change. Economic, political, and pedagogical decisions have been made and will impact, for many years, the entire school culture.

The fact is that the COVID-19 pandemic revealed social and economic vulnerabilities – including technological infrastructure – in a global way. But, also, it has emerged the extraordinary human resources and potential, capable of giving immediate answers and revealing that pragmatism and rapid actions when based on great principles and under the best purposes.

The statement UNESCO and many world theorists have made is that we cannot return to the world in the same way as it was before. We cannot therefore have institutional arrangements at the international and national level restructured in a way that doesn't dialogue with the principal school actors. As it has not been seen for a long time, for example, decisions regarding the performance of school activities were taken by health authorities, not pedagogical. We became aware of our vulnerable health and of how states and politicians prioritize their actions, especially regarding the construction of public health care systems.

If school culture is impacted by society and vice-versa, shouldn't teachers be heard about how to proceed upon this emergency? Our politicians demonstrated their worries in respect to our fragile health during this pandemic but, little was heard about how to go about the fact that students were without formal education.

Teachers, in many countries, took it into their hands to guarantee a minimum of continuity of education during this period. In doing so, they came in touch and researched new forms of

teaching and the possibilities of teaching with technology. How will these teachers come back? How will this experience impact school culture?

Philosophers, pedagogues, sociologists, and economists have dedicated themselves to understanding and leading us to reflect upon what we are experiencing. What has been revealed to us? What was unveiled to us? What will be delegated to us?

The Portuguese philosopher Boaventura Santos (2020) wrote a text early in the Pandemic, entitled "The Cruel Pedagogy of the Virus." " In this paper, he states that it is possible to learn from the "Virus", but this will only happen in fact if we are ready to abandon the world as we knew it before and abandon our desire to return to "normal".

He understands that the virus has revealed the consequences of our options. In the last 40 (forty) years we have not paid attention to the seriousness of ecological issues and to issues related to social and economic inequalities. Therefore, it is not enough for us to have passive attitude of acceptance that we will no longer have the same world.

We need a different attitude, one of promotion of concrete and effective change. Not only to abandon our way of life before the pandemic, but also to position ourselves energetically willing to create a new life, with a new pattern of consumption of nature and, above all, with new ways of participation and political insertion in our communities, among these insertions, direct involvement in the construction of school identity.

The Brazilian indigenist philosopher Ailton Krenak wrote a strong manifesto entitled "Tomorrow is not for sale." (2020). In it, the indigenist agrees with Boaventura in saying that the pandemic is not a surprise, but rather the consequence of a process of non-legitimation of the knowledge of ancestral cultures, especially those in respect to nature.

He argues that humanity needs to emerge differently from this pandemic and understand that it is not an accident but an incident in the trajectory of the economic and social choices that we take on a daily basis in all our actions. The way out is to re-humanize ourselves; that is, to place man, his dignity, and his preservation as an essential recipient of our actions. What is at stake, therefore, is not only the change of the way of life, but the confirmation or not of our human character:

Let us hope we do not get back to normal, because if we go back, it is because it was not worth the death of thousands of people all over the world. After all that, people will not want to wrangle their oxygen again with dozens of colleagues in a small workspace. [...] We cannot go back to that rhythm[...].

It would be like converting to denialism, accepting that the Earth is flat and that we should keep devouring ourselves. Then, yes, we will have proved that humanity is a lie. (Krenak, 2020, p.14)

Yuval Harari, Israeli historian, is emphatic in stating in an interview that "We will go on living, but we will inhabit a new world"(Harari, 2020). For him, who has dedicated himself to understanding how man dialogues with his historicity, what awaits us is a very rich period, in which we have to discuss essential topics such as privacy, the role of the State, solidarity between nations. However, he, warns that the "[...] the storm will pass. But the decisions we make today will change our lives in the years to come."

For Harari, the Pandemic delegates responsibility for a new global pact, with the establishment of a new citizenship and a new parameter of humanity. In a unique way and never even imagined by researchers, the pandemic made us live and participate in a 'large-scale social experiment that would never have been approved'. At the same time, from the West to the East, in the northern and southern hemispheres, entire societies have altered their daily lives, their eating and hygiene habits, their policies and judicial decisions, and their pedagogical processes.

Thus, if we do not commit ourselves to a new "tomorrow" we run the risk of repeating the dynamics of the twentieth centuries that witnessed numerous emergency situations, in which temporal measures were taken that had the "ugly habit of [not] surviving the emergencies".

The coronavirus epidemic is therefore a great proof of citizenship. In the coming days, each of us will have to choose between relying on scientific data and medical care experts, or unfounded conspiracy theories and political interest. If we do not make the right decision, we could be renouncing our most cherished freedoms, thinking that this is the only way to safeguard our health. (Harari, 2020).

One of the consequences of the pandemic for the author is the empowerment of the new citizen. Among the main changes, he points out that science, education and technology can recover spaces of trust in society – lost especially in recent years –, contribute to the socialization and identification of healthy habits and reduction of health hazards, as well as insert us into participatory democratic processes, since it forced us to follow government decisions and taught us to dimension the risks inherent to them.

The French educator, Edgard Morin, is also a supporter of the idea that we should expect changes. Such changes will focus on the economic, political and, above all, human spheres. In economic changes we will experience a time with new forms of work, differentiated concern with the health and qualification of workers, decision-making processes with less hierarchy. In political changes we will have a resizing of the collective value of solidarity and the culture of consumption. And in human change, we will have to strengthen our humanism, re-establish the criteria for our sense of equality.

The pandemic comes to make us recognize that we are "adrift" of the world. That we very quickly assume the habit of seeing any and all knowledge as dogmas, absolute certainties, however, "Certainties are an illusion".

Science is a human reality that, like democracy, is based on the debates of ideas, although its methods of verification are more rigorous. Despite this, the main accepted theories tend to become dogmatized, and the great innovators have always fought for their findings to be recognized.

The episode we are going through today may therefore be arousing the right time to make citizens and researchers aware of the need to understand that scientific theories are not absolute, like the dogmas of religions, but biodegradable. (Morin, 2020)

In this biodegradable world, the pandemic presents itself as an opportunity to become permanently aware of these human truths that we all know, but which are repressed in our subconscious: that love, friendship, communion, solidarity are what make the quality of life.

In the same perspective, the Spanish educator and sociologist Manuel Castells, sentences: The world has already changed; never more will it be as we know it! This unveiling, as if in a hurry

to pluck the *band-aid* from the skin, is what should guide us. Castells points out that our task now is to ask, "how the world has changed?" and no longer "will it change?".

Among the many modifications, the philosopher bets that Education has been hit the fastest. For him, online education will gain more and more space and more quality, especially breaking prejudiced barriers that have been sustaining themselves in recent decades. However, this will not be possible if there is no change of political orientation. If there was one thing that the pandemic revealed to us is that we are inserted in a global society in which there is a deep technological inequality, as well as social inequality and it reveals itself in all areas.

What is most interesting, and with which we utterly agree, for him, face-to-face teaching will never disappear, because his "band width is much higher than that of the fiberoptic network." (Castells, 2020a). In this way, we can expect as a consequence "A great frontier of pedagogical innovation and investment in teaching," faced with the perception that Education is a fundamental part of the social fabric and, above all, of the civilizing process. The educator says that now is the time for humanity to make a 'great reset'.

However, the biggest reset, is the one that is happening in our heads and lives. It is that we have realized the fragility of everything we believed guaranteed, of the importance of affections, of the resource of solidarity, of the importance of an embrace — and that no one will take us away, because it is better to die embraced than to live in fear.

It is to feel that the consumer waste in which we mistakenly spend our resources is not necessary, because we need no more than a few eats and drinks with friends on the balcony. [...]

The necessary reset is a portal to a new way of life, another culture, another economy. It is good that we value it, because the alternative to it is the masochistic nostalgia of a world that is gone not to return.

Life goes on, but another life. It's up to us to make it wonderful." (Castells, 2020b)

There is no denying the impact of the Pandemic on the world. Not only for their expressive numbers, but above all for the depth of dialogue and reflections on the cultural changes that we are facing and that we will face.

The pandemic has revealed to us, more as confirmation than innovative postulation, that such changes are directly proportional to our choices, including those related to nature. It revealed to us the possibility of a new humanitarian pact, sensitive to the world, to citizenship, attentive to the desires of men and women. And it delegated to us the responsibility to promote reflection upon, and change about the world in which we live, our options and our forms of cultural appropriation.

As we can all verify, the pandemic reaffirmed that one of the most sensitive and powerful aspects in our society is education and, its basic social institution, the School. The School was one of the institutions that most quickly responded to new needs, as it was already rehearsing an insertion of innovative and digital culture. And it did so without losing sight of, rather reinforcing, its social and political dimension.

Jane Soares de Almeida says that this is the belief of all those who are dedicated to the understanding of Education:

Even recognizing [...] difficulties in the immanent educational field [...] they share the belief in a school that, in the labyrinthine universal entropy, characteristic of present times, still becomes one of the last bulwarks of peoples' hope, whether belonging to this or to that nation, as part of a globalized world that has never shown so many human similarities before the useless social abysses. (Saviani, Almeida, Souza & Valdemarin, 2014, p.3)

### **School Culture and Digital Culture in the Pandemic: changes or ruptures**

As we have seen, social conditions change. Naturally, due to their expected and desired processes of transformation, or abruptly, in the face of a need that is imposed.

If cultures change, so do institutions. Thus, as António Viñao (2007) states, educational institutions change. The educator tells us that such changes are fruit of a combination, among many other possibilities and imaginations, of the constant tension between tradition and innovation, notably as a consequence of decisions limited sometimes by external factors, sometimes by technological constraints, sometimes by alteration of practices and processes. All these elements can be grouped into the concept of School Culture.

"[...]This term, of ambiguous and polysemic significance, comprises, in its historical perspective, as stated, a set of ways of doing and thinking, of beliefs and practices, of shared mentalities and behaviors within educational institutions, which are passed on to new members of the school community, especially teachers and students, and that provide strategies to integrate, interact and carry out, especially in the classroom, the tasks that are expected of each one, as well as, at the same time, to meet the demands and limitations they involve or transport." (Viñao, 2007, p.09)

In effect, we have experienced, as teachers, two different kinds of stimulus for change in our daily practices that might possibly influence our School Culture. On one hand, as already pointed out, the inequality due to the low technological access students have for their learning experiences and for accessing information is an aspect that governments and school administrators will need to face. This unveiling, if ignored, will reveal unethical intentions. It is something that necessarily needs to be faced.

On the other hand, many teachers were faced with the possibility of altering their methods of teaching using the social network students are habituated to use; using different types of APPs and platforms created for sharing and collaborating on line, that necessarily existed, but did not enter into our daily lesson plans. The challenge we now face, when we return to our physical classrooms is to blend our meetings with activities that implicate the students in creating and interacting with each other on-line, using these app. We are challenged to comprehend that technology will not substitute teachers but will enhance their capability of provoking learning and communication with students in a more constant manner, as these technologies for communication permit.

Akash Singhal, a CEO in India, states that:

By the time this pandemic will be defeated, we also have a chance of overcoming all the problems and cons related to the traditional and unorganized form of schooling.

E-learning services, coupled with Collaborative LMS offering such as - Auto-Quiz creation, teachers performance reviews, expertly curated content library, one tap-assignments, Instant messaging, and doubt clearing sessions, etc. will become the best friends of the whole education fraternity. (Singhal, 2020)

However, as pointed out earlier, these experiments, if not accurately reflected and thought about, will dissipate when we return. We will not survive the crises if we do not think about it seriously. As pointed out by Castells, face-to-face teaching will never go away, but it will gain new force, new energy. Nevertheless, only if closely thought about and seriously related to prior experiences and prior knowledge of what it means to teach, to learn, to be in school.

In an interview given to The Harvard Gazette, former secretary of Education for Massachusetts, Paul Reville, stated:

In politics we say, "Never lose the opportunity of a crisis." And in this situation, we do not simply want to frantically struggle to restore the status quo because the status quo was not operating at an effective level and certainly was not serving all of our children fairly. There are things we can learn in the messiness of adapting through this crisis, which has revealed profound disparities in children's access to support and opportunities. We should be asking: How do we make our school, education, and child-development systems more individually responsive to the needs of our students? Why not construct a system that meets children where they are and gives them what they need inside and outside of school to be successful? Let us take this opportunity to end the "one size fits all" factory model of education. (Reville, 2020)

School culture was already being put in "check" before the pandemic because we weren't communicating with this generation of students of the XXI century, we weren't meeting their needs. At the same time, we observe that when challenged to learn using technology and apps, this generation has much difficulty, because, they know how to use it for leisure, for social communication, but not for studying, not for systematization of knowledge. For that, they need the teacher's mediation.

Now, we are at a turning point. We need to be conscious of this; we need to seek more training and more abilities to insert these resources in our pedagogy. But we can't turn back. It is important to reevaluate School Culture and to understand how it will be impacted from this experience. It is our, the teachers', the responsibility to do so and to bring forth this discussion in society. Will we make small changes, adaptations, that in the first opportunity will fall back into old habits? Or will we rupture with old paradigms?

## **Conclusion**

This paper started out problematizing how the COVID 19 virus and the closing is affecting the role of education and its political, economic, social, and infrastructural impact on society and from society.

The challenge made in June 2020, by UNESCO, and made opportune by ICSS, to write in defense of the idea that "We cannot return to the world as it was before" was faced by the discussion we proposed, so that some principles were raised.

Among the many guidelines already pointed out, this paper aimed to consider two important aspects that involve the "right to education" and interact with the concept of School Culture.

First, a structural change: the confrontation of the necessity to extend access to information to all types of students and populations, expanding connectivity as one of the demands for education.

In second place, the need for all educators to recall on the significance and the aspects that contribute and constitute what is called School Culture and the effects of forced on-line teaching on this culture, in order to guarantee adequate interaction amidst Society, Education and Curriculum.

We discussed how curriculum relates with valued knowledge in society and how the movements and events lived socially influence education, because they create new needs, new behavior, new forms of interaction. And in school, all these aspects come together composing school culture.

Another concept discussed in this paper relates to how COVID19 unveiled our social weaknesses, our contradictions, our prejudice, the inequality, our fragile health systems. However, it also unveiled our characters, for good, for solidarity, for courage. It revealed how teachers, even if with small conditions deficient abilities involving technology, are committed with their students, with their professions.

We affirmed that this crisis being experienced might generate innovation, but to do so, will necessarily demand clarity about the purpose of schools in society, and teachers and educators, as a whole, will have to reflect upon the experience and the new possibilities that it brought to teaching and to student's development. This commixture of elements historically composing our ideas of schools, teachers and of students, along with the on-line teaching and on-line learning experienced, the technology, the learning platforms and the use of social networks all compose a possible new school culture.

Each community, each school district, each school will need to "look in the mirror" and examine the needs of its own students, the conditions that need confronting and change. This is the opportunity to do so.

Altogether, school culture dialogues with the great social changes (macro) and internalizes them with changes in pedagogical practices and processes. Nonetheless, teachers will need to navigate in uncertain oceans, find new islands to rest and reflect, but the rupture will happen when we all, as teachers, realize that the new culture implies a restlessness that resists the establishment of new dogmas, and promotes continuous pursuit for satisfying new needs and demands of new generations and of society.

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## Measures and Possible Support Solutions of the Sustainable European Economy in the Context of Actual Crises

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### Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic involves the major risk of a severe recession, and of the economic, financial, social, educational crises, which will affect the entire EU economy, with consequences for citizens, businesses, jobs, and households. In order to guarantee the continued availability of sufficient liquidity on the market, to counteract the damage caused to healthy enterprises and to maintain the continuity of economic activity during the epidemic and after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is necessary to develop a plan of measures and solutions. supporting the European economy, both through direct measures of state aid, as well as through measures to support/develop/innovate the business environment through the EU funding programs allocated at the level of the Member States both in the period 2014-2020, but more elected 2021-2027, the effects of the current crisis being both short term, but especially in the medium and long term. Among the objectives pursued we propose: identification and proposal of state aid measures to support the economy in the context of the current epidemic of COVID-19 through close coordination at European level of the aid measures; estimating the impact of temporary state aid measures on the European economy through the intervention of the European Commission; and ways to attract European funds for the business environment through the European Union funding programs existing in the budget for the period 2014-2020, but especially for the period 2021-2027.

**Keywords:** economic crisis, European economy, sustainable development.

### Introduction

The current challenges at the European level (including global) and its financial and economic consequences have caused a major economic slowdown, especially on small businesses, and the European Union in the period February-April 2020 has concretely supported through monetary and fiscal policy, respectively through ( European Commission, 2020):

The temporary framework of the European Commission;

Fiscal policy instruments and Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020;

Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027;

European Investment Plan for European Green Transactions.

The State aid financial instrument could also be used during this period to remedy the serious disturbances of the economy. According to official European Commission documents, the

Temporary Framework adopted in March 2020 established temporary state aid measures that the Commission will consider compatible with state aid rules, thus allowing Member States full flexibility in supporting coronavirus-affected economies. The temporary framework was created to respond more effectively to the different needs of the Member States. Moreover, it initially focused on measures to ensure liquidity in the economies of the Member States. In early April this year, it was extended to include measures to support the medical economy and investment, coronavirus-related research and production, measures to relax the social and tax obligations of companies and the self-employed, and measures to subsidize employee salaries, including of micro-enterprises.

Experts argue that the Temporary Framework includes emergency liquidity measures for the business environment, as well as temporary tax deferrals for businesses, which are considered to be the most effective policy measures (Boumans, D., 2020). Moreover, it is considered that financial support must be carefully dimensioned for each economic agent, so as to avoid both the economic crisis and the financial crisis.

### **Methodology of scientific research**

The methods and tools that formed the basis of this paper are the classical ones, respectively instruments of observation and examination, research methods based on the basic principles of scientific research. Moreover, we performed procedures based on factual analysis, as a result of significant practical work experience and intense documentation at the level of existing literature, especially at European level, but we correlated with the information identified internally and internationally in the context of these global challenges generated by the pandemic COVID 19.

### **Research results**

At the level of the *Member States of the European Union*, policy measures (fiscal, sectoral, regional, economic, and others) have been taken against the spread and impact of COVID-19 through the *Temporary Framework of the European Commission*. All these measures have been reported at the level of the European Commission by each Member State, the policy measures being of direct (potential) relevance for economic and fiscal surveillance. This includes measures on expenditure (eg higher health care expenditure, short-term employment benefits) or revenue (eg tax deferrals) of the budget, measures specific to certain sectors of the economy or regions, and measures to support lending to national economies (eg public guarantees, bank support measures, policy decisions of the national central bank).

Many Member States have also taken precautionary measures in the form of general guidelines for citizens, travel bans, school/university closure, the adoption of telework measures, etc., with macroeconomic and budgetary implications. In order to have a comprehensive overview of the measures announced or taken so far in the Member States, we will present in the paper the measures for each Member State.

*The quantification of these measures* and their expected impact on the government deficit and debt figures can be estimated, but the effects and impact of these measures could be analyzed in the next half of the year.

The impact of temporary state aid measures on the national economy through the intervention of the state and the European Commission

*The new Temporary Framework for State aid in the context of the COVID-19 crisis* (19 March 2020) was a direct form of support for the Member States, allowing them to provide direct subsidies of EUR 500,000 per company, state guarantees for loans and subsidized interest

rates to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. In the context of the current EU state aid rules, Member States are required to notify the European Commission of the aid scheme they want to implement and obtain approval before actually implementing it. At the same time, it should be noted that there are exceptions to this general prohibition which allow certain types of aid to be granted in certain special circumstances, without prior notice.

Exceptions to the obligation to notify State aid schemes include the exception whereby State aid "supports the remedying of economic damage caused by natural disasters or exceptional occurrences". This exception allows, for example, the compensation of airlines for losses suffered due to the COVID-19 crisis.

The temporary framework related to the COVID-19 crisis was designed to directly support the real economy at the level of each Member State and indirectly through certain financial instruments, the banking sector (Dorn et al. 2020). However, as can be seen from the analysis per Member State in the new Temporary Framework shows that aid to banks to maintain the flow of credit to companies will also be considered as indirect aid to companies (since they will be aimed at combating illiquidity and supporting a harmonized fiscal response at EU level), some of which fall into the category of Expenditure Measures taken at the national level. Moreover, the new Temporary Framework allows the following types of aid, intended for companies that have suffered financial losses after December 31, 2019 (European Commission, 2020):

1. *Direct granting of financial support or tax advantage* - Member States have the possibility to set up aid schemes of up to EUR 500,000 to individual companies to meet urgent liquidity needs. This aid may be provided in direct form or as a tax advantage;

2. *State guarantee of bank loans*, direct support on the real economy and indirect financial-banking sector - Member States will be able to guarantee bank loans to companies or create a scheme for both investment and working capital. These schemes would be subsidized as a matter of priority, but the Commission may impose a maximum loan amount depending on the real liquidity needs of the companies. This category also includes the Package of measures adopted by the Government of Romania on March 18 a.c. and which also provides for an intervention fund of 10 billion lei to provide guarantees to SMEs for contracting loans to finance investments and working capital. The Ministry of Finance will guarantee 80% of the loans for SMEs, 90% of the loans for micro-enterprises, and will subsidize 100% of the interest associated with the guaranteed loans. On March 19, the authorities said that the Fund could be increased by an additional 5 billion lei, if necessary. An approximate estimate of the fiscal cost (subsidized interest): RON 250 million.

3. *Subsidized interest rates for loans secured by State guarantees* - Member States will be allowed to grant loans (for investments) using subsidized interest. The interest rate must be at least equal to the amount of the base rate set on 1 January 2020; the credit risk premium corresponding to the recipient. Different rates can be set for SMEs and non-SMEs. The intention is to use a fixed base rate to provide certainty to the business environment in the Member States. As in the field of State guarantees, the Commission may impose a maximum loan amount based on the actual liquidity need of the beneficiary in order to prevent distortions of competition in the market and to obtain unfair advantages.

4. *Direct state aid to the banking sector* - Member States will be able to help banks and financial companies directly, which will also be considered as an aid to the real economy.

The temporary framework provides guidance and clarifies how the Member States should maximize the amount of aid granted to firms or agencies involved in the real economy directly or indirectly in the form of a larger volume of financing, risk portfolio aid, aid for higher guarantee requirements, for lower guarantee premiums or lower interest rates (S. López Piqueres, 2020). Moreover, in order to strike a balance at the European level, aid caps are introduced, as well as to limit undue support or residual financing for the banking sector.

5. *State aid schemes in the form of direct loans*, repayable advances or tax exemptions - these State aids could also be granted based on Article 107 (3) TFEU, in the form of temporary amounts, limited to a certain ceiling, but, under the current Temporary Framework, they can also be granted to enterprises and small companies in financial difficulty (lack of liquidity), if the Member State concerned considers that such measures are appropriate and necessary in the current exceptional circumstances induced by the COVID-19 crisis. As a result, the European Commission will consider such aid to be compatible with the provisions of the internal market and Article 107 (3) TFEU provided that simultaneous eligibility criteria are met: State aid does not exceed EUR 800,000, gross (ie before the application of tax exemptions or other tax burdens) per company; the aid is granted in the form of a scheme with an estimated budget; aid can also be granted to enterprises that were not in "difficulty" on 31 December 2019, but are currently in "difficulty" due to the negative effects of the COVID-19 crisis; the aid is granted until 31 December 2020.

Regarding the aid granted to companies that process or distribute agricultural and food products, there are, in the Temporary Framework, some special provisions. Thus, the aid granted to these companies is conditional on them not being part (in whole or part) of the primary production process and is not capped based on the price or quantities purchased by these traders from the primary producers. For the agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture sectors, it is specified that aid granted under the current Temporary Framework may be cumulated with de minimis aid, but not exceeding EUR 100,000 per undertaking.

To a large extent, all these support measures provided for in the *Temporary Framework of the European Commission* are found in the state aid schemes intended to support the real economy and have been adopted by our authorities.

### **Ways to attract European funds for the business environment through European Union funding programs**

The analysis of the measures taken by each Member State shows that very few states have resorted to the financing measures provided for in the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, among which we mention Bulgaria, Latvia, and Romania. Measures were taken by the Romanian authorities regarding the allocation of financial resources from European funds, respectively from the European Union Programs 2014-2020, namely: the use of an additional 350 million euros from EU funds for the purchase of Covid-19 tests, protective equipment and mechanical ventilation equipment (March 24); The Ministry of European Funds announced on 25 March an additional allocation of EUR 682 million from EU funds to the Inspectorate General for Emergency Situations for the purchase of medical and emergency equipment; The EU funds minister said on March 18 that the government would use EUR 300 million. EU funds allocate funding to support measures for people who lose their jobs due to the COVID-19 crisis. The money will be attracted from allocations to the Human Resources Operational Program. The Minister of Regional Development said he would launch a line of funding to provide up to € 1 billion in aid to SMEs and EU funds. The measure is temporary and if the expected amounts are not enough, other sources of EU funding will be sought.

## European investment plan for European green transactions - considerations

*The European Green Deal is the European Union's (EU) new growth strategy to promote the transition to a climate-neutral economy by 2050. Confirming the importance of financial resources for such an objective majority, its investment pillar was the first initiative of the presented strategy. The European Investment Plan for Green Transactions, also known as the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan, aims to help finance a sustainable transition while supporting the regions and communities most affected by its impact. According to official documents issued by the European Commission and the European Parliament, by combining legislative and non-legislative initiatives, the plan addresses three issues:*

- 1) mobilizing funding of at least € 1 trillion from the EU budget and other public and private sources over the next decade;*
- 2) putting sustainability at the heart of investment decisions in all sectors;*
- 3) providing support to public administrations and project promoters to create a solid pipeline of sustainable projects.*

*The EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (2021-2027) has traditionally been a strong supporter of climate and environmental goals, with resources commensurate with the goal of facilitating a smooth transition to a carbon-neutral economy. The impact of the pandemic has raised concerns that decarbonization strategies could be derailed. However, more than ever, experts and stakeholders generally agree with their continued relevance, arguing that green investment from public and private sources must play a central role in any economic recovery plan at European level, and implicitly in local level.*

*The European Union (EU), is a supporter and leader in the fight against climate change at international level, is expected to further intensify its actions in this field during its institutional cycle 2019-2024. On 11 December 2019, in her first weeks in office, European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen launched the European Green Deal as a new EU growth strategy to promote and facilitate the transition to a green, competitive and inclusive economy. Such a major economic transition requires huge financial investments, including to ensure that the process benefits all parts of society and to support the citizens and regions most exposed to the costs of decarbonisation (R. Waldholz, 2020).*

*Based on the current target of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 40% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, the European Commission has estimated that additional investments of € 260 billion per year will be needed. year to meet this target. Given that the environmental agreement intends to increase the intermediate target of reducing GHG emissions by at least 50% by 2030, the resulting financial needs will be even greater. For this reason, a measure planned under the Green Agreement is an investment plan to mobilize public and private funding towards the objectives of a fair transition to a green economy.*

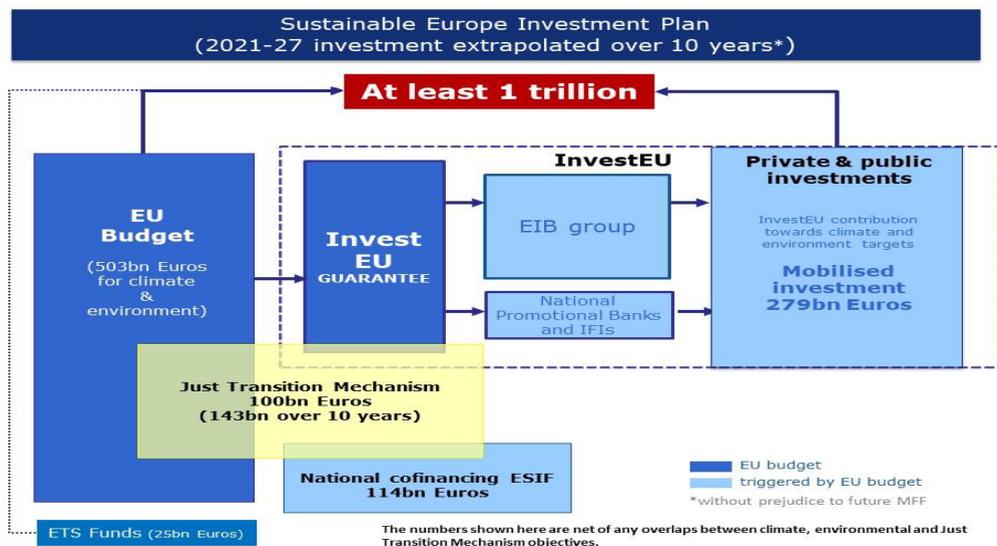
*On 14 January 2020, the European Commission published a communication detailing the European Investment Plan for Green Transactions, also known as the Investment Plan for Sustainable Europe. The investment plan, which complements other initiatives expected under the European Green Agreement, aims to provide and use the necessary funding for the transition to 2030, seeking to put sustainability at the heart of both public and private sector investment and spending, the private one. In the period 2021-2030, the European Commission will mobilize at least € 1 trillion in sustainable investment by increasing resources for climate action within the EU budget and by using additional public and private funding. Part of the*

global resources will be specifically designed to support the regions most exposed to the challenges of the transition.

The mobilization of financial resources worth 1 trillion euros over ten years is part of the investment plan that has so far attracted the attention of the majority. According to official documents, about half of the amount would come directly from the EU budget, while other public and private sources would provide the rest, mainly through leverage. Furthermore, we believe that the European Investment Bank (EIB) should be a key partner in mobilizing additional funding, as it is expected to trigger investments of up to around € 250 billion (ie a quarter of the total) according to EU mandates under the investment plan. Given that the EIB has announced its own target of supporting € 1 trillion in climate action and investment in environmental sustainability over the next decade, it should be noted that the two targets only partially overlap. Therefore, it can be deduced that taken together, the European Investment Plan for Green Transactions and the EIB target should have the potential to provide around € 1.75 trillion in climate-related finance.

The overall level of investment for the *European Investment Plan for Green Transactions* requires further clarification on its time horizon, which covers the decade 2021-2030, in line with the fact that the current EU climate targets are for 2030. the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 is intended to cover a period of seven years, from 2021 to 2027. The European Commission has therefore calculated the total amount on the assumption that the next MFF, scheduled to start in 2028, will maintain at least the same level of ambition as its predecessor for climate finance for the last three years of the decade.

**Figure 1 – Financing elements making up at least €1 trillion over the 2021-2030 period under the European Green Deal Investment Plan**



Source: European Commission., 2020

The above figure shows the details of the total figure component of at least EUR 1 trillion. Furthermore, the European Commission presents this figure as clear from possible overlaps, taking into account the fact that different sources of funding and/or instruments may interact

and contribute to a particular joint project or operation. In descending order of magnitude, five broad categories of climate finance sources would support a wide range of projects and contribute to the *European Investment Plan for Green Transactions*, as follows:

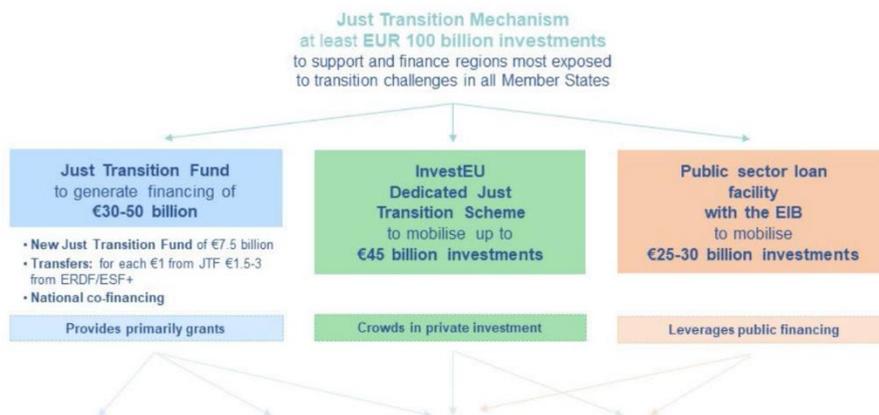
1. *EU budget totaling EUR 503 billion.* The European Commission has proposed that at least 25% of post-2020 MFF resources be allocated to climate-related spending, by incorporating climate considerations into numerous EU budget funds and programs. Tools that should make a significant contribution to this goal include:

- a. funds under the common agricultural policy (CAP);
- b. European Regional Development Fund (ERDF);
- c. Cohesion Fund 2021-2027;
- d. Horizon Europe Framework Program for Research and Innovation;
- e. LIFE program; and
- f. Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).

This approach is based on the experience with climate integration in the current MFF, below which the climate target amounts to 20% of total resources 2014-2020.

2. *The EIB Group and other investment partners in the context of InvestEU (EUR 279 billion).* The proposal for the MFF 2021-2027 includes the creation of the InvestEU program to streamline in a single investment scheme the operations currently carried out under the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and various financial instruments supported by the EU budget. Moreover, InvestEU would be the key tool to exploit the capacity of the EU budget to benefit from additional public and private funding for investments in the Union's internal policies, as well as its targeting of the dominant segment of business beneficiaries, namely SMEs. The Commission has proposed a 30% climate target for InvestEU operations. The Commission intends to develop financial products aimed at ecological, climate, and social sustainability within InvestEU. *The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)* has a focus on the regions and communities most exposed to the transition challenges, this mechanism would be structured on three pillars (see figure below):

**Figure 2 – Just Transition Mechanism over the period 2021-2027**





Source: European Commission, 2020

Just Transition Mechanism, with the following:

- a fair transition fund, with € 7.5 billion in new money by 2027 and a specialized fair transition scheme within InvestEU;
- as well as a new public sector loan facility, with the EIB, to benefit from additional public funding.

Particular attention is paid to economic sectors that provide additional jobs, namely in the sector of activity the production of fossil fuels or related industries. Under cohesion policy, EU Member States will identify eligible regions and the envisaged transition process by 2030, in the fair territorial transition plans to be approved by the European Commission. Member States and regions will receive technical and advisory support from the Commission through a fair transition platform.

## Discussion

The paper is an empirical research based on official documents reported by European Union member states in the early days of the COVID pandemic. Moreover, this period coincides with the new financial programming period at European level, as well as with the launch of new strategic programs until 2030 and 2050, respectively.

As regards the general financial system, the *EU taxonomy* will play a major role in the measures designed to put sustainable finance at its center. The Commission will also explore how the EU taxonomy, originally designed for the private sector, could be used by the public sector beyond the scope of InvestEU to promote synergies. Besides, a renewed strategy for sustainable financing is envisaged, including the creation of a European Green Bond Standard as a tool for increasing public and private finance for sustainable investment.

Also, the Commission will develop a "Sustainable Procurement Screening" tool to provide tailored support to public investors in implementing their projects.

In May 2018, the European Commission presented its proposal for the new MFF which should cover the period 2021-2027, calling for an agreement to be reached before the 2019 European elections to avoid delays in the implementation of related instruments. Among other things, the Commission has proposed raising the climate integration target from 20% of total resources to 25%.

In the context of the *European Green Agreement*, climate integration in the EU budget should be further intensified, proportionate resources to facilitate a fair transition to a carbon-neutral economy. The call for further change towards climate transition included the call for a new

and strengthened methodology for climate integration, with strong performance indicators and provisions to prevent any financial support for climate-damaging measures.

The emergence of Covid-19 and the declaration of a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020, caused significant uncertainty, triggering the announcement of packages of economic incentives to mitigate the social and economic impact of the public health crisis. An article published by the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE) highlights the central role that public and private investment under the European Green Agreement must play in any recovery strategy. Drawing attention to the falling price of oil, the author recommends that the EU and its Member States keep fossil fuel prices for consumers at pre-crisis levels, through higher taxes, as a crucial measure for their decarbonisation efforts.

The goal would be twofold: on the one hand, the public sector would have additional revenue to combat the pandemic and its consequences; on the other hand, the move would prevent the price of oil from falling. However, the Commission said it would continue its intensive work on climate issues. As previously planned, the Commission has launched a public consultation on the upward revision of the GHG reduction target for 2030, which aims to gradually increase the road to climate neutrality in 2050. Furthermore, the European Environment Agency (EEA) intends to assess the impact of the pandemic on production and consumption patterns once the crisis passes. The Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 is directly linked to the attitude of Member States to be directly involved in the adoption of measures, so that from 2021, small and medium-sized enterprises can use the financing instruments so necessary for their sustainability.

In May 2020, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented the Commission's proposal for an economic recovery plan following the € 750 billion coronavirus pandemic *Next Generation EU*, and according to the official communiqué, it includes the following :

The proposed recovery instrument, *Next Generation EU*, will have a budget of € 750 billion, which will be in addition to the long-term budget, according to President von der Leyen.

The money for the Next Generation EU will be raised by temporarily raising the own resources ceiling to 2% of the EU's Gross National Income. This will allow the Commission to use its very strong credit rating to borrow € 750 billion in EU financial markets for the next generation.

According to the official document published today by the European Commission on the proposed solutions, in addition to the *Next Generation EU*, a renewed EU budget is proposed, amounting to approximately 1.1 trillion euros in the period 2021-2027.

All money raised through the Next Generation EU and the new EU budget will be channeled through EU programs.

Next Generation EU money will be invested in three pillars, with € 500 billion in grants and € 250 billion in loans to the Member States.

*The first pillar is support for the Member States for investment and crisis resolution reforms:*

- *A new Recovery and Resilience Facility with a budget of EUR 560 billion* - distributed in grants and loans. It will support the Member States in implementing investments and reforms that are essential for a sustainable recovery. Member States will design their own national recovery

plans, based on investment and reform priorities identified as part of the European Semester, in line with national climate and energy plans, fair transition plans and partnership agreements, and operational programs from EU funds.

- *A new initiative, REACT-EU*, will provide a supplement to cohesion support to the Member States with a budget of € 55 billion. It will be available from 2020 and will be distributed according to a new allocation key, taking into account the impact of the crisis. This will ensure that there is no interruption in funding for key crisis relief measures and the support of the most disadvantaged. It will support workers and SMEs, health systems, and green and digital transitions and will be available in sectors - from tourism to culture.

- *To support the green transition*, the Commission aims to provide additional funding for the Fair Transition Fund and the European Rural Development Fund. Cohesion policy programs will also be strengthened in the next EU budget period, to also allow for greater flexibility.

*The second pillar is to launch the EU economy by stimulating private investment:*

- *A new Solvency Support Instrument* will mobilize private resources to provide urgent support to healthy companies. Investments will be channeled to companies in the most affected sectors, regions, and countries. This will help balance the "game" conditions for those Member States that are less able to support through state aid. It can be operational from 2020 and will have a budget of 31 billion euros, which aims to unlock more than 300 billion euros in support of solvency. Guidelines will be developed to help align investment with EU priorities.

- *The Commission aims to modernize InvestEU*, the EU's main investment program, by doubling its capacity.

- In addition to the above, *a Strategic Investment Facility* will be created within InvestEU. It will be able to unlock investments of 150 billion euros thanks to the 15 billion euros brought to it by Next Generation EU. This will invest in strengthening our resilience and strategic autonomy for key technologies and value chains.

*The third pillar is about learning lessons about the crisis:*

The Commission intends to set up a *new autonomous EU4 Health program* with a budget of EUR 9.4 billion. It will invest in prevention, crisis preparedness, the purchase of vital medicines and equipment, as well as in improving long-term health outcomes. A number of other key programs will be strengthened to learn the lessons of the crisis, in particular rescEU and Horizon Europe.

In addition to the three pillars, the Commission aims to strengthen a number of other programs in the EU budget, compared to those discussed by the European Council in February. These include: Common agricultural policy; European Maritime and Fisheries Fund; The Single Market Program and programs that support tax and customs cooperation; Connecting Europe Facility; Erasmus +; Creative Europe Program; Digital Europe Program; European Defense Fund; Internal Security Fund; Asylum and Migration Fund, and Integrated Border Management and Pre-Accession Assistance Fund.

For the proper management of funding instruments through the programs, we believe that there should be a correlation and integration from and between the priorities of citizens and the business environment, respectively according to the figure below:

**Figure no. 3. Direct relationship to and from the Programs, Priority Directions and Projects of Citizens and the Business Environment in Europe**



Direct and permanent interconnection relations from and to the Programs, Priority Directions of each Member State of the European Union (27 states) and Concrete Project of citizens and business environment managed by the Managing Authorities of the European Commission and those managed at national level of each We believe that it is the solution to the management and orientation of funding sources towards European priorities in the context of current challenges at European and global level.

### Conclusion

The reduction of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis required a rapid, focused and coordinated response from all states in the field of state aid (as shown by the analysis of each Member State), as well as to support the most vulnerable economic agents ( including companies in the public catering sector, services, etc.).

State support is required to be: aimed at reducing the disruptive economic effects of the epidemic, and clearly defined and limited to what is needed to address the acute economic crisis, excluding unjustified benefits for companies or the banking sector, to be borne by taxpayers in EU Member States.

In order to turn state aid into an effective tool for supporting the real economy across the EU, sufficient behavioral rules are needed for beneficiaries to prevent the abuse of state support, such as, for example, company expansion or aggressive market strategies. with the help of a state guarantee (Manta, O., 2017).

At present, in addition to their own efforts, it is necessary to exogenously finance the business of companies. For European companies, even in conditions of economic crisis, exogenous financing through bank loans is the main solution to cover the need for financing both the current activity and their own development projects;

In the period 2020-2030, companies will have the improvement of financing through government intervention, but especially through innovative financial instruments that are in

line with the principles of green financing and are found in the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027.

*Measures taken by other countries and which can be taken at the level of any state:* setting up a government and business unit COVID 19 (following the example of the Danish Government) in collaboration with relevant business organizations and labor market organizations to solve sectoral economic problems. Among the main objectives should be MicroFinance Fund with a potential loan threshold of € 50,000 and intended to finance small family businesses; support for programs for SMEs (packages of financial instruments, ie loans, and guarantees to support current activities and development of investment and technology plans in accordance with green investment support policies); launching state-subsidized leisure vouchers to help hotels recover from the crisis; tourism support (EUR 11 million). Additional budget for the implementation of actions to support tourism in June-September 2020, in cooperation with airlines and tourism organizers, as well as actions to improve initiatives to attract tourists between October 2020 and March 2021 (eg measures adopted by The Cypriot Government); postponement of tax and social security payments for the tourism sector until the resumption of activities (quarter III estimate of the year), sectors that were severely affected by the pandemic (eg tourism, restaurants, entertainment, sports, cultural services, transport) will be exempted from paying social security contributions, payroll taxes and small business tax. The employees' contribution will be reduced until the resumption of the activity (respectively quarter III of the year); and cultural support: emergency support funding for the most affected artists and entities (€ 1 million); Resolution mechanism for the protection of canceled cultural and artistic performances (Manta, O. 2020).

In a healthy and rational society, strategy and action are not subordinated to ideology, doctrine. The action must be based on the rules governing each case. There is something quite satisfying about expressing a political and economic belief such as: "I am absolutely on the side of the free initiative" (Galbraith K.J., 1997).

Our future research on European funding instruments, funding models and funding programs is based on references to current decisions at European level, all the more so as the seven-year programming period is very clearly regulated by EU directives and regulations. European Commission.

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# A Mind Genomics Cartography of Shopping Behavior for Food Products During the Covid -19 Pandemic

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## Abstract

The study presents a new approach to understand the mind of the persons in order to drive desired action in crisis situation, specifically the COVID-19 pandemic. Understand the mind of the shopper in a pandemic situation, with massive uncertainty, should provide direction for governments and the retail trade to adopt practices and communications which will reassure their customers. This study investigates the nature of what people will do to reassure themselves in the pandemic, and has been executed during the period of the pandemic, making the study relevant to the actual events taking place. The focus of the study is on the likelihood of buying ordinary food, given certain descriptions. The study revealed three mind-sets, clusters of individuals who respond to the pandemic in one of three ways. These are: Mind-Set 1: Focus on sanitation & supply; Mind-Set 2: Focus on budget for lifestyle; Mind-Set 3: Focus on shopping, personal needs, consumption. These mind-sets are distributed through the population, and are not limited to specific age or gender. The paper closes with the PVI, personal viewpoint identifier, to assign a new person to one of the three mind-sets.

**Keywords:** Pandemic; Covid-19; shopping behavior.

## Introduction

Since the first death in China in early January 2020, the coronavirus (COVID-19) has spread across the globe, dominated the news headlines and led to fundamental changes in the health, social, political and economic landscape (Schroeter, 2018). Attributed to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, panic buying is now a frequent occurrence in many countries, leading to out-of-stocks and disruptions to the supply chain. Consequently, it has received much attention from academics and the retail industry (Yuen, Wang, Ma, & Li, 2020),

The pandemic has been addressed by requirements for behavioral change, the most important being social distancing. Social distancing manifests itself in reduced store capacity, more difficult shopping, insecurity about one's safety in the store, and a sense of diminished finances as jobs disappeared. Social distancing has ushered in a sharp change in consumer lifestyles which almost certainly will produce long-term effects on the ordinary shopping behavior of the typical consumer (Duckett, 2020).

The keywords for today are foresight, anticipation and of course preparations. Some aspects of consumer behaviour and marketing response will be seen to have permanently changed. Brands which prepare will emerge stronger from the disruption (Shaikh, 2020). The COVID-19 crisis overwhelmingly plays into the reality of worries shared by many regarding current food systems. The issues are complicated, involving a rainbow of issues, some technical such as biophysics, but the others softer, more people-relevant, such as demographics, business infrastructure, socio-cultural responses, and of course political responses to the pandemic.

The outbreak and spread of the COVID-19 virus make the shortcomings of our current food system, already frequently 'called out', once again painfully clear. Combined with an already growing feeling of "being fed up" with present food systems and the call for radical change, the crisis provides opportunities to carry out a "re-set" of our food systems, to determine what is important and what is not, to revalue the role of public goods, to reconsider "basic income" for all, etc. (Ruben, McDermott, & Brouwer, 2020).

### **Mind Genomics, systematic experimental design of test stimuli**

"Helping with a good cause" is a way for struggling retailers to stay relevant as they attempt to capture demand, which may be changing due to the behavior of their customers. We focus in this study on understanding the mind of the struggling consumer, living through the pandemic. The focus is on the consumer as a person going to the store, selecting the product, and taking the product home. Rather than focusing on the shopping experience, which for much of the pandemic becomes a fast trip the store, we focus on the mind of the shopper thinking about what to do, what to buy. Simply stated, we focus on the customer shopping from home base, and focus on the decisions made from this focus, viz., people at home who are shopping in a situation where shopping is no longer recreational (Viberg, 2020).

We use the method of experimentation, following the tenets of Mind Genomics. The emerging science of Mind Genomics has as its objective to understand the dimensions of the ordinary, everyday experience. In doing so, Mind Genomics identifies what specific characteristics of everyday experience are positive versus negative, costly versus inexpensive (cognitive economics), and finally what is the nature of the link between the characteristics of shopping and the expected accompanying emotions. For this study, we limit our focus to what people look for in the store, what they think they want to buy, how do they feel they want to budget their money, and what do they do when they get the product home.

Mind Genomics constructs an empirical, inductive science of perception and experience, layer by layer. The ultimate objective of 'mind genomics' is a large-scale, inductive science of the human experience, 'from the bottom up,' based upon emergent commonalities across many different types of daily experience (Moskowitz 2012.) The tools of Mind Genomics uncover different groups of people holding opposite or perhaps unrelated patterns of ideas about the same specific, granular topic (so-called Mind-Sets), and then create a system to assign a person to one of these mutually exclusive, exhaustive mind-sets.

## Mind Genomics, systematic experimental design of test stimuli

Mind Genomics begins by requiring the researcher to choose a topic, then, create four questions which ‘tell a story,’ and finally for each question provide a set of four different answers. The questions and answers are simple phrases, with each question or answer ‘standing on its own.’ The approach is ‘Socratic,’ designed to promote critical thinking about the topic, and to focus on the everyday. For this study, the topic is a ‘story’ about shopping. The questions and answers are framed in the language of the ordinary, as Table 1 shows.

	<i>Group (Binary Ratings)</i>
	<i>Base Size</i>
	<i>Additive Constant</i>
	<i>Question A: How is Covid-19 changing your shopping behavior?</i>
A1	<i>Analyze every purchase for affordability</i>
A2	<i>Maintain what I did before</i>
A3	<i>Focus on essential products</i>
A4	<i>Focus on products to maintain my personal health</i>
	<i>Question B: Where is the place that you shop mostly in this situation?</i>
B1	<i>Supermarket</i>
B2	<i>Retail stores</i>
B3	<i>Online Stores</i>
B4	<i>Local Bakery and Nearby Farms</i>
	<i>Question C: Which products do you buy most?</i>
C1	<i>Basic products (water, bread, vegetables, cereals, fruits and dairy products)</i>
C2	<i>Alcohol (wine, beers, colored alcohol drinks)</i>
C3	<i>Cookies, sweets and snacks</i>
C4	<i>Personal care products</i>
	<i>Question D: Based on this situation, do you trust the food products?</i>
D1	<i>Buy packaged foods products &amp; unwrap myself</i>
D2	<i>Disinfect every product that I buy and bring home</i>
D3	<i>Buy every needed, trust stores to be clean and careful</i>
D4	<i>Buy extra of key products to ensure my supply</i>

Table 1 – The raw material for the Mind Genomics study, comprising four questions which “tell a story” and four answers to each question

The Mind Genomics process combines these answers into small vignettes, combinations of answers. The questions never appear. The vignettes, comprising 2-4 answers, at most one answer from a question, produce little “stories” about the topic area that the respondent rates. Each respondent rates a unique set of 24 vignettes, set up according to an individual experimental design. All 16 elements are statistically independent of each other, allow for OLS (ordinary least-squares) regression to be used to estimate the contribution of each element to the rating. The OLS regression is run on the data from each respondent as preparation for clustering, and on the total data for relevant groups, such as Total Panel, and Mind-Set. Finally, the 24 vignettes for each respondent are different from those of all other respondents, much as in the fashion of the MRI, which takes pictures of the same tissue, but from different angles

and vantage points. With 135 respondents, the Mind Genomics system creates 134x24 or 3240 DIFFERENT vignettes

Each respondent read an orientation, telling them about the study:

*We have created this study, in order to better understand how the situation of Covid-19, is affecting consumer buying and what are they buying mostly, in the category of products.*

*Each vignette represents a situation. The rating scale is: How likely are you to buy basic food products in this situation? 1=Unlikely ... 5=Likely*

The analysis begins by transforming the ratings so that ratings of 1-3 are transformed to 0, and ratings of 4-5 are transformed to 100. Managers understand binary scales, no/yes. After the transformation, a small random number is added to the transformed numbers. The OLS regression analysis generates a single equation of the form: Binary Transformed Rating =  $k_0 + k_1A1 + k_2A2 \dots k_{16}D4$ .

The additive constant is the expected percent of responses 4 and 5 in the absence of elements. The additive constant is an estimated parameter, having no concrete value because it is a correction factor. It is useful, however, as a baseline or proclivity to say 'likely' in the absence of elements. Each positive coefficient shows the driving force of an element towards saying 'yes.' There are negative coefficients, driving to neutral or no. They are not relevant for this discussion, and have been left out of the paper to make the exposition clear. Finally, the standard error of the coefficients is around 4, so a strong and significant 'driver' to yes (likely, rating 4 or 5) is about 7.51 or higher.

Table 2 shows the positive coefficients for the Total panel, for gender, and for the different age groups having a sufficiently large base size. It is clear from Table 2 that although we have several drivers towards 'Likely', most are small and statistically non-significant, except for a few elements rated by respondents ages 18-24.

The foregoing is the typical outcome for Mind Genomics studies. The total panel does not show strong 'drivers', perhaps because the total panel comprises groups with different points of view those differences canceling each other out. The differences do not emerge based on WHO the respondent IS. Even though the common wisdom is that age cohorts or genders think alike, the Mind Genomics data contraindicate that generalization.

	Group	Total	Male	Female	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44
	<b>Base Size</b>	13 5	35	10 0	71	25	23
	<b>Additive Constant</b>	54	50	56	57	52	61
	<b>Question A: How is Covid-19 changing your shopping behavior?</b>						
A1	Analyze every purchase for affordability				1		
A2	Maintain what I did before						
A3	Focus on essential products						
A4	Focus on products to maintain my personal health	3	6	2	4		

	<b>Question B: Where is the place that you shop mostly in this situation?</b>						
B1	Supermarket					6	
B2	Retail stores			1		9	
B3	Online Stores	1		2	1	9	
B4	Local Bakery and Nearby Farms					8	
	<b>Question C: Which products do you buy most?</b>						
C 1	Basic products (water, bread, vegetables, cereals, fruits and dairy products)		5			10	
C 2	Alcohol (wine, beers, colored alcohol drinks)	1	5			10	3
C 3	Cookies, sweets and snacks		2			5	
C 4	Personal care products					3	
	<b>Question D: Based on this situation, do you trust the food products?</b>						
D 1	Buy packaged foods products & unwrap myself						
D 2	Disinfect every product that I buy and bring home						
D 3	Buy every needed, trust stores to be clean and careful						
D 4	Buy extra of key products to ensure my supply						

**Table 2– Model for the key subgroups, for 'Likely' related to the presence/absence of the 16 elements**

### Emergent mind-sets for positive shopping experiences

One of tenets of Mind Genomics is that within any experience, especially micro-experiences, such as shopping, people differ from each other in systematic ways called mind-sets. The analogy is to the genome. Genomes have alleles, different forms, which express themselves in different traits, possibly in different behaviors. Carrying that analogy forward, Mind Genomics creates these mind-sets by clustering the pattern of coefficients of the individual models relating the binary rating (here positive emotion) to the presence/absence of the elements in a study (here 16 answers to the questions, i.e., elements). The within-subjects experimental design allows the researcher to create the model (equation) separately for each respondent, and then cluster the respondents based upon the pattern of coefficients (excluding the additive constant.) The metric for 'distance' upon which the clustering is based is defined as  $(1 - \text{Pearson } R)$ . The metric takes on the value 0 when the coefficients for two respondents show a Pearson R of 1.0. The metric takes on the value 2 when the coefficients for two respondents show a Pearson R of -1. As a rule of thumb, there should be fewer mind-sets, rather than more (parsimony) and tell a story (interpretability).

Three mind-sets emerged for these data, and for clustering based upon the coefficients for 'Likely'. The additive constant and the coefficients for three mind-sets appear in Table 3. All three mind-sets show low to moderate coefficients 43-48, so that it is the elements which will drive the rating of 4-5, viz., 'likely.'

It is clear from Table 3 that there are three different mind-sets, with strongly positive coefficients, reaching and exceeding the cut-off for statistical significance. The mind-sets can be named by considering the commonalities of the elements generating the highest coefficients.

Mind-set 1 - Focus on sanitation/ supply

Strong positive coefficient for answer

D2 Disinfect every product that I buy and bring home

Mind-set 2 – Focus on budget for lifestyle

Strong positive coefficient for answer

A4 Focus on products to maintain my personal health

A3 Focus on essential products

Mind-set 3 – Focus on shopping, personal needs, consumption

Strong positive coefficient for answer

C1 Basic products (water, bread, vegetables, cereals, fruits and dairy products)

	Group	Total	MS1	MS2	MS3
	Base Size	135	47	45	43
	Additive Constant	54	52	58	58
	<i>Mind-Set 1 - Vigilants - Focus on sanitation/ supply</i>				
D2	Disinfect every product that I buy and bring home		17		
D3	Buy every needed, trust stores to be clean and careful		16		
D1	Buy packaged foods products & unwrap myself		15		
D4	Buy extra of key products to ensure my supply		13		
	<i>Mind-Set 2 - Focus on budget for lifestyle</i>				
A4	Focus on products to maintain my personal health			15	
A3	Focus on essential products			15	
A2	Maintain what I did before			13	
A1	Analyze every purchase for affordability		2	8	
	<i>Mind-Set 3 - Focus on shopping, personal needs, consumption</i>				
C1	Basic products (water, bread, vegetables, cereals, fruits and dairy products)				15
C2	Alcohol (wine, beers, colored alcohol drinks)	1			14
C3	Cookies, sweets and snacks				11
C4	Personal care products				9
B1	Supermarket				8
	<i>Not a strong focus in terms of mind-sets</i>				
B4	Local Bakery and Nearby Farms				6
B2	Retail stores				6
B3	Online Stores	1			5

## Identifying the mind-sets of new individuals in the population for more effective communication

Research scientists, marketers and many others find the notion of Mind Genomics attractive because it works from the micro-level, rather than working from the macro-level. The results can be immediately put into action because they deal directly with the topic. The messages are the raw material from which the mind-sets are derived. The only recurring problem is that it is difficult to assign a new person to a mind-set segment based upon either behavioral data that one can capture, or attitudinal data from larger-scale segmentation studies. How does one know the 'attitude of a respondent' in terms of imputing emotions to the shopper? There is no such data, at certainly no data of the granularity provided by Mind Genomics.

For practical use of these data, e.g., communicating and reassuring customers, it is necessary to identify the mind-set of a new individual. The data shown here suggest that it will probably be hard to link individuals to mind-sets simply on the basis of who they are. In study after study, Mind Genomics data suggest that the mind-sets distribute across the normal classification variables of who a person IS, what the person DOES, and even what general BELIEFS a person holds about a topic.

A different approach is necessary, one which uses the profile of coefficients to identify elements which differentiate among the specific mind-sets uncovered in the study. Author Moskowitz and a colleague, Prof. Attila Gere, have developed a Monte-Carlo-based system for identifying the combination of six elements, presented as questions, with two answers. These elements are created from the original data used to uncover the mind-sets, and so the system, the PVI (personal viewpoint identifier), can work anew at any level of granularity covered in the original Mind Genomics study leading to the mind-sets.

The PVI system creates 64 possible patterns of answers and identifies the most likely mind-set corresponding to each pattern, when the coefficients are subject to random permutation, noise in the results. Figure 1 shows an example of the PVI, the personal viewpoint identifier, created for this study. The PVI is located at: <https://www.pvi360.com/TypingToolPage.aspx?projectid=192&userid=2018>

**SHOPPING1 PVI 06.23.2020.1**

**No Specialty Questions for This Study**

ACTION: DISINFECT EVERY PRODUCT THAT I BUY AND BRING HOME	<input type="radio"/> ME	<input type="radio"/> NOT ME
ACTION: BUY EXTRA OF KEY PRODUCTS TO ENSURE MY SUPPLY	<input type="radio"/> ME	<input type="radio"/> NOT ME
ACTION: BUY EVERYTHING NEEDED, TRUST STORES TO BE CLEAN AND CAREFUL	<input type="radio"/> ME	<input type="radio"/> NOT ME
ACTION: BUY PACKAGED FOODS PRODUCTS & UNWRAP MYSELF	<input type="radio"/> ME	<input type="radio"/> NOT ME
FOCUS ON ESSENTIAL PRODUCTS	<input type="radio"/> ME	<input type="radio"/> NOT ME
FOCUS: MAINTAIN WHAT I DID BEFORE	<input type="radio"/> ME	<input type="radio"/> NOT ME

**Submit Answers**

## Discussion

The global market of eCommerce is growing fast and bigger in the past years. After this situation, from the Covid-19 situation consumers are more careful on their purchases and they do not have contacts with other to protect themselves.

The Mind Genomics cartography about shopping during the pandemic suggests that the direct statements about online shopping are only modest drivers of responses. The coefficients are low. We conclude that it is NOT online shopping per se which emerges from the pandemic but rather the specifics about the shopping behavior. This focus on the specific is the most important finding of the study.

When studying behavior, the data suggest that there are different mind-sets. People think differently from each other. Emerging from this study are three very clear groups, the Vigilants, the Budget-Conscious, and the Product-Oriented. These three mind-sets distribute equally in the population, and show the same likelihood of basic agreement, and indicated by similar additive constants. It is only their 'minds' which differ. When we merge all three mind-sets together into one group, the total panel, we lose sight of the individual foci, the different driving forces for the mind-sets, and end up with bland results, insignificant coefficients, often around 0 or negative.

The importance of mind-sets cannot be over-stated. Successful coping and adaptation in the years to come may well emerge from knowing how the person THINKS, rather than increasingly refined measures of who the person IS, or what the person has DONE in the past. Furthermore, the success may come quicker, and less expensively, in days, and on a very low budget, by focusing the topic, by being granular, and by developing knowledge from the ground up, from the specifics of everyday life.

## Conclusion

This paper presents the emerging science of Mind Genomics as a way to bridge the gap between the impersonal, quantitative dimension of social science and the qualitative, story-telling, emotion-filled and narrative-rich material provided by qualitative methods and by literature. The contributions of this paper to the literature may be summarized as follows:

Experimental design of the shopping situation, which creates a verbal experiment. The Mind Genomics method is an experiment, with controlled conditions, and defined measures.

Ability to identify mind-sets in the population, and then to create a short, easy-to-administer tool to assign a new person to a mind-set. This tool, the PVI, makes it possible to extend the application of the science to new people, as well as do in context validations of the results.

Ability to 'scale knowledge', rapidly, inexpensively, from the 'ground up,' from the granularity of life, to build a 'Wiki of the Mind.'

From this Virtual Experiment it is easy to understand from the strong positive emotions, which specific types of products that will be sought during the pandemic crisis, where respondents feel they would like to shop, and how do they perceive different actions which communicate 'safe.'

The granularity of this first experiment suggest ways that companies might organize their selling efforts, and the nature of the products that they might find to be in strong demand. The study can be replicated, with each topic (e.g., venue, safety, product, etc.) explored with

increasing granularity. The speed of the procedure, hours and days, and the depth of the information, provide a learning system which can 'keep up with changing conditions,' producing knowing in virtually 'real time,' hours after the Mind Genomics virtual experiment, our so-called 'Cartography' has been launched.

The PVI, the personal viewpoint identifier, provides the potential for online shopping to present specific landing pages 'tuned' to the mind-set of the respondent. The feedback from the PVI, viz. the mind-set, can move from informing the person as 'nice-to-know-about-me' into more directed, focused landing pages containing the appropriate information and 'tonality' for the mind-set. Marketing now becomes a path, from meeting the respondent, 'gamifying' the PVI to discover the mind-set, and immediate presentation of the 'right information to the right person at the right time.'

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## The Value of Communities of Practice as a Learning Process to Increase Resilience in Healthcare Teams

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### Abstract

This paper addresses the role that communities of practice (CoP) can have within the healthcare environment when facing uncertainty and highly emotionally impactful situations, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. The starting point is the recognition that CoPs can contribute to build resilience among their members, and particularly moral resilience. Among others, this is due to the fact that they share a reflective space from which shared knowledge is generated, which can be a source of strength and trust within the healthcare team. Specifically, in extreme situations, the CoPs can contribute to coping with moral distress, which will be crucially important not only to facing crisis situations, but to prevent the long-term adverse consequences of working in conditions of great uncertainty. The purpose of this paper is to analyze how CoP can support healthcare professionals when building moral resilience. To support that goal, we will first define CoP and describe the main characteristics of communities of practice in healthcare. Subsequently, we will clarify the concept of moral resilience, and establish the relationship between CoP and moral resilience in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, we analyze different group experiences that we can consider as CoP which emerged in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic to navigate moral problems that arose.

**Keywords:** communities of practice, vulnerability, moral distress, COVID-19, moral resilience

### Introduction

Vulnerability is a fundamental aspect in health care (Gjengedal et al. 2013; Delgado 2017). The recognition of our corporeality, dependence and fragility is everywhere in hospitals and health institutions. In this context, healthcare professionals do suffer or witness suffering on a regular basis: they confront death and fragility in a more noticeable way than in daily life (Delgado et al. 2020). To be witness to all of these circumstances in patients' lives has an impact on healthcare professionals' own lives, and it constitutes a form of vulnerability. Healthcare

professionals may themselves be prone to *more-than-ordinary vulnerability*, since they are routinely exposed to stressors that are not ordinarily encountered by most people in their everyday life (Carel 2009). Since these situations cut deeply into the most existential aspects of human life, and place the professionals in a unique position of vulnerability, clinicians suffer when interacting with human health and illness (Ulrich and Grady 2018). In this regard, vulnerability is experienced by professionals because of their profession, as part of their work. Not recognizing this vulnerability may come at a cost not only for healthcare staff, but also for patients and their families. That is, clinician burnout and fatigue are separately associated with major medical errors and perceived medical errors (Tawfik et al, 2018; Welp 2014)

In a public health emergency, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare professionals are even more prone to moral suffering (Rushton 2018), which include vulnerability experiences and moral distress. Moral suffering is the anguish that occurs when healthcare professionals have to deal with adversities that challenge their own integrity (Rushton 2018). Facing dramatic situations, frontline workers who are directly involved in the diagnosis, treatment and care of patients with COVID-19 are at risk of developing mental health problems (Lai et al. 2020) and moral distress (Cacchione 2020). There are at least three ethical issues that are likely to affect healthcare professionals globally: a) their own safety, and the safety of patients, colleagues and families; b) the allocation of limited resources; and c) the changing nature of relationships with patients and their families (Morley et al. 2020). Due to that, there is a necessity for healthcare institutions and professionals to seek sources of support during this pandemic. However, what kind of support can healthcare professionals find, to face these ethical problems? Moral resilience may be an outcome of addressing moral suffering. We understand moral resilience as the ability to effectively navigate crisis situations in response to the moral complexity, confusion, anguish or setbacks of practice (Baratz 2015; Rushton 2016). The question is how in a public health emergency such as the pandemic COVID-19 moral resilience can be fostered in health professionals who face these challenges?

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of people interested in the same problem, technique or question that interests them, and who interact regularly to learn together and from each other (Casado and Uria 2019). In the healthcare settings, a CoP constitutes an intentional space to promote the exchange of experiences arising in clinical practice (Delgado et al. 2020). Because of that, our hypothesis is that CoP can be of great value in addressing the moral suffering inherent to the healthcare practice, which is manifested as vulnerability, moral distress, and sometimes burnout. As spaces of openness to share different ethical experiences arising from the practice, especially in unknown and highly emotionally impactful situations, CoPs offer an opportunity to learn together in order to increase resilience collectively.

Our goal is to explore the role that communities of practice (CoP) can have within the healthcare environment when facing unknown and highly emotionally impactful situations, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, we first explain what is a CoP, and more particularly a healthcare CoP. Then, we address some modes in which CoPs can promote moral resilience in healthcare professionals to cope with moral distress. We then proceed to analyze these particular problems of moral distress and moral resilience in the context of the current pandemic COVID-19, which show us that moral distress is an issue that must be prevented always, but more intensively in situations which involve a huge emotional impact in healthcare professionals. Finally, we analyze different group experiences that we can consider as CoP which have emerged in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic to navigate moral problems that arose.

## Understanding the key elements of a community of practice

The notion of CoP was originally introduced to literature by Lave and Wenger in 1991. In this early work, CoP were understood as a type of informal organization oriented to learning with focus on the practical aspects. Since then, the term has been extensively used in education and business sectors, and also in the healthcare field. Lave and Wenger (1991) initially focused on how novices participate in practice, beginning at the periphery of professions, using culturally and historically rich examples. In this context, the situated learning emphasizes the social interactions that support learning within a community of those who practice similar professions or in similar fields (Delgado et al. 2020). Nowadays, CoP can facilitate the ongoing learning process for all professionals, and not only novices.

Following the early work of Wegner et al. (2002), CoP share a basic structure combining three main elements: a domain of knowledge; a community of people who are concerned or interested in the domain; and a set of shared practices that they develop to be effective within the domain. By interacting, the members of CoP obtain several benefits: they share information; help each other to solve problems; share situations, aspirations and needs; explore new ideas; create tools and documents; accumulate knowledge and associate informally. All of this reflects the value that the CoP create for individual members, as well as for the system or organization, the process of learning together. Consequently, the value of CoP is based on (Wegner et al. 2002):

Connect different or isolated professional experts,

Diagnose and address recurrent problems whose root causes barriers between teams,

Analyze why work units with similar tasks offer different results and work to achieve the highest possible quality and efficiency standard,

Relate and coordinate unrelated activities within the same domain of knowledge.

A CoP has been defined as a group of people who share a practice, care about the same topics, share tacit knowledge and meet regularly to guide each other through their understanding of mutually recognized real-life problems (Pyrko et al. 2017). Pyrko et al. (2017) point out that both the intention to foster trust and the mutual engagement of all members are essential features of a CoP. They proposed developing CoP by "thinking together", in order to advance the understanding of the nature of CoPs and their fundamental learning processes. Some reasons for that are:

Thinking together entails a trans-personal process. Through this process, the members of the CoP thoroughly learn together and from each other in practice, and in this way they become more skillful professionals.

This idea of thinking together additionally emphasizes the possibility of developing learning partnerships and a sense of community through mutual identification. This way of learning is not only related to technical, practical or theoretical knowledge, but also to the understanding of relevance relationships and communities to any particular field of practice.

More particularly focusing on the healthcare field, usually, healthcare CoPs arise to share clinical information about relevant problems in daily work (de Carvalho-Filho et al. 2019), and sometimes it is an urgent clinical problem that initiates the CoP. In these cases, usually a particular patient's case is at the core of the CoP (Young et al. 2018). Accordingly, CoPs

constitute an intentional and determined space which allows the exchange of experiences that arise in clinical practice (Delgado et al. 2020). We propose that these experiences could also be a space to exchange thoughts and feelings about the ethical dimension of healthcare, present in all clinical practice, but has not yet been considered in the literature about healthcare CoP. We envision that through "thinking together" about ethical dilemmas in daily work, healthcare professionals will learn together through a process that may foster resilience.

In the next section, we will address why it is so important to deepen understanding the particular circumstances why healthcare professionals face moral suffering (Rushton 2018), and consequently, can experience moral distress.

### **A silent reality: healthcare professionals' vulnerability, moral distress and burnout**

Healthcare professionals' vulnerability arises from their everyday practice, from the fact that they confront suffering, pain and death day by day. In addition, professionals bring their own vulnerabilities to their encounters with patients. Carel (2009, 218) argues that there is "a vulnerability that arises out of the experience of others' vulnerability, and this type of vulnerability may require more recognition by the profession. Working as a nurse brings with it an almost daily reminder of the fallibility of human flesh and spirit and the fragility of human life and goods. This, in turn, is a lesson in vulnerability". This learning cannot be explicitly addressed in training, supervision or practice. On the other hand, Carel also maintains that the lesson of vulnerability is not a pessimistic one: vulnerability also suggests a relationship of openness to the world. In order to flourish we must let ourselves be vulnerable: this vulnerability is also the gate to creativity and flourishing (Carel 2009). According to vulnerability theory<sup>1</sup>, vulnerability is not simply a negative condition, but it must be accepted and not ignored (Fineman 2013; 2014). Indeed, recognizing the positive aspects of vulnerability can improve the experiences of people in terms of isolation and exclusion, because vulnerability is also generative. "Importantly, our vulnerability presents opportunities for innovation and growth, creativity and fulfilment" (Fineman 2012, 96). Some of these positive aspects of vulnerability can improve the relationships in the field of healthcare. To recognize it, we have to consider that there is a shared vulnerability between patients and professionals. Nevertheless, as Barnard maintains, "the ability to translate shared vulnerability into therapeutic relationships requires continuing self-awareness and self-care" (Barnard 2016, 297). Some difficulties seem to appear regarding how to allow healthcare professionals in practice to talk and express their own and shared vulnerability.

Nissim et al. (2019) have developed a qualitative study to evaluate a group intervention based on mindfulness, called Compassion, Presence and Resilience Training (CPR-T), for interprofessional oncology teams. Shared vulnerability emerged in that study as a challenge identified by the participants. The authors recognized three key elements to analyze this experience of vulnerability: a) an organizational culture that does not allow the professionals to show their feelings in adversity, b) vulnerability management in sessions and c) the paradoxical benefits of sharing vulnerability within the team. Regarding the first aspect, the participants worried about being open and showing vulnerability in the group, since they

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<sup>1</sup> The Vulnerability and the Human Condition (VHC) Initiative at Emory University has been developed over the last decade under the leadership of Woodruff Professor of Law Martha Albertson Fineman. See <https://web.gs.emory.edu/vulnerability/index.html> (Last visited July 8, 2020). In addition, for a broad understanding about vulnerability theory and bioethics, see Delgado 2017.

considered that this could diminish their ability to function effectively within the healthcare team when they return to work. Usually in the healthcare environment, any expression of emotionality is traditionally seen as a weakness, although that reality is changing. The participants pointed out that vulnerability is something tacit, which they do not share with patients or colleagues, much less with superiors, since it is seen as a negative feature. Furthermore, people with leadership roles were uncomfortable opening up in front of direct reports and vice versa. Regarding vulnerability management in the sessions, participants described a gradual change through which they could express their vulnerability as the CPR-T was developed. Although the participants were concerned about the possible consequences of demonstrating vulnerability in front of their team members, they noted that the sessions facilitated mutual trust, empathy and understanding, so that even communication with their colleagues had improved their work (beyond the study group). Finally, regarding the paradoxical benefits of sharing vulnerability within the team, participants commented that CPR-T helped them to recognize the commonalities that they share with their team members, which made them feel more connected to their colleagues and develop a non-critical attitude towards them. All this helped them to build cohesion as well as improve communication between different professions. The participants expressed their surprise upon learning that "they are also vulnerable" (Nissim et al. 2019, 9) and how this awareness helped normalize their own sense of vulnerability and initiate mutual dialogue and learning. Although participants expressed concern about showing vulnerability to their supervisors, participants in managerial positions noted that they became more understanding and responsive to the needs of others.

In addition to the vulnerability experienced by healthcare professionals because of their professional role, moral distress is another source of moral suffering. Moral distress occurs "when a health professional, as a moral agent, cannot or does not act in accordance with his moral judgments (or what he believes to be correct in a particular situation) due to institutional restrictions or internal "(Ulrich and Grady 2018, p1). In other words, moral distress occurs when health professionals recognize ethical conflicts and their responsibility to respond to them, but cannot make their moral choices. Moral distress can arise when the professionals cannot perform their work in accordance with their moral values. In many cases, the reasons may be directly related to the institution.

We have many examples about health care professional vulnerability, moral distress, and burnout experienced in the workplace, unfortunately, increasing during last years (Dyrbye et al. 2017; Davidson et al. 2018; Squiers et al. 2017). In this regard, there are institutional factors that generate impotence, burnout or moral distress: lack of personnel, lack of administrative support, imbalance in power, inadequate organization of work, lack of communication, work overload, etc. (Moreno 2016). These system problems can lead to feelings of impotence, fear or frustration in the individual healthcare professional. In addition, the perception of an unsafe environment for patients, and the fact that professionals cannot challenge these conditions can exacerbate moral distress (Berlinger 2016). Some of the institutional factors that can trigger moral distress are lack of staff and resources, lack of administrative support, imbalance in power, some styles of leadership, poor organization of work, poor relations between members of the interdisciplinary group, lack of communication, work overload and the precariousness of personnel, among others. In addition, there are also some institutional policies or legislation that can generate moral stress (Moreno 2016).

Moral distress can be a contributor to burnout (Fumis et al. 2017) as well as unrecognized vulnerability. Burnout is a psychological syndrome that arises in response to chronic stressors at work, a condition in which professionals lose concern and emotional feelings for the people they work with. As a consequence, they come to treat patients as dehumanized persons (Maslach et al. 2001). Burnout is a three-dimensional syndrome: (1) emotional exhaustion, (2) cynicism and depersonalization and (3) lack of accomplishment and inefficacy (Maslach et al. 2001, 2016; Fumis et al. 2017). Most burnout research has focused on its profound prevalence rather than seeking to identify the origin of the burnout epidemic, and these efforts are usually focused on increasing resilience and wellness among participants rather than combating problematic changes in how medicine is practiced by physicians nowadays (Squiers et al. 2017).

However, there is an increasing recognition that healthcare organizations need to face burnout and foster well-being, as well as help clinicians to provide the best care to patients, through collective action and targeted investment. In the United States, healthcare organizations are implementing committees and supporting groups in an attempt to reduce burnout among their clinicians, nurses and physicians. The National Academy of Medicine (NAM), has a strong commitment on addressing these problems, and they have designed the vast initiative "Action Collaborative on Clinician Well-Being and Resilience", which is one of the most important initiatives developed in this area. As part of this project, the NAM is promoting a network of organizations of the Action Collaborative on Clinician Well-Being and Resilience<sup>1</sup>. Another initiative to address burnout has been the Institute for Healthcare Improvement Framework for Improving Joy at Work (Perlo et al, 2017).

### **The COVID-19 pandemic complexity as a moral suffering trigger for healthcare providers**

In exceptional situations of great physical and emotional burden, such the pandemic COVID-19, ethical questions involving huge emotional suffering increases exponentially. No other previous situation has explicitly exposed the vulnerability of healthcare professionals worldwide to the public. With the current public health crisis, several factors that increase stress, fear and moral distress in health professionals, increasing the mental load of health workers, has been added to their more than ordinarily vulnerable everyday practice. During the peak period of the pandemic, the increasing number of cases, overwhelming workload, lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), media coverage, lack of specific medications, and feelings of being inadequately supported has been identified as factors associated with experiences of psychological burden among healthcare workers exposed to COVID- 19 (Lai et al. 2020).

These are some aspects that have been identified as triggering moral distress during the current pandemic:

a) The need to prioritize scarce resources such as ventilators, intensive care beds, blood, etc., generates moral distress (Berlinger et al. 2020; DePierro et al. 2020). In addition, the decision making process about the withdrawal of life support treatments, in this case, would occur despite the fact that the treatments are not objectively futile and that the patients do not reject these interventions, but mainly due to the lack of availability of resources. In Intensive Care

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<sup>1</sup> The information about the Action Collaborative on Clinician Well-Being and Resilience, developed by the NAM, is available in: <https://nam.edu/initiatives/clinician-resilience-and-well-being/>

Units, during the COVID-19 pandemic, professionals have experienced feelings of disorientation, worry, loss of control, and helplessness (Kok et al. 2020).

b) Primary Care professionals have been overwhelmed, having to face complex decision-making that generates great moral distress, since it is a new disease with great uncertainty regarding treatment, which entails establishing a relationship with patients different from usual practice (having to do triage, telematic consultations, distance or using PPE), and in a context of scarce resources for both care and protection of professionals (Melguizo et al. 2020).

c) Health professionals cannot refuse to care for patients. However, if there is a lack of personal protective equipment PPE and they are at risk of contracting the disease, should they refuse to treat their patients? When does work-based risk become unacceptable? Is there a time when health professionals have the right not to treat seriously ill patients if their PPE is inadequate or if they do not have it? It is essential to treat patients regardless of their disease. But are there limits to this duty? How much risk is too much risk? (Kok et al. 2020; Sheather and Chisholm 2020). The lack of PPE highlights the obligations of healthcare professionals to take care of themselves (Declaration of the World Medical Association in Geneva 2017; Parsa-Parsi 2017) not only because it is necessary to improve the work life of healthcare providers as part of the quadruple aim (Bodenheimer and Sinsky 2014), but also because they are extremely valuable assets for treating patients in the context of a pandemic. The Canadian Medical Association conducted a poll of Canadian physicians showing 74% were somewhat anxious or very anxious about PPE supply (CMA April 2020), and that three quarters of physicians working hospitals were uncertain of their PPE stock or supply (CMA April 2020). In any case, this kind of uncertainty about PPE availability and difficult decision-making generates moral distress, as healthcare professionals feel obligated to continue to provide care.

Moral distress has been identified as a predictor of burnout (Rushton et al. 2015; Fumis et al. 2017) and research has explored the prevalence of burnout in healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a public health crisis as the current pandemic, healthcare professionals have to contribute increased efforts into their activities for extended working hours. In addition, the constant use of PPE, and the physical fatigue and mental pressures on the unknown disease make the working hours tremendously exhausting (Talee et al. 2020). Other studies have noted the psychological impact of COVID-19 to healthcare workers. A study in Italy where 49% showed post traumatic stress, 25% depression, 20% anxiety, and 22% high perceived stress (Rossi et al. 2020). A study in China showed that of healthcare workers treating patients with COVID-19, 50% reported symptoms of depression, 34% reported insomnia, 45% reported symptoms of anxiety, and 72% reported distress (Lai et al. 2020). Another study of frontline nurses in Wuhan China reported that nurses experience moderate burnout and a high level of fear, with half of nurses reporting moderate or high burnout in all burnout dimensions (Hu et al. 2020). According to the results of a study in Ecuador during the COVID-19 pandemic (Vinueza et al. 2020), more than 90% of medical and nursing professionals had moderate-severe burnout syndrome. These results were associated with profession (physicians experienced higher burnout than nurses), age (the youngest were the most affected) and gender (women were more affected than men). In a systematic review addressing the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and insomnia among healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic, the evidence suggests that a significant proportion of healthcare professionals have experienced mood and sleep disorders,

highlighting the need to establish ways to mitigate mental health risks and adjust interventions to cope with it and minimize the risks factors (Pappa et al. 2020). In addition, medical and nursing students have also experienced stress and anxiety during the pandemic (Al-Rabiaah et al. 2020). A study in Iran of hospital workers showed 53% experienced high levels of burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic (Jalili et al, 2020). These studies are worrisome, as the existing rates of mental health illness and occupational burnout in healthcare prior to the pandemic were significant, with over half of physicians and one third of nurses experiencing burnout in the United States (McHugh et al. 2011, Shanafelt et al. 2012). An editorial in a Canadian newspaper highlights the potential crisis of worsening mental health issues from the pandemic, in physicians already experiencing high mental health and burnout rates (Horton 2020). The parallel pandemics of burnout and post traumatic stress disorder received further attention following the death by suicide of Dr Lorna Breen, the medical director of the emergency department of New York Presbyterian Hospital<sup>1</sup>. Further research is ongoing exploring the psychological impact and effect of burnout from the pandemic. For example, a psychiatrist in Montreal is recruiting healthcare workers for a study on factors associated with burnout (<https://burnout.mhicc.org/>), while a team in Halifax is conducting research on burnout in healthcare workers. (<https://researchns.ca/2020/05/05/preventing-burnout-among-front-line-care-workers-to-fight-covid-19-screen-and-intervene/>)

Considering all this complexity, to address the psychological and emotional needs by providing the healthcare professionals and students with adequate support is essential to improve the management of this situation. Some ways that have been proposed to support them are: a) considering their conditions, b) presenting solutions, c) increasing their awareness, d) encouraging them, and e) acknowledging their importance (Talee et al. 2020). In addition, to increase the resilience of healthcare professionals seems to be a necessary goal to cope with the specific difficulties triggered by public health emergencies. To foster healthcare professionals' resilience, we show how CoP can provide the adequate space for building the healthcare professionals resilience.

### **How to foster moral resilience through a CoP in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic**

The most common approach when talking about ethics in organizations is the use of an individualistic vision in which each person is morally responsible for their behavior; consequently, the interventions focus on the health care of the professional. However, another way to approach ethics in health organizations is to see each person as a member of a community or team, where the understanding of individual ethical behaviors must be complemented by knowledge and exploration of the organization's moral and social structure (Moreno 2016). Despite being a source of suffering for healthcare professionals, vulnerability and moral distress can also act as a spring to open the field of reflection and dialogue from which to generate change at the collective or institutional level (Carel 2009, Fineman 2013, 2014, Moreno 2016). In this regard, our thesis is that CoP can be a source of moral resilience for health care professionals to cope with vulnerability, moral distress and other forms of moral suffering.

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<sup>1</sup> The New York Times published the report about this case on April 27, 2020. Available in: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/27/nyregion/new-york-city-doctor-suicide-coronavirus.html>

In the healthcare environment, resilience plays an important role for workers. A way to foster workplace well-being and engagement is training for resilience, developing good mental health and subjective well-being. Resilience training has a number of wider benefits that include enhanced psychosocial functioning and improved performance (Robertson et al. 2005). All professions in healthcare experience similar effects in relation to the stressful conditions of work. This common aspect offers an opportunity to design and implement interprofessional approaches that can enhance the capacity for resilience among teams of coworkers. For this purpose, it is necessary an institutional culture that prioritizes training and cultivating specific skills and attitudes for promoting resilience to all members of the health care team, which also include students (Haramati and Weissinger 2015). Resilience has been studied mainly in regard to stress. But what about ethical conflicts and problems that workers have to deal with?

Initially the term of moral resilience was developed as moral courage. Lachman (2007, 131) defines moral courage as the "capacity to overcome fear and stand up for his or her core values; the willingness to speak out and do what is right in the face of forces that would lead a person to act in some other way; it puts principles into action". In her latest work, she also develops the concept of moral resilience, defining it as "the ability to deal with an ethically adverse situation without lasting effects of moral distress and moral residue" (Lachman 2016, 123). She adds that this requires morally courageous action, activating needed supports and doing the right thing. In addition, she argues "the virtue of moral courage is necessary to meet the ethical obligations of the profession" (Lachman 2016, 123). Rushton (2016) highlights that moral resilience is a concept under construction, and it is a way to transform the deep despair and impotence associated with morally distressing situations. Moral resilience can be understood as the ability to preserve or restore integrity in response to various types of moral adversity (Rushton 2018).

We acknowledge that healthcare professionals are thought to be highly resilient. A Canadian study of physicians showed that despite over 30% experiencing high levels of burnout, 60% of physicians said their overall mental health was flourishing and 82% reported high levels of resilience (CMA 2018). In the COVID-19 pandemic, Hu et al. (2020) found a moderately negative correlation between frontline nurses' burnout, anxiety, and depression with the self-efficacy and resilience. Thus, as nurses have greater more self-efficacy and resilience, they may experience less mental health problems.

Gujral et al. (2020) have proposed some strategies to increase resilience in healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- a) Find time for self-care: give employees the opportunity to attend the practice of meditation, acupuncture, yoga therapy or massage therapy as well as a weekly mindfulness meditation session guide.
- b) Breathing practice: offering 15-minute breathing sessions three times a week by teleconference for anyone working within the healthcare system as a reminder of focus on breathing practice.
- c) Gratitude practices: Finding the opportunity for gratitude as a powerful practice to heal, energize, and empower.

Although these interventions are important, all of them are focused on an individual perspective, that is, to promote individual moral resilience. They must be complemented with

a collective perspective. In addition, these interventions do not address the systemic factors which are thought to contribute to moral distress and burnout. A collective and systemic perspective is of great importance, given recent research that finds physicians have greater resilience than the general working population (West et al, 2020) and that even highly resilient physicians may experience burnout. Thus, individual resilience alone is not sufficient to prevent burnout or moral distress. Collective perspectives also have the potential to improve systems through advocacy. It is also necessary to consider whether resilience as currently assessed, equates with moral resilience.

In the light of this way of thinking, and according to Delgado et al. (2020), the exchange of experiences that is shared within the CoPs is an essential factor in building and maintaining moral resilience. It allows for a change in relationship from a distressing situation by shifting the mindset that the distressing experience is completely negative. From this starting point, strategies to collectively navigate ethically complex situations can be developed. Culture and systems play a crucial role in supporting physicians' moral resilience, in terms of building an environment of ethical practice. In this regard, CoP seems to be one ideal strategy for the flourishing of resilience among the healthcare team. Fostering CoPs as a process that encourages healthcare professionals to address ethical dilemmas together has the potential to build culture and system change, which reciprocally enhances personal resilience.

One concern that can arise regarding the CoP as a strategy to collectively build resilience is if this process can imply some risks. We believe that CoP can facilitate the increase of resilience among the participants through the relationships, dialogue, trust and continuity (Delgado et al. 2020). However, who should facilitate or moderate these discussions? Since the emotional management of these groups is complex and can be iatrogenic if they are not carried out by people trained, CoP pursuing the goal of increasing moral resilience should be facilitated by experts with experience facilitating groups, addressing emotional needs, understanding ethical complexities and building personal resilience. The question now is who should be these experts? The selection and composition of these experts influence effectiveness of the CoP to achieve its goal of moral resilience.

### **Practical approach: analyzing examples in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the healthcare providers have shown great strength and resilience. Liu et al. (2020) found that healthcare nurses and doctors working in Hubei, China, used multiple support systems and self-management skills to relieve stress. However, the sense of helplessness over the suffering of the patients and the sudden loss of life were identified as painful. Some professionals believed that they could cope with their emotional stress without professional support. However, professional psychological counseling and support systems and crisis interventions should be made available to those seeking formal assistance. "With logistical support from their hospital and peer support and encouragement among colleagues, they had a sense of safety and felt they were not alone" (Liu et al. 2020, e795).

Across the world, healthcare providers were called to step up to the surge of patients requiring hospitalization. Many were redeployed from community settings, often without direct experience caring for patients with infectious or respiratory disease. The sense of responsibility to provide care in a competent manner led to the provision of multiple educational resources. Many medical organizations, educational institutions, and healthcare organizations provided educational webinars to learn more about COVID-19 with a focus on

clinical aspects of managing patients with COVID-19. These webinars provided an opportunity for healthcare professionals to share experiences within their respective clinical settings. Many international physicians provided opportunities to share their experiences with others around the world via teleconference to support others' efforts to contain the pandemic<sup>1</sup>. The emergence of online forums to share experiences related to COVID-19 was observed, as the Doctors of British Columbia initiative (<https://www.doctorsofbc.ca/news/new-online-forum-physicians-collaborate-covid-19>). An international online forum for critical care physicians provided an opportunity to share experiences surrounding healthcare personnel management, isolation and quarantine procedures, respiratory therapy, antivirals, and indications for Intensive Care Unit admission and discharge (Bo et al. 2020). A report of G-MED's Global Physician Online Community showed physicians from over twenty countries contributing information about four themes: epidemiology, guidelines, preparedness, and treatment approaches (IpsosMORI 2020). The use of social media, including Facebook and Twitter to gain information from other healthcare professionals has been noted in a New York Times article<sup>2</sup>. Although not formally called CoPs, we witnessed healthcare professionals engage with colleagues around the world to share information and learnings together with the common goal of curbing the pandemic. In this regard, Tan and Roach, who met via Twitter, co-wrote a piece on Allyship (Tan & Roach 2020) as global anti-racism protests enhanced awareness of the greater likelihood of Black Americans, indigenous people and people of color, experiencing not only discrimination and police brutality, but also developing COVID-19 itself and its adverse outcomes, including death (Thakur et al, 2020; Elbaum 2020).

More specifically, CoPs that address healthcare professionals' well-being, with the intention to prevent burnout and increase ability to cope with moral distress have been developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts or groups of experts as in the examples below, of the Virtual Moral Resilience Rounds and the COVID Ethics series are helpful to providing examples of learning from experience and conveying diverse ways of thinking about moral challenges. In groups, expert facilitators may support validation of and exploration of challenges or encourage others to provide perspectives. These examples of CoPs addressing moral distress and building resilience are described here:

Virtual Moral Resilience Rounds have emerged at Johns Hopkins Hospital (US) to proactively have discussions about the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>3</sup>. These weekly one-hour sessions invite multidisciplinary clinicians to attend to discuss ethical challenges, with the goal of acknowledging distress and finding solutions. These sessions are held on Zoom and facilitated by C. H. Rushton, a physician, and a philosopher, with broad expertise on moral distress and moral resilience.

In Calgary, Canada, a team of psychiatrists, mental health clinicians, and family physicians established a partnership to provide an opportunity for connection and support amongst healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic. Online spaces offer physicians, and separately, continuing care facility staff, the chance to meet and share experiences with peers.

<sup>1</sup> More information is available in these websites: a) <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-03-07/China-Italy-doctors-share-experiences-of-COVID-19-control-online-OFi0gryDVS/index.html>; b) <http://en.people.cn/n3/2020/0324/c90000-9671699.html>

<sup>2</sup>Information available in: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/well/live/coronavirus-doctors-facebook-twitter-social-media-covid.html>

<sup>3</sup>Information available in: <https://www.advisory.com/research/physician-executive-council/prescription-for-change/2020/05/moral-resilience-rounds>.

The online space for physicians is called "Virtual Doctors' Lounge" and acknowledges the challenges of providing care during the pandemic including ethically complex situations. It has been piloted to a group of family physicians providing care in hospital settings. As continuing care staff have been greatly affected in Canada with high numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths, an online group provides the opportunity for staff to receive support. These online group sessions promote sharing of experiences, acknowledging emotional distress, normalizing experiences, and providing support to others. They are facilitated by psychiatrists and mental health clinicians with expertise in group therapy.

In Alberta, Canada, different experiences can be identified as emerging or strengthening frequency of CoP meetings in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic to navigate healthcare professionals problems that arose.

1) Alberta Health Services (AHS) Zoom Room: This biweekly one hour session addressed numerous topics relevant to the pandemic and physicians, including but not limited to PPE availability, domestic violence during the pandemic, Zoom use. The series began with an expert-led presentation on one of the topics followed by participants' sharing of their own experiences and perspectives. Outcomes of the sessions were shared with AHS leaders and often led to Tip sheets that others could access.

2) Psychosocial oncology spontaneously developed a clinical discussion group - addressed all matters related to clinical practice including technology.

3) Psychodynamic psychotherapy clinicians who previously met bi-monthly, met weekly to share wisdom regarding practical and clinical implications of COVID-19 in psychotherapy practices. This included change to virtual practice, clinical presentations and therapist challenges related to COVID-19 including Zoom fatigue and methods to manage it. Texts, email information and papers are shared between meetings.

Dr. Mamta Gautum, a Canadian psychiatrist with expertise in physician health held daily online support groups for physicians across Canada during the pandemic. Many physicians entered the pandemic burnt out, and thus were at risk of medical errors. Four distinct stages were evident through the course of the first surge of the pandemic: readiness, response, reassurance and recovery. Challenges discussed varied from frontline issues including PPE limitations and, for those not at the front-line, there was adjustment to clinical practice and delivering virtual care while working from home, balancing childcare or resilience, partner job loss. These sessions provided a space for physicians to share their experiences and receive expert advice on strategies to address personal challenges and build resilience.

A COVID Ethics Series at Seton Hall University and Hackensack Meridian Medical School arose in recognition of the value of many and diverse people discussing challenging ethical issues. The series was organized by Dr. Pilkington and includes a panel of experts from medicine, nursing and health sciences, as well as philosophers, ethicists, economists and lawyers. Topics included but were not limited to: Intention and Limitations of Aid, Vulnerability and Dependence during the time of COVID-19 and Discrimination intensified during Covid-19. The series aimed to enhance the capacity of students and healthcare practitioners to practically reason about morally challenging topics (Pilkington, 2020).

## Conclusion

Healthcare professionals are exposed to complex challenges in daily work that increase vulnerability and moral distress, which are heightened in the situations of extreme stress, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. We examined CoP as a process to build resilience, and provided examples of healthcare providers coming together to share information, experiences, wisdom and perspectives with a common goal. This process of sharing common experiences in a group setting can also be valuable to build resilience, not only for the individual professional, but also towards a culture of ethical practice. Using CoP, our intention is to recognize both the individual and the system's responsibility towards shaping the working environment in a way that promotes safe and effective care. CoP have demonstrated value during the pandemic and we theorize that CoP may be an effective strategy to increase moral resilience of healthcare professionals collectively, and exist beyond the duration of the pandemic. Finally, we emphasize the importance of promoting ethical reflection grounded on practice in order to respond to the everyday ethical challenges of healthcare professionals. "There are limits to thinking of professional ethics in terms of virtues- being caring, being compassionate, being respectful- if healthcare professionals see few ways to put these virtues into practice(...) Thinking about the complex systems as a "moral space" that must always be open to the discussion of questions of right and wrong action, of justice and injustice, may help us grapple with the continuing challenge of creating and sustaining health care systems that are safe, effective, compassionate and just" (Berlinger, 2016, p. 176).

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## Challenges Facing Financial Inclusion Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

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### Abstract

Financial inclusion is often considered as an access to financial resources for the wide public and small and medium-sized businesses, although it is a much broader concept and includes a wide range of access to quality financial products and services, including loans, deposit services, insurance, pensions and payment systems. Mechanisms for protecting the rights of consumers of financial products and services are also considered to be subject to financial inclusion. Financial inclusion acquires great importance during the pandemic and post-pandemic period. The economic crisis caused by the pandemic is particularly painful for low-income vulnerable population. A large part of the poor population who were working informally has lost source of income due to lockdown from the pandemic. Remittances have also been reduced / minimized, as the remitters had also lost jobs and are unable to send money home. Today, when people die from Coronavirus disease, it may be awkward to talk about the financial side of a pandemic, but the financial consequences can be far-reaching if steps are not taken today to ensure access to and inclusion of financial resources. The paper examines the impact of the pandemic on financial inclusion and the responses of the governments and the financial sectors to the challenge of ensuring the financial inclusion of the poor population and small and medium enterprises.

**Keywords:** financial inclusion, economic growth, access to financial products and services, pandemic, low-income population

### Introduction

The economic growth rate in Georgia in 2019-2020 was one of the highest among the Eastern European countries and the Caucasus region – 5.1%. However, talking about this issue in a positive context by experts and government officials causes a negative attitude from citizens for some reason. We often hear not even a rhetorical question - can a country have one of the highest GDP growth rates in the region and the population cannot feel it? The answer is simple – it is possible and we should search for the reason in the non-inclusive growth of the economy (**Kasradze & Zarnadze, 2019**). Inclusion is an important factor for the sustainable development of the economy (**Kasradze, Tea, 2018**). The cause of poverty of the population is unequal opportunities, which means not only unequal incomes, but also unequal access to economic opportunities.

Inclusive development benefits the wide society and not just individuals within a narrow group of society. Inclusion makes it possible to derive not only quantitative but also qualitative effects from economic growth (**Kasradze, Tea; Zarnadze, Nino, 2018**).

The term "inclusion" first appeared in the Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Georgia "Georgia 2020", where we read that "Our main goal is to benefit a significant part of the population of Georgia from the goodness brought by inclusive or universal economic growth" and the development of work force focused on the requirements of the labor market, the improvement of the social security system and the provision of a quality and affordable health care system are considered by the government as the main way to achieve this goal **(Government of Georgia, 2014)**.

Financial inclusion is an integral part of economic inclusion. Moreover, the path to inclusive growth and development of the economy goes through financial inclusion. It is true that among the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which should be achieved by humanity through joint efforts by 2030, we do not find financial inclusion, but achieving many of these goals (GOAL 1: No Poverty; GOAL 2: Zero Hunger; GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-being; GOAL 4: Quality Education; GOAL 5: Gender Equality; GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth; GOAL 10: Reduced Inequality) would be impossible without financial inclusion **(United Nations, 2015)**. UN member states use the Global Financial Inclusion (Global Findex) database to measure progress towards sustainable development goals. This document is also the statistical information base for our paper.

The issue of growing financial inclusion gained a special significance during the COVID-19 pandemic, when a large part of the world's population was locked up at home. According to a preliminary assessment by the International Labor Organization (ILO), 25 million people lost their jobs and livelihoods **(ILO, 2020)**. Now is the time for governments and financial institutions to play their part in providing greater access to financial services for poor individuals and households as soon as possible during the crisis. Governments, working together with financial institutions, must first and foremost be able to provide financial access to poor individuals and households with the necessary support to ensure their survival in these times **(Ozili, 2020) (Tarek Eldomiaty, 2020)**.

Often financial inclusion refers to the availability of only financial resources for the broad layers of society and small and medium-sized businesses, although it is a far more common concept and includes a wide range of quality financial products and services, including loans, deposit services, insurance, pensions and payment systems. As well as financial education and consumer protection mechanisms **(Giovanna Prialé Reyes, 2010)**.

Financial inclusion implies equality of access to financial information and services. Every member of the public should have access to the financial information and services that the other part of the population enjoys. Yet, unfortunately, in today's reality billions of poor people do not have access to numerous financial global and non-financial products and services **(Kasradze, Financial Globalisation-Positive and Negative Impacts on Developing Countries, 2014)**. Financial inclusion allows poor people to finance their own businesses, save, contribute to the well-being of their own families, and protect themselves from daily risks. The readiness of the country's financial sector as a whole, as well as the responsible and social approach of specific financial institutions - microfinance organizations, insurance companies, banks and others - play a big role in increasing financial inclusion in general in conjunction with public policy. It is important these institutions to be well aware of their role in struggling against poverty by promoting financial inclusion **(Kasradze, Poverty - A Global Socio-Economic Problem, 2013)**.

The following definition of financial inclusion is also found - financial inclusion includes a diverse range of financial and non-financial products and services to combat financial exclusion. In developing countries, financial exclusion usually means being without access to a bank account in particular. This category of the population is called the unbanked category. Bank accounts allow people to save money and make (send and receive) payments. Lack of access can be caused by various reasons, such as lack of financial knowledge (**Tea Kasradze, Vakhtang Antia, Ekaterine Gulua, 2019**), (**Nino Zarnadze, 2019**), distrust of financial institutions in general, high banking fees and rates, territorial distance from bank customers, etc. In developed countries, we are dealing with more the so-called underbanked challenges, which is caused by the high cost of financial products and services due to risk management measures taken by banks.

The World Bank defines financial inclusion as access to and use of formal financial services, and believes that it is a global problem and that the authorities should pay significant attention to its improvement in the country's economic development strategy (**The World Bank, 2018**). According to the World Bank Global Findex Database 515 million adults worldwide opened an account at a financial institution or through a mobile money provider between 2014 and 2017. Which means that by 2017, 69% of the adult population had an account, while in 2014 this figure was 62% and in 2011 it was 51%. 94% of adults in high-income economies have an account; 63% - in developing economies.

Globally, 1.7 billion adults lack an account in 2017. In the Global Findex survey conducted by the World Bank in 2017, the majority (2/3) named the lack of need for an account due to lack of funds as the reason for not having an account. A quarter cite the distance and fees of banking institutions as the reason. Approximately the same number cite the fact that other family members have an account as the reason for not having an account. 1/5 cited a lack of documents and distrust of the financial system, while 6% cited a religion. (**Asli Demirgüç-Kunt, Leora Klapper, Dorothe Singer, Saniya Ansar, Jake Hess, 2018**).

Having an account is an important first step towards financial inclusion. However, a real inclusion requires the ability to use these accounts securely and conveniently (digital payments, payments via a mobile phone or the internet) (**Dorofeiev, 2019**). The Global Findex database provides information not only about who owns the account, but also whether people use these accounts for payments. 1/5 of the account holders state that they have not put or withdrawn money from their accounts in the last 12 months, which is why these accounts are considered inactive and naturally such accounts cannot be considered as promoting financial inclusion. In countries where more than 80% of the population use an account, private sector initiatives and innovations have played a major role, including the main impetus for low rates on account usage and the ability to make mobile phone transfers.

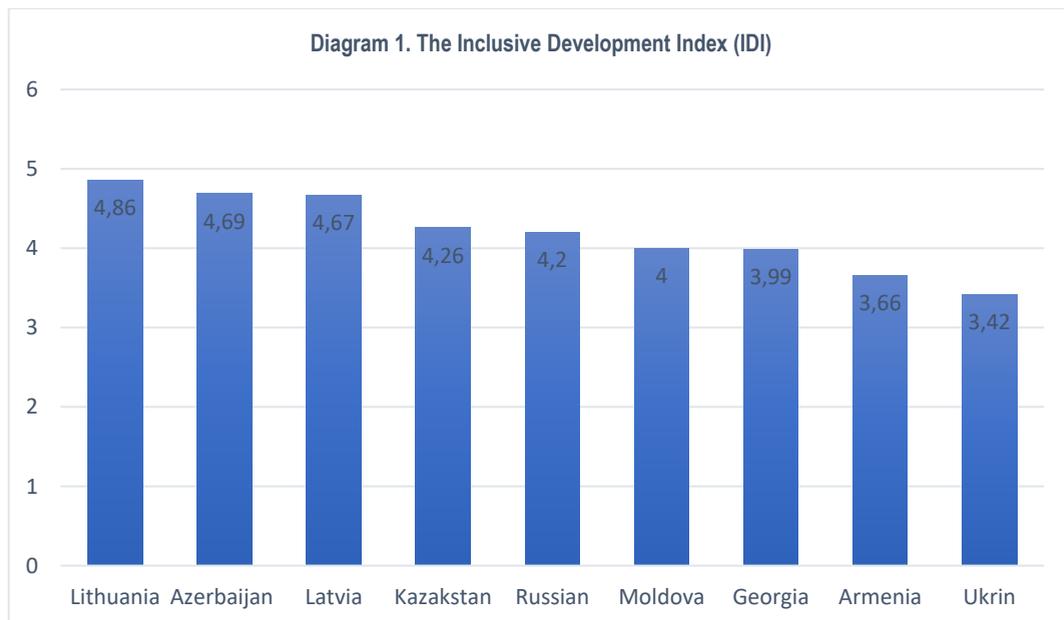
### **Financial Inclusion in Georgia**

According to the Inclusive Development Index (IDI) 2018 of the World Economic Forum Report, Georgia ranks 32nd among 74 developing countries in the world with a 3.99<sup>1</sup> inclusive development index, lagging behind post-Soviet countries (Diagram

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<sup>1</sup> IDI scores are based on a 1-7 scale: 1=worst and 7=best

1). The Inclusive Development Index (IDI) is an annual assessment of 103 countries' economic performance that measures how countries perform on eleven dimensions of economic progress in addition to GDP. It has 3 pillars; growth and development; inclusion and; intergenerational equity – sustainable stewardship of natural and financial resources (**World Economic Forum, 2018**).



Source: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Forum\\_IncGrwth\\_2018.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Forum_IncGrwth_2018.pdf)

Special scrutiny is required for the part on financial intermediation, which ranks Georgia on 16th place among low and mid income states. Georgia is on the 31st place among states with the access to business accounts for the poorest 40% of the population. In terms of access to credit, it ranks 23rd. Georgia is in the middle in terms of accessibility of financial sector. The situation is even worse in case of financial intermediation of real economy investment (19/38). In terms of accessibility of local asset market, Georgia takes 34th place among 38 low and middle income states, as for attracting venture capital, Georgia is on 32nd place (**Arevadze, 2015**).

As mentioned above, even well-developed financial systems today have failed to achieve comprehensiveness and certain segments of the population remain outside the official financial systems. As a result, in recent years, the importance of an inclusive financial system has been widely recognized in political circles, and financial inclusion is considered a policy priority in many countries, including Georgia. An inclusive financial system facilitates the efficient allocation of financial resources and thus reduces the value of capital. (**Kasradze, The Major Policies Used by the Governments of Developing Countries for Attracting Direct Investments, 2014**) In addition, access to financial resources and services can significantly improve a day-

to-day financial management, facilitate to reduce the use of high-risk informal credit sources.

According to the World Bank surveys conducted in 2011, 2014 and 2017, the growth of financial inclusion in Georgia is visible in all directions. According to the World Bank Global Findex database, in 2017, 61% of the adult population of Georgia (15 years and older) had accounts, while in 2011 and 2014 this figure was 32.98% and 39.66%, respectively (**Asli Demirgüç-Kunt, Leora Klapper, Dorothe Singer, Saniya Ansar, Jake Hess, 2018**).

According to the same study, in 2017, the adult population of Georgia without accounts named the following reasons for not having accounts:

**Table 1.**

<i>Reason</i>	<i>%, age 15+</i>
<i>No account because financial institutions are too far away</i>	2.55131602
<i>No account because financial services are too expensive</i>	12.7379675
<i>No account because of insufficient funds</i>	24.0508652
<i>No account because of lack of necessary documentation</i>	16.8846092
<i>No account because of lack of trust in financial institutions</i>	9.13279533
<i>No account because of no need for financial services ONLY</i>	0.92726338
<i>No account because of religious reasons</i>	1.17684305
<i>No account because someone in the family has an account</i>	15.6534386

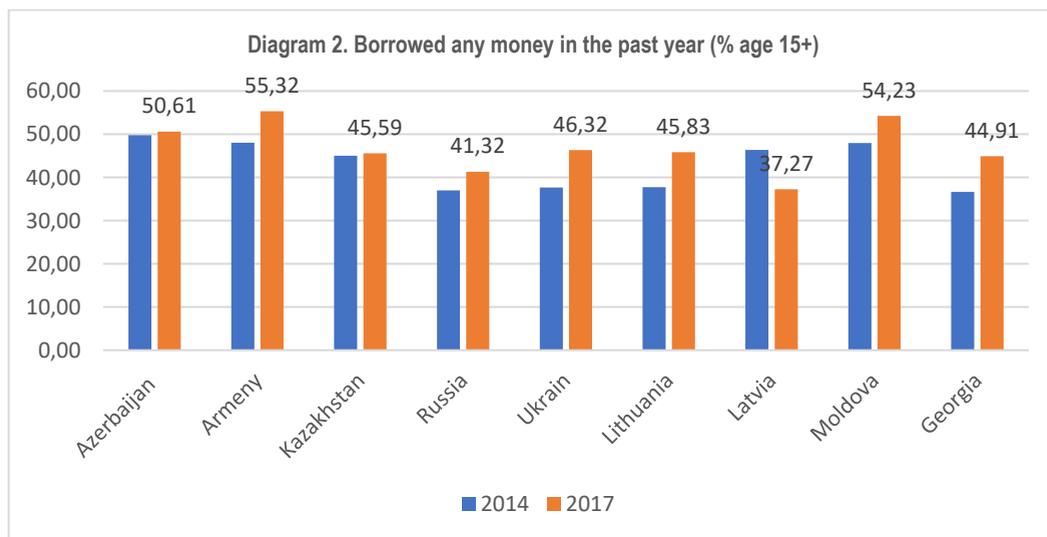
It is complimentary that the number of account holders in Georgia is growing from year to year, but in terms of financial inclusion, it is more important how many other financial products and services are available to them, how much access they have to financial technology. The most significant driver of financial inclusion today is technology. Its potent effect is its ability to deliver financial services to people wherever they are and when they need them. Financial inclusion has arisen as a by-product of these technologies now commonly known as FinTech. Since financial technology lowers the costs of financial intermediation, it enables profitable intermediation of the unbanked poor (**Ashenafi Beyene Fanta, 2019**). Financial technologies have a special load during COVID-19. Fintech allows users locked at home due to COVID-19 to transfer money from any bank account, make payments and services for trade and business in any part of the country and abroad. Financial technology can also create a framework for the inclusion and use of technological capabilities to facilitate transaction execution, access and use of accounts.

According to the Global Financial Inclusion (Global Findex) database, in 2014 and 2017, 13.37% and 29.07% of the adult population made digital payments respectively, while 20.82% and 52.95%, respectively, made or received digital payments which is quite a low indicator. The trust of poor individuals and families towards the Fintech platforms is of particular importance during COVID-19 pandemic. Fintech businesses need more transparency and security. Increasing transparency alone will not build trust. A combination of ethics, regulation, oversight, communication and transparency will be key elements of trust that will enable people to benefit from Fintech business services on the one hand, and Fintech companies to provide financial services to the poor and families on the other.

The financial industry constantly offers innovative products and services to the population, thereby reaping great benefits itself. The appearance of Fintech companies on the Georgian financial market and their active activities have significantly contributed to solving the problem of gaining access to financial services by offering the services needed by individuals and organizations at a reasonable cost. Fintech can help millions of unbanked and underbanked individuals improve their financial well-being and tackle poverty.

Fintech has boosted digital, crowdfunding, and peer-to-peer (P2P) cashless transactions in recent years. P2P loans have proved to be particularly profitable for people in emerging markets who are unable to take loans from traditional financial institutions because they do not have a financial or credit history that would allow them to assess their credibility.

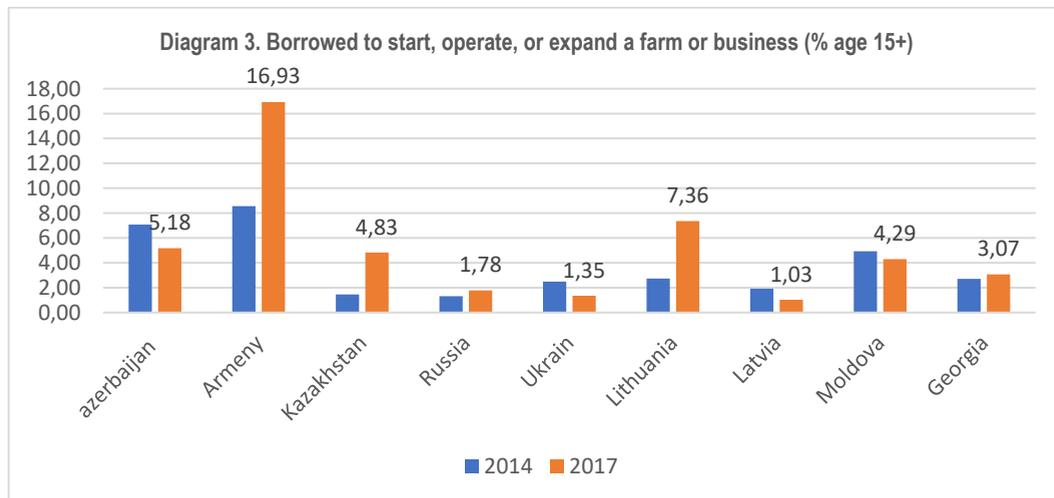
According to a World Bank study, there has been an increase in access to credit in recent years. In particular, according to the data of 2017, 44.92% of the adult population had access to any kind of loan in Georgia during the last year (Borrowed any money in the past year), while the similar figure in 2014 was 36.65%. It is true that 8% growth in 3 years is not a bad indicator, but if we look at the statistics of access to credit in other countries, even the former Soviet countries, we will see that the situation is not so favorable (Diagram 2):



However, it should be noted that only 23.65% of the adult population borrowed in 2017, compared to 13.86% in 2014, while 20.33% of the adult population borrowed from financial institutions or used a credit card in 2014, and 27.44% in 2017. Which, on the one hand, indicates that a small part of the adult population has access to credit cards and, on the other hand, all in all a small part of the population has taken loans from financial institutions. If you look at other sources of credit, such as borrowed from family or friends, unfortunately, we have a growth tendency here as well. In 2011-2014-2017, these figures were 14.01%, 16.23% and 20.68%, respectively, indicating that official loans are either not available for some reason or due to high interest rates, people choose this path.

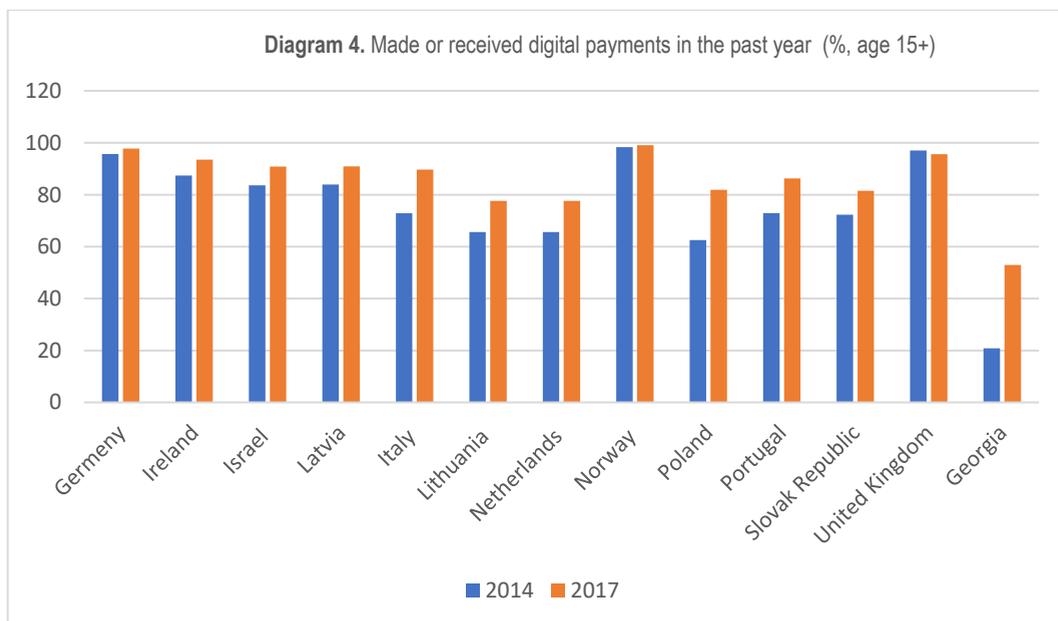
With that being said, it is thought-provoking that a very small portion of the adult population borrowed to start or expand a business. In particular, in 2014 and 2017 2.71% and 3.07%

borrowed to start, operate, or expand a farm or business. The similar figures in the former Soviet Union look like this (Diagram 3):



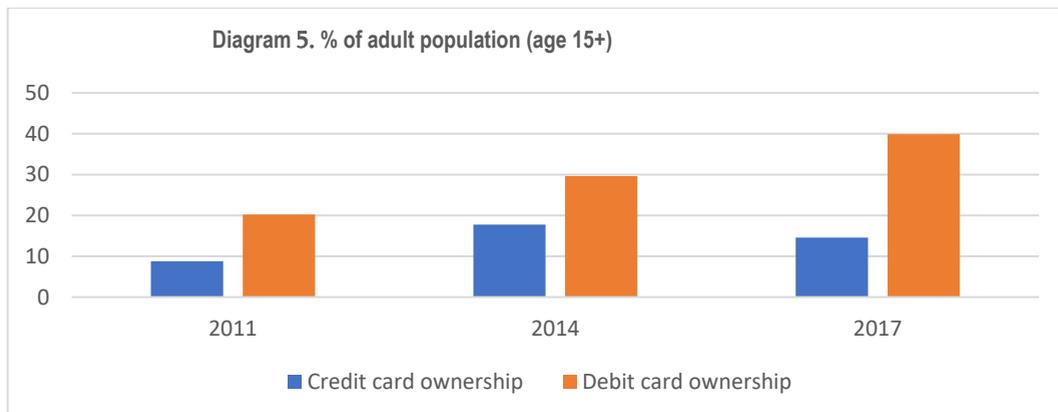
The COVID-19 crisis has once again shown how important digital funding is for the poor in difficult socio-economic conditions. In many developing countries of the world, including Georgia, remittances received from migrants abroad using international digital payment systems are a means of livelihood for many poor families. Sending remittances using mobile devices is an effective tool towards financial inclusion. The pandemic has caused a double problem with remittances in developing countries, one- Remittances have been sharply reduced, as the remitters had also lost jobs and are unable to send money home, which negatively affected both the well-being of specific individuals and families and the country's economy as a whole. Second - the lack of skills to make and receive digital payments in the population. Digital financial services, on the one hand, need encouragement from the regulator, and on the other hand, in parallel with the promotion of these services and raising public awareness, it is desirable to reduce tariffs on digital services. Reduced tariffs will encourage and increase the number of entities using digital services.

According to the World Bank Find Global Findex Database 2014 and 2017 data, digital payments were made by 13.37% and 20.07% of the adult population in the last one year, respectively. While digital payments were made and received by 20.82% and 52.95% of the adult population, respectively. If we look at the statistics of developed European countries (Diagram 4), the difference is very big and it is clear that the Georgian government and the financial sector have a lot of joint work to do in this direction.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of cases of human infection with the virus caused by touching money were reported in Georgia. Naturally, using non-cash in such a situation is one of the best ways to protect yourself. In the report on the measures taken by the Government of Georgia against COVID-19, we read that the banking sector of Georgia is one of the leaders in the world in terms of payment technologies. There are quite a variety of means of payment and banking services: contactless cards, mobile wallets, payment bracelets, barcodes, internet banking, mobile banking, telephone banking, etc. The services can be used without physical contact with cash. In addition to the fact that these services are usually more convenient, their usage is especially important now when social distance is so critically important. We call on the population to use Internet payment services as much as possible in order for the country to be able to fight the virus effectively (**Government of Georgia, 2020**).

However, the fact that in 2017 only 18.52% of the adult population used a debit or credit card to make a purchase in the past year and 15.27% used a mobile phone or the internet to access an account (% with an account, age 15+) indicates that on the one hand a large part of the adult population does not have accounts and, therefore, neither debit and credit cards, on the other hand, those who do have preference for cash transactions. In 2011-2014-2017, the percentage of the adult population in Georgia, according to the possession of debit and credit cards, looks like this (Diagram 5).



The growth tendency of debit card holders is complimentary, but the declining number of credit card holders in 2017 compared to 2014 still indicates the problem of access to credit and the preference for loans by non-financial institutions by a large part of the population, which does not really help increase financial inclusion.

It should also be noted that a large part of the population was left without livelihoods during the COVID-19 pandemic in Georgia. According to research, a large part of the adult population (44.84%) does not have access to emergency funds, which indicates low financial inclusion and complicates the situation of the already poor population in a pandemic. In 2017, there was a decrease in access to emergency funds compared to 2014. In particular, the percentage of the adult population that can access to emergency funds has decreased from 45.51% to 41.24%. In addition, for 18.18% of the adult population, a loan from a bank, an employer, or a private lender is the main source for emergency funds; And unfortunately for only 5.48% - savings. This means that despite the joint monetary and anti-crisis measures taken by the government and the National Bank during the pandemic, access to financial resources for a large part of the population will still be one of the main problems of financial inclusion in the near future (**Kasradze, Theoretical Aspects of Financial Crises, 2015**).

### Conclusion:

COVID-19 is not just a pandemic that has affected nearly 14 million people to date and has taken the lives of up to 600,000 people worldwide. It is a global economic crisis triggered by lockdown measures taken to stop the virus. It is a global macroeconomic shock of uncertain scale and duration that has left people without jobs, food, education (even temporarily). The movement of capital has been halted due to risk aversion by investors and other stakeholders (**Kasradze, Investment Environment in Georgia and and Domestic Investment Potential of the Country, 2014**). Due to the pandemic, on the one hand, the amount of debts of citizens already in debt has increased even more, and on the other hand, the financial systems themselves are under stress. Financial institutions are unable to receive disbursements from their clients whose livelihoods have been destroyed by the pandemic (**Arunachalam & Crentsil, 2020**)

Since the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the financial sector, naturally the same can be said about financial inclusion. The pandemic affected all stakeholders in financial inclusion - the poor, microfinance organizations, banks and other financial institutions. Under

the anti-crisis plan developed by the government, initially citizens were given the opportunity to defer loan repayment for 3 months with the help of the state in order to avoid problems with the payment and the corresponding fines. After the expiration of the term, the loan payment was postponed for another 3 months. The anti-crisis plan also provides direct financial assistance to citizens who have lost their jobs or been on unpaid leave, as well as to various categories of vulnerable groups.

The National Bank of Georgia has taken significant measures to mitigate the negative impact on financial sector by COVID-19 and to stimulate the country's economy. In particular **(Georgia, 2020)**:

- Reduced existing capital and liquidity requirements, allowing the banking sector to offset potential losses through these buffers and being able to continue normal business operations and crediting the real economy;
- In order to provide liquidity to the banking system, the National Bank has launched swap operations, thus supplying the system with GEL liquidity. The purpose of these operations is to reduce liquidity risk in the system so that liquidity risk does not become an impediment to crediting the economy. The \$200 million swap instrument will be distributed among banks in proportion to their market share;
- Considering the role of microfinance organizations in providing financial services to businesses and the population of the regions of Georgia, the National Bank provides liquidity support to microfinance organizations through \$200 million in swap operations;
- Commercial banks' capital requirements have been eased, which will free up 1.6 billion GEL in capital for the banking sector, which could be used to offset potential losses or to lend 16 billion GEL to the economy.

The mentioned anti-crisis measures ensure the survival of stakeholders of financial inclusion in the short term, but their long-term survival is important also. The question naturally arises - how long can the moratorium on payments be extended? Where will customers get the money to repay the loan? On what basis will citizens and small businesses be able to take out new loans and on what basis will financial institutions issue new loans? Who will get the final blow when the large-scale loan defaults start? The danger is real, and the questions remain unanswered.

Although COVID-19 in terms of access to financial resources threatened the positive trends discussed above in the paper on financial inclusion, in some respects it could also be said to have had a positive effect. In particular, due to the high risk of spreading the virus:

Remote service was encouraged (POS cashing, remote identification, etc.); A new rule has been developed and approved, which allows customers to withdraw money from POS terminals of shopping facilities (pharmacy, grocery store) in addition to ATMs; The National Bank of Georgia has started issuing permits to banks on remote customer identification procedures. At this stage, three banks were allowed to agree to use remote identification for different product purposes; Some products and financial technology companies are being communicated on the digital transformation of some products; Remote lending procedures have been simplified according to which temporarily no real estate appraisal is required on the spot. Demand for renewal of financial statements was eased, etc. We think that all this will have a stimulating effect on financial inclusion in the future.

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## **Mexican Airlines in the Current Situation of COVID 19. Evolution and Prospects**

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### **Abstract**

The present work seeks to analyze and contrast the previous characteristics of the general financial situation of the main Mexican airlines. This is especially relevant, since in general there were problems in leverage and profitability in some of them, since exercises prior to 2020. In this sense, it is important to clarify the conditions in which several surgical surgeries were developed, faced by economic and health crisis of the first decade of this century and finally, they will face this global phenomenon unprecedented in the economic history of this century and much of the previous one. In the part of presenting the figures of reduction in passenger flows today, the characteristics and problems they have faced, as well as some reflections on how they can be better rid. Likewise, a model is presented that emphasizes the change in Aeroméxico's financial situation, towards a critical state in terms of the fall in the activity of commercial aviation worldwide. Finally, there are some reflections and recommendations regarding the possible alternatives for this important sector of the Mexican economy, in general, Aeroméxico in particular, can get out of this difficult and complex current environment.

**Keywords:** Economic and health crisis, main Mexican airlines, Mexican economy, model, possible alternatives

### **Introduction**

To give an idea of the conjunctural panorama, before the COVID 19 pandemic, a data that sounds very shocking is that of the decrease in the arrival of total passengers, national and international, same as in annual variation, according to Airports and Auxiliary Services, was of the 29%, for the first four months of 2020. In relation to the five most relevant airports in the country (69.5% of the total), namely: México City, Cancun, Guadalajara, Tijuana and Monterrey, the steepest drop corresponds to Cancun (35.0%), followed by Monterrey (31.0%), México City (29.5%), Guadalajara (26.3%) and Tijuana (19.0%). It should be noted that this situation is general in the 30 most important airports, as well as in the rest of them,

according to this source. Additionally, generalized falls are seen when said period is compared against that of 2018. (ASA, 2020) By type of flights, the decrease was 26.1% for domestic flights, while international flights accounted for a decrease of 31.5%. Given the steepest drop in this last line, the share of domestic flights, at the end of April 2020 was 50.5% of the total, reversing the highest relative share of international flights, shown in the same period of 2019.

At the national flight level, for the first quarter of 2020, five Mexican lines absorbed 96.7% of passengers, with the following order in their relative participation: Volaris 33.2%, Vivaaerobus 21.0%, Interjet 18.7%, Aeromexico Connect 13.7% and Aeromexico 10.1%. It should be noted that these lines show very pronounced drops in the number of passengers transported, with Vivaaerobus being the least pronounced -14.2%, followed by Volaris with -23.3%, Aeromexico with -29.9%, Interjet with -30.5% and Aeromexico Connect with -32.8%. Another relevant data refers to the fact that in April 2020, the falls in passengers transported compared to the same month of 2019, were more than 86% in the five aforementioned lines, the sharpest being that corresponding to Interjet, with -97.2%. With reference to international flights, for the January-April 2020 period, Mexican lines participated with 30.3% of the passengers transported (against 42.9% of the US ones). Of this percentage, 26.8% was absorbed: Aeromexico 10.3%, Interjet 9.1% and Volaris 7.4%, leaving Aeromexico Connect, Vivaaerobus and Magnicharters with marginal percentage shares. Falls in this area are more severe than for domestic flights. Aeromexico Connect stands out with -47.4%, Aeromexico with -41.5%, Interjet with -24.3% and Volaris with -18.9%. If only the month of April is considered, compared to the previous year, all the lines (except Magnicharters, which has a negligible participation) presented falls of more than 93% in the number of passengers transported. (AFAC, 2020)

### **Literature review: Current situation of low-cost airlines in the commercial aviation industry**

As part of the deregulation process, especially reflected in the liberalization of fares and the expansion of routes to foreign destinations, faced by the commercial aviation industry since the end of the last century, low-cost airlines have observed significant growth, as well as a greater participation in the market. Among the most notable proportions, it can be seen that at the beginning of the last decade one in three passengers traveled in these in the United States, in Europe one in four and in Asia and Oceania one in two. In the case of the Latin American subcontinent, the market is concentrated in very few lines, unlike what happened in Europe, although with an interesting dynamism, which is mainly concentrated in Brazil, México and to a lesser extent in Colombia. In México, just under 2 out of 3 passengers in the domestic market traveled in them in the period indicated above.

Approximately it is appreciated that more than half of its cost structure is made up of those of flight operation, with the consumption of jet fuel playing a key role here. It is noteworthy that in México this type of air services offer is oligopolistic in nature, having been concentrated since the last decade, especially during the 2008 global crisis, where recession and impact on fuel prices were combined. Among the main advantages that this type of flight has used for its proliferation and presence in the market, the elimination of intermediaries in the sales process, the reduction of costs by offering more basic services, the greater frequency of nonstop flights, the Round-trip flights, as well as the encouragement of flying by socio-demographic strata that previously did not, given the accessibility of fares, competitive even with those of buses, in the Mexican case.

As a problematic situation prior to this global situation, there is not having the cargo market covered, the lack of more comprehensive connectivity in terms of destination airports, consumer complaints, due to the concomitant reduction of the services offered by the fee, as well as those caused by delays and cancellations, among other factors. Another topic that is appreciated is focusing on the tourism market, rather than on business travelers. In general, in the current context, the following statement seems very eloquent: "...these costs may be affected by financial circumstances, as happened between 2007-2008; health crises like influenza and of course due to economic recessions". (Canseco, 2015: 10). For some time now, it has been necessary to rethink the strategic direction of low-cost airlines, by generating competitive advantages that can face the competition and, as it is currently appreciated, face the sharp drop in flows, within a context of high volatility in costs. In this sense, the challenge will be extremely difficult, since among the attributes most indicated by the segment of the market oriented to the "businessman", punctuality, comfort and above all convenient hours are privileged. In general, the latter will be a challenge when facing a return to activities, predicting that these flows will be much more restricted than in the days prior to the current pandemic. Perhaps in the case of the tourist segment these situations are much less severe. Another issue that has affected since the beginning of the century is the one related to the costs derived from insecurity, following the terrorist attacks of 2001, which add to the volatility indicated in fuels.

In this sense, to account for the vulnerability of this economic activity and unintentionally anticipating what happened in the context of the current situation, we have the following assessment, made in the previous decade: "Unfortunately and without having achieved recovery Overall, airlines around the world are facing a new crisis, this time caused by high fuel costs and in many cases putting them at imminent risk of bankruptcy..." (Urzúa, n.d.: 7). Taking into consideration all the above factors, it is necessary to seek to attend quickly to the two highly relevant segments in this field, namely: the business market, on the one hand, and the tourism market, the latter representing a potential aspect of the How companies that survive can recover. Regarding the tourism market, special attention should be paid to its ability to boost income, since its economic relevance and dynamism are general globally, as stated in the following: "It is one of the most important economic sectors and dynamic in today's world, both for their level of investment, participation in employment, contribution of foreign exchange, and contribution to regional development." (Urzúa, n.d.: 8). Concerted action is required in inter-institutional cooperation (both local, national and international), in the prevailing regulations, in the training of the human factor, in infrastructure as a system, in the marketing mix oriented to the different segments, as well as risk management, among other factors.

In this order of ideas, attention should be paid to the possible reactivation of the tourism sector, in terms of the Mexican air network, and its characteristics of connectivity, centrality and intermediation, due to their impact on the capacity for growth in said activity economic. In general, connectivity fosters a multiplier effect in activity directly related to the airport industry and related services, as well as in the tourist network connected to the place in question. It highlights that in 2012 tourism generated about 2.3 million jobs (about 6% of the national total). One of the possible threats that could be presented in the current scenario is the public policy of "air freedoms", which allows foreign lines to attend local flights. According to data from the Ministry of Communications and Transportation, the air network carries 2.5% of passengers, while only 0.1% of cargo. Relating to connectivity, for 2013, it observed that it

is found in the three main cities of the country (with a clear centralizing predominance at the country level, in México City), as well as in Cancun, Puerto Vallarta, Los Cabos, Acapulco and Tijuana. The shorter distances increased their frequency by 22% between 2000 and 2012. Cancun stands out with 100 airports added to its network, reaching the position of being the second airport in the country. With respect to centrality, which measures the relevance as an origin and destination of an airport, the same concentration can be seen in the three main cities in México, with Cancun in second place and Tijuana in fifth. In this sense, it is relevant to take into account that this excess of centrality could be counterproductive in the event of a reactivation of tourism. In fact, *ex ante*, it had been pointed out that: "The projections proposed by Aviasolutions suggest that during the period 2009-2020 we will face a growth rate of 6.1% ... double the traffic over the next 10 years..." (Lichtle, 2015: 9) Evidently it is clear that this will not be achieved, although it reflects the inertia that prevailed in the market. Regarding intermediation, Cancun, Los Cabos and Puerto Vallarta stand out. Only 8% of flights can be direct from origin to destination, the rest requires two or more stops.

Another interesting aspect is the one regarding the correlation between the arrival of national flights and hotel occupancy in national tourist destinations. In this regard, however, and evidently reflecting the drop in airline activity, it should be noted that: "However, there is a divergence between both series as of 2008, as a result of the negative impact of the health crisis in México during 2009 derived from the outbreak of influenza...From 2012 the behavior of the number of flights and the arrival of national tourists began to move in the same direction, as a result of the improvement in economic conditions..." (Lichtle, 2015: 10). Without being able to obtain an accurate forecast of the duration and magnitude of the current economic recession, what is evident is that it will be much more severe than that of 2008.

Within this context, the strong impact that exogenous aspects to the industry have generated on it can be seen, particularly the fall in the markets, the result of global confinement. Likewise, the effect of public policies around the concentration of the Mexican air network, described above, can be seen intertwined. To this are added endogenous aspects, mainly in matters of managing the financial function of companies, although at this point each economic entity entails the consequence of its own organizational management, regardless of the situation the referred sector.

In this order of ideas and admitting the synergistic causality of external and external factors, the following seems plausible: "It is necessary to monitor and detect all those events that occur outside the company and that may affect it, but cannot always be controlled from a company in particular; from this, strategies can be developed to face these events." (Alvarez, 1997: 8). Of course, an event like the current one goes far beyond the proportions that occurred before, at least since the first half of the last century. Finally, it is convenient to articulate alternatives between internal strategies that generate a critical mass of survival, and incidents of public policy in the area of communications and transportation, that support the Mexican airline industry in particular and tourism in general.

## Methodology

### Vector Autoregressive Model (VAR)

To analyze the way in which the evolution of each of the selected independent variables (as described below) influence Aeromexico's share price, the Autoregressive Vectors methodology was used, which is explained in more detail. then:

At first glance, the VAR methodology (Joselius, K. (2006); Neusser, K. (2016)) is similar to the simultaneous equation models, since it considers various endogenous variables together. But each endogenous variable is explained by its lagged or past values, and by the lagged values of all the other endogenous variables in the model; there are usually no exogenous variables in the model. When considering models of simultaneous or structural equations, some variables are treated as endogenous and others as exogenous or predetermined (exogenous and endogenous lagging. The term "autoregressive" refers to the appearance of the lagged value of the dependent variable on the right side, and the term "vector" is attributed to the fact that we are dealing with a vector of two (or more) variables, mathematically the model is summarized as follows.

$$A_0 X_t = \sum_{j=1}^m A_j X_{t-j} + \varepsilon_t$$

With  $E(\varepsilon_t' \varepsilon_s) = I$  if  $t = s$  and  $E(\varepsilon_t' \varepsilon_s) = 0$  if  $t \neq s$  and

Where  $A_0$   $y$   $A_j$  are matrices and  $\varepsilon_t$  is the unexplained part of the model, which is included as a vector of white noise variables. As mentioned in the VAR model, it is expressed as a linear variable of its own past values, of all other variables, and of a stochastic error term. Formally the VAR is presented as:

$$B_0 y_t = Z + B_1 y_{t-1} + B_2 y_{t-2} + \dots + B_p y_{t-p} + e_t$$

Where  $B_0$  is a matrix of  $k \times k$  of coefficients of the variables included in the VAR,  $Z$  is a vector of constants,  $B_1, B_2, \dots, B_p$  are matrices of lag coefficients and  $e_t$  is a vector of white noise errors. Furthermore, it is supposed to follow an autoregressive process of order  $r$ .

$$e_t = F_1 e_{t-1} + F_2 e_{t-2} + \dots + F_p e_{t-r} + u_t$$

Once the system is solved the reduced form is found:

$$y_t = c + \phi_1 y_{t-1} + \phi_2 y_{t-2} + \dots + \phi_p y_{t-p} + \varepsilon_t$$

Where  $c = \beta_0^{-1} Z$ ;  $\phi = \beta_0^{-1} \beta$ ;  $\varepsilon_t = \beta_0^{-1} e_t$ .

## Analysis

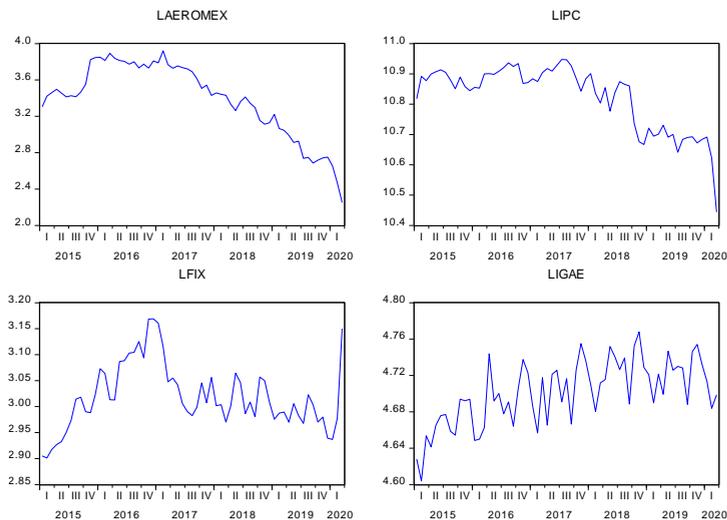
### Econometric Model

The aim of this model is to analyze the impact that the macroeconomic environment has on the market value of Aeromexico and thereby determine whether the country's economic conditions are decisive in the level of Aeromexico's share price. For this, an Autoregressive Vectors model is proposed with monthly data in the period from January 2015 to March 2020. The variables used to build the model are: AEROMEX (monthly closing price), IPC (Price Index and Quotes), FIX (peso-dollar exchange rate) and IGAE (Global Index of Economic Activity).

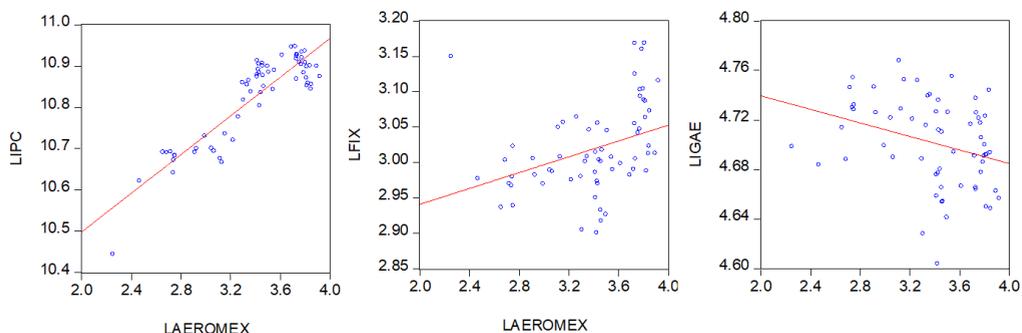
The following graph shows the variables in their logarithmic version to illustrate their behavior. In it, it is possible to observe that the market value problems in Aeromexico come from the end of 2016 and have not recovered. Likewise, the Scatter is presented where we can observe the most significant functional is that of Aeromexico with the IPC. The next procedure was to calculate the yields and growth rates of the variables, but before that, the unit root tests were performed. The test results show that the variables have order of integration 1, so it is possible to include them in the model with a difference.

Graph 1

Variable behavior



Scatter diagrams



Source: Own elaboration with Eviews

Table 1

**Unit Roots Test**

Variable	ADF	Phillips-Perron	KPSS	Integration order
laeromex	-7.644806 (0.0000)	-6.259836 (0.0000)	0.085560 (0.146000*)	I(1)
lipc	-7.752026 (0.0000)	-6.280828 (0.0000)	0.058404 (0.146000*)	I(1)
lfix	-6.499266 (0.0000)	-6.093774 (0.0000)	0.143522 (0.463000*)	I(1)
ligae	-6.309609 (0.0000)	-15.85080 (0.0000)	0.360857 (0.463000*)	I(1)

Source: Own elaboration with data from Eviews

The specification of the model obtained is as follows:

$$D(LAEROMEX) = C(1,1)*D(LAEROMEX(-1)) + C(1,2)*D(LAEROMEX(-2)) + C(1,3)*D(LFIX(-1)) + C(1,4)*D(LFIX(-2)) + C(1,5)*D(LIGAE(-1)) + C(1,6)*D(LIGAE(-2)) + C(1,7)*D(LIPC(-1)) + C(1,8)*D(LIPC(-2)) + C(1,9) + C(1,10)*DUM2$$

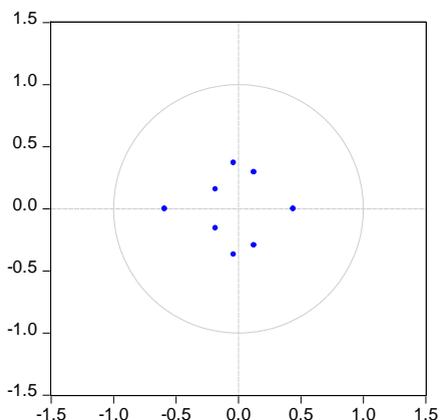
$$D(LFIX) = C(2,1)*D(LAEROMEX(-1)) + C(2,2)*D(LAEROMEX(-2)) + C(2,3)*D(LFIX(-1)) + C(2,4)*D(LFIX(-2)) + C(2,5)*D(LIGAE(-1)) + C(2,6)*D(LIGAE(-2)) + C(2,7)*D(LIPC(-1)) + C(2,8)*D(LIPC(-2)) + C(2,9) + C(2,10)*DUM2$$

$$D(LIGAE) = C(3,1)*D(LAEROMEX(-1)) + C(3,2)*D(LAEROMEX(-2)) + C(3,3)*D(LFIX(-1)) + C(3,4)*D(LFIX(-2)) + C(3,5)*D(LIGAE(-1)) + C(3,6)*D(LIGAE(-2)) + C(3,7)*D(LIPC(-1)) + C(3,8)*D(LIPC(-2)) + C(3,9) + C(3,10)*DUM2$$

$$D(LIPC) = C(4,1)*D(LAEROMEX(-1)) + C(4,2)*D(LAEROMEX(-2)) + C(4,3)*D(LFIX(-1)) + C(4,4)*D(LFIX(-2)) + C(4,5)*D(LIGAE(-1)) + C(4,6)*D(LIGAE(-2)) + C(4,7)*D(LIPC(-1)) + C(4,8)*D(LIPC(-2)) + C(4,9) + C(4,10)*DUM2$$

According to the unit circle, the model is stable with two lags, as shown below:

Inverse Roots of AR Characteristic Polynomial



Source: Own elaboration with Eviews

To ensure that the model is not expurious, the Autocorrelation tests were performed, with four lags, and the results show that none of these is statistically significant, so it can be said that the model does not present autocorrelation problems in the residuals.

**Table 2****VAR Residual Serial Correlation LM Tests**

<i>Null hypothesis: No serial correlation at lags 1 to h</i>						
<i>Lag</i>	<i>LRE* stat</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Prob.</i>	<i>Rao F-stat</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Prob.</i>
1	20.74978	16	0.1883	1.328223	(16, 132.0)	0.1893
2	39.36250	32	0.1736	1.263773	(32, 145.4)	0.1776
3	60.86734	48	0.1006	1.321233	(48, 136.9)	0.1086
4	71.66033	64	0.2388	1.138784	(64, 123.6)	0.2669

\*Edgeworth expansion corrected likelihood ratio statistic.

Source: Own elaboration with data from Eviews

The following correctly specified tests are those corresponding to Normality and Heteroskedasticity. The following table shows the statistics obtained and the p-values that show normal residuals without heteroskedasticity.

**Table 3****Normality and Heteroskedasticity Tests**

<i>Test</i>	<i>Value</i>
<i>White Heteroskedasticity (with cross terms)</i>	577.9712 (0.1252)
<i>Jarque – Bera</i>	3.587681 (0.8923)

Source: Own elaboration with data from Eviews

Once the correct specification was determined, the Granger Causality test was performed to determine if there was a correlation between Aeromexico's behavior (yields) and the movements that occurred in the macroeconomic variables during the analysis period. The results show that the null hypothesis that indicates that the No Granger variables cause Aeromexico cannot be rejected, which implies that the behavior in the market of this issuer is not correlated to variations in the exchange rate, the IPC or the economic activity.

Table 4

**VAR Granger Causality/Block Exogeneity Wald Test**

<i>Dependent variable: D(LAEROMEX)</i>			
<i>Excluded</i>	<i>Chi-sq</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Prob.</i>
<i>D(LFIX)</i>	0.984377	2	0.6113

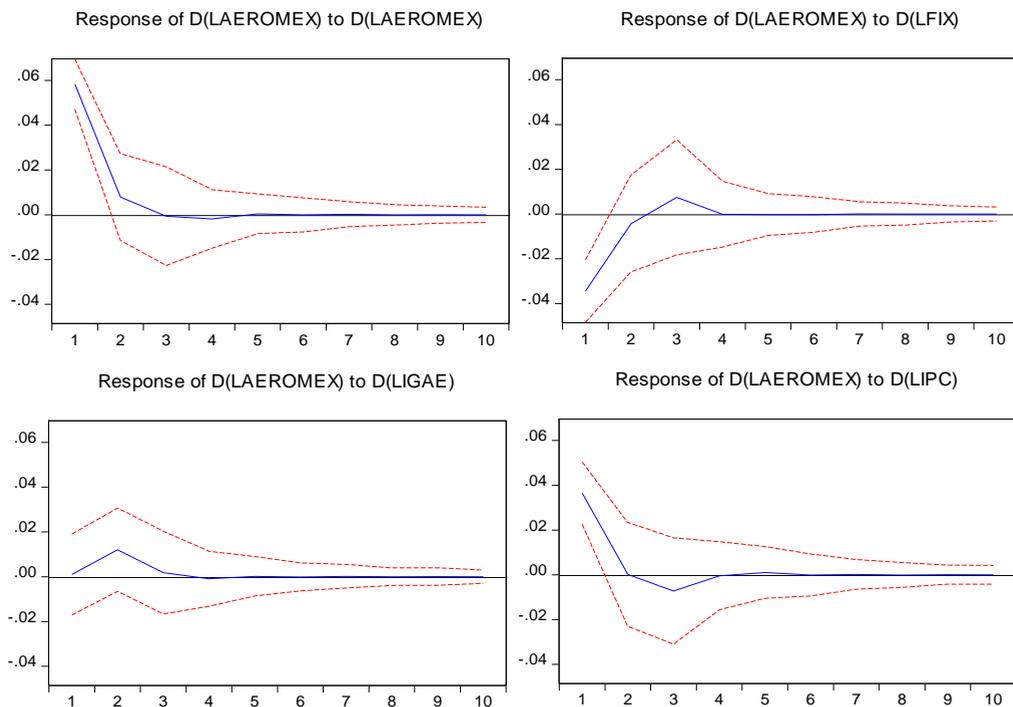
<i>D(LIGAE)</i>	2.000652	2	0.3678
<i>D(LIPC)</i>	0.551446	2	0.7590
<i>All</i>	4.491112	6	0.6105

Source: Own elaboration with data from Eviews

To expand the previous analysis, the Impulse-Response Functions were listed, shown below. In it we can observe that Aeromexico to a shock in the exchange rate in negative terms and in the third month it takes positive values but that effect is diluted from the fourth month. As for the market, a shock in the IPC implies a fall in aeromexico that is only perceived for three periods and is diluted as of the fourth month. And finally, the effect of a shock on economic activity does not statistically influence Aeromexico's market value.

Graph 2

Response to Generalized One S.D. Innovations ± 2 S.E.



Source: Own elaboration with data from Eviews

**Conclusion**

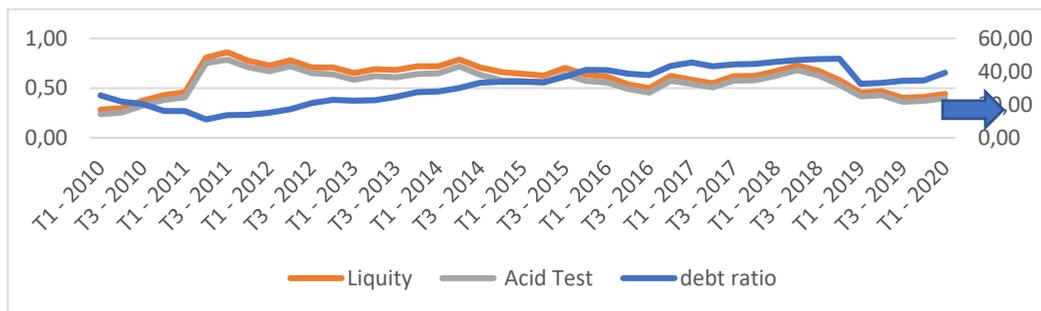
The results obtained with the Autoregressive Vector Model give us indications that external factors have not been the cause of the loss in value of Aeromexico's Market, but rather internal factors and investment decisions over the past ten years. This is evident in the following graphs, in the first the liquidity and the level of indebtedness of the company are presented and in the second the reasons of profitability that Aeromexico has offered in the last five years

are presented. As can be seen, liquidity has had a downward trend which, together with the increase in debt, has caused it problems in solving its short-term commitments. In terms of profitability, net margin and return on assets have been on a ten-year downward trend for ten years, and the deepest problem is seen in the return on capital that fell in negative terrain since 2017 and has not achieved recover to positive values.

Once recovery features are reported, Aeromexico must focus on covering the tourism market, in combination with the business-oriented one, so that it can reactivate with the expected increase in its income. Likewise, efforts should be focused in order to exercise greater control over its main operating costs, to the extent possible. Another factor of central importance is to seek certification of the aircraft in its fleet, to be in a position to use them in planning its operations. In this sense, there is a component of an endogenous nature, very important in the financial situation of the main Mexican airline. However, public policy actions must also be articulated, aimed at creating a less adverse environment for the development of the aviation industry in Mexico.

**Graph 3**

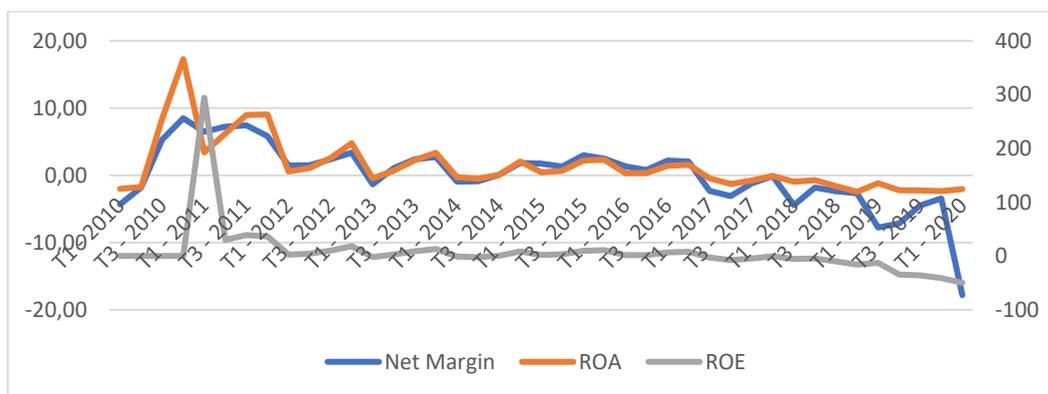
**Liquity and Debt of Aeromexico**



Source: Own elaboration with data from Economatca

**Graph 4**

**Rentability of Aeromexico**



Source: Own elaboration with data from Economatca

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# The Covid-19 Between State of Emergency and Exception in Italy and Its Consequences on Human Rights

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## Abstract

In mid-December 2019, several atypical cases of pneumonia were detected in hospitals in Wuhan City – Hubei Province – in Inner China. It turns out that the first patients had already fallen ill in early December or even mid-November. However, only on the last day of the year 2019, Chinese doctors were able to officially identify a new virus in a 41-year-old patient admitted 5 days earlier. The virus belongs to the class of “coronavirus”, the same to which the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) viruses belong. It is initially baptized 2019-nCov, or “new 2019 coronavirus”. In February, the official name assigned to the virus is Sars-COV-2 and the associated disease is named COVID-19. The outbreak took on considerable proportions in China and then spread to the rest of the world, leading the World Health Organization to declare the infection a “pandemic” on 11 March 2020. The containment strategies applied in the most affected countries have proved to be very different in effectiveness, to the point that the lethality of the virus appears very different from country to country. This difference in impact has led to different legal, economic and social consequences.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, State of Emergency, Exception in Italy, Consequences, Human Rights

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<sup>2</sup> Arabist and sociologist, Ph.D. in Political Science, vice-president of the Study Centre “Tempi Moderni”, she deals with Islamic migration in Europe and studies the relationship between immigration and work. She is a member of the research staff in the European project Horizon 2020-TRiVALENT: Terrorism pReventIon Via rAdicaLisation countEr-NarraTive of the University of Roma Tre and was a visiting fellow at the University “do Mihno” in Braga, Portugal. She is author of many national and international scientific publications.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

On 21 February, a secondary outbreak was also detected in Italy, i.e. the transmission did not only affect people from areas at risk. The first Italian COVID-19 patient was detected in Codogno (Lodi). After an attempt to isolate a "red zone", Italy has been facing a progressive national lockdown since March 7. With a series of measures in succession - the subject of this essay - the government has stopped increasingly large portions of the productive fabric, until it identified a small number of "essential activities" that could continue the activity, including the agricultural supply chain.

The Italian government has also followed the WHO guidelines for the surveillance of the epidemic. The contagion in the Lombardy region immediately appeared very widespread and the tests carried out were not sufficient to accurately monitor the phenomenon. At the end of March 2020, the epidemic in Italy caused about six thousand infections per day and about one thousand victims. Overall, there were over ten thousand victims and 92 thousand infected people identified through 429 thousand tests. As Walter Scheidel recalls in his extensive review on inequality (Scheidel, 2019), epidemics are among the most transformative events in human history. The crisis triggered by the Sars-COVID-2 epidemic and the choices made to combat it, has produced strong pressure on the protection, international and national, of human rights. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, said, "Given the exceptional nature of the crisis, it is clear that states need additional powers to address it. However, if the Rule of Law is not respected, the health emergency risks becoming a human rights catastrophe, the adverse effects of which will far outweigh the pandemic itself (Editorial staff MeteoWeb, 2020). The corona virus pandemic, contrary to popular belief, also kills healthy adults, as well as older people with previous problems. WHO data say that the global mortality rate of the virus has doubled in the last two months, from 2.1% on 20 January to 4.4% on 23 March, well above 2% of the well-known "Spanish" pandemic.

Sars-COVID-2, together with the dramas it has caused, is also an unprecedented test for Europe, just a few months after Brexit. After the initial torpor, the lives of European citizens have changed dramatically under the pressure of measures like never before, in times of peace. More than 250 million people have experienced a situation of total or partial lockdown, with measures affecting the fundamental rights of human beings, which are at the basis of Western democracies, and represent the expression of an awareness that emerged following the dramatic experiences of the European dictatorships of the early 20th century and the Second World War.

From this point of view, the debate on how to deal with Sars-COVID-2 developed, in its first phase, along two different axes: the first concerned the treatment of the patients, the second the containment of the epidemic. The United Kingdom and other countries proposed the first, which British Prime Minister Johnson exemplified in his famous statement on herd immunity. The second, however, is the one adopted by South Korea and Taiwan. It should be pointed out that the first system led to dramatic consequences in terms of the number of deaths, particularly in the weakest section of the population, in view of substantial respect for rights

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<sup>1</sup> Both authors have elaborated the structure of this essay. Marco Omizzolo is the author of the introduction, first and second paragraphs. Pina Sodano wrote paragraphs three and four. The last paragraph has been elaborated and written together.

and democratic life of the country. The second system, which tended to protect the population as a whole, had inevitable consequences in terms of respect for human rights.

On a closer analysis, the situation appears to be much more complex than previously considered, to the point that, by taking those two alternatives to the extreme, we cannot help but notice some disturbing points of convergence. The strategy developed by Korea and Taiwan - i.e. moderate containment - so different from the Chinese model and its European variants, has led to a much smaller restriction of the rights of the citizens, also due to the efficiency with which the strategy has been conducted. On the other hand, the radical solutions to the epidemic have called into question the system of rights and the democratic order itself. There are several dramatic examples in support of this thesis: for example, Hungary officially declared a state of emergency to allow a centralised management of the health emergency, but the first application of the extraordinary powers given to Prime Minister Orban (Benvenuti, 2020; De Sena, 2020) was the repeal of the law allowing for the registration of sex change<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, equally worrying are the news coming from Brazil, where President Bolsonaro, who is probably infected with the virus, passes through the crowd calling for a coup d'état; not to mention groups of armed citizens who gather in various US cities, praising President Trump against the "strong powers" who have practiced the lockdown.

In this perspective, the decisional practice established in Italy during the months of the emergency deserves careful analysis in order to understand both the genesis and future prospects and the possible repercussions on the system of fundamental rights and guarantees.

### **Sars-Covid2 and the Italian Constitution**

Unlike most of the European continent, the Italian Constitution does not provide for a state of emergency. It merely lays down provisions, in Article 78, for the declaration of a state of war. The Constituent chose not to take into consideration the proclamation of a state of emergency in order not to create dangerous precedents, such as to reopen the way to authoritarian drifts. Only decades later, the Italian legislator decided to include the state of emergency in art. 24 of the Civil Protection Code<sup>2</sup>, and this is an evolution to be analyzed with great attention, also for its repercussions in terms of social protection.

According to par. 1 of this instrument, "on the occurrence of the events which, following an expeditious assessment carried out by the Civil Protection Department on the basis of available data and information, and in connection with the Regions and Autonomous Provinces concerned, meet the requirements of Article 7, paragraph 1, letter c)<sup>3</sup>, i.e. the Council of Ministers - on the proposal of the President of the Council of Ministers, formulated also at the request of the President of the Region or Autonomous Province concerned and, in any case, having acquired the agreement - deliberates the state of emergency of national importance, fixing its duration and determining its territorial extension with reference to the nature and quality of the events and authorises the issuing of the civil protection orders referred to in

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<sup>1</sup> This choice reveals the mythical/sacral origin of the operation: in emergencies, the leader takes up again the primordial role of medium between the human and the divine; his task is then to appease the divine wrath, through the restoration of the "boni mores". Unfortunately, there is a reappearance of an ancient and terrible logic, as it is taking place in Hungary.

<sup>2</sup> Legislative Decree no. 1, 02/01/2018, in G.U. no. 17, 02/01/2018.

<sup>3</sup> Article 7, paragraph 1, letter c) identifies "emergencies of national importance connected with natural or man-made calamitous events which, due to their intensity or extent, must, with immediate intervention, be faced with extraordinary means and powers to be used during limited and predefined periods of time pursuant to Article 24".

Article 25<sup>1</sup>. " The fact that the compression of rights is possible by means of ordinances "in compliance with the general principles of EU law and regulations" indicates that the measure, in the intentions of the legislator, is not intended to exceed the limitations laid down in the Constitution on the application of individual rights (Civinini and Scarselli, 2020)<sup>2</sup>.

With regard to the Sars-Covid-2 epidemic, the Italian Government declared the State of Emergency on 31 January 2020 in terms that did not allow predicting what would have happened later. The preamble of the Declaration makes general reference to a serious international crisis, which manifested itself with the proclamation of a state of global emergency by the WHO on 30 January. The Head of Civil Protection would have carried out the necessary implementation of the measures, in accordance with Article 25 of Legislative Decree 1 of 2018.

After the Declaration of 31 January, Regional Governors and Mayors issued a series of ordinances - in addition to the orders of the Head of Civil Protection -, which led to serious legal and social confusion. The ordinance is the instrument of the President of the Region (and in some cases the Mayor) as well as the head of Civil Protection but, in a state of emergency, the latter is supposed to prevail.

The Government intervened with Decree-Law No 6 of 23 February on 'Urgent measures on containment and management of the epidemiological emergency by COVID-19', converted, with amendments, into Law No 13 of 5 March. The decree-law provided that, considering the worsening of the situation, the government should intervene with containment measures implementing the declaration of the state of emergency taken with DPCM, after consultation with the relevant ministers and regional presidents. The decree-law was followed by a series of Prime Ministerial decrees implementing it on 23 February, 25 February, 1 March, 4 March (which imposed suspension for certain kinds of activities at a national level, through absolute bans and criminal sanctions) and 8 March (which tightened the measures both in the red zone and at national level).

The restrictive aspect of the measures contained in the Prime Ministerial Decrees took a quantum leap with the Prime Ministerial Decree of 9 March, which was further amended by the subsequent Prime Ministerial Decrees of 11 March and 22 March. It should also be noted that Decree-Law No 19 of 25 March 2020 extended until 13 April the measures initially taken until 3 April. The Decree-Law was also used in some sectors for the regular conclusion of the school year, for economic measures and to reorganise the whole Country for the restart.

To date, the measures relating to the restriction/suspension of rights have been taken through DPCM - and Ministerial Decrees -, issued on the basis of an ordinary law - Law no. 13 of March

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Article 25 (par. 1), the coordination of the implementation of the interventions during the state of emergency takes place through the ordinances of the Civil Protection, "in derogation of any existing provision, within the limits and in the manner indicated in the deliberation of the state of emergency and in compliance with the general principles of the legal system and the rules of the European Union". The ordinances shall be issued after agreement with the Regions and Autonomous Provinces territorially concerned and, if they derogate from the laws in force, they shall contain an indication of the main rules to which they intend to derogate, with specific reasons.

<sup>2</sup> After a careful reading of Articles 24-25 of the Civil Protection Code, the opinion expressed by the President of the Court of Pisa and Prof. Scarselli seems reasonable. In fact, they claim, "These measures are clearly designed to deal, for example, with an earthquake or flood, but not with a viral pandemic such as the one we are experiencing". Civinini, V. and Scarselli, G. (2020). *Emergenza sanitaria. Dubbi di costituzionalità di un giudice e di un avvocato, Questione giustizia*, Research news.

5 converting Decree-Law no. 6 of February 23 (and subsequently Decree-Law no. 19 of March 25) -, which applied the declaration of a state of emergency more than a month earlier.

The question that arises concerns the appropriateness of the procedure followed in Italy, considering the enormous impact that the measures have had on fundamental human rights. This is without prejudice to the assessment of the severity of the epidemic itself, and does not consider how the virus could have manifested itself with such destructive effects in Italy, as well as in France, Spain, the United Kingdom and Belgium (as well as in the USA and Latin America), while little has occurred in Taiwan, South Korea and a number of other European countries<sup>1</sup>. In order to answer this question, the existing instruments of international protection of human rights must be analysed as a framework for the qualification of the government choices under examination.

### **International protection of human rights and their derogation**

Both the ECHR (European Court of Human Rights) and the PDCP (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) contain a provision derogating from the protection of human rights, respectively in Article 15 of the first and Article 4 of the second, and this under the conditions set out in paragraphs 3 of both instruments. The provision in paragraph 1 of both instruments indicates the conditions under which a State may suspend the application of the rights provided for in the instrument itself<sup>2</sup>. The central aspect of the strict formulation of the possibility of emergency derogation<sup>3</sup> in international human rights law should not be sought in the provision of such a possibility. It is a measure present "also in other conventional texts, to signify the irrepressible impulse of the State to act free from constraints when, in situations of force majeure and/or extreme danger, its security or even its existence is at stake". The central aspect of this formulation is that the States allow the possibility of unilateral recourse to the derogation to be limited<sup>4</sup>.

In suspending the application of the Treaty to which it refers, the derogation clause should not be confused with restrictive clauses which serve to limit the specific scope of certain provisions. In particular, Articles 5 and 8 to 11 ECHR - which deal with the right to personal freedom, respect for family life, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association - are constructed on the basis of a recurrent scheme, according to which the right is set out in paragraph 1, while paragraph 2 sets out the restrictive measures in the application of the law to which the State may have recourse. Thus Article 5(2) (e) states, among the reasons justifying the regular detention of a person, that of 'preventing the spread of a contagious disease'. Given that the only restrictions on the normal exercise of the right of assembly and association must be laid down by law, Article 11 indicates

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<sup>1</sup> Germany but also other Northern European countries and beyond (see Portugal).

<sup>2</sup> According to Article 15 (1) ECHR, the State, "in the event of war or other public danger threatening the life of the nation, may take measures derogating from the obligations laid down in this Convention to the strictest extent that the situation requires", "as far as there is no contradiction with other obligations under international law". In stricter terms, Article 4 (1) PDCP seeks to deal with an exceptional public danger threatening the very existence of the nation, and it sets as a condition that it must be proclaimed by means of an official act.

<sup>3</sup> Article 15 (3) ECHR requires the State to inform the Secretary General CoE when the state of emergency begins and when it comes to an end.

<sup>4</sup> Zagato, L. Ibid. The Commission, and then the EDU Court, have established that the situation referred to in paragraph 1 is in the meantime a situation of crisis or exceptional danger, since it poses a threat "pour la vie organisée de la communauté composant l'Etat en question": EDU Commission, *Lawless v. Eire*, Decision of 30 August 1958, in YECR, II, 1958-59; EDU Court *Lawless v. Eire*, 1 July 1961, Rec. 332/57.

such measures as necessary in a democratic society 'for national security, public order, the defence of law and order and the prevention of disorder and other offences, the protection of health and morals, and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others'. Article 9(2) provides for a similar limit for the freedom to manifest one's religious beliefs. Article 2 of Protocol 4 to the ECHR is still relevant. It relates to freedom of movement, and indicates that the regular exercise of that freedom may be restricted only for compelling reasons, provided for by law, such as restrictions that constitute "measures that are necessary for national security ... for the protection of health, in a democratic society"<sup>1</sup>. At the end of Title I, Rights and Freedoms, Article 18 ECHR provides that restrictions on freedoms may only be imposed 'for the purpose for which they were intended'. Articles 18 par. 3 (freedom of religion) and 21-22 par. 2 (freedom of assembly and association) of the PDCP express the same concept in rather close terms, while Articles 12-13 confirm freedom of movement for anyone who is legally in a State other than his own, as well as to leave the country where he is, including his own. All these rights are subject only to the restrictions provided by law, necessary to protect national security, public order, public health and morality, or the rights and freedoms of others, compatible with the other rights recognized by the Pact itself.

Ultimately, as long as a State puts in place measures restricting individual rights that do not go beyond what is provided by the limiting clauses of the ECHR or PDCP, whether or not it declares a state of emergency, it does not have to make any notification. On the other hand, when the measures taken go beyond, or concern rights in relation to which the Treaty does not provide for restrictive measures, only the notification (to the CoE Secretariat or to the UN Secretariat) of the proclamation of the state of emergency will protect the State from the consequences of its actions.

In the present crisis, ten European countries have used Article 15 ECHR to justify the measures taken at national level<sup>2</sup>. The form of these notifications<sup>3</sup> suggests that these states, when taking emergency measures, made the notification in the uncertainty of the possible consequences. They followed the footsteps of Georgia, which notified the state of emergency declared at the time of the avian epidemic in 2006<sup>4</sup>.

In fact, as there was no reaction in the ECHR to the declaration of a state of emergency during the avian influenza epidemic - certainly less dangerous than Sars-COVID-2 - it was to be expected that the same would happen in the case of the current epidemic. All the more surprising then is that Italy has not done so. It is true that the Italian State, like every other State, can deal with situations of serious danger as it sees fit, but it is also clear that only recourse to the notification procedure provided for in Article 15(3) ECHR would have demonstrated the concern on the Italian side to ensure that, even in dealing with such a serious

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<sup>1</sup> Protocol No 4 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms recognize some rights and freedoms not included in the Convention and its Additional Protocol, Strasbourg, 16 September 1963, entered into force internationally on 2 May 1968, in Italy on 27 May 1982.

<sup>2</sup> Starting with the Note Verbale notified by Latvia to the Secretary General CoE on 16 March 2020. These are: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, North Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia.

<sup>3</sup> Summary E., "Law enforcement measures ...", cit., such as the use of the formula that the measures adopted "may invoke a derogation from certain obligations" indicates the absence of absolute certainty on the part of the notifying States as to the scope of the measures taken, or any amendments that may be necessary in the course of the procedure.

<sup>4</sup> Note verbale notified to the Secretary-General CoE on 13 March 2006.

crisis, the limitations of fundamental rights remained within the limits of what was strictly necessary.

Other countries belonging to the Convention also proclaimed a state of emergency without notification, because some States did not initially take any measures (UK, Netherlands), but were then forced to follow the events (UK in particular, while the Netherlands remained within the limits of restrictive measures). Other States adopted measures prepared in good time, so that they were able to tackle the crisis by means of measures that were restrictive, but not suspensive of rights (Germany, Portugal). From this point of view, it is even more difficult to justify the French<sup>1</sup>, Spanish<sup>2</sup> and, above all, Italian lack of notification of the state of emergency.

### **The Italian case in phase 1**

In Italy, passive behaviour in the first weeks after the declaration of the emergency may explain the initial lack of notification. It remains that subsequent measures, in particular since the Prime Ministerial Decree of 9 March, are unlikely to fall within the scope of the ordinary restriction of individual and collective freedoms. In other words, they do not simply restrict the rights of movement, assembly, association, work and economic initiative. These measures also seriously interfere with the exercise of other rights: worship, education<sup>3</sup>, family life and, above all, the right to freedom, both individual and collective, to privacy and scientific freedom. The ratio behind these measures lies in the protection of the right to health: art. 32 of the Constitution states that health is a fundamental right of the individual as well as the community, stressing that no one can be subjected to health treatment except by legal obligation, with the only limit of respect for human dignity.

The point is that the confinement measures taken from 8-9 March in Italy have in fact paralyzed, to the point of suspending it, that right of freedom, placed not by chance (Article 13) at the beginning of Title I (civil relations) of Part One of the Constitution, "Rights and duties of citizens". This establishes that personal freedom is inviolable and cannot be restricted except by reasoned act of the judicial authority and only in the cases and ways provided for by law. The public security authority may take any provisional measures only in cases strictly provided for by law, which must in any case be examined by the judicial authority within 48 hours, forfeited in the event of failure to validate them. Some constitutionalists have explained that Art. 13 cannot yield to Art. 32 (Pace, 1974)<sup>4</sup>. It is astonishing, then, that in a situation constitutionally so much at risk, the opportunity to link the Italian emergency practice with the international instruments referred to, has not been taken into account.

International human rights law does not include this strange game between state of emergency and state of exception. Within the context of the present crisis, Hungary is the only European country to have actually used the declaration of the state of emergency for

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<sup>1</sup> Proclaimed by Prime Minister Edouard Philippe on 18 March 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Proclaimed by Prime Minister Sanchez on 14 March 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Provided for in Article 2 of the Additional Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Paris, 20 March 1952, entered into force on 18 May 1954, in Italy on 26 October 1955.

<sup>4</sup> Pace, A. (1974) *Libertà personale* (dir. Cost.), in *Enc. Dir.*: "It should be immediately stated that it does not seem that art. 13 can give way to art. 32; therefore all coercive restrictions for health reasons must necessarily follow the jurisdictional route provided for by that article" (p. 298), and in even more direct terms (p. 296), "on the other hand, the public authority could never invoke art. 32 of the Constitution to derogate, for health reasons, from the scope and guarantees of art. 13": contribution cited, with others, in Civinini M.G., Scarselli G., op.cit.

liberticidal purposes, and it has beware of notifying it, unlike the ten states that proclaimed the state of emergency in relation to the measures taken against the epidemic. Furthermore, in the context of the international system, in which Italy is also included, there must always be an emergency fact at the origin of the suspension of rights (EDU Commission, 1969).

In conclusion, the Italian legislator has never foreseen an emergency such as the one that has arisen, thus skewing a rule, Article 24 of the Civil Protection Code, which has little to do with this situation. It is no coincidence that from the very beginning the Italian media have used the metaphor of war and not that of natural disasters to explain the suspension of fundamental rights. As for the fact that the measures taken in application of the state of emergency went beyond the limits of the simple restriction of rights<sup>1</sup>, this is evident at least in relation to Articles 13 and 17. Finally, one may wonder to what extent the provision suspending all non-urgent judicial activities, including the substantial closure of judicial offices, is compatible with Article 24 of the Constitution.

## The Italian case in phase 2

With the transition into Phase 2, concerns about constitutionally contrived human rights procedures increase. First, the questionable absolute prevalence given to the right to health over any other right tends to turn into absolute prevalence of the precautionary principle, increasing doubts about its constitutionality. Perplexities have increased since the television announcement by the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte on 25 April, which, based on this principle, imposed uniformity of treatment for situations in different realities, each relating to fundamental rights.

It should be noted that, on the one hand, the ongoing projects for phase 2 seriously affect the right to privacy. Specifically, the introduction of tracking apps via DPCM without parliamentary debate raises serious concerns, especially in relation to the perverse relationship between emergency legislation and technological innovation. In this respect, the google/apple agreement, due to its global scope, is more than just one example among others on which a thorough critical analysis needs to be undertaken.

On the other hand, the role of the media in the "war against the coronavirus" campaign - responsible for an uncertain congruity with that art. 33 of the Constitution that wants art and science free, and free their teaching - has not been sufficiently analysed. It has consolidated, in fact, the unique thought in a field where opinions among specialists differ. The predominant thesis was total and prolonged imprisonment, waiting for the vaccine as the only solution, propagation of a state of anxiety and fear to be managed by vague media reassurance, interruption of any opinion that diverged from the standard narrative. This dangerous trend has led the Guarantor for Telecommunications to invite the social media to obscure sites that carry "inaccurate news or news not coming from authoritative scientific sources". If it is true that fake news is circulating on the web, it is equally true that, the way the measure is presented, it seems dangerously aimed at silencing the voices of scientific dissent.

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<sup>1</sup> See the open letter of 30 jurists (lawyers and professors, but also the President of the Juvenile Court) from Turin to Premier Conte on 29 April 2020, with the indicative title "Restore constitutional guarantees", in <https://www.open.online/2020/04/29/ripristinare-garanzie-costituzionali-lettera-aperta-premier-conte-trenta-giuristi-torinesi/>.

On the opposite side, the insistent demand to put an end to measures to return to a normal situation as quickly as possible represents a shortsighted vision, unable to grasp the changed threshold of the problems at all levels of civilised living, including respect for human rights.

**In conclusion: fundamental freedoms have been violated and new horizons have emerged**

The most important aspect of the impact of radical containment of the epidemic on human rights is that it has affected the freedom of our living as a whole, not only individual aspects. It has affected all rights, not some specific ones, but has also created new horizons. Actually, the collective character of some human rights emerges, in the present situation, with a force that was not conceivable before. One of these rights, in particular, which has long remained a prisoner of an uncertain status, draws unthinkable strength from what we might call a heterogenesis of purpose. In fact, since the epidemic caused the worst damage in the most polluted areas (especially in those zones with a high concentration of fine dust), and since it sprang from the perverse dynamics that compromise both natural environments and its species, now the public authorities have - at least in theory - to take environmental factors into account for their purposes of recovery. In the meantime, a series of measures to protect the environment had already been planned - at both European and national level - in terms of the ecological conversion of the economy and the construction of circular economy dynamics, but these measures have now come to a standstill. However, in Italy as elsewhere, the executive has to maintain certain fixed points in order to give faith to its own narration of the emergency. In fact, the incentive measures for the purchase of bicycles and scooters are a truly significant turning point for Italy, and Paris itself shows an exponential growth of pedestrian areas and cycle paths, in phase 2. Indeed, the environmental component of the right to health and the environmental dimension of the right to life are the areas coming out of the crisis that are most requalified.

The other right that emerges is the right to cultural heritage and identity, which is both an individual<sup>1</sup> and a collective right. That is to say, the right of the community to keep its identity profiles alive (Zagato, 2012), and the right to safeguard the cultural identity of the community, as a heritage of humanity. The collective dimension of cultural rights and the right to cultural identity does not conflict with the individual dimension of the rights themselves. "The collective dimension develops through and thanks to the individual one; besides, recent international legal instruments" (Zagato, 2017) include in particular the Convention on the Protection of Intangible Heritage at a universal level<sup>2</sup> and the Faro Convention<sup>3</sup> at a regional level. The collective dimension of safeguard of cultural heritage closely relates to the practice of sharing and transmitting of knowledge (Pinton, S. and Zagato, L. n.d.), but the accelerated digitisation of recent months poses a serious threat in the field of education, such as the impulse to cultural standardisation. It is therefore essential to recover a dialogical, as well as a physical profile of the social relationship in the dimension of cultural transmission. However, after the experiences of the last few months, communities and movements within civil society

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<sup>1</sup> It refers to the right of individuals belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities to have a cultural life of their own, in common with other members of their group, to profess and practice their religion or to use their language.

<sup>2</sup> Convention for the Protection of Intangible Heritage, Paris, 27 October 2003, entered into force internationally on 20 January 2006, in Italy.

<sup>3</sup> Faro Convention on the value of cultural heritage for society, Faro, 13 October 2005, entered into force internationally on 1 June 2011, not yet for Italy (proceedings in progress).

know that they must deal with the construction of digital archives in relation to their respective identity profiles, and with the setting up and the application of digital museums. In short, we must not disperse the forced legacy of the lockdown. Today we must make a creative effort, also in relation to language, since "we urgently need new metaphors and new words to draw the days we are living; the old ones risk turning not only the present into a nightmare, but also and above all, the future that awaits us" (Cassandro D., 2020).

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## Digital Culture and Learning in Higher Education After COVID19: A Collaborative Approach in a Virtual Environment

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### Abstract

This article is the result of a critical analysis of the incorporation of Digital Culture into methodologies and interactive approaches that drive collaborative and meaningful learning processes for higher education students. We will analyze a specific course, Science, Technology and Society in Arts, Languages and Culture, with students from the 1st. Semester of the Portuguese Language and Literature for Teacher education Course of a Private University. Our goal is to demonstrate the planning, implementation, and learning outcome in a course with a hybrid methodological approach that makes use of interactive tools in the students' learning trail. We will highlight an interactive evaluative activity that consisted in the construction of a collaborative mural using the *Digital Padlet* tool as a resource for a critical reflection done by students on the chapter of a book from the basic bibliography: "What is Society?" (Bazzo, 2003). We adopted the qualitative analysis of the data from the Collaborative mural itself and the records of the students' Digital Learning Diaries, which was performed after the collaborative activity. This allowed us to observe the relationships between the methodological approach, the use of digital tools and the perception of significant learning in higher education, as well as to establish a critical reflection on the incorporation of digital culture in pedagogical practices.

**Keywords:** digital culture, collaborative learning, meaningful learning, teaching methodologies, hybrid teaching

### Introduction

Faced with a moment so unique that one lives all over the world from the emergence of the "New Coronavirus" causing COVID19, education is seen at a crossroads.

It is a watershed moment, which will bring, if properly reflected and systematized by educational networks and by teachers themselves, new practices, which can put into action the much desired curriculum that promotes meaningful learning, the emancipation of the student and that promotes a teaching practice focused on the development of the student's protagonism.

Many schools, and many teachers, have implemented creative solutions for the time of remote teaching. There are surveys showing what some schools in the state of São Paulo, Brazil have done. These actions range from caring for infrastructure, economic actions up to those related to curriculum reorganization. But it is necessary to look directly into the classroom, the teacher-student relationships, the solutions that are being proposed in the micro world of the teacher and his students. Schneider, former municipal secretary of education of São Paulo, in a column in *Folha de São Paulo*, confirms this idea in his recent article, which states that:

Making the curriculum more flexible, having a good information system and learning metrics, betting on the connection between the school, students and the school community and investing in the connectivity of all students, regardless of their income, are good learning from the experiences mentioned. But we will only wake up better from this nightmare that has been remote teaching if we are able to rethink educational practices from this experience.

The pandemic taught us that teaching is not a simple craft and unveiled the enormous professional commitment of Brazilian educators. Our greatest tribute to these professionals should also be to believe in their ability to design the educational policies they will implement (SCHNEIDER, 2020).

This is what we will do in the brief words of this article, by sharing a teaching and learning experience during the quarantine period caused by the COVID pandemic<sup>19</sup>. We will highlight movements made by the teacher and the students that reveal conceptions of education. Can this lockdown and remote teaching experience impact educational concepts and paradigms?

Our objective is to point out the learning experienced by these students and conceptualize the actions performed by the teacher, so that it can be evidenced that technological resources well employed, intentionally and promoting collaboration, can be rich in the teaching and learning process.

We believe the teaching experienced during this pandemic lockdown might bring forth new possibilities for curriculum organization post covid<sup>19</sup>. Nevertheless, for this to actually take forth, the *savoir-faire* needs to be conscious, reflected and intentionally practiced. Active learning, flipped classroom, blended learning, as discussed by Bacich and Moran, (2018) can be done in regular (no distance learning) classrooms and the digital culture can be incorporated.

We do not intend to defend digital education (distance learning) exclusively. But, rather, reflect on the possibilities of a curricular reorganization that can be implemented using digital tools and that can expand the possibility of developing skills such as collaborative learning, autonomy and protagonism.

## Literature Review

Levy (1991) states that the good use of technology can empower and amplify our cognition. That affirmation is in complete accordance with Vygotsky's concept of how our cognition increases. The more interaction with different instruments and meaningful signs, the greater capacity for developing cognition.

We have been forced, in the last decade, to confront our teaching methods because our students have different cognitive capacities due to their high use of technology. Our teaching methods have not always kept up with them.

There have been many researchers pointing out new ways of teaching that promote protagonist students. We can recall Mazur (2013), with peer instruction; we can also call on Duch, B. J., Groh, S. E., & Allen, D. E. (2001) with Problem Based Learning. But all these new methods draw originally from Dewey (1916), Vygotsky (1998), Piaget (2003), Wallon (1995), Paulo Freire (1996) and D. Ausubel (1980).

Education has long demanded new ways of making students active and not passive, through teacher's methodologies. But lately, with the advent and rapid development of digital culture even more emphases have been put for teachers to change their ways of teaching.

Dewey (1916) pointed out the importance of putting students in real life situations so that they might experience different solutions for solving situations and for reflecting on principles.

Piaget (2003) enlightened us with the child development theory and how one learns by assimilation and accommodation of new facts and new habits, increasing therefore their knowledge.

Vygotsky (1998) put all his effort and studies demonstrating how culture and interaction makes it possible for one to learn. He postulated that teachers need to intentionally challenge their students so that they might interact with signals, signs, meanings and so increase the significance of their world, increase their vocabulary, and consequently increase knowledge.

Wallon (1995) developed his theory of how the human is an integration of cognition, motor, and affection, and that these dimensions need to be put in action and be observed by teachers while organizing their teaching plans and methods. A teacher needs, according to him, to pin out students' needs so that in permitting experiences that will help them fulfil these needs, they will necessarily perform effectively. Vieira (2020) also points out that Wallon's theory leads us to the understanding that amidst afflictions, cognitive responses will be compromised. In this pandemic moment we live, teachers need to be aware of their students need for interaction, even in virtual environments, so that they can figure out their emotions and, in doing so, they can resume their learning experience. In part, that is one of the demonstrations this paper will focus, as students are encouraged to interact with each other and with their teacher.

Freire (1996), in Brazil, defended the need for teachers to part from students' reality in order to introduce new knowledge and make it possible for them to emancipate from states of ignorance, in different levels.

Finally, among our choice of researchers and intellectuals of education, Ausubel (1980) proposed that teachers seek for their student's previous knowledge, so to build upon it, enhance it. He also argued that to reveal meaningful learning, students needed to demonstrate and be conscious of how the new knowledge was assimilated in his cognitive structure. That can only happen, also, if the student is active in his learning experience.

From these educational fathers, we derive all other active teaching methods, as already mentioned. One that has called much attention lately is the inverted classroom method, through which the students can collaborate, can individually reflect and systematize their learnings, can interact with the teacher and can learn to search for information, evaluate information and use it in favor of his development. But for this to happen, the teacher needs a careful and detailed plan of action, with phases; a kind of trail for the student to track in

order to promote exploration, recognition of former knowledge of the subject of study, collaboration, reflection and meditation, systematization and application. This is where the digital culture contributes. It makes all these phases possible and mobilizes the students.

It is important to observe how much this digital culture, marked by the ubiquity of digital devices, drives and impacts the processes of knowledge construction, since "for the first time ordinary citizens can not only have access to information, but also produce and distribute their productions and carry out these actions collaboratively." (BANNELL, et al, 2017, p. 104).

In this sense, the so-called culture of convergence (JENKINS, 2008) refers to a stream of images, ideas, stories, sounds that can be shaped by the subjects immersed in this new reality, who appropriate the countless possibilities of media and languages to become authors and protagonists of new knowledge.

It becomes relevant, therefore, to understand how methodological approaches that combine the use of digital technologies can enhance interactive, collaborative, and authorial learning processes. Lévy (1994) pointed out, for more than two decades, how collective intelligence can become viable as resources drive new ways of learning and teaching, incorporated into cyberspace. Thus, possibilities are created so that the student of higher education can develop cognitive abilities, exploring different senses and languages and different spaces and times.

Thus, digital culture brings to education the possibility of building new skills and abilities, given the plasticity that the virtual expresses in its constant modification.

Technology should not be thought of unilaterally, as it is also configured by the use, we make of it. [...] its dynamic interactivity changes the user socially and culturally, activating different intelligences and abilities, demanding, and favoring the construction of new competence. That is, adopting ICT in our daily lives changes what we want to accomplish, what we try to accomplish and what we think it is possible to accomplish: it changes our goals, actions, interpretations and meanings, as well as the neuronal organization in the brain. (BANNELL, 2017, p.108).

We understand that adult learning occurs as an awareness of learning and what meanings they attribute to it. Therefore, it is of great relevance to understand the need to establish relationships that take place in the virtual space, through the experience of narratives in network, so present in the daily life of students, especially higher education. (LOPES, VIEIRA & HARDAGH, 2018). "If the school ignores the breadth of the community to which the new generations belong, it will be excluding much of the daily social and cultural experience from school life." (BANNELL, 2017, p.117).

In this sense, promoting actions that awaken new possibilities of interaction between teacher, students and knowledge, creating a network and a perspective of collective construction of learning that allows the student to be active, inspires new forms of pedagogical practices, more consistent with the scenario presented (LOPES, 2018). In this way, it is necessary that "teaching-learning activities boost independence of thought and propose significant challenges for the student". (BANNELL, 2017, p.118).

Our research establishes a critical reflection on Digital Culture to incorporate methodologies and interactive approaches that drive collaborative and meaningful learning processes for higher education students. We will analyze the course: Science, Technology and Society in the Arts, Languages and Cultures, with students from the first semester of a Bachelor's degree in

Language Teacher Education of a Private University in São Paulo, Brazil. Our research object implies a blended learning methodological approach with the use of interactive tools that permeate the students' learning trail.

We will examine an interactive evaluative activity that consisted in the construction of a collaborative mural, using the *Digital Padlet* tool as a resource. Students were assigned a critical reflection of the chapter of a book from the basic bibliography "What is Society?" (BAZZO, 2003).

We adopted the qualitative analysis of the data from the Collaborative Wall itself and the records of the Students' Digital Learning Journals after the collaborative activity, so that we could observe the relationships between the methodological approach, the use of digital tools and the perception of significant learning in higher education, as well as establish a critical reflection on the incorporation of digital culture in pedagogical practices.

Unfortunately, the incorporation of new methodologies and of technology in the classroom is still a dream. What we perceive are teachers repeating practices inherited from their teachers, and so on. School culture, in general, is difficult to change. Many will defend that change can come through crises. But a crisis cannot bring change if the desired change is not brought to consciousness by serious discussion and reflection. We understand that actions such as the one we present in this paper can contribute to an effective reflection and to change in educational paradigms, since only the fact of the existence of a crises, a phenomenon caused by the need for social isolation due to COVID19, does not guarantee a change of culture, nor, the incorporation of digital technologies in everyday school practices.

### **Methodology**

The methodology consists in the analyses of teaching and learning experience carried out during the COOVID19 pandemic lockdown with first semester students taking *Science, Technology and Society in Arts, Languages and Culture* of Portuguese Language Teacher education Major, in a Private University in São Paulo, Brazil. The class counted with the participation of 30 students.

During the lockdown, the classes were held on-line, with students that did not have experience with online learning. This experience that is being presented consists in an analysis of both the learning journals and the collaborative mural constructed as products of a study topic "What is Society", given during that period.

For the construction of the Collaborative Mural, the Padlet digital tool was used, which allowed the collective construction of posts (according to the chosen model and lay-out) using various media resources such as: texts, audios, videos, images and links. The reason for this choice of resource is that the Padlet is considered a tool that allows the "convergence of media" for the collaborative construction of knowledge and for authorship by the students.

The students were initially given the task of performing the full reading of the chapter "What is Society" (BAZZO, 2003) and, from there on, the teacher divided the contents covered in the chapter into five topics and divided the class in five groups. The class was presented to the Padlet resource and told that each group had the assignment to present their understanding in a critical manner and through the use of associations and relations with other media resources that could be produced and authored by the group or be selected in other virtual environments, in social networks or other communication vehicles.

The construction of the mural was carried out collectively and collaboratively by each group during a two-week period and culminated in the online presentation during a remote (online) class. After this experience, a critical reflection on the activity and on the individual learning process was proposed through the registration of the on-line learning journal, created on the Moodle Platform.

Our analysis is built from a qualitative perspective and presents the construction of the Collaborative Mural as a collective production of knowledge. It also establishes, through the observation of the personal records taken from the learning journals, what the students perceived about their learning process.

The analysis seeks to identify and reveal the significant impact that a teaching strategy with clear pedagogical intent, involving collaborative construction and, at the same time awareness of the individual learning process through personal records, can establish new ways of involving students as protagonists of their learning process.

Using multisensory media tools and resources, the teacher seeks to create conditions for the incorporation of digital culture in higher education teaching practices, especially in the quarantine period, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure aspects related to research ethics, the names of students in activity records are fictitious.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

The construction of the collaborative mural presented itself as an interesting and stimulating synthesis activity for students to experiment in various formats for consolidation and presentation of knowledge incorporated during the learning process.

Mental maps, conceptual maps, infographics, comics, among other products used for the discussion of the topics were created to stimulate the establishment of various cognitive relationships with student's prior knowledge (AUSUBEL, 1980; FREIRE, 1996). The creativity and appropriation of the media to express the new knowledge also had peaks in which students created "Tweets" of the authors and subjects studied and, also, a video of a conversation on WhatsApp to discuss the concepts studied in the class. We can highlight how the appropriation of technologies and languages more consistent with the student's profile, drive the processes of building meaningful knowledge while promoting engagement and active participation in online classes (BANNELL et al, 2017). This can also be observed in the registers put in the learning journals.

The following image shows the completed padlet, after each group inserted his observations about the chapter studied. We will, in sequence, demonstrate parts of this padlet.

<https://padlet.com/analusouzalopes/x3ummopfm5gr>

This set of materials and media shown in the *padlet* link was organized by the students. This digital resource was proposedly used and configured in the teacher's class plan as "a place" of media convergence (JENKINS, 2006) in which students become the producers and consumers of their own knowledge. This can be attested by the fact that the collaborative mural was complemented by other themes brought by the students' elaboration over the original text. At the end of the assignment, the "product" of knowledge was a critical and expanded reflection of the concepts of the chapter proposed as a basic reading from the bibliography, constructed collaboratively by all students.

It is worth highlighting the language used to express the understanding of theoretical concepts, associated with the profile of the 21st century student. The appropriation of media languages is significant in that this possibility of expression through various media allows the construction of narratives that students experience daily in social networks and virtual environments (BANNELL, et al, 2017) and that often have no place in the contexts of formal education.

The construction of the mural allowed students to expand their sources of knowledge, expanding the themes, presented in the chapter, through research, leading them to build knowledge and establish relationships beyond the text proposed for reading.

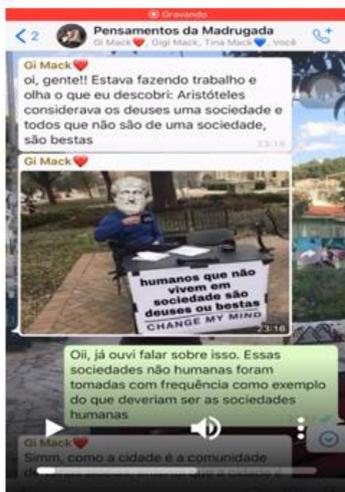
Some examples:



Hello, internet users, I'm here to explain to you my theory on three social science systems, originally published in 1984.

But first, I need you to understand that communication is the central element in my theory. However, the receptor doesn't receive information in the same way that the emitter intended (...)

Miklas Luhmann tweet presenting his social science theory.



Hi, Guys! I was doing the assignment and look what I found. Aristotle considered the gods a society. And all the ones that are not in the society are

Hi! I heard something about that. These non-human societies were taken as examples of what human societies should be.

WhatsApp group video that explains Aristotle's idea of Polis.

The comics was created by one of the groups to express the concepts seized from the reading of the text and the teacher is portrayed as if she were in the physical classroom. Their teacher uses the Socratic method and in the "comics" they produced, the students use the same "methodology" to present the concepts learned.

In this sense, it is possible to identify how students establish relationships with previous knowledge, contextualized experiences (in the classroom) that allow them to "anchor" new knowledge and create new scenarios to express their learning in a meaningful way.



Comics on Social Change.

Teacher: "Hey guys.! Today we are going to discuss different interpretations about social changes. What comes to your minds when I speak of social changes?"

Student 1: "revolutions"

Student 2 – "Ideologies and Heroes."

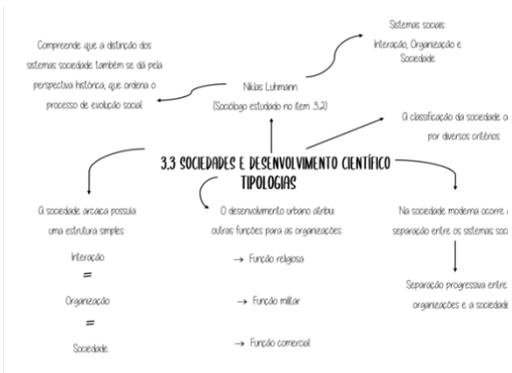
Teacher: "Congratulations! You are both right. Both ideologies, revolutions and agents of change, the heroes, represent mechanism of change (....)."



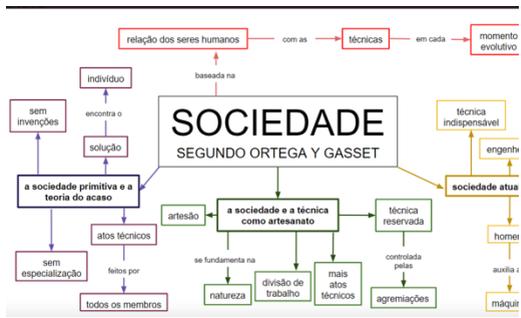
Mackenzie Newspaper to discuss Science, Technology and Society in Arts, Language and Culture

Moreira & Masini (1982) point out Ausubel's (1968) proposal "(...) the essence of the meaningful learning process is that symbolically expressed ideas are related in a non-arbitrary and substantive (non-literal) way to what the learner already knows, that is, to some relevant aspect of his knowledge structure." (1982, pp.13-14)

In addition to creative products that were incorporated into the mural, it is important to highlight the resources of organization and systematization of ideas such as mind maps, conceptual maps, schemes and timelines that demonstrate students' understanding of concepts, appropriation and synthesis of knowledge. In this sense the exploration of digital tools was also used for the elaboration and presentation of visually attractive and engaging materials.



Mental Map on Society and Scientific Development: typologies



Conceptual Map on Society according to Ortega y Gasset

In this regard, it is worth mentioning, once again, that in Ausubel's proposal, the systematization and hierarchization of knowledge should be considered from the concept of "progressive differentiation". Thus, mind maps are useful instruments for incorporating this principle, since diagrams that indicate relationships between concepts facilitate visualization and, consequently, can be used to integrate, reconcile, and differentiate the contents studied. (MOREIRA & MASINI, 1982).

To have clarity of students' learning process and so that students might have full consciousness of their learning process, it was intentionally planned by the teacher a second activity in which the students reflected on their process of knowledge construction through a Learning Journal, using a tool available in the virtual environment of the discipline (Moodle). Observe part of a text taken from a learning journal, that contemplates and reveals a meaningful learning process:

*During the studies we used some methodologies that helped us learn the content. Among those that helped me the most I quote here the reading of the texts and the elaboration of visual schemes. (Diana, Learning Diary, 2020).*

The teacher's clear and planned intention needs to be present in the conduction of the proposal, so that the results can express the learning possibilities of the students. For this reason, active and collaborative participation should be conducted by the teacher with a clear approach that allows the student to experience moments of collaboration, systematization and application of knowledge, but it is extremely relevant that he reaches a moment of reflective synthesis, in which he can be led to identify and recognize his learning process.

From the records of students' journals, we can identify how the recognition of the learning process drives the awareness and the strength of deep and meaningful learning. In the theory of Meaningful Learning "it is consciousness that attributes meaning to the objects that surround the individual" (MOREIRA & MASINI, 1982, p. 2). This is also evident in the following extracts, remembering that these students are studying to become teachers themselves, what they perceive is of significant value:

*With regard to knowledge, I can say that the discovery of the process of knowledge formation was something new for me, and to know that knowledge is something so particular for each person, since each one processes information in a unique and exclusive way, is really stunning. (Murilo, Learning Journal, 2020).*

*A methodology that helped me a lot was to read the texts given and indicated, do a research on them and then make a summary of what was read, I realized that this is how I learn more. I learned about the kinds of knowledge and societies. (Leticia, Learning Journal, 2020).*

The awareness of the learning process also occurs to the extent that students perceive themselves as active in their learning experience. It is this contextualized relationship that allows them to identify how and what they have learned and, also, the impact of this new knowledge on their cognitive structure and lives.

*In my personal life, in a way, it has helped me gain confidence, because I feel like I am making more and more progress. I use the content in discussion of a more intellectual level, even if it's just a discussion at the table with my parents. In general, even in the short class time we had, I was able to develop more. (Isadora, Learning Journal, 2020))*

*(...) I cannot leave out the impact of the methodology applied by the teacher, who, to give us a broader view, engaged us in dynamic and creative projects, which materialized our vision of the concepts seen in the classes, such as the PADLET tool, the mental map (...). In short, I affirm that the classes were of utmost importance to my life, and that I will take their teachings to my professional and personal space. (Anne Bianca, Learning Journal, 2020)*

The combination (with pedagogical intention) of the organization and systematization of activities, allows the creation of conditions for an active learning process and makes it possible for student to recognize their learning path. In addition, student engagement and involvement in activities contribute to a meaningful process. The use of digital tools, especially *padlet* (object of this investigation) stimulates dynamic interactivity and activates the different intelligences and abilities. As pointed out to us by Bannell et al. (2017), it can be identified in the following reports:

*The tools used for evaluations and group work have aroused in me a great interest in the subject and all that surrounds the course. Being able to use tools such as padlet to expose the learned content brings a more technological and new practice to the classroom (face-to-face or virtual), explores our skills in connecting content to images, videos, news, websites and even gifs. (Jessica, Learning Journal, 2020)*

Perceiving one's learning process is also significant to boost student autonomy, as we can see:

*I find the teacher's work amiable, her goal of always engaging us in class discussion, with our impressions and worldviews. (...) bringing and presenting us remarkably interesting platforms, such as Padlet and other digital resources, where we simultaneously set up a mural of words. Learning like this instigates curiosity, takes some of the burden off obligation and seriousness, gives space to light, fun learning, done together. That is, there is not only concern with content, but also with methodology, in how this knowledge will reach us students. (Juliana, Learning Journal, 2020).*

*We read chapters of a book and introduced them to the room. I believe this is because we have been encouraged to read and research the subjects of these works on our own and introduce them to our colleagues as a teaching. (Laís, Learning Journal, 2020).*

It is possible to perceive the students' engagement through activities, especially the construction of the mural that mobilized them collaboratively, even in the context of social isolation experienced during the pandemic. The learning experience is expressed in the learning journal records that contribute to helping the student in this process of recognizing his own learning process.

*In the last unit, where we discussed the theme of society, we had to do group work (in times of quarantine). I was suspicious of the effectiveness of a task like this at that time, but with my group I had a great experience. We read the text, presented the ideas and one of our colleagues made herself available to draw a comic by hand. (Carina, Learning Journal, 2020)*

*One of the most interesting things about this first semester is how we are going through an experience that shows us the importance of human relationships and the intelligent use of digital technologies. Like all the other events that mankind has gone through and overcome, this pandemic is causing and will cause significant change in the world. It gives a little chill in the belly to see all this happening and know that you are living in a situation that, without a doubt,*

*will be the reason behind the future news. It is seeing history live and in color. (Julia, Learning Journal, 2020)*

Finally, it is worth mentioning that all the work developed, when intentionally planned, finds in the learning trails a strong methodological resource to lead the student in his/her learning process, providing various ways of interacting and building knowledge. In this sense, the trail must rely on potentially significant materials that allow the student to understand and establish the relationships proposed for his/her journey.

*When we study "What is society? ", we had video class, responses in the forum and, to complement, we built a collaborative mural, once again, which would be difficult to understand only with reading and a summary, became innovative and more efficient, with each group sharing their knowledge, exploring various tools, applicability, concepts, theories... Creativity always flows, each working one way and making it work together. (...) We learnt that each theme relates directly and influences each other, contributing to the development of society. (Clara, Learning Journal, 2020)*

*I really enjoyed the creative exercises we did during this semester, practicing and developing various ways to learn the same subject. I found this very cool since it does not impose a limit on the imagination or ability of the student. (Inara, Learning Journal, 2020).*

Thus, stimulating exploration, contextualization, reflection, application, and synthesis of knowledge are fundamental elements for the construction of learning trails for students.

## **Conclusion**

From the discussions proposed through our theoretical framework, we were able to reflect on the need to rethink pedagogical practices that incorporate intentionally the use of digital technologies in the learning processes, creating conditions for meaningful learning and more consistent strategies for the profile of the 21st century student.

When discussing the need to incorporate digital culture into school practices, we took as an object of investigation a methodological experience based on the assumptions of meaningful learning, with organization and systematization of curricular activities during the period of the pandemic lockdown with students of the first semester of a bachelor's degree in Language Teacher Education, in the course: Science, Technology and Society in the Arts, Languages and Cultures.

The methodological proposal involved the organization of learning trails and, in particular, we analyzed an activity of creating a collaborative mural, associated with a learning journal, identifying how students engaged themselves in the activity and, also, how they recognized their learning process, built autonomously, collectively and collaboratively, mediated by technologies.

The results presented show us the effectiveness of the strategy used, since students demonstrated great involvement with the proposal and, even going through a tough crisis, a moment of pandemic lockdown, identified themselves with a digital resource that offered the possibility of incorporating multiple media resources, placing students as protagonists and producers of knowledge. The collaborative experience contributed to an expansion of knowledge and the learning journal made it possible for students to be aware of their formative process, of their own learning trail.

During the pandemic, the use of remote online classes was obligatory and promoted the necessity for teachers to teach with technology. We affirmed that this might bring change to education. But we questioned if the mere existence of this crisis would be significant for change to happen in the teaching-learning process. What we take from this experience is that change will come if we effectively and intentionally insert technology in the teaching-learning process; if we plan activities in a collaborative manner and if we create circumstances for students to be autonomous and develop authorship.

We also believe that teachers need to share and to read about the different experiences with technology during this period. This will promote the possibility of establishing consciousness of class plans. As teachers, we need to go beyond registering our class plans, we need to do so consciously organizing phases and resources to intentionally sponsor and stimulate student's learning goals.

To advance meaningful learning in students of the XXI Century, the use of collaborative platforms and virtual resources is a great possibility and needs to be explored in teacher education programs, in colleges and in continuous education experiences offered for teachers by the institutions in which they work.

Once again, we emphasize that change is not automatic due to a crisis. With the purpose of change, of encouraging innovation, it will be important for serious reflection to take place among educators, aiming to understand the needs of our students, from the XXI century, and our society and its demands.

This is what needs to happen in our traditional schools and classrooms. It is not the insertion of computers, of apps, or of any type of technology that guarantees the incorporation of digital culture into teaching; it is, though, the insertion of all these mechanisms, nonetheless, with planning, with clear learning goals.

Technology can be a resource that enhances opportunities for development of abilities, alongside subject contents. Technology can be a teacher's ally but cannot substitute a teacher's intention for student's achievement.

Thus, we understand that, given the challenges posed by the pandemic, the issue is more complex to the extent that incorporating digital culture into formative processes involves a pedagogical paradigm shift. We understand that looking at the theories of education presented by : Piaget (2003), Wallon (1995), Freire (1996), Vygotsky (1998) and Dewey (1916); the latter that inspired the movements of systematization of active methodologies, combining the use of digital technologies, allows us to accomplish formative experiences in virtual environments, which also become "a place" of learning, experiences and experiences in the construction of new knowledge.

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# The International Society for the Systems Sciences: Contributions to the Future World

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## Abstract

The International Society for the System Sciences (ISSS) is a microcosm model of the global human social system (HSS, our species). The unprecedented crisis presented by the COVID-19 pandemic is causing major disruptions to the 'normal' processes and has triggered a spasm of self-reflection and self-realization that what had been thought of as "the normal" was not sustainable, both for the larger HSS and for the ISSS. Both the greater HSS and the ISSS have had their capacity for resilience in the face of the crisis challenged. Under the proposition that complex adaptive systems are resilient, and evolvable systems are sustainable, members of the ISSS have set out to use our knowledge of systems theory and practice to renew the society, to make it more systemic in structure and function. We are proposing to create a new core working group that will find purpose in doing a dual level deep systems analysis of the ISSS itself and then, using the insights gained in that process, turn to doing the same for the HSS. Deep systems analysis can expose the dysfunctions in subsystems as well as identify missing subsystems and requisite communications. All societies share certain systemic properties since all involve the interactions among groups of human actors. And all long-term sustainable systems have been shown to operate in specific fashions to be self-sustaining (autopoietic) and produce products or services to the larger embedding supra-system. For the HSS this is the Earth as a whole. For the ISSS this is the HSS. Key questions that the ISSS needs to consider as context for its place in the HSS: What product(s)/service(s) should the HSS produce that would benefit the rest of our planet? How should the HSS be structured/organized? The turning that question on the ISSS, what products/services should the ISSS produce that would benefit the HSS. Since the knowledge that is represented within the ISSS pool of expertise is system knowledge, it follows that how the HSS should be structured/organized after the pandemic crisis is in the rearview mirror could be answered by deep systems analysis of what the HSS should be in the future. Key questions to be addressed in this report: With all humbleness how should the ISSS and system societies in general come together to effectively meet the purpose of system science? Indeed, should they and to what purpose? What product(s)/service(s) would the enterprise of system science produce that would benefit the HSS and broader, life on this planet? We report on the plan and the effort undertaken to find answers to these and related questions. This is part of our mission to bring greater unity to the field of systems science and reach out to the wider field of systems thinkers; it is an invitation to participate.

**Keywords:** Resilience, systems science, systems analysis, organization viability, human social system

## Introduction

This paper describes a phenomenon of a society becoming self-aware and self-reflective leading to a realization of a need for regeneration of its original purpose but reflecting the new conditions of the larger world society it is meant to serve. Daniel Christian Wahl (2016) speaks to the need for societies to embody regenerative capacity:

*"A regenerative human culture is healthy, resilient and adaptable; it cares for the planet and it cares for life in the awareness that this is the most effective way to create a thriving future for all of humanity. The concept of resilience is closely related to health, as it describes the ability to recover basis vital functions and bounce back from any kind of temporary breakdown or crisis. When we aim for sustainability from a systemic perspective, we are trying to sustain the pattern that connects and strengthens the whole system. Sustainability is first and foremost about systemic health and resilience at different scales, from local to regional to global." (p43).*

We, the ISSS, see this as reflective of what seems to be going on around the world today in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. As economies everywhere are suffering as a result of shut-downs many are recognizing the full breadth of how many aspects of the human social system (HSS) have become strongly interdependent to the point of being brittle and un-adaptive under the radically changed conditions. As with society writ large, the ISSS, responded with the question: what can we systems scientists, systems practitioners, and systems engineers do to improve the resilience of our HSS capability to pandemics and knock-on effects? In a series of on-line meetings with a group of members participating we had already been exploring the structure and function of the ISSS and how it serves the larger global society. The pandemic brought into sharp focus that the society had not been doing so and could not, likely, find an answer to the question owing to what this group perceived as its lack of systemicity. Through this process one could say that the ISSS had become self-conscious and self-aware of its shortcomings.

The listed authors along with many other members of the ISSS have conceived of a self-similar process to use systems science to explore how a global HSS could be designed such as to achieve the goals of sustainability (longevity and persistence), resilience (adaptability when the environment changes), and supportive of psychological well-being of its human members (Wallerstein, 2004; Mobus, 2017, 2018). It will accomplish this by starting with itself – it will apply the same intentions to its own organization. "Physician, heal thyself<sup>1</sup>."

The work reported here is in its early stages but several parallel developments will help accelerate the process. Many of the pieces of the puzzle are already in place so that a focus on organizing the effort to assemble and integrate the parts.

After describing a brief history of the ISSS we will describe its current organization and functioning, showing how it has lapsed into with respect to its once understood mission. We will then describe the process of analysis we propose to apply in order to revitalize the society. This will be the same analysis that can be applied to the HSS. We will then describe the

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<sup>1</sup> Biblical: Luke 4:23 (King James Version)

proposal to do a *deep systems analysis* on the ISSS itself and the nature of a proposed reorganization that will fulfill the society's purpose.

## **A Brief History of the ISSS**

### **Origin Story**

The text below has been transcribed from the ISSS website.

In December of 1954, under the auspices of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), a meeting of some seventy people was held in Berkeley to form a society for the exploration and development of the ideas that von Bertalanffy, Boulding, Rapoport, and Gerard had come together to discuss earlier that year in Palo Alto at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (a newly established Ford Foundation enterprise).

The International Society for the Systems Sciences (ISSS) is among the first and oldest organizations devoted to interdisciplinary inquiry into the nature of complex systems, and remains perhaps the most broadly inclusive. The Society was initially conceived in 1954 at the Stanford Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Kenneth Boulding, Ralph Gerard, and Anatol Rapoport. In collaboration with James Grier Miller, it was formally established as an affiliate of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1956. Originally founded as the Society for General Systems Research, the society adopted its current name in 1988 to reflect its broadening scope.

The Society was originally formed as the Society for the Advancement of General Systems Theory, which was then changed to the Society for General Systems Research in the fall of 1955. The name was changed again in 1986 to the International Society for General Systems Research, and then finally, in 1988, to the International Society for the Systems Sciences.

The initial purpose of the society was "to encourage the development of theoretical systems which are applicable to more than one of the traditional departments of knowledge," with the following principal aims:

to investigate the isomorphy of concepts, laws, and models in various fields, and to help in useful transfers from one field to another;

to encourage the development of adequate theoretical models in areas which lack them;

to eliminate the duplication of theoretical efforts in different fields; and

to promote the unity of science through improving the communication among specialists.

In the intervening years, the ISSS has expanded its scope beyond purely theoretical and technical considerations to include the practical application of systems methodologies to problem solving. Even more importantly, it has provided a forum where scholars and practitioners from across the disciplinary spectrum, representing academic, business, government, and non-profit communities, can come together to share ideas and learn from one another.

### **Over the Years**

One of the central organizing features of the ISSS that emerged was to establish a set of Special Integration Groups (unaptly referred to as SIGs, even though they were explicitly not supposed to be *special interest* groups). The intent was that these groups would be the foci for applying

systems science to areas of particular interest to their participants. SIGs have been formed to cover the nature of systems science itself, but also to consider applications of systems science and systems thinking<sup>1</sup>. Over the years from their inception the SIGs have tended to evolve and internalize, the groups became more like subject silos, each using its own definition of systems concepts such as complexity or hierarchy, to their narrower field of interest. As a result, the cross-communications and integration of systems ideas that was defined to be their purpose has not substantially been realized.

The ISSS holds an annual conference, each year in a different part of the world, where the SIGs organize paper/presentation sessions<sup>2</sup>. This has been beneficial in terms of the social aspects of having a "community of interest". But it became somewhat opaque as to how 'rigorous' these presentations or papers were. There were no clear guidelines for acceptance (only abstracts were being submitted). Each SIG adopted its own criteria for accepting the abstracts as well as the way it is presented at meetings. Some SIGs organize traditional paper presentation sessions, but others use it to explore ideas after each presenter briefly describes her/his ideas. In part the problem may have been due to the lack of systems science as a recognized academic subject onto itself, except in isolated cases. Participants were not necessarily associated with a rigorous academic tradition so there was no 'model' that was being followed. There were, of course, academicians from established fields with track records in academic publication who did attempt to follow the traditions. Every year a few papers presented at the conference were selected for publication in a special issue of the associated journal, *Systems Research and Behavioral Science* (Wiley On-line<sup>3</sup>) based largely on how well the papers supported the 'theme' of the conference. Even so, these papers are not unified in any sense of, say, how they show the expression of larger systems science principles within a coherent framework for shared orientation.

Some cross-fertilization between SIGs does occur in that a member is free to attend any one of the SIG presentation meetings and engage in informal conversations with members of the SIG. But there was never any attempt to capture and record these conversations, nor analyze their content as candidates for integration.

## To Today

We are left with a concern today. The ISSS has been losing its vitality, passive in response to what is now obvious in terms of changing circumstances, continuing along fragmentary paths in more or less open loop mode. It does not convey a sense of unified purpose or a vision and strategy of how it will pursue and achieve its purpose. Indeed, what is the purpose of the ISSS; what is its place in the HSS, what is its strategy to achieve its purpose<sup>4</sup>? Questions like these have been periodically raised over the years but answers have not surfaced. Up until recently, the only activity that brought the membership together has been the annual conferences, and those are mainly devoted to SIG meetings. There did not appear to be any body, other than the Board of Directors (all volunteers), that examined these questions in an on-going process of

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<sup>1</sup> A list of current SIGs can be found at the ISSS website: <https://www.iss.org/special-integration-groups-sigs/>, Accessed 6/23/2020.

<sup>2</sup> The 2020 conference, slated to be held in Cape Town South Africa in July, had to be cancelled, the first time this has happened in the history of the society.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10991743a>, accessed 5/27/2020.

<sup>4</sup> The ISSS has a stated purpose, or rather had a stated purpose but acknowledges on their website that the nature of that purpose has morphed from a systems theory-based research program to incorporate more practitioner-based applications. See the About page at: <https://www.iss.org/about-iss/>. Accessed 6/23/2020.

self-reflection. As long as the external environment of the ISSS remained essentially stable it could continue to operate in this manner. But that environment has indeed changed dramatically. The ISSS has woken up! How will the ISSS adapt, become resilient and rekindle the flame that the founders sparked?

## Fragmentation

There is a natural tendency in all areas of knowledge to fragment into sub-topics and for specialists to become somewhat isolated from those working in other sub-topic areas. This is the case of discipline silos in academia, for example. So, it is not surprising that as the subject areas loosely coupled in the early days of general systems theory (e.g. cybernetics, hierarchy theory, and many others) produced their own bodies of knowledge, that they should begin to take on independent existences and, indeed, come to view their topics as the core of systemness. It is ironic that this should have happened to a field that originated in the ideas of conciliation of the sciences, wholeness of the idea of a system, and recognition of the interconnectedness of topical areas. Personalities and egos may have been involved and contributed to this over the years.

However, it may have evolved, today there are a number of related (in principle) societies globally that are devoted to specific aspects of a general systems framework. These include the aforementioned cybernetics, but also complexity theory, network theory, and system dynamics to name a few. Happily, it turns out that some members of these other societies are also members of the ISSS providing some communications bridges to hold the overarching subject of systemness together. Thus, there is an existing network of interconnections between these societies that counts as a strength of the community moving forward. Additionally, the International Federation for System Research (IFSR, <https://ifsr.org/>) is a formal aggregation of many of these systems-related organizations (a federation) to facilitate information sharing. Finally, the International Council on Systems Engineering (INCOSE, <https://www.incose.org/>) is the largest organization devoted to the development and furtherance of systems engineering in the world. The ISSS and INCOSE have been working in tandem to get a better definition of the systems sciences as the foundations of systems engineering principles and practices. They have a memorandum of understanding that allows members of either organization to participate in workshops directed toward this common effort.

So, even though the field seems to be fragmented and disparate, there are hopeful signs that some kind of reintegration is taking place.

On the other hand, within the systems community there remains major disagreements about what would constitute a general systems theory and even one could be possible! One major area of disagreement is over terminology (the lexicon of systems). Many researchers have independently discovered similar phenomena and assigned terms based on their own proclivities and histories. It often happens that when these researchers share findings, they use terminology that others do not understand. This remains a major hurdle to overcome if reintegration of the subject is to move ahead.

Nevertheless, the ISSS is uniquely positioned in the larger systems community to provide a nexus for reintegration of the various facets of the systems sciences. What is missing is an in-depth understanding of the ISSS organization as a complex system and a clear sense of the

purpose of the ISSS and, in fact, the purpose of the larger systems community with respect to the whole Earth.

### **Reflections on the Current Organization**

As mentioned above, self-reflection questions about the organization have come up from time to time, but have not led to any kind of resolution. In part this may have been simply due to the way the organization conducts business. A once-a-year, five-day conference with little else going on except getting prepared for the next conference is not conducive to the kind of deep reflection that is necessary.

Prior to the 2019 conference held in Corvallis OR, the then president Peter Tuddenham had started an on-line discussion group to explore the nature and workings of the various SIGs. The intent was to have the SIG chairs present a short summary of what the SIG was, what the subject of interest was, and what sorts of results or products it produced. What had been bothering Peter and other members for some time is that, by the titles and short descriptions of the SIGs, it was hard to see any kind of pattern suggesting that there were crossover linkages and integration going on. From a high-level view the SIGs appeared to be insular. But the weekly meetings to discuss the SIGs didn't throw any real light on the issue. At the Corvallis meeting, Peter, along with Gary Smith and Jennifer Makar organized several group meetings to attempt to find relations between the SIGs that might be the basis for encouraging more cross-communications. There were a number of "patterns" suggested, but nothing that seemed actionable. They also conducted a preliminary review based on Stafford Beer's (1972) Viable System Model (VSM), asking the pointed question: Is the ISSS a viable system<sup>1</sup>? Some immediate findings seemed to suggest the answer was "probably not."

Subsequent to the Corvallis meeting the SIG discussion group continued to meet finishing off reviews of all the SIGs. At some point after, the regular discussions continued but began to focus on whether the SIG organization itself was the right one to foster the intended integration and production of systemic knowledge of systems. In short, the organization, or a subset of it, began reflecting on its own efficacy. That effort was timely. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was to thrust a major test of resilience on the organization and, indeed, the whole world.

### **Parallel Developments**

#### **What the Crisis Has Revealed about the ISSS**

Over the last several years there has been a growing realization that the current form of the ISSS was not addressing finding systemic solutions to the growing existential threats to humanity and the Earth ecosystem (Ecos) even while dedicating annual conferences to themes related, such as the Anthropocene (Berlin, 2015<sup>2</sup>). It's not that some members were not involved in various aspects of these threats or applying systems thinking to solving some kinds of, for example, environmental problems. Many definitely were, and reporting their work at the annual conference. However, the ISSS itself was not organized to leverage these works, integrate their findings, and engage in a practical and influential way to address the global system.

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<sup>1</sup> Viable meaning that it is fit for long-term sustainable and resilient life-cycle.

<sup>2</sup> See the Annual Meetings page at: <https://www.iss.org/annual-meetings/>, accessed 6/24/2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought these issues into sharp focus. A subgroup of the larger discussion group, the listed authors among them, formed a dedicated discussion focused on the future of humanity in the aftermath of the pandemic. We realized that the HSS is dysfunctional, possibly beyond repair, especially within its set of establish paradigms. Talk of returning to "normal" is delusional in light of the accumulating disruptions and the yet-to-be fully grasped impacts of global climate chaos, its related sea level rise, ocean acidification, and peak net fossil fuel energy just at the time when humanity will need substantial energy to do the work of mitigation and/or adaptation. Thus, we began a discussion about what could the ISSS do, not necessarily to 'solve' the pandemic problem, but rather, to prepare humanity for a transition to a more systemic design for the HSS. How could we apply our systems knowledge, resident in so many members and a rich history of systems science and practice to develop a roadmap for this transition, a transition toward sustainable development of systems knowledge and resilience?

### **A Book on the Theory and Methods for Deep Systems Analysis for Deep Understanding**

For the last five years one of us (Mobus) had been working on a book that seeks to provide a unified framework for gaining a deep understanding of real-world systems, from particles to societies. It starts with chapters on a unified way to look at systems in general, the theory of systemness, and proceeds to develop a set of methods and descriptions of tools that would support those methods in doing a principled analysis of any system of interest. The intent was to provide scientists, practitioners, and engineers with a model framework for deep understanding and, in the case of the latter two audiences, designing whole functional systems. The book then addresses these methods and theories to large-scale complex systems to show how it would work. In the process of applying the methods to the study of the extant human social system – motivated by the impending needs to address the issues of the Anthropocene – the author uncovered some deeply disturbing aspects of the human social system (HSS) of the modern world that were very much linked to, and causally responsible for those issues. Many other thinkers and writers had noted similar problems (e.g. with capitalism and "free markets") and we know through works such as (Capra and Luisi, 2014), that these problems are all intertwined, related, and mutually causal. The outcome of a collective analysis (with examples provided in the text) led to the author considering the methods necessary to determine what an intentional system design for a sustainable, resilient, and psychically supportive social system might be like (Mobus, 2017, 2018).

### **Providing a Framework for Integration – the Complex, Adaptive, and Evolvable Systems Archetype Model**

A central feature of the book (in progress) is the development of a generic or archetypical model of a complex, adaptive, and evolvable system (CAES<sup>1</sup>), which addresses all living and supra-living (human activity systems such as organizations) systems, with the ISSS and HSS being examples at different scales. This model is comprised of three basic interrelated sub-models, all of which can be found in real systems. These are an archetype model of an agent and agency (human or otherwise), a model of an archetypical economic system (where the work gets done), and a model of an archetypical governance system (Figure 1).

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<sup>1</sup> A complex adaptive system (CAS) is a CAES but without the capacity to evolve.

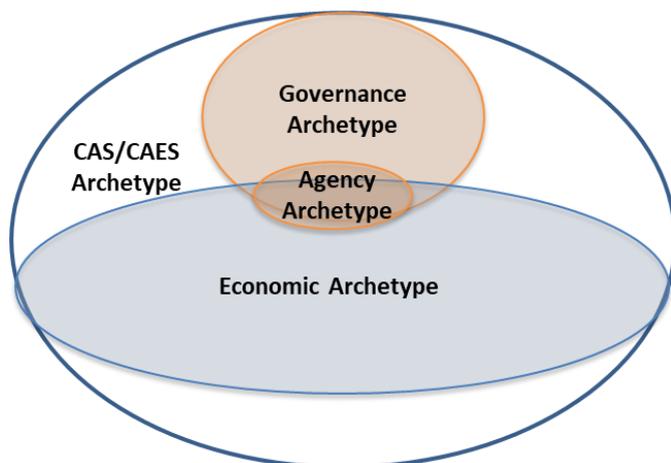


Figure 1. The three archetype sub-models of a CAES interoperate in nested hierarchies

The first model considers the data processing, information extraction, and decision-making aspects that will be embedded in the second two models. The economic model describes a generalized economy that extracts resources from the environment, produces goods and service, and exports products and by-products to the environment. Other examples of economies are cellular metabolism, multicellular organism physiologies (that support metabolism), and ecosystem food webs. The governance model, similarly, describes the regulation and coordination of work processes (in the economy), the logistical management of production chains, and the tactical management of obtaining resources and exporting products – coordination with entities in the environment. The strategic management of CAESs arises with mental capabilities as in the human brain, and in human organizations, such as corporations and nation states.

The CAES archetype is an integration of concepts from many workers (several listed below) in systems theories. It covers a lot of territory and yet it has a highly defined structure and functioning. It provides a skeletal framework for guiding the analysis of real systems, existing already or to be designed.

As mentioned above, the CAES archetype model was derived from an integration of the works of many previous workers who had developed models, especially of particular kinds of systems. The CAES model derives from the work of many systems thinkers. A partial list would include: Ashby (1958), Beer (1959, 1966, 1972), Boulding (1956), Checkland (1999), Churchman (1960, 1968a, b), Churchman, Ackoff, & Arnoff, (1957), Forrester (1961), Fuller (1968, 1970, 1982), Klir (2001), Koestler (1967), Miller (1978), Morowitz (1968, 1992, 2002), Odum (1983, 1994, 2007), Prigogine (1984), Rosen (1985, 1991), Shannon & Weaver (1949) Simon (1957, 1991, 1998), von Bertalanffy (1968), Wiener (1950, 1961). It is an amalgamation, integration, and synthesis of some of the best features of these works, from many decades of study along with more recent understandings from the sciences (particularly neuropsychology).

The CAES model then constitutes both a framework and a template pattern. As the working groups' analyses proceeds, this will be both guided by the requirements of a CAES and have a

place to attach what is discovered and developed. Below we discuss the use of this model in the analysis of the ISSS we propose to conduct.

### **What the Pandemic Has Revealed About the HSS**

There has been a growing realization that the current HSS was not prepared for the pandemic, nor resilient in its wake (c.f., Packer, 2020). With the global response to COVID-19 being, primarily though not consistently, self-quarantine and consequently to shut down major segments of the economy, a number of dysfunctions in the way the HSS is organized and worked have come to light. Many people already realized that, for example, capitalism with its emphasis on growth and profit (with concomitant high salaries for the captains of industry and banking) was a major contributor to global warming (Klein, 2014). However, the vast majority of people firmly believed that the economies (whether centralized or distributed governance prevailed) existed and worked the way they did for the benefit of all, even whilst those economies were failing to provide for basic human needs, including and importantly human satisfaction with life (psychical well-being). Many other parts of the current global economic designs have become equally disrupted due to interdependencies that most have taken for granted.

The inabilities of most governments (with several notable exceptions), especially in the supposed democratic west, to respond quickly and sufficiently to minimize the effects of the pandemic also reveal major deficiencies in the design of the governance architecture as well as the corruption in government agents' decision processes. Not only did many governments fail to *react* adequately, they had ignored informed warnings that something like this could happen and did not *anticipate* the impact or prepare in a preemptive fashion to respond when it did happen.

It is recognized that while the pandemic has a frightening mortality rate, it by itself would not spell the doom of humanity per se. In the global reaction to it however, in the quarantining and shut down of large segments of the economies of nations, it is now revealed just how fragile and, in many cases, dysfunctional many aspects of our economic (so-called) system and governance processes are. They were not designed to be resilient in the wake of such a pandemic and as these institutions break down, but what we do witness that individual human beings are capable of adapting to the stressful conditions. Humans are resilient – up to a point.

### **Toward a Systemic Organization**

#### **Regeneration**

The original intentions and operations of the ISSS were formed in a different world than the one we are currently entering. The emphasis was originally on research into the nature of systems and the application of what was known to real-world, but limited in scope, systems. Any complex system that intends to be sustainable in the long-run has to either adapt to changing conditions, or, when those changes are severe, evolve new capabilities that make it more adaptive to the new environment. The ISSS must now consider this aspect. The world we are entering is very different from where we have been. If there is a collapse of societal subsystems such as the economy, then the ISSS must quickly develop structures and functions to meet the challenges. It must anticipate how those changes are likely to affect its current form and use those scenarios to design new capabilities – it must perforce evolve.

At the same time, there is an on-going structure that embodies a rich history in terms of people and ideas. So, the changes that must be pursued cannot, and should not, tamper with what is of value in the existing organization. What we envision is a process of regeneration, to reinvigorate the original ideals of the society, while developing the mechanisms needed to meet the needs of becoming sustainable in a rapidly changing world.

Our approach to regeneration and evolution will be in accord with The International Futures Forum (IFF), a registered charity with a human development mission to enable people to thrive in powerful times. They address complex, messy, seemingly intractable issues – local, global and all levels in between – fostering practical hope and wise initiative. They support people making a difference in the face of all that stands in the way of making a difference, rising to the challenge of the moment.

The IFF has found the 'three horizons model' (IFF, 2008) useful and practical.

Horizon 1 is the Dominant System at present: "business as usual" or "the world in crisis", Horizon 2 is the time innovations become more effective than original systems: "the world in transition", and Horizon 3 is the new way of doing things or the successor to business as usual: "the viable world". (IFF website, <https://www.internationalfuturesforum.com/three-horizons>)

The application of the model facilitates a systems approach in maintaining the essential infrastructures of H1 (the ISSS as we find it today), providing pathways through H2 (ways to transition gracefully), whilst building up the capabilities of H3 (the ISSS we seek to build).

This model is again useful in the context of the ISSS transformation. We must maintain what works and identify what does not, secure the essentials, provide new foundations, prepare for the future and importantly imagine what that future target is. This needs to be a learning endeavor, since as we progress to the future, our experience and understanding will grow and the circumstances of the world will change around us.

### **Systems Analysis of the ISSS**

The methods of deep systems analysis and the CAES framework described briefly above provide an approach to the analysis of the ISSS organization. This analysis will provide two results. The first is the identification of the various subsystems and processes within the ISSS organization as they are today. The second is the identification of gaps or holes relative to what we know a fully functional CAES would possess. For example, according to the CAES framework, sustainable, resilient, and self-regenerative organizations – that is viable organizations – produce products and/or services that benefit the larger supra-system in which they are components. The method of analysis starts by looking at that aspect of the system of interest (SOI) to determine if that is happening. It looks at the benefactors (customers) of the output of the system to see if the products produced are actually benefiting. It also considers other possible benefactors that need to be served by its products.

The method of deep analysis, as described in the forthcoming book, is itself a system of processes and procedures. The core of analysis uses a top-down functional and structural decomposition of the SOI following an algorithmic recursive procedure with well-defined stopping conditions. The analysts are guided in what to look for and questions to ask internal agents by reference to the CAES model. For example, the analysts know in advance that there will be specific kinds of management and governance functions that must be fulfilled and what

kinds of information the management agents require in order to make the decisions they are responsible for. They can home in quickly on the relevant questions posed to the internal agents to determine if they are currently functioning in the way the CAES model requires. This model requires, for example, that there is a set of tactical management decisions needed in order to coordinate the organization with its external suppliers and customers (i.e. regulate the flow of materials, energy, and information into and out of the SOI). Once the analysts have identified an agent as filling that agency (tactical manager) they can focus on questions about sources of information, timing, etc. to determine if the agent can be as effective as needed.

### **Creating a New SIG: Future Human Social System**

So as to not disrupt the current organization and membership with some kind of wholesale redesign, the group has centered on a plan to create a new SIG under the current structure. This SIG would be devoted to the subject of applying systems science to the understanding of what a sustainable, resilient, and dynamically stable HSS would be. The envisioned mechanism for doing so is to use the complex, adaptive, and evolvable (CAES, Mobus, 2019) archetype model described above as a unifying framework and to have members of this new SIG take on different aspects of the CAES model, such as governance and economy particularized to the HSS. Each of these members would conduct a deep analysis of their particular subsystem models and forward results to the community of practice management team for incorporation into the system science knowledge base.

While the ultimate goal of the new SIG would be to explore the issues for a future HSS, it would start by first analyzing the ISSS itself. This would serve to provide a roadmap to ISSS evolution toward a more resilient, sustainable, and dynamically stable ISSS organization. The process of self-analysis would give the SIG members the opportunity to learn how to use the CAES model and the analytic methods in a laboratory-like situation. We envision an initial membership of perhaps a dozen, of which only five or six would take on active roles in performing the analysis and data gathering. But the experience and the products of the work should attract other individuals to join the SIG and take active roles in the work as it turns toward the analysis of the HSS.

### **Conclusion**

The ISSS is undergoing an internal self-organizing process by which it is recognizing that the society needs to evolve to become resilient in the world as we find it. The world is in an unstable state and will result in a phase transition in the human social system of some kind. Our fate as a species is still within our collective wisdom if we choose to act together. Some members of the ISSS seek to formalize a process of analysis and redesign of the society itself, with the intent that the society will be organized to serve a useful purpose in the network of systems-oriented organizations.

The purpose of this paper was to explore if we could make progress towards the unification of the ISSS and systems science as a coherent system in service to the HSS and the wider Ecos.

We are facing a time of complex interrelated crisis that threatens the very viability of humanity on our planet. Our societal systems, underpinned by our traditional sciences and technologies are proving inadequate to deal with these challenges.

Our situation urgently demands coherence in our collective effort. The larger systems community has developed and applied some very effective methodologies. Through the

application of a systems approach, taking advantage of synergistic methodologies, these various threads of knowledge can be woven together into a more integrated understanding of the global threats and designs for systemic solutions not just to the threats per se, but to the very design of the HSS and its place in the whole Earth system.

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## Character Skills and Patience to Promote Resilience in Children - Education in Primary Schools After Pandemic

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### Abstract

The proposal of the education of character skills in childhood has and still represents an authoritative experience within the educational landscape with particular regard to the school environment. If the proposal of character education has been so widely accepted to date, how can it be a valid support for the school even after the pandemic? In order to represent a valid support to all intents and purposes, should it maintain the traits that have distinguished it up to now or should it change in some respects? In particular, what skills should then be promoted by character education in schools after the pandemic? Starting from these problematic spaces and in order to work on a reconstruction of possible answers to the questions raised, the present contribution is articulated around three main reflexive nests: the education of character with particular regard to the proposal of character skills by James Josef Heckman; the relationship between conscientiousness (central to the discourses on character) and patience, an educational proposal centered on patience's skills that should be promoted through character education in schools, especially at primary level, after the pandemic.

**Keywords:** primary school, character, skills, conscientiousness, patience, resilience, waiting, indecision

### Introduction

The proposal of the education of character skills in childhood has and still represents an authoritative experience within the educational landscape with particular regard to the school environment. Many have been the voices of scholars who have argued the importance of the formation of character as a manifestation par excellence of the person. In fact, character is understood as the central nucleus from which the person expresses their originality, decides and acts in the world by managing issues whether ordinary or extraordinary or complex in view of the good whether personal or communal.

If the proposal of character education has been so widely accepted to date, how can it be a valid support for the school even after the pandemic? In order to represent a valid support to all intents and purposes, should it maintain the traits that have distinguished it up to now or should it change in some respects? In particular, the skills that are recognized as constitutive to the central aspects of the character itself should be reviewed in the light of the pandemic experience that calls the school to its commitment to contribute to the promotion of resilience in children facing critical events, pandemic or not, that can cross their lives? What skills should then be promoted by character education in schools after the pandemic?

Starting from these problematic spaces and in order to work on a reconstruction of possible answers to the questions raised, the present contribution is articulated around three main reflexive nests. The first thoughtful node, whose roots lie in a distant and authoritative past, is represented by the education of character with particular regard to interpretation that until now is within the theoretical framework of human capital in relation to the proposal of character skills by James Josef Heckman. The second reflexive node opens a focus on one of the dimensions that in the heckmanian perspective is constitutive of character, conscientiousness, subsequently relating it to a dimension currently not central to the discourses on character, patience. The third reflexive node argues a proposal centered on patience and related skills understood as central aspects that should be promoted through character education in schools, especially at primary level, after the pandemic.

### **Character skills for school and society**

«One of education's principal functions is therefore that of fitting humanity to take control of its own development. It must enable all people without exception to take their destiny into their own hands so that they can contribute to the progress of society in which they live, funding development upon the responsible participation of individuals and communities» (Delors, 1996, pp. 78-79).

The words of Jacques Delors, contained in the "Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century" highlight the obvious importance of the full realization of oneself and of one's own abilities as a condition of opportunity to participate in the "progress" of society. The society to which the Delors report refers sees the central focus of every process of change in the «capacity» of the person «to produce the new» (Rossi, 2009, p. 95) and therefore recognizes in "human capital" the source, as well as the condition of a continuous "strengthening" as a continuous process of humanization.

The very expression human capital sums up the idea of a wealth of skills that allow both individuals and society to invest in the future (Folloni & Vittadini, 2010)<sup>1</sup>. Because of the importance of this asset of capacity in life, both personal as well as professional and social, many attempts have been made to clarify its forms and content. Among the most significant interpretations are that of James Joseph Heckman who, identifying human capital with skills, believes that they are not only in the cognitive area but rather in the *area of personality* (Gutman & Schoon, 2013).

«Here lies the discovery that brings the theory of human capital to a new decisive stage. Human capital cannot be reduced to cognitive skills: [...] deep personality traits, desire-related aspects and socioemotional dimensions must also be considered.] deep personality traits, desire-related aspects and socioemotional dimensions must also be considered» (Vittadini, 2016, p. 13).

The American Society of Psychology has explained boundaries and profiles of these "traits" defining them "The Big Five" and detailing them through the O.C.E.A.N. acronym: Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism. The Big Five are

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<sup>1</sup> The expression "Human Capital" rises a lot of reflections within pedagogical literature. "It is better to temper, then, the concept of "human capital", in order to render it, at the same time, more functional and meaningful with the concepts of "social capital", diffuse and ordinary practice of subsidiarity and social economy, validating the formative outcomes that, also and most of all, emerge from their intersection and from their overlaps" (Bertagna, 2012, pp. 36-37).

conceived as general coordinates within which it is possible to state specific character skills, such as perseverance, self-control, trust, promptness, self-esteem, self-efficacy, resilience, availability, humbleness, tolerance of other people points of view, productive engagement in society.

It is within this construction that Heckman believes that these skills do not have to be defined "soft skills", "life skills" or "personality skills", but "*character skills*" (Kautz, Heckman, Diris, ter Weel & Borghans, 2014, p. 13). The choice of Heckman is motivated by the need to precisely emphasize the unitary nature of skills. Character skills in fact «are not a list of qualities without any connection among them. Instead they are peculiar manifestations of a man's complex and fundamental aspect, that is his/her *character*» (Vittadini, 2016, p. 14). Therefore, character skills represent specific operational abilities that make manifest the «internal capabilities» which are the potential capacities of action that every person can and wants to pursue<sup>1</sup>.

The idea of character skills reconstructed by Heckman offers itself as an interesting theoretical-practical frame in relation to the deep "revolution" that today's world is living. In fact, since the eighties, the "paradigm of standardization" of Fordism has undergone a radical change. Following the kuhnian interpretation of paradigmatic dynamics, this change has contributed to a real «revolutionary transformation of vision» (Kuhn, 2012, p. 113) of such disruption and depth that it has started a fourth Industrial Revolution -*Industry 4.0*.

The fourth Industrial Revolution is characterized by its being an expression of the "paradigm of flexibility and innovation", connected in particular to the digitalization of operational activities and the remote control of production and flow of materials (WEF, 2016). It is precisely this digital transformation of work and above all of existence itself that makes skills, in particular character skills, an increasingly debated issue because it is increasingly recognized for its importance and, as a result, increasingly strategic in the formation of new generations. Skills, in fact, take on a crucial importance in the international training panorama, as they constitute that set of basic abilities through which it is possible to promote the widest skills that foster their own growth and the common world (Dyer, Gregersen & Christensen, 2019; Costa, 2018; Bacigalupo, Kampylis, Punie & Van de Brande, 2016).

### **Starting from "yesterday": Character Education and its roots in the past**

The issue of character skills is not a new theme. It has in fact been the object of reflection dating back to classicism, repeated in all the successive epochs, to the present day. Reflection on character already finds in the works of Plato and Aristotle an important articulation: «It is true now, as it was in the days of Plato and Aristotle, that the character of a people is responsible for its social and political life, and that education is very important because it produces or modifies that character and, in this way, affects public interests» (Impara, 2002, p. 69).

This long tradition, which places the question of character at the heart of man's reflection, has found fertile ground in the pedagogical field. It is particularly *moral education* that has offered an authoritative framework within which the idea of character education has been deepened. The voices of Friedrich Wilhelm Förster and Eduard Spranger are significant expressions of this. Between the 19th and 20th centuries, they worked to define an implication between the

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Giorgio Vittadini's analysis, character skills do not arise as an alternative or in opposition to the capabilities approach (Heckman & Corbin, 2016, pp. 342-359; Nussbaum, 2011, p. 30; Sen, 2009; Vittadini, 2016).

values of character and education (Förster, 1970, 1912; Spranger, 1964, 1960). In this perspective, education represents a path through which man shows character by putting himself to the test in implementing an existence of meaning and value. This implementation can then take the path of obedience, according to Förster (Förster, 1970, p. 233) and of "inner normativity" according to Spranger (Spranger, 2000, p. 24).

Despite the blows that the idea of character has suffered since the 1920s, at the hands of the studies of «masters of suspicion» and anti-authoritarian theories<sup>1</sup>, the implication between *values*, *character* and *education* has survived and maintained its own significance. This was also possible thanks to speculations such as those of Emmanuel Mounier who saw a manifestation par excellence in the character of the person understood as «a lived activity of self-creation, communication and participation» (Mounier, 1990, p. 8).

A particular area in which the education of character has immediately found a privileged educational space is the *school*. In fact, the experiences are many of character education in the school context, but among them the "programs" of character education have taken on a particular significance (Character Education Movement) that, since the twenties of the last century, have spread to the United States<sup>2</sup>. Within the framework of the "Movement of Character Education", the educational focus is in particular on the promotion of the ability to self-regulate behaviour and judgment, intended in particular as an attitude to take morally correct action. It is precisely the focus on the development of moral capacities that constitutes the pivot around which the goals of «good character» (Lickona, 1991, p. 50; Lickona, 1983) education are articulated. Thomas Lickona, a well-known exponent of the "Movement of Character Education", clarifies the meaning on the basis of which this "good character" is intended. It «consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good – habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action» (Lickona, 1991, p. 51).

### **Until today: character skills and conscientiousness**

It is precisely in this ethical key that it is possible to read Heckman's reflection on the importance of a school that not only works for the intellectual empowerment of children, but also for the promotion of character skills that make those same children "ethically reliable":

«In addition to being an established economist, Heckman has strong interests for the future of the young generations convinced that without adequate education there will be no future either for them or for the communities in which they live. The education that Heckman promotes is not, however, the prevailing one based on strong doses of precocious cognitive exercises and a focus mainly on mastery of skills. According to the Chicago scholar, the educational challenge is won or lost to the extent that individuals are provided with character skills such as to make people not only intellectually prepared, but above all ethically reliable: people who have their own value set consisting of five main qualities: consistency in commitment, friendliness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, positive vision of the experience (the so-called Big Five)» (Chiosso, 2018, p. 186).

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1 In particular, with "masters of suspicion" we refer to Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud and in relation to anti-authoritarian studies we refer in particular to the works of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Wilhelm Adorno and Herbert Marcuse.

2 In fact, following the drafting of the "Aspen Declaration on Character Education" in 1992, the international association "Character Education Partnership" was founded through which the guidelines for character education in schools have been defined and partnership projects have been launched in schools (Power, Nuzzi, Narvaez, Lapsley & Hunt, 2008, pp. 23-25).

Based on Heckman's analysis, among these five main qualities the most promising for success in studies, work and daily life is *conscientiousness*. Indeed, conscientiousness «predicts the number of years of study with the same force as intelligence assessments». In addition, it «has been linked, in the workplace, to the level of performance and salary development». Finally, it «is a more powerful predictive factor of longevity than all the other big factors» (Heckman & Kautz, 2016, pp. 112-115).

The conscientiousness is understood by Heckman as scrupulousness, reliability and self-discipline, as the ability to pursue a goal with precision. People with this personality trait are reliable and meticulous people, who work hard to achieve as excellent a result as possible. They are used to examining all the possibilities before acting. They have a strong sense of duty and obligation (Shum, Gatling, Book & Bay, 2019). Ron Sun, reflecting on Heckman's non-cognitive skills, links «conscientiousness» to «Patience, and trustworthiness» (McArdle & Willis, 2012, p. 362).

In Heckman's speech, in fact, conscientiousness calls for patience because both express the ability to commit accurately and feel responsible for the excellent success of their work. The «skills» that both conscientiousness and patience make manifest are «"grit", perseverance, ability to defer gratification, control of one's own impulses, commitment, ambition and work ethic» (Heckman & Kautz, 2016, pp. 98-99). These are skills that place a particular emphasis on the work being carefully and diligently carried out.

In particular as regards patience, it is in effect often identified with the ability to defer gratification and to delay the result itself: «"Patience" is a recommended means to obtain academic, social, and economic success» (Barragan-Jason & Cauchoix, 2019, on line publication). Patience is grasped in its ability to tolerate delay (Barragan-Jason. Atance, Kopp & Hopfensitz, 2018), renouncing immediate but reduced "results", in view of results that are more distant in time but quantitatively greater. With regard to conscientiousness (in study, in work and in daily life), it also implies a deferral of gratification in order to complete one's task with the greatest possible precision and completeness. In fact, conscientiousness, in the first place, directs the person to declare his work completed only when the commitment was such as to have led to the realization of a work done in the best possible way. So conscientiousness, secondly, directs the person to tolerate a non-trivial amount of fatigue in view of achieving a success that is further in time and that is perceived as important and meaningful for themselves.

If conscientiousness, with its capacity for self-control and deferment, has up to now assumed the central role in the discourse on character skills, It is precisely this engagement with patience that must be brought to the fore in the reflection on the most promising skills in the post-pandemic school. Patience, in fact, while placing itself in continuity with conscientiousness, is not really its synonym but has its own characters that can make it one of the most significant character skills both to "resist" in the pandemic and to re-build after the pandemic.

### **From "tomorrow": character, patience and ability to resist in adversity**

The pandemic has and will require not only the ability to defer gratification, meticulousness and perseverance in meeting goals. Both the current one and those that could happen in the

future, has and will, above all, deem necessary the ability to resist in those particular cases when one is "crushed" from «adversity»<sup>1</sup> in which one is forced to stay for a prolonged period.

This specific ability to resist represents the first and most recognizable meaning of patience, as clearly emerges from the intertwining of the Greek verbal forms that translate the word itself: *ἀνέχω* (anecho), *ὑπομένω* (hupomeno), *καρτερῶ* (kartereo) e *μακροθυμέω* (makrothymeo) (Bommarito, 2014; Guarcello, 2019; Pianalto, 2016).

The first, *ἀνέχω* (anecho), evokes the common expression of "have patience", hold on, bear the weight of the conditions that require presence. It expresses the concepts of keeping your head up and of keeping on top of oneself which, although interesting in relation to the scope and strength of the endurance itself (not to let oneself be put down), can imply an idea of immobility. Steadiness certainly implies a condition of stability, firmness, rootedness, but not necessarily static and devoid of concrete objectives.

The second verbal form which translates the word patience, *ὑπομένω* (hupomone), is the ability to «hold position», not retreat and hold the momentum (Tagliapietra, 2016, p. 15). It is a term that imposes itself in parallel to the spread of stoicism and recalls the deeds of the Greek phalanx warriors, who held their position firmly to save others, protecting with spear and shield the body of their partner. It is a state that, while proposing the condition of endurance and steadfastness, implies a push towards active resistance, aimed at an objective with impetus, even while restrained.

The third verbal form that translates the word patience, *καρτέρησις* (karteresis), expresses strength, *κράτος* (kratos) and the ability to dominate in order to act effectively at the right time<sup>2</sup>. It is represented by the Homeric heroes Hector and Ulysses in relation to their ability to wait and defend while in battle, and then to understand the time and the most appropriate way to overcome the opponent.

Precisely on the basis of these meanings, patience cannot be identified and exhausted within the boundaries of perseverance and constancy. Constancy and perseverance, with different forms and modes, intervene in complicated but manageable circumstances, programmable and winnable with an assiduous, precise and continuous behaviour. The circumstances within which patience "works" are complex because unlike what happens in perseverance and constancy, they imply the endurance of what cannot be explained rationally, which is difficult and for which there is no certainty of a positive outcome.

Constancy and perseverance, as well as tenacity, persistence and permanence, intervene in patience but do not exhaust «the semantic area of "patience"» (Caramore, 2014, p. 47) are not synonymous and do not represent the essence. In fact, being patient is best expressed by two dimensions that constitute it: firmness and fortitude. Firmness is one who welcomes difficulty, failure, darkness with an attitude of firm surrender, the one who courageously remains in view of transforming this difficulty. Fortitude is one who expresses strength, the cardinal virtue proper to one who faces formidable difficulties with ardour, not yielding definitively to fear and temptation to escape from dangers: «Patience [...] is the way of fortitude. [...] But no one

1 Gregory the Great, one of the Fathers of the Church, believed that the virtue of patience cannot be exercised in prosperity. The true patient is the one who is crushed by adversity and yet does not deviate from the righteousness of his hope (Gregorio Magno, 1965, p. 337).

2/ «To have patience means to be able to hold back and then to strike, to master the strength and then to exercise it» (Tagliapietra, 2016, p. 15).

has the right to demand the capitulation of another. [...] For this who is patient is forbearing» (Natoli, 1996, pp. 104-106).

Forbearance leads back to the last Greek language form that translates the word patience: *μακροθυμία* (makrothymia). Makrothymia is a quality attributed to God and manifested by him through the ability to tolerate the mistakes of men and to wait for their change in the desired direction<sup>1</sup>. The makrothymia, meaning a slowness to anger and literally the "length of mind", is involved in the staying of patience because it expresses the intention to hold the impetus of anger against the other, understanding it and somehow accepting it for what it is, waiting for his transformation.

Thus outlined, in the interweaving of the dimensions previously expressed, the capacity of patience finds its core in resisting. Nothing in constancy, perseverance, tenacity, endurance shows unequivocally the dimension of resisting in the confrontation with what is looming externally: the impact, the weight, the clash, the rip. If <sup>2</sup>patience could speak in fact he would say «we have the duty to resist: resist here and wherever possible, against everything that humiliates, subjugates and separates. To transmit what elevates, liberates and unites [...]. A freedom to be conquered against all fatalism» (Meirieu, 2007, p. 120).

As a central aspect of patience, the ability to resist is not innate, casual or there by chance. Patience can be considered a trait of character, an aspect of personality and, just as such, it is not purely instinctual but can and must be educated. Patience, and therefore the ability to resist in adverse situations, matures in relational and educational interaction and therefore since primary school, finds a privileged, meaningful and effective field of exercise and promotion. The more the school is able to work early on the dimension of patience, the more children will be able to develop a solid capacity to stay in adversity, managing to rework the meaning of what they experience and making it an opportunity that contributes to the positive construction of its future.

### **For the post-pandemic school: educating patience in order to promote resilience**

According to Albert Mehrabian's classification, patience and its ability to resist can be exercised by children in three different forms: long-term patience (e.g. illness), short-term patience (e.g. driving in traffic) and interpersonal patience (tolerance) (Mehrabian, 2012, pp. 263-280). These three forms represent life experiences with which children deal commonly and frequently. At the same time, these three forms also represent three different aspects with which children have had to deal in the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In fact, the pandemic has confronted children with the need to exercise their ability to resist in the long term at least in relation to three different areas. Firstly, in relation to the restrictive measures imposed for the health control of the pandemic; secondly, in relation to the emotional discomfort associated with prolonged isolation and the alert status of possible contamination; thirdly, in relation to the most unfortunate cases of direct or indirect illness experienced by family members, close relatives or reference adults.

In addition, the pandemic has confronted children with the need to exercise their ability to resist in the short term in relation to the tasks that have been requested daily by their schools

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<sup>1</sup> Makrothymia expresses the image of patience proper to biblical language. It is understood as God's quality of delaying wrath, leaving room for the slow maturation of a mercy that surpasses the immediacy of judgment and guilt.

<sup>2</sup>

(distance learning), the needs of home life (routines of life) and social distancing at the time of resuming contacts with peers and with their social networks of reference.

Finally, the pandemic confronted children with the need to exercise their ability to resist in an interpersonal sense, that is, not to give in to the temptation to consider the other (the potentially "infected") as a person to demonize, to exclude or to attack.

The children had to deal with these three forms of patience without having worked in advance to improve the capacity to resist, which is necessary to face the difficulties and adversities that each of these forms involved. Patience, in fact, although it is a concept that has traversed humanity's intense history from antiquity until today, has not found a structured and systematic place in our primary schools. It must certainly be made clear that work to promote and strengthen the capacity to resist does not, of course, imply any guarantee that children will not encounter difficulties in managing exceptional moments, such as pandemic crises. However, there is no doubt that constant and early work to promote and strengthen the ability to resist could help the child to develop the resilience necessary to assimilate the shock wave of traumatic events, such as pandemic (Jiao et. Al., 2020, on line publication, italics is mine), to survive and to build experiences as significantly as possible even within adversity. In fact, a large part of current studies (Cheema-Fox, La Perla, Serafeim & Wang, 2020; Wu, Connors & Everly, 2020) see resilience's strategies as a central aspect for the most constructive management of the Covid-19 pandemic experience by both children and adults:

«(a) communication (clear information, emotional sharing, *collaborative problem-solving*, dyadic and family coping), (b) organization (adaptability [...]), and (c) belief systems (*meaning-making, hope, and spirituality*). These processes are purported to be disrupted or altered [...] in the context of the pandemic. They can also serve as sources of resilience» (Pime, Wade & Browne, 2020, p. 4, italics is mine).

This is a resilience which finds patience (and "positive waiting") to be a premise and a necessary starting point in the ability to resist.

### **The skills of patience and resilience**

Not being able to give an account here of the different capacities and skills underlying the dimension of patience, we limit ourselves to briefly highlighting two different skills that can be a solid starting point to consolidate a resilient attitude in the child. These skills are on the one hand a clear condition and expression of the ability to resist. On the other hand, they are skills which today are unfortunately largely lacking in the training of the child and neglected if not opposed by society itself, on the basis of its increasingly "unbridled" needs for efficiency. It is the skill of waiting and the skill of indecision.

The *skill of waiting* is one of the most recalled and studied dimensions in respect to patience. In patience the waiting is conceived mainly as the ability to resist in view of the possible fruits (in professional, financial, daily life) that you can get thanks to the waiting itself: «high I-Q populations are more patient and more risk averse than low I-Q populations. The correlation between Patience and intelligence corroborates previous results based on micro data. Intelligent people tend to be patient because they have long time Horizons» (Potrafke, 2019, pp. 116-120; Güss, Hauth, Wiltsch, Carbon, Chütz & Wanninger, 2018).

In patience waiting is also conceived as "ability to tolerate a delay" not only in relation to waiting for a reward but also as «pure waiting» without precise perspectives of advantage (Barragan, Atance, Kopp & Hopfensitz, 2018, pp. 14-30). So, the skill of waiting in patience is the ability to resist even without the clear prospect of a result but still developing the ability

to live the moments of waiting in a constructive way, as experiences that are part of human everyday life and can be lived not only in a serene way but also in a fruitful way. This way of living the wait, of which the "marshmallows" experiments represent interesting experiences of research and reflection (Watts, Duncan & Quan, 2018), needs a job aimed at exercising and promoting in children two specific strategies. The strategy of waiting by 'shifting attention' (Vigani, 2017, pp. 327-340; Duckworth, Gendler & Gross, 2014, p. 208) and the strategy of waiting without emergency (Pianalto, 2016, pp. 81-100).

Waiting by dislocating attention involves the ability to resist a first temptation. In fact, it means knowing how to look at waiting by focusing attention on the possible outcome without being definitively distracted by the frustrations and inconveniences of waiting. The waiting aspect of patience is not without irritation or anger, as one would like in a perspective in which patience is emptied of all temptation. If waiting were an expectation without pathos it would not be waiting in patience. If the waiting were a waiting with pathos that was not yet caught or considered, it would be unawareness, denial or removal.

Waiting without emergency involves the ability to resist a second temptation: the temptation of urgency. The urgency hastens the outcome, does not wait for its time, it pursues it and in doing so it jeopardizes the success of the experience that is being lived. The urgency not only runs the risk of rushing the outcome, but also gives rise to anticipating and widening anxieties and concerns with regard to the concreteness of the problem that may arise or is already looming. The urgency in fact limits or deprives the person of sufficient lucidity to reflect on the experience he is experiencing thus preparing the necessary ground for an effective and significant problem solving.

The question of problem-solving leads to the second skill necessary to exercise the ability to resist: the *skill of indecision*. The skill of indecision is much less referred to in the studies on patience but has an immediate and clear connection with it. Indecision is involved with patience because it is the necessary prerequisite for decision-making. In fact, there are many studies that see in patience a self-control and a decision-making ability. Salman Akhtar believes that patience is the ability to orient oneself towards a goal by renouncing magical thinking and learning to endure ambivalence (Akhtar, 2018) which very often characterizes situations where a decision has to be made.

In particular, in relation to the ability of self-control and decision-making the theme of intertemporal choice is often called upon. Patience, in assessing the different opportunities, comparing their scope not only at a synchronic level but also at a diachronic level, is able to tolerate the time taken in the evaluation process and to decide on the basis of the subjectively perceived advantages (Mischel, Ayduk, Berman, Casey, Gotlib, Jonides & Shoda, 2010; Doebel & Munakata, 2018). These studies are basically in agreement in that they indicate patience as a dimension necessary to take a genuine, coherent and effective decision, aimed at objectives of interest with the ability to approach them. Patience gives the decision authenticity and effectiveness precisely because it brings the decision to maturity slowly while passing through a preliminary stage of indecision. Indecision, so opposed by the pressing rhythms and the performance approach of today's society, is in fact precious every time you are in a problematic situation, dilemmatic and difficult to decide.

With reference to the studies of Nicoletta Cavazza and Fabrizio Butera on ambivalence, it is possible to argue that "above all" where there are conflicting positions on the same object, both positive and negative, not only can the decision be made but can even be of better quality.

As a result of the collection and analysis of more data, the decision will be more informed, relevant and responsive to one's own personality and interests. The multiplicity of data, while on the one hand increasing the perception of ambivalence and contradiction, on the other hand allows therefore to have a wide repertoire of reflections in order to come to a well-founded decision. There are not a few studies on the virtues of indecision and on the particular sensitivity possessed by the person who knows how to grasp the nuances and polarities of reality and, precisely for this reason, knows how to decide with appropriateness and soundness.

An example on which the authors reflect is chocolate. It is a not uncommon experience to feed a certain indecision between the love for chocolate and the concern for subsequent weight gain. This is therefore a situation of ambivalence: hatred and love coexist with chocolate. According to the authors this ambivalence does not prevent people from eating chocolate on some occasions and from abstaining on others, on the basis of what is considered appropriate (Cavazza & Butera, 2008, pp. 1-15; Pillaud & Cavazza, 2013, pp. 1139-1151).

Mario Mikulincer argues that this skill of indecision is not only present in adulthood, but that on the contrary it can be exercised already in children of 4-5 years. The child is able to perceive and understand the ambivalence of reality and people, so much so that for example they know how to connect negative feelings even to what they love. This ability is structured in an increasingly wide and complex way until reaching adulthood, when they are able to resist in a pre-decision situation in order to consider different possibilities before choosing (Boyatzis, 1982; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

The ability to resist in indecision, in order to lay the foundations of a well-founded and coherent decision, with respect to the initial problematic situation, is crucial in order to manage critical pandemic situations as constructively as possible. In fact, the child learns to resist in the difficult and uncomfortable ambivalences of reality, to become aware of them and to tolerate them. In addition, the child learns to manage experiences that contain both positive and negative aspects, which involve both feelings of pleasure and sorrow at the same time. Finally, the child learns to decide by evaluating the reality for the different nuances that it presents and tolerating the uncertainties derived from the number and contradiction of the variables in play. A child who has been accompanied to exercise this skill of indecision may more likely become an adult able to exercise making complex decisions in the face of enigmatic and ambivalent situations, characteristic of the crisis phases such as caused by pandemics, with which we may still be confronted.

Both skills of waiting and indecision promote a meta-competence which is what John Dewey defined as «incubation»:

Many persons having a complicated practical question to decide, find it advisable to sleep on the matter. Often, they awake in the morning to find that, while they were sleeping, things have wonderfully straightened themselves out. A subtle process of incubation has resulted in hatching a decision and a plan. But this bringing forth of inventions, solutions, and discoveries, rarely occurs except to a mind that has previously steeped itself consciously in material relating to its questions, has returned several matters off and over, weighed pros and cons. Incubation, in short, is one phase of a rhythmic process (Dewey, 1986, p. 345).

Patience and its capacity to resist act by postponing the action to understand in depth how it may impact on the future of oneself and others. At the same time, however, one does not

necessarily act with a lack of readiness and excessive slowness. Furthermore, even in cases where, due to urgency, a prompt and immediate response is needed, this same response either follows indicatively pre-determined "protocols" or raises a question at least following the decision itself ("Having acted so quickly under pressing circumstances, were the decisions taken the most appropriate?"). Therefore in these cases the incubation capacity will be used not in relation to the "to-do", but in relation to the "already-done" so that it can be revised, integrated or corrected also for the benefit of the management of similar situations that might happen in the future.

Precisely for this reason patience promotes a capacity that, in times of Covid-19, rehabilitates the concept in its incubation and elevates it to a refined capacity for decision, action and critical review, all of which are promising for the management and improvement of the crisis situation in which you are living.

### **Conclusion - Patience, discrimination and judgment: for a new school in a renewed society**

Starting from the reconstructed frame, it can be argued that the proposal of character education could be a valid support for schools, especially after the pandemic. Moreover, and above all, it can be a valid support if the skills such as conscientiousness, which are recognized as constitutive to the central aspects of character itself, are reviewed in the light of the pandemic experience. Indeed, the pandemic experience calls the school to its commitment to contribute to the promotion of resilience in children facing critical events, pandemic or not, which may cross their lives.

Consequently, skills that should then be promoted by character education are, in particular, the "skills of patience", more precisely those of "waiting" and "indecision". These are skills that enable children to increase their capacity to resist in moments of adversity, reflecting on the sense and problematic aspects of experience. On the basis of this resistance and reflection, children can identify the possible choices and strategies to cope with the crisis phases they are living.

It has always been the case, but even more so after the Covid-19 pandemic, that one of the main meanings of education in school should be to make humanity able to "reason about reality" even in the face of the shocking facts that it will unfortunately continue to reserve for us. Reasoning means giving ourselves time to know, and then on the basis of this knowledge to distinguish; finally, being able to judge reality by facing its adversities and contradictions to take a personal, consistent and well-founded position.

An education at school that commits itself, once again, to promoting a lucid capacity of judgment even in times of greatest adversity needs the patience, resistance and resilience necessary to know not only how to survive but above all how to build within the crisis. An education at school that promotes a clear judgment even in moments of greatest adversity is the only thing that today, after the pandemic, can safeguard and promote human capital. A human capital that knows not only how to develop unceasingly, but above all how to protect its own survival and to work for the construction of a new common world capable of being, finally, on a human scale.

«Patience, nourished by interest and hope, helps to explore the human story in its complexity. Thinking about reality is in fact having the patience to make a concrete comparison with it. First of all - as a well-known economist wrote - "to try to understand means for everyone to

devote more time and more attention to the shocking facts that take place before our eyes". Instead people are in a hurry and rely on some simplified or publicised formula. Nowadays it is more necessary to taste than to know. Thinking about reality means learning to distinguish. Yes, distinguishing is fundamental, to avoid creating monsters or ghosts in the laboratory of our thoughts, adding into the same category different manifestations or expressions» (Riccardi, 2006, pp. 126-130).

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# The Contemporary Vision of Universal Strategic Planning for Facing (COVID-19) Crisis in the Field of Higher Education Via Virtual Learning & Training

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## Abstract

**This is an analytical study for Global Education vision ( 2020- 2030) of The contemporary vision of Global strategic plan for facing (covid-19)or the renew corona disease crisis via virtual learning & training for higher education.**The research builds in the virtual university configuring its concept and how could it simulate the environments of reality ,and its tools with a new contemporary vision **for facing (covid-19) crisis via Global strategic plan of virtual learning & training for higher education**, and deals with virtual reality as an effective way to simulate reality whatever the circumstances and difficulties in the environment of university, through which it can be configured for different environments tell the reality of an individual can't be accessed or coexistence with them. For example, the environment of space can't be educated to student in the university environment to live by realistic, and here comes the role of virtual reality in an environment similar to the environment of space and enables the student to interact with it as if in the real environment.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** The contemporary vision (2020-2030), Universal strategic plan, (Covid-19) crisis, Higher education, Virtual learning, Virtual training

## Introduction

### The research plan

### The importance of research:

The research has clear global strategy plan **for facing (covid-19)or the renew corona disease crisis** with both virtual education and training, where e-training will revolutionize the training sooner or later, whether we like it or not, and this fact that will certain happen in every classroom in all the world. The electronic training will be the next generation in the visual training assistance. It will grow to become the largest of advanced wireless Communications programs. This research also deals with the most important benefits of virtual education and what distinguishes it from traditional education.

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<sup>1</sup> This research is introduced as worksheet to publish my post- PHD researches in EJMS (ISSN 2414-8377, Vol 5, No 3, 2020) for the 23rd International Conference on Multidisciplinary Studies (ICMS XXIII): "Resilience for Survival", organized at the venue of Cambridge University, Pitt Building on 30-31 July 2020, at Cambridge University/(UK) (An analytical study for Global Education vision 2020 - 2030)

**The aim of research:**

**This research introduces a contemporary vision of universal strategic plan for facing (COVID-19) or the renew corona disease crisis in the field of higher education via virtual learning & training. This is An analytical study for Global Education vision - 2030 2020).**The research has clear global strategy plan with its steps and terminology **for facing (covid-19) crisis** to overcome the obstacles of the impossibility of the presence of both the teacher and the student in one place. So it comes the role of both virtual education and training, where e-training will revolutionize the training sooner or later, whether we like it or not, and this fact that will certain happen in every classroom in all the world. Both are methods of education technology.

This research also deals with the most advanced education technology, as: hologram and virtual& argument reality and what distinguishes these educational technology tools from traditional education. **So this strategy plan isn't only introduce a solution for the immerging case of (COVID-19) or the renew corona disease but also it push the education process to get progress and developed with the rapid development of virtual technology which become used in different fields and to simulate these fields' environments virtually as realistic in the education process.**

**The research problem this research and the challenges faced by virtual Education**

**The difficulty & resistance of teachers 'accepting deals with technical and educational change in the university education level**

**The legal, administrative and technical barriers.as** Students' resistance actively takes responsibility for the learning process, Legal, administrative and technical challenges

**The resistance of students to work without a "teacher" in front of them.** It is necessary to recognize that, most of our students generally have become lazier. There are many factors that play an important role, like:

- (1)Lack of motivation of teachers to know turns, and moves to students.
- (2)The absence of social idealism made from the study effort a lofty goal
- (3)Cultural work faces mental resistance.
- (4)All of this must take in consideration the methodology.
- (5)When the student notes that he must move from its negative position, preferred to start a protest, and attacks: the teacher, the classroom, and even the school or university, telling everyone that he will leave the educational institution. This feature exists mainly in the private sector, and in the face of an economic crisis, forcing some institutions to surrender in their efforts to promote the knowledge of the assets of active education, without realizing the damage, and without seeing the results of the community, who will receive a graduate of the University isn't qualified by itself. For this particular case, the policy requires the promotion of the assets of the active education for the first semester, because it is necessary to start the entire process of adjustment that replaces the assets of the passive former science to active pedagogy science that promotes a passion for knowledge and isn't boring to learn.

**Time limits:**

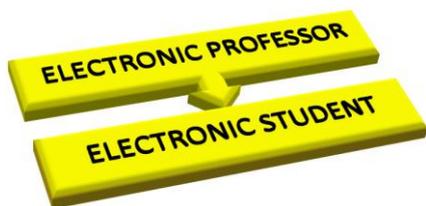
The near future (one decade=10years) of the period2020-2030

**Spatial borders:**

The Arab Republic of Egypt in all governmental, private and international universities& universal universities, as: American & European universities especially Cambridge universities.

**Introduction**

computer simulations is used in educational purposes for many years - even before small computers, and then in the late of seventies and eighties this kind of simulation becomes common in classrooms and laboratories computer in Western countries, it ranged in complexity from simple simulation to play a coin in order to learn the binary possibilities distribution. for example, the creation of (ecosystem)-shaped lake in which a various animal organisms interacts, and these types of simulation were introduced textually or digitally, while the development of hardware and its potentials , the programs have been developed to introduce pictorial output.



If we accept that the three-dimensional drawing and based on the screen is a form of virtual reality, it can be said that the virtual reality has been used for a period in education, and one of examples can be seen in the work of (Veronica Pantelidis) And (Lawrence Auld) , who are the co-directors of the virtual reality education laboratory(VREL), in the East of Carolina University, in which a package of programs ,called Virtues VR are been used by primary school children to form the inner parts of a room or building, including using the design of walls, doors, windows, furniture and then put it in the right place in the building based on the screen-based Construction, and this activity aims to improve children's abilities to imagine the space and the three-dimensional place, providing fun, and give the meaning for children understanding while they were learning.

"Another example of the current use of virtual reality in education is found in Jason Project by which school children can be tested both exist in the 'Tele-presence' (which refers to the sense of presence in another place than the real place where the person is existed in it ) and 'Tele-operation 'which means the tool control in operations remotely). this program has been designed, which is supervised by the USA space agency (NASA), and began in 1989, to create excitement and motivation of children to study science, mathematics, and technology, that allows children to control by the presence in 'Tele-operation 'of vehicle under water (TROY) , exploring the ocean depths, while they are watching the results of their work in the Real-Time Results on large video screens.

There is also an increase in the number of uses of the virtual reality in higher education, for examples include Learning Sites Project, which works through a team of archaeologists and experts in virtual reality, and three-dimensional models, for the instruction of graphics and audio databases, through which users explore a number of archaeological sites (in Turkey and Egypt, for example), they allow him interaction with the virtual versions of the sites that have been created with accurate translation of recorded data about the real sites, and how to report this interaction, for example; If a user gets the attention to a dark corner of the site existing in the virtual environment, he can focus on this area and explores it with greater details.

**Before analyzing this contemporary vision of strategy plan .we should study the education process . We mean here the integration interactive relationship between professor and his students virtually or presently which contained from university - faculties or colleges- specialization departments- education staff - students - administrative& artificial corps - university study contents)**

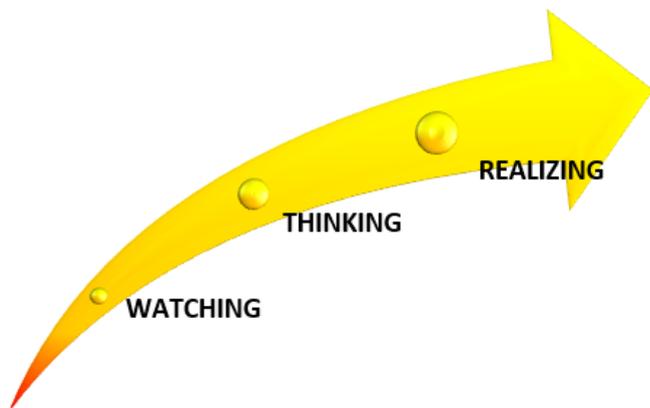


So there is three kinds of students in the education process ,including: the visual student, the listening student, and the visual & listening student . They are in the education process has three terminologies.

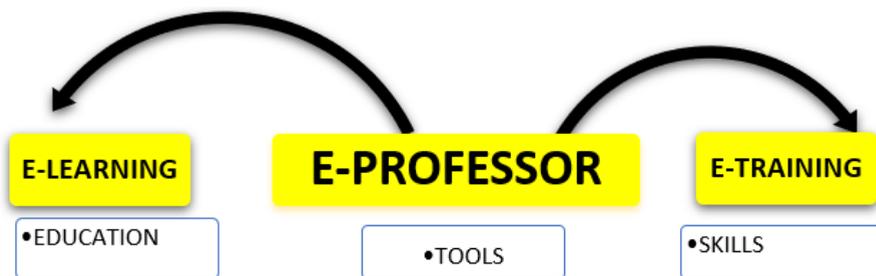
The visual student in the education process are watching, thinking, and realizing

The listening student in the education process are watching, thinking, and realizing

The visual & listening l student in the education process are watching, thinking, and realizing.



This strategy plan with its steps and terminology **for facing (covid-19) crisis** to overcome the obstacles of the impossibility of the presence of both the teacher and the student in one place. So it comes the role of both virtual education and training, where e-training will revolutionize the training sooner or later, whether we like it or not, and this fact that will certain happen in every classroom in all the world. Both are methods of education technology. **This is contemporary vision introduced three new concepts related with the virtual education process via both E-Learning and E- Training .those concepts are E-Professor, E-Student, and E-Virtual Education Platform.**



#### **A graph describes the role of E- Professor between both E-Learning & E-Training Processes**

In this strategy we use the electronic learning & training both side by side to get the integration of the education process. Indeed we didn't use both e-learning & e-training only in the case that the teacher and the student aren't in one place. But also if they are in one place we can use those methods of education technology to get more interaction with the virtual environment which is generated to get full / semi /or none immersion for the student in education processes with remoting and direction of this virtual education environment via the teacher.

This research also deals with the most advanced education technology, as: hologram and virtual& argument reality and what distinguishes these educational technology tools from traditional education. **So this strategy plan isn't only introduce a solution for the immerging case of (COVID-19) or the renew corona disease but also it push the education process to get progress and developed with the rapid development of virtual technology which become used in different fields and to simulate these fields' environments virtually as realistic in the education process.**

(sherry aazlnger) confirms that virtual reality can offer the necessary tools to visualize and form abstract information to make it understanding easily. As It enriches the educational process with expertise and modern technological capabilities.Training of learners to acquire technical skills and things that are difficult to train them in reality.Submission of a virtual environment to sail through a three-dimensional space. Also It enhances hologram's photos with sensory management of depth and the vacuum dimensions .and The virtual environment achieves the safety for her user when studying serious or difficult information to obtain it in time and place.

As This is the universal strategy plan for facing (COVID-19) crisis in the field of higher education via virtual learning & training. It is analytically graphed current study Global Education vision and for the near future . it is drawn as the contemporary vision with these steps2020 - 2030 ),including the following steps:

Installing virtual & argument & hologram Interactive dynamic university education platform

Designing and developing electronic university study content, like: E-books - E-specialization magazines and journals-PDF published papers- electronic encyclopedias - power points),which could be consider as some professors' tools

E-learning education installing for developing the process of education

E-training education installing for developing the skills of students and get integration with education process

University electronic portal

University server connected to professor's educational server for education purpose

virtual & argument & hologram Interactive dynamic educational systems with his tools ,and applications and software programs

simulating & developing virtual & argument & hologram Interactive dynamic educational video games environments

Generating &developing virtual & argument & hologram Interactive dynamic education environments' systems.

We can classify and virtual experiments and applications that have been used for education according to the following categories:

Virtual educational games

Virtual theater

Virtual lab

Virtual museum

Virtual educational environments (Virtual classrooms, training rooms, and science workshops, libraries, virtual universities, and scientific conferences)

Virtual garden.

Virtual space and aviation

Virtual factory and Virtual vocational training institutes.

Virtual Courts & virtual crimes.

Virtual medical operations

designing &developing virtual & argument & hologram Interactive dynamic education applications for mobiles and others boarder receiver devices

Designing& developing virtual & argument & hologram Interactive dynamic education software(programs)

creation & innovation developing virtual & argument & hologram Interactive dynamic education hardware(devices)

### **Virtual Reality Devices and tools:**

**Devices that are worn on the head (HMD):** They are similar to the mask or helmet and they consist inside of screen or two screens small to display single views or hear influential voices (stereo) and the individual can see what is offered by the program through the mask or helmet, and he can watch the object with its three dimensions or it may be covered the full of head as he can watch and listen at the same time.

**Tactile gloves :**A sense of devices covering all the hand and generating an active interaction between the user and the virtual environment for the application of a sense of touch and a sense of temperature degree, for example, they have the ability to find a sense of real environmental conditions.

**C) Motion Sensors (Motion Sensing):**This technique is essentially a special suit worn by the actor ,and put on it white points placed them in the joints sites (such as the wrist, elbows, ankle, knee), and put these points as well as on the head and face, and the pair of video units follow-up the movements of these points (where each point configured via special software program, and there is similar points linked it with the virtual character is designed in the computer, and through the powerful computer processors and complex software, virtual character is animated with a very realistic movement using different shots which it is recorded by the real actor, this process is known as stirring Performance Animation and In some applications it is simulated the actor's head and face movement and even his eyes and his mouth movement through a virtual character speaking.

The aim of stirring Performance Animation is achieved fast and accurate construction of the character in the virtual world, and this method has recently used in the production of many films such as: O. J. Simpson which contained stirring Performance Animation of what supposed had happened at the crime scene.

**D) Multi- directions telescope (BOOM):** Multi- directions telescope (BOOM) is developed by Fake space. it is consist of screens, and projector system combined in a box jointed with multi-connections 'arm, and when the user look through the slots in the box, he can see the virtual world, and he can direct the box in any direction that the existing processing capacity in the tool is allowing it, and the process of following the head's movement track via Sensors in the arm's connections that hold the box.

**E) The Automatic Virtual Environment CAVE :**The Automatic Virtual Environment CAVE is developed in the Illinois University of American Chicago State, which gives inspiration of immersion via displaying stereoscopic images on the walls and a cube land fitted the size of a room, and a number of people who wear stereoscopic glasses can enter and goal freely inside the cave, and The tracking system of head's movements is continuously adjust the stereoscopic display process according to the position where the Advanced beholder looks at it.

**F) Assistive devices :**Assistive devices vary in the virtual reality, For example: control rod, mouse and keyboard. In general, the input devices for virtual reality programs are continuously developing. As it appear recently in the markets Assistive devices, such as: track ball, tri-dimensional control stick, movement stick and the butt head, etc., and all are Assistive devices for virtual reality applications.

**E) The computer system:**There is no doubt that the virtual reality is mainly depends on the computer device, but (to reach to the full sense of virtual reality as the reality, it must be a high specification computer system is generated geometric shapes in a distinctive way which describes the data and information technically and wonderfully similar to virtual reality.

**G) Nano Manipulator device or nanometer processor (Nano Manipulator):** Nano Manipulator includes a pointing machine looks like a driving cars' stick, this machine conducts to a personal computer provided with very advanced graph card, it convert the microscope data for exposure in the form of a three-dimensional image of multiple colors, this sensor enables scientists to touch and feel the sights of small things that they examine it .and scientists have felt with the small edges and gaps existed in the protein molecules, and viscosity of some types of pathogenic bacteria.

The most advanced version of Nano Manipulator is in the Department of Physics at the North Carolina University at "Chapel Hill". And for the severe importance of this device in many researches of researchers at other institutions, the researchers of computer science at the North Carolina University made a study to make this device accessible to everyone. And "Kevin Gievaa" ,professor of computer science tried to use the second generation technology of the Internet, which his success will lead to using it for allowing researchers to send samples and checked it remotely using the Internet. This researcher has already been doing practical expert through examining a sample in University the capital Washington, 270 miles from the place of examination at the North Carolina University, but this expert had some problems.

**H) Virtual worlds, for example (Second Life world):**Internet is also one of virtual reality tools, via multiple ways, one of these methods is the virtual world, and the Second Life is an example of the virtual world. And (Second Life is a virtual game, it required a fast internet connection and a PC with high specifications to be able to run, her idea spins about making a virtual character for you and then enter a virtual world that resembles the world in which we live, you can walk around there freely, and build many friendships, you can chat Using text, audio and even video, as you can buy your own house, or start trading there, through this world currency called Lidden ..).And some of the players spend between 4 to 10 hours a day on this game and some of them feel too immersive in the game to see some of the installations and the scenes that you may see in the reality.

Installing virtual education platform provided with video hologram call &video conferences &chats with professors and students or with each other

Video conference between the professor & his students or between professors with each other or with experts and also between students with each other or with experts

Generated hologram objects for education purposes

Generating virtual reality education environments & Simulation the real environments used for education purposes.

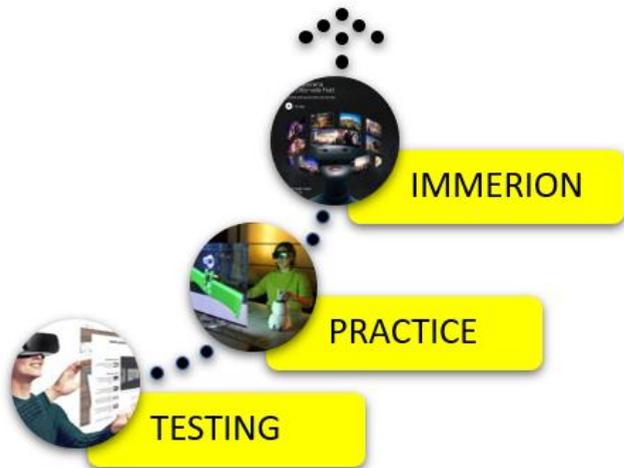
These environments provide with three points including : immersion, practice ,test. And **this is the Standards of good virtual reality environment.**

Abdul Hamid (2003) Said that we really live in an imaginary world, many events around us are imaginary.

Cinema, theater, drama and databases, even mental images composed in the memory, also it has been imaginary, but we don't consider all of that imaginary virtual reality environments, because virtual reality environments should be provided by the following characteristics & considerations:

Honestly simulated: where you must represent and simulate the real virtual reality environment actually honest representation & simulation.

Interactive Immersion & integration. As the teacher doesn't interact with the virtual reality from the outside, but he indulges in it and become integrated and completed part of it.

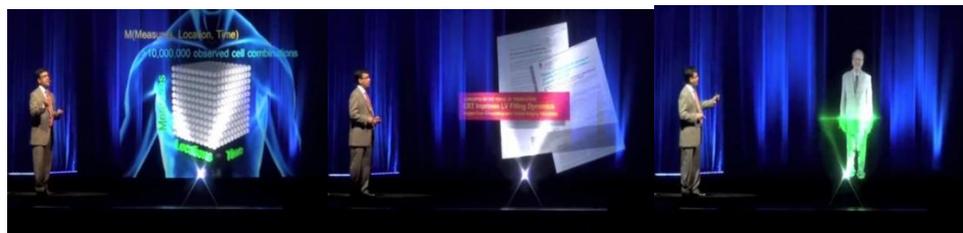


The embodiment of personal Avatar: it is an animated puppet generated by computer, represented the user inside the virtual reality environment, and embodies the idea in the user person.

The disappearance of the interaction interface within the environment: because the user doesn't interact with the environment from the outside, but he is an integrated part of it, so there is no need for him to the external interaction interface, where it disappears within the environment itself, so that the user interacts directly with the virtual reality in the moment.

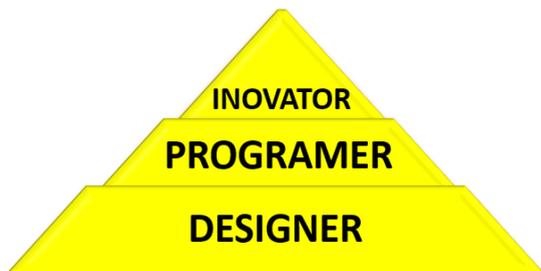
### 3D & Hologram Power point

Dr. Sengupta – The Winner in Contributors Competitions of Arther . Ai .Wiman For Youth Organized By echocardiography Association Introduced 3d Power Point for the First Time with hologram communication call ,and Images Up To 8 Ft High in 2013



Several Images Up To 8 Ft High for Dr.Sengupta Introduced 3d Power Point for the First Time And making hologram communication call, in 2013

The golden pyramid- as the researcher call this name on it-for installing virtual university education platform depending on three integrated elements in their role they are the innovator, programmer, and designer



A graph of the golden pyramid- as the researcher called this name on it-for installing virtual university education platform depending on three integrated elements in they role .they are the innovator,programmer,and designer

### **The Concept of Virtual University**

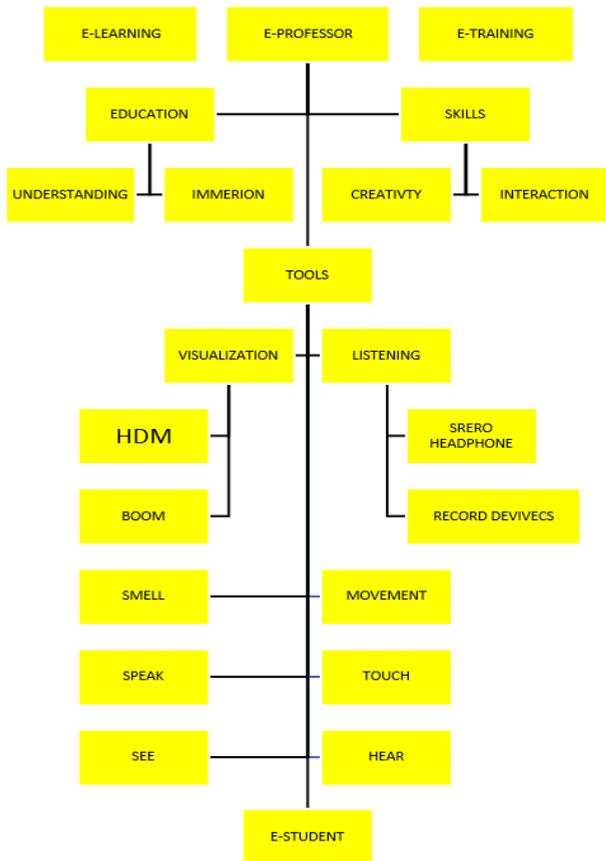
**Virtual University** can be defined procedurally traditional school in the presence of teachers, students and administrative & educational corps, but on the World Wide Web (Internet) where it isn't bound by time or place, and based on multiple global Web technologies ,like: discussion ,conferences and forums, and reading lessons, and perform the duties .. , and etc.

Virtual University is an academic institution aimed at securing the highest levels of higher education for students in their places of residence mediated by the World Wide Web through the establishment of an integrated e-learning environment based on a sophisticated network, "the first virtual integrated and accepted university has been established to provide more than 600 study material on the Internet, called the Jotr University in Denver, Colorado and its website ([www.jonesknowledg.com](http://www.jonesknowledg.com)) .

**Virtual lectures** are the tools, techniques, and software on the World Wide Web "Internet" enables the teacher to disseminate lessons and objectives and put duties and tasks of study and communicate with his students via multiple technologies, as it enables the student to read goals and tutorials and solving homework and sending tasks and participation in the discussion areas and dialogue and see his progress in studying and his degree obtained" .

### **Integration Cycle Process of Virtual University Education Via Multimedia**

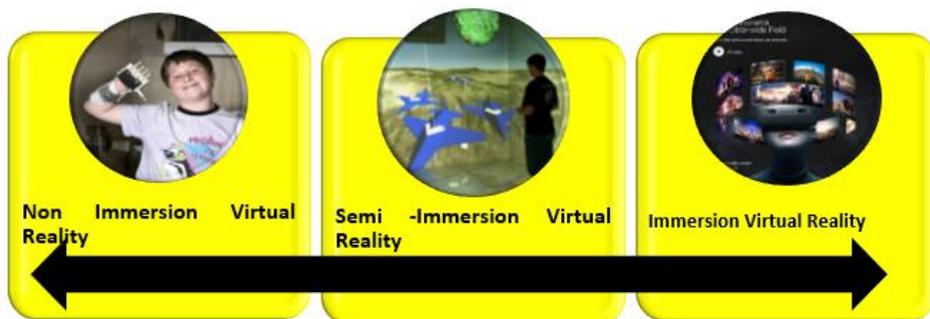
It is described the integration communication between the professor -who developed the virtual education process with both e-learning & e-training - and his students who are different types in realizing via professor's visalization or listening tools or both together ,as follows:



A graph of integration cycle of virtual education via multimedia

**Integration Cycle of Virtual Education Via the Reality Simulation**

As it describes immersion virtual reality&semi -immersion virtual reality & non immersion virtual reality, as follows:



A graph of integration cycle of virtual education via the reality simulation

The models of these virtual universities on the World Wide Web (Internet) are the following examples:

#### (Phoenix)University

This is one of the largest private universities in America, where there is (40,000 students), students - studying through the Internet at this university - represents 10% approximately of students number (4,000 students), this university accepted only students' ages at least 23 year (the class of society that missed university education) ,also it requires that the student is an employee, as the university does not contain staff working regularly, or even libraries, so the faculty has been rent - rather than buy - temporary substitutes in about 10 US states.

As the curriculum focuses on information technology, education, and health, and it is the pioneer faculty in introducing study materials online. The university offers (800) class in (5) Diploma programs and (5) other BS, and a number of faculty members contracted with them to work at the university through the Internet. Internet's students in the university represent equivalent to (10%) of the total students.

#### **Syrian Virtual University:[www.svuonline.org/Arab.SVU/index.asp](http://www.svuonline.org/Arab.SVU/index.asp)**

Syrian Virtual University is the first integrated virtual university in the Middle East, which leads the education movement on the Internet in the region. It puts on the web new educational methods based on international standards, and of modern manifestation techniques of advanced and exciting experience of the learning process.

It is currently coordinating as it puts between the student's hands the most important US, European and global universities. The Syrian Virtual University provides student with the highest virtual environment to facilitate their rich interaction with their professors, friends. and technologies around the world. It also it provides them with an academic, technical and administrative support of the most important experts, scholars and professors of Arab origin and a global study.

#### **The results and recommendations to overcome the challenges of research:**

The virtual reality environment technology is one of the growing technologies and some time will spend on the adoption of desktop computers for this environment due to halt the spread of this technology to provide supporting for her in various operating systems, and unsuitability for applications used in this type of computers, but Intel company solved this problem by dealing with programs' companies to provide support for her in their programs without relying on the support of the operating system. The software and operating systems developers adopt this technology in addition to companies specialized in producing computer hardware components such as IBM and AMD.

On the other hand (after «MTV» becomes one of the most famous names in the world of television networks, it is now trying to enhance its successes to become a leader in the marketing of virtual worlds. This was her message of this giant network through the virtual worlds conference in 2007 which held in New York. And this net launched her strategy of new hybrid network platform«4D», or four dimensions.

The primary endeavor of this will be the focus on the integration of existing content in television programs in «MTV» networks, with three-dimensional virtual worlds, and then it will place them within an interactive circle so that persons can interact through it with television characters and producing new content, his role is being a part of experience shared by everyone.

### **Recommendations to overcome the teacher resistance to change in the university education level**

Teaching in a virtual classroom isn't intended to record a traditional separation and put it on the Internet in order to bring the students practically, it isn't intended to record, and write it in the text and then published it in a Web page. But it is intended to transfer the assets of traditional education science towards electronic science pedagogy in which the professor becomes a facilitator of student learning and pro-active education pedagogy. It assumed the "new" education science assets that the teacher must qualify in the new educational technologies, but also that he must be left, in whole or in part, to face-to-face interaction in the classroom, and for some of them, this is very difficult.

### **To overcome the resistance of students to work without a "teacher" in front of them**

Our students are used to working in a classroom in which Professor speaks only directs his classroom. This makes students adopt a negative attitude (based on listening to the teacher); In this case, a good teacher who is making every effort, while the bad teacher has large demands, the teacher who works instead of his students and who doesn't give everything.

The result is that a huge distrust was born about the easy teacher role, where the professor's site is in the virtual class, but, at the same time, the responsible site that generates resistance to leave laziness and ease. The one professor who plays the role of "Father" as he has all knowledge (the only) and all power (to direct his students to where he wants) .

It is the site generates a lot of satisfaction because of the power of recognition and discrimination and admiration that appears in many times, but at the same time is the site prevents the diversity of ideas, and promotes iterative learning and kills creativity. so the professor should protect student laziness as in his role can rest in peace without forcing to think ,and just only pushing to save information for tests and examinations, and save information of the content which he received in the class, and there isn't in other research, or what the student reads or encountered more than what is required from him.

### **To overcome the legal, administrative and technical barriers**

#### **For technical obstacle:**

To apply the techniques those allow us to apply virtual education. We must provide several devices (computers connected to the Internet) for students who attend half virtual classes, and also virtual support classes, and those who don't have computers and Internet connection at home, this also requires a data transfer rate larger so as not to break down the network. If all students entered the virtual classroom at one time . As More computers, the largest data transfer rate, which means the quality of education is better, which attracts more students (including students' long distances).

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# Political Borders Are Not Natural Orders – The COVID-19 Pandemic in Frankfurt on the Main and Its Refugees

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## Abstract

The overall aim of this paper will be to stick to the previous researchers to get valid and impartial data from the most international city of Germany: Frankfurt on the Main. However, this research paper will try to provide answers by comparing war situations (object) where curfews are at daily basis impact on lives of people, who become gradually refugees (subject). In the recent years many refugees found their way to the global city of Frankfurt and its region of Rhine-Main. In these days if talking about the situation of the visible shutdown, lockdown and the strictly forbidden laws for an overall betterment of life, refugees have a tendency to explain to the native people about their crisis-laden past: "Resilience for Survival". Their recent past in the war-torn countries of Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq in West-Asia, Libya in Africa or the many wars in the Balkans in the 1990s in Europe, are a case in point. Given that as a matter of fact, when individuals are leading conversations about the outbreak to the recent lockdown, especially, fugitives try to explain to the ordinary dweller of Frankfurt through what life-threatening circumstances they experienced. This described social encounter despite the imposed social distancing is the proof how our globalized planet (global and local) effects the everyday life and every human being lives in each and every corner of the confined nation-states.

**Keywords:** transnationality, refugees, migration, everyday life, Frankfurt on the Main

## 1. Introduction

The city of Frankfurt on the Main is rooted in the Rhine-Main area. It is economically or historically not only one of the most affluent regions of Germany, but it is also embedded at the center of Europe. Frankfurt is by far the most international city of Germany. In a survey Frankfurt could prove to be a "global city", having a "super diversity" and being totally "transnational" (Vertovec, 2013). This is a proof why Frankfurt is chosen by many global actors not only in the prominent domain of finance and money as a hub. One important fact to point out is the skyline of Frankfurt and one of its dominant founders. The skyline of Frankfurt was much internationalized in the mid-1970s by an Iranian migrant, called Ali Selmi. He established his firm shortly after the Second World War. Frankfurt as a hub for finance and trade (like the Frankfurt stock exchange and trade fairs) has its roots in the medieval time period (Holtfrerich, 1999). In addition, it was chosen for example in the recent years and decades by Chinese banks, Korean car companies and Indian IT-entrepreneurs as one of their explicit global bases. This is the one and only face ordinary people might know about this city. The other face of Frankfurt will be explored on grounds of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak in

this article, when it comes to the status of refugees, especially from Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq.

For that reason, Frankfurt is directing its refugees through a division of tasks: accommodation, integration and public (Stadt Frankfurt am Main, 2020a). Each of these three categories has subdivisions that guides a refugee precisely through a process of search, finding and monitoring by the municipality staff as well as volunteers if necessary.

In intellectual terms Frankfurt belongs to the networking of "City of Refuge" (ICORN, 2006). Since 1997 under the supervision of the municipality threatened writers are invited to live with a scholarship for two years in the city of Frankfurt. Additionally, Frankfurt is the city of books, whose annual book fair is the biggest of its genre in Germany and in Europe. The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research (Frankfurt School) is going to turn a century, established in 1923 by Felix Weil (Wiggershaus, 2008). In this eminent institution masterminds such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Walter Benjamin and Juergen Habermas were of the first in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to explore about the society through the lens of Marx thoughts and others. Another figure is Anne Frank, who is often mistakenly perceived as Dutch. She was born and raised during her shirt lifetime in Frankfurt, but migrated due to the Nazi threat with her parents after some years to the Netherlands (Jüdische Orte in Frankfurt am Main, 2011). Historically, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the celebrity of German poets, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, was born in Frankfurt and spent a great part of his lifetime in the city. Today, the biggest University of Frankfurt, Goethe-University, carries his name. This city is not only in the heart of the Rhine-Main region, the Federal Republic of Germany and the European continent, it had since the medieval period the status of an imperial free city (Historisches Museum Frankfurt, 2020).

Despite all this beyond belief facts about Frankfurt, this city suffered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from the cholera pandemic narrated by the "Corona-Special Virtual Tour" (Setzepfandt, 2020): As late as the year of 1830 the cholera disease infection took the life of many people in Frankfurt, so the solution was cremation.

Later on, after the French Revolution, Frankfurt gained again its status as a free city. Subsequently, it became in 1848-49 the seat of the first German parliament at St. Paul's Church. In 1866 Frankfurt had been annexed by the Prussians from Berlin that marked the loss of its political independence. After the Second World War in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was foreseen to recuperate Frankfurt "again" the German seat of decision makers. Then, Bonn became by four votes the political capital until the fall of the Berlin wall (Deutscher Bundestag, 2014). Shortly after the Second World War, it was intended that the present-day headquarter of the Hessian broadcasting corporation should become the Federal Parliament of Germany.

Critically, another fact about the city is the negative domestic reputation of Frankfurt. As the fifth major city of Germany it has the most important national airport, Germany's and even Europe's historical largest railway station in the new-renaissance style, and the A5 as one of the most important Germany highway, to provide references about few leading points. On international level, Frankfurt is the center for economy, finance and trade: Each criminal act as counted, passes its way through the Frankfurt police, then as a consequence to the public prosecution department and finally to the Frankfurt court of justice. These additional factors are the primary causes for the one and single reason of the negative collected statistics, when it comes to the status of Frankfurt being the most criminal city in Germany (Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik, 2018).

The "Homo Migrant" is the stereotype of human being, who is populating, influencing, and thus enriching Frankfurt, as a repeated center in each and every imaginable field.

## **2. Methodology**

The data gathered for this research is based on qualitative research methods. For this purpose, the researcher employed an in-depth interview guide and observation technique to gather research data. The sample included 28 refugees aged between 18-55 years from Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq. In general terms Frankfurt has according to its own municipality as of March 2020, 34% Afghan, 16% Syrian and 5% Iraqi refugees out of 4.467 refugees of whom two third are male and one third female (Stadt Frankfurt am Main, 2020b). For this study they were selected through verified asking concerning differences in their mother tongues, ethnic and city belongings, and life experience in Frankfurt. Researcher sustained a gender balance in the sample size of this research. Therefore, in this observation, 18 male and 11 female respondents were met at different public spaces. Not a single person of the target respondents was known before. The researcher maintained a certain trust level with the respondents without any difficulty and convinced them to do a detailed interview. However, participants did talk much about many aspects of their lives in such gatherings to some extent, because of the abruptly lockdown process. The data collection was carried out through IDIs at public spaces in the neighborhood of the researcher in Frankfurt. For this research, the concerned data was collected during the time of the lockdown in Frankfurt from mid-March 2020 to the mid-April 2020.

## **3. Objectives**

1. To explore the factors which are responsible for the resilient habits of the refugees in Frankfurt in times of Covid-19 pandemic.
2. To understand the transnational resilience in and outside the fugitive community, which influences their everyday life and shapes their identity.

## **4. Discussion and Analysis**

The contemporary shutdown process was done in Frankfurt like in many other cities worldwide, as well. It was announced by the media, then the public reacted, and eventually the society has to follow orders of the imposed lockdown in general and social distancing in public space in particular.

In the first days in March 2020 people of all walks of life had not enough conscience about the scale of the Covid-19 pandemic and its severe hygienic impacts. By and large, people began to stockpile noodles and toilet paper. So, things changed rapidly not only by health measures, but by social-habitual, economical-income, or just the fear of lacking enough food in groceries. All these caused panic behavior for the individuals, families, and couples (Harari, 2020). Many domestic employees and foreign expats left Frankfurt to go back to their native home.

In fact, the entire process of everyday life was power cut. Within these limits, it was not much easy to talk to people. But, refugees in the neighborhood, streets, and groceries and in public spaces stood quite open without or let us say a smaller amount of panic. Those refugees from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq showed not much panic fear by social distancing measures by standing in a queue to maintain a distance of 1.5 meters between each other. Or else, if one customer gazed on a product a refugee offered the man to take it at first, and often stated the two English words of "no problem" with a smile.

By the passage of time, it was quite obvious the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak caused death tolls in each and every country at large scale. A 27 year old Syrian refugee was concerned: "Sometimes I feel it was a mistake to migrate to Europe. With this current infectious diseases, the labor market, and housing problems I acutely want to get rid of this situation as soon as possible."

### **Media Reports**

The German media was from the beginning on full of reports from experts such as the local medical advisors, the three principal virologists and the two German national research institutes. In all news outlets the topic of the hour was Covid-19 pandemic.

The public space played, as reported, a key role on daily basis in Frankfurt. Many young people could not attend gyms, schools, universities or workplaces. The solution was to find third ways to match with a new everyday life. The regional and local media of Hesse covered many streams of life to showcase under what circumstances ordinary people – loneliness, jobless, aged, single parents – do really suffer without sufficient protection (Hessenschau, 2020). For the short time period, politicians pledged to provide financial aid to vulnerable employees, households, and small shop owners.

In the meantime, it was reported for example in Greece that refugees from war-torn countries intend to travel to Western Europe, targeting as first destination Germany. In advance, the conscience about the Covid-19 pandemic raised at large scale among the native dwellers. In Frankfurt, as case in point, many refugees were mistreated at the Turkish-Greece frontier. After a while, the amount of deaths raised due to Covid-19 pandemic infectious pace according to the principal public health institute in Germany (Robert Koch Institut, 2020). The Robert Koch Institute provided data from the third of March 2020 about diagnostic, hygiene and control of Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. As a result, the plight of the refugees at the eastern frontiers small continent of Europe was fully forgotten.

In Frankfurt, refugees have contacted their families, where they had in addition to the media coverage firsthand information about their home countries, cities, and the unending armed conflicts or wars. In this case a 51 year old woman from Iraq voiced: "In my age migration makes really not much sense. As you can imagine, I let my life behind me, came to here, only for the sake of autonomy, and to secure the future of my children."

### **Refugees as Survival Actors**

In the year of 2015, as the German chancellor Angela Merkel opened the doors for refugees to find a proper shelter in Germany, many observers were critical if this deliberate act was the right approach to receive up to one million predominantly male refugees from war-torn countries (Katz, Noring, & Garrelts, 2016). It was not clear by the very arrival of the refugees at that time with what kind of infectious diseases, like scabies and pediculosis, these ones will arrive in Germany (Alberer, Malinowski, Sanftenberg, & Schelling, 2018).

However, in the time after Merkel was internationally valued as someone who practiced good will by her applied policies. At national level the German society was practicing a unique welcoming culture as a gesture by truthful words and deeds. After the incident of Cologne at New Year's Eve 2016 the hospitable frame of mind threatened to turn worse. The so-called celebrated welcoming culture was put in question. Especially, many male asylum seekers

targeted Germany as final destiny, what caused hostile sentiments among Germany's news outlets and mass media (Georgiou, Zaborowski, 2017).

Within the years, especially in times of Covid-19 pandemic the daily survival as resilience by measures of hygiene practices are the most important precautions. In exactly this point, the lots of male refugees who came to Frankfurt are visible for their habits in public spaces. Hence, in many of participant observations since the outbreak of the virus refugees' showcase in conversations that they are used to with daily curfews due to armed conflicts in their native countries. A 19 year old Afghan lamented: "Look, I was born in Iran, stemming from Central Afghanistan, my face features are betraying myself by only a single second about my origin. My East Asian appearance betrayed myself as a foreigner, the Iranian government through their thugs were about to intimidate myself every day. My parents fled in the late 1990s from the Taliban to Iran. In Iran, which I consider still as my home, I was beaten as a street vendor in public, then I was not allowed to participate in public school. Please, answer my humble question: Do you really think I fear this virus?"

This source of dread interconnects with shortcomings of nutrition or education. In the same vein, the concept of identity is much touched: whether the nation, religion, patriarchy, nor the tribe are safeguards. As of now, refugees tend to explain the cause and reason of their escape from war zones to that of freedom.

Before the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic wars, conflicts and refugees were perceived as a phenomenon from far away. Within this short period of time, refugees are not more or less valued as before by the domestic German welcoming culture, but the event of the current virus from Wuhan in China triggered being more sophisticated by glocalized (global and local) crisis: That is to say, local diseases in Asia impacts each and every socioeconomic life at wide-ranging global level.

Especially, in Frankfurt the language changed in social media. The discursive proverb of "social distancing" was replaced in these virtual public discussions by "physical distancing" and "social solidarity" was written in red letters. Particularly, these headings have to signify the importance of perhaps first-hand mores and values in times of crisis. In each street of every neighborhood the Frankfurt residents were accumulating aid for elder and vulnerable persons. A 30 year old male refugee from Syria indicated: "This social or physical distancing, call it as you like, is sophisticated. Nobody has beaten you up to be in line with these new habits to avoid contagion. Here is the matter of fact, the German police forces are talking to you in a friendly, calm and peaceful way, while in my home country a policeman alone is the symbol of menace."

Undeniably, daily life changed in many ways. If the concern of an ordinary person was about his or her lifestyle, work and gym, the present Covid-19 pandemic was about continued existence procedures. The short news on the smart phones were expressing about the death records in Frankfurt, Rhine-Main region, Germany, Europe and the entire planet earth. There was no way out to be ignorant about the sharp line between today's life and tomorrow's after life.

### **Re-opening as Resilience**

After the shutdown procedure from the kickoff of the spring until mid-April 2020 the re-opening is a bargain. At first, the economy of a city like Frankfurt was hit relentlessly due to the thousands of retailers who lost their customers (Wirtschaftsförderung Frankfurt, 2020).

Short after, a large number of employees lost their income sources (Hessenschau, 2020b). The short-term ultimate solution from responsible decision makers in politics was, if an employee lost livelihood, to do immediate work (German: Kurzarbeit). For many observers as medical experts a re-opening was to be done carefully by monitoring agencies. The Frankfurt International Airport, the stock market, the fair and many other global acting businesses were to restart by an hourly loss of millions of Euros.

It came worse as president Trump of the USA with his "America First" populist rhetoric decided amidst a life-threatening virus not to fund anymore the World Health Organization like the US did it before (The White House, 2020). The German public opinion was even before the Corona crisis not much benign to the US leadership, its position vis-à-vis China, and its way to overcome the Comid-19 pandemic (Barkin, 2020). The epicenter of the outbreak changed within few weeks from China in Asia to New York in the USA. Earlier, it was transmitted from Asia to Europe, subsequently to Africa, which was hit rigorously by the outbreak of the virus.

Still, the ordinary refugee is not much touched by the great discourses in Frankfurt. There is no scientific investigation about refugees in Frankfurt how they would obey the rules, if experiencing or re-experiencing situations of crisis without arms. But, one 50 year old Iraqi refugee is expressing: "Iraq is a rich country by natural resources. This is not something new to hear, but for all that, since my adolescent life I have experienced how to survive, being more attentive about my surroundings, sharing everything I had in and out of my being."

Resilience for survival is not only a matter of fact, but in the same time it is how to act properly to safe on state level employments, to preserve socio-economic freedom, and to improve perhaps the labor state of affairs. Despite the fact that Covid-19 pandemic outbreak was not taken seriously by some states at the beginning of the year 2020. Critically evaluated, it is time to reshape a new order for the glocalized economy, which should not be decided exclusively between the two major world leaders of China and the USA (Hamideh, 2018).

Gradually, public life is guaranteed throughout Germany by the expertise of virologists, if the physical and social distancing are going to be maintained. Once more, it is important to carry masks in public transportations, groceries and institutions for the simple reason not to spread individual breath.

For an ordinary refugee, who lives in a zone of freedom similar to in Frankfurt, it is very important to achieve legal documents, having an appropriate shelter or learning the native German language. Many male single refugees spent the vast part of their income for shared housing, which is in the case of Frankfurt around €710 (Bathke, 2019). Yet again, it is surprising in the eyes of a refugee that in times of a virus disease outbreak Frankfurt as a city has such a largely control, which is in comparison to their experience not violent, but considerably educative and preventive. In this regard a 45 year old male Afghan shares the opinion: "Frankfurt as a city is more competent than my entire country. The preventive actions taken to this point by the municipality to anticipate the appropriate reactions in these days and weeks are mind blowing. In Kabul I didn't know, if I will survive the day healthy by leaving home."

A re-opening in Frankfurt with his largest international airport, its national central railway station, the internationally orientated banks, just to remark few essential daily belongings of this "alpha global city", is too much contested (Lohde-Reiff, 2003).

Foresight and Hindsight

If resilience is the bottom line of the hour of Covid-19 pandemic by means of migration to carry on just life, so one should examine more the life of an average refugee to gain insights. In general, the foresight in war zones is to save the own and family's life. In particular, the hindsight is not to participate in warfare, or avoiding the choice being a member of one of the participant groups in an armed conflict. The domestic German welcome culture of the year 2015 high-raised the expectations of the average refugee on the grounds of accommodation, regular income source, and a better life: But, since then, refugees and asylum seekers live under nearly the same circumstances (Neis, Meier, & Furukawazono, 2018).

Since Covid-19 pandemic outbreak the entire society is somehow getting more post-heroic: People have a tendency to be more anxious. If before the virus a face was marked by sorrow, because the everyday life was against the low income, which resonates simply too many other factors for leading a suitable life. At this time, the yesterday's grief and despair is not getting into oblivion. But then again, this virus has become a struggle between life and death. As said by a 28 year old Syrian refugee: "I might be observing many aspects of life here in the West, which are not much clear to my own since my arrival of the year 2015 in Frankfurt. But, I do not come across the reason of the daily pressures of the native people. What is honestly the reason of their dissatisfaction? Has it something to do, excuse me for expressing this, that the state is paying low salaries and takes the great part of the average income for taxes?"

Therefore, the significance of solidarity to the next person converted to a virtue. As a consequence, helping the weak and aged people is even promulgated by the government, what a citizen is able to read in buildings, streets, and public transportation in Frankfurt. Similarly, other values like tolerance, acknowledgement for the so-called system relevant employees like scientists, medical doctors, nurses, sanitation workers, and cashiers at groceries are the daily topics on the surface of public discourses (Lindhoff, 2020). In a nutshell, the societal conscience for resilience to survive was followed as a task force at daily basis. The foresight was at the same time the hindsight, and the opposite way around.

### **Refugee as Approver**

A refugee in Frankfurt might be seen as an approver. When talking about Covid-19 pandemic, which is in liaison with life and death, the individual refugee, who came to here, epitomizes by his or her will to take the undetermined burden to migrate. In the current situation the permission for the legal status is getting difficult if a foreigner seeks shelter as a refugee and he or she is not from the European Union.

Not later than this outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic the habit of stockpiling dominated the societal media debate in Germany about people's motives of panic-buying toilet tissue, germicide, and noodles. This is the embodiment of a certain stereotype of syncope of the vast majority of Germany.

But for all that, the refugee is always in permanent danger being deported back, as it was reported by media. In this sense a 37 year old female Syrian is complaining: "We as refugees are living in a trauma and post-trauma condition. Whether we know if we are staying here, we are allowed to, or we should re-migrate to Syria. In spite of this, why I should be afraid to die. Do you or the people in Frankfurt fear to die?"

## 5. Conclusion

In Germany's neighboring country France, the French intellectual radio "France Culture" dedicated a whole series of radio broadcast to "Coronavirus, Une Conversation Mondiale" (English: Corona Virus, A Global Conversation) (France Culture, 2020): Once more, the legendary stroke of genius of Albert Camus "La Peste" (English: The Plague) was debated in this radio station as the historical legacy of 1947. As Germany's western neighbor, in times or "opportunities of crisis" France (44%) was evaluated by "a representative survey on German attitudes to foreign policy" as the most important partner for Germany, while the USA (10%), China (6%) and Russia (4%) got not in sum half of the votes in comparison to France (Körber Stiftung, 2020). The new shape of the world seems to include one more important factor after Covid-19 pandemic, which is on the one hand the "politization of health issues", and on the other the "sanitarization of politics".

This Covid-19 pandemic was the watershed at glocalized platform without any slight announcement. The virtual offline world transcended to the real life, whereas the daily vibrant life was because of the lockdown to be for a time alone. Forced seclusion from the public space at home was the solution to the Frankfurt citizen.

The refugees in this study were concerned, but not as that much as expected. The common attitude and stance were that the interviewed refugees compared their current situation in Frankfurt with their home countries: The zone of freedom (Frankfurt) vs. the zone of armed conflicts. Attention should be paid to the cast that Frankfurt is not an ordinary city, which all of the interviewees recognized. Principally, the transcultural distinctive side of Frankfurt at daily basis was pointed out (Alam, 2019).

In the public sphere of influence of the German newspaper "Die Zeit" the eminent 90 years old Juergen Habermas was discussing in a conversation with the professor for legal theories Klaus Guenther about the significance of human dignity, its protection and the basic limits of rights in the German constitution (Habermas, Guenther, 2020). More or less, both argued that even basic rights are not infinite.

To recommend only one point: There is no in-depth long-running scientific investigation about refugees in Frankfurt to gain more knowledge how they would obey the rules, if experiencing or re-experiencing situations of crisis without arms. It is necessary to investigate more on refugees with a preemptive outlook who belong to the more vulnerable social groups.

On a final note, the Covid-19 pandemic infectious disease prompted in many fields to a certain extent legal, political, societal, individual, gender, economical and digital debates through the lens of health.

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# **Epidemics in Modern and Contemporary Age in a Backward Area of Europe: The Role of Institutions and Socio-Economic Effects in Southern Italy**

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## **Abstract**

Ethics as a cure for anxiety, or rather for anxieties, a distinctive feature of contemporary western man, neurotic and afraid. Man cannot be only that aggregate of primitive instincts driven by selfishness and individual interest that utilitarianism has credited and neoliberalism has emphasized. It seems obvious that the Covid-19 effect amplifies these paradoxes and anxieties. Epidemics are certainly not new in the historical-social context. The purpose of this study will be to analyze some of the numerous epidemics that have occurred in history and their impact on the economy. The corrections can only come from a re-evaluation of the ethical state, the ethical family and a new ethical world: attention to migratory phenomena through the principle of the obligation to rescue the least of the earth; relaunch of the international organizations with which the world, in the happy post-war season, had intended to give an order that guaranteed peace and balance, but which has gradually been forgotten; reduction of wage differences; taxation of capital and presence of the public interest in the company's governing bodies. Through the analysis of original sources, such as the historical archive of Pio Monte della Misericordia and Banco di Napoli, the study will compare the plague of 1656, and the effects of the intervention of charities in support of the population with the socio-economic impact of the Spanish influence in the first decades of the twentieth century, up to the current pandemic, with particular attention to the consequences on the production capacity of goods and services in a backward area of Europe, such as Southern Italy. \*

**Keywords:** Economic History; Social Sciences; Economic impact; Epidemics.

## **Introduction**

### **1. The 1656 Plague Epidemic in the Kingdom of Naples: spread and socio-economic effects**

Throughout history, there have been numerous epidemics that have affected the population. There are several figures of scholars who have written about it, passing on scientific, social

and economic data. The plague is certainly one of the largest epidemics, which has occurred periodically over the years, starting with "The black plague of 1347", up to the last and serious episodes of pestilence that characterized the seventeenth century.

Plague (bubonic, septicemic, pulmonary) was a widespread disease in the ancient regime, which was often confused with other diseases. The doctors of the time could hardly identify and contrast it, so every time it reappeared it involved changes in the demographic, social and economic levels.

«A vessel loaded with leather and other hides, coming from *Algieri* brought the plague to *Valenza*», as Bindio writes and who, just like other scholars claims that in 1647 the disease spread to Spain starting from the shoemakers of Valencia. The plague advanced rapidly and after a few months from Valencia it had passed to the neighboring cities, causing thousands of victims in Ciche, Alicante, Cartaghena, Striglia and Cadiz. Not even Barcelona and its entire region was spared.

From 1652, the disease spread to Sardinia (already recovering from a plague that struck Alghero in 1582, causing over 6000 deaths in a few months, with only 150 survivors<sup>1 2 3 4 5</sup> However, in this case, «thanks to the doctor<sup>6</sup> the plague did not leave the borders of Alghero and the island was spared»), first in Sassari, then moving to the Sardinian capital in 1655 and then to the cities and territories of Naples, Rome and Genoa.

In the Kingdom of Naples the plague broke out in 1656 causing considerable damage not only to the population, but also to the southern economic and social system<sup>7</sup>.

Naples was the first city to be hit within the Kingdom, there are several theses supported on how it got there. For some it was carried by passengers on a ship from Sardinia, for others by some boats loaded with hides and other merchandise or for others still from a ship carrying

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\*Authors agree on the entire paper, however paragraphs 1 and 2 are due to Marilena Iacobaccio, paragraphs 3 and 4 to Valentina Sgro, and paragraphs 5 and 6 to Vittoria Ferrandino.

<sup>2</sup> Pascale Bindio, Napoli nell'anno 1656: ovvero, Documenti dell'epidemia che desolò Napoli nell'anno 1656, 1867

<sup>3</sup> See Maiso Gonzalez, La peste aragonesa de 1649 a 1652, Departamento de Historia Moderna, Universidad de Zaragoza, Zaragoza, 1982; V. Perez Moreda, Las crisis de mortalidad en la Espana interior (siglos XVI-XIX), Siglo veintiuno de Espana editores s.a., Madrid, 1980

<sup>4</sup> F. Manconi, Castigo de Dios. La grande peste barocca nella Sardegna di Filippo IV, Donzelli, Rome, 1994

<sup>5</sup> F. Montanaro, La peste del 1656 nel casale di Frattamaggiore: i fatti nei documenti originali dell'epoca, in coll. Novissimae Editiones, series 17, Raccolta Rassegna Storica dei Comuni - Vol. 16 - Year 2002, edited by Giacinto Libertini, Istituto Di Studi Atellani, year XXVIII (n. s.), n. 112-113 may-august 2002, december 2010, p. 155

<sup>6</sup> The doctor referred to is Q. T. Angelerio who described the symptoms of the disease and the best precautions to combat it in the volume *Epidemiologia, sive, tractatus de peste, ad regni Sardiniae progeren*, Madrid, Ex Typographia Regia, 1598.

<sup>7</sup> I. Fusco, Il ruolo dei fattori antropici e fisici nella diffusione dell'epidemia di peste del 1656-58 nel Regno di Napoli, Istituto di Studi sulle Società del Mediterraneo, «Popolazione e Storia», 2/2015, Naples, pp. 95-113

Spanish soldiers<sup>1 2 3</sup>. The doctor Giuseppe Bozzuto was among the first to diagnose the plague in February, as shown by the payment coupons in his name kept in the Banco di Napoli Historical Archive. The doctor Geronimo Gatta, on the other hand, would trace the first cases of plague, even to the middle of January<sup>4</sup> as claimed by Rubino<sup>5</sup>. However among the archive sources<sup>6 7</sup> the predominant thought is that the infection spread in March, making the maximum expansion of the infection from that month until May of the same year. Propagation was favored by the delay with which the disease was recognized and the late contrast measures adopted. The epidemic affected Naples until the following August<sup>8</sup>, but only from December 1656 Naples could declare itself plague free<sup>9</sup>.

The closure of the city is one of the first law enforcement actions, with limitations on movement and a ban on trade. Infact it needed a health report, certifying the state of health, to enter or leave the city<sup>10 11 12</sup>. Despite the prohibitions imposed, the population tried to escape from the city of Naples, where the plague advanced rapidly. It is therefore no coincidence that the first infected territories were the closest to the capital: primarily the *Terra di Lavoro* and subsequently the Contado di Molise and the two Abbruzzi. The escape that involved as many nobles and religious as the common people, later touched also the southern areas of the Kingdom, arriving in areas increasingly distant from the capital<sup>13</sup>.

Numerous remedies were adopted, researched and applied in the field, both as a preventive

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<sup>1</sup> For further information, I. Fusco, La peste del 1656-58 nel Regno di Napoli: diffusione e mortalita, Istituto di studi sulle societa del Mediterraneo, «Popolazione e Storia», 1/2009, Naples, p. 116

<sup>8</sup> Archivio di Stato di Napoli (from now on ASN), Segreterie dei Vicere, Scritture diverse, fascio 206, fasc. 152; agosto 1656, this thesis was also supported by S. De Renzi, Napoli nell'anno 1656, Celi, Naples, 1968 [1867].

<sup>9</sup> Societa Napoletana di Storia Patria (from now on SNSP), ms. XXI.C.23, f. 456; D.A. Parrino, Teatro eroico e politico de' governi de' Vicere del Regno di Napoli, 3, in the new Stampa del Parrino e del Mutii, Naples, 1694, p. 33

<sup>10</sup> S. De Renzi, Napoli nell'anno 1656, cit., pp. 35-36

<sup>5</sup> SNSP, ms. XXIII.D.14, A. Rubino, Notitia di quanto e occorso in Napoli dall'anno 1648 per tutto l'anno 1657, tomo I, ff. 218-219

<sup>6</sup> Cf. S. De Renzi, Napoli nell'anno 1656, cit. p. 37 note 1; SNSP, ms. XXVI.D.5, G. Campanile, Cose degne di memoria della citta di Napoli, f. 681; Furthermore, ASN, Segreterie dei Vicere, Scritture diverse, cit., fascio 217, fasc. 126 (17 november 1657)

<sup>7</sup> ASN, Segreterie dei Vicere, Scritture diverse, fascio 208, fasc. 136 e fascio 205, fasc. not numberd; 17 may 1656

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, fasc. 158

<sup>10</sup> ASN, Segreterie dei Vicere, Scritture diverse, fascio 206, fasc. 229 (16 august 1656)

<sup>11</sup> In ASN, Segreterie dei Vicere, Scritture diverse, fascio 212, fasc. 221; 13 june 1656, it is found that already in June 1656, the plague had arrived in the territories of the Prince of Caserta, brought just by fugitives. The same can be seen from ASN, Regia Camera della Sommaria, Notamenti, vol. 112, ff. 433-434 (26 april 1657)

<sup>12</sup> In the Contado di Molise it would have been brought by a doctor from Naples (ASN, Segreterie dei Vicere, Scritture diverse, fascio 213, fasc. 86; 7 maggio 1657). In Abruzzo Citra, it would spread from Chieti, where some lawyers residing in Naples had retired. (L. Del Vecchio, La peste del 1656-1657 in Abruzzo. Quadro storico-geografico- statistico, in Bullettino della Deputazione Abruzzese di Storia Patria, Annate LXVI-LXVIII (1976-1978)), p. 87

<sup>13</sup> For further information, I. Fusco, Peste, demografia e fiscalita nel Regno di Napoli del XVII secolo, FrancoAngeli, Milan 2007, cap. 3

and at a curative level. They range from health to religious and mystical ones, sometimes even very imaginative. In the first place, attempts were made to avoid contact between healthy individuals and assaults. Once the plague victims were identified, they were isolated in special lazarets, the corpses were transported away from the inhabited center and the infected objects were burned<sup>1 2</sup>. Only later did the «purge» proceed, that is, the destruction or disinfection of all that had come into contact with the pandemic. Once this procedure was also completed, a quarantine period was carried out to prevent new outbreaks. Obviously the most relevant remedy was the one adopted a priori, which today we will call social distancing.

The results were rather disappointing, in fact there were huge numbers of deaths. Despite the difficulty of defining demographic data precisely, it can be said that the number of victims of the infection was between a minimum of 400,000 and a maximum of 900,000 throughout the Kingdom, excluding the capital where contemporaries of the time estimate an additional 200,000 - 600,000 victims. Adding the two data it can be said that the disease caused the death of about 43%<sup>3 4 5 6 7 8 9</sup> of the previous population, however the mortality rates varied widely between the different centers.

In addition to the victims, we must consider the damage done to the economy of the affected territories, in fact, if on the one hand the expenses increased, on the other the revenues decreased. To the costs of the barriers to be built were added those of the guards specially recruited for the emergency, but also those relating to the payment of medical personnel. Then there were still the expenses of the *lazzaretti* and of the places of isolation; the costs incurred to bury the dead, build cemeteries; as well as those to support the primary needs of families unable to work; up to the purge and quarantine costs. The decrease in revenue was determined both by the demographic decrease and by the worsening of the economic situation of the various areas. With the destruction of entire families, the tax burden of those surviving, who were frequently subjected to indirect local taxes, also worsened. The economic situation of the small towns plummeted when the population was forced to neglect their economic

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<sup>1</sup> ASN, Supremo Magistrato di Salute, 296, 4

<sup>2</sup> The purge provided that: a fire was lit inside the houses; the walls were whitewashed; the wool was boiled or washed together with all the other washable objects, whatever was not washable, had to be disinfected with fire and left to air; coins and letters were immersed in vinegar; valueless objects were burned and in unrecoverable conditions; (Prammatica dodicesima. In S. De Renzi, Napoli nell'anno 1656, cit., pp. 203-13)

<sup>3</sup> Prammatica decimaterza. In S. De Renzi, Napoli nell'anno 1656, cit., pp. 213-8

<sup>4</sup> For further information, I. Fusco Peste, Demografia e fiscalità nel Regno di Napoli del XVII secolo, cit., chap. 4

<sup>5</sup> It is useful to specify that the highest estimates are provided by contemporaries. For further details I. Fusco, Peste, demografia e fiscalità nel Regno di Napoli del XVII secolo, cit., pp. 111-112

<sup>6</sup> For further information I. Fusco, Peste, demografia e fiscalità nel Regno di Napoli del XVII secolo, cit., pp. 99-107

<sup>7</sup> I. Fusco, La peste del 1656-58 nel Regno di Napoli: diffusione e mortalità, cit., pp. 115-138

<sup>8</sup> As explained by E. Nappi, in *Aspetti della società e dell'economia napoletana durante la peste*, dai documenti dell'Archivio storico del Banco di Napoli, edited by Banco di Napoli, Naples, 1980, cap. 2. In the Historical Archive of the Banco di Napoli (ASBN), Banco del Salvatore, there are documents certifying the expenses for the Deputation of health incurred between May 1656 -1659, for an amount equal to 190,000 ducats, to which must be added the payments made for cash of which no trace has been received

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, pp.133-137

activity, because due to the travel prohibitions it was difficult to continue agricultural, breeding, fishing, as well as trade activities, with the closure of numerous shops .

The repercussion on public finances was not long in coming, the debt of the centers increased more and more, impoverishing the provinces of the Kingdom. Nonetheless, the court continued to demand some sums, sometimes granting concessions to lands in difficulty, until the issue of the pragmatics, by the Neapolitan authorities. However, the critical issues did not end, indeed the tax debate continued for several years to come<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. The role of the Institutions: the *Banchi Pubblici* and the *Pio Monte della Misericordia*

Institutions played a fundamental role in the time of the plague. Here we will examine the role of *Banchi pubblici* and that of *Pio Monte della Misericordia*, in making contributions and economic aid to support the population. Some sources also attest to public aid, which however proved insufficient and of negligible importance. First of all, it is necessary to specify that the *Banchi Pubblici*, as well as the *Pio Monte della Misericordia* of Naples, continued to work during the plague period, despite the difficulties related to the people in service, not spared from the disease .

The *Banchi Pubblici*, among other things, made available the hospitals connected to them, for the hospitalization of the sick belonging to their institution . They incurred expenses for the transport of plague victims to lazarets and for burial . They granted awards (salary advances and bonuses) to their employees for their extraordinary work, even in the place of their deceased colleagues, and for the risk they ran . The *Monte della Pietà* undertook to pay a weekly subsidy of 500 ducats to the hospital of San Gennaro<sup>2 3 4 5 6</sup>. Institutions suffered significant losses, both due to the reduction in banking transactions and to the failure to collect income from real estate<sup>7</sup>, some of which were covered by inheritance legacies<sup>8 9</sup>.

Even *Pio Monte della Misericordia* was affected by the infection and counted the loss of numerous confreres, in fact the financial statements drawn up every six months were prepared annually, after appointing the new governors. During the same period, the institute provided relief to people in need. Precisely the *Monte* allocated 11 493 ducats (corresponding to more than 50% of the total outputs of the period March 1656 - February 1657) for alms to the poor of the city and its villages. About 4 593 ducats derived from donations made in favor

<sup>1</sup> For further information I. Fusco, *Peste, demografia e fiscalità nel Regno di Napoli del XVII secolo*, cit., cap. 6-7

<sup>2</sup> Before the plague there were 206 *Banchi pubblici* officers, after which there were only 70, (E. Nappi, in *Aspetti della società e dell'economia napoletana durante la peste*, dai documenti dell'Archivio storico del Banco di Napoli, cit., p.29

<sup>3</sup> ASBN, Banco di Sant'Eligio, apodissario, giornale copiapolizze del 1656, matr. 303; Banco dell'Annunziata, apodissario, giornali copiapolizze del 1656, matr. 316-317

<sup>4</sup> ASBN., Banco della Pietà, apodissario, giornale copiapolizze del 1657, matr. 462

<sup>5</sup> ABN, Banco dei Poveri, apodissario, giornale copiapolizze del 1656, matr. 328; Banco del Salvatore, apodissario, giornale copiapolizze del 1657, matr. 66; Banco dell'Annunziata, apodissario, giornale copiapolizze del 1656, matr. 317.

<sup>6</sup> ASBN, Banco della Pietà, apodissario, giornale copiapolizze del 1656, matr. 454

<sup>7</sup> ASBN, Banco di Sant'Eligio, apodissario, giornale copiapolizze del 1657, matr. 305

<sup>8</sup> ASBN, Banco della Pietà, patrimoniale, libro delle conclusioni del 1658, matr. 246, p. 162

<sup>9</sup> Archivio Storico del *Pio Monte della Misericordia* di Napoli, cat. H Governo del Monte, rubr. d<sub>1</sub> - Governatori, Declaratorie vol. 2 (Hd<sub>1</sub>/2), pp. 277-283

of Monte, with the specific aim of allocating them to the poor sick of the infection. Among the names of those who made these donations, the Viceroy (2400 ducats) and that of Cardinal Filomarino archbishop of Naples stand out.

### 3. Spanish flu: origins of the first great pandemic

Over the years, epidemiologists and virologists have made several hypotheses about the origins of the pandemic flu of 1918-1919. According to a first theory, the virus was generated in the overcrowded training camps of the American army, scattered throughout the United States. Another hypothesis is that of Asian origin, based on scientific conjectures and, above all, atavistic stereotypes, which identified the East with the place of origin of the main epidemics spread in history. The theory had a wide circulation thanks to German propaganda and the erroneous association of pandemic flu with bubonic plague, present in limited areas of China, from where, according to the scholar Mask Osborne Humphries, the disease would have spread to the rest of the globe carried by Chinese workers sent to France to work in the rear of the western front. In order to reach Europe, immigrants crossed Canada, where, from the Canadian archives, it emerged that 3000 Chinese workers were hospitalized for parainfluenza symptoms<sup>1</sup>. The third hypothesis dates back to 1918, when some medical circles assumed a correlation between war and the virus. In fact, the poor sanitary conditions of the trenches and military quarters had favored the onset of infectious diseases<sup>2</sup>.

The influence was indicated by different names in the various countries and at the various times of its development. Names, sometimes exotic, that evoke expressions and testimonies of cultures of wars and tense colonial relations or even the fluctuating and deceptive course of the disease: the "fashionable disease", the "stranger", the "cursed". In France it was initially referred to as "Parma fever"; "Flanders fever" in England; "Bolshevik disease" in Poland. In Spain, however, it was called "soldier of Naples"<sup>3</sup>. But the general conditions imposed by the world war would have indissolubly and forever associated the name of Spain, and not that of Naples, with the pandemic. In fact, the reason why that terrible epidemic was identified with Spain stems from the censorship made in many countries during the First World War. The governments of the belligerent nations, fearing that panic would spread among the population, tried in every way not to spread the news of the pandemic. The first information leaked from Spain - which was neutral and therefore uncontrolled in the press - and pushed the other countries to believe that it was limited to Spain alone, where, however, both the Prime

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. D. Patterson - G. Pyle, *The Geography and Mortality of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic*, in *^Bulletin of the history of Medicine*», Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1/1991; A. Rasmussen, *Spanish flu*, in J. Winter (edited by), *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, Vol. III: *Civil Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014; K. Jones, *The Forgotten Pandemic: A short history of the 1918-1919 Influenza outbreak and the effect on*

*Kalamazoo and Western State Normal School, Honors Theses, Western Michigan University, 2013; M. Humphries, Paths of infections: the First World War and the origins of the Influenza Pandemic*, in *«War History»*, 21/2013, pp. 5581.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. H. Phillips, *Influenza Pandemic, in 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, edited by D. Ute, P. Gatrell, O. Janz, H. Jones, J. Keene, A. Kramer and B. Nasson, Berlin, Freie Universitat Berlin, 2014-10-08, doi: 10.15463/ie1418.10148, p. 11; L. van Bergen, *Military Medicine*, in J. Winter (edited by), *The Cambridge History of the first World War*, Vol. III, cit. pp. 300-301.

<sup>3</sup> At that time in Madrid the most famous show was *La cancion del olvido* (The song of oblivion) which contained a hit song: the Neapolitan soldier (F. Cutolo, *L'influenza spagnola del 1918-1919. La dimensione globale, il quadro nazionale e un caso locale*, Pistoia, I.S.R.Pt, 2020)

Minister and King Alfonso XIII fell ill. Before and after 1918, most flu pandemics developed in Asia and spread from there to the rest of the world. But the Spanish arrived almost simultaneously in Europe, Asia and North America and that makes it difficult to accurately establish the geographical origin of the virus. Historical and epidemiologic data are inadequate to identify the geographic origin of the virus, and recent phylogenetic analysis of the 1918 viral genome does not place the virus in any geographic context<sup>1</sup>.

Regardless of its origin, however, the Spanish flu can be considered the first truly "global" disease in history, second only, perhaps, in terms of number of victims, to the terrifying epidemic of black plague of the fourteenth century, and infected between 1918 and 1919 a billion men, killing twenty-one million worldwide, according to the most cautious estimates<sup>2</sup>. At first the symptoms of the disease were the same as those of a common flu: sore throat, headache, fever. But in many cases complications such as bacterial pneumonia in acute form occurred, the patients quickly developed breathing difficulties and pains arose in most of the body. Drowsiness and numbness followed, with very high fever, weak pulse, white tongue, headache. About half of the deaths occurred in the age group between twenty and forty years old. The disease spread quickly and the prevention and treatment medical countermeasures proved to be mostly imaginative, as well as vain: gargling with quinine, nebulization chambers where up to twenty people at a time inhaled formalin or zinc sulphate. It was, in general, a bad time for science, which could not find any remedy and realized that it did not have any tool to identify and neutralize the invisible agent of the disease. The reasons for such a frightening mortality - Spinney explains - were certainly multiple. To the particular virulence of the virus were added elements such as the concomitance with the Pfeiffer bacillus, the malnutrition present for years in the populations of the warring countries, the lack of antibiotics for pulmonary complications and the precarious sanitation of the soldiers in the war<sup>3</sup>. Some authors believe that the Spanish flu was a direct consequence of the war and that the conflict represented the real incubator of the virus. Influenza, in fact, was born in military camps, where men and animals were in close proximity. Most authors claim a close connection between the flu and the conflict, though the conflict was not necessarily the primary cause.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. Tognotti, *La "spagnola" in Italia. Storia dell'influenza che fece temere la fine del mondo (1918-1919)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, (I ed. 2020) 2015; P. Giovannini, *Le malattie del corpo e della mente*, in «Annali della Fondazione Ugo La Malfa. Storia e politica», XXVIII (2013), 2014, pp. 283-300; Id., *L'influenza spagnola. Controllo istituzionale e reazioni popolari (1918-1919)*, in A. Pastore - P. Sorcinelli (ed.), *Sanità e società*, vol. II, Udine, Casamassima, 1987, pp. 373-397; Id., *L'influenza "spagnola" in Italia (1918-1919)*, in F. Magni - A. Stederini - L. Zani (ed.), *La grande guerra e il fronte interno. Studi in onore di George Mosse*, Camerino, Università degli Studi di Camerino, 1998, pp. 123-141; J.K. Taubenberger. D.M. Morens, 1918 Influenza: the Mother of All Pandemics, in «Emerging Infectious Disease», 2006, vol.12, n. 1, pp. 15-22.

<sup>2</sup> The most recent sources are discordant. Some claim 25, others 50 million, still speculate 100 million. Cf. W. Beveridge, *L'influenza. L'ultimo grande flagello*, Roma 1982; N.P.A.S. Hohnson, J. Mueller, *Updating the accounts: global mortality of the 1918-1920 "Spanish" influenza pandemic* in «Bulletin of History of Medicine», 2002, n. 76, pp. 105-115.

<sup>3</sup> As Spinney argues, the pandemic has in fact reconfigured the human population more radically than any other event following the black plague: it influenced the course of the First World War and, probably, contributed to the outbreak of the Second; has brought India closer to independence and South Africa apartheid, has stimulated the growth of national health care and alternative medicine, the love of outdoor activities and the passion for sport and is partly responsible of the obsession of 20th century artists with the infinite fragility of the human body (Cf. L. Spinney, 1918, *l'influenza spagnola. La pandemia che cambiò il mondo*, Marsilio, Venice, 2018).

The relationship between influenza and war, instead, maybe should be sought in the rapidity of the virus' transmission and its global spread. These aspects would have been determined by the crowded conditions in the trenches and in hospitals and, of course, by the long-distance displacements of large masses of soldiers and

workers<sup>1</sup>.

As in many countries of the world, in Italy the flu epidemic experienced three waves: the first coinciding with the spring of 1918, the second with autumn and the third between the winter of that year and the first months of 1919. In the Peninsula, however, the first two waves corresponded to two other crucial moments of the First World War; the offensive on the Piave in mid-June and the battle of Vittorio Veneto in late October, right at the most difficult time of the epidemic in many large cities. This circumstance certainly contributed to determine its particular diffusion and gravity with respect to other European countries that were affected by it in the same period<sup>2</sup>.

Furthermore, the pathological vulnerability of civilian populations was further increased by the geographical position of Italy, a real stretched bridge over the sea between the different fronts. The Mediterranean, a crossroads of the "pests" from the Middle Ages to the early modern age, became an epidemic sea with the Great War at the beginning of the twentieth century by virtue of the movements of men, armaments and means of the allied armies, which operated in the Near East. Of course, the transition from peace to war had not been easy in any of the belligerent countries, but in Italy it had taken on particular characteristics given the lack of connection between civil and military health, hitherto caged in a different organization and in a health bureaucracy « dependent on a dual and jealous ministerial authority, educated even in a different school, oriented towards a different ideal and destiny»<sup>3</sup>.

#### **4. Economic impact and social consequences of the Spanish influenza pandemic**

The pandemic had major consequences and it killed a number of famous people, including the sociologist Max Weber, the artist Gustav Klimt, the poet and writer Guillaume Apollinaire or the US President Wilson, who took the influence of the third wave and weakened considerably in the decisive weeks for the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles, so as to induce some scholars to even establish a correlation between the effects of the disease and the terrible peace that laid the foundations for the new wars. As for the economic and social consequences, similarly to other plagues of liberal Italy, the disease was considered a disease of a social nature: it was the subordinate classes that suffered from serious health shortages, living in overcrowded neighborhoods or in rural areas lacking services Toilet. The authorities and publicists tried to attribute the disease to the conduct of the victims, stigmatizing those behaviors deemed transgressive: it was a phenomenon that also occurred on the occasion of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. P.W. Ewald, *Evolution of Infection Disease*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> E. Tognotti, *La "spagnola" in Italia*.

<sup>3</sup> It was only the very serious dangers of cholera, typhoid and other diseases during the battles on the Isonzo front, between the end of 1915 and the spring of 1916, which prompted, a few months after entering the war, a first form of coordination between civil and military health: the health organization established at the time made use of a mixed health commission and branches concerning war zones, prisoners and those coming from the East, an ancient outbreak of plague (M. Pietravalle, *Per un ministero della Sanita e dell'assistenza pubblica in Italia*, in «Nuova Antologia», march-april 1919, vol. CC, pp. 103-117; Cf. Ministero dell'Interno, *Direzione Generate della Sanita Pubblica, Atti Amministrativi (1910-20)*, bb. 178 bis, 179, in E. Tognotti, *La "Spagnola" in Italia*.

cholera epidemics during the nineteenth century.

The pandemic, therefore, can be considered as a biological and social phenomenon, inseparable from the historical, geographical and cultural context. Therefore it is interesting to trace the evolution and dynamics of the epidemic in a country like Italy, particularly from a geographical point of view, stretching from Europe to the center of the Mediterranean, and diversified from a socio-economic point of view. While looking to the past and focusing attention on Southern Italy, therefore, it is important to make an all-round reflection on a topic of great relevance and of global interest. Several studies have found a link between social distrust and the economic crisis with devastating consequences for the economy of the time. The Spanish influence and its consequences in terms of social disintegration and generalized mistrust have had permanent consequences on individual behavior in terms of lower social trust. This loss of social confidence has limited economic growth for many decades to follow. In essence, therefore, the consequences made themselves felt for many years after the pandemic ended.

Both health services and governments proved ineffective, communication errors, also due to the post-war context, did not allow the message of social distancing to be efficiently delivered, not to mention the climate of suspicion that determined the distrust of the population. Attention is therefore placed on the errors made at the time during the two years in which the Spanish woman raged throughout the world, management errors that led to a long crisis. But in addition to the ideological censorship of the interventionist press and of politics, which also feared the demoralization of an army committed to the epilogue of the conflict and was therefore always ready to brand any negative news as a defeatist, there was the embarrassed self-censorship of the medical class, which it came out of the golden season of the great microbiological discoveries of the late nineteenth and early century. In the following years, the shadow of the collective memory of the great war and of what followed, and the lack of interest of great writers and journalists who knew how to give the Spanish influence the sinister sound of a pestilence, ended up confining the memory of the 1918 pandemic in the private of family stories.

Today the Spanish flu is rightly considered among the most terrible pandemics in the history of humanity, causing alterations mainly of individual behavior, but at the same time it must be considered, among the great epidemics of the past, a sort of exception as its consequences on behaviors were relatively limited, probably due to the ongoing war, as well as the censorship and the particular psychological condition that ensued. It is also true, however, that as regards Italy and in particular the South, the extent of the pandemic can only be understood by restoring the complexity of the consequences, the correlations with the conflict and its tragic demographic, social and cultural consequences. From the repercussions on the functioning of the state machine, with its repercussions on production activities and essential services, to the disruption of the daily life of the internal front due to the spread of contagion; by the conflicts between military and civil authorities on emergency management, with the priority of protecting the army exercised on the assistance of civilians; by the communication strategies of the authorities and the interventionist press, which sought to reassure the population by minimizing and censoring the seriousness of the situation, the behavior and reactions of the population, which manifested a growing mistrust for the work of the authorities<sup>1</sup>. At the end of the twentieth century, Eric J. Hobsbawm wrote: "The indications that the world of the 21st

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E. Tognotti, *Il mostro asiatico. Storia del colera in Italia*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2000, p. XI, 119

century will be better are not negligible. If the world manages not to destroy itself, the favorable odds are very strong". The world appeared transformed by the titanic technical-scientific process of the development of capitalism, which had dominated the past two or three centuries. The future cannot be a continuation of the past and the signs of an impending historical crisis were now evident. As J. Schumpeter observed regarding the cyclical fluctuations of the capitalist economy, "they are not like the tonsils, something that can be treated separately from the rest, but are, like heartbeat, the essence of the organism that manifested"<sup>1 2</sup>. On the eve of the third millennium, the forces generated by the technical-scientific economy were now large enough to destroy the environment, that is, the material basis of human life. The short century was a century of world wars, led by the great powers and their allies in scenarios of mass destruction, culminating in the possible nuclear holocaust, which was fortunately avoided. The decades of crisis have demonstrated the limits of the various golden age policies, but without producing convincing alternatives. They revealed that the institutions had lost control over the effects of collective human actions. The two main problems on the eve of the third millennium were the demographic and the ecological problems. It was clear that a rate of economic growth such as that of the second half of the short century would have produced irreversible catastrophic consequences for the natural environment of the planet, including the human race that is part of it. It was clear that it would not destroy the planet, but it certainly would alter the type of life in the biosphere. Furthermore, modern technology would have so dramatically increased the ability of our species to transform the environment that the time available to solve the problem should not have been calculated in centuries, but in decades. The other problem was that of keeping a world population stable or, more likely, a world population oscillating around a certain quota with a slight tendency towards growth or decrease. It was evident that the movements of the world population would increase the imbalances between the different regions. On the whole, as had happened in the short century, the rich and developed countries would have been the first in which the population would have stabilized. Surrounded by poor countries with numerous young people who would have demanded modest jobs in developed countries, however sufficient to enrich a person for the standard of living of Morocco, for example, rich countries with an increasingly older population and few children would have had to choose between allow for massive immigration, which would have led to major political problems within; barricade themselves against the immigrants they would need for some activities or find some other solution. The most likely would have been to allow temporary conditional immigration, which did not give foreigners the political and social rights of citizenship, but which would have led to an informal tolerance of immigrants who, for their part, would have made no claims against the host country, because they would have considered it simply as a place to earn money from time to time, basically remaining tied to their homeland. Transport and communications at the end of the twentieth century, as well as a huge gap between skillful earnings in rich countries in poor countries, made this kind of double existence possible more than in the past<sup>3</sup>. Certainly, in this context, it would have been difficult to predict the Covid-19 pandemic. Between the end of 2019 and the first days of 2020, the coronavirus spread to China, in the province of Hubei. The severe containment measures introduced by the Chinese authorities (isolation of large areas of the country, restrictions on mobility, interruption of

<sup>1</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Il secolo breve. 1914-1991 ;l'era dei grandi cataclismi*, Milan, Rizzoli, 1994, p.674.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. J. Schumpeter, *Business Cycles*, New York-London, 1939.

<sup>3</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Il secolo breve. 1914-1991 ;l'era dei grandi cataclismi*, cit., pp. 650 et seq.

numerous production activities, an obligation to quarantine for infected people) have proven overall effective in combating the extension of the contagion, but have had a strong impact on economic activity. The epidemic spread quickly to neighboring regions of China, mainly South Korea and Japan, and to western countries, first in Italy and other European countries, later in the United States. The impact of the pandemic on world growth, difficult to quantify given the uncertainty about the duration and extent of the infection, will likely be very significant. The estimates on macroeconomic projections have been repeatedly revised downwards, prefiguring a global recession, accompanied by a slowdown in the dynamics of GDP, by a fall in employment and industrial production. In the latest report on the state of the global economy, drawn up by the World Bank, it is estimated that this pandemic may trigger the worst recession that the world economy has ever experienced and is likely to favor a dramatic increase in poverty levels. Experts took into account the economic situation of 183 countries and it turned out that 90% will experience a considerable drop in GDP. The data collected speak of an average reduction of about 5.2%: more than double compared to the financial crisis of 2008 and among the worst since the Second World War onwards. The decline in global GDP in 2020 will be exacerbated by commercial, production, financial and investment connections between countries. In 2021 the recovery will be partial. Foreign trade is most affected (-12% in 2020), due to the limitations on the movement of people, goods and services, the new US-China trade tensions and high geoeconomic uncertainty. Furthermore, the subsequent rise will be held back by the weakness of world demand<sup>1 2</sup>. A particular aspect of trade makes the effect of the crisis more serious and worries observers. For at least twenty years the weight and role of global value chains in world markets has grown. According to a recent World Bank report, today most of the exchange flows between countries take place within the global value chains (or Global Value Chains, GVCs), i.e. it is generated by production processes that cross country borders and involve in the production chain of goods, especially complex ones, specialized companies located in even distant areas. The role of these global value chains in this crisis appears crucial. According to some observers, this international production organization has created a fragile economic system that is more exposed to international shocks. The risk of an interruption of the supply of the inputs necessary for production is greater in a very geographically dispersed production chain. Furthermore, the presence of these production chains can amplify the transmission of shocks according to the so-called "whip effect". In the presence of a negative shock that affects many economically connected countries almost simultaneously, the slowdown in the production of an economic system supplying essential production inputs is transmitted to the downstream connected systems, reducing their production capacity, adding a further negative squeeze to the local slowdown of production (which may be due to local factors of both supply and demand), and thus amplifying the shock. The areas in which the spread of the epidemic was greater are closely linked by the GVCs in many crucial sectors, from textiles-clothing to consumer electronics. For this shock-amplifying effect, the forecasts for the global economy and international trade are more negative than in any other crisis of the past .

However, developing countries and emerging economies will suffer most from this situation: there will be poorer people and the closure of schools and the difficulty of accessing basic

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<sup>1</sup> Elaborations of the Centro Studi Confindustria on Thomson Reuters data, FMI..

<sup>2</sup> World Bank, World Development Report 2020, in L. Tajoli, La crisi globale da Covid-19 e le ripercussioni sul commercio internazionale e sulle catene globali del valore, School of Management Politecnico di Milano.

health care will have repercussions, in the long run, also on capital development human. The social distancing measures that led to the closure of businesses and services will impact demand and supply levels, trade and financial assets, which are expected to decrease by 3.6% per capita income and millions of people may have to live in conditions of extreme poverty .

The Monetary Fund estimates that the world economy will enter a more severe recession than that of 2008-2009, when the collapse of GDP was limited to 0.1%. The different entity of the two crises is linked to their profoundly different nature: while the 2009 crisis was a financial crisis, transferred to the real economy, the current crisis derives from the paralysis of very large areas of the real economy, aimed at preventing risk of contagion. Indeed, the crisis triggered by the pandemic presents three new elements compared to the financial crisis of 2008-2009. The first is constituted by the fact that the most affected countries are the most industrialized in the world which, together, represent more than half of the world's GDP, almost two thirds of the planetary manufacture and about 40 percent of international trade. The second is that the world economy was hit when manufacturing activity slowed, due to the worsening of restrictions on trade and growing uncertainty on a global level. The third element of novelty is that the current shock is affecting the service sector more than the industry, especially in the catering, entertainment and hospitality services.

The crisis that is developing in recent months is therefore potentially more disabling, because it is generated by the blockade of economic activity on several fronts, primarily that of services, and because it affects a large part of the countries of the world. According to the estimates contained in the WEO of April, 9 out of 10 countries of the IMF members will witness a contraction of their GDP for the current year: it is therefore, in all respects, a global crisis<sup>1 2 3</sup>.

## 6. The post-pandemic crisis in Italy

In Italy, already at the end of March 2020, the ISTAT monthly report showed a clear picture: a sharp reduction in demand and consumption spread not only in Italy but all over the world. Exports and imports had fallen by 16%, retail sales in Italy had fallen by 21%, and industrial production had fallen by 28%<sup>4</sup>. Many entrepreneurs, not only small, but also medium and large ones, have faced enormous difficulties, especially in the service sector, in particular in small shops and in the bar- restaurant-hotel chain, following the serious crisis in tourism and transport. Temporary forms of support and emergency liquidity provision were certainly essential to contain the closure of companies and the loss of jobs, but they were not sufficient. Micro entrepreneurs are undoubtedly important, they are the social fabric of many areas of Italy, especially in the South, and are the kindergarten from which larger companies are born, but the export of Made in Italy is not based on micro entrepreneurs, but on 44,050 industrial enterprises active for export with 10 or more employees. In 2017, in fact, the Italian industry exported 350 billion euros with 89.611 exporting companies and, among these, the 45.561 with less than 10 employees exported only 8 billion. The restart strategy, therefore, should focus on the 44 thousand large-scale exporting industrial enterprises, which have already driven our economy out of the 2008-2009 crisis. The Italian industrial export is the second

<sup>1</sup> Banca Mondiale, Rapporto sulle prospettive economiche globali, giugno 2020.

<sup>2</sup> R. Leoncini, Verso il post emergenza Covid 19: Business as usual o nuove opportunità?, n. 12/2020. Banca d'Italia, Bollettino economico, n. 2/2020.

<sup>3</sup> FMI, World Economic Outlook, april 2020.

<sup>4</sup> ISTAT, Nota mensile, april 2020.

largest in Europe after the German one and allows us to be among the top five countries in the world for the best manufacturing trade balance, with a surplus with foreign countries stably over 100 billion dollars. Thanks to the Industry 4.0 plan, our production system has grown more than that of Germany in recent years and has enormously increased its productivity, also diversifying into new sectors such as the pharmaceutical sector, where last year Italy registered the most strong growth both percentage (+ 26.3%) and absolute (+5.1 billion dollars) among the top 15 world exporters. Growth will be stronger the more the industry is put in a position to compete better. An infrastructure plan is needed to make the country and its economy run more, which together with manufacturing is also based on agriculture, tourism and the advanced tertiary sector, often interconnected. In the 1950s, the *Autostrada del Sole* Highway ran cars along the peninsula and was a symbol of the economic boom. Today, modern infrastructures are needed to make data, ideas, passengers and goods run. Fiber optic, high speed and high capacity, energy saving and green energy, fight against hydrogeological instability, anti-seismic and school building, research, innovation, technological platforms, technical schools and more mathematics, engineering and medicine in the education of young people: these must be the drivers of the restart, not the welfare. Along with a reform that can no longer be postponed and a complete digitalization, from North to South of the country<sup>1</sup>.

The fall in consumption could cause a chain of business failures more in southern Italy than in the north of the country. The companies located in the South, in fact, with some exceptions, are mainly small companies, frequently family-run, heavily dependent on bank credit and above all oriented to selling on the internal market.

Failures could increase the already high unemployment rate and accentuate migratory flows, especially of young people and above all of young people with high educational qualifications. It would therefore be necessary to find more resources to stimulate the southern economy by reducing the wide margins of uncertainty deriving from the ongoing epidemic. In particular, the *migration* of young people must be curbed and therefore the aging of the local population, which would lead to an increase in the propensity to save in the South more than it increases in the North, should be countered. This would lead to a more intense fall in consumption in the South and, given the productive structure of the companies located here and given the growing uncertainty, a fall in production and employment<sup>2</sup>. Could the solution be that, apparently utopian but susceptible to practical applications, of the so-called "partnership economy" formulated by James Meade?

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<sup>1</sup>M.Fortis, Una nuova autostrada del Sole per ridare slancio all'economia, in "Il Sole 24 ore", 2 June 2020.

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## Covid-19 and Inequality: A Gender Perspective

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### Abstract

My paper examines some aspects of the Covid19 pandemic in Italy from a gender perspective. I intend to highlight some important inequalities in the management and cohabitation during the pandemic that risk being otherwise hidden in the public discourse. I will focus in particular on two circumstances: public decisions about the pandemic and work-care balancing. As regards the first profile, I will focus on the composition of the committees appointed by the government for the management of the crisis and the effects that this composition had on the way to deal with the pandemic in our country. With regard to the second profile, working environment is certainly where inequalities have emerged most clearly, albeit in a different way. First of all, there were women who had to work during the emergency and had problems reconciling work and care role. Secondly, women who could / had to work from home had to deal with the lack of a distinction between workspace and care duties. On this point, the Italian State has taken very different measures from those of other countries, for example the decision not to reopen schools, which has penalised and will continue to penalise women's work. In this perspective, the work will investigate what other measures have been or will be adopted since the so-called third phase.

**Keywords:** covid, gender, Italy, public decisions, gender digital divide

### Introduction

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic has made clear the profound inequalities from which our society has been affected. Just think of the so-called digital divide (Rodotà,1995, 2006 Pietrangelo, 2009, Van Duk, 2020), which emerged in all its amplitude when access to the network became the only means of connection with the outside world, or the inequalities in access to the possibility of treatment, or the difference between those who were able to continue their work remotely and those who, suddenly, were cut off from that world, with the inevitable dramatic economic fallout. These inequalities must certainly be accompanied by the inequalities arising from gender, which have become even more marked at this difficult time.

On the basis of these premises, the work will examine the Italian situation, analysing in particular a) the role that women have played in public decisions regarding the emergency and b) the relationship between women and work. The analysis will compare the data relating to the situation of women in the period before the covid with those relating to the period of the pandemic and the so-called phase three, where Italy has now entered since the beginning of June. In this perspective, the solutions adopted by the Italian legislator and their impact on women's lives will be evaluated.

## **Women in public decision making: the case of the Colao task force**

As far as the first aspect is concerned, namely the presence of women in the places where decisions are taken, what is striking is the small number of women appointed to committees who have been called upon to manage the emergency and propose ideas for getting the country moving again. This is in line with what happens in many other countries (*Garikipati and Kambhampati, 2020*) where, as stated in a document published by the UN on 15 April 2020

"Women and girls - and women's networks and rights organizations - are not equally represented in local, national and global COVID-19 policy spaces and decision-making. The voices, expertise and experience of women are not being fully incorporated into global health security surveillance, detection, and prevention mechanisms. In terms of media, only one woman is quoted for every three men quoted in media coverage of the COVID-19 outbreak. In past health emergencies, gaps in participation of women in such spaces has led to corresponding gaps in responses to their specific experiences, situations, challenges and requirements. Examples from around the world suggests that this situation is no different. As noted, women represent more than 70% of the health workforce and are at the frontline of interaction with communities and caregiving, placing them in a prime position to identify outbreak trends and responses at the local level and effectively influence the design and implementation of prevention activities and community engagement".

Regarding Italy, the story of the so-called task force appointed by the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and chaired by Vittorio Colao is truly emblematic in this regard. The task force is a committee of experts on economic and social issues that has been assigned the task of developing and proposing measures necessary to deal with the emergency and for a gradual recovery in the various sectors of social, economic and productive activities starting from the so-called Phase 2.

In its initial composition the committee was composed of 16 members, only 4 of whom were women. In the face of this obvious lack of women in the group called upon to carry out the important task of 'rethinking the future of the country', and thus the lives of millions of women and men, the President of the Council was subjected to a crossfire of criticism.

The debate that has opened up in public opinion has had the effect of leading the President-in-Office of the Council to integrate the Commission with five other women and to motivate this choice precisely on the basis of the lack of consideration for women in his previous appointment.

This public assumption of responsibility had the "cascading" effect of imposing the integration of the equally important Scientific Technical Committee set up within the Civil Protection. Since the date of its creation, this Committee had been integrated several times "by experts in relation to specific needs, taking into account the crisis situation and in order to give continuity to emergency activities, also in view of the gradual recovery of social, economic and productive activities", but there was never felt the need to evaluate appointments also taking into account a gender perspective. What has just been mentioned, however, is hardly surprising when one considers the worrying lack of women in the places where public decisions are taken. This absence has been denounced in our country for years and has led to the adoption of various legislative measures and two important constitutional amendments which, however, have failed to really change things.

In this regard, it is worth remembering a few facts. In the last national elections, 231 out of 630 women were elected to the House and 112 out of 315 were elected to the Senate. They represent 31.7% of those elected to the House and 35.11% of those elected to the Senate. There is still an insufficient number of women, but this is already a major achievement if one only looks at the figures from previous legislatures. In the 17th legislature, for example, there were 197 women out of 630 deputies, while in the Senate there were 97 out of 315.

To these figures, broadening our perspective, we can add that in Italy, a woman has never been appointed Prime Minister. Only four women were elected Presidents of the House and Senate and it was only in 2019 that a woman was elected President of the Constitutional Court. These are disturbing numbers.

The exclusion of women from places of representation is a problem that clearly does not only affect women, but more generally represents a vulnus for democracy, for its effectiveness, because we are witnessing the exclusion of some citizens from places where decisions are taken. That is despite the fact that Article 51 of the Italian Constitution provides for equal access to elected office and public employment. In particular, the right to stand for election was introduced into the Constitution with a formula that expressly states that "all citizens, men and women, may be elected" to avoid that the constitutional provision could be interpreted as excluding women from the enjoyment of political rights, as had happened in the past. In Italy, in fact, the right of active and passive electorate was granted to women only in 1946. In particular, women were able to vote and be elected to the Constituent Assembly on June 2, 1946.

As has already been mentioned, however, the constitutional provision has not prevented a real under-representation of women in politics in Italy.

To deal with this exclusion, measures (positive actions) aimed at rebalancing the gender balance in political representation have been introduced since the 1990s. These actions did not take the form of quotas, but simply aimed to ensure that men and women had equal access to elected office. In addition, two important constitutional amendments were approved which required the adoption of such measures by both the state legislator and the regional legislator. In accordance with this constitutional provision, the recent electoral law No 165 of 2017 provides for various measures aimed at rebalancing the gender balance in political representation.

As the case of appointments to Coronavirus Task Forces shows, however, the issue of inequality re-emerges when it comes to acts of appointment, political acts in respect of which legal criteria cannot be invoked when the choice is made (*Equilibri di genere e procedure di nomina. Tero report intermedi, 2020*)

From this point of view, however, the Italian Constitutional Court has specified that, if it is true that there are spaces reserved for political choice, nevertheless, they find their boundaries in the legal principles set by the system, both at constitutional and legislative level; and when the legislator predetermines canons of legality, politics must adhere to them, in compliance with the fundamental principles of the rule of law". Because, inasmuch as the scope of the extension of discretionary power, even the very broad one that characterizes a government action, is circumscribed by constraints set by legal norms that mark its boundaries or direct its exercise, respect for such constraints constitutes a requirement of legitimacy and validity of the act, which can be syndicated in the appropriate forums".

The low number of women who make up the bodies of the State is a worrying phenomenon, as demonstrated by an incident that occurred in 2018. In that year, on the occasion of the renewal of the members of the Superior Council of the Magistracy, the self-governing body of the judiciary, and other organs of guarantee of the judiciary, Parliament elected 21 men out of 21 posts. To censor the exclusion of women, a group of constitutionalists sent a letter to the Presidents of the two Houses denouncing the lack of transparency in the proceedings and in particular the absence of a procedure for submitting nominations before voting. This procedure would have made the choices of the parties and the violation of Article 51 of the Constitution visible to the public.

### **Women and smart working**

As far as the second profile is concerned, the working environment is certainly the one in which inequalities have emerged most clearly, confirming what statistics and doctrine have long stressed. That is to say, the world of work remains a place where inequality between women and men in terms of salary received, equal work done and the possibility of reaching top positions is still evident.

The pandemic also confirmed that talking about gender inequality can be misleading. Women, despite having many common problems, are also profoundly different from each other and cannot be taken into account as a unitary category (Butler, 1999). In this sense, the pandemic has also affected in a very different way women who have had to continue working outside the home (cashiers, nurses, doctors, sweepers...), women who do not work, women who could (or should) continue working remotely and domestic workers (Staiano, 2020).

As far as the former are concerned, the problem was to reconcile work outside the home with the role of caregiver, the difficulty of being able to use external people for help and the concern for the health and well-being of their loved ones. In Italy, domestic work was banned from 13 March to 4 May. In this case, the role of care was carried out by husbands or companions, where they were present, also because the Government banned visits to relatives and therefore it was not possible to have recourse to the help of grandparents. In Italy, traditionally, they play an important role in supporting families with young children. A 2019 ISTAT survey reveals that in a family where both parents are workers, 60.4% entrust children under two years of age to their grandparents. In this pandemic, the important role of grandparents has disappeared.

Non-working women, like everyone else, have seen an increase in domestic work, from caring for the home to confined children at home. While women who were able to take advantage of the so-called smart working have experienced the difficulty of reconciling work with the increased role of care, in the impossibility of being able to separate private and public space.

Finally, as far as domestic workers are concerned, the impossibility of being able to carry out their work has dramatically put their very survival at risk. In this regard, it is important to remember that these people very often work illegally and that, in any case, in the economic measures adopted by the Italian Government to deal with the emergency these women workers have been guilty of being forgotten. Their condition was taken into consideration by the Government only after the other working categories.

In this work, the situation of women who have worked in smart-working will be examined in particular.

In this regard, the advertising of the immune app, chosen by the Italian Government to carry out the contact tracing, has aroused a huge controversy because of the gender stereotype it conveyed. The advertisement showed an apartment divided in two. In one room there was a woman with a child in her arms and in the other a man working on a computer. This advertisement, if on the one hand it photographed a dramatically true image of the family life of many women in Italy and around the world (gender digital divided), on the other hand it did not represent the reality as true as the women who have to reconcile work with their role of care.

In this sense, the app image should have shown a woman working at the computer with a baby in her arms! For many women, in fact, the problem in this period has been that of reconciling work and care tasks that are still conceived as typically feminine.

As was also underlined by the already mentioned document published by the UN on 15 April 2020:

[...] closure of schools and day-care centres has a differential impact on women parents or guardians, who will often be expected to take on additional caregiving responsibilities due to discriminatory gender norms, further restricting their work and economic opportunities. In previous health emergencies, such as the Zika outbreak, the amount of unpaid work carried by women increased exponentially.

In order to face this problem, the Italian Government has foreseen two different instruments: the extension of the extraordinary parental leave and the so-called baby sitter bonus. The first instrument consists in the possibility of enjoying a period of 30 days of leave in addition to ordinary leave for a period between March 5 and July 30, receiving a salary equal to 50% of salary in the case of children up to 12 years of age. In the case of children between 12 and 16 years of age, the leave is granted to the worker but is not paid.

The second measure provides, instead, the possibility of receiving a bonus to pay for babysitting services up to a maximum of 600 euros, 1000 for nurses, doctors and other workers in the security sector. The sum has been doubled by the subsequent relaunch decree and has been increased up to 2000 euros for doctors, nurses and workers in the security, defence and public aid sectors employed to deal with the Covid-19 emergency.

Evidently, the measures are very different. The first, although it is aimed at mothers and fathers alike, is intended to be used in particular by women, who usually receive a lower salary. In this way, in fact, the reduction to 30% of the salary will have a smaller impact on the overall family budget.

The second, on the contrary, seems to be really neutral by not penalising the work of mothers differently from that of fathers.

In the summer period, the bonus can be used to cover the costs of the summer centres and can be allocated to grandparents, not living together, who take care of keeping grandchildren instead of babysitters (see INPS no. 73 of 2020).

The latter is really a novelty to be welcomed, because for the first time it is an express recognition of the care work done by grandparents, which in Italy is a very important aid for families.

The pandemic has certainly contributed to this activity of support for families carried out by grandparents, which has prevented contact between grandparents and grandchildren for many months and, as already mentioned, has represented a big problem for many families.

Against the background of these measures, there is the great question of the reopening of schools which, it is good to clarify right away, should not be reopened because they are the place where parents leave their children while they are at work, but they are the place where children grow up and develop their skills.

For this reason, correctly, the debate on the reopening of schools should be kept separate from that of its possible impact on the work of women/mothers. The big issue of reopening schools is not, and should not be, confused with a gender issue. The Government must commit to the safe reopening of schools for future generations and not to allow parents to work.

The closure of schools was a very fair measure at a time when the epidemic was at its peak, the news about the virus was still confusing and the contagion in Italy was very widespread, but at the current stage the political decision-maker should develop instruments that will allow a safe reopening in September. In Italy, on the other hand, the work to get schools back on track is proceeding very slowly and there is still no clear plan for a return to school. Also in this area, however, the emergency has made clear the deep inequalities among students and, as a result of the now well-known digital divide, has in fact produced the emergence of students belonging to the weaker sections of the population (Calvano, 2020, Zuddas, 2020)). As pointed out in the Istat report of 2020, Throughout the pandemic of 2020, in Italy it has been registered that among school children aged from 6 to 17 years old, many do not have access to an adequate IT equipment. The figures are worrying: 12.3% are without PC/tablet at home, whereas 57.0% share a pc/tablet with a member of their family. Only 6.1% have a personal computer. Moreover, in 2019, among 14-17 year old teenagers who have used the internet in the last 3 months, two out of 3 have low or basic digital skills while less than three out of 10 (equal to about 700 thousand kids) are at high levels. To these data we must add that more than a quarter of people live in conditions of overcrowding, the share rises to 41.9% among minors. The emergency linked to the spread of Covid-19 has highlighted the need to have sufficient space at home for those who live there and adequate computer equipment to allow students to follow lessons at a distance, those who work can continue to do so from home and those who want to relate with others, watch movies, find opportunities for leisure time.

Returning to women's smart working, the emergency seems to have made it clear how strong the inequalities are still strong and how far equality within the same family is still far away. Symptomatic, from this point of view, seems to be the figure relating to the significant reduction in the scientific production of female researchers in the covid period, which contrasts with the considerable increase in the production of male colleagues in the same period. In the light of these data, it seems that at the moment when the private sector became public, inequalities have once again become evident even in strata of the population that seem to be far removed from gender stereotypes (*Drew, Canavan, 2021*)

With regard to the research activity, it is interesting to note that the decree n. 18 of 17 March 2020 the cd. Cura Italia has expressly taken into consideration this working sector and the problems related to the closure of libraries and universities. In particular, the decree provided for the extension of the deadline for obtaining the national scientific qualification, which in Italy is necessary to hold the position of university professor, but did not take into account the

problems related to the conciliation between study and research and care activities, unlike the Gelmini Law of 2010, which provided for a different calculation criterion for the number of publications of female researchers, who had enjoyed periods of maternity leave, and their male colleagues.

## Conclusion

The analysis above makes it clear that the Coronavirus emergency has highlighted the profound inequalities between women and men who are still present in our society in terms of access to elected and non-elected public offices, access to the world of work, type of work done, salary and above all the role played within the family.

The emergence of private space has thus made the reasons for the inequalities in public space more strident and perhaps intelligible. In Italy, in particular, the pandemic has brought out the difficulties of a society that is not able to think back and that, despite all the battles, continues to perceive women, as explicitly written in Article 37 of the Italian Constitution in "its essential family function" that dangerously refers to an image of women linked to the role of care of the whole family (husband, children, parents ...).

Hence the difficulties of thinking of women in top positions within institutions and hence in an eternal vicious circle derives the inability of the political class (mostly composed of men) to imagine a society that is able to give more space to all, men and women, and that sees in diversity and education, especially of the youngest, the road to a future of change.

The Italian case shows, however, that adequate pressure from the media and public opinion can make a difference. While waiting for transparent nomination and selection procedures for candidatures, the story of the so-called task force Colao and the change in its composition shows that change also comes through the circulation of information in the media. Certainly it was a truly sensational case of exclusion at such a difficult time for the country. Public opinion is not always so vigilant, while the cases are really numerous. In this sense, we must welcome the recent election by Parliament of the members of the Guarantor of Privacy and that of the members of the Agcom which saw the election of 1 woman out of 4 members of the college to the Guarantor of Privacy and two women out of 4 members of the college to the Guarantor of Communications.

As far as the world of work is concerned, there still seems to be a long way to go, also because of some structural inequalities in our society we are still struggling to realize and, for this reason, we do not find the cultural tools, even before the legal ones, to fight them. In this case too, however, we should welcome a recent law passed by the Lazio region on 17 July 2020 which, for the first time, implemented a legislative decree in Italy aimed at transforming the school from 0 to 6 years. The law has, among other things, the important objective of reducing fees and, finally, making the service free. In this perspective, priority will be given to families in socio-economic distress, those with disabled children and foster children who rely on private individuals for lack of places available in the public. These services will be managed by the municipalities, which will also take care of fares and management costs for families. This is an important first step in the direction of a state that takes charge of the lives of parents and their children. The lack of services for families is one of the factors that makes Italy one of the lowest birth rates in Europe in European statistics.

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## Resilience: A "Psychosocial" Competency and Its Role in the Pathways of University Students in Intercultural Research (Pre and Post-COVID19)

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### Abstract

Rapid changes to the workplace, even more so after the pandemic, demand education in competencies different from strictly disciplinary competencies, competencies which allow the individual to deal with emergencies and which imply a renewal of professional and institutional identity, favoring restructuring, employability and professionalization focused on future needs. In this paper, the focus is on what the author describes as a "psychosocial competency" in light of her theory, or Resilience. Like resilience, this theory, the Three Dimensional Spiral of Sense, involves three interacting and self-sustained levels: micro (individual), meso (organizational) and macro (national). We present two studies in which the impact of Resilience was observed: a) on academic achievement for delayed students, associated with institutions that do little to promote resilience and b) its importance in the shared representations of university students with respect to the competencies necessary for facing new challenges in the workplace. This group was taking part in a bilateral exchange program in France. COVID-19 suddenly placed them in an emergency situation, which demanded flexibility and the ability to adapt (stranded, without financial or health resources and lacking psychosocial support). Both research studies refer to the Quality of university education as regards Achievement, Professionalization, Identity and Employability. Both reveal deficiencies in the education system in terms of coping with crises. The methodologies, respectively, were quantitative (bivariate and multivariate level) and qualitative (techniques: interview and hierarchical evocation). The results of both studies show: a) the relevant role of Resilience with respect to Achievement; b) the lack of development in this regard. Finally, with a view towards transfer and intervention, a proposal is made to create and/or improve resilience and other psychosocial competencies by means of agreed-upon psychosocial support programs.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** University, Internationalization, Identities, Professionalization, Employability, Resilience

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<sup>1</sup> PICTO Project 2016-0008. BID Loan. Argentina.

## 1. Introduction

Our own research, beginning in the 1990s, addresses factors linked with University Quality as it relates to the productive and scientific context. Currently, Quality and Evaluation of Quality have become the focus of the political-educational agenda. Interest was given to the analysis of factors that impact (both positively and negatively) the Achievement of university students (graduates, delayed students and dropouts) as well as, indirectly, the Quality of educational institutions and national innovation. Studies covered more than 20 incoming classes in 18 study programs at two national universities (Argentina). They were carried out from a *sui generis* systemic perspective that involves several psychosocial micro-theories and three levels – micro, meso and macro – observed self-sustainably (Aparicio 2005; 2012; 2015 a and b). The models included base variables as well as pedagogical-institutional, psychosocial, organizational and structural variables. We also worked with other populations (government workers, healthcare workers, teachers, students at various levels, judges, scientists, etc.)<sup>1</sup>.

This research had already demonstrated the importance of competencies – which two decades ago I called “social” and “collective” – both for Achievement and for coping with adversity. Socializing instances were deemed essential and socializing education required as these competencies are not innate, the context influences their “co-construction” together with the individual, feeding each other. The interactive perspective came together in a theory which I have called, in its latest version, The Three Dimensional Spiral of Sense (2015a, b). Twenty-five years have passed and in the last three years, the OECD has shown the impact of these competencies for the ten highest ranked countries as regards learning (OECD, 2017a and b; 2018 a, b, c, d; Agacisti, 2018). Nevertheless, the findings of a first study with *delayed* university students and a recent study with students participating in international exchanges continue to show that some of these competencies, which I now call “psychosocial” competencies, were not sufficiently developed; or at least students were not made aware of their importance for dealing with adversity. COVID-19 has suddenly presented us a difficult scenario: these competencies are developed at the middle and long term, yet emergencies do not wait. The results invite us to reflect upon and rethink the “new normal”. On the one hand, this will force us to reinvent ourselves, turning to creativity, entrepreneurship and critical thinking, and to rethink our life projects. On the other hand, it will teach us to resist and to face adversity with flexibility and without losing our balance, even when we live in “pathogenic” contexts.

Additionally, at the academic/professional level, this new world for which we are not prepared will have an impact on dropout rates<sup>2</sup>, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. These rates were already high in Argentina and Latin America (Aparicio, 1995; 2014)<sup>3</sup>. It is predicted that dropout rates will influence equity and equality of opportunities (Aparicio, 1973/1983) and

<sup>1</sup> The findings were presented in more than 200 publications and paved the way to a second doctorate at the Sorbonne (France) and to two opportunities to direct research in the European Union (HDR, field of Education and Organizational and Workplace Psychology).

<sup>2</sup> In Argentina, dropout rates are around 70%; in other countries of the region, the average dropout rate is close to 55%: Guatemala (82%), Uruguay (72%), Bolivia (73%), Brazil (59%), Chile (54%), Costa Rica (54%) and Mexico (53%). In countries like Spain, the US and Austria, the dropout rate is between 30 and 50%.

<sup>3</sup> A synthesis of English and Spanish literature on dropout can be found in Aparicio, 2020 (in press in Germany). Another synthesis can be found in UNESCO/IESALC (Higher Education Institute for Latin America and the Caribbean) (2020, post COVID-19) and Webinaire F. Pedró, June 2, 2020

quality of global life. Both students and professors alike will be affected by the elimination of jobs and demands for new professional profiles due to the abrupt advance of digitalization. This will be added to already high rates of dissatisfaction and burnout (Freudenberger, 1974; Aparicio offers synthesis based on empirical research: 2009 a and b; 2015 a, b and c). Faced with a structural crisis, the global stage will require new competencies co-constructed by individuals, the organizations of which they are a part and public policy.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 The notion of Resilience and its evolution: from a static concept to a dynamic and procedural concept

Resilience may be defined as the individual's capacity to react to and cope with adversities due to an adaptation process and in spite of risks and the adversities themselves. As we see it, all of these elements are essential as regards success and failure. We should clearly state that the ability to deal with pressure and lead a healthy life in an unhealthy environment *implies social and intrapsychic processes in which institutions and primary socializing instances play a fundamental role* (Puerta de Klinkert, 2002, Cirulnik, 2001, 2002, 2004). Resilience is, then, a personal and institutional construction, it is not innate. It is formed within a context. For this reason, it was included in our theoretical model and analyzed from our *sui generis* systemic approach. It is the *context* in which the *individual is inserted*, the factors that enhance or diminish the possibility of overcoming obstacles. In view of the "relative" failure of students who are delayed in their studies, two questions arise: Is a low level of resilience involved? Does the university community, with its dominant system of beliefs and values, influence the probability of being successful? Without understanding the situation based on empirical data, it is quite difficult to make changes at the level of intervention.

The concept of resilience is not new. It was first used in metallurgy and engineering to describe the ability that certain materials have of restoring themselves to their original shape after being subjected to distorting pressure (Royal Spanish Academy, *Salvat Encyclopedia of Science and Technology*, 1964). Dyer et al. (1996) define as it the flexible or elastic quality of a substance.

In positive psychology, the notion of resilience appears in the 1960s, and even more so in the 1970s and 1980s<sup>1</sup>. At the beginning, in early psychiatric literature, Anthony (1974) made no distinction between Resilience and Resistance, confusing "invulnerable" and "invincible" with resilient. Later, the longitudinal studies of Werner & Smith (1982), carried out with multiracial groups (exposed to risks in Hawaii), were decisive for establishing the differences between the two concepts<sup>2</sup>.

Briefly, the concepts of invulnerability and invincibility – referring to "fixed" or "static" qualities – lost ground in favor of resilience, which is a dynamic notion that implies a process.

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<sup>1</sup> In Spanish, the concept is introduced later, between 2001 and 2005 (Aparicio, 2007 a; 2009 b; Grotberg, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Dyer & Minton McGuinness explain the longitudinal study of Werner & Smith (1982), carried out with a group of 698 children born in 1955 in Hawaii. Several families lived in poverty and their members had different mental and physical abilities. Researchers combined biological, social and psychological factors considered predicative of vulnerability and invulnerability when faced with serious problems. They observed that the "invulnerable" youth that had suffered shorter separations from their mothers during their first year of life were active and socially receptive and reached development milestones.

Moreover, the authors discover protecting factors: self-esteem, Independence, connections, initiative and critical thinking – factors considered pillars of resilience. They highlight the difference between physics and psychology. In physics, resilience refers to the ability to return to a state prior to changes applied by extreme forces. In psychology, on the other hand, the concept is broader as it does not involve returning to a previous state. It implies reconstruction of the psychic apparatus, with more efficient organization which is capable of facing the future after the impact of trauma (Lorenzo, 2010).

The dynamic perspective has as its “founding father” Michael Rutter (1985, 1991 and 1992; Rutter, MacDonald, Le Couteur, Harrington, Bolton & Bailey, 1991). From a psychological perspective, the author conceives of protecting factors not as being opposite of risk factors but rather the two form a dynamic that allows strengthening of the individual when faced with situations of adversity, respecting at all times personal characteristics.

Kotliarenco, Cáceres & Fontecilla (1997) describe the evolution of the concept of resilience in three stages. The first implies acceptance of a “positive adaptation” that “invulnerable” or “resistant” individuals have, that is, those who are capable of “resisting” adversity (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). As such, invulnerability is the first notion. It refers to people who seem to be strong and who do not yield to the pressures of stress and adversity.

Later, however, this concept was considered incorrect due to the fact that resistance to stress is relative. It is not stable over time, varying according to an individual’s stage of development and with circumstances. Moreover, the roots of resilience come both from the environment and the individual’s own constitution (Rutter, 1985; Klotiarenco et al. 1997).

For her part, Edith Grotberg (2003) defines Resilience as the interaction of factors at three levels: social support (I have), abilities (I can) and internal strength (Here I am and I have). The important element *is interaction*, with people always playing an active role in events and contexts. Barnard (1999) and Manciaux (2003) share the same perspective: resilience is a dynamic process.

The second stage consists of replacing the concept of invulnerability with that of resilience. The difference resides in the fact that resilience can be formed/consolidated while invulnerability is considered an intrinsic characteristic (Rutter, 1991).

## **2.2 Resilience as a “psychosocial” competency from a systemic perspective or a “sustained” co-construction between individuals and contexts**

Aparicio offers another vision in light of her theory. She analyzes resilience as a “psychosocial competency” within sustained macro-meso-micro-macro interplay. In its conception, we may not understand an individual outside of his immediate and mediate contexts, gaining feedback from a particular dialectic that implies spiral movement, with effects that may be both positive and negative (2005; 2007 a and b; 2009 a and b, 2015 a and b). This is very different from the hyperfunctionalist and deterministic spiral, as “each situation” deserves to be analyzed in its own time, in its own space and according to its own circumstances in dynamic interplay or self-sustained giving and taking of “individuals and their contexts”. From this notion comes the name of the author’s theory (cit. *supra*, 2005, 2012, 2015a and b). Her approach breaks with the genetic determinism of an individual, which presupposes an epistemological focus on the human being, influenced but not determined by his cultural context. It recognizes the potential individuals have for development. Nevertheless, this development may or may not be achieved, depending on the existence or lack of responsibility on the part of socializing

instances (family, peers, school, university), on the influence that the social and cultural contexts have and, fundamentally, on the richness of connections. Such influences, interacting with an individual's strengths, will allow him to adapt to adversity and successfully overcome risks and adversity.

### 2.3 Other concepts related to resilience

**-Ability:** defined as social ability or success in one activity (Becoña, 2006). This competency implies effectiveness of action (execution in the field). Masten (1999; 2001) argues that "competency" and "resilience" are two closely related constructions that form part of a more general adaptive construction.<sup>1</sup>

**-Positive adaptation:** Adapting means adjusting, that is to say it implies internal changes and changes in types of relationships (Lorenzo, 2010). But there is only resilient accommodation when there is positive accommodation.

**-Strength:** There is a difference between strength and resilience. Resilience takes into account adaptive and constructive behavior in the struggle to be successful in a given situation. Therefore, an individual who commits no social crime could be considered strong but not resilient (Novella, 2002).

**-Coping:** Lazarus & Folkman (1980) define coping as the cognitive and behavioral efforts made to improve specific external and internal demands that are evaluated beyond an individual's resources<sup>2</sup>.

The aspects which make Resilience stand out are: i) resilience always requires adaptive behavior from all sectors; ii) to have resilience, there must be an adverse or stressful situation. With coping, on the other hand, responses may or may not be adapted to daily events; iii) resilience requires effective adjustment strategies, that is efforts to maintain internal or external balance through activities related to thought and action. Individuals must adapt to stressful events and to do so must assess situations through the use of adjustment strategies (Manciaux et al, 2003).

As regards the topic at hand, and particularly as it relates to the **Research 2** group, which is currently facing the COVID-19 emergency and will later face the post-pandemic era, we can see that successful adjustment will require adaptive behavior in the realm of education, "organizations that learn", the health sector and social development in the face of enormous increases of poverty. It will be necessary to adapt to the structural changes that are already beginning to be seen (millions of jobs lost, among other aspects).

In this regard, we believe it is important to analyze the value given to resilience by university students and the degree to which it is present in their social representations as a competency to be reinforced for overcoming adversity. This is essential because these representations, which must be reviewed collectively, are followed by new models of action, concrete practice

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<sup>1</sup> Luthar (1993) highlights the fact that there is a difference between the two concepts: competency does not imply risk. Nevertheless, Perrenoud (2000) defines competency as the ability to mobilize a set of cognitive resources (knowledge, abilities, information, etc.) to face a family of situations pertinently and effectively. It means being able to transfer what was learned, to have autonomy in one's learning and to resolve problems. These personal/professional situations may imply risks.

<sup>2</sup> Establishing the differences goes beyond our objective here. In Research 1, both variables were measured with different techniques.

and action (Moscovici, 1961; Argyris, 1982). In other words, if resilience is not sufficiently valued, both at the individual level and at the institutional level, it will be more difficult to deal with the consequences of COVID-19. The findings that link Resilience to Achievement point in this direction (at the international level and from my own research).

### 3. Contributions of resilience at the university level

Traditionally, educational institutions have been concerned with detecting errors instead of identifying strengths. From our perspective, it is most important to concentrate on acquiring and developing abilities, skills and strengths, as opposed to focusing on weaknesses. And it is here that resilience can make enormous contributions. Findings from research carried out in countries at the top of the educational rankings prove this (Rutter, 1987; PISA / OECD, ops. cites).

Briefly, education plays a central role in developing resilience in children, adolescents and academics, helping them to deal with both academic and workplace difficulties (Melillo, Suarez & Rodríguez, 2004 and Coronado-Hijón, 2017). Pulgar Suaso (2010) affirms that a resilient student is committed and responsible, has more self-confidence and greater control over his future, tends to feel included and participates more in social networks. These characteristics impact success. Likewise, Goleman (1996) warns that emphasis placed on cognitive-technological models, as opposed to social skills in higher education, leads to the emergence of fear, insecurities, instability and lack of self-control. On the other hand, an institutional context which promotes resilience *among its students and ad intra* (among its teaching and administrative staff) acts to prevent crises. Multiple findings support this idea. However, Henderson & Milstein (2003), who have worked in formal educational environments, maintain that this has not been well-studied at educational institutions, and much less in higher education.

In the same vein, it is important both for individuals and for institutions themselves to incorporate programs that promote leadership, motivation, study habits, participation and responsibility. These were precisely the factors which were addressed in our research. Finally, the Delors Report (UNESCO, 1996) identified four pillars of education policy for quality: knowledge, know-how, good manners and learning to be. The first two correspond to traditional models, attempting to measure to justify results. The latter two, within which programs to consolidate resilience are inscribed, are becoming more and more important in contexts of globalization and emergency as they seek to promote social integration and the construction of citizenship.

### 4. Objectives and questions/hypotheses of our research

#### 4.1. Objectives

##### 4.1.1 General Objectives:

**Research 1 (DELAY):** to understand the factors (core, psychosocial, structural, pedagogical and institutional) associated with success at university and in particular the importance of resilience.

**Research 2 (IAM - INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC MOBILITY):** to observe the importance university students participating in academic exchanges give to resilience, both for their integration into a new culture and for facing the demands of a new working world.

##### 4.1.2 Specific Objectives:

**Research 1 (DELAY):** a) to determine the sociocultural and psychosocial factors which significantly influence delay in studies; b) to Identify the at-risk population and; c) to provide elements to the authorities of each institution with which to implement changes which will in turn contribute to achievement.

**Research 2 (IAM):** To observe the role that this group attributes to Resilience as it relates to the demands of the working world, with the rapid adaptation that it requires and the degree of adjustment to these demands/competencies that educational institutions must take into account.

## 4.2 Hypotheses

**Research 1 (DELAY):** Higher degrees of Resilience (RESIL) have a positive impact on University Achievement (UP) and on the chances of labor insertion.

**Research 2 (IAM):** in the social representations of students and/or professionals who participate in international academic exchanges, Resilience will be an important factor for adaptation: a) at the moment of entering into a different macro and organizational context and; b) when facing the future world of work and its demands.

## 3. Methodology

We used both quantitative and qualitative methodology.

### 3.1. Guiding questions

#### \* DELAY and IAM Group

1- Are there differences in representations of resilience between university students studying in Argentina and those who have chosen to participate in exchange programs in Europe? These exchanges would allow us to think that the IAM group has a certain ability to adapt.

2- What strength does Resilience have as a factor associated with academic and professional achievement in both groups? These questions seem naïve but the answers given have left us perplexed.

#### \* IAM Group Only:

3- What role do university students interviewed in Paris give to Resilience as it relates to the demands of the new **world of work**?

4- Do their social representations (evident in their responses) show the importance that Resilience will have when they are faced with the changes and innovation that the new world of work will demand post-COVID-19? (Gaglio, 2011; Alter, 1999; Alkrich, Latour & Callon, 2006)

5- Do they value being prepared for adjustments that will mean, more than ever, supporting and strengthening connections or, on the contrary, does its role appear diluted, revealing little awareness of the need for such preparedness?

We must point out that in this paper (IAM Group), we will not go into an analysis of all of the questions proposed in Research 2.

Keeping in mind our objective, to observe the importance Resilience has as regards the current demands of the world of work in addition to the essential aspects which define it, we have attempted to respond to the above questions.

The findings are presented in two instances, result of the application of the hierarchical evocation technique. Firstly, we observe what importance the IAM group gives to Resilience. Secondly, we observe the importance given to five aspects related to this competency: i) connections; ii) the ability to adapt to change; iii) its role as regards rapid adjustments; iv) problem-solving abilities and; v) flexibility.

Briefly, their responses reveal the awareness they have of the importance of this variable, an importance which will only increase due to the effects of the pandemic and the need to overcome adversity in the world of work. Likewise, their responses allow us to observe which competencies they believe must be strengthened (among professors and students) in light of abrupt changes and the need to quickly adjust.

Lastly, it is important to point out that we will analyze both the responses as well as the "silences", as "silences" as such do not exist. They speak for themselves of a lack of awareness, deficiency, lack of involvement and disinterest.

### 3.2. Sample groups

#### Research 1 (DELAY):

The sample group consisted of individuals at six Schools, including Philosophy and Literature (Educational Sciences), Economic Science (Accounting and Management), Political Science (Social Communication), Law, Medicine and Engineering (Civil, Industrial and Petroleum Engineering), at the National University of Cuyo (1985 – 2004). They were interviewed at home. These individuals had enrolled at the university starting in 1985 and reenrolled in 2004 but are not currently attending courses; they are ghost students. Out of 1880 individuals identified in institutional listings, the number of students interviewed (students we were able to locate) was N=229.

#### Research 2 (IAM):

The sample group consisted of university students participating in academic or business exchange programs starting in 2018 in Paris (Cité internationale). We worked with several classes of students (2002-2003, 2013-2014 and 2018-2019) (descriptive/percentage quantitative level) and at the qualitative level (2018-2019) we worked face to face with volunteers (20% of the total). This paper will deal with the qualitative level.

### 3.3. Techniques

#### Research 1 (DELAY):

-We used a semi-structured interview and specific tests to measure the different psychosocial variables related to achievement (UP): Strategies to "overcome" difficulties (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1996), Attributional Styles (Seligman, 1991) and *Resilience* (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). In this work, we deal with the importance of Resilience for overcoming difficulties within university institutions.

-As regards Resilience, Henderson and Milstein's questionnaire consists of three scales: Student (RESIALUM), Staff (RESIPERS), both the administration and teachers, and Institutional (RESIFACU); its six sub-scales can be regrouped into two sub-dimensions. The aspects evaluated include: I. *Reducing risk*: 1. Enhancing pro-social bonds; 2. Defining clear and firm limits (Creating and implementing coherent school policies and procedures and explaining expectations in terms of behavior. Stating written rules and transmitting them

clearly; 3. Teaching competences for life (cooperation, critical thinking, communication competencies, problem solving skills, healthy stress management); and II. *Constructing Resilience*: 1. Providing affection and support; 2. Defining and transmitting high and realistic expectations (avoiding the notion of development *plafond*); 3. Providing opportunities for significant participation (granting both students and those in charge of making decisions the chance to determine goals with the help of others).

As regards University Achievement (UP), in a broad sense, it comprises the following categories: a) Achievement: finishing studies (obtaining the degree); b) Delay: finishing studies in a longer period of time than the officially pre-determined one; and c) Failure: dropout.

Strictly speaking, performance was understood considering the following indicators (UNCuyo Statistics Department):

- Number of years studying (2005 – COHORT)
- Number of years needed for the study program (ANIPLAN)
- Subjects failed (MATPLAN-REUSSI)
- Total number of subjects in the curriculum (MATPLAN)
- Number of failures (APLAZOS)
- Subjects passed (MATPLAN)

$$UP = \left\{ \frac{1}{\left[ \left[ \frac{(2005 - COHORT)}{ANIPLAN} \right] + \left[ \frac{MATNOAPR}{MATPLAN} \right] + \left[ \frac{APLAZOS}{APROBADA} \right] \right]} \right\}$$

## Research 2 (IAM):

Interviews were conducted, as well as a semi-structured interview.

Here we have decided to approach the matter in two instances and only as it relates to the variable/dimension **"World of Work"**.

### *Instance 1:*

The hierarchical evocation technique was used (Abric, 2001). The objective was to understand how the **"World of Work"** appeared in their shared representations (central or peripheral), as well as the predominance of positive or negative aspects.

Four categories resulted from the combination of the frequency with which words were used and the importance given to them: 1) Educational Dimension; 2) Organizational, Sociopolitical and Structural Dimension; 3) Economic Dimension; and 4) Relational/Motivational Dimension (Resilience located here). According to the aforementioned combinations, these four categories are located in different quadrants: P2, P3, P4 and P1.

In the P2 quadrant (nucleus of the representation) are the most frequent and most important categories; in the P3 quadrant, those most frequent but least important; in the P4 quadrant, those which are overall the least important; and finally, in the P1 quadrant (low frequency and

high importance), appear the so-called elements of contrast or innovators that show group differences. Through the use of this technique, we were able to understand the most notable convergences and divergences.

**Figure 1. Quadrants (Hierarchical evocation technique)<sup>1</sup>.**

P1 (-+)	P2 (++)
P4 (--)	P3 (+-)

**Instance 2:**

Taking into account our focus here, **Resilience**, we sought to observe what relevance this variable was given in the face of rapid adaptation which the workplace is currently demanding. We therefore proceeded to count how many times the word Resilience and four related words were mentioned.

Lastly, we must also point out that the following qualitative dimensions were observed as they relate to the issue at hand, though they are not the object of our analysis here. They are included in Figure 2.

- 1- Which competencies do companies value according to students of the hard sciences?
- 2- Which competencies do companies value according to students of the soft sciences?
- 3- Which competencies do universities value according to students of the hard sciences?
- 4- Which competencies do universities value according to students of the soft sciences?
- 5- What should be a priority to change in the development of competencies for professors?
- 6- What should be a priority to change in students' education in the place of workplace transformations?

These students' representations are of particular interest as this group theoretically received superior education and passed selection processes to continue their studies in Europe.

#### 4. Results (IV)

##### Research 1 (DELAY)

Results show the role of Resilience in the Extension of Studies (UP).

The Resilience factor, as previously stated, was measured using three scales: Student (RESIALUM), Staff (RESIPERS), both administrative and teaching, and Institutional (RESIFACU). For all three scales, the average is focused on category three, which indicates that Resilience training is at the "initial" stage. This means that, in general terms, in all Schools, institutional evaluation as a means of modeling Resilience in students, in staff and in the institution as an organization is quite low. On the other hand, each institution has its own profile, since some appear as to encourage Resilience among students, staff and/or the institution itself (Aparicio, 2009<sup>a</sup>, Vol. 1).

<sup>1</sup> Note: Frequency of word appearance is located on the x-axis, while Importance given the word is located on the y-axis.

There should be *resilience resource areas* (see Schools/Courses in Study I of our research) favoring this competency, that is, instances favoring: a) the creation of supportive social networks; b) the consolidation of a transcendental meaning of life; c) the development of skills to build solid, respectful and rewarding relationships in order to obey rules and accept limits in a conscientious manner; d) the ability to solve problems through analysis and reflection; and e) the development of self-esteem based on a realistic viewpoint of one's own potential and limitations.

Below is analysis of results showing the variables which influence achievement.

**Bivariate Analysis:** As regards factors for "overcoming obstacles" in our *Resilience and Coping* model, the results show that the most significant Resilience Scales are the Pro-social Bond (RESIVINC), Clear Limits (RESILI) and High Expectations (RESIEXPE). More precisely, when the *Pro-social Bond* increases, University Performance (UP) decreases. On the contrary, when there are *Clear Limits* and *High Expectations*, UP increases.

We stress, then, the positive effect of expectations in relation to learning limits, something that is lacking nowadays. On the other hand, there is the very high pro-social bond, which leads to dropout. At the level of demands, experience in different Schools shows that as demands increase, so does performance (lower rate of delay in studies).

**Multivariate Analysis:** Let us focus for a moment on the University Achievement (UP) model and analyze which variables can predict achievement. Among the *Psychosocial* Variables, Resilience is precisely the most influential. Two sub-scales are associated with UP: bonds and opportunities offered to individuals (RESIVINC and RESIOPOR). The former contributes negatively; that is, the more students are devoted to social life, the more their levels of achievement drop. The latter contributes positively. In other words, the more opportunities for progress, the higher the UP.

RESIVINC: Probability is lower than 5% (0.0328). Coefficient is -0.003520, which reveals a negative relationship with UP. In other words, when these bonds are exaggerated and sociability is considerable, studying becomes less important and studies become delayed.

RESIOPOR: Probability is lower than 5% (0.00057), which indicates a higher association in the multivariate model than RESIVINC. Coefficient is 0.004104; that is, there exists a positive relationship with UP. When there are opportunities for development, academic performance improves and delaying studies decreases.

## Research 2 (IAM)

### **Instance 1: Analysis of central and peripheral categories of the "World of Work" dimension**

The "Motivational - Relational" Dimension is located in the nucleus or heart of the representation (P2). It is, therefore, the most important as the majority of responses are concentrated here: F = 43.5%; I= 44%. In other words, almost 50% of the responses are found in this category.

Practically all of the rest are located in the "Organizational/Sociopolitical/Structural" category: F =28.3%; I = 28%<sup>1</sup>.

What stands out is that in the first category, where Resilience should be located, the word did not appear even once<sup>2</sup>. This goes against our hypothesis.

Table 1: Category «Item 38.1 World of Work» (IAM)

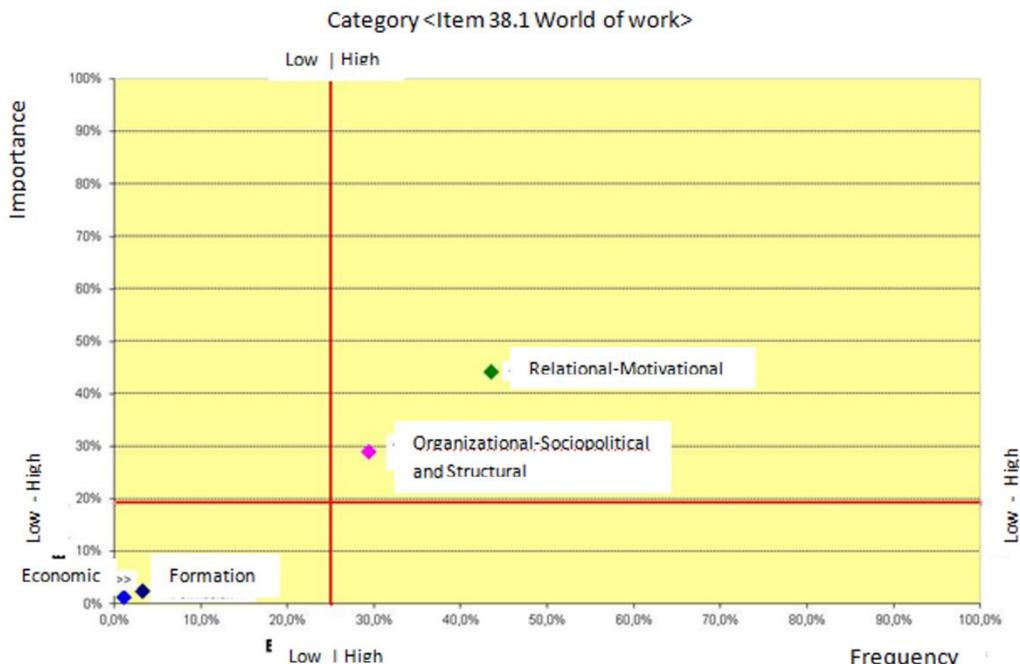
Subjects		23	
Sub-categories		4	
Frecuency	Maximun	92	100%
	Hight	23,00	25%
Importance	Maximun	230	100%
	Hight	45	19%

Importance	<<Education>>	<<Organizational-Socio-political and Estructural>>	<<Economic>>	<<Relational-Motivational>>
1	0,0%	6,5%	0,0%	13,0%
2	1,1%	6,5%	1,1%	9,8%
3	1,1%	10,9%	0,0%	8,7%
4	1,1%	5,4%	0,0%	12,0%
Frecuency	3	27	1	40
	3,3%	29,3%	1,1%	43,5%
	Low	Hight	Low	Hight
Importance	6	67	3	102
	3%	29%	1%	44%
	Low	Hight	Low	Hight

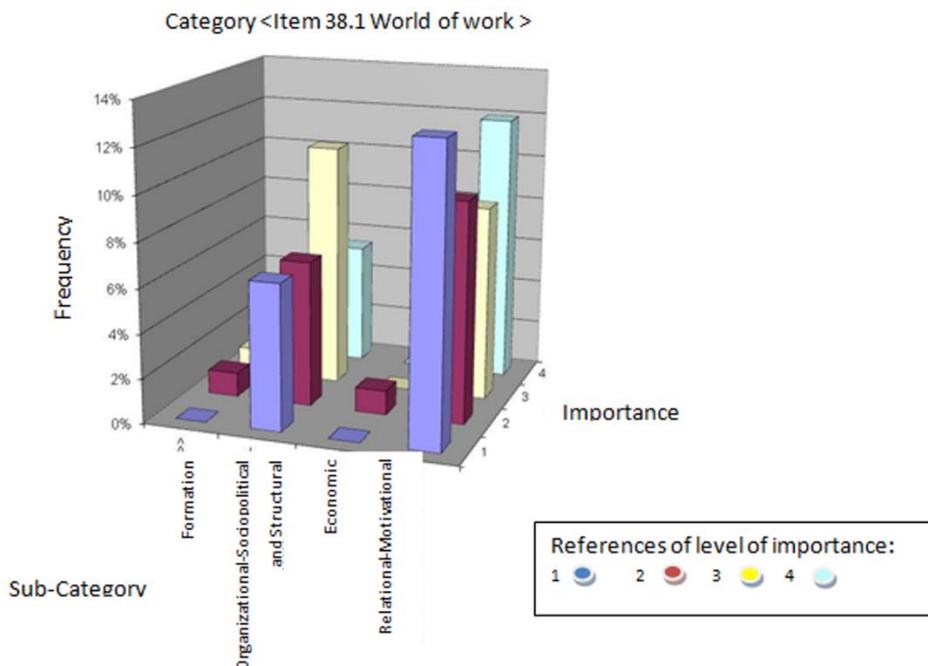
**Graph 1a. Categories « Item 38.1. World of Work » (IAM)**

<sup>1</sup> Values are given for the four constructed categories: 1) Education (F=3.3%; I= 3%); 2) Organizational/Sociopolitical/Structural (F=28.3%; I=28%; Economic: (F=11%; I= 1%); 4) Relational/Motivational (F= 43.5%; I= 44%).

<sup>2</sup> The Table and Graph (qualitative) are referred to in Aparicio, 2017-2020. PICTO.



Graph 1b. Categories « Item 38.1. World of Work » (IAM)



In the “**Motivational – Relational**” category, we observe that the majority of the responses see the world of work as something positive. Respondents describe it as: “factor of fulfillment”

and "identity" (these were the most-used words), but also as: "interesting", "dynamic", "visibility factor", "satisfaction", "socialization", "a place to apply what you've learned", "essential", "construction", "challenge", "something that gives personal and social value", "respect for others", "a reason for happiness", etc.

On the other hand, in the "Organizational-SocioPolitical-Structural" category, the majority of words evoked were negative: "negative", "imposed", "exploiter" (repeated frequently), "destructive", "unequal", "precarious", "cage", "slavery", "racist", "ungrateful", "little respect for minorities", "meritocracy", "bad compensation for another's work", "unjust" (repeated frequently), "with shortcomings in evaluation and in work conditions" ("many hours daily", "little time for rest", "little vacation time", "unequal treatment"), "competitive", "closed", "leading to low quality of life", etc. This reflects certain nonconformity with the functioning of workplace organizations and of macro policies adopted in the field.

Two respondents finally pointed out that it presents "many changes" which would imply that it will require adjustment, the ability to adapt and, indirectly, Resilience.

Focusing on the issue at hand, the word "resilience" was **never** mentioned as an ability nor, according to the author's conception, as a "**psychosocial competency**" important to carrying out one's work daily **under current conditions**, conditions which have already had negative effects at the level of health, such as increases in burnout, low levels of satisfaction, decreases in wellbeing and falling expectations, among others.

**Instance 2: Number of times words referring to Resilience appeared**

These words included: Adjustment/Change, Adaptation, Resolve, Connections and Flexibility<sup>1</sup>.

Once again, the word Resilience never appeared. In the "**World of Work**" Dimension, only 2% of respondents mentioned the word adjustment/change. The other words listed are not the focus of this analysis, however, the percentages of mentions of words that could refer to Resilience are extremely low<sup>2</sup>.

**Table 2: Frequency of appearance of words related to Resilience**

Competencies valued	Words Analyzed						
	Resilience	Adjust/ Change	Adaptati on	Resolv e	Connecti on	Flexibili ty	% Tot al
37.a. Competencies valued by companies – Hard Sciences	0	0	1	0	0	0	
%	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
37.b. Competencies valued by companies – Soft Sciences	0	0	4	0	0	2	

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that after studying what was said by each respondent, we observed something which has not been mentioned by other authors applying the technique and which we have observed repeatedly. In effect, tendencies in individuals' responses (words mentioned) are observed. That is, those who have negative representations tend to make this evident through the majority of their words and the same happens with those having positive representations.

<sup>2</sup> The item number from the semi-structured interview is maintained.

%	0	0	4	0	0	2	7
37.c. Competencies valued by the university – Hard Sciences	0	0	1	0	0	0	
%	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
37.d. Competencies valued by the university – Soft Sciences	0	0	3	0	0	0	
%	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
38.1 World of work	0	2	0	0	0	0	
%	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
500.d. Competencies to be developed in educators	0	0	0	1	0	0	
%	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
500.e. Competencies to be developed in students	0	1	1	0	0	1	
%	0	1	1	0	0	1	3
Total responses = 100%	92	92	92	92	92	92	

#### 4. Discussion (Research 1 and Research 2)

These results show the need for developing means and sources of resilience within organizations. Resilience always leads to success for individuals, as well as for the organizations they belong to (Aparicio, 2005, 2007a, 2007b; Rutter, 1985; Werner & Smith, 1982; Rutter et al, 1991; 1992; Barnard, 1994; de Konink, 2011; Cirulnik, 2001, 2002; Henderson & Milstein, 2003; Grotberg, 2006; Kokliatenko et al, 1998; Agacisti, 2018; Mo, 2018; Chernyshenko, Kankaraš and Drasgow, 2018; OECD, 2017 a and b; 2018 a, b, c and d, among others).

On the one hand, our findings align with those of important researchers.

On the other hand, the global findings show the significance of other core variables of achievement micro-theories (clear goals, realistic expectations, effort, *coping*, etc.). All of this refers us to the N-achievement theory (McClelland, 1961); to the Expectancy/Valence theory (Feather & Davenport, 1981); to the Optimistic theory (Seligman, 1991), to Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 1987); to reflective practice and learning organizations (Argirys, 1982; Shon; 1992); to theories related to Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1980) and to Coping Styles and Strategies (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1996) and its counterpart: Burnout (Freudenberger, 1974).

Finally, in **Research 1**, the influence of context is made evident. Some Schools generate and consolidate Resilience, while there are others in which this “social competency” is weak: (Dubar, 2000 a, b; Aparicio, 2015 a, b; Silva & Aparicio, 2015). This situation reveals that the University is in need of professionalization in order to favor the development of competencies beyond disciplinary areas. As regards students, it demands the consolidation of goals, limits and stamina to overcome obstacles, expectations which are presently lacking due to the devaluation of degrees.

## 5. Conclusion

In **Research 1**, results demonstrate that *low* levels of Resilience developed both in individuals and in the University (in different Schools) are related to *negative* Achievement (that is, delayed studies).

In **Research 2** (IAM group), on the one hand, there is little awareness of the role of Resilience in the current World of Work, a world which demands strong connections, great flexibility and the ability to adjust. Likewise, respondents value this "psychosocial competency" very little as it relates to **Professional and Personal Achievement**, despite what has been shown by numerous studies. On the other hand, knowing that resilience is not innate and that it must be "constructed" through interaction with a context (family, university, etc.), the findings show a debt on the part of educational institutions in terms of the formation of social, collective and psychosocial competencies, as they have focused solely on disciplinary learning.

In other words, when it is addressed from the valuation of individuals, Resilience is an undeveloped "absent competency", whereas it is well-developed in the ten countries that lead educational rankings (Aparicio, 2011a; OECD, ops. cit.). This allows us to predict that it will have high impact on levels of achievement, much more so in the post-COVID-19 world.

Faced with this "absence of education" and looking to overcome the emergency generated by COVID-19, we invite universities to act to create new protocols of action, guides of best practice and programs for psychosocial support of different actors (including resilience consolidation programs). Finally, we invite everyone to join together in a RESIL-COVID-19Network.

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## Albania's Plan: Response to COVID-19

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### Abstract

The current novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, which began in December 2019, represents a significant challenge for Albania, as well as for the entire world. This study considers that Albania has prepared several action plans over the years related to pandemic influenza preparedness, health security, and health emergencies. The result shows that sharing information about the preparedness of Albania's plan has a significant positive impact on the response adequately and in a timely manner, offering protection to the population. This paper first investigates the novel nature of the virus during a pandemic situation in Albania and proposes public protection plans to respond to the coronavirus. In brief, the current main objectives in Albania are to create a protected environment, update information and create response measures for the Albanian population. The results show that the measures taken are helping the health indicators to stay constant and decrease the curve of the pandemic.

**Keyword:** coronavirus, measures, indicators, response, Albanian population

### Introduction

Despite lack of data, Albania has been prepared against and affected by several outbreaks including the Spanish flu, Asian flu, Hong Kong flu, etc. Spanish flu, between 1918 and 1919 caused an estimated attributable worldwide excess mortality of 20 - 50 million, with a case fatality of around 2% and typically affected children, young adults, and pregnant women. In 1957-1958, Asian flu originating from Southern China was responsible for claiming the lives of 1 to 4 million people with a case fatality of 0.1 - 0.2% mainly affecting children. Hong Kong flu started as an emergency also in Southern China between 1968 and 1969 causing a moderate influenza pandemic with an estimated mortality ranging between 1 and 4 million people, with a case fatality of 0.2 - 0.4% and affected all age groups. The first pandemic that we possess country data on is the recent AH1N1 outbreak which started in Mexico and caused a mild influenza pandemic with an estimated worldwide attributable excess mortality of around 18'000, and a case fatality of less than 0.025% affecting mainly children, young adults, pregnant women and people with chronic disease. Fortunately, Albania was not affected by Serious Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak between 2001 and 2002 and from the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) that started in 2012, both with high mortality rates of approximately 10% and 30% respectively, affecting middle aged and the elderly. Nonetheless, Albania is affected every year by seasonal flu epidemics which in some instances, such as the 2015-2016 flu season, are more severe than others, affecting individuals across all age groups, but showing a more severe impact on children, pregnant women and people

suffering from chronic diseases. To summarize, Albania has a lot of experience in facing outbreaks from having undertaken significant preparedness work for seasonal influenza throughout the years, as well as from outbreaks caused by emergent viruses such AH5N1 outbreak in poultry, Congo Crimean hemorrhagic fever, Hantan hemorrhagic fever, other outbreaks from the past such as cholera and polio, as well as recent occurrences such as last year's measles outbreak. This experience provides the foundation for the effective response to COVID-19, which later on can be adapted according to the situations that arise and to the information that becomes available.

### **Overview of Albania's national approach**

In the face of an outbreak of a serious disease, such as COVID-19, Albania, aim to plan and decide on the measures and steps that ought to be taken and increase their efficacy based on the following principles.

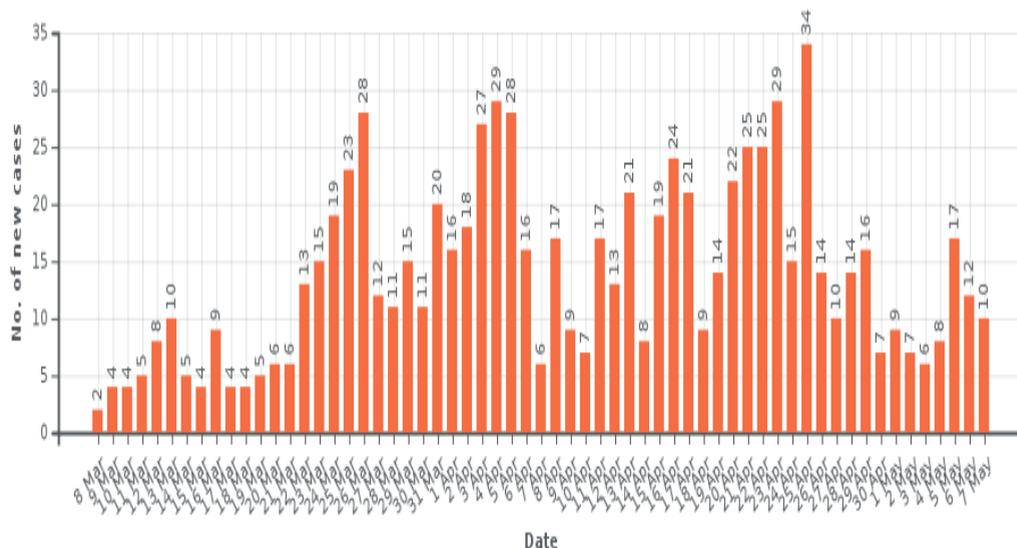
To this day, the COVID-19 situation in Albania remains in Scenario 0, and the steps has taken thus far, summarized below, aim towards having in place a system that allows for timely identification of cases, follow up with their contacts and prevention of spread. The COVID-19 expert committee was established as a decision making body based on medical and scientific analysis of the situation. Furthermore, Albania has established the new coronavirus task force focused on tackling COVID-19 in a cross-institutional fashion, by employing measures to prevent the spread while also reporting and advising the COVID-19 expert committee observations made in the field and steps that might be needed. Case definitions are being updated in real time in accordance with the recommendations from WHO and ECDC. Albania has developed a system to manage the infodemic of misinformation by identifying and addressing rumors spread to create panic in the population. The Institute of Public Health of Albania has prepared guidelines, procedures and plans to early detect and isolate the first case (s) of COVID-19. All local public health agencies and the health inspectorate have worked with border control, port officials and flight carriers to implement and reinforce health measures in all points of entry including temperature control. All guidelines, procedures and plans have been distributed and tested throughout the country. A scheme for cascade training of health care workers with regard to COVID-19 was designed and implemented. Public health units have passed on information to all health professionals on steps needed to be taken in the event of a patient who may have COVID-19. The 127 emergency number, coordinated by national health emergency center in collaboration with public health and health expert teams with trained staff and necessary equipment are able to conduct the triage process and are ready to receive and transport patients providing coverage across the whole country. Upon entering the Albanian territory, all residents and travelers receive a text message on their mobile phones informing them on the importance of calling 127, as a measure to ensure that all people with symptoms are given appropriate advice and tested when appropriate. Public health recommendations with regard to minimizing the chance of transmission of disease have been widely publicized and are updated regularly. Travel advice on what individuals need to know before deciding whether or not to travel and steps to take if they are affected by an outbreak of COVID-19 while travelling has been provided and made public and is continuously updated as the situation evolves. Advice has been provided to first responders, employers, educational institutions, social care institutions and other sectors and business, on identifying and reporting possible cases and taking the necessary precautionary measures. Self quarantine or self isolation is advised for those returning from the affected areas. Guidelines on how to handle individuals under investigation are in place and have been tested. Influenza like illness

and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) surveillance program have been strengthened and adapted to COVID-19.

### Covid 19 pandemic situation in Albania and the adaptation of measures

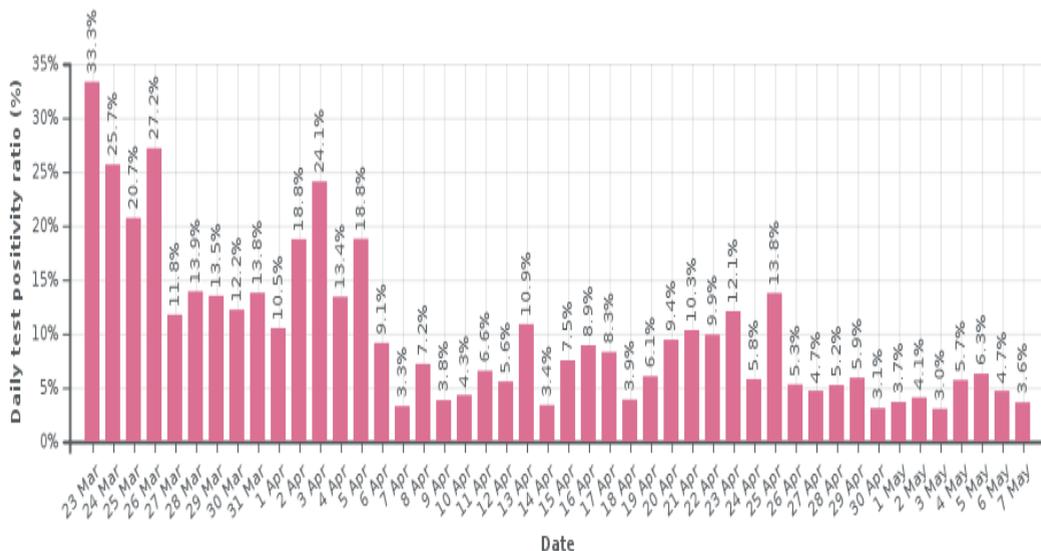
#### Containment of the infection

Albania is now in its 9th week of the Covid 19 pandemic as the first cases were recorded on 8th of March in 2 people coming from Italy. Data show that the spread of infection has been contained; (i) the epidemic curve was 'flattened' with infection circulating in clusters only; the number of cases in need of hospitalizations never threatened the stability of health care; (iii) the mortality rate is kept at low levels.



#### Daily diagnosed cases of Covid 19 in Albania

In the 9<sup>th</sup> week of the Covid 19 pandemic, Albania recorded only thirty-one covid related deaths. At the same time, are only thirty-eight patients in two covid hospitals in the country, with only seven of them in intensive care. From 9.806 tests 842 were confirmed positive, with more tests being carried out. Since mid April, the number of recovered cases is higher than the number of active cases and the trend continues. Although the disease has affected most districts of Albania at various degrees, there are still many municipalities with no confirmed cases. There are still active clusters in many regions of the country, and new cases are being identified every day, but the trend during the last two weeks of May, has been on decrease.



*Daily test positivity ratio in Albania*

**Measures taken**

Albania has inherited good public health structures from the past and has passed a new bill on control of infectious diseases quite recently. After the Wuhan situation in January, before covid, Albania started to prepare a strategy to respond to an eventual pandemic. Laboratory was equipped with new tests, new epidemiology protocols were developed, and staff in districts was trained. Albania, observed with attention and concern the surge of cases in Northern Italy in late February and drew valuable lessons about the extent and intensity of the measures which would be needed. Alertness was increased to maximum and special measures were introduced for all travelers from Italy. Albania reacts with nationwide measures, starting with schools which were closed on Mars. One day later all flights from Italy were suspended and on Mars 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> all national borders were closed. Self quarantine was required for all those who entered the country in the first week of Mars. Some services and activities were closed since 10<sup>th</sup> of Mars. From Mars 12<sup>th</sup> to Mars 18<sup>th</sup> all travel between main cities was limited or banned. On second week of Mars government introduced first limits of moving out of home. Then on third week, all essential activities were limited to 05:00-13:00 o clock. During weekends there was almost total curfew strictly enforced. There has been massive compliance by the public. Also, religious communities of the country supported the measures taken by authorities and suspended their ceremonies or carried them out without public. Since 15<sup>th</sup> of Mars measures were introduced to minimize contact with health services, while planed surgeries were postponed and private health services were requested to adapt to the emergency rules. Since 10<sup>th</sup> of Mars strict rules were introduced to avoid contagion of residential institutions. On 24<sup>th</sup> of Mars Government raised the emergency situation to the highest possible catastrophe. The existing emergency is coupled with the earthquake emergency which left without homes almost 20 000 people.

### ***Adaptation of measures and the normalization strategy***

While the measures are being very effective to contain the circulation of the virus and suppress the effect in health of the population and health system, the situation has been hitting the economy and society as whole. After successfully controlling the pandemic during March and April, Albania is adapting gradually and carefully the measures to the epidemiologic situation. Since 25<sup>th</sup> of April, Albania has announced the establishment of "green zones". The Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Albania, in collaboration with other ministries, has developed a comprehensive strategy to guide the country through normalization in four (4) phases. This strategy assures that the steps forward be gradual and cautious, accompanied with other measures and intensive monitoring, while health system is continuously strengthened: (i) it is being gradual and cautious; (ii) every decision for lifting some of the measures is followed by two weeks periods of monitoring the indicators; (iii) a system of alerts is put in place and Albania is ready to stop the 'normalization' if indicators start to worsen; (iv) activities are categorized in green, yellow and red, in terms of public health risk, based on a score from one (1) lowest risk to five (5) highest risk. Risk is estimated based on the number of potential contacts, intensity of contacts, geography of contacts etc. Health risk is prevailing over economic rationale.

### **Recommendation**

The activities and businesses with highest public health risk will be normalized the last.

The gradual normalization of activities is being accompanied with extra sanitary measures to be applied during the phases. A list of eight sanitary protocols for a range of businesses is prepared to assure that social distancing is maintained risk of infection is minimized; (ii) health system will continue to be prepared for all scenarios; a new quarantine hospital will be ready in May, stocks of equipments will continue to be increased, and health services normalization will be centrally planned during the phases; (iii) public health and epidemiology capacities for case finding and testing will be strengthened, with new serologic testing already starting. Tests will continue to be carried out intensively to assure good control of infection community spread; (iv) vulnerable categories and risk populations will continue to be specifically protected. Albania has been effective not allowing outbreaks in its residential institutions and will continue to keep in place the measures for protecting its elderly, during all normalization phases; (v) strategy of normalization will be dynamically adapted as international data and knowledge on Covid 19 improves.

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## Digitalization of Financial Services in Albania Under Restricted Measures Covid-19

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### Abstract

Under the restricted measures due to the global pandemic Covid-19, like all other services, financial services had difficulties in performing their financial activities. These difficulties are stronger at countries where financial services are denied for a long time. Financial services denial is an issue that has affected not only Albania but small Balkan countries as well. The reasons for this denial are many, but among them we can distinguish the lack of credit experience, as one of the common reasons to be excluded in these countries from the development of the financial sector. Currently, one of the reasons for the financial denial is the emergency created by Covid-19, where physical distancing and other measures taken by governments to restrict movement and services make financial service impossible. Thus, one of the most effective ways to perform financial services remotely is financial technology. Financial technology refers to the possibilities of financial innovation through technology that can result in new business models, applications, processes, or products with an effectiveness related to financial markets and institutions and the provision of financial services. This paper aims to present the challenges of the legal framework and regulatory institutions, to provide recommendations for its improvement, to enable the development of financial technology in the financial market in Albania. The paper address issues such as the Bank of Albania's consideration on the Directive<sup>1</sup> (EU) 2015/2366 On Payment Services (PSD II). What benefits or challenges would its implementation bring? How is the financial industry projected after the implementation of PSD II? What are the biggest job challenges with payment institutions that have not been to the market before or that bring technology innovations? The paper addresses the issue of money laundering through online digital transactions as well.

**Keywords:** financial teknlology, digital financial services, online process, know your client, physical presence.

### Introduction

Almost all small Balkan countries, mainly those that were part of the former communist alliance, have no credit history, they have been excluded from financial and banking services,

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<sup>1</sup> Directive (EU) 2015/2366 On Payment Services (PSD II) published at European Official Journal entered into force on January 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/LSU/?uri=CELEX:32015L2366> visited on 01.06.2020.

due to the policies of communist totalitarian regimes which did not allow lending, as it constituted a capitalist phenomenon. Although the banking market has developed in Albania, in these last years of transition period, large part of Albanian citizens has not been able to benefit from banking services, for many reasons. One of the major issues of the financial markets in Albania remains the financial education of consumers. Albanian citizens have very little knowledge<sup>1</sup> about banking and financial products, in general. For many of the interviewees, it is stated that the bank accounts have been opened by the businesses in which they were employed, as they did not need to open and use the bank account and benefit from the banking services. The issue of financial education is included and is part of all the strategies of the supervisory authorities and the actors and factors of the financial market. Education should be part of school curricula so that citizens are familiar with financial products, understand them and then use them to the best of their capability. The paradox of not benefiting from bank financial services is the lack of credit history, if someone does not have a credit history, cannot benefit from bank financial services. At least that was true until a short time ago. Microfinance institutions in Albania aim to reach their customers by enabling them to provide services such as lending through electronic devices. So, they aim to provide online financial services to their customers. The online process has great benefits for financial institutions. Thus, the number of transactions through electronic means of communication, various smart phone devices has been increased. Through, the use of the online process will be ensured higher efficiency and productivity. Consumption and competition and the democratization of financial services are increasing. The online process is the easiest and fastest choice for the consumer. Additionally, through the online process, the prevention of money laundering<sup>2</sup> is ensured, as every step and transaction performed remains preserved and documented. At the same time, the online process can contribute more to increasing transparency to customers and regulatory institutions. Selecting the use of the online process can lead to the involvement or exclusion of customers from this process. One of the best ways to increase customer engagement in choosing digital finance is to raise awareness and sensitize them to this selection. Financial education should mainly aim at involving customers from rural areas, as their difficulties in accessing financial services are even greater.

Increasing the use of financial technology will lead to the processing of sensitive personal data. Because, online processes will require the processing of personal biometric data<sup>3</sup> for distance identification. The use of online data processing and the benefit of digital financial services will contribute to bringing innovation to the financial market and create the first steps towards the digitalization of financial services by contributing to increasing the number of individuals using bank accounts today in the country. In this way, digital financial services will also contribute to the formalization of the economy, knowing that a part of the market economy in Albania is still informal.

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<sup>1</sup> The data were published by the Albanian Microfinance Association based on a study conducted by the organization IDRA from the findings it results that 49% of respondents have average or little knowledge in terms of financial education. Published at Bankieri Magazine, no.26, Tirana, April 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Shegan, A. (2010), *La lutte contre le terrorisme: étude de droit comparé (droit français, droit albanais) et de droit pénal international*, Tirane, Albania. p. 237

<sup>3</sup> Balla, R. (2008). Protection of Personal Data - a new challenge for the Albanian society. *Journal Parliamentary Law and Legal Policies*. Tirane, Albania. no. 42 pg. 21-40.

## Legal and Institutional Challenges in Albania

### II.1- Amendments of Anti- Money Laundering Law

In these times of global pandemic, the selection of digital finance to access financial services is a necessity requirement. In the context of the development and digitalization of financial services, the aim is to carry out the process of remote identification of financial institutions' customers. This fact constitutes one of the fundamental issues regarding the prevention of money laundering. Actually, there is a legal framework and lots of laws and regulations that are implicated in the performance of digital financial services. We can even say that this will affect the institutional and practical behavior in Albania. So far, no non-bank financial institution, but even the banks themselves in Albania, do not perform a full online financial service without the physical presence of the client. The banks perform online financial services only after the clients have appeared at the bank and they have performed the procedure of recognizing and identifying the client.

Undoubtedly, the most important role in this context is played by the Directorate of Prevention and Money Laundering (DPML). Improvements of the Law on Prevention of Money Laundering<sup>1</sup> in June 2019<sup>2</sup> poses a new challenge for DPML. Because, for the first time in the history of this law, it is foreseen the performance of transactions or the establishment of business relations without the physical presence<sup>3</sup> of the client. Thus, the regulation is made in article 6/2 of law no. 9917, dated 19.5.2008 "On the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing", as amended. According to this provision, entities (financial institutions, banks, etc.) must implement specific procedures and take appropriate and effective measures to prevent the risk associated with transactions<sup>4</sup> or business relationships performed without the physical presence of the client. From a legal point of view, we can say that this provision contains a very broad definition of "appropriate and effective measures". This is a formulation that leaves room for different interpretations, as for different subjects of the law, different measures can be defined as 'appropriate and effective measures'. Therefore, DPML should definitely instruct the subjects by identifying some appropriate measures as "appropriate measures".

The improvement of this provision is very progressive because the previous stipulation, has been the main obstacle to the performance of digital financial services. However, we can say that even after a long time has passed since the entry into force of this provision, its practical implementation has not yet begun. Currently, no financial institution provides financial services entirely online, even though, it is already allowed the performance of operations remotely, without the physical presence of the client. DPML should work harder to enable financial institutions to perform their services effectively, digitally, completely without the physical presence of customers. By preparing instructions and guides with clear recommendations on the possibility of effective implementation of this legal provision.

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<sup>1</sup> Balla, R. (2017) The Fight Against Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing. International Conference, *Globalization, Vision for Sustainable Future* of the Mediterranean University of Tirana, Albania.

<sup>2</sup> Amendments of Law no. 9917, dated 19.5.2008 "On the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing", published in the Official Journal no. 99, year 2019, p. 7179.

<sup>3</sup> Balla, R. (2018) Combating Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing in Albania. Amendments to the Legislation on AML/CTF. *SEE/EU Cluster of Excellence in European and International Law*. Series of Papers Volume 4, Saarland University, Germany. p.121

<sup>4</sup> Hartley, I. (2008) Corporate Crime. *Contemporary World Issues*. p. 87.

The provisions of the law on the prevention of money laundering have indicated the need of amendments of other regulations to have harmonized and unified regulations. By imposing respective amendments in order to unify the regulatory framework, by reflecting them in the Regulation<sup>1</sup> of the Supervisory Council of the Bank of Albania no. 44/2009 "On the prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing" as amended. Thus, based on its point 6, it is foreseen that the subjects can enter into business relations or even opening bank accounts without the physical presence of the client.

Another element that enables and facilitates the performance of online financial services is the definition of the term virtual tool. This term is defined for the first time in the Albanian legislation with the following explanation: "Virtual tool" is a digital representation of a value that can be traded or transferred in digital form, and that can be used for payment or investment purposes, thus including but not limited to cryptocurrencies. This definition does not include digital reflections of officially recognized currencies such as those issued by central banks, securities and other financial instruments provided for by applicable law.

A novelty in Albanian legislation is the definition of the term third party. The law gives, the following definition for this: "Third Party", means a subject supervised by the competent authorities, necessarily registered in Albania, in one of the member states of the European Union or third countries, provided that they meet the conditions as follows: a) to be regulated by a special law and to be obliged to be register in the respective country; b) to be registered in the Republic of Albania, the member states of the European Union or in a third country, provided that they apply the same or higher requirements as those established by this law for proper and expanded vigilance, identifying the client and the beneficiary owner, storing information, and to be supervised by the competent authorities for compliance with money laundering and / or terrorist financing prevention issues. This definition constitutes a relief for all entities that by law intend to rely on third parties. The process of relying on third party is very important for the functioning of the performance of digital financial transactions, especially for non-bank financial institutions. However, even if these institutions can finalize the approval of the transaction or loan, the support of third parties must be provided to enable the disbursement of the credit in the bank account of the client. Thus, Article 6/1 of the law defines the procedure and criteria for relying on third parties.

## II.2- Central Bank of Albania's Regulation

At the same time, another obstacle for the digitalization of financial services have been the provisions of Regulation<sup>2</sup> no. 28 dated 30.03.2005 "On the supervision of banking transactions electronically", as amended. Thus, according to Article 5 "Prohibitions", banks are not allowed to open e-banking accounts without the physical presence of the customer in the bank. Meanwhile, with the amendments of the Regulation in December 2019, this article has been repealed. Similarly, according to Article 6 of the Regulation, banks can perform e-banking only after verification of the fulfillment of the conditions and criteria by the Bank of Albania. So,

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation of the Supervisory Council of the Bank of Albania no. 44/2009 "On the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing" as amended, published in the Official Journal, the latest amendments dated 24.12.2019.

<sup>2</sup> Regulation of the Supervisory Council of the Bank of Albania no. 28 dated 30.03.2005 "On the supervision of banking transactions electronically", as amended, published in the Official Journal, the latest amendments dated 18.12.2019.

[https://www.bankofalbania.org/Mbikeqyrja/Kuadri\\_Rregullativ\\_Mbikeqyres/Rregullore\\_te\\_mbikeqyrjes/Rregullor\\_e\\_Nr\\_28\\_Per\\_mbikeqyrjen\\_e\\_transaksioneve\\_bankare\\_ne\\_rruge\\_elektronike.html](https://www.bankofalbania.org/Mbikeqyrja/Kuadri_Rregullativ_Mbikeqyres/Rregullore_te_mbikeqyrjes/Rregullor_e_Nr_28_Per_mbikeqyrjen_e_transaksioneve_bankare_ne_rruge_elektronike.html) visited on 03.06.2020.

through these amendments above mentioned, it is possible to allow online transactions or e-banking without the physical presence of the client.

Based on the Decision of the Bank of Albania no. 59 dated 29.08.2008 On the Approval of the Regulation<sup>1</sup> "On Transparency for Banking and Financial Products and Services", as amended, it is stipulated that electronic means of communication can be used to build business relationships with clients. So even this regulation enables the facilitation of the performance of digital financial services.

### **II.3- Other Legal Provisions**

Another very important aspect of the online process is the electronic agreement. Currently, the official electronic signature has started to be used in Albania. But this signature is known and works only for the official signatures of public servants who provide online services through official websites such as e-Albania. Whereas, for private legal entities that want to use the electronic signature, they can proceed with a request to the NAIS<sup>2</sup>, as the competent institution for issuing certificates for electronic identification and trusted services. Currently, electronic agreement is not used in the market, although the legal framework provides and has created the ground for their use. Technological developments and improvement of services offered to the market and customer imposes the implementation of electronic agreement, therefore in this regard should be established by a regulation or legal binding act the implementation of agreement with electronic signature by individuals.

The online process facilitates distance identification of customers, in accordance with the above legal basis, mainly the law on prevention of money laundering which follows the best practices of the European Union and enables safe processing of personal data<sup>3</sup> of customers in accordance with the law on personal data protection, as well as Management Information Security Standards.

Despite the regulatory framework, there are some issues on the recognition and acceptance of electronic documents. Currently, commercial banks are reluctant to recognize electronic documents, for example, it is evident that the electronic extracts of legal entities are not accepted as a document in electronic format. The electronic document is processed by the official website of the National Business Register and stamped with an electronic stamp certified by the public authority. So, there is no reason not to ensure the use of these documents in the context of digitalization. Likewise, the courts have begun accepting electronic documents on paper, but the practice is not unified and there are judges who show resistance on accepting electronic documents. This practice should be changed and unified where all courts in the Republic of Albania uniformly must accept the electronic agreement without resistance and without questioning the authenticity of the document.

In this regard, appropriate infrastructure should be created in institutions to receive and accept the document electronically. According to Article 10 of Law 10273 / 29.04.2010 "On

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation of the Supervisory Council of the Bank of Albania no. 59 dated 29.08.2008 "On Transparency for Banking and Financial Products and Services", as amended, published in the Official Journal.

<sup>2</sup> The National Agency for the Information Society, which is the competent institution for the recognition and certification of electronic signatures, in accordance with law no. 9880 dated 25.02.2008 "On Electronic Signature", as amended", as well as law no. 107/2015 "On Electronic Identification and Trusted Services", as amended;

<sup>3</sup> Law no. 9887 dated 10.03.2008 "On the protection of personal data in the Republic of Albania" amended, published in the Official Journal.

the Electronic Document" and the Instruction 1/31.12.2012 "On the Certificate of Copy in Letter of the Electronic Document from Public Institutions" requires the unifying stamp in the paper copy of the electronic document from the issuing institution of the document or by the public notary, encouraging public and private institutions not to use the electronic service. In our estimation, the paper copy of the electronic document should not bear any kind of stamp, as this would lose the purpose of the electronic document and the speed of service leading even to financial costs. Anyone who modifies the content of the paper copy of the electronic document must be subject to criminal legal provisions of the illegal interference<sup>1</sup> with the forgery of the document.

Identity cards are not equipped with "readers" to perform electronic identification and as a result electronic identification is not widely used. In order to protect the financial system as a whole from fraud and to solve once and for all the problem of fraud (persons whom sign for other persons in agreements) a wider campaign should be undertaken for the implementation of readers in identification documents.

Similarly, taking into consideration the law on consumer protection, according to which loans for amounts less than 30,000 ALL and loans in the nature of overdrafts are excluded from the scope of its implementation (so no extended contractual conditions are required), regarding the regulation of the Bank of Albania on consumer and mortgage loans and regarding the requirements of the legislation for the prevention of money laundering, we estimate that for these types of loans should be implemented and sanctioned by more mitigating measures in terms of developing a simplified diligence to the client and contractual terms. In this regard, reviewing the necessary guidelines in the regulation of the Bank of Albania for consumer and mortgage loans would facilitate digitalization process.

Another important aspect of the online process is the certification of electronic programs that will enable electronic identification entirely in the electronic environment, as trusted services that truly provide electronic identification based on the established algorithms. These criteria are provided by law<sup>2</sup> no. 107/2015 "On Electronic Identification and Trusted Services". Based on Article 34 "Acceptance and use of foreign products" is stipulated that trusted products, created by qualified service providers trusted outside the Republic of Albania, will be recognized only through the relevant agreements signed by the Republic of Albania with other countries. For Qualified Trustees of the Trusted Service, who operate in the Member States of the European Union and are accredited by the relevant supervisory authority, the trustworthy credentials and services issued by them shall have the same legal validity and probative value as those issued by a Qualified Trustee of the Trusted Service, operating in the Republic of Albania.

## **International, European Incentives**

### **III-1 European Incentives**

European initiatives on creating a suitable environment for making payments, transactions and other online services have started earlier than in Albania. Building trust on the online environment is essential for economic and social development. Consumers need to feel safe and legal assurance is an essential element not only in building the online process but in

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert/Pontell. (2007), *International Handbook of White-Collar Corporate Crime*. p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Law no. 107/2015 "On Electronic Identification and Trusted Services", amended published in the Official Journal.

building all other business relationships. Lack of trust, especially due to a lack of perception of legal assurance, makes consumers, businesses, and public authorities reluctant to perform transactions electronically and adopt new services.

Thus, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe have adopted Regulation<sup>1</sup> no. 910/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council on 23 July 2014, On Electronic Identification and Trust Services for Electronic Transactions in the Internal Market and the Amendment of Directive 1999/93. This regulation aims to strengthen confidence in electronic transactions in the domestic market by providing a common foundation for secure electronic interaction between citizens, businesses and public authorities, thus increasing the effectiveness of public and private online services, e-business and e-commerce in the whole common European jurisdiction. In its conclusions of 27 May 2011, the Council of Europe invited the Commission to contribute to the single digital market by creating appropriate conditions for the mutual recognition of key providers across borders, such as electronic identification, electronic documents, electronic signatures and delivery of electronic services. and for interoperable e-government services throughout the European Union.

The European Parliament, in its resolution of 21 September 2010 on the completion of the domestic market with e-commerce, stressed the importance of the security of electronic services, especially electronic signatures, and the need to create an important public infrastructure at the pan-European level and called on the Commission to establish a platform for European evaluation authorities, to ensure cross-border interaction of electronic signatures and to increase the security of transactions made by using the internet platform.

Additionally, another important act in this process is the regulation<sup>2</sup> of the payment service. Payment services are regulated by the provisions of (PSD II) - Directive<sup>3</sup> (EU) 2015/2366 which entered into force on 12 January 2016 and its application has started since 13 January 2018. One of the objectives of PSD II is to ensure the security of electronic payments and to reduce, to the maximum extent possible, the risk of fraud (recital 95). Based on the Recital 7 of PSD II it is stated that "security risks associated with electronic payments are increased". Meanwhile as per Recital 95 it is further stated that "the security of electronic payments is essential to ensure the protection of users and the development of a healthy environment for e-commerce". This Directive provides a strong legal basis for further and better development of the domestic market for electronic payments within the European Union. It sets out comprehensive rules for the purpose of making international payments (within the EU) simpler, more efficient, and safer as they are made within a single country. This Directive aims to open the payment market to new participants, moving more towards competition, alternatives, and better prices for consumers. It also provides a legal platform for a single euro payment area.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) no. 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014, On Electronic Identification and Trust Services for Electronic Transactions in the Internal Market and Repeal of Directive 1999/93, published in the Official Journal of Europe OJ L 257, 28.8.2014.

<sup>2</sup> Regulation of the Delegated Commission of (EU) 2018/389 of 27 November 2017 supplementing Directive (EU) 2015/2366 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning technical regulatory standards for strong client authentication and open and secure standards of communication (OJ L 69, 13.3.2018, p.23).

<sup>3</sup> Directive (EU) 2015/2366 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 on payment services in the internal market, amending Directives 2002/65/EC, 2009/110/EC and 2013/36/EU and Regulation (EU) No 1093/2010, and repealing Directive 2007/64/EC.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32015L2366>

The Directive aims to improve existing European Union rules on electronic payments. It considers the development of innovative payment services, such as mobile or online payments. In particular, the directive sets out rules relating to strict security requirements, electronic payments and protection of consumer financial data, guaranteeing safe verification and reduction of fraud risk, transparency of conditions and information requirements for payment services the rights and obligations of users and providers of payment services.

The Directive is complemented by EU Regulation 2015/751 which sets out a limit on exchange rates between banks for card-based transactions. It is expected that from the entry into force of the Directive and the Regulation, the costs of traders in accepting debit or consumer credit cards will be reduced. This process will lead to the formalization of payments and if it works even in the Albanian payment market, it will undoubtedly contribute to the formalization of the economy in general. The Directive creates a clear set of rules to be applied to new and existing providers of innovative payment services. These rules aim to ensure that providers of the financial services can compete on an equal terms and conditions, leading to greater efficiency and transparency of payment services, while strengthening consumer confidence in a harmonized market.

According to the Directive, consumer rights have been improved, including the reduction of liability for unauthorized payments by Eur € 150 - € 50, the right to unconditional repayment for direct debits in Euros for a period of 8 weeks. It also provides customers with the removal of fees for the use of debit or credit cards. In order to help consumers, the European Commission prepared a brochure from the beginning of 2018 listing and explaining consumer rights under the European Directive and the law as a whole. The role of the European Bank Authority to develop a publicly accessible central register of all authorized payment institutions, which will be updated by national authorities, has also been enforced. Its role in assisting in resolving disputes between national authorities has been strengthened. The European Central Bank will develop regulatory technical standards to strengthen customer authentication verification and develop criteria for secure communication channels, which will be met and implemented by all service providers. It will also develop regulatory technical standards on cooperation and information exchange between supervisory authorities.

In this context, in order to enable the most effective implementation of the Directive, the European Commission has adopted several Regulations, such as Regulation (EU) 2017/2055 On Determining Technical Standards for Cooperation and Information Exchange between Competent Authorities regarding the Exercise of the Right to Freedom of Establishing Payment Services Institutions. Regulation (EU) 2018/389 On the Determination of Technical Standards for Strong Customer Verification and Standards for Safe and Common Communication. Regulation (EU) 2019/410 Defining the Implementation of Technical Standards for the Purpose of Detailed and Structured Information Notification in the Field of Payment Service by the Competent Authorities to the European Central Bank. Regulation (EU) 2019/411 On the Determination of Technical Standards for the Development of Technical Requirements, Operations and Maintenance of the Central Electronic Register within the Payment Service Area and On Access to Information Contained in it.

It should be noted that in this initiative, so the performance of online payment services, the Baltic<sup>1</sup> countries are the vanguard in the enterprises that have done both institutionally and legally. We can also say that there are similarities between the Baltic states, such as Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and the Balkan countries, both in terms of GDP growth and population growth. Thus, the development of a favorable regulatory and supervisory ecosystem for FinTech<sup>2</sup> as well as the promotion of innovation in the financial system is one of the strategic directions of the Bank of Lithuania. Together with other state authorities, the Bank of Lithuania aims to create a FinTech-friendly environment that will attract new companies and encourage them to create new products in the country.

The Baltics are leading the digitalization of financial services in Europe. In Latvia, for example, the first eurozone immediate payment systems (24/7/365) have been launched in line with the Single European Payments Area (SEPA) project. It is also experimenting with innovative data sharing services from the client file (KYC) to all participants in the financial sector, using biometric data to identify the client. On October 2018, Lithuania<sup>3</sup> launched the regulatory "sandbox", which allows market participants to execute innovative FinTech products or business models in a virtual environment with real customers, under the direction and supervision of the Lithuanian Bank. The regulatory box is only open for financial services, products or business models that are new to the Lithuanian market. Adoption of financial innovation will bring identifiable benefits to society, e.g. more appropriate, safer, and cheaper financial services, or otherwise they will contribute to the sustainable development of the financial market. The necessity to test financial innovations in a controlled environment is objectively justified, while the testing itself can contribute to the implementation of the innovation in question.

Estonia has digitized many aspects of the lives of its citizens, from voting routines to pharmacy prescriptions to driving licenses. So, it's no wonder that Estonian school children are stimulated to learn about financial education using bank applications designed specifically for them.

### III-2 FATF<sup>4</sup> Guidelines

Most of states have adopted 40 Task Force Recommendations<sup>5</sup> on Financial Action on Money Laundering, and Terrorist Financing. These recommendations include criminalizing Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, freezing and seizing terrorist financing, preventing measures against Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing for financial institutions, intelligence units and international cooperation. FATF recommendations set international

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the proceedings of the International Conference on Digitalization of Financial Services organized in October 2019, in Skopje, Northern Macedonia, the "special guests" were delegates from the Central Banks, the Ministries of Finance and other supervisory authorities of the three Baltic states, namely Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

<sup>2</sup> FinTech is the abbreviation of the word's financial technology in English. <https://www.lb.lt/en/fintech-and-innovation> visited on 01.06.2020.

<sup>3</sup> Lithuania sandbox project <https://www.lb.lt/en/regulatory-sandbox> visited on 01.06.2020.

<sup>4</sup> Financial Action Task Force - financial action unit on money laundering prevention.

<sup>5</sup> All FATF Recommendations which are 40 and 9 Special Recommendations on Terrorist Financing constitute a comprehensive package of measures for an effective legal and institutional regime against money laundering and terrorist financing. The United Nations Resolution 1617 (2005) of the Security Council and the Resolution Action Plan 60/288 of the United Nations General Assembly (20 September 2006) reinforce the importance of implementing these Recommendations.

standards for preventing and combating money laundering<sup>1</sup> and terrorist financing. In any financial transaction to get to know the customer it is essential to ensure that the funds involved are not linked to crime and terrorism. However, in a digital context traditional verification tools are not included. The FATF has approved guidelines<sup>2</sup> that will help governments, financial institutions, virtual asset service providers and other regulatory units determine whether a digital ID is suitable for customer verification. Digital ID validity can be made easier and cheaper and it will be safer to identify individuals in the financial sector. This will also help monitor requirements and minimize human vulnerabilities in control measures. Digital ID systems are evolving very fast. To determine if a digital ID is valid, governments, financial institutions, and other stakeholders need to understand the security level of the technological system, architecture, and digital ID governance. Depending on the level of security, it is determined whether the appropriate independent reliability in light of the potential risks used may or may not facilitate illegal financing.

With over 1.7 billion adults worldwide who do not process with banks and 26% of them report deficiencies in documentation as an obstacle to accessing the banking system, digital ID offers another significant benefit. A strong digital ID can allow individuals without a traditional identification to have in the other hand a strong form of identification in order to access financial services and improve financial inclusion. The number of digital transactions has increased by approximately 13% per year. From 2022 it is estimated that it will reach 60% of global GDP which will be digitalized. There is a huge demand from the private sector to be able to confidently identify people in the digital environment. Currently, there are no universally accepted international standards for digital ID development. The guideline sets a number of standards as a framework for guaranteeing digital IDs, especially those in force in the United States and the European Union, to establish links between the highly technological world of digital IDs and policy development to combat money laundering and financing of terrorism. The FATF sought comments on its guidance that could clarify how digital identity systems can be used to verify clients through a public consultation.

The guideline clarifies that not every face-to-face identification of the client and transactions relying on reliable independent systems and digital identification with appropriate risk mitigation measures may present a standard level of risk or may even be low risk.

## Conclusion

Based on what is elaborated above, regarding the inclusion of the use of financial technology for payment services, we conclude that the Albanian market will undoubtedly welcome and use it as a suitable tool for performing transactions faster, better and at no cost. A very important role in this process undoubtedly will be played by AML agency. Based on the conclusion it is recommended to the AML agency that should instruct in a simplified manner on the appropriate measures to be taken by financial entities that want to embrace this innovation in performing payments.

Financial institutions in the Albanian market must take initiatives to enable the performance of these online financial services in a digital environment. However, compared to the bureaucracies and administrative barriers of banks, they will greatly facilitate the

<sup>1</sup> Gordon, I. (2011) Losing the War Against Dirty Money. *Duke Journal of Comparative and International Law* p. 503.

<sup>2</sup> FATF March 2020 Guidelines <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/Digital-ID-in-brief.pdf> visited on 08.06.2020.

development of transactions more quickly and efficiently. It is recommended to the financial institution that they must carry out detailed risk-based analysis, for the process of distance identification of the client which must be carried out in compliance with the Law on Prevention of Money Laundering and at the same time with the Law on Data Protection. Since distance identification as a process involves biometric data of individuals, the processing of personal data may jeopardize their privacy.

Undoubtedly, the supervisory role is also very important in this process. Currently, the Central Bank of Albania has not made public any of its initiatives regarding the implementation of Directive (EU) 2015/2366 on the facilitation of the performance of the payment service, as well as the Regulations for its implementation. Therefore it is recommended the development of an appropriate, regulatory, and supervisory ecosystem for financial technology. Based on the Bank of Albania's Regulation on Prevention of Money Laundering it is stipulated that the online process must be evaluated by financial entities as high risk and on those clients will be implemented enhanced vigilance. But the FATF's guideline clarifies that not every face-to-face identification of the client and transactions relying on reliable independent systems and digital identification with appropriate risk mitigation measures may present a standard level of risk or may even be low risk. So, it is recommended to the Bank of Albania to change the level of risk from high to low risk on online process clients. The promotion of innovation in the financial system, should be the direction of the Central Bank of Albania's strategy. Adoption of financial innovation will bring identifiable benefits to society, more appropriate, safer and cheaper financial services, or in other words will contribute to the sustainable development of the financial market.

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- [5] <https://www.lb.lt/en/fintech-and-innovation>
- [6] <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/Digital-ID-in-brief.pdf>

## Correlation of Society Stringency/Openness Measures with Timely Trend of COVID-19 Cases - Case Study – Albania Versus Italy

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### Abstract

Following the WHO<sup>1</sup> declaration for COVID-19 as a pandemic, this disease has caused an international crisis with a severe impact on economic and health care systems. After the first cases reported in China, the disease has progressively widespread worldwide where all affected countries has adapted specific safety protocols and tried to find new therapies in order to face this new disease. The final objective is to evaluate the overall impact of stringency measures taken from Albanian and Italian governmental authorities in relation to daily cases of COVID-19 in each country. This is a descriptive paper where the data collected in Albania and Italy according to authority-based stringency measures were compared with their output; temporary trend of daily cases. Officially Albania reported the first COVID-19 case in 8<sup>th</sup> of March<sup>2</sup> in an Albanian citizen just arrived from Italy, meanwhile in Italy the first cases dated January 31<sup>st</sup> were a Chinese couple in Rome who had travel from Wuhan City<sup>3</sup>. Both governments took action by applying different closer measures; thereby Blavatnik School of Government has introduced the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT)<sup>4</sup> in order to quantifying numerically these actions. According to OxCGRT, Albania and Italy present similar level of stringency indicator, but epidemiological curve of daily cases is totally different in shape. Italian curve corresponds to a typical outbreak, while Albania curve seem like any endemic disease in the population. In front of this pandemic, the Albanian curve might be cut off as a result a small number of tests carried out by Albania authorities, 6906 tests/million population, which is far lower than tests performed by Italian authorities, which is 11 times fold (79908 test/million population<sup>5</sup>). Toward end of

<sup>1</sup> WHO. Statement on the second meeting of the International Health Regulations (2005). Emergency Committee regarding the outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). [https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/30-01-2020-statement-on-the-second-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-\(2005\)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/30-01-2020-statement-on-the-second-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-(2005)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)). Jan 30, 2020

<sup>2</sup> WHO. Novel Coronavirus(2019-nCoV) Situation Report – 11, 9 MARCH 2020

<sup>3</sup> WHO. Novel Coronavirus(2019-nCoV) Situation Report – 11 31 JANUARY 2020, [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200131-224-sitrep-11-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=de7c0f7\\_4](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200131-224-sitrep-11-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=de7c0f7_4)

<sup>4</sup> [www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/covidtracker](http://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/covidtracker)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

May the number of COVID-19 were dropped so both governments planned to relief closure measures by opening most of public and economic activities. In front of the fear that COVID-19 could rise up again, as a result of virus transmission amongst people that was observed in Albania, while in Italy continued with the low and decreasing trend of disease cases. Data and their comparison though different indicators or index, shows that stringency measures could contribute on a temporary diminution of new cases of COVID-19, but if not are accompanied with individual protection measures, and/or special vulnerable groups it might be a missing opportunity because the general population might lose what was achieved during national quarantine. On the other hand, taking in consideration low public spending per capita in Albania (307 USD, 2014), moving from "hummer" toward "dance" phase, managing and supporting health system is critical<sup>1</sup>. Public health services should be mainly the entitled authorities to monitor data and come up with specific and efficient measures in order to prevent an increase of cases on the overall population.

**Keywords:** Albania, Italy, stringency index, epidemic, COVID-19; Pandemic;

## Introduction

The "severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2" (SARS-CoV-2), officially named as "Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19)" by World Health Organization (WHO) on February 11, 2020<sup>2</sup> actually the new coronavirus culpable of one of the most severe worldwide pandemic in recent history. On December 31, 2019, the WHO China Country Office documented many cases of unknown origin pneumonia in the city of Wuhan, in the Hubei Province. A new type of Chinese Coronavirus, that was isolated on January 7, 2020 and its genetic sequence was shared with the rest of the world in order to develop specific diagnostic kits and to fight this new battle together. Other possible etiological agents such as flu, avian influenza, adenovirus infection, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) were previously excluded<sup>3</sup>.

Albania and Italy are not just two neighbour countries, but they have tight relations because of big Albania community who lives and work in Italy and business Italian people who live and

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<sup>1</sup> The economic and social impact of COVID-19, Health systems, Western Balkans, regular economic report, N0.17, Spring 2020;

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/650491590681594215/The-Economic-and-Social-Impact-of-COVID-19-Health-Systems>

<sup>2</sup> WHO, Emergency Committee regarding the outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

[https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/30-01-2020-statement-on-the-second-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-\(2005\)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/30-01-2020-statement-on-the-second-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-(2005)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)). Jan 30, 2020

<sup>3</sup> WHO. Disease outbreak news: Update. 12 January 2020

<https://www.who.int/csr/don/12-january-2020-novel-coronavirus-china/en/>; WHO. Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Situation Report - 1 21 JANUARY 2020 [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200122-sitrep-2-2019-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=4d5bcbca\\_2](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200122-sitrep-2-2019-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=4d5bcbca_2); Wu, Z; McGoogan, JM. Characteristics of and important lessons from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak in China. JAMA. 2020; 2019: 25-28

work in Albania since 30 years. Therefore, are two countries which are not in the same geographic position, but enormous movement of people and goods, makes them vulnerable to each other epidemic issues. According to Imperial College COVID-19 Response team<sup>1</sup>, two fundamental strategies are possible: (a) Suppression, here the aim is to reduce the reproduction number (the average number of secondary cases each case generates),  $R$ , to below 1 and hence to reduce case numbers to low levels or eliminate human-to-human transmission. (b) Mitigation, here the aim is to use non-pharmaceutical interventions (and vaccines or drugs, if available) not to interrupt transmission completely, but to reduce the health impact of an epidemic. In this scenario, population immunity builds up through the epidemic, leading to an eventual rapid decline in case numbers and transmission dropping to low levels. Albania and Italy used suppression strategy to reduce the reproduction number, hence to reduce case numbers and to protect healthcare system from being overloaded.

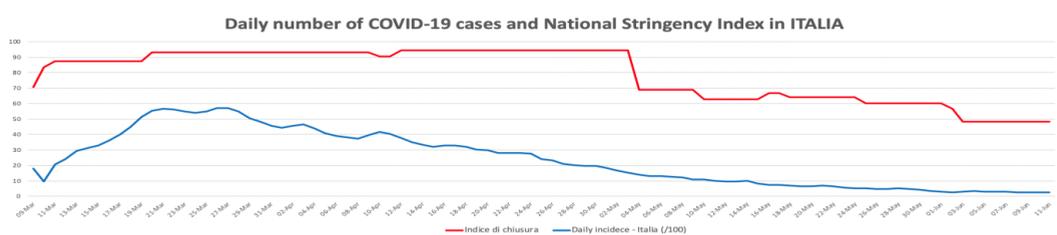
### Methodology:

This paper is descriptive analysis, by collecting data from official sources and other think tank institutions, in order to analyse different indicators, like: daily new cases, stringency index, average tests performed to population, etc.

### Results:

First step to manage the situation, or mitigate spread of virus was close of schools, universities and public activities in both countries, Albania<sup>2</sup> and Italy. Within few days from the appearance of the first covid-19 cases, both countries switched strategy, from mitigation toward suppression, by achieving stringency index about 90 (Graph,. No, 1&2)

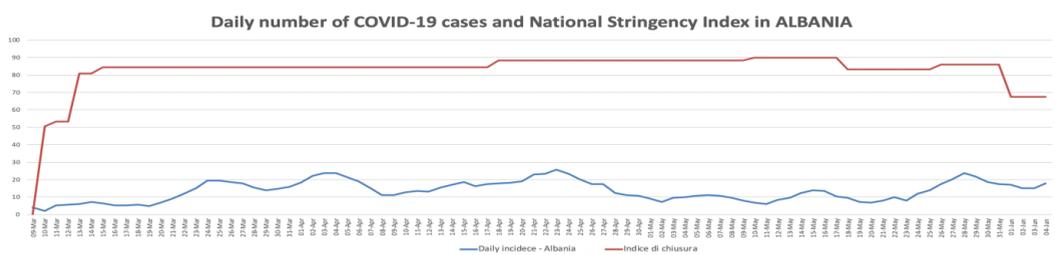
#### Graph no.1: Stringency index and daily number of covid-19 in Italy



#### Graph no.2: Stringency index and daily number of covid-19 in Albania

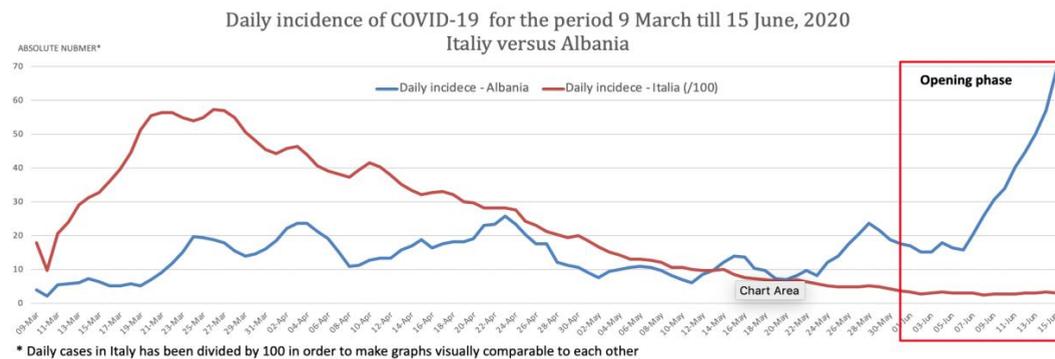
<sup>1</sup> "Impact of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) to reduce COVID-19 mortality and healthcare demand", Imperial College COVID-19 Response Team, <https://spiral.imperial.ac.uk:8443/handle/10044/1/77482>

<sup>2</sup> Decision of Ministry of Health of Albania, No. 135, date 09.03.2020 and N0.132 date 08.03.2020

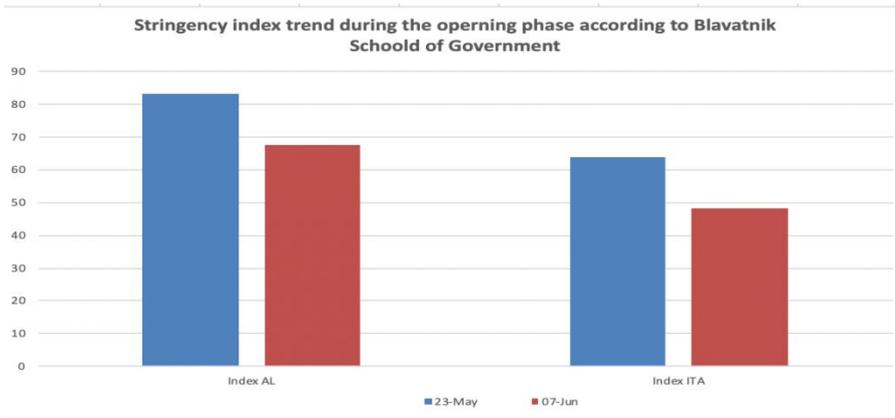


Both governments started to relief closure measures by opening most of public and economic activities, which was expected to be accompanied with an increase of daily new cases because of increased social activities. But, it happened an sharp increase of daily cases in Albania and steady situation in Italy, even because opening measures were almost the same in both countries (Graph no. 3 &4).

**Graph. No. 3: Daily incidence Albania vs Italy**

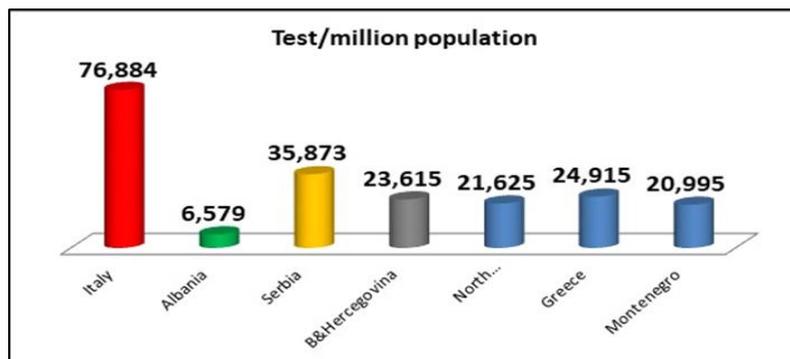


**Graph. No. 4: Stringency index Albania vs Italy**



Moving from "hammer" toward "dance"<sup>1</sup> phase, managing and supporting health system is critical<sup>2</sup>. The increase of new cases in Albania as relieving closure measures happened because according to Health System Analysis, 2019 Global Health Security Index<sup>3</sup>, has very low score, 0 points in "Infection control practices and availability of equipment". On the other hand, has lower region score for "Capacity to test and approve new medical countermeasures" with 50 points, Graph No. 5 shows Albania has the lowest number of tests per million population in the region, 11 fold less than Italy.

### Graph no.5: Test per million population performed in Mediterranean region



On the other hand, workforce migration and shortages also make health systems vulnerable during a pandemic<sup>4</sup>. Health worker emigration has been a creeping challenge for Albania. In 2013, Albania had 128 physicians per 100,000 people, but in 2016 according to Order of Physicians there are 400 doctors have asked for "Certificate of good standing" in order to go and work abroad. As consequence of massive migration and other factors Albania has the lowest rate of medical doctors for covering healthcare to population, by 1.1 doctors for 1000 inhabitants<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://medium.com/@tomaspuayo/coronavirus-the-hammer-and-the-dance-be9337092b56>.

<sup>2</sup> The economic and social impact of COVID-19, Health systems, Western Balkans, regular economic report, N0.17, Spring 2020;

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/650491590681594215/The-Economic-and-Social-Impact-of-COVID-19-Health-Systems>

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Deep Knowledge Group study has ranked both Italy and Albania in tier 3, but Italy is ranked in 53<sup>th</sup> position with 533 points, and Albania in 88<sup>th</sup> position with 476 points<sup>1</sup>, by scoring lower point in each field comparing to Italy (Pict. 1).



**Picture no. 1: Safety Ranking by Deep Knowledge Group Albania vs Italy.**

### Conclusions

Data and their comparison though different indicators or index, shows that stringency measures could contribute on a temporary diminution of new cases of COVID-19, but if not are accompanied with individual protection measures, and/or special vulnerable groups it might be a missing opportunity because the general population might lose what was achieved during national quarantine. On the other hand, moving from “hammer” toward “dance” phase, managing and supporting health system is critical<sup>2</sup>. Taking in consideration low public spending per capita (307 USD, 2014) and low healthcare workforce 1.1 doctors for 1000 inhabitants, Albania should invest more in healthcare system. Public health services should be mainly the entitled authorities to monitor data and come up with specific and efficient measures in order to prevent an increase of cases on the overall population.

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# COVID and Christ: Remote, Faith-Based Activities Using Religious Technology in the Catholic Church

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## Abstract

Only 39 percent of American Catholics say they attend church in any given week (Gallup, 2019). In an effort to connect and engage the global congregation of the Catholic Church, the Vatican partnered with an external developer to create mobile learning tools—a project cumulating with the iOS and Android app "Click to Pray" and hardware extension app "eRosary." Click to Pray is the prayer platform of the "Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network" (PWPN), a pontifical work whose mission is to mobilize Catholics through prayer and action. Founded in 1844 as the Apostleship of Prayer, the PWPN is present in 98 countries and is made up of more than 35 million Catholics. This study aims to review the technology and security of the software; design of the hardware; the end-user experience, and the primary demographics of those who have downloaded either the Click to Pray or eRosary apps. This paper will also examine the idea of authenticity and replication of the religious experience in a remote atmosphere, in addition to its uses and gratifications. The eRosary is also capable of monitoring the health of the user, providing an interesting example of mobile learning device convergence for mind, body, and spirit.

**Keywords:** biometric user interfaces, wearable technology, religious technology, mobile learning, data privacy

## Introduction

"You are dust and you will be dust..."

It was Ash Wednesday, February 26, 2020. The emergence of COVID-19 would soon change the nation and world forever. There was already talk within the church about social distancing; nevertheless, services still ran much as they always had, including the bestowing of ashes—and, even more alarmingly, handshake greetings between parishioners. By the time Easter Sunday arrived, there were no services to attend.

There have been at least three other major pandemics in the past century; however, none of them involved church closures—particularly, a closure during one of the most holy days of the Catholic calendar. Amidst a global pandemic, many Catholics have found themselves displaced, with most churches closed for services. Additionally, some parishioners are disabled, impaired, or without transportation. Now, certain religious acts are being examined anew in a digital atmosphere.

Literature Review

The Vatican's 2020 Easter services were conducted remotely. The Pope and a small fraction of clerics, alone in the Basilica, prayed as cameras beamed and streamed the service to parishioners. While the Archdiocese of Philadelphia encouraged private praying to the rosary as a "personal time of prayer," the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network's recently launched "Click to Pray" and the "Click to Play eRosary" as an alternative to solitary prayer for the more communally-minded parishioner. Advances in technology allow for more connectivity within a church community during a time when COVID-19 has eliminated the ability to worship in-person at the local Catholic church.

Figure 1. "Click to Pray eRosary" beads shown on charger with the companion app shown on the cell phone. Source: Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, 2019.

### **Click to Pray: background**

Click to Pray is the prayer platform of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (PWPN), whose pontifical mission is to mobilize Catholics through prayer and action to face the challenges of humanity and the missions of the Church. These challenges are presented in the form of prayer intentions entrusted by the Pope to the Catholic community. Their mission is part of the dynamic of "The Heart of Jesus," a mission of compassion for the world, founded in 1844 as "The Apostleship of Prayer." The PWPN is present in 98 countries and is made up of more than 35 million Catholics, including the Eucharistic Youth Movement. The Pope established this ecclesial service in March 2018 as a pontifical work and approved its new statutes. Click to Pray invites everyone to pray for and act upon the challenges of humanity and the mission of the Church as identified by the Pope in his monthly intentions.

La Machi Group serves as communications agency hired by the PWPN to produce and manage their specific hardware and mobile application projects. La Machi Group led the design, digital development, digital marketing, community management and press and promotion campaign. Moreover, La Machi Group partnered with GTI (Acer, Inc.) for the hardware execution of eRosary, culminating in a product that also has an integrated fitness tracker with six-axis inertial sensing. The eRosary bracelet is also IP67 water and dust resistant and connects using Bluetooth 5.0. The hardware itself contains a 15mAh lithium-ion battery and offers wireless charging on a proprietary cradle.

### **Mission and intention of the Click to Pray application**

The purpose of the Click to Pray app is to connect people around the world through prayer. Each user with an account has the opportunity to share intentions with the 'Prayer Wall' feature, allowing users to submit intentions which are then shared with all members of the community for prayer. When the user clicks Click to Pray, one prayer is added to that intention. Generally, users share personal intentions, but there are also registered prayers for human tragedies or events that may have recently occurred. In fact, the 'Daily Prayer' is the app's most popular feature; for example, there were many reported prayer intentions for the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. What seems most remarkable is that this specific intention not only appeared in Spanish, but is translated into other common languages, too, highlighting Click to Pray's main purpose and slogan: connect your prayer with the world.

Demographic information of active locations worldwide

1. Website

### 1.a. Top three user countries (since the launch):

United States: 19.07%

Brazil: 10.68%

Italy, 10.12%

#### 1.b. Top three user languages (since the launch)

English: 28.13%

Spanish: 27.38%

Portuguese: 23.4%

### 2. App

#### 2.a Top three countries

Italy: 22.1%

Portugal: 16%

United States: 14.3%

### 3. Facebook

#### 3.a User language:

English: 98,596

Spanish: 25,744

French: 31,500

Portuguese: 38,659

German: 539

Italian: 3,767

Chinese: 529

### 4. Twitter

#### 4.a User language:

Spanish: 51%

English: 45%

Portuguese: 17%

French: 7%

Italian: 6%

### 5. Instagram

## 5.a Top five user countries

Brazil: 15%

Portugal: 11%

USA: 6%

Colombia: 5%

Argentina: 5%

### Technology

La Machi Group identified the target audiences of "Click to Pray," dividing them into three types:

1. according to the message
2. according to the countries
3. according to their relationship with the application

Based on the aforementioned types, researchers then created different profiles. To better understand the User Experience (UX), La Machi Group examined users' age, sex, knowledge of the project, and whether old or new users. The results of that study helped La Machi Group identify points of improvement in the UX.

The mobile application Click to Pray is a non-proprietary native build. Upon the launch, the initial downloads totaled over 520,000:

- Android 318,534
- iOS 202,324
- Total: 520,858

Within the first six months, Click to Pray reached 2,000,000 members among its social networks, app users, newsletter subscribers, and website visits. Of smartphone users, 64% were Android and 36% iOS. The number of subscribers continues to increase daily.

### Other Catholic mobile applications

The Catholic Church and Vatican City previously used mobile applications available within the City State and Holy See. They are officially published by the Segreteria per la Comunicazione (Communication Secretary). Among them are companion apps for Vatican.va, L'Osservatore Romano (the newspaper for the Holy See), Radio Vaticana, and weekly Homilies.

### Methodology

#### Location of study

The current study was conducted on or near campus at Kennesaw State University, as well as online through computer-aided research. The location was chosen because the researchers conducting the study live and work near Kennesaw State University, making participation more accessible.

#### Research design and sampling procedure

The study took place for 30 continuous days from April 1-30, 2020. The timeframe was intentionally chosen because it was long enough to chart progress and to see positive outcomes within the user-interface—as well as to examine potential problematic situations within the app and hardware, if applicable.

#### Data collection

Data was gathered for specific themes and trends, including commonalities between Click to Pray and its associated eRosary mobile applications. The data gathered was both qualitative and quantitative. Certain measurements were made regarding specific Uses and Gratifications.

#### Data-gathering instruments

1. Privacy: within Terms of Service.
2. Efficacy and usability: ease of use.
3. Comparison to traditional worship: Application or replication of authentic experience(s) during use.
4. User Education: measured data presented to users during use.

#### Data Analysis

Focusing on each measurement, the current study analyzed and organized the gathered data into specific categories to best examine the effects of the Click to Pray mobile applications; it also examined negative and positive data in relation to the total testing period while recognizing and charting relevant patterns and themes in the study's results.

#### Results

Focusing each measurement, the researchers analyzed the gathered data and organized it into specific categories to best examine the usability of the Click to Pray and eRosary mobile learning applications, including examining negative and positive data in relation to the total testing period (April 1-30, 2020):

1. Privacy: including terms of service.

#### Positive outcomes:

- Users are afforded the option of praying directly with the Pope, or with fellow users through the social network. Moreover, the app enables users to discover prayer intentions through the 'Prayer with the Network' and 'Pray Every Day' features (morning, afternoon, night). Users can also connect with their friends through the intentions and requests that they make. There are prayer campaigns and donation information as well.

Figure 2. This figure depicts the online notice when Pope Francis issued "Special Week of Prayer" to end the pandemic. Source: Click to Pray app, 2020.

#### Potential negative outcomes:

- A user cannot interact with the Click to Pray app unless they sign up with their Facebook, Google, or email accounts and they must also enter into the Terms of Service.

## 2. Efficacy and Usability

### Positive outcomes:

- Click to Pray has a list of tasks that the user can select before undertaking activities such as praying with the network, praying with the pope, and specific prayer campaigns.

Figure 3. Scheduling reminders to pray shown within the app. Source: <http://jesuits.ca/news-detail?TN=NEWS-20190123125348>, 2019.

- Click to Pray also offers a scheduled reminder to pray, with pop-up notifications when it is time to pray to the rosary.

- Users can customize health goals, such as steps per day. The eRosary will vibrate when the health goals are achieved, as well as incoming calls on a connected device.

- The eRosary bracelet also includes statistical information for rosaries prayed, complete rosaries prayed, and the total amount of time praying.

### Potential negative outcomes:

- The eRosary hardware must be charged on a separate charging cradle daily (it also has USB connectivity).

- The eRosary issues a prayer notification twice a day, every day. By default, the application reminds the user in the morning and evening, which may prove potentially inconvenient for those who have not customized their reminders on the app. Notifications can be turned off under settings.

- The Bluetooth connection can sometimes exhibit latency issues if the phone is housed in a case. However, the Bluetooth does not have to be connected at all times as the eRosary will update the data with the companion app once it is reconnected.

Figure 4. Screenshots displaying eRosary's mobile learning features. Source: <https://erosary.clicktoprayerosary.org/en-us/index.html>, 2019.

3. Comparison to traditional worship: Application or replication of authentic experience(s) during use.

### Positive outcomes

- The eRosary was designed to duplicate the authentic experience of traditional rosary prayer for the user. The physical movements of rosary prayer are duplicated, helping to educate the new user on how to pray to the rosary with the corresponding mobile application.

- The eRosary hardware is constructed to be worn as a bracelet and manufactured with the look and feel of a traditional rosary. The device is outfitted with black agate and hematite rosary beads, and a 'smart cross,' which stores the data connected to the associated application.

### Potential negative outcomes

- To unlock eRosary, the user is required to hold the beads and tap the four positions of your body to make the sign of the cross. There was difficulty in duplicating success in unlocking the hardware multiple times without issue.

- The user must shake the eRosary twice to move to the next prayer steps, which was also problematic.

- The corresponding app does not encourage engagement when praying to the rosary—it serves only as a ‘reminder’ message.

4. User education: measured data presented to users during use.

Positive outcomes:

- The eRosary mobile application successfully gamifies the rosary, with daily encouragements for success with messages such as “For a complete rosary, you need to pray: Joyful, Luminous, Glorious,” which appear on the application’s corresponding dashboard.

- The corresponding eRosary app can integrate with eRosary devices, doubling as a fitness tracker providing detailed information for the user when worn daily. This data includes steps, calories burned, and meters walked per day, week, month, and year. Moreover, users can access all recorded data, which is displayed in half-hour increments.

Potential negative outcomes:

- The eRosary must be worn in order to register the prayers on the corresponding app (“Click to Pray’s eRosary”). Many times, the connection drifted, not allowing the Rosary to update the fitness tracker feature.

- The eRosary measures biometric data from three areas: steps, calories burned, and meters walked per day. The mobile application does not contextualize the data nor show any graphical representation of progress beyond the daily total. The user can toggle between dates, however.

## Discussion

Only 39 percent of American Catholics say they attend church in any given week. With this data in mind, the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network collaborated with La Machi Group, who, in partnership with GTI (Acer Group), created the Click To Pray app and the Click To Pray eRosary in order to facilitate engagement, connectivity, and mobile learning. This paper discusses application topics including the background of Click to Pray and the eRosary mobile applications, also reviewing similar Vatican mobile applications as well as user education, uses and gratifications.

## Comparisons to Previous Research

While there have been no ‘officially released’ academic or consumer trials of this product, consumer statistics from La Machi Group are available online. The applications have mixed product reviews from consumers, showing no outstanding public opinions either way. Several reviewers, however, noted the sophistication of the eRosary from a hardware perspective; other reviews noted that the eRosary’s privacy may have been compromised due to hacking within hours of the initial release (October 2019).

## Limitations of the Study

There were no focus groups or other large-scale tests of the product. The study was limited to discovery research based on the criteria outlined in the methodology and results sections of

this paper. Moreover, there was no way to measure multiple-user, self-reported success with learning to pray to the rosary.

### Suggestions for Future Research

There should be a large-scale study with pre- and post-testing of knowledge about users' backgrounds and abilities to chart progress in learning how to pray to the Rosary by using the eRosary as a mobile learning tool. Moreover, an analysis of vulnerability of the data and associated privacy concerns should be examined in the context of the hardware and software.

### Conclusion

The Click to Pray and eRosary mobile applications allow users to monitor their health and remain committed to praying to the rosary while engaged in various tasks inside and outside the home. Catholics affected by the COVID-19 pandemic have an option to ease the struggles of social isolation and self-isolation measures. The Click to Pray and eRosary mobile applications provide the benefit of using mobile learning technology for teaching how to pray to the rosary and reminders for prayer that can be controlled by the user. The hardware and software do have several drawbacks but they do not outweigh the benefits dependent on situational analysis and user needs.

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## Distant Teaching and Learning for the Foreseeable Future - Georgian Universities' Students and Professors Perspective

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### Abstract

Like the rest of the world, because of COVID-19 and the new reality, most professors and students suddenly have found themselves forced to use technology while teaching and learning. All of a sudden, every faculty member faced the challenge of delivering education online and accordingly every student receiving education online. On the other hand, it was an overwhelming time for the administration to achieve quality online education at scale. Nevertheless, most universities in Georgia immediately took the challenges of converting to asynchronous learning. The paper presents findings of the survey conducted at the present stage at Georgian private and state universities, comparing students' and professors' satisfaction with e-learning. Surprisingly, it appears that professors feel better motivated with online teaching rather than students. Almost every respondent agrees that what seems like the best-case scenario out of this crisis needs much stronger contribution and elaboration in the years ahead.

**Keywords:** pandemics, online learning, students' satisfaction, professors' satisfaction, correlation.

### Introduction

Though we all believe that the face-to-face environment of learning will never go away, it is fascinating how suddenly we woke up in a new reality. Moreover, the new reality is that COVID-19 is increasingly dominating the way we live, work, study, and rest. If we take even a quick glance at the media, we will be overwhelmed by the predictions of the foreseeable future. What impact can this sharp, forced immersion and experimentation with technology-enabled distance learning have on higher education? What are the feelings of every faculty member who all so suddenly were asked to deliver education online? What are the reactions of every student who unexpectedly started to receive an education online? How happy are they? How satisfied are they? Does it somehow affected their emotional well-being? Finally, what institutions and educators can do to ensure a better rather than worse outcome? As the semester retreats, we think it is high time to ask these questions.

## The Aim of the Study

The aim of the presented paper is to find out how university professors and students evaluate online teaching and learning experiences, quality of their teaching and learning, engagement during online lectures, satisfaction with assessment methods, and their perspective for the foreseeable future. This will provide educators with useful insight to better plan for the inevitable future.

## Students Satisfaction and Online Learning

Modern technologies have changed the traditional classrooms, the ways professors and students communicate and made it possible to dissolve any type of boundaries. Modern students are inseparable with technologies, they prefer active, rather than passive learning atmosphere, via their gadgets they are part of a highly interactive world, and accordingly, they expect the same in their classes. Therefore, it is obvious that even far ahead of the virus we have been moving slowly towards it. The difference was the fact that some countries have already been well prepared for it others were forced to start it hastily.

Before the pandemics, several studies were conducted regarding students' satisfaction with online learning. At the University of Central Florida, the research aimed to answer the question if there is a possible relationship between student satisfaction with online learning and the theory of psychological contracts.<sup>1</sup> The authors consider that online learning has separated the classroom and we are no longer bound by physical space. Thus, the solution can be blending.

Gleason, B. & Greenhow, C. (2017) discuss the Potential of Teaching and Learning via Hybrid Learning in Higher Education. They also suggest that it offers advantages over the traditional classroom, including affordances for fostering students' embodiment in the classroom, their feelings of belonging and trust, and their ability to contribute ideas in authentic ways. Ghilay, Y. (2017) indicates the advantage of integrating technology into learning. Brown, M., Dehoney, J., & Millichap, N. (2015) in their report outline the key principles to guide the development of a new learning ecosystem. Liu, O. L. (2012) considers critically important to understand student learning and experiences with online education.

Many educators provide survival guides for online teaching and assessment (Boettcher, J., & Conrad, R. 2010; Clinefelter, David L. 2012; Christopher D. 2014; Johnson, A. 2013; Vai M. & Sosulski K. 2015)

## The Coronavirus Crisis and the World Higher Education

Hundreds of colleges have announced in early March that because of health concerns related to COVID-19, they are ending in-person classes and moving all instruction to virtual settings. They are using different means around this -some are specifically talking about shifting to online education, while others talk about remote classes and the like. Many of them are taking advantage of (and in some cases extending) spring breaks and other cessations of coursework to prepare for the shift, and it will be some time before they can really tell what forms of learning the institutions will adopt during this period.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1062943.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2020/03/18/most-teaching-going-remote-will-help-or-hurt-online-learning>

Different opinions emerged related to distance learning. Will the transition to distance learning be a benefit or detriment to online learning? Some consider that urgent and universal adoption of technology-based learning will support the process of adoption of new forms of learning. Others argue that the transformation done hastily and unprofessionally will be resulted in the flawed product rather than advanced and innovative education.

It has been interesting reviewing about how world-class universities and colleges reacted to the pandemic. Harvard University advised students not to return to campus after spring break and to expect to complete classwork remotely until further notice in an effort to avoid the spread of covid-19. "The idea that Harvard would switch to online classes seemed like an overreaction just a couple of days ago", Jason Furman, professor of the practice of economic policy at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, wrote in a tweet. <sup>1</sup>

"There will be no face-to-face lectures at the University of Cambridge over the course of the next academic year due to coronavirus" it has been announced. However, lectures will be available to students online and "it may be possible to host smaller teaching groups in person" if they meet social distancing requirements, the university said. University campuses have been closed this term by the Covid-19 outbreak. All teaching at the university was moved online in March, while exams are being carried out virtually. <sup>2</sup> Protopsaltis, S., & Baum, S. (2019) state, that technology can not only increase access to education, but as well enhance learning experiences, and reduce the cost of providing high-quality postsecondary education.

As part of #AtHome campaign, the British Council organised a series of dialogues between universities across Europe and Central Asia. The series aimed to help universities stay connected with their peers from around the world, and share their experience and lessons learned during the Covid-19 crisis. The series explores the challenges many universities face in the areas of distance learning, quality of online classes, student mobility, and research collaboration during the lockdown. This online series brought together Higher Education professionals from around the world.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Coronavirus Crisis and Higher Education Challenges in Georgia**

To better confront the COVID-19 pandemic an anti-crisis plan was introduced in Georgia. The Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of Georgia, Mikheil Chkhenkeli urged the professors and the heads of the universities to quickly mobilize resources and switch to distance learning mode to ensure an uninterrupted process of education.

Accordingly, most universities resumed the spring semester from March 16 in the e-learning mode. Since all universities faced one common challenge, all decisions were made based on mutual assistance and the sharing of experiences between state and private universities.

The Minister noted that the universities were advised to follow the guidelines of e-learning and quality assurance developed by the Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the European Higher Education (ENQA).

At this stage, higher education institutions use various applications and online platforms that promote distance learning such as: Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Moodle, and Google Classroom. The Ministry has also developed relevant guidelines and video tutorials for academic staff and

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/03/10/harvard-moves-classes-online-advises-students-stay-home-after-spring-break-response-covid-19/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-52732814>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.britishcouncil.am/en/stay-home/higher-education-dialogue>

students as well. In order to better manage the learning process, the curricula have been modified; online lectures/seminars have been uploaded to the relevant platforms and are now available to all students. Moreover, teaching methods and assessment systems have been revised. The universities have determined the evaluation mechanism based on the recommendation provided by the Ministry. Final exams will be held mainly during stage VI of the restriction relief plan.<sup>1</sup>

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University had to introduce a number of changes in the educational process in order to conduct the learning process accordingly. The changes affected the structure of educational programs, teaching methods and the evaluation system. The changes made in each educational programs were different and tailored to the specifics of the program. Teaching at the university using electronic components began on March 16 and all seven faculties gradually introduced the components of e-learning, synchronous and asynchronous.<sup>2</sup>

Kutaisi Akaki Tsereteli State University also accepted the challenge of online teaching and promptly started using its electronic platforms Microsoft Teams and moodle.atu.edu.ge. For the implementation of the online training faculties provided professors and students with video guides and tutorials. According to the rector's decree online, blended and hybrid forms were introduced.<sup>3</sup>

Davit Agmashenebeli National Defense Academy of Georgia has also moved to distance learning. In addition, to Zoom's video conferencing app, ILIAS learning platform is used to provide students with multimedia programme and course materials. Things went quite smoothly for both students and professors. As one of the students says, "Because of this format, the same quality and high level of training is provided as during the standard mode".<sup>4</sup>

Caucasus University also carried out the E-Learning process. Lectures have been delivered at the times specified in the university's timetables by means of one of Google's products, namely, the "hangout meet" platform. It took just two or three days to fully implement the new method of online teaching. Transformation was not problematic, primarily because the university has been actively using the online platform with relevant presentations and textbooks.<sup>5</sup>

Gori State Teaching University rector Giorgi Sosiashvili also stated that the university staff and students bravely accepted the challenge: "We were in piloting mode for two weeks, in terms of moving to an online teaching platform. We are currently using the ZOOM app for the learning process, the introduction of which has been supported by the Ministry of Education. Trainings were held for professors and administration, and we began online teaching with students at both undergraduate and graduate levels".<sup>6</sup>

Thus, from the several cases discussed above it is apparent that the majority of universities managed to cope with the unexpected reality quite effectively. Organization for Economic Co-

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<sup>1</sup> <http://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=10329&lang=eng>

<sup>2</sup> <https://edu.aris.ge/news/shualeduri-da-finaluri-gamocdebi-ra-cvllilebebs-axorciebebs-tsu-studentebis-shefasebis-miznit.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://atsu.edu.ge/index.php/en/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://edu.aris.ge/news/rogor-afaseben-iunkerebi-onlain-swavlebas-da-ras-amboben-erovnuli-tavdacvis-akademiiis-warmomadgenlebi.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://cu.edu.ge/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://edu.aris.ge/news/yvelanair-pirobas-vqmnit-srulyofili-leqciebis-chasatareblad-giorgi-sosiashvili.html>

operation and Development (OECD) discharged a report on tackling the educational challenges in 2020 caused by COVID-19 pandemic, which confirms the above mentioned. The study examined practices from 98 countries. According to this report the measures taken by the Georgian government to ensure a continuous education process was viewed as one of the most effective examples.<sup>1</sup>

The OECD recognized Georgia as a leading country in this direction. Anthony Salsito, Vice President of Education at Microsoft Corporation, praised the steps taken by the Ministry of Education, to promote distance learning during the COVID-19 crisis. In his speech, he stated "We are inspired by the tremendous effort and resilience of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia in responding to the COVID-19 crisis in adapting the system. It was these steps that helped the students, despite the challenges they faced, to continue their studies without any interruption".<sup>2</sup>

### Method

In order to check students' and professors' satisfaction with e-learning we designed a traditional questionnaire, thus we used the quantitative study to gather information. The questionnaire was divided into two parts containing closed-ended questions. The first part contained questions regarding online teaching and learning. The second part provided spaces where professors and students could express freely (the answers were anonymous) their suggestions, recommendations, wishes and solutions. We uploaded the survey questions at google forms and asked professors and students to participate in the survey. Totally, more than 200 people participated in the survey.

The correlation method was chosen to analyze the interconnection and interrelation between two independent surveys, as this method clearly illustrates the relationship between two independent variables. In our survey, two variables were: 1. professors' attitude towards online teaching and 2. students' evaluation of online learning. The conducted analysis gave us the possibility to observe in which questions there was a positive or negative correlation. In addition, it provided us with specific results requiring from the Department further in-depth analysis and solutions.

### Survey Results and Analysis

We present findings of the survey conducted at the present stage at Georgian private and state universities, comparing students' and professors' satisfaction with e-learning. Majority of professors and students were from Akaki Tsreteli State University Pedagogical Faculty, but there were several respondents from Caucasus University and Tbilisi Open University. Overall, our aim was to find out how satisfied professors and students are with online learning process and resources, assessment and interaction.

The first question was related to the possibility of having an appropriate online learning environment, and the necessary technical equipment.

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Professor's and Students' Technical Means**

	Yes	No	Other
Professors	93.9%	3%	3%

<sup>1</sup> <https://oecdeditoday.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=10318&lang=eng>

Students 86.5% 8.6% 4.9%

From the table, it is clear that professors were nonetheless prepared for the process and the preparation week training and consultations appeared to have a positive outcome on the contrary to the students. In their answers students listed reasons like not having appropriate equipment, bad quality or no internet connection, etc.

**Table 2**

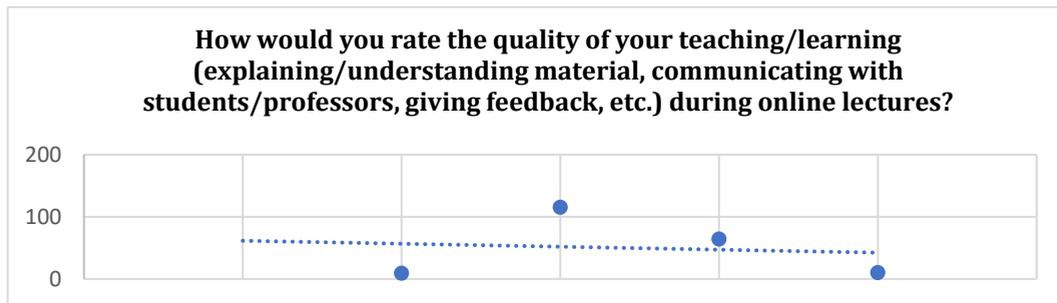


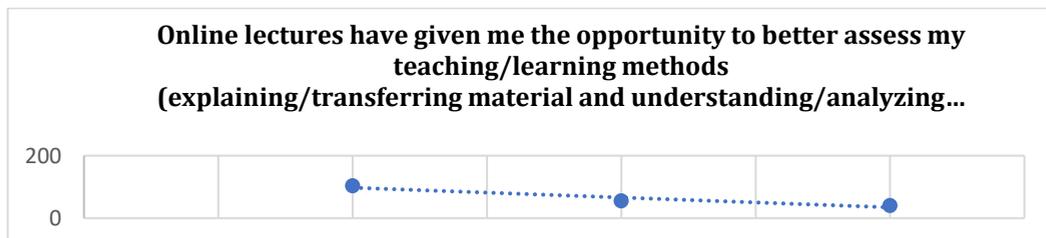
Table 2 presents a general overview of how students and professors generally evaluate the quality of teaching or learning and engagement during online lectures. 27% of professors rated their quality of teaching as excellent, though none of the students has a similar evaluation. 48% of students find their online learning satisfactory and 64% of professors are also content by online teaching. Correlation between students and professors on this question is 76%. This indicated that students and professors are rather satisfied with the quality of online lessons.

**Table 3**



Table 3 presents findings on explaining or understanding the material during online lectures. Professors seem to be more contented by the means they explain the material (63.6%) rather than students (53.3%). However, correlation on this question is 87%. Which proves the fact that both for students and professors the online courses were clear and easily understandable.

**Table 4**



The next question dealt with the very vulnerable issue of self-assessment as online teaching and learning appeared to be a reviler of many drawbacks. The majority of professors (78.8%) found out that the new way of teaching helped them to better evaluate their teaching methods and abilities. 47% of students' also found out that online lectures gave to them an opportunity to better evaluate their learning possibilities, but still, there is 23% who gave negative answer. Correlation between students and professors on this question is rather high - 78%. A high percentage of correlation underlines that most of the students and professors gave positive answers to the upper mentioned question, which means positive feedback in terms of evaluating the participant itself.

**Table 5**

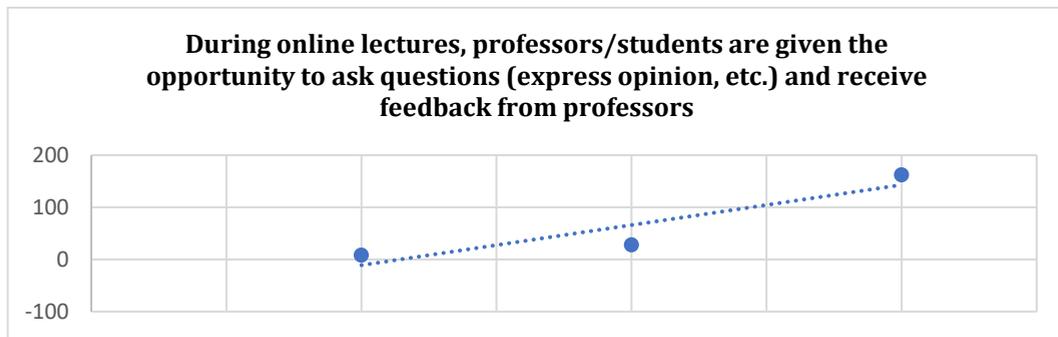
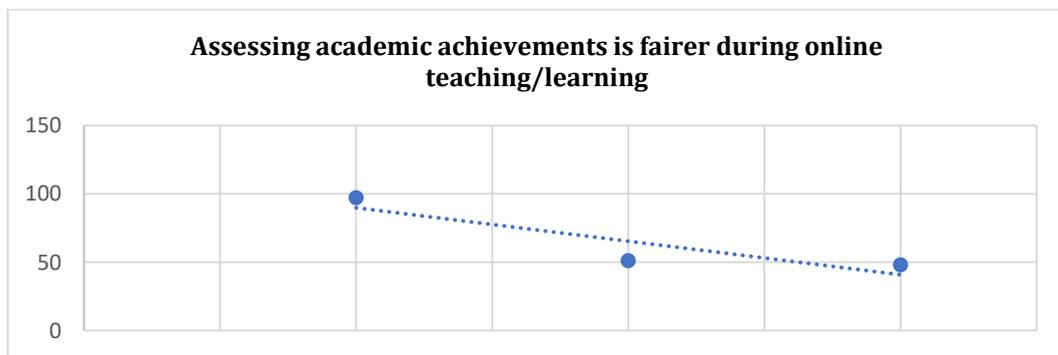


Table 5 presents findings of the opportunity of interaction, which appeared to be very crucial during the pandemics as we were deprived of the possibility of face-to-face communication. Thus, our intention was to find out not only the quality of delivering or attending lectures but also how professors and students cope with the problem of online communication. Correlation between students and professors on this question is 71%. Professors' answers (93.9%) imply that they always gave chances to students to express themselves freely and the majority of students agreed (79.4%). This strongly proves that students nearly always had the opportunity to ask questions during the sessions and receive feedback.

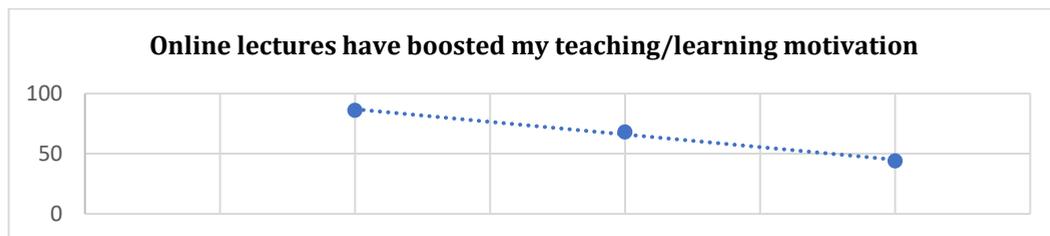
**Table 6**



It appears that neither professors nor students have a clear idea weather assessing academic achievement is fairer during online teaching/learning or not. Only 27.3% of professors said yes, and 33.3% found it difficult to give an answer. 51.5% of students were also uncertain

about the answer, 24% said "yes" and 25% said "no". Correlation between students and professors on this question is 88%. Together these results strongly indicated that both students and professors were unable to give the definite answer to the issue related to the assessment.

**Table 7**



Surprisingly, it appears that professors feel better motivated with online teaching 69.7% rather than students 38.2%. Students pointed out that they miss a lot of their university classes and professors though they also stated that professors made a good effort to explain the material clearly and thoroughly. Students also accentuated the fact that in this way their responsibility and self-drive increased immensely as they felt motivated and even more obliged to learn. They also found that this type of learning was more convenient for them. For professors, it was an extra motivation to prepare online causes and experiment with innovative methods.

Correlation between students and professors on this question is 61%. The answers strongly indicated that professors were more motivated with the online courses rather than students. In addition, nearly a quarter of the students hesitated to give the answer. This indicator may be crucial to investigate why the younger generation was not happy about online courses.

To sum up, major problems encountered during online teaching and learning from professors and students perspective were 1. The internet connection (some students are from remote places, but sometimes the problem was thought out); 2. Technology literacy (some professors say that teaching online is harder and requires additional skills); 3. Remote assessment (some still argue that it is acceptable in terms of formative assessment, but not for summative); 4. Students' motivation.

## Conclusions

We may conclude that currently, all educational institutions face the same challenges even though they might have found different solutions. For students and professors, as the major actors of the education process, this is the most challenging time since the format, mode, and the shape of the teaching and learning process affect them. How shall we prepare for the foreseeable future? A lot will depend on the instructors' competencies to be able to build the balance by providing opportunities for students to learn in an informal atmosphere. With good instructions professors can turn their students into self-determined learners, technology-based pedagogy can help to solve some of the problems.

Currently, we need some guidelines from the government of Georgia introduced in the Law on Higher Education to decide which form is more acceptable fully online or blended, synchronous or asynchronous, how to assure quality, how to control, how to assess, how to modify curriculum and teaching methods etc. There are a number of questions at a present

stage, which are remaining unanswered and need further research and investigation. However, one thing is clear, whatever the perspective is for the foreseeable future we need to enhance methods and innovate learning systems.

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## Education and the Economy of Attention in Times of (post-) Pandemic

Siavash Bakhtiar

### Abstract

With the Coronavirus crisis, online teaching seems to have become a norm in Higher Education. The essay argues that, although this new pedagogical practice is totally acceptable in times of social distancing, it can lead to something more radical, especially with the strong will of HE institutions to continue this mode of teaching beyond the period of *crisis*. The normalisation of dematerialised teaching comes as a challenge to academics: it is imbedded in a new form of economy, where *attention* is a key source of value and labour. The omnipresence of virtual interfaces questions the very fabric of their practice as teachers, especially in humanities, where it can lead to an intensification of the pauperization of teaching staffs, due to forced redundancy. To understand how the normalisation of online teaching after the crisis can be potentially noxious, the essay proceeds by looking at the change of agency of digital tools in teaching contexts, through the concept of *pharmakon*, developed by Bernard Stiegler, that offers the chance for a critique of this new pedagogical strategy which can be positive during the crisis, but potentially destructive after. This concept leads to a new criteria of judgment of the digital (mode of teaching), which has to be understood as a third way between the optimism of managerial perspectives, always keen to consider information technologies as the perfect catalyst for neo-liberal reforms in education; and the traditional technophobia, proper to a philosophical tradition that, from the Frankfurt School to Giorgio Agamben, apprehends the mediation of technology essentially as a critical regression and a modern form of rationalisation that engenders an immense social and psychic alienation.

**Keywords:** distance teaching – higher education – attention economy – crisis – pharmakon – technology

### Introduction

When confronted to the question of the replacement of in-class teaching by online delivery, one can refer to the Gilles Deleuze aphoristic essay modestly called "If Literature Dies, It Will be Murder," where he states that "if audiovisual media ever replace literature, it won't be as competing means of expression, but as a monopoly of structures (...). It's no matter of comparing different sorts of medium. The choice isn't between written literature and audiovisual media. It's between creative forces (in audiovisual media as well as literature) and domesticating forces" (1995: 131). In other words, the matter of concern is not about the intrinsic qualities of the respective modes of expression, but rather about their interaction with a complex network of ideological and material forces that constitutes a specific context.

We have all experienced the Covid-19 Crisis, which has imposed a quasi-global lockdown, with serious consequences in terms of human interactions. In this peculiar context, most of universities in the UK promptly shifted to remote teaching, as a response to the imposed social

distancing. Like in many other countries, teachers and researchers in the UK adapted very quickly. Many of them were not "digital natives;" nonetheless, they had to get used, within a few days, to the migration of teaching on different communication platforms, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom or Panopto, in a great effort to keep the pedagogical continuity. Many of those dedicated academics received a few weeks later, through emails or departmental meetings, a note from the administrators who have decided that the online teaching will be the privileged option until the end of 2020, and maybe beyond. In response, many members of staff and the unions instantly manifested their scepticism about this managerial choice, arguing that it comes as another step to the (neo-liberal) vision of the university, and intensifies the already existing institutional crisis.<sup>1</sup> The suspicion was reinforced a few weeks later with the announcement of mass redundancies, recruitment freezes and cuts in programmes. With those drastic measures, it goes without saying that spectre of a standardization of online delivery after the crisis can be perceived by the university community as another excuse to accelerate the rampant managerialism that puts higher education on the brink.

In times of crisis, critique is more than essential. Questioning is the essence of the job of an academic – some would say, even her responsibility – in difficult times. Therefore, it is important to examine the proliferation of remote teaching, which has important implications for the teachers and the students. If the crisis does not provide (yet) a direct opportunity to undo the endemic marketisation of UK universities, it certainly shows the fragility of its fabric.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, this essay looks at several aspects of this process. In the first section, it shows how the prolongation – and de facto, the replacement of in-site classes by virtual teaching – might eventually accelerate the proletarianization of teachers, and the growing of class of knowledge workers known as the *cognitariat*. In the second section, I claim that there is little ground for criticism for this measure during the pandemic: this unprecedented crisis caught everyone unprepared, and it was the universities' responsibility to keep the students safe. However, this new settlement – which combines multitasking, communication of information on platforms owned by private companies, and long-hours in front of the screen – participates fully to what thinkers like Yves Citton have called an *economy of attention*. This concept which gives ground for reflexion on our adjustment to an exponential use of media technologies in our everyday life. Finally, following Bernard Stiegler's notion of *pharmakon*, I discuss the possibility for a "new" critical theory that perceives objects and virtual activities within their contexts; a pharmacological approach defines them as "cure" or "poison" for the human individuals or

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<sup>1</sup> Last spring, academics and members took part in a strike in 74 universities across the UK. It was another illustration of the rapid precariousness of academics, which is a direct consequence of emergence of corporate mentality and market logic within HE institution. The action mainly led by the UCU (University and College Union), that released a report in June 2019, based on the survey led by HESA (Experts in higher education data and analysis) that "give us is an approximate sense of scale. 37,000 fixed-term, mostly hourly paid teaching staff plus another 60-70,000 hourly paid 'atypical academics' represents a lot of casualised teachers circulating in the higher education system." See: [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10336/Counting-the-costs-of-casualisation-in-higher-education-Jun-19/pdf/ucu\\_casualisation\\_in\\_HE\\_survey\\_report\\_Jun19.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10336/Counting-the-costs-of-casualisation-in-higher-education-Jun-19/pdf/ucu_casualisation_in_HE_survey_report_Jun19.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Luckily, unions and independent associations of academics are already thinking about ways of a restoration a more accessible and public model of higher education. Next to the actions led by UCU, the group The Convention for Higher Education has been very active organising to defend Higher Education from market failure. They have organised several videoconferences since May 2020 and have come up with a manifesto in the form a 9 essential points manifesto based around solidarity around the most vulnerable members of staff and eventually restore higher education as a vital public good that should be accessible to all. The members of the Convention are planning to bring their campaign to the Parliament, with a set of demands for the MPs to put the universities on a long-term sustainable footing. See: <https://heconvention2.wordpress.com/2020/05/25/new-future-for-he/>

societies that interact *with/through* them. This leads to argue that although technologies are interwoven in the fabric of capital expenditure projects of multinational companies, there is a need to look for an alternative to confront the pessimistic narratives that often present those technologies as alienating instruments.

### **The University as Atomised Individuals and the Emergence of the Cognitariat**

The quick response of academics to the need of remote teaching, and the accelerated adaptation – via virtual trainings to develop and teach online courses – has pushed paradoxically the managers to believe that, in a matter of weeks, academics will be ready and happy with this new model for a long period of time – often without taking into account the substantive inequality between them. The differences come in many forms: from the space available in the house to work efficiently – everyone does not have the luxury to have an office at home – to the ability to work with digital tools. By extension, these inequalities can give ground to a division of labour, which will eventually atomise the academic community into individuals, allowing a scenario of competition already present in many companies with a neoliberal ethos, where failure is understood a consequence of an individual's poor choices rather than the collective responsibility.

Also, the Covid-19 Crisis comes as another layer to a latent crisis that has been present for decades. The interest of university managers for technology-enhanced teaching is not new, but the current crisis seems to act as a catalyst to online model of delivery that is already part of the practice of many higher education institutions, as a result of restructuring of universities to maximise profit, especially in the UK.<sup>1</sup> It goes without saying that the implementation of a market-oriented ideology is transforming *de facto* knowledge into a commodity. The traditional argument is that the in-class format is obsolete or anachronistic, and placing business before pedagogy, as David Lewin highlights:

“Is the interest in online education really pedagogical? It seems highly likely that the impetus to develop online education is founded, first and foremost, on economic rather than pedagogic concerns, since online learning is clearly driven by large corporations invested in the proliferation of online technologies, as well as affording extraordinary scalability and restricting the greatest cost in traditional education, the expense of the teachers” (253).

Consequently, in a neoliberal paradigm, the work of academics becomes merely “content delivery” to students, who are considered as clients that are looking for credentials that will give them a plus value on the labour market. This narrative has been at the centre of a larger mechanism, known as *cognitive capitalism*, which can be defined as a new economy where cognitive activities and information technologies are playing a major part in the production of profit: “the emergence of ‘an economy of knowledge’ means a strengthening of capitalism by the transformation of a free good into a commodity with an exchange value” (Azam: 111). This new paradigm is characterised by a shift from the traditional workplaces, such as the factories, to new sectors and such as offices and universities, but also domestic spaces of everyday life.

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<sup>1</sup> In this essay, I focus mainly on UK universities, but there has been a drastic neo-liberal turn of higher education is also present in other European countries, as for instance France with *Libertés et Responsabilités des Universités*; a reform imposed in 2007 with the objective of adapting public universities to the rules of the Nouveau Management Public (Vinokur 2008). Mutatis mutandis, the reform is usually similar in all the European countries: a shift from a traditional collegiate principle (usually independent from the “outside world”) towards a model where the decisions are taken by a board constituted by increasing number of administrators coming from outside the university, and many of them experts in *Knowledge Management* (Newfield: 70-73).

With the social distancing and remote working, this phenomenon is now more obvious than even:

"This mechanism transforms the free and autonomous essence of those activities, through the alienation and the direct domination of individuals, but also by competing with one another and their integration in the techno-structures of biopower. In this context, the university as an autonomous space of production and transmission of knowledge is on the decline. Progressively, it becomes an institution that is potentially at the centre of the capitalist modes of regulation and production" (Cottet, Bernat Zubiri-Rey, Sauvel: 57).

A cognitive capitalist regime – as the classic liberal economic model, based on division of labour and competition between workers – implies the emergence of a proletariat, known as the *cognitive workers*, the *info-proletariat*, or the *cognitariat*. This new category determines a group of individuals that, on one hand, are selling their labour power for a wage; and, on the other hand, are conscious of their exploitation by a neo-capitalist system. The only different, in comparison to Marx's times or the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, is that today " 'knowledge workers' (...) unlike the employees under capitalism, they own both the 'means of production' and the 'tools of production' " (Drucker: 8). These means of production are mainly generated by media technologies, which are the axis of rotation where high-tech companies articulate their interaction – some would say insertion – of universities. More than two-third of major digital innovations imply a type of collaboration between private companies and public universities or laboratories called *open innovation*. This asymmetrical collaboration allows majors companies, such as Microsoft or Google, to give "free access" to their tools, in return of the intellectual property of the inventions, which gives them a great opportunity to expand their monopoly and make their technologies the standard in different sectors (Newfield: 73-74). One of the consequences of this model is a systematic stratification of the different members of staff between valuable members – researchers that have grants from external companies and agencies, and therefore enjoy a great autonomy within the universities, useful members – lecturers and technicians with experience, usually with an administrative; and finally the disposable members – associates and graduate teaching assistants on fixed-term, variable or zero hours contracts – that constitute the cognitariat of higher education.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, this type of hierarchisation in universities has been in place for decades now, but I argue that it has been intensified with the current crisis. As mentioned in the introduction, the pauperization of the academic community increased with the systematic slashing of jobs.<sup>2</sup> This is even more dramatic when it is proven that distance learning is more time-consuming and will demand more preparation from the academics on permanent contract, since it tries to adapt to the needs of the learners:

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<sup>1</sup> As said earlier, the cognitariat is perfectly aware of the situation and the means of its exploitation. In the last months, there have been a great number of academics on precarious contracts that have denounced the university manager's systematic plan an anticipated reduction of hundreds of casualised TA and TF academics, by letting their contracts to expire. Many of them have decided to challenge the financial narrative back this unfair decision, because they consider it is the consequence of bad management and decades of marketisation, rather than the pandemic crisis per se. see also: <https://www.ft.com/content/67f89a9e-ac30-47d0-83e7-eba4d1284847>

<sup>2</sup> According to UCU, one of the latest and most dramatic action is Bradford College's intention to dismiss 107 academics by 5 August 2020, after a shortfall £2m fall in apprenticeship income due to the lockdown. See: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10851/Unfair-dismissal-warnings-as-Bradford-College-announced-plans-to-axe-over-100-staff?list=1676>

"This can be observed in the spatio-temporal flexibility of online education: it can take place synchronously (in 'real time') or asynchronously (whenever suits the learner, i.e., self-paced), though the asynchronous component is more characteristic of learning online where learners engage in email, blogs, forums, wikis, audio, video etc. This flexibility can facilitate independence of mind and self-directed attitudes towards education but more negatively, plays into the 'student-as-consumer' attitude" (Lewin: 255).

In the previous lines, I have discussed the notion cognitive capitalism to highlight the emergence of a new class of workers, the cognitariat. In the following section, I would like to introduce another concept that will narrow down the scope and help us to understand better certain aspects of our experience during the lockdown period; a liminal time where the imposed social distancing has revealed in an unprecedented fashion what is at the centre of cognitive capitalism: *attention*.

### **Attention Economy in a Contactless Society**

Like many people, most academics working from home have noticed that this new form of labour requires discipline and organisation, in a context where attention becomes rare. The sociological interest in attention is not new, but it reemerged in the late 1990s with the exponential use of digital technologies the development of Internet in a globalised market, where "money (now) flows *along with* attention" (Goldhaber 1997, emphasis in original). Therefore, in order to understand how cognitive activities have become a major subject of profit and domination in a neoliberal regime, I refer in this section to the concept of attention economy, proposed by thinkers such as Yves Citton, and tailor it to the study of the specific case of remote teaching in higher education pre- and post -pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

Citton discuss in his work the necessity to find an alternative to the classic definition of economy, understood as merely a study of the optimisation of the exploitation of rare resources (2014a; 2014b). According to this purely instrumental perspective, one could say that in the age of "liquid" modernity (Bauman, 2000), we have reached a quasi-optimal where all interactions are smoothly integrated into flows of data. Even though the current ecological crisis demonstrates that the hyper-industrial age is far from being *immaterial*: the exploitation of workers to make the devices, the contamination of lands in the extraction of rare mineral. *The digital comes at a high material cost.*

Paradoxically, the digital age has been often presented, especially in media studies, as a revolution in the progress line of modernity that presents virtual technologies as extensions of man (McLuhan, 1999). The study of the economy of attention demonstrates that this new economy, marked by exponential use of digital tools, does not replace the old modes of production and communication, but only "adds another layer of complexity, which implies a reconfiguration of the ulterior layers, without abolishing them in any way" (Citton, 2014a: 9). Said differently, the crisis of attention is just one of the latest stages that complete the long litany of the crises of modernity: the ecological, the social, the economic, the viral...

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<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Kessous points out that the "marketisation of attention" can be understood from two different perspectives: "two radically different theoretical approaches based on two fairly compartmentalized disciplines in the social sciences: ergonomics and economics. Whereas in the former, attention is seen as a stock of limited resources that must be preserved, because they are renewed slowly (the problem of usability concerns the use of one's attention), in the latter, attention is seen as a flow. This approach seeks to set up the economic conditions for the exploitation of attention in order to extract value from it." (79) In this essay, I will focus on the former definition.

In his seminal book, *Pour une écologie de l'attention*,<sup>1</sup> Citton asserts that in order to understand the depth of this crisis, one needs to understand *attention as essentially a collective phenomenon*, in two senses; first, from an ontological point of view, he reminds us that "individuals do not pre-exist the relations that constitutes them"(45). Secondly, he defends the postulate that:

"[The] attentional resources of each individual allow her to perform a limited number of tasks at a certain time, with relation with the skills she had learned. (...) [The] limited sum of available attention at every moment implies a principle of competition between the different objects that we take into consideration or the quality of the consideration that is dedicated to each of them. (...) What our attention gains quantitatively by taking into consideration different objects simultaneously, we lose qualitatively in the intensity of the attention we dedicate to them separately" (55).

When applied to the practice of online teaching, which requires a high level of multi-tasking – between giving the instructions, sharing documents, avoiding any connection issues, delegating speech time to the students... – it does not take long to understand that at the end of the equation, the quality of the teaching will certainly not be the same than in an in-class situation, where the capacity for *deep attention*, necessary for an effective learning, is eroded and replaced by *hyper attention*, defined by Katherine Hayles as "characterized by switching focus rapidly among different tasks, preferring multiple information streams, seeking a high level of stimulation, and having a low tolerance for boredom" (2007: 187).

This new situation offers a good opportunity to think about the type of higher education we want, without falling into the moralism that, since the Frankfurt School, considers most – if not all – digital technologies as prostheses of a culture industry that entertains the masses (Adorno 2001). However, the attentional phenomenon is more complex than what the followers of the Frankfurt School describe in their work: the position of the viewer is not anymore a passive one, a victim of a powerful alienating visual industry; rather, attention has to be considered as an active phenomenon where "to look is to labour" (Citton, 2014b: 79).<sup>2</sup>

Far from a digital ideology, which would present internet as a neutral network, made of democratic and "free" interactions that would take the peer-to-peer as a standard, those interactions are fundamentally asymmetric: we are not all equals, when it comes to the digital. The division of between an elite and a proletariat is mainly done by the amount of attention one requires for a specific task, just like in the assembly line in Fordist factories. As mentioned in the first section, the creation of a cognitariat is mainly due to the very physical of a hyper-industrial type of economy, which is always presented as immaterial, but actually requires a huge amount of material and biological capacities to be inventive enough to produce a product that is attractive enough to catch the attention of the viewers, the clients, the teachers, the students.

Citton also insists on the *necessity of invention* in education. Following Jacques Rancière's lesson on democratic pedagogy, he argues that the essential task of the teachers is not to

<sup>1</sup> An English version was published in 2016, but in this essay, all the references are from the original French version.

<sup>2</sup> Many social scientists have theorised recently what has been coined by Tiziana Terranova as *Free Labour*: "We call this excessive activity that makes the Internet a thriving and hyper-active medium "free labour"—a feature of the cultural economy at large, and an important, yet unacknowledged, source of value in advanced capitalist societies" (73).

deliver knowledge, but rather to be inventive enough to catch the student's attention.<sup>1</sup> The challenge of inventiveness goes hand in hand with novelty: there is a necessity to work with educational allies that participate in the process of creation, since "we see *better*, because we usually see *with*" (Citton, 2014b: 139, emphasis in original). With what? With colleagues and students: paying attention to a different perspective, learning from it and then trying to adapt it to a new context, in order to convey your own understanding of a subject. But also with a huge range of objects: books, of course, but also other types of artefacts and technologies, which can facilitate the transfer of knowledge, empowering the students' autonomy and promoting a more democratic educational practice.

This point is very important, since it pushes to (re)consider that with regard to online education, the issue is not the technological device per se, but the role imposed to them in a specific context of the attention economy. Citton mentions the specific cases of the *MOOCS* (massive open online courses) to illustrate the ambivalent nature of technology-enhanced teaching. On the one hand, these courses provide a high-quality teaching to many students who need remote teaching for different reasons – and not only a pandemic. It would be absurd to not recognise that visual technology clearly favours the need of creativity that education needs to be attractive and build up new pedagogical strategies – new forms of evaluation, different format of lectures and seminars, ... – to fit the needs of an ultra-connected generation. On the other hand, it would be dangerous to consider the MOOCS as a long-term solution to the new problems of higher education. I have already mentioned the direct effect of this shift on teaching posts: with massive redundancies and the acceleration of the pauperization of university teachers.

Citton also insists on the pauperization of the education experience, in the way that the technological medication does not allow to reproduce two interconnected fundamental features essential to in-class education at a university level. First, *the imitation of gesture*, which requires that the students must observe, and later repeating, the instructor's action "for real" (Citton, 2014b: 145). Secondly, to be able to watch and imitate the instructor, there is a need of *corporeal presence* that allows the affective/sensory/ bodily dimension of the constitution of our individuation (ibid.: 146). Of course in times of pandemic, this social proximity is not possible, and the technology can substitute human presence, and help out to keep a pedagogical continuity; but it would be irresponsible to consider that they can replace the hands, the voice, the gaze of a teacher.

The substitution of technology of human presence, and its interference with the process of *individuation* has been at the heart of the work of many philosophers. Therefore, I find it important to discuss it in the next section, where I will confront a tradition of critique that is concerned by the rise of technologies in the capitalist (culture) industry and consider de facto most of digital and visual devices as prostheses of a capitalist system or participating to the surveillance apparatus of the state. Contra this technophobic and pessimistic perspective, I will argue, echoing Bernard Stiegler, that attention is not a given natural skill that needs to be protected, but rather it is something that is composed et decomposed *with* other entities, humans *and* non-humans.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I have mentioned Citton's analysis of Rancière's work on education in a previous essay (Bakhtiar, 2018b). See also Citton, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> It is certainly Bruno Latour who offered the most ambitious theory about the necessity to consider non-human entities as important and necessary actants in the composition of the "social" (Latour, 1993; 2005; 2008).

## Concerning the Modern (Capitalist) Pharmacopeia

The concern about attention is also present in the writings of philosopher Bernard Stiegler who expressed, in several occasions, the necessity to consider attention in more general terms (*économie générale de l'attention*) as an essential part, from a very young age, of the socialisation of individuals. Stiegler highlights the fact that the attention processes necessarily go through material *dispositifs* – from a ritual artefact to an Ipad – that keep part of the artificial memory of a society (Stiegler, 2007: 40; 2010: 127). Therefore, he advocates for an approach that analyses the current neoliberal systemic dynamics, that he calls “hypermaterial economy” to contrast with the immaterial narratives (2014: 127).

In philosophy, terminology is important. Consequently, Stiegler’s use of the words *dispositifs* to talk about the technologies, which did not exist at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and are now taking an active part in the transformation of our societies, is not a trivial act. By choosing this terminology, he chooses his takes part in the argument between the two major currents of the commentators of Michel Foucault: one could be called *techno-pessimistic*, and the other, *techno-enthusiastic*. The former perspective is best represented by Giorgio Agamben, and the later by Gilles Deleuze. Both currents refer to Foucault’s work on biopolitics and agree on many points in their critique of modernity, especially the one that breaks with the modernist epistemological construction of technological progress and science, as being essential and neutral with regard to the development of humanity. However, the orientation they give to their reflexions on technology is radically different.

Agamben diagnosis is by far the most pessimistic one: it invites the modern thinkers and favours a definite division between human beings and other entities, since the modern apparatus implies the control of the subject, to the extent of “desubjectification.” In *What is an Apparatus*, he writes:

“It would probably not be wrong to define the extreme phase of capitalist development in which we live as a massive accumulation and proliferation of apparatuses. It is dear that ever since Homo sapiens first appeared, there have been apparatuses; but we could say that today there is not even a single instant in which the life of individuals is not modeled, contaminated, or controlled by some apparatus. (...) What defines the apparatuses that we have to deal with in the current phase of capitalism is that they no longer act as much through the production of a subject, as through the processes of what can be called desubjectification. A desubjectifying moment is certainly implicit every process of subjectification” (15, 19)

Deleuze offers a much more enthusiastic definition that focuses on the possibilities modern (media) technological devices can offer in favour of the process of subjectivation:

“The first two dimensions of an apparatus or the ones that Foucault first extracted are the curves of visibility and the curves of utterance. Because apparatuses are like Raymond Roussel’s machines, which Foucault also analysed; they are machines that make one see and talk. (...) And finally, Foucault discovered lines of subjectivation. This new dimension has already given rise to so much misunderstanding that it is hard to specify its conditions. More than any other, this discovery came from a crisis in Foucault’s thought, as if he needed to rework the map of apparatuses, find a new orientation for them to prevent them from closing up behind impenetrable lines of force imposing definitive contours. (...) And as for Foucault, he sensed that the apparatuses he analysed could not be circumscribed by an enveloping line without other vectors passing above and below: ‘crossing the line,’ he said, like ‘going to the

other side'? (...) It is a line of flight. It escapes the previous lines; it escapes *from them*. The Self is not knowledge or power. It is a process of individuation that effects groups or people and eludes both established lines of force and constituted knowledge. It is a kind of surplus value. Not every apparatus necessarily has it" (2003: 317-318. Emphasis in the original).

In other words, Agamben is looking to what is lost in the digital age, while Deleuze is interested to the potential possibilities that can be gained. I write the *potential possibilities* to highlight the passage: "not every apparatus necessarily has it." This statement might look self-evident, but it goes against the grain of a certain melancholy that has been present in critical theory, which is an important part of its genealogy. Referring to the Deleuzian perspective, I have used the adjective "enthusiastic" rather than "optimistic" to avoid to include Deleuze into a binary logic that would oppose a positivistic tradition that consider techno-science progress as key to humanity's future to a tradition of critique that considers technologies solely as tools eroding some "aura" essential to education and emancipation.

Like Deleuze, Bernard Stiegler also investigates the possibilities offered by the dispositifs, but advocates for a *general pharmacological* approach of knowledge and considers technologies as *pharmaka*: that is to say, objects that can be curative or toxic, favour or against individuation, depending on the way we interact with or understand them (2007: 39-40; 2013: 4; 2014: 130). The contribution of such an approach is more than necessary in times of rise of media technologies, and the *de facto*- usual negative - critique that philosophers and sociologists develop with regards to them.<sup>1</sup> It provides a more pragmatic vision - thinking "par le milieu" to use a Deleuzian catchphrase- to the complex relationship between technological devices and the ideological (and scientific) forces that use and are used by them.

Stiegler's theory also allows to shape a reflection on education, without falling into a romantic rejection of technology, which is according to him central to the process of humanisation, and therefore of emancipation. Said differently, humans are fundamentally technological beings. Confronted to the obstacles of existence, humans had to constantly call on "compensation processes that generate social invention and individuation;" and this compensation cannot be done without the participation of devices. Despite the dependence they might create, there is not socialisation without them: "there can be no 'origin' no 'beginning,' no 'inside' without exteriorisation and differentiation, without the artifice of technics. From the start, a 'default' - and the reliance on technics - is always necessary: *un défaut qu'il faut*" (Stiegler, 2003: 152, emphasis in original). Despite this statement, he calls for a new critical theory that highlights the importance of investigating the genealogy of the complex fabric that links technology, attention, and education.<sup>2</sup> One could read the pharmacological approach as an alternative to the narrative of technological neutrality that consider objects as not *neutral tools* determined by the will of the user or designer - this user being a humanistic teacher or a capitalist manager. On the contrary, I would say that one should consider technologies used for distance learning as part of a long lines of tools used in the educational practice: just like books or pen

<sup>1</sup> Stiegler borrows this term from Jacques Derrida, who describes the ambiguous character of writing, that Plato describes as the first *pharmakon* (Derrida, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> David Lewin highlights that it takes part in the polarised debate that has been going between technophiles and technophobes about digitalisation, individual and societal emancipation: "[The debate] has particular resonance with the philosophy of Bernard Stiegler for whom the emergence of human nature and the development of technology are coeval. This is important because it deconstructs the romantic and prelapsarian view of human nature. unsullied by the instrumentalism of *homo technicus*. If human beings are not, in any meaningful sense prior to technology, then the tensions between technology and education are transformed" (252-253).

and paper. This symmetry does not mean that they all have the same potential, or *agency*, when they interact with other entities.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, the pharmacological approach can be sympathetic to the concern of modern critics, and their post-modern followers, like Agamben who warns us about the threat not only on critical consciousness, but also on the social and individual bodies (Agamben 1998). However, in contrast with this type of perspective, a pharmacological approach considers that the process of *individuation cannot be opposed to alienation*. Said differently, the real/presential cannot be opposed to the virtual: “[the] virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual” (Deleuze 1994: 208). Stiegler’s tour de force is that to offer a new critical discourse that gives an alternative to the tradition of critique established by the Frankfurt School, and by post-modernists.

Consequently, he establishes a “new” critical theory that considers that human socialisation is composed by phases of addiction – or *desire* or *drive* to use psychoanalytic terminology– to beings and things.<sup>2</sup> The challenge is to dose out the interaction with those addictive entities, those *pharmaka* that are potentially a cure or a poison depending on the circumstances. I suggest that this statement is applicable to online teaching; in times of crisis, it has an overall beneficial effect on both teachers and students – in times of social distancing, teaching is better than not teaching. But we must be caution in post-crisis times, when this same pharmakon can be toxic, if we do acknowledge the pharmacological nature of such technology, and we do not take *care* about its effects, without question them, on the process of individuation. as Lewin points out, “[for] Stiegler the mere satisfaction of drives entails infantilization because those drives are given and do not encourage inquiry into their own nature” (261).

I would add that the necessity to *care* and to be concerned is even more necessary in times of social distancing, that are short-circuiting the process of trans-individualisation necessary to the psychic well-being of individuals and affects their socialisation. In times of pandemic, one should not be concerned about the material and primary organs; the heart, the liver; the lungs...but also the “*organa as pharmaka*: in other words, the artificial *organa* without which we are nothing: clothes, glasses and other devices that improve our natural capacities; (...) those *pharmaka* can also cause ruins, disaster..” (Stiegler, 2007: 44). Therefore, one could say that they are not factually always dangerous, but have the potential to be toxic, depending on the circumstances, therefore we should be responsible for the attention we delegate them and consider them legitimately as *matters of concern*.<sup>3</sup>

### **In Conclusion, I Would Prefer Not To...**

If the reader has still some doubt about the fact that some university managers are taking the opportunity of the Covid-19 crisis to push further their neoliberal strategy for the future of

<sup>1</sup> The term *agency* has to be understood in the way Bruno Latour defines it: “One of them is the precise role granted to non-humans. They have to be *actors* and not simply the hapless bearers of symbolic projection. But this activity should not be the type of agency associated up to now with matters of fact or natural objects. (...) . Conversely, any study that gives non-humans a type of agency that is more open than the traditional natural causality—but more efficient than the symbolic one—can be part of our corpus, even though some of the authors would not wish to be associated in any way with this approach” (2005: 10).

<sup>2</sup> About addiction, Stiegler writes: “I think addiction is a normal condition and that there are good and bad addictions, in the same way that there are good and bad fictions. (...) In conclusion, any addiction can go sour and trigger instinctive or destructive pulsion, starting with auto-destruction” (2007: 34-35).

<sup>3</sup> I have developed a section about the difference between matters of fact and matters of concern, using Bruno Latour’s theory, in another essay (Bakhtiar, 2018a).

Higher Education in the UK, she should read some of the comments of those managers have made in the last months.<sup>1</sup>

I hope that I have proven in this essay that, on the base of the material and moral impact on the teachers, who were at the front during the crisis, it is important to slow down and set a critical eye on the option of maintaining online teaching *after* the pandemic. I argue that it will potentially become a toxic pharmakon that places higher education at the heart of the "symbolic misery," to use Stiegler's terms, "which places the sensory life of the individual under the permanent control of the mass media" (2016: 192).

There is no doubt the education is a multifaceted practice that evolves by including new technics. However, as Stiegler has pointed out, many decision makers have lost sight of the questions of higher education values and purposes. The later are closely linked with the pharmacological questions of *caring about beings and things*, and the psychological and material consequences of their toxic (neo-liberal) logic for the teachers, who will be massively pauperized if we all stop *paying attention* to the pharmacological nature of digital technologies:

"[The] fact of proletarianization is caused by the digital, which, like every new form of tertiary retention, constitutes a new age of the pharmakon. It is inevitable that this pharmakon will have toxic effects if new therapies, new therapeutics, are not prescribed. Such prescriptions are the responsibility of the scientific world, the artistic world, the legal world, the world of the life of the spirit in general and the world of citizens – and, in the first place, of those who claim to represent them." (ibid.: 197).

Indeed, the Covid-19 crisis, as any crisis, is by essence the a time for critique and therefore offers an opportunity for collective and individual choices about the "lines of subjectivation" and "bifurcations," to speak with Deleuze's words, will be *co-constitutive* of our universities and societies.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, as I have already mentioned, there have been collective actions organised by unions and independent associations mentioned earlier, that are leading campaigns in response to trailing proletarianization that is menacing higher education imposed to universities the UK.

Finally, what about the individual response to the current situation? It there any mode of resistance at this level? It is certainly the most difficult one, since it implies an implication on the most intimate conditions: On an individual level, the situations are usually much more complicated on a personal and intimate level, especially after this difficult period, when most

<sup>1</sup> For instance the interview given by Prof. Cliff Allan, a former-vice chancellor and eminent Board member of Universities UK, who answered very openly to the question "Will this crisis result in a change to the way universities teach in 2020, or are we likely to see some changes that endure beyond the time of the pandemic?": "Looking to the future, how can we turn this crisis into an opportunity for change? I hope that we don't fall back into what we were doing before. What can we learn from this fast step-change around teaching and learning that many leaders have wanted to make in universities, but historically haven't been able to? Many people may now be waking up to the opportunities, flexibility, and the different models that might emerge from an online offer. (...) What it could have an impact on is the temporal experience of higher education. Does everything have to be delivered in the traditional academic year? We may feel that this gives us a new model of teaching: any place, anywhere, anytime. In many ways, this is a shock to the system, and sometimes shocks to the system can result in quite rapid change. Many people are using this phrase 'the new normal.' So does this become the normal, as we move forward?" (Allan in Levisohn, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Stiegler reminds us that "Krisis, which has a long history – in Hippocrates it refers to a decisive turning point in the course of an illness – is also the origin of all critique, of all decision exercised by to *krinon* as the power to judge on the basis of criteria" (2016: 195).

of academics had to promptly comply to the needs of the pedagogical continuity, but knowing that on the long term the current situation – teaching online – might become toxic. The situation most of academics in times of pandemic reminds me of Bartleby. I see a parallel between the pharmacological condition teachers are in universities, where the current mode of teaching is pushing them to a psychological a material limit, and the stranger protagonist of Herman Melville's eponymous short story, a conscientious clerk in a company in Wall Street, who after a long time of hard work, one day suddenly enters into a state of crisis and decides that would rather not proceed with his regular work; when asked why, he systematically answers: "I would prefer not to" (Melville: 10). This sentence has been the objects of many comments from philosophers, from Derrida to Agamben,<sup>1</sup> and especially Deleuze who highlights, in his essay *Bartleby, ou la formule*, the disruptive potential of such an ambiguous answer, which is not a strict refusal, but "Bartleby does not refuse, he simply rejects a *nonpreferred* (the proofreading, the errands ...). And he does not accept either, he does not affirm a preference that would consist in continuing to copy, he simply posits its impossibility" (92).<sup>2</sup> Casualised teachers – as genuine members of the cognitariat – might passively express in a pharmacological call for recognition, through a negative preference, until the moment their managers recognise the (in)humanity of their condition; echoing therefore the passive resistance of the narrator in Melville's story who, at the moment of the clerk's death, acknowledged eventually the critical condition of his former employee, by finishing his tale writing "Ah Bartleby! Ah humanity!" (34). Let's hope we will not have to reach this extreme situation. But for now, let's say that when asked by a manager if she prefers to keep teaching online after the crisis, any teacher is entitled to use the Bartlebian formula *I would prefer not to* as a passive, but still direct, act of resistance.

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<sup>1</sup> I do not comment in this essay Derrida and Agamben's respective books of the figure of Bartleby, but the reader can find in Gisèle Berkman's excellent essay an extensive analysis of the negative definitions these two thinkers give of Bartleby. In *donner la mort*, Derrida understands Melville's tale as another modern version of the biblical story of Abraham's sacrifice; whereas Agamben describes Bartleby as a fictional allegory of the "Muselmann," the central figure in *Remnants of Auschwitz* that illustrates those in the concentration camps who are deprived of will, spontaneity, and thrown into a vegetative existence (Berkman, 2011: 162).

<sup>2</sup> One could see a similitude in the passive resistance of Bartleby and those teachers who, on an individual level, have also rejected a "nonpreferred" when they have taken part on "wildcat" marking boycott to protest at Goldsmiths, where five hundred members of staff are at risk of losing their jobs. See: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jul/01/goldsmiths-sack-casual-staff-exams-universities-covid-19>.

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# The Role of Social Research in Pandemic Emergency: What Methodology for Resiliency?

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## Abstract

With the theoretical and empirical one, the dimension which qualifies and corroborates the scientific nature of social research is that of effective usability that suggests a transactional and pragmatic vision of social investigation. So, the ability of social research to produce knowledge predisposed to impact and measure itself effectively with real-life contexts is particularly arising in pandemic emergency. Perhaps, never like now, the reflexivity of research is the pre-condition for the reasonableness of a conscious practices, related to the need for solutions inspired by social relationality criteria combining with the everyday life and interpersonal exchanges of people. For this purpose, social research must be inspired by criteria of temporariness, contingency and circularity of the methodologies and techniques that need to be coherent and suitable for distinct situations. At this level, the reflexivity assumes meta-theoretical connotations that imply, on the one hand, an implicit recognition of the need to adapt solutions to specific contexts and, on the other, a tacit acknowledgment of the continuous opening of social research to a reasoned dialogue with the stakeholders for evaluate opportunity and merits of operative solutions. This contribute aims to offer a theoretical reflection on the topic by trying to highlight how the value of reflexivity in research in times of "information deluge", puts the researcher in front of two questions (one conceptual, the other properly methodological). Where the excess of information tends to irrelevance and communicative ineffectiveness, the reflexivity of the research turns rather to the adoption of "existential" methodological procedures suitable for understanding the more than representative dimensions of the real experiences lived by people (their affective and perceptive responses and the relational experiences of the pandemic "time" and "space"; the perception of contagion risk; the fear of loneliness induced by physical distancing; the prospects for future life, etc.).

**Keywords:** Social Research, Methodology, Reflexivity, Resiliency, Culture

## Introduction

Rethinking with renewed meanings what, in reality, should represent a *habitus* (generator and at the same time organizer of conscious, aware and responsible representations and research practices) or a "natural" attitude of each analyst and social scientist in particular, is equivalent to rediscover the congenital vocation of social research for reflexivity. What is reflexivity? Briefly, reflexivity is a "dowry" of the social researcher at the same time epistemological, methodological and technical: reflexivity allows us to devise and calibrate the research strategies presumably more suited to contextually circumscribed realities and therefore itself

typically characteristics of peculiar temporal and cultural areas. For this reason, reflexivity cannot rely on the impulsive randomness of occasional and imaginative inventive impulses or worse clumsy and careless improvisations. On the contrary, awareness of the contexts, the relevance of the methodologies and the adequacy of the research tools are three key principles denoting the reflexivity of virtuous investigation paths, rationally oriented towards the achievement of significant results, objectively valid, as far as possible faithful to the multifaceted and heterogeneous dimensionality of the investigated and reasonably expendable realities. Reflexivity, therefore, supports the course of the investigation path, shows us the way, reinforces and reinvigorates every scientific path, offers us the coordinates of a "situational morality" in which the procedural criteria must be reviewed, possibly corrected and in any case operationally adequate and relevant respect and in harmony with concrete social situations. As an expression of a cautious and reasonable hermeneutic and interpretative approach of the phenomena studied, not reckless or irrational, reflexivity expresses attention to the quality of the information collected and is not careless rush to the quantum-frenzy of the data.

Never as now, perhaps, social scientists are called to a constant exercise of reflexivity. Now, we are spectators and at the same time actors of a "film" in first vision of which we do not know the ending. A film whose visual and sound script intertwines (often dangerously) scientific or pseudo-such knowledge and common-sense knowledge, often fueled by misleading and mystical apocalyptic visions.

It is a film in which the spectacularization (in a literal sense) has made us dismayed participants of dismal scenarios. Think of the Italian images of military vehicles lined up as funeral cars, the loneliness of intubated people and desolation of relatives, the hunting for infectors, the "singing appointments" from the balconies of neighborhood houses, the rainbows drawn by children with reassuring captions "will go all right!", the visual bulimia of home-videos and tutorials in kitchen, the race of television talk-shows to grab the most enlightened virologist and the frenetic race (also often spectacular) to the numbers of the infected and died, the number of search engine visualizations of the symptoms associated with Covid-19 and with the asymptomatics.

What scenario outlines all this? Are these tools to exorcise fear or risk? Perhaps never as in this period there is a risk of a real flood of information: "a pandemic in the pandemic".

Not infrequently, in "historical shocks", the spasmodic search for information (even scientifically unfounded) represents a reassuring trick for resilience to destabilizing events. However, the excess of information sometimes results in communicative irrelevance, in background noise. The result is that collecting noise fragments and converting them into meaningful messages turns into a substantially complex process, difficult to manage: the supreme value of the right-obligation to the "search for happiness" pushes to the intensive and frantically restless consumption of "surrogates" who, in some way, placate anxieties and fears (Bauman, 2000; 2007).

Here then, reflexivity in social research can represent a scientific antidote to a loss that is unprecedented for our generations. This contribution aspires in some way to corroborate this statement through a brief reflection which, without claiming any exhaustiveness, serves to outline the sustainability of a research path plausibly practicable in the awareness that a fruitful exercise of real reflexivity of social research in the pandemic emergency proceed from conceptual/methodological arguments before even technical/operational ones.

In the knowledge that: the 'objects' of social sciences are not independent and cannot be separated from the situated activity with which and by means of which the researcher has made them observable (Zimmerman & Pollner, 1970); only ingenuously (and wrongly) is it possible to give in to the prejudice of assimilating sociological investigation to the operational *mise en place* arranged to carry it out, thereby reducing its sense and content to a merely applicative exercise or, at the most, to a routine exercise of stereotyped techniques.

## Discussion

Methods of data analysis are not simply *neutral* techniques because they carry the epistemological, ontological and theoretical assumptions of the researchers who developed them (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000) based on an relational exchange with the assumptions (sometimes different) of the stakeholder who use them. And this is perhaps one of the main reasons that already in the phase of conceptualization of an investigation path ascribe to reflexivity an intrinsic value. On the other hand, it is no coincidence that the so-called "reflective turn" in social sciences is based on these assumptions; the partial, contingent and perspectival nature of knowledge is recognized, so that the production of scientific knowledge is essentially a social activity, culturally, socially and historically embedded, thus resulting in 'situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1988).

Also at linguistic and definitional level used by social scientist, these inference is particularly important: how many times, since the beginnings of the pandemic, and still today, in the anxious bewilderment of lockdown return, the expression "social distancing" has been repeated until now fully enter the common lexicon? The same can be said for the concept of risk. The Covid-19 pandemic puts us in a situation of unprecedented, dramatic, and global reach: its power to destabilize our life project grows day by day. The pervasiveness of the threat calls into question evidence that was taken for granted in our system of life.

If words are a bit like goods and coins (the more we use them the more they inflate until they almost lose their meaning) it is necessary to take care of their value and carefully evaluate their semantic scope. Rather than social, distancing should perhaps only be connoted "physically". The locution "social distancing" is an oxymoric expression, if one thinks that a prerogative of sociality is not distancing, if anything, the opposite. Think also of the concept of solidarity which certainly does not go "into quarantine": it is not true that in quarantine social relations decrease: who "wants to be there" is also from afar.

We are painfully experiencing a paradox that we would never have imagined: to survive the disease we must isolate ourselves from each other, but if we were to learn to live isolated from each other we could only realize how essential living with others is for our life. This destabilization is beyond the reach of the science and technique of the therapeutic apparatus. It would be unfair (and perhaps incorrect) to charge the technicians with this responsibility. At the same time, it is certainly true that a greater depth of vision and a better responsibility for the reflective contribution on the meaning and values of solidarity has the same urgency as the search for drugs and vaccines.

Therefore, what is the contribution that social research can offer in this regard? The Covid-19 pandemic is definitely causing social upheavals that require "cautious" assessment. In the face of the exponential increase in the number of infections, the increasingly stringent containment and contrast measures, which methodologies can contribute to an accurate analysis of

uncertainty and even of the fear that is imposing a sharp brake on our habits in the face of sanitary emergency?

You get the idea that to the aseptic and deterministic epidemiological certainty of the numbers of the dangers induced by the pandemic "escape" equally important elements. Suddenly, starting from the institutional registration of the first outbreaks of infection, our life has been and is immediately invaded by data and graphics. They are everywhere. Number of infected, dead, healed. Exponential curves, logistic curves, descriptive trend measures of the relationship between the number of ICU patients and the deceased. Ecosystems of dots that become infected from white to red in newspapers, on social network posts, on televisions in every home. How do I "see" the pandemic? Data, data, data, and visualizations. Everywhere. One every about four minutes. They are extremely violent data, obviously also used instrumentally to give strength to this or that other philosophy of intervention on the pandemic. However, what is the effect of all these data representations in our communication ecology? In our society?

Among the main and most powerful is to make us spectators. The data governance model is extractive; the information and data are "extracted" from people and their environment, processed, and represented in some way useful for making decisions that correspond to some form of intervention. Often, the intervention itself consists in administering data visualizations, to obtain some purpose (awareness of the dangerousness of the virus, knowledge of the risk of contagion, compliance with regulations, for example). The extractive model corresponds to a precise epistemological model (of paternalistic type) in which the data come out and transcend from sensitivity, and from the actions of the subjects from which come. The person can only be just a spectator: what can I do other than suffer the numbers and their representations? What can I do other than to be terrified, and then - hopefully - rejoice in their color change: white, red, white again?

Nothing could be further from the methodological reflexivity of paths of investigation aimed at explaining the sense and the existential value of those numbers. A procedural model oriented to investigate to understand the more than representative dimensions of the experiences really lived by people in everyday contexts necessarily "distorted" by the pandemic (an inevitable renewal in the organization and management of times and spaces of work, care, sociality, among others) with unpreventable repercussions on the social and cultural determinants of health and resiliency capacity. Situating ourselves socially and empathetically in relation to respondents is an important element of reflexivity: the data are not "oil" to be extracted from people and the environment. Behind the numbers there are people, there are stories, there are narrations. There are myriads of micro-stories, which cannot be reduced or summarized in tables. People are the partners of research, and reflective sociology "gets its hands dirty", takes place during social relationships. Each data corresponds to an existential component, not to a reductive technical or administrative application.

Additional considerations lead us to support these arguments. For example, the fact that the researcher is not a mere outside observer but rather a constitutive and integral part of a pre-interpreted reality, linguistically opaque, dynamic and socially constructed, which is unfit for a "mechanical" and un-critical reiteration of pre-established or 'ready for use' conceptual schemes or investigation models (Bailyn, 1977; Blaikie, 2010). Furthermore, the complexity typical of social phenomena forces the researcher to acquire the capacity of unravelling and deconstructing their indeterminacy through ad hoc research practices, each time designed and

performed per specific themes or problems, in restricted situations. In addition, the approach to social reality must proceed and be determined by background knowledge and cognitive tools chosen by the researcher so that the 'success' of a methodological procedure in a given situation does not guarantee its effectiveness in any other situation. Finally, the intrinsic instability and socio-cultural peculiarities of investigation contexts refer (particularly in this pandemic emergency) to a pragmatic meaning of reflexivity that break down all claims of cognitive exhaustiveness and tending to rethink the methodological paths undertaken when these prove to be unviable or unfit for the problems to be faced (Venneri, 2000a).

## Conclusion

Compared to abstract and standardized logics of classification and homologation of needs, reflexivity of social research in times of emergency configures the ability to define and manage those needs in a *relational* sense. The operative logic that presides over and determines its effects is a comparison logic that also takes on a transformative value; in other words, the reflexivity does not immediately seek the resolution of a problem nor does it take on an emergency value, but is systematically concerned (through methodologically and technically adequate and relevant procedures) with the enhancement and mutual recognition of "parts" distinctly characterized by multiple cultural codes and locally specific (Venneri, 2020b).

Implicit is the reference to the exhortations invoked by WHO in support of strengthening resiliency at individual, community and system level; resiliency is far as part of policies and programs designed to promote an holistic and sustainable approach to individual and community health and well-being (not just confined to health care). In particular, resiliency is not just a genetic trait but "the result of a relational process" (WHO, 2017: 13) as positive capacity and a form of toughness of people to cope with stress and adversity.

In effect, the scenarios and the urgencies that put us to the test are never such as to undermine our tension to make a sociology that places the person at the center of our analyzes, in a committed way to the reaffirmation of social rights and their exercise fuller.

We are perhaps convincing ourselves that "nothing will be like before" and that this "after" will have to push us to critically consider many situations of the "before" worthy of strong attention: just think of the multiple forms of inequity and inequality that the current pandemic has accentuated or unveiled, issues on which an analysis based on the constitutive principles of reflexivity can offer a qualified and useful contribution in the territorial and institutional contexts in which we live and work professionally.

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## **Strong Organizational Culture – An Effective Tool for Companies to Survive in a Pandemic World**

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### **Abstract**

Recent events related to COVID-19 have shown that many companies are on the edge of crisis. The unpredictable situation in the world has given rise to a new phobia in people: the inability to control one's life, the unpredictability of the future, anxiety for physical and financial well-being, fear of losing a job. The incident caused a state of mental and post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and other nervous diseases. These processes are particularly crucial in developing countries, where managers and staff of the companies have failed to collaborate and work coherently during the crisis. In many cases splitting of workforce and top-level management took place. Although people's engagement has grown caused by fears of job losses, the decision makers has often abused the current situation: reducing wages, increasing work time and intensity, and treating staff unethically. In our view, this separation will deepen in the post-pandemic period especially in the organizations that do not have an organizational culture. Organizational culture is the most important tool for regulating interaction in a group, a lever for increasing the efficiency and productivity of its members. Forming a culture in an organization, we create thinking architecture, a common psychology and value system that creates physical changes in the brain. All that we believe in, what we strive for, all the actions that we physically perform over a long period of time, our goals and objectives, ideas, values and traditions that we follow form our brain. In this research the impact of the pandemic on the staff coherency, the measures that were taken by managers to maintain stability in the company and the role of the organizational culture in overcoming the crisis are analyzed and relevant recommendations suggested.

**Keywords:** Organizational culture, coherence, pandemic, collaboration, workforce, overcoming the crises.

### **Introduction**

The evolution of economic relations is closely related to the development of organizational forms of management. The world production boom predetermined the permanent desire of companies to adapt production forces to new, advanced means of production. In pursuit of leadership in a competitive race, companies are constantly looking for unique ways to maximize current profits. This is necessary, but today it is an insufficient requirement for

obtaining the title of "high-performance company", a successful company. The years of doing business have revealed the particular importance of the company's image and reputation as an important intangible asset that affects its life cycle and success.

The Oxford Dictionary defines reputation as "a widespread belief that someone or something has a particular characteristic". Reputation is an intangible resource that can strengthen or weaken a company's position in the market. According to studies, companies with a good reputation (high rating, positive customer reviews) are more attractive to consumers and, therefore, have an advantage in competition. 86% of people would pay more for services from a company with higher ratings and reviews (**Status Labs, 2020**). On average, more than 25% of a company's market value is directly related to its reputation.

Building a company's reputation in order to achieve its "high performance" is one of the strategic issues of modern companies. There are many universal ways to enhance a company's reputation. These include high social responsibility, special requirements for the quality of goods and services produced, transparency and business style, etc. However, an important advantage of giant companies (Bosch, Netflix, Michelin, Canon, Sony, Microsoft, etc.) is that they were able to discover not a universal, but a unique path of public respect and self-presentation on a global market (**Natalie Singer-Velush, Kevin Sherman, Erik Anderson, 2020**).

Among the many factors that determine the success of the organization and form a positive business reputation of the company, the organizational culture is one of the most important. Companies face, performance and reputation is a mirror image of the quality of intra-organizational relationships, value systems, norms, and rules that exist in the company. The culture at whatever level it is considered (macrolevel - national culture or microlevel - organizational culture) is the connecting link of the members of the association, society. Moreover, the value and maturity of the organization, its resistance to crises and emergencies, and the potential for getting out of difficult situations is directly related to the degree of development of the organizational culture.

Organizational culture is a system of norms, rules, traditions, and values existing in the organization accepted and shared by members of the organization. The architecture of organizational culture reflects the main value and ideological attitudes, the most important value orientations that underlie relations between people in the organization, as well as outside it. Organizational culture is what the organization believes in, its vision and awareness of the mission of its activities. At the same time, organizational culture is a way of fulfilling the organization's mission - how, using what way, and through what tools the organization achieves its goals.

The value of organizational culture is manifested through the functions of culture in the organization. The most important of them are:

Adaptive (through culture, people are socialized, they integrate into a new community, harmonize and synchronize their interaction).

Axiological / value (the formation of value priorities in the organization is done through culture)

Gnoseological / cognitive (through culture, the experience of employees is accumulated, the ways and stages of the organization's development are perceived, and their role in this process

is realized, they identify (associate) themselves (employees) as part of the organization). Along with this, culture and the degree of its development are an indicator of how much people are involved in the life of the company, how devoted to it they are, what is the quality of relations between members of the organization, how great is the distance between authority and subordinates, how significant is the influence of employees on the future of the organization).

Communicative (through culture it becomes possible to transmit and exchange information, the formation of motivational messages. In this case, it is very important that the meaning and context of the most important concepts are decoded by the members of the groups adequately, correctly, without "communication noises" and distortion). Communication is intended to become an instrument of rapprochement and mutual understanding.

Functions of compilation of social experience (through this function, the values, rules, norms and traditions of the organization are transferred to new employees)

Through the implementation of the listed functions, culture consolidates the organization into a single core, a single system. The work of Aristotle, Plato, Kant, and Hegel is permeated with questions of the relationship between the whole and the parts. Holists, led by the founder of the holistic philosophical movement, Jan Smuts, in their philosophical teachings, consider the issue of the integrity of the system and come to the following conclusion: "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts". Relying on holism, an organization is a holistic system only when there are connections between its parts. In other words, if there is no interaction between people in an organization, then it is simply a crowd.

Organizational culture is the connecting core that turns the crowd into a holistic organization. Moreover, the stronger the connections between the members of the group, the more transparent the values and rules in the organization are formulated, the higher the degree of their acceptance by people, the greater the likelihood of high motivation of the staff, their productivity, and High Performance. The studies confirm that 88% of the surveyed employees of American companies believe that a strong organizational culture is key to the success of the organization. 94% of managers agree with this (Heinz, 2019). 82% of respondents to this survey believe that culture is a potential competitive advantage.

Citigroup has an entire committee focused on ethics and culture and has implemented a website-based video series which shows in details the real work ethic dilemmas. Bank of America focuses on transforming its corporate culture to encourage employees to raise and escalate issues of concern or problems.

Wells Fargo is stepping up its efforts to collect feedback surveys from employees to become aware of its culture, current trends, and potential areas. The Netflix culture presentation, often used as an example, has been downloaded more than 12 million times since 2009. The presentation clearly describes a culture that combines high expectations with an engaging employee experience: Generous corporate perks such as unlimited vacation, flexible work schedules, and limited supervision balance a strong focus on results with freedom and appreciation for the expected achievement. Professor Andrew Oswald, one of three researchers who led the study, said companies that invest in employee support and satisfaction tend to succeed in generating happier workers.

At Google, employee satisfaction rose 37% as a result of those initiatives—suggesting that financial incentives aren't enough to make for highly productive employees (**Revesencio, 2015**).

From the very beginning, at Toyota, it was believed that the key to success was the investment in human capital. Toyota's production system is primarily about the culture - the way people think and behave, and this is deeply rooted in the philosophy and principles of the company. The focus is on respect for people and continuous improvement. It took nearly ten years to create such a document under the leadership of Fujio Cho, the then President of Toyota.

The founders of the work on the importance of organizational culture were first voiced in the work of a group of scientists led by E. Mayo, who conducted an experiment in one of the American companies. Further, such scientists as E. Schein, V. Sate, T. Dila, and A. Kennedy and many others worked on this topic.

Organizational culture is of particular importance in crisis situations. An example of this was the 2020 crisis associated with the spread of COVID-19 in the world (**Lisa Dreier, Jane Nelson, 2020**). The coronavirus pandemic has hit all countries hard and caused the worst economic downturn in a century. Factories and plants, enterprises, and organizations have been stopped. Schools, kindergartens and other educational institutions are closed. Transport links have been suspended. Countries have closed up their borders. The whole world froze in obscurity and unpredictability of the course of events. According to the calculations of a world-renowned consulting company specializing in solving problems related to strategic management, it could take more than five years for the most affected sectors to get back to 2019-level contributions to GDP (**Mckinsey&Company, 2020**)

Particularly noteworthy are organizations in developing countries in which economic growth and population welfare are unstable and difficult to achieve. Developing countries, as exemplified by Georgia, are in a precarious socio-economic state and are more sensitive to changes in the external environment (**Kasradze & Zarnadze, 2019**). The effect of crises on unstable systems extends over the long term. The suspension of innovative activity, the reduction in investment flow here are directly related to the loss of jobs, rising prices, reduced purchasing ability, high inflation, and ultimately are fraught with socio-economic disasters. In the crisis situation of the 2020 Corona-virus pandemic, the authorities of developing countries were also not able to fully provide "airbags" to companies, and survival in the market has become a priority for the companies themselves (**Government of Georgia, 2020**). Once on the edge of the abyss, not having sufficient reserve funds to overcome the financial crisis, they are in search of other rescue opportunities.

One of such lifebuoys is the company's unique ideology, which forms the spiritual and emotional upsurge of employees. For Georgia, a country experiencing a shortage of free financial resources against the background of difficult socio-political conditions over the past few decades, cohesion, resilience, and patience as a psycho-emotional factor in overcoming a crisis situation is not new. By basing its organizational culture on these basic values for society as a whole, Georgia is trying to get out of the current crisis with minimal losses (**Kasradze, Tea; Zarnadze, Nino, 2018**).

In general, a national culture largely determines the priorities of local companies and forms the nature of the organizational culture of companies. The history of the development of local companies is inextricably linked with the history of the development of economic relations in

society, and, accordingly, with the culture of a particular society. It is possible that our mental programs are physically determined by states of our brain cells. Nevertheless, we cannot directly observe mental programs. What we can observe is only behavior: Words or deeds. When we observe behavior, we infer from it the presence of stable mental software. This type of inference is not unique to the social sciences; it exists, for example, in physics, where the intangible concept of "forces" is inferred from its manifestations in the movement of objects. Like "forces" in physics, "mental programs" are intangibles, and the terms we use to describe them are constructs. A construct is a product of our imagination, supposed to help our understanding. Constructs do not "exist" in an absolute sense: We define them into existence **(Hofstede, Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values, 1980)**.

From this point of view, the works of the Dutch sociologist Geert Hofstede are of particular interest to us. The Hofstede theory was developed in 1982. He conducted a study at the well-known multinational company IBM, which shows the data of more than 110 thousand respondents in 40 countries of the world. The scientist has formulated 6 identifiers by which he distinguishes national cultures according to the following parameters **(Draguns, 2007)**:

Power Distance

Collectivism-individualism

Femininity-Masculinity

Uncertainty Avoidance

Long-term Orientation

Indulgence-Restraint

This study shows that in countries characterized by high level of collectivism (Colombia, Pakistan, Taiwan, Russia, and Georgia) the following features of organizational culture prevail:

Emotional dependence on the company;

Managers prioritize stability;

Managers hold traditional views, discouraging individual employee initiatives;

Group solutions are more attractive than individual ones;

Particular attention is paid to discipline and order, to a sense of duty;

Relationship according to the principle: friend-or-foe.

In countries characterized by a high level of individualism (USA and Western European countries), the following features of organizational culture prevail:

The priority of the personal interests of the employee over the interests of the company;

Emotional independence from the company;

Sober estimation prevails in relations with the company;

Managers encourage employees' initiative;

Managers call safety and pleasure as the main goals in life;

Faster career growth.

According to the research of G. Hofstede, collectivism is characteristic of poor and developing countries. They are also characterized by a large distance of authority (Philippines, Venezuela, India, and Russia). In fact, in these countries, managers are more authoritarian, prone to establish strict discipline and control. They are less inclined towards group reasoning in the decision-making process, and employees prefer not to express disagreement or dissatisfaction.

In countries with a smaller authority distance (Denmark, Israel, Austria), managers tend to consult with their subordinates in the decision-making process. The word "authority", "wealth" does not cause negative emotions in subordinates. Moreover, subordinates are not afraid to express their disagreement with the manager. Workers tend to cooperate and collaborate. Interestingly, in countries with a shorter authority distance, highly educated workers are less likely to adhere to authoritarian values than poorly educated workers **(Kasradze, Tea; Zarnadze, Nino, 2018)**.

In the countries studied by the author, the situation also differs in terms of the parameters of perception of uncertainty, since it is obvious that people from different cultural structures react to the state of uncertainty in different ways. For example, Latin American countries, Greece, Turkey, Japan, and South Korea are countries with a strong rejection of uncertainty:

The workers become managers here on the basis of the seniority criterion;

high positions are intended for adults, the elderly;

The hierarchy is strictly built;

Strict adherence to the rules;

Focus on continuous monitoring of employees;

Initiatives of employees should also be supervised;

The attitude towards the staff is respectful but pessimistic.

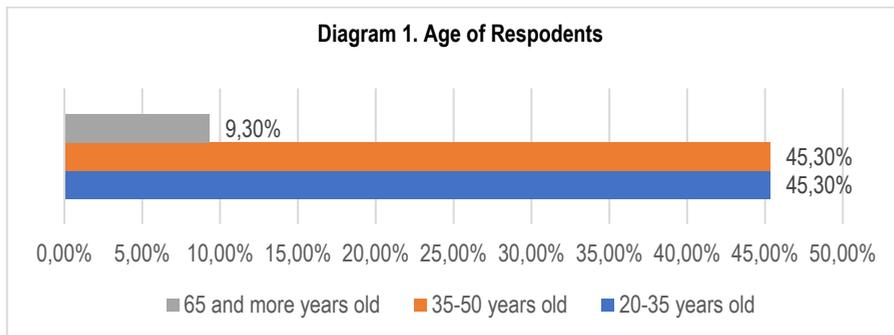
Thus, the unique ideology of the organization is, on the one hand, a reflection of the depth and characteristics of internal ties between employees, and on the other hand, it is closely linked to the national culture, its characteristics, and history. In general, the more trusting and transparent the relationship between employees in the organization, the more favorable working conditions for them. Studies in the field of personnel management have shown that the effectiveness of personnel depends on the environment in which they work. Economists calculated that "happiness led to a 12% spike in productivity, while unhappy workers proved 10% less productive" **(Revesencio, 2015)**.

### **Organisational Culture in Georgia during Pandemic**

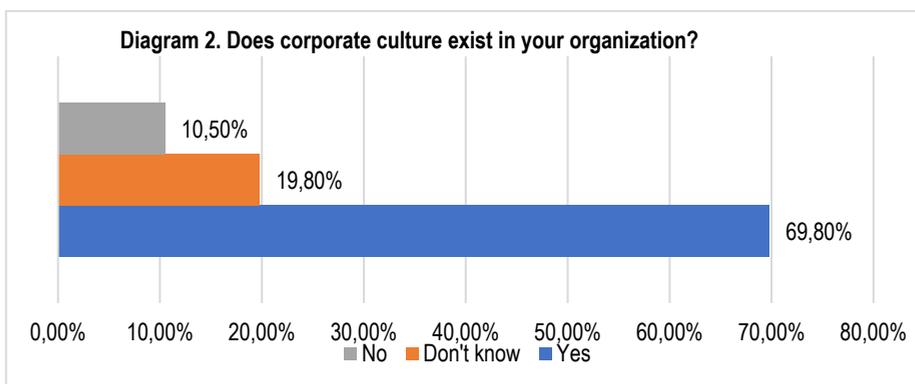
Based on the foregoing, the authors of this article conducted a study of the activities of companies during the pandemic in Georgia. The interest was due to the fact that at this stage in the development of economic relations, the role and importance of organizational culture in Georgia are underestimated. The main values, rules, and traditions, and in general, the entire organizational culture of modern Georgian organizations are spontaneously implemented rules and traditions, borrowed (brought) from the national culture of Georgia. Being an informal law of behavior, these values are brought up and formed according to

Georgian traditions from childhood and are considered universally recognized for all members of society (high empathy, complicity, and compassion, teamwork, high resistance to crises, etc.).

We conducted studies of employees of more than 80 companies starting with small businesses with a number of personal of up to 10 people to large businesses with a number of personal of over 250 people. The areas of activity of companies are different, but all companies are private. People of different age categories were involved in the study: 45% - people aged 20 to 35 years, and 45% - company employees aged 35-50 years. Employees of 50-65 years old made up a small part of the study - 8%, but their questioning is also interesting to us (Diagram 1).



According to the obtained data, more than 69% of respondents' answer that there is an organizational culture in their company, more than 30% answer that there is either no organizational culture in their organizations, or they know nothing about its existence (Diagram 2).

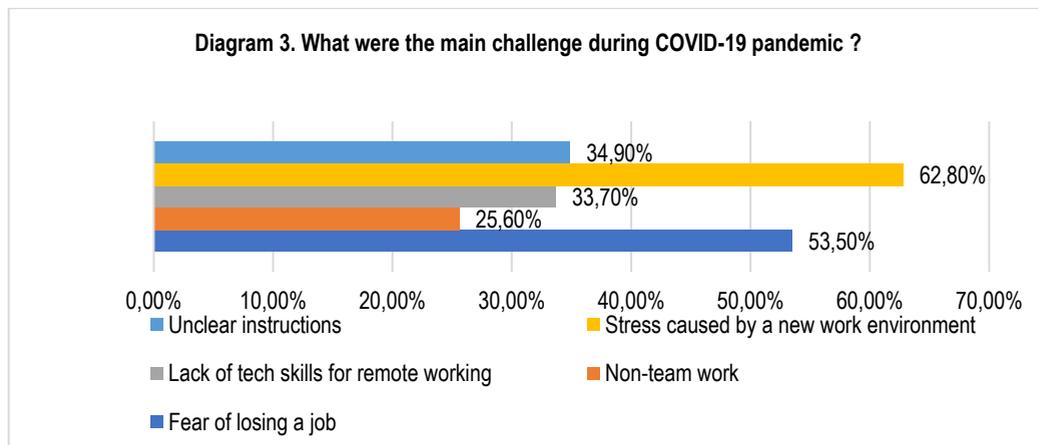


This actually means that a third of the employees we surveyed (not to mention their managers) do not understand the role of organizational culture as a real tool for effective employee interaction, as a platform that connects employees into a single whole, as a mechanism that increases employee productivity. In fact, every third respondent is deprived of a "team" feeling in the organization, the awareness of the need for engagement, and high performance, which is directly proportional to the company's reputation and competitiveness in the market. Such employees often do not get satisfaction at work and work solely in the interests of material reward.

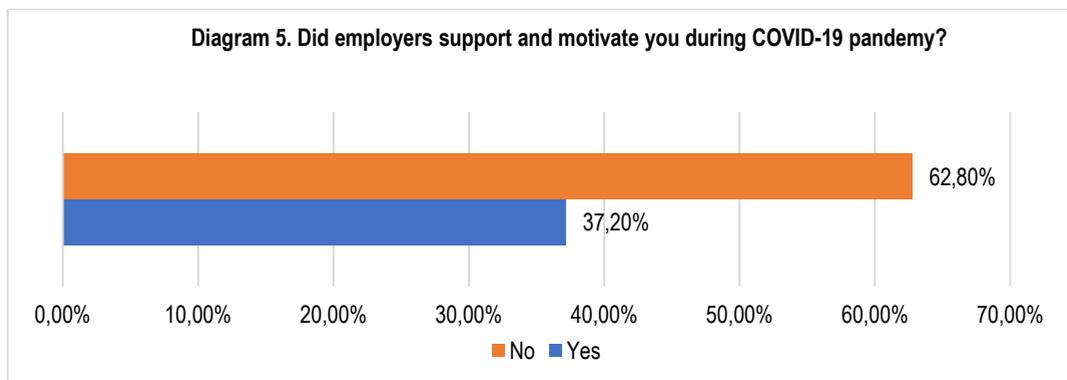
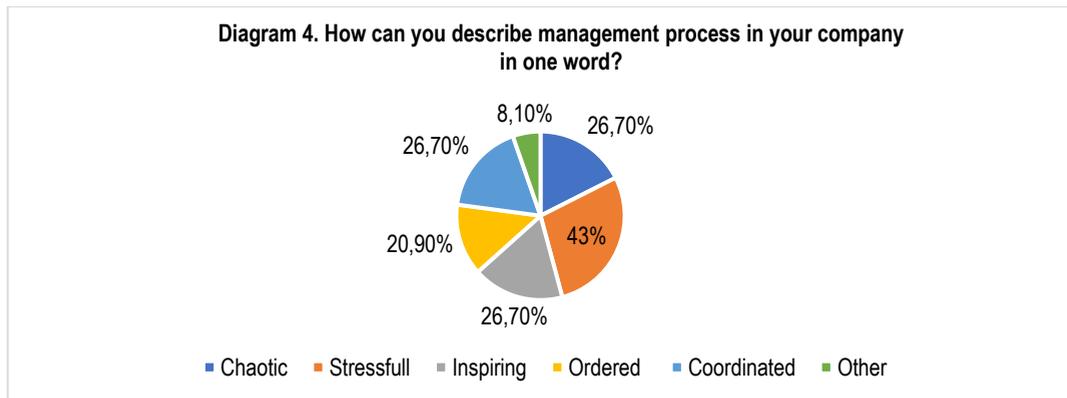
However, the most important factor in increasing the efficiency of the organization, its business reputation, and capitalization is the Person and the quality of his/her interaction in the group. We have already said above that organizational culture as an intangible asset of an organization is perhaps one of the most important. The importance of this intangible resource lies in the fact that it affects the productivity and efficiency of each member of the group and the team as a whole. Shawn Achor, author of *The Happiness Advantage*, has found that the brain works much better when a person is feeling positive. At those times, individuals tend to be more creative and better at solving problems. And additional research by Daniel Goleman has shown that when employees are happy they are more effective and so their productivity rises. As Daniel Goleman writes, "happiness leads to greater levels of profits" and for every 2% increase in how happy employees are revenue grew by 1% (**Goleman, 2013**).

When asked what the most important characteristics of organizational culture are, respondents answer as follows: (care for employees, development opportunities, high sense of responsibility and discipline, sense of "team" and respect, hygiene and equality). In this case, it is of particular interest that none of the respondents named the economic elements of doing business as elements of organizational culture, for example, "low cost", "quality service", bonuses, remuneration, salary cuts, reprimands and warnings, which confirms our earlier hypothesis that 60% of the respondents who believe that their companies still have organizational culture still do not have a complete idea of what organizational culture is.

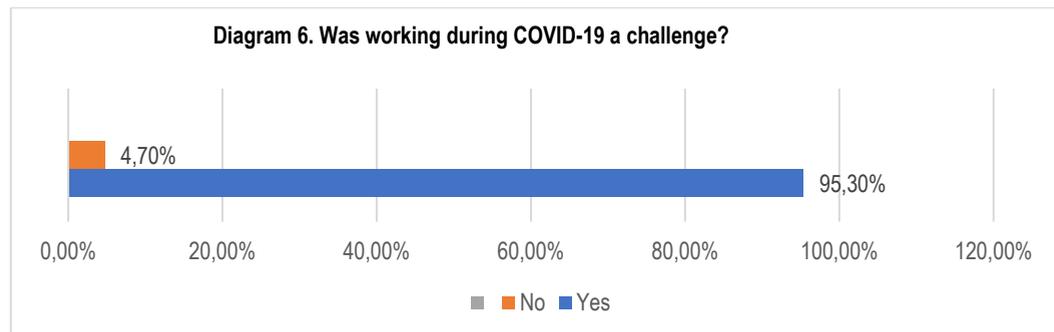
It is known that employees who don't like their organization's culture are 24% more likely to quit (Revesencio, 2015). However, this is truer for companies in developed countries. In developing countries like Georgia, where the level of unemployment is high and the level of well-being of the population is low, losing a job is a tragedy, and, accordingly, keeping a job and wages regardless of external conditions is the norm for Georgian everyday life (Kasradze, Poverty – A Global Socio-Economic Problem, 2013). This is confirmed by our research: more than 53% of respondents named fear of losing their jobs and about 63% of respondents named anxiety due to changes in working conditions as the main stress factors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The rest of the factors causing anxiety and concern that the respondents named were the unclear instructions of managers — 30%, uncoordinated work — about 28%, lack of tech skills for remote working — about 34%, non-team work — more than 25% (Diagram 3).



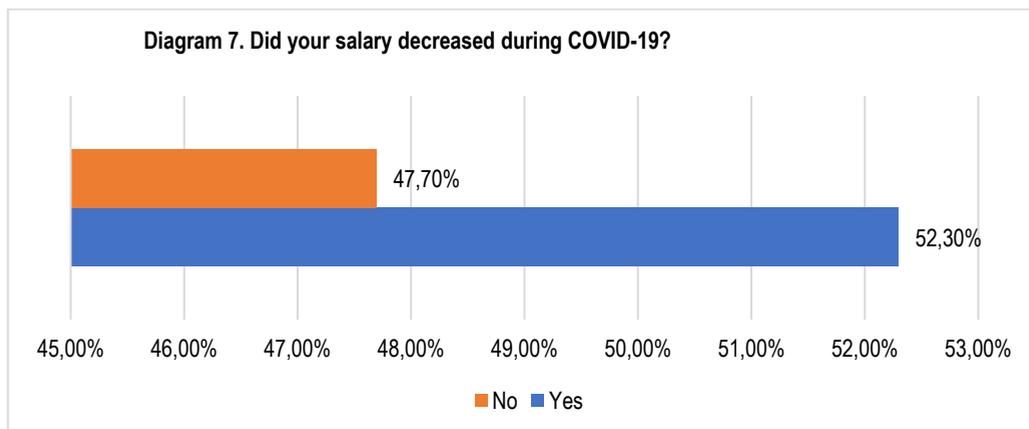
From this point of view, the role of managers and leaders is very important, who, considering the difficult material conditions of employees, must constantly try to increase their motivation and productivity, thereby contributing to the growth and development of the company. In fact, over 37% of employees believe that during the coronavirus pandemic, they did not receive the psychological support and motivational charge they needed from employers. 27% of respondents described the management process as chaotic, 43% - as stressful (Diagram 4) and (Diagram 5).



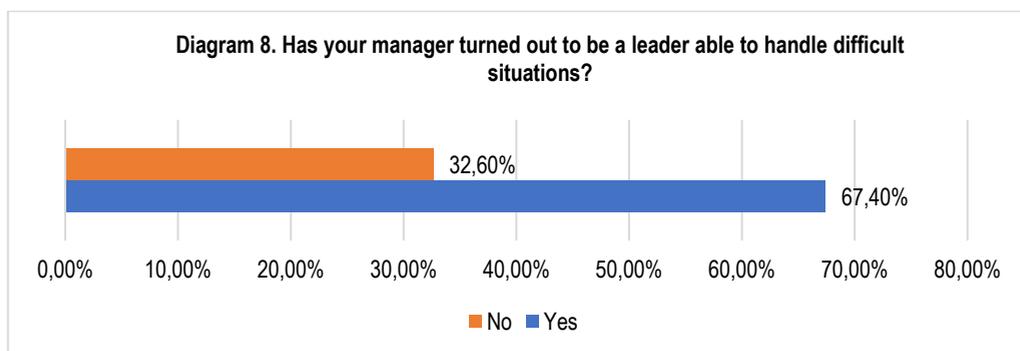
So, for example, despite the fact that approximately 60% of the employees participating in the survey were ready to work on a remote basis, for 95% of respondents, working in a pandemic was still a challenge (Diagram 6).



Thus, even for "ready-to-challenge" employees, the COVID-19 crisis has become a factor of great psycho-emotional stress. The following data of the study, which reflects the inextricable connection between the specifics of the national and organizational culture, which we mentioned above, became very interesting for us. More than 58% of employees did not receive financial assistance from the company during the COVID-19 crisis, wages of 52.3% of employees decreased (and about half of the respondents, 45%, consider the reduction of wages justified), while the intensity and time of work increased for 50% of respondents (Diagram 7). Despite the above data, more than 67% believe that their managers in difficult situations turned out to be strong leaders who are able to manage in difficult situations.

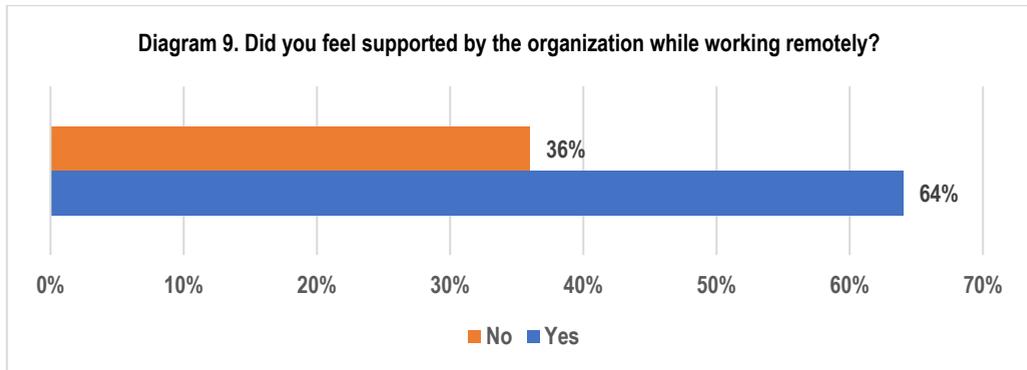


These statistics clearly reflect the fact that in a Georgian society (inclined towards collectivism, strict hierarchy, obedience, and respect for seniority, a masculine society) a manager is a leader – "a conqueror leader". They believe in the manager, he/she is respected and followed even in the face of disagreement or inefficiency. Special attention should be paid to the fact that for a 67.4% of the respondents, their managers were strong leaders, which, from our point of view, is the topic of a separate study (Diagram 8).



Of particular interest is the fact that, during the COVID-19 period, in the Georgian companies, according to 66% of respondents, training and online meetings focused on enhancing team collaboration and cohesion were implemented either rare or not at all, but only 36% lacked support from the organization. In our opinion, the described situation is caused by an underestimation of the role of intra-organizational links, when even minimal participation is

sufficient, the distance of authority is great and managers, employers are not considered obliged to do anything more than job descriptions. Ultimately, about 97% of respondents believe that a healthy, strong organizational culture would increase their productivity (Diagram 9).



## Conclusion

As a result of the study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Organizational culture is the most important managerial resource that helps to increase the company's capitalization and competitiveness in the market, its reputation, and its performance.

The economic effect of the introduction of organizational culture is easily measurable and can be expressed in such indicators as employee productivity, time spent on implementation of work, the number of products and services produced per unit of time, etc.

Organizational culture is closely related to the national culture of the people forming the company, it has its own specific features and characteristics. The culture of the company can be judged by the national values and traditions of the country in which the company is located, by the history of its social and economic development. They are constructs, which have to prove their usefulness by their ability to explain and predict behavior. The moment they stop doing that we should be prepared to drop them, or trade them for something better. I never claim that culture is the only thing we should pay attention to. In many practical cases it is redundant, and economic, political or institutional factors provide better explanations. But sometimes they don't, and then we need the construct of culture (**Hofstede, 2002**)

Organizational culture takes on special importance in times of crisis and becomes a circle of salvation for employees, managers and the company as a whole.

The situation that has developed in Georgian companies during the coronavirus infection COVID-19 has shown that there is no understanding of the role and importance of organizational culture in society. There is a lack of understanding of the economic benefits of introducing organizational culture in companies (**Nino Zarnadze, 2019**). The atmosphere existing in companies, which is spontaneously formed and borrowed from the national culture, is considered as organizational culture.

Formation of strong intra-organizational links will help Georgian organizations create a strong immune system of the organization, synchronize the actions of employees, maintain team

spirit and raise the psycho-emotional mood of company employees, increase its profitability and work efficiency.

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## **Resilience in Covid-19 Times - Is There a Plan B for the Future? A State of Art**

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### **Abstract**

There are three concepts represented that prove the possibilities of finding a plan B for humankind towards a pandemic such as Covid-19. Our papers focus in the study for the prove of the organizational ambit in Mexico, where it hasn't been valued as a way of well-being to fortify people for a pandemic like Covid-19 in the organizations, that is to say, about which should be the Plan B for humankind, schools, universities, media, governments, and other domains. There is literature presented that provides arguments of an emergent and meaningful change in the paradigm of human evolution and other organization during future pandemics. To describe this change of strategy, we revisit Florentino, Ríos, Carrillo and Sacubo, Molina, Castello, Mikulic and Fernández, Palomar, Matus, Victorio among others. In any context where people are developed, they must confront situations that can affect significantly their life dynamics and lose forever the perception of a reality built over years of life, exposing them to risks on their physical, mental and emotional health. It is argued that the reason why organizations are not listening more, about the emergent sociocultural, economic, political, and even philosophical change that Covid-19 has caused. The general idea of a change on an e<sup>1</sup>mergent paradigm and the next step on the history of humankind is being hatched.

**Keywords:** resilience, organizations, pandemic, emerging plan

### **Introduction**

#### **Part I. The problem**

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<sup>1</sup> What is presented here is a state of the art that justifies the presentation of quotations and quotations, which are reflected in the paragraphs that precede or precede them.

The concept of resilience<sup>1</sup> according to diverse perspectives, seen by the Real Academy of the Spanish Language dictionary, comes from the latin word *resilie* –entis and means “to jump backwards, bounce, fall back” (RAE-ASALE, 2020). Garmezi (1991, p. 459), states that it is “the capacity to recover and maintain an adaptive sanity after being abandoned or the initial capacity to start a stressful event”. Meanwhile Kotliarenco, Caceres and Fontecilla (1997), affirm that:

The focus of resilience comes from the premise of being born in poverty, like living in a physiologically insane environment; these are high risk conditions for the mental and physical health for people. Apart from focusing on circuits that maintain on this situation , resilience worries to observe those conditions that could possibly open to a more positive and sane development (1997, pp. 1-2).

It is also defined as “the human capacity of confronting, overcome and being strengthened or transformed by the experiences of adversity” (Amar Amar et al., 2013, p. 1). Flores Olvera (2014, p. 7) States that, it is “the potential capacity that an individual has to confront the adversity and keep growing form it”. It also mentions that there exists a phenomenon opposite to resilience known as *asiliente anomie* that:

Is a sick attitude from the individual, a conduct deflected form policy, which characterizes mainly from transforming the real vision from itself, for a wrong vision that proves the incompetence of the individual and their social group to solve problems, to reach optimism and a high life standard, making them to obtain results that are negative to adversity (Flores Olvera, 2013, p. 7).

The current pandemic scenario in the world (2020), is a challenge and a threat to the human resistance process in every way: physical and mental. Is a threat for each eight dimensions: confronting, autonomy, self-esteem, awareness, responsibility, hope, sociability, tolerance and frustration. But, do all public and private organizations are taking into consideration of these dimensions? Each one of these are a base of the resilient support of the human being towards these diverse situations.

### **The problem**

In Mexico, there exists a total population of 126.2 million habitants (World Bank, 2018). according with data provided the 100% of Mexican population have never lived in a pandemic such as we are going through in June 2020, we have never been exposed to family context (house) labor (companies) where there are always contextual and individual problems presented (Maslach et al., 2001) joining the sanitary emergency, Covid-19.

In recent studies made June 21th 2020, the Health Secretary of Mexico states that: the quantity of cases in Mexico is 180,545 confirmed, 21,825 deaths (Health Secretary of Mexico, 2020) and in the world there are 8,860,331 confirmed positive cases and 465,740 deaths (WHO, 2020), and to this day there hasn't been fund a cure or the structural composition of the virus. The lack of investigators in Mexico is still precarious.

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<sup>1</sup> It is about understanding and putting in due importance a concept of building the capacity for adaptation and recovery of the human being in adverse situations such as economic crises, emotional crises, as a consequence of the current pandemic; as a learning capacity, which should not be understood as a panacea but as an alternative.

In this Covid-19 situation in many countries, such as Mexico, the answer was to send the population to quarantine and the strategy known as "sana distancia" as better tools to face it; quarantine has been used a long time ago as tool to prevent the possible spread of diseases transmissible among the population. (Barbisch et al., 2015).

However, we must consider if the benefits obtained with this mandatory is going to compensate the possible psychological cost during this period (Rubin & Wessely, 2020). During the pandemic process there has not been a word about strategies to fortify resilience for the people.

During the period in which people are quarantined in their home, we can appreciate two types of reactions, in one way, it can bring the best of themselves, and in other way, it can present stress, burden and other physiological disorders. (Rubin & Wessely, 2020).

In studies recently checked traumatic stress answers were measured in kids and fathers during pandemic disasters, it was found that these quarantine events can be traumatic, accomplishing the criteria to post-traumatic stress disorder. (TEPT) (Sprang & Silman, 2013).

It is also important to mention that the economic decay probably will be a problem during quarantine, due to most of the population aren't allowed to work and have to interrupt their professional activities without a correct planning and their effects can last a long time. In other studies, the economic decay due to quarantine created several symptoms of distress, frustration and violence against the people surrounding each other (sons, wives, mothers and fathers (Pellecchia et al., 2015) and it has been reported as a risky factor for symptoms to physiological disorders, anger and anxiety, even months after the quarantine is ended (Mihashi et al., 2009).

In other study based in the reaction of people in quarantine by the Ebola disease, it was found that, even when the participants were granted with an economic subvention, some of them felt that the quantity wasn't enough and/or came too late for them; due to this, many of them felt affected because they couldn't cover their current expenses. Many others became economically dependent from their families, generating the possibility of conflicts in this nature (Desclaux et al., 2017). The same thing Mexicans are passing though. This symptom probably happens because those with less income tend to be more affected to a temporal loss of income that those with a higher income. For this, employers should also consider proactive approaches that allow employees to work from home; this is to avoid economic loss and to maintain the proactivity and to be benefited from remote working of the employees.(Manuell & Cukor, 2011).

In another study, psychological effects were studied from quarantined people in Toronto, Canada finding a high prevalence of psychological anguish. The symptoms of TETP and depression were found in the 28.9% and the 31.2% of surveyed people, respectively. Longer durations of quarantine were associated with a higher prevalence of symptoms of TEPT. Likewise, the knowledge or direct exposing to someone with a diagnosis of SARS was also associated with TEPT and depressive symptoms. (Hawryluck et al., 2004).

Also, in some reports of a study it is stated that negative psychological effects, including posttraumatic stress, confusion, and wrath symptoms. The stressful factors included mayor duration of the quarantine, fears of infection, frustration, boredom, inadequate supplies, incorrect information and financial loss (Bedford et al., 2020).

On the other side, on previous investigations, people who participated in them state that they perceive deficient information and sometimes deceit from authorities of public health and they turn it in a stress factor, believing that the information isn't sufficient and unclear to be able to take appropriate actions; such as, some habitants still don't get the purpose of the quarantine (Braunack-Mayer et al., 2013; Reynolds et al., 2008).

Finally, people also informed a perception of a lack of transparency from officer of health and government sectors about the gravity of the pandemic (Braunack-Mayer et al., 2013). Maybe due to the lack of clear patterns or justification for accomplishing quarantine protocols related to posttraumatic stress symptoms (Reynolds et al., 2008).

Negative psychological effects both in general population and personal health, that are those who are found in the first line of people who contracted this virus; the main symptoms are posttraumatic stress, confusion, and anger. Stressing factors include the enlargement of the quarantine, fears of infection, frustration, bad temper, aggressiveness, fatigue, boredom, inadequate supplies, incorrect information, and financial loss.

Observing this problem from a scientific point of view, we have the perspective of Vincent Larivière, Fei Shu and Cassidy Sugimoto (march, 2020), who mention that important crisis tend to reveal hidden rules from the scientific system, making well-known scientific practices public. The Coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) in Mexico and the world, exposed an uncomfortable truth about science: The actual system of academic communication does not satisfy the need of science and society. More specifically, the crisis manifests two inferences in the investigation system: the predetermined value of closed science and the excessive focus on elite publishing, only in English, independently from the context and research consequences. For the case of Mexico, this is not distant, due to the collapsing of the political system, medical staff without knowledge and experience on the treatment of this disease made the sector to have 17% of infections between mayors, nurses, medics and even administrative staff and these, like a snowball, would infect their families and friends.

In January 31 of 2020, Wellcome Trust reviewed coronavirus as an "important and urgent threat for global health" and asked for both magazine researchers and their sponsors to "make sure that the results of the investigation and relevant data for this outbreak were shared quickly and openly to inform to public health sectors and save lives". Partners from this declaration included mayor editorials, such as Elsevier, Springer Nature and Taylor & Francis, such as, many other funders and social academies. Mixed partners of this statement were compromised to make all the investigations and data about the outbreak public immediately: on preprint repositories for articles that haven't been checked by pairs yet and on platforms of magazines for articles that that have been checked already (Carr, 2020).

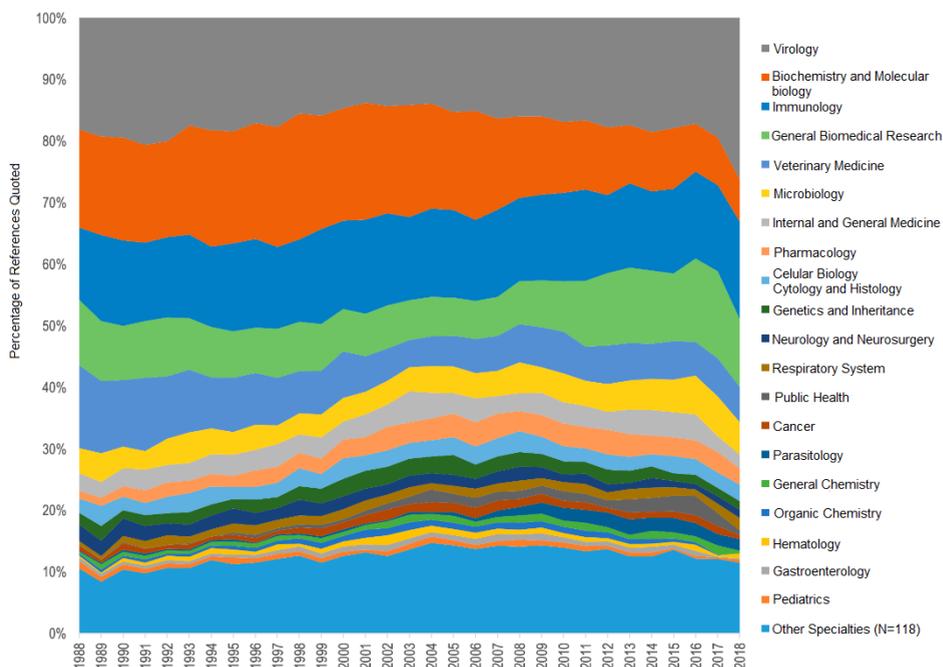
This is a positive step, but it doesn't comes far enough to satisfy public needs, because the only thing it did, at least for Mexico, was to liberate and put a direct access to things that have nothing to do with the problem; and to be able to inform and cause awareness at least on people in the academic scope and work as expositors with collaborative tools to reach more citizens from the country or the world.

It is true that the documents and chapters from books that have been released for this action represent only a small proportion of literature available about Coronavirus. According to Web of Science (WOS), there have been 13,818 articles published about the Coronavirus topic since the final years of the decade of 1960. More than a half (51.5%) of these articles have a

restricted access. Coronavirus is without a doubt a great family of viruses and someone could argue the relevance of older researches on the actual outbreak. However, as an example, three documents about COVID-19 published on the edition of February 15th from The Lancet were based on 69 different documents indexed in WOS, which of 73.2% of them are mixed with 13,818 documents about Coronavirus. The most antique reference in these documents is from 1988; this remarks the fact that, even if Coronavirus can be a novelty, the research about Coronavirus is based on a long queue of literature of research that is often closed.

The overlay of this scientific literature on larger investigation flows also highlights the limitations of this approach.

The 13,818 articles of coronavirus quote more than 200,000 articles, from virology to cancer and from public health to genetics and heritance (Figure 1). Less than a third of the quoted articles in which "coronavirus articles" obtained information and inspiration were other "coronavirus articles". Even if all the articles about coronavirus were available, this would not be enough to tackle the crisis, given the intrinsically interdisciplinary nature of the biomedical investigation. The base for the knowledge of the science is just much wider than only one topic. Seeing the literature through a wide lens about coronavirus articles causally related with COVID-19 only blinds the effort of the research for other work that could be crucial.



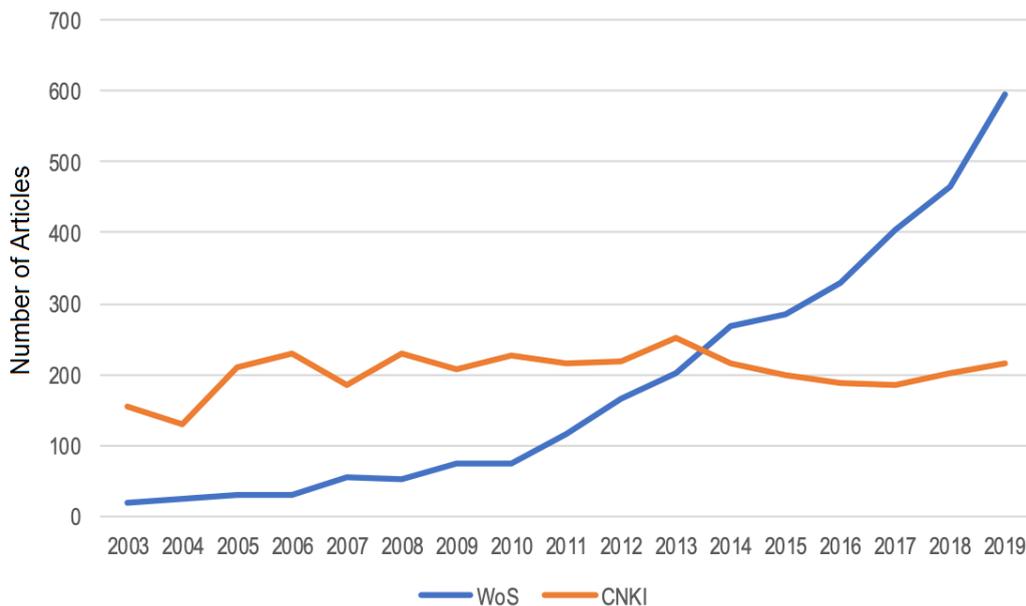
**Figure 1.** Percentage of references quoted by works about Coronavirus, by specialty of quoted magazines. Field NSF and subfield classification 1988-2018.

But this does not stop there; cures for deceases tend to come from new combinations and knowledge from several investigation areas. If the goal of opening an investigation is to advance in science and serve society, all the investigation must be open, not only a part of it. Not finding elements that allow human resource to heal the wound of losing its loved ones,

besides the total confrontation conditions that has caused levels of interfamilial violence or against women or children in the world. The absence of resilience is total in all these articles.

Publication incentives are the other controversial element revealed by the actual outbreak. During the last decade, authorities and Chinese institutions, such as the ones in many other countries, have offered a financial direct reward based on the magazine in which researchers publish their work, with the implicit objective to put in a better position their institutions on international classifications. Invariably, publishing on these magazines implies to adjust to a frank language (English) and to publish about topics that matter to most of the guardians of these magazines that are disproportionately from western countries. Meanwhile, a larger diffusion to the scientific community is a more important objective; it should not be at the expense of diffusion to local communities, particularly to those who have a direct connection to the study scope. Due to the payment barriers and the use of English, international magazines tend to be inaccessible to those who are on the first global line of proposing medical attention and elaborating health norms, especially on crisis times. The only researchers that have possibilities of economic support to pay these articles are the ones on hard science and only a small group.

The actual outbreak exemplifies this efficiency. In late 2019, the Chinese Center for Control and Decease Prevention (CCDCP) sent a group of experts to Wuhan to recover data about the virus. This was almost three weeks after the first patient presented symptoms and right after the news of human-human transmission on social networks by eight different medics from Wuhan (posteriorly they were accused by police). Researchers analyzed data and the presented their results, including a verification of human-human virus transmission to high-prestige magazines from the west, such as The Lancet and The New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM), published on January 24th and 29th respectively. On January 20th it was published a public statement, recognizing the transmission form human to human.



**Figure 2.** *Number of articles about disease surveillance posted by Chinese investigators on international magazines (WOS) and on national magazines (CNKI). After the pandemic of SARS in 2003, the importance of the investigation about disease surveillance in China has exponentially increased*

In response to this, the Chinese government stipulated that financed projects about coronavirus, including the ones with new initiative 1.5M from the National Science Foundation of China (NSFC), should be published in local Chinese magazines instead of international ones and the emphasis should be for controlling the virus and saving lives. This suggests recognition from part of the Chinese government that the focus of publishing on elite magazines did not provide a convenient way of spreading results. Besides, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) emitted a mixed statement that required that universities and research institutions should limit the use of SCI documents, just like related indicators (for example, JIF, ESI, etc.) on investigation evaluation. MoST also stipulated that the number of documents cannot be used as key criteria for evaluating the development of the investigation and has prohibited the use of cash policies per publishing. All these initiatives point to a subjacent truth: prioritizing indicators about a sudden deliver for results to relevant communities is not the best for society.

Signatories to the declaration of agree to follow these principles not only for the actual outbreak, but also for every situation in the future "wherever there is a significant benefit for public health when guaranteeing that the data is shared in a quick and long way" (Carr, 2020). This statement establishes a direct link between public health and the trade of results for the investigation: explicitly arguing that walls and embargos from magazines are an obstacle for science and as a result they're a threat for public health. However, it also states the question: Where is the line of what constitutes a "public health benefit" drawn? In the last five months, the Center for Disease Control of the United States estimated that there was between 18,000 and 46,000 deaths related to the flu. Isn't there benefit for public health at doing public, or any type of research that can accelerate biomedical discovery and save lives? In Mexico it has been all the opposite, only financing is given for paying articles on international magazines that belong to the Scopus Sources y Master Journal List companies – WoS.

Es por ello por lo que hacemos un llamado a la comunidad científica (editores, financiadores y sociedades) para que se mantengan fieles a su palabra. It is necessary to quickly share the investigation to inform the public and save lives. We applause the job that it is being done through this crisis, we hope for this moment to serve as a catalyst for change. Trump's administration in the United States, for example, is considering an executive order that makes every financed study by the federal government to free to read at publishing. On the same way, the coalition of funders from the Plan S have been opposed by many of the signatories from the Wellcome Trust declaration. This is a blatant contradiction.

The signatories of the declaration from Wellcome Trust must extend their principles to cover all their practices: make the investigation to be available immediately and incentivize scientific communication to all the people who are interested. The scientific answer to Covid-19 has proven some of the benefits for opening the scientific system, including the torrent of documents that are shared immediately on preprint servers, the open collaboration and the discussion of scientist that use platforms such as social networks and the accelerated modeling of viral genomes. However, this would be in vane if the scientific system does not change. It is

essential to recognize what is clear during these times of crisis: a robust scientific system and an informed citizenship requires immediate access and public to the research.

The review from the State of Art for the impact of Covid-19 does not show a resilient program at all as alternative, neither as plan B for future world pandemics. Fairly.

## **Part II. On why resilience as a key factor for the future of human resource towards a pandemic**

According to verified national and international investigations, resilience has been brought, but focused around kids, young people, and women in a situation of vulnerability, poverty, violence, and educational context, but not for phenomenon like pandemics, Covid-19. More recent studies focused around resilience have been accomplished on an international ambit with a quantity focus and a correlational scope.

Meneghel, Salanova and Martínez (2013), launch new study challenges of resilience in a labor context in which it remarks the necessity of studies with a focus on resilience at an organizational level, social level, group and individual. Therefore, the current investigation centers around contributing new discoveries that enrich previous works by other investigations focused on organizational resilience through the reinforcement of resilience on individuals, on institutions for future pandemics.

### **Resilience as a key factor for future projects for human resources from global nations**

#### **Resilience background**

Studies of resilience appear around the 70's, their study isn't simple, due to the diversity of context, focuses, methodologies and several studies; but it is important to expand the knowledge about this phenomenon because it is actually primordial that human beings reinforce their capacities, resources and individual competences for confronting future world pandemics.

The conceptual study of resilience generated some attention and has been studied by several disciplines in the last years and decades, like the case of social and human sciences, therefore:

It is recognized as a valued perspective for its possible applications in the fields of health, prevention and education; as well as a theoretical input for the elaboration of strategies to develop from the school, family and community ambit oriented to recover health, dignity and human condition (Fiorentino, 2008, p. 96)

Resilience has been investigated by researchers under different approaches:

50s: Researchers focused their attention on how young people were able to survive and overcome adverse extreme situations such as poverty or abuse from a mentally sick parent, additional to the presence or absence of intrinsic qualities such as temper that acts with the social environment of a young person. (Anthony, 1987 quoted by Flores Olvera, 2013, p. 9)

80's: "studied the process and mechanism of protection involved emerging from resilience on a natural way. Arguing that resilience must be understood as a dynamic interaction between an individual and its environment." (Rutter, 1987 quoted by Flores Olvera, 2013, p.9; 2014, p.9).

Late 20th century: "researchers focused in actives on people, arguing that positive development, coping and resilience are present among those who have enough for both

internal and external resources" (Lerner & Benson, 2003 quoted by Flores Olvera, 2013, p.9; 2014, p.9).

21st century: There is a fourth wave on this decade that it is extending the discussion, arguing that the way in which we are understanding resilience currently is being discursively negotiated and influenced by culture and the context in it. (Boyden & Mann, 2005 quoted by Flores Olvera, 2013, p.9; 2014, p.9). Besides focusing around the social resilience factor for helping others in cases such as pandemics like Covid-19

Professionals that have been interested or integrated to resilience studies are "sociology, administration, social psychology, neuroscience, anthropology and genetics". However, "additionally there already are international organizations involved in the investigation and promotion of resilience, such as: UNICEF, CEPAL, World Bank, LAC and others on England and USA" (Flores Olvera, 2013, p. 10, 2014, p. 9).

### Part 3. Evolution and identified factors on resilience studies throughout time

During the development of resilience studies there have been found a considerable number of related factors with it, among which vulnerable groups are highlighted, such as kids, teenagers, and women. It is also related with temper, family, community, environment, social support, self-esteem, dynamism and perseverance, adaptation, interaction, abilities, intelligence, context, Puig and Rubio (2013), do a line of time where they prove the concept of resilience and identify associated factors with it, just as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Conceptualization of resilience and associated factors

<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Concept of Resilience</b>	<b>Identified factors</b>
<b>Werner and Smith</b>	1982	"History of successful adaptations on an individual that has been exposed to biological factors of risk or stressful events in life" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).	"Being a woman, physically strong, socially responsible, adaptable, tolerant, oriented towards concrete goals, good communicators and a good level of self-esteem, helpful environment and caring in and out of the family" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).
<b>Garmezzy</b>	1991	"Capacity to recover and maintain an adaptive conduct after abandonment and/or initial incapacity when a stressful event occurs" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).	"Temperament and attributes (level of activity, reflexive capacity, cognitive abilities, and responsibility towards others)" (Puig and Rubio, 2013). "Families (affection, cohesion and the presence of some adult care)" (Puig and Rubio, 2013). "Availability of social support (substitute mother, interested professor, help from an organization, etc)" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).
<b>Rutter</b>	1992	"Mix of social and intrapsychic processes that bring the possibility of having a "sane" life living on an "insane" environment. These processes would have a place	"Being a woman, good temperament, positive school environment, self-control, self-efficacy, planning skills and a close personal relationship, warm and

		<i>thought time, giving lucky mixes between kid attributes and their familiar, social and cultural environment" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>	<i>stable at least with one adult" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>
<b>Kumpfer and Hopkins</b>	1993	<i>"It develops through interaction with the environment" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>	<i>Optimism Empathy Insight Intellectual competence Self-esteem Direction or Mission Determinism and perseverance.</i>
<b>Kumpfer, Szapocznick, Catalano, Clayton, Liddle, McMahon, Millman, Orrego, Rinehart, Smith, Spot and Steele</b>	1998	<i>"Capacity to recover from traumatic events in life" (Puig and Rubio, 2013). "Ability to resist chronic stress" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>	<i>"People with resilience tend to consume less and have a better adaptive level" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>
<b>Azjen</b>	1998	<i>"The construct of resilience could be a previous element, equivalent or similar to perceived conducted control, or to other constructs such as Bandura's self-efficacy" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>	
<b>Braverman</b>	1999	<i>"Successful adaptation to exposition for significant stressors or other risks. For him, resilience would explain us why a person consumes or not in a specific moment." (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>	<i>"We don't know if we should consider resilience as a simple phenomenon, specific from the individual or as a group of phenomena that can be studied more independently in different areas" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>
<b>Masten</b>	1999	<i>"Feature relatively global from the personality that allows a person to a better adaptation to life" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>	<i>"Morrison, Storino, Robertson, Weissglas, Dondero" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>
<b>Morrison, Storino, Robertson, Weissglas and Dondero</b>	2000	<i>"Is the great macro factor of protection that covers all the others" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>	
<b>Becoña</b>	2002	<i>"Strategy of confrontment, ability to solve problems and self-regulating" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>	
<b>Luthar and Zelazo</b>	2003	<i>"Is should be considered as a process or phenomenon, not as a feature. It is modifiable not static" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>	<i>"It is going to depend on the interaction of the individual with his most immediate environment" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).</i>

<b>Fergusson and Horwood</b>	2003	"It explains the adaptation of people that have passed through tough or traumatic situations during their infancy" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).	"The factors that take you to resilience are: intelligence and skill during problem solving" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).
<b>Fergus and Zimmerman</b>	2005	"There are three models of resilience identified: compensatory, protective and challenging" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).	"The community organization is a central element to produce resilience for those who are at risk" (Puig and Rubio, 2013).
<b>Grotberg</b>	2006	"Capacity of the human being to face the adversities in life, overcome them and even being transformed by them" (Puig y Rubio, 2013).	Source of resilience: I am I have I can Triadic Model.

Source: Puig and Rubio (2013, pp. 40–43).

### State of art in resilience. Studies of resilience at an international level

There exists a multidisciplinary of studies related with resilience at an international level, this is why through Table 2, we will detail different approaches for these and the design for being able to have an analysis on more common studies about resilience.

**Table 2.** International studies of resilience

<b>Author/Year/ Country/Keywords</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Type of investigation</b>	<b>Design of investigation</b>	<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Results</b>
Ríos, Carrillo and Sabuco (2012). Murcia, España. Keywords: Resilience Burnout	Resilience, burnout and sociodemographic variables in nursing students. Where the levels of the two first variables and the variables of the sociodemographic samples were studied	Quantitative	Transversal/ Descriptive/ Correlational	Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC)	(+) resilience (-) emotional fatigue and mayor personal fulfillment  Levels of Burnout: 28% emotional fatigue 19% cynicism
Molina, (2013). San Juan, Argentina. Keywords: Resilience Burnout	Resilience and Burnout in a public hospital from Argentina in the urgency area (relation between resilience and burnout and the association of these phenomenons	Quantitative	Transversal/ Descriptive	Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC).	(+) resilience (-) Levels of Burnout (+) resilience (-) Emotional fatigue and (+) Personal fulfillment

	<i>with sociodemographic variables and lifestyles).</i>				
Castello (2003). Argentina.	<i>Resilience from a systemic focus for the development of human resources and organization.</i>	<i>Theoretical and Quantitative Variables: Shock, paralysis, denial, wrath, depression, rationalization and acceptance and compromise</i>	<i>Revision</i>	<i>There exist four bases to build organizational resilience, according to Castello: Future goals Confronting reality exploration of meaning Capacity of realizing things with elements near our approach.</i>	<i>(+) resilience (+) Adjustment to the context and insecurity of the environment (-) Assimilation of total process, (+) Treatment regression and reduction</i>
Mikulic and Fernández (2005) Buenos Aires, Argentina. Keywords: Psychological Evaluation, Strengths, Children, Teenagers and Resilience.	<i>Philological strength in children and teenagers</i>	<i>Quali-Quantitative International sample 44 participants between 10 and 18 years old.</i>	<i>Empirical and descriptive exploratory</i>	<i>Interview structured to review strengths in children and teenagers</i>	<i>Need of inclusion of the psychological evaluation in the context of children and teenagers because it provides them strength and sense of protection.</i>
Canaval, González and Sánchez (2007). Cali, Colombia. Keywords: Women health, violence in relationships, abuse women, spirituality, and resilience	<i>Spirituality and resilience on abused women that file a complaint on their situation of relationship violence</i>	<i>Quantitative</i>	<i>Correlational. sample on purpose: 100 women between 18 and 65 years old, that file a complaint on situations of relationship violence</i>	<i>Resilience Scale (RS) of (Wagnild and Young), with 25 items. Spiritual perspective scale of Reed, with 10 items.</i>	<i>(+) Spirituality (+) Resilience</i>

Source: Self-made elaboration from Ríos Rísquez (2012), Molina Collon (2013), Mikulic and Fernández (2006) and Canaval, González and Sánchez (2007).

## Studies of resilience in Mexico

In Mexico there exist multiple studies about resilience, just as it is shown on Table 3:

**Table 3.** National studies of resilience

<b>Author/Year</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Scope of Investigation</b>	<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Results</b>
González Arratía, Valdez Medina, and Zavala Borja (2008). Tepic, Nayarit. México. Keywords: Resilience and Resilience questionnaire	Resilience in 200 Young Mexican people	Quantitative	Transversal	Resilience questionnaire (Strength and personal security of González-Arratía and ValdezMedina (2005).	(+) Resilience on men with independent features, on their part women need an external backup to be resilient
Gaxiola, González and Contreras (2012). Hermosillo, Sonora. Keywords: Resilience, Academic performance and High School	Resilience influence, goals, and social context in the academic performance of high school (96 young Mexican people).	Quantitative Internal variables: goals and resilience External variables: risky neighborhood and risky friends.	Transversal	The scale about goals for teenagers (Sanz de Acedo, Ugarte and Lumbreras, 2003). Inventory of Resilience (IRES) (Gaxiola, Frias, Hurtado, Salcido and Figueroa 2011).	(+) resilience (+) academic performance prediction, during school goals.
Palomar, Matus and Victorio (2013). Urban areas near the Federal District.	What is resilience of extreme poverty from the center of Mexico made of? (sample 913 people)	Quantitative	Transversal	Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (Connor and Davidson, 2003).	(+) Strength: Locus internal control, motivation till achievement and direct confronting (+) Confronting of adverse conditions
González-Arratía, Valdéz-Medina, Pasa-Flores and	Knowing the features of resilience in children in a poverty situation of a	Quantitative	Transversal	Resilience questionnaire (González Arratía, Valdez, and Salazar	High level of resilience at the three dimensions of the instrument: 1. internal

González-Escobar (2009). Mexico State	rural community (100 children, 50 men and 50 women)	2006) (32 replies).	protective factors 2. external protective factors 3. empathy
Keywords:			
Resilience,			
Poverty and			
Children			

Source: Self-made elaboration from the literature (Gaxiola Romero et al., 2012; González Arratia López Fuentes et al., 2008; González-Arratia López et al., 2012; Salgado Arteaga et al., 2018).

### **Merton's Model: The Pygmalion effect**

We individuals coexist day to day with other people and we need their trust and acceptance, it is because of this that Merton (1964) named Pygmalion effect to obtained results on the behavior of an individual, derived from the expectations and opinion from other people. This means that, the individual will obtain mediocre results, if other people treat him with mistrust and devalue. Meanwhile, if this situation is opposite, and the individual is treated with trust and value, then the results of the individual work would increase drastically. Coming from Merton contributions (1964), it is detached that the trust that other people have on an individual, will reinforce it to achieve goals with a mayor complexity and this is very important, given that all the individuals need in one way or another is support and acceptance of others to be able to potentiate our capabilities and hidden abilities.

In the world we are living on we face a lot of challenges; therefore, a resilient culture must be constructed, in which values, respect, dignity, triumph, and happiness are always available. Resilience isn't static, it is dynamic and if it isn't feed, it can even die; it is true that when an individual is born it is resilient, but if this resilience doesn't have a continuous feedback it tends to die and turn itself in an opposite phenomenon called asilient anomie. It is very important to have a "positive vision for the future of mankind" (Flores Olvera, 2013, p. 16), however, this is a hard task from all of the contexts in which the individual develops itself. High executives, leaders, teachers, instructors, and bosses must focus in creating a chain effect in resilience constructing and not only individual, but social in ways of strength for facing tough situations. In the world there exists: "pessimism, depression, suicide, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, drug abuse, violence, this is nothing new or unknown among employees, students and families from Mexico" (Flores Olvera, 2013, p. 16), this is why asilient anomie must be eliminated and we must promote the strength resilience to build an environment of peace, wellness, mental health and productivity in every context where the individual interacts.

### **Shakespeare's Principle Model**

When people have positive and negative aspects that a daily effect on them, in one way or another, this phenomenon is known as Shakespeare's principle and it refers to the actions both negative and positive that increase or decrease levels of resilience from individuals (Flores Olvera, 2013) this effect is known as filling or emptying an internal tank for a person. Depending on their age is how can someone fill or empty Shakespeare's tank, and it is because the importance of knowing what activities help us to feed back the resilience levels on people to strength them on environments where they are developed.

## **Plan B**

Now we detail the actions from the government or national, regional, and global leaderships that could be done in an articulated way:

Create comprehensive programs about friendship.

Create comprehensive programs about teamwork, group activities, the feeling of belonging in a social group, the celebrating the achievement of another person, listening to others, to actively participate in social events not only from work if not from citizens; if these are efficient they will have positive effects on citizens such as high levels of security, self-esteem, optimism, hope, happiness and creativity.

Comprehensive programs that encourage in an individual and positive way to elevate individual resilience levels: practicing sports, coexist with nature and other people, having an active social life, having presence on social networks with the intention of receiving positive actions from other people, having at least one clear and precise goal in life, planning short or medium term goals, having osseous and fun times (camping, board games, going to parties, healthy activities, singing, hobbies), having a pet, being thankful and giving others positive actions.

Create a program to release data bases or payment repositories where they keep more recent investigations about pandemics for all the academics to be popularizers in every part of the country for educating during pandemics.

Integrate a subject or seminary on curriculums of elementary, middle, and high schools and colleges to be transversal for studying.

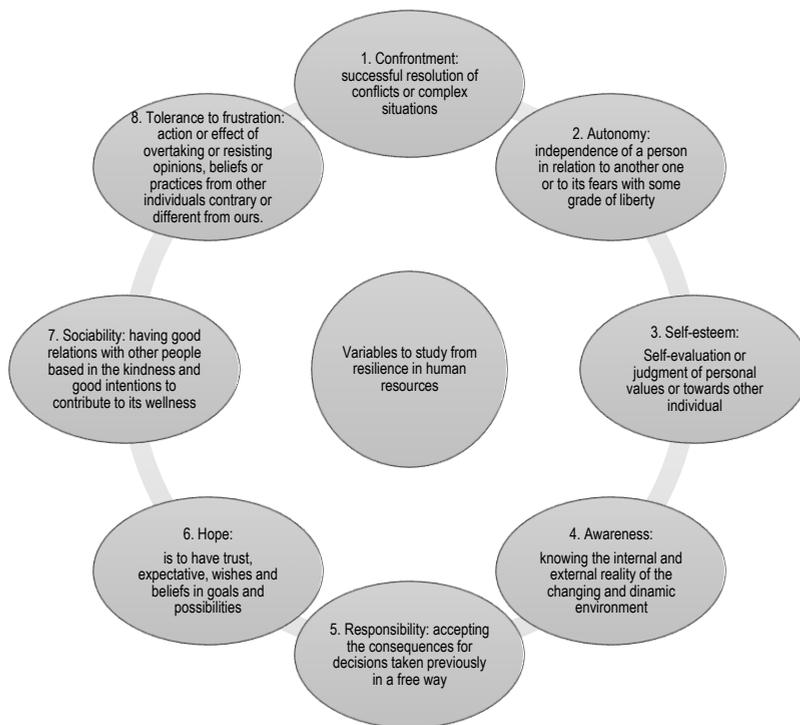
Append the organizational learning Theory to study the phenomenon of resilience in human resources on organizations in every postgraduate existing in the world.

Build a model of resilience culture specifically for future pandemics.

Create recruitment and selection models for all the public and private organizations it the world that from the beginning start to apply instrument for measuring their capacity of resilience, and from there.

Create an institutional entertaining program.

Create in a permanent way investigation programs that not only study from the medical perspective, if not organizational and administrative, the impact of pandemics on organizations.



**Figure 3.** Methodological model for studying social resilience. Source: self-made elaboration from Flores Olvera (2014).

**Conclusion**

The present pandemic scenario in the world (2020), is a challenge and threatens the human resistance process in every way; physical and mental. This threat affects eight dimensions in the life of a human being: confrontment, autonomy, self-esteem, awareness, responsibility, hope, sociability, tolerance to frustration and life. But, do private and public organizations are aware of these dimensions? Every, and each of them are the resilient base for the human towards adverse situations. Given this, we expose the results found in the literature:

In this Covid-19 situation in many countries, such as Mexico, the answer was to send the population to quarantine and the strategy known as “sana distancia” as better tools to face it; quarantine has been used a long time ago as tool to prevent the possible spread of diseases transmissible among the population.

About the costs to consider regarding this strategy (obligatory on quarantine): economic decay, as a consequence, millions of people lost their jobs; serious feelings of anguish, frustration and violence against people that live in their environment (sons, couples, parents), psychological effects of high prevalence such as anguish; negative psychological effects, including symptoms of posttraumatic stress, confusion and anger. High duration stressing factors like: fear of virus exposition, contagion, disappointment, tedium, alimentary insecurity, inadequate information, financial loss.

Lack of strategies and projects for resilient strength of people.

Deficient information perception and sometimes misleading from part of authorities from public health or government. Uncertainty was also present from part of officials from health and government about the severity of the pandemic.

The pandemic has put in evidence the deficiency of the scientific system in the world and even more in Mexico. These important crises tend to reveal hidden norms in the scientific system, making well-known practices from science public. The coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) in Mexico and the world exposes an uncomfortable truth: that the actual academic communication system does not satisfy all the needs for science and society.

Two inefficiencies are revealed in the investigation system: the predetermined value of closed science and the excessive emphasis on elite publishing, only in English, independently from the context and the consequences of the research. In Mexico's case, this is not weird, due to the political system collapsing, medical staff without the knowledge and experiencing on this virus treatment made this sector to have 17% of infected people among managers, nurses, medics and even administrative staff (Health Secretary of Mexico, 2020) and they infected their families and friends just as a snowball.

Obligatoriness proposed by the declaration of the *Wellcome Trust* about dominant editors like *Elsevier*, *Springer Nature* and *Taylor & Francis* was necessary, and as funders and academic societies; to compromise to make every investigation and data about the outbreak public immediately: on preprints repositories for those articles that haven't been checked by pairs yet, and on magazine platforms for those articles that were already checked. Signatories from the *Wellcome Trust* agreed on keeping these principles not only for the actual outbreak but for every other situation were "there in a significant benefit for public health by guaranteeing that data is shared on a wide and quick way" (Carr, 2020).

This is a positive step, but not enough to satisfy public needs, because the only thing it did, at least for Mexico, was to liberate and give open access to collections that doesn't have anything to do with the problem; which limits the ability to inform and aware people from the academic ambit at least and work as expositors with collaborative tools to reach more citizens from countries and the world.

A scientific community call must be done (editors, funders, and society) for maintaining true to its words. The statement from *The Wellcome Trust* is incorrect: it is necessary to quickly share the investigation for saving lives and informing the public. Even though we applaud the job that is being done in this crisis, we hope for this moment to work as a catalyst for change.

The documents and chapters from books that have been released over this action represent just a small portion of the literature available about coronavirus. According to the Web of Science (WoS), there have been 13,818 articles published about the coronavirus topic since the end of the 1960 decade. More than the half (51.5%) of these articles remain closed for the public to read.

Publication incentives are the other controversial element revealed by the actual outbreak. During the last decade, authorities and Chinese institutions, such as the ones in many other countries, have offered a financial direct reward based on the magazine in which researchers publish their work, with the implicit objective to put in a better position their institutions on international classifications. Invariably, publishing on these magazines implies to adjust to a frank language (English) and to publish about topics that matter to most of the guardians of these magazines, that are disproportionately from western countries

Meanwhile, a larger diffusion to the scientific community is a more important objective; it should not be at the expense of diffusion to local communities, particularly to those who have a direct connection to the study scope. Due to the payment barriers and the use of English, international magazines tend to be inaccessible to those who are on the first global line of proposing medical attention and elaborating health norms, especially on crisis times. The only researchers that have possibilities of economic support to pay these articles are the ones on hard science and only a small group.

The actual coronavirus outbreak exemplifies this efficiency. In late 2019, the Chinese Center for Control and Decease Prevention (CCDCP) sent a group of experts to Wuhan to recover data about the virus. This was almost three weeks after the first patient presented symptoms and right after the news of human-human transmission on social networks by eight different medics from Wuhan (posteriorly they were accused by police). Researchers analyzed data and the presented their results, including a verification of human-human virus transmission to high-prestige magazines from the west, such as *The Lancet* and *The New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)*, published on January 24th and 29th respectively. On January 20th it was published a public statement, recognizing the transmission form human to human.

In response to this, the Chinese government stipulated that financed projects about coronavirus, including the ones with new initiative 1.5M from the National Science Foundation of China (NSFC), should be published in local Chinese magazines instead of international ones and the emphasis should be for controlling the virus and saving lives. This is something that most of the countries never did, and even less in Latin America.

The signatories of the declaration from *Wellcome Trust* must extend their principles to cover all their practices: make the investigation to be available immediately and incentivize scientific communication to all the people who are interested. The scientific answer to Covid-19 has proven some of the benefits for opening the scientific system.

The review from the State of Art for the impact of Covid-19 does not show a resilient program at all as alternative, neither as plan B for future world pandemics. Fairly.

According to verified national and international investigations, resilience has been brought, but focused around kids, young people, and women in a situation of vulnerability, poverty, violence, and educational context, but not for phenomenon like pandemics, Covid-19. More recent studies focused around resilience have been accomplished on an international ambit with a quantity focus and a correlational scope.

Thus, there is the necessity for creating a global model, International, regional, or local of resilience for citizens. It is affirmed that it is the capacity for recovering and maintaining and adaptive behavior after being abandoned or the initial incapacity to start an stressing event, it is true people with less capacity for recovering or maintaining and adaptive behavior are the ones that have less economic or material resources. It is June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and the present effects from Covid-19 exist, people are still getting infected and dying, and new psychological effects are being born. What awaits us without a Plan B? What awaits us without a Resilient Plan?

The impact of the pandemic remains among us, what remains to come is the subjective and intersubjective impact on the human being, and the intervention of organizations, public and private, is not notable.

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## Exploring the Labyrinths of *Resilience*: A Concept Analysis

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### Abstract

This literature review focuses on the concept of resilience seen through an analytical lens as presenting substantial possibilities and an enormous potential mechanism for children experiencing at-risk situations. In many different contexts around the world children face every day different life circumstances and difficulties. Many of these children will experience the "resilience" phenomenon or in other terms they will develop positive adaptation despite all the difficulties and adversities that they encounter. As we are more and more confronted with significant social challenges in many fields and areas of life, also in part posed by the 21st century, the use of the expanding and flourishing knowledge on the concept of resilience could be crucial in advancing and promoting possibilities and well-being for different individuals who are identified as being in a state of risk.

**Keywords:** resilience, concept analysis/definition, research, children and youth at-risk, advantages, limits, possibilities

### Introduction

In the recent decades there has been a growing interest related to the concept of resilience in the field of children's rights and also in other fields. Over time and research on the concept, the term that initially was rather denominated as presenting "invulnerability", in the recent decades has been replaced by the term "resilience". The term portrays or indicates the ability to "*bounce back or cope successfully despite substantial adversity*" (Rutter, 1987). People surviving and coping positively in extreme life situations experience the phenomenon of resilience. Different researchers from different fields have tried to decorticate the meaning of the concept and have made many efforts to trace resilient attitudes and behaviour among diverse populations of the world. In the resilience research it is assumed that people who experience resilience dispose certain strengths which allow them to succeed or bounce back in high risk situations.

The term *resilience* appears as useful in various different disciplines such as engineering, economics, business, environment etc. Going back in history, the concept has been stemming initially from engineering sciences/physics where resilience appears as the property of a material capable to go back to its initial state after a force or pressure has occurred. The Latin notion "resilire", translated means to bounce back, to rebound (ISSU, 2015:5). The focus of this paper is "resilience" in terms of human social experience and particularly focusing on children and youth. In the field of humanities the term appears in medicine or early psychiatric literature that for example was analysing children that were "not vulnerable" in

adverse life situations (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007). The terms used in psychopathology such as "invulnerable" or "invincible" were replaced later on by the term "resilience" that we use nowadays.

The evolution from these terms to the current use of the term "resilience" came as a result because researchers understood that in different circumstances, individuals presented different degrees of vulnerability or resilience, therefore nothing was absolute. (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007:74) Since that time, the study of children in resilience research has been used to identify possible relationships between risk factors and protective factors that lead to resilience, since from several studies (Garmezy, 1981; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith 1982;1989) it emerged that the vast majority of children despite experiencing adverse circumstances were demonstrating survival and resilience (Liebel, 2009: 2). For example a lot of researchers are interested in situations such as children living in poverty or children who have experienced war etc. and what are the factors that lead these children to become resilient and have positive outcomes despite facing adversity. The study of resilience has contributed in turning a new page or forming "a new paradigm" in terms of possibilities for capabilities of resistance and empowerment.

According to some researchers resilience can be designated as a "*two dimensional construct that implies exposure to adversity and the manifestations of positive adjustment outcomes*" and it does not present a personality trait or it is not related to individual attributes. (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000:859) Even though many children and young people face different problems or adversities in their life there are many of them who thrive in these difficult situations. This has contributed in giving a huge importance to the concept of "resilience", since it could hold an important key for social changes. If factors that help increase resilience for every child in difficult and at-risk situations such as trauma, family problems, poverty, etc. are being taught or trained, or promoted in some sort of way, the situation for many children could drastically change. Furthermore, the resilience phenomenon or social experience could bring many beneficial outcomes when it comes to the development of children's rights and to the increasing of empowerment and agency of children in the society. Most importantly it could bring positive results and potential impact on well-being and the quality of life. This is why, this concept presents a significant matter and it is important to study what stands behind it.

Although, there has been a lot of theoretical research regarding this construct, it presents a lot of problems and limitations since the concept itself is very variable and multidimensional, very much depending on the context and other variables. Before understanding hidden pathways of resilience, including advantages and limitations or ways of implementing it into social policies, there is a huge need in understanding well its definition and its construct on the first place. A lot of important progress is being made and has been done so far in the field of resilience but there are still many gaps left open that need to be clarified in order to facilitate a broader understanding of it from research, policy and also practice.

### **Methodology and research questions**

The objective of this paper is to (i) present a spectrum of the concept of resilience and its construct in terms of attributes, characteristics, etc., (ii) provide an overview of some of the advantages, difficulties and limits related to the conceptualization of this concept, as well as (iii) discuss critically some of the implications for further research.

The methodology consists in: (i) gathering relevant literature related to the topic of "resilience" by mainly focusing on research from social sciences and particularly by focusing on children and youth, and (ii) discussing it critically in a form of a literature review.

The notion of *resilience* and the definition of its construct

The notion of resilience presents multidimensional traits or characteristics and it indicates different specific operational definitions which when it comes to research or theory, it can be quite difficult to define. Across a lot of literature and research there exists an overall recognition of difficulty in defining the concept. Although it is very difficult to trace a linear definition of the notion, it is more or less acknowledged that it is characterized by two main constructs: (i) adversity and (ii) demonstration of positive outcomes or adaptation. Adversity can be defined as a state presenting a risk and "*typically encompasses negative life circumstances that are known to be statistically associated with adjustment difficulties.*" (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000:859) Such risks for example mean experience of trauma, violence, situations of war or massive killings etc. The second important construct of the notion, positive adaptation, includes the adjustment that takes place after being in a state of risk which is manifested in terms of social success or competence, for example good social relations with members of a given society or good emotional state of being.

Overall, according to Masten (1994), the construct of resilience "*broadly refers to the class of phenomena involving successful adaptation in the context of significant threats to development*" (as cited in Masten & al., 1999:143). In another definition according to developmental psychology, Garmezy (1985) defined resilience as "*the process of capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances*" (as cited in Windle, 2010:3) Other definitions of the construct can be found in discipline specific dictionaries including juvenile delinquency, medicine, or research in fields such as biology, psychiatry etc. (for further research see Windle 2010:2-5)

According to Luthar et al. (2000), there exists a confusion regarding the conceptualization of resilience viewed mainly as a personal trait and resilience seen rather as a dynamic process. The author argues that resilience rather constitutes a dynamic process and it is not a personality trait. The consideration of resilience as a personality trait can be very detrimental, since it implies that every individual can provide "*per se*"- by himself and surpass difficulties without any help or services. This is mainly a neo-conservative myth, as Ungar (2005; xvi) also mentions. The author stresses that not every child will be able to develop his/her capacities if there is no actor that helps these children succeed or experience socially the occurrence of resilience. Resilience is not something that depends only from the individual, or residing in him, it is rather a multidimensional, diverse and very complex phenomenon. It is also important to mention that resilience is also not just a process but it concerns different spheres including the individual, the social, the political and other resources within a specific family, community or a given culture.

### **Main Attributes and protective/risk factors**

The concept of resilience is framed by a huge complexity and the process of defining the attributes brings to a better understanding and clarification of the construct. Since the use of the concept in practice or research requires a good definition of resilience, an in-depth exploration of the most common associated attributes is important and needs to be carefully

considered. In order for resilience to occur, some factors or attributes are crucial to set up the ability to respond with positive outcomes and diminish the effects of adversity. In order for resilience to occur the presence of risk and protective factors is needed.

**Table 1. Protective Factors (by author)**

Protective factors	Anthony	Benard	Garmezy	Masten	Rutter	Werner
Good natured, easy temperament		X		X	X	X
Positive relationship	X	X	X	X	X	X
Communicates effectively			X		X	
Sense of personal worthiness	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sense of control over fate	X	X	X			
Effective in work, play, love			X			
Positive social orientation	X		X	X	X	X
Assertive/asks for help	X		X			
Above average social intelligence			X		X	
Informal social support network	X		X		X	X
Ability to have close relationships	X		X		X	
Healthy expectations and needs			X			X
Uses talents to personal advantage			X	X	X	
Delays gratification	X		X		X	X
Internal locus of control	X		X		X	X
Flexible	X		X		X	X
Believes in her or his self-efficacy	X	X	X	X	X	X
Desires to improve			X			
Interpersonal sensitivity					X	X
Problem-solving ability	X		X		X	X
Decision-making ability	X		X			
Future oriented					X	X
Trust in others/hope for the future	X	X	X	X		
Sense of humor	X	X	X	X	X	X
Productive critical thinking skills	X		X	X	X	X
Manages range of emotions	X			X		
Adaptive distancing		X				
High expectations	X	X	X	X	X	X

**Fig.1. Protective Factors (by author) (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007:75)**

Vulnerability and protective factors can each originate from multiple levels of influence: the community, family, and the individual (Cicchetti & Aber, 1986; Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993; Luthar & Zigler, 1991; Masten et al., 1990; Werner & Smith, 1992) as noted in Luthar & Cicchetti, (2000:860). Risk factors are usually identified as: family factors such as depression, alcohol and drug abuse; family processes such as divorce or separation, loss of one or both parents, family violence; outside factors such as poverty, low income, social conditions of growing up in violent or urban problematic contexts, or in situations resulting of discrimination of minorities or disadvantaged groups. (Liebel,2009:3) On the other side protective factors are often designated as residing between resources of the child, some commonly defined personality characteristics or other attributes of the environment. Earvolino-Ramirez (2007:75) presents some protective factors based on the work of different authors (see Fig.1). Dyer & McGuiness (1996) argue that "*protective factors can be defined as specific attributes or situations that are necessary for the process of resilience to occur*" (see Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007:75) However the author mentions that it is important to note that protective factors, since they are contextual, do not qualify as critical attributes since the outcomes can be very different. For the same factors the results can be different for different individuals.

According to different research in resilience some of the defining attributes that appear when the concept occurs are some of the following (as noted in Earvolino- Ramirez, 2007:76-77):

*Rebounding/Reintegration*: bouncing back or reintegrating back to the normal or the familiar.

*High expectancy/Self-Determination*: sense of expectation or purpose that feeds internal or external goals and self-determination as a sense of perseverance and worth.

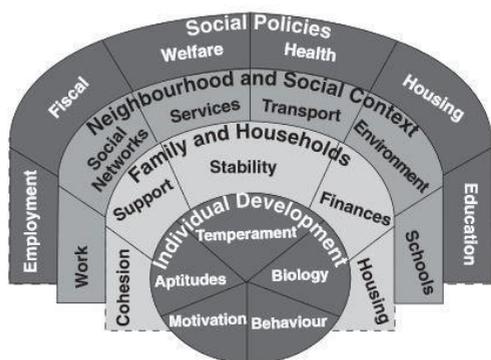
*Positive Relationships/Social Support*: healthy attachment to members of family or other and relationships that provide support and healthy quality.

*Flexibility*: the ability to adapt with changes, be tolerant and adaptable in different life situations.

*Sense of Humor*: the ability to have sense of humor about life and oneself.

*Self-Esteem/Self-Efficacy*: very important in relation to resilience, appearance in different forms and levels.

Another model (see Fig.2) referring to attributes of resilience separates them in three levels such as the individual, the social and the community/society (see Windle, 2010: 6- 7). This model takes in consideration resilience not only on an individual level of attributes. Here resilience is understood as a multidimensional and diverse mechanism.



**Fig.2.** Example of the layers of resources and assets that facilitate resilience (from A. Sacker, personal communication, 2009; adapted from Dahlgren & Whitehead, 1991 as appearing in Windle, 2010:7)

Other authors such as Ungar et al. (2005:326-327) provide an overview of some attributes starting from the individual (in this case referring to children and youth), interpersonal and beyond the environment including the social and cultural context.

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**Individual attributes**

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Competence (intellectual, physical), past and present  
Self-efficacy, internality  
Positive self-concept/self-esteem  
Self-awareness or insight  
Sense of humour/creativity  
Positive outlook/optimism/hopefulness  
Goals and aspirations/personal mission  
Problem-solving ability  
Healthy sexual identity  
Initiative and planning  
Perseverance  
Empathy for others  
Emotionally expressive  
Autonomy and independence or dependency (as appropriate to situation)  
Morality  
Spirituality  
Constructive use of time

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**Interpersonal attributes**

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Meaningful relationships with others/social bonding  
Maintains a network of school, home, community and peer associations  
Emotional management in stressful situations  
Social competence (understands what motivates others, how to act appropriately, etc.)  
Assertiveness, resistance to negative and controlling behaviours by others  
Capacity to restore self-esteem when threatened by others  
Interpersonal planning skills  
Interpersonal problem-solving skills  
Evoking personality, engages with others, elicits positive attention

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**Family attributes**

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Parents monitor the children in age-appropriate ways  
Quality of parenting  
Financial resources sufficient to meet family's needs and social expectations  
Avoidance of dangerous or threatening family interactions  
Family emotional expressiveness  
Collaborative family problem-solving  
Flexibility  
Low level of family conflict

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### **General characteristics of the environment beyond the family (including peers, school, community)**

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Availability of mentor to provide guidance when needed  
 Access to community resources and relationships that counter the effects of risk  
 Maintaining proximity to safe environments  
 Keeping distance from dangerous and stigmatizing environments  
 Perceived social support  
 Affiliation with a religious organization, spiritual supports  
 Appropriate use or abstinence from substance use/abuse  
 Community expectations for success  
 Access to school and/or a learning community  
 Access to recreation opportunities  
 Safety and security  
 Academic opportunities to excel  
 Age-appropriate vocational opportunities  
 Meaningful role in community  
 Time for reflection and renewal

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### **Social and cultural context**

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High social status (based on wealth or position)  
 Economic stability of the family  
 Meaningful rites of passage that include manageable levels of risk  
 A relational world view, emphasizing coherence, unity, place  
 Perception of events as either stressors or normative events as is appropriate to community norms

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Fig.3. Attributes, environment and social context (Ungar et al., 2005:326-327)

### **Antecedents and consequences**

Based on the Walker and Avant (2005) method of concept analysis, it appears of extreme importance the need to understand the contexts in which the concept occurs or is applied. Therefore, it is important to also clarify the antecedents and the consequences. Antecedents include the events that happen before the concept itself. On the other hand consequences are the events that proceed after the occurrence of the concept being studied. Adversity is the crucial antecedent before resilience occurs. Without a state of risk or adversity, no resilience will appear. After resilience, come consequences which could include outcomes such as ability to cope or coping, tolerance, positive adaptation etc. that can appear in different forms or domains.

### **Model case and additional cases**

A model case is an illustration of the concept that validates approximately all the defining attributes of the concept and does not include other attributes but only those of the concept mentioned. Additional cases include the contrary case and the related case which serve as a comparison and as an additional method to narrow down defining attributes according to the method of Walker & Avant (2005). Additional cases provide the concept analysis of examples of what the concept is not, which can be helpful in the process of understanding the essence of the concept. In the case of resilience cases can be interpreted differently according

to different cultures and contexts, so it is very important to consider this fact. Many examples of cases can be found in different literature such as those in Earvolino-Ramirez (2007: 78-80) or in Dyer & McGuinness (1996:278-280).

### **Empirical referents**

The empirical referents state the existence of the phenomenon of resilience. On this we could note that there are many instruments on resilience such as the Resilience Scale for Adults (RSA). This scale is composed by 37 items and it is based on the protective factors defined by different resilience researchers over the years (see Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007). Empirical referents mainly concern the part of how the existence of resilience is measured in practice. The presence of factors such as adversity, the capability of resistance and showing positive outcomes rather than negative ones confirms the occurrence of resilience. There are other approaches that serve to identify resilience such as the *variable focused approaches* (multivariate statistics) and the *person focused approaches* (see Windle, 2010:8-10).

### **Cultural and contextual component of resilience**

Children's development is deeply affected also by the multiple contexts and cultures that they experience. Resilience as well, since it's multidimensional and very diverse, it also depends on the contexts and the cultural component. The opportunities by which individuals are capable to surpass difficulties and situations of adversity are different. It is indeed acknowledged that resilience is relevant in a global perspective but nevertheless, it is also very contextual. The measurements of what it is considered to be a risk or resilience it is very much depending on the cultural perceptions and therefore, there can't be a strictly defined pathway to resilience in a global sense. According to Ungar (2005: xxiv) the definition of risk factors, and specifically the notion of risk, is socially constructed and also culture specific. According to Opp & Fingerle (2007:15), as mentioned in Liebel (2009:4), regarding the interplay of risk and protective factors the authors mention that it should be understood as an integrated and complex process, where the a-priori made distinctions between risk and protective factors do not always necessarily make sense. According to (Ungar, 2005; Ungar et al. 2007) the social construction of different factors is depending on the context and especially on class, gender, economics or it's culturally specific. Therefore, the study of resilience should refer and include these dimensions, the socio-historical context of children and youth and this applies especially to those who live in socially disadvantages or marginalized groups where resilience takes different forms. The process of defining resilience and implementing approaches that promote resilience sometimes it's tricky since the westernised resilience discourse inflicts the idea of individualism and does not take in consideration the cultural and contextual spaces, but rather conforms disadvantaged children and youth to social norms of the dominant society.

*"The resiliency discourse imposes prescribed norms of school and social success upon underprivileged children identified as at risk. The effect is that non-conforming individuals may be pathologized as non-resilient. Emphasis, remains wholly on the individual and thus, individualism is a dominant ideology embedded in the mainstream resiliency discourse"* (Martineau, 1999: 11-12 cited in Ungar 2005: XXVI; Liebel, 2009: 6-7)

In addition, as argued in Ungar (2005) the western societies and mentality generally associate more to the dimensions of the individual rather than communal. In many other parts around the world things don't work like this, since individuals are perceived as being part of a

community or a specific culture which is rather focusing on the "collective" than on the "individual". Therefore, even though the study of attributes or factors on an individual level that lead to resilience could be important, it is also necessary to mention that the dimension of the "communal" or the child/youth experiences related to the collective, shouldn't be underestimated. Instead, they should be valorized. Community resilience (when in confrontations with risks), goes hand in hand with the active action of the subjects. The notion of well-being is not separated from the notion of community or culture. As a result, also the notion of resilience itself cannot be understood on the individual level but it is rather a cultural reflexive and a contextual understanding. It is a "community experience" and an interconnection between the individual and the environment around him.

### **5. Advantages and limitations of resilience**

The resilience framework presents many advantages, since it could bring scientific evidence regarding factors that help in the shift or adjustment in high-risk situations. The study of resilience brings explicit guidelines regarding social interventions or policies that may help communities and individuals inside them to experience resilience. *"Of central interest are not only adaptational failures (traditionally focused on in research with groups at high risk; Cicchetti, 1993) but also, and more importantly, positive adaptational outcomes and their antecedents (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Luthar & Zigler, 1991; Masten, et al., 1990)"* as noted in Luthar & Cicchetti (2000: 892). The resilience framework encompasses on strengths, rather than on deficits, which contributes in enhancing the positive aspects or changes in individuals considered at-risk. Some authors mention another important aspect of resilience which is thought to increase the adaptability or the capacity to cope in a specific given environment. *"Resilience describes the phenomenon of surviving and thriving in the face of adversity typically predictive of negative outcomes:poverty, family psychopathology, and trauma. Resilience improves conditions affecting an individual's ability to cope."* (Kitano & Lewis, 2005: 200) Furthermore, the resilience approach is very useful when it comes to the process of circumscribing factors, that are powerful when there exists a high-risk situation but they aren't affecting the same when the high-risk situation does not occur. The careful attention also on context-specific vulnerability and protective factors gives the approach a great importance on the macro and micro level. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) puts a great emphasis on the child's well-being. As a result, the protection of children (considered as being in a high-risk situation who face adversity) has become a crucial priority of interventions and policies in an international level. Since the conception of well-being is also contextual, there are many difficulties in implementing the CRCs mechanisms. Therefore, the protection of children is still all over the world very uncertain. New approaches, such as the resilience approach, provide exploration of dimensions related to children's experiences, which are inseparable from their contexts.

On another level, beside many advantages that resilience presents, there are also difficulties regarding the terminology of this concept due to its variability. There are some problems related to the methodology and the non-adequate application of scientific standards. Different researchers use a huge variety of methodology and sometimes the application of theory in the field of research is not made accurately. Another concern refers to the use of another term, "hardiness", which sometimes is often misinterpreted or misunderstood as resilience from people. The term "hardiness", is described as "robust or able to withstand adverse conditions" according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2002) as noted in Earvolino-Ramirez (2010:80) and it is rather a personality trait, which resilience is not.

Resilience leads to positive adaptive outcome and hardiness doesn't necessarily bring a positive outcome, it's more a mechanism of self-endurance. One of the major problems in resilience research can be the misuse of the term for implying a personality trait, which can be a very prodigious problem. Such consideration would imply that children possess this trait that enables them to endure and succeed in situations of risk, which indirectly puts the blame on the individual level if this trait is missing. This could serve also as a justification from stakeholders in order not to intervene or offer support for children who face high-risk conditions. According to Doll & Lyon (1998:360) this mentality puts children in a state of being "*responsible for forging their own Horatio Alger pathway through risk and toward success*".

A big limitation in the study of resilience is the process of defining a situation at-risk, an individual being at-risk, since the assumption can be biased. Resilience outcomes are also linked to normative judgements. Furthermore, there is a striking difference between the research priorities in the global north and south (Liebel, 2011:13). In the northern part, the focus is mostly on the individual level and in the south there is a focus in greater social events such as wars, poverty etc. For example, Werner (1993) argues that there is a limitation and danger in the process of defining outcomes because sometimes it could be generalized based on principles of a specific culture. Risk factors and the conceptualizations of resilience are very variable and diverse according to normative judgements of a specific context and the subjective view of the researcher.

Another main issue, which leads to limited interpretation, is also the fact that most of the research on childhood experience is mainly based on adult perspectives on childhood and children. Constructions of childhood and adulthood and their dichotomy interfere on the characterization of what is considered to be a situation of resilience, what is a risk etc. According to Boyden & Mann (2005: 15), there is no accurate information on children's own perspectives and since they don't share the same perspectives, this can be quite problematic. As cited in Liebel (2009:5), Boyden and Mann (2005:15) argue that "*the privileging of adult perceptions over children's experiences has sometimes meant that, in practice, resilience is conceived of more as the absence of pathology rather than the presence of personal agency in children*". The majority of children around the world are relying on the parental support and care and often adults are the ones who decide about their children and their well-being.

According to the CRC, adults are entitled and are morally obliged to protect and take care of children. This includes protection against all situations of risk and also adversity. Nevertheless, it is a fact that in western societies, children are being overprotected and their agency is often restricted. "*Modern societies have generally tried to defend against risks at all costs meaning that we are less likely to accept fate as an explanatory factor for peril*" (O'Hare et al. 2015:3). The fact that children are conceptualized from adults as in need to be protected, indirectly harms experiencing resilience and coping. This poses a paradox as it does not mean that support is not needed, but it rather tends to articulate that children should be considered in research as active social actors, rather as adult future projects or products of intervention etc. Boyden & Mann (2005:19) suggest that "*supporting children in situations of adversity requires the perspective not just that children need special protection but that they have valid insights into their well-being, valid solutions to their problems, and a valid role in implementing those solutions.*"

## Implications for further research

Resilience research may hold significant potential for social changes especially regarding social policies or other, since its main concern are factors that adjust the effects of difficult and at-risk life conditions.

The exploration of resilience is central and consequential in the process of instrument development and application. The study of resilience, even though it has been known for its development in the recent decades, it is spread in different fields of study and has a relatively sufficient background regarding theory and research. The attention and the commitment for future research should be focused on exploring new ways on how to apply resilience on interventions that help children of different social backgrounds or different contexts. Of importance is also the development of interventions that are not related to age. The application of resilience research can bring substantial outcomes for many fields by promoting positive outcomes, increased adaptability and ability to cope.

According to Windle (2010: 13) most of the resilience research refers to children and adolescents. The author states that regarding resilience in adulthood, not much has been studies and less is known. Therefore more research is needed regarding the follow up of protective factors within the entire life course and according to age. In addition, it might result interesting to research whether factors that bring to adult resilience could be similar or not to those represented in childhood or adolescents. The study of resilience could be deepened also by the contributions from other fields such as neuroscience, biology etc. which would help examine factors from different perspectives. Multi-disciplinary approaches could help discover other underlying factors or fluctuations of resilience. Research on dynamics and mechanisms of adversity, interventions or other protective elements have not been widely conducted, even though it is very important (Sandler, 2001). Further research and importance should be also focused on psychological resilience vs. improving resources (such as social support) or the study of the dynamics between these levels (Windle, 2010: 14). Luthar & Cicchetti (2000) argue in favor of the need to increase the interface between science and practice in the development of interventions and evaluation mechanisms.

## Discussion

The literature review shows that the available theoretical background of the concept construct is very broad and also very variable which also poses some limitations in the process of evaluation. In many different fields or even diverse contexts, resilience is approached or conceptualized in many ways. According to Ungar (2005) "*a broad developmental perspective on resilience that can fully account for how children become resilient in multiple contexts across cultures has yet to be fully articulated.*" (xvii)

The study of resilience, including risk and protective factors or other components may be very beneficial to the realization of a change in terms of well-being, positive adaptation to difficult life conditions and a source of empowerment for many children facing adversity around the world. The process of definition of different factors needs to take into account the contextual components that take part in the construction of protective/risk factors such as gender, social classes, cultural specificities and normative judgements. Risk factors and community resilience can only be understood if the interpretations and the use of the employed terms

is context specific. As a result, they can't be generalized and a holistic approach is strongly envisaged.

From the resilience perspective, adversity and risks are not considered in isolation, but they explore children's opportunities to learn from them and become stronger (Liebel, 2011:10). This could be particularly important in regard to children who face different vulnerabilities, social exclusion, discrimination etc. due to different social situations, since their adaptability and flexibility may be activated in a *cul-de-sac situation*. The resilience paradigm opens up several possibilities also regarding new ways of understanding and analyzing for example children in street situations, as noted also by Liebel (2011: 3). In addition, children are seen as acting subjects in their own interpretation of the world and their specific competencies have to be taken seriously. For example, children are not only considered in terms of their relationship with the street but also their life story and their diverse social relations come into view. This conceptualization opens up important opportunities that could lead to relevant steps in the realization of children's rights around the world.

Resilience, a notion which emerges as a possible alternative solution to many problematics that the world is facing, besides its many positive constituents, exposes a paradox of our times. Matthias Horx (ISSU, 2015:6) notes on this perspective that resilience will replace the concept of sustainability, behind which stands an old harmony-illusion that revolutionary systems move always on the borders of chaos. The normative dimension of sustainability suggests to shape the conditions that minimize the dangers and adverse life circumstances. In this logic, the staple is no longer to make efforts to correct or minimize difficult and adverse conditions, but to lead to a process of adaptation, due to lack of alternatives, as part of a progressive and destructive process. Here, resilience could apprehend a pure commercial interest. For example, "*insurance regimes could reinforce exposure and vulnerability through underwriting a return to the 'status-quo' rather than enabling adaptive behaviour*" (O'Hare et al. 2015). The paradox stands in the fact that those circumstances that are stabilized or "insured", are exactly those precarious conditions that ignite resilience itself.

## Conclusion

Resilience remains nowadays a widely used term, but due to its fluctuating nature, it is quite hard to measure or define it properly. Researchers acknowledge that resilience is relevant in a global perspective but nevertheless, it is also very contextual. Meanwhile, it is imperative to comprehend that the resilience concept needs to be handled with adequacy and conscientiousness, since it could be easily mishandled and it could serve as a strong political tool, as a means of *governing* the uncertainty, which could possibly turn to a scientific utopia of making the unsafe controllable. If transposed on the individual level, many stakeholders could also take advantage of it to blame the individuals for their own misery or difficulties in life. Therefore, it is vital to comprehend resilience with the help of a multidimensional approach and apply it in a genuine way, as a definition that arises on the basis of social experience and in cooperation with others.

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## Other Resources

*Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989).  
<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

Consulted on: 15.08.2015

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ISSU, Medico international - rundschreiben 02/15 Paradox der Resilienz. Nepal: Selbsthilfe nach dem Beben Mittelmeer: Seenotrettung reicht nicht Resilienz-Debatte: Fit fürs Chaos?

[http://issuu.com/medico\\_international/docs/rs\\_15-02](http://issuu.com/medico_international/docs/rs_15-02) Consulted on 10.09.2015

#### Figures

*Figure 1.* Protective Factors (by author). Adapted from "Resilience: A concept analysis", by M. Earvolino-Ramirez (2007), *Nursing Forum*, 42:75.

*Figure 2.* Example of the layers of resources and assets that facilitate resilience. Adapted from "The Resilience Network: What is resilience? A systematic review and concept analysis", by G. Windle (2010), *Reviews in Clinical Gerontology*. 21:7.

*Figure 3.* Attributes, environment and social context. Adapted from "Risk, resilience and outdoor programmes for at-risk children", by Ungar, M., Dumond, C. and McDonald, W. 2005, *Journal of Social Work*, 5(3): 326-327.

## COVID-19 Resilience for Survival: Occurrence of Domestic Violence During Lockdown at a Rural ACS Verified Level One Trauma Center

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### Abstract

**Background.** As the novel coronavirus outbreak has intensified globally, stay at home mandates requiring identified individuals as nonessential were advised to remain home to prevent community transmission of the disease. Further mandates escalated isolated environments such as school closures, social distancing, travel restrictions, closure of public gathering spaces, and business closures. As citizens were forced to stay home during the pandemic, the crisis created intensifying stressors and isolation, which fostered an environment for increased domestic violence. **Methods.** A retrospective review of all trauma patients that presented to an ACS verified rural level one trauma center with associated diagnostic coding for assault was conducted during the COVID-19 lockdown. The identified proportional assaults presenting to the emergency department (ED) after school closures (March 16, 2020) to April 30, 2020, as compared to the previous year (March 16, 2019, to April 30, 2019). The data collected included patient characteristics, grouping by mechanism, grouping by a specific mechanism, and domestic violence perpetrators. **Results.** During the time period of March 16, 2019, to April 30, 2019, a total of 7008 trauma patients presented to the ED, which included 78 assault patients. Through March 16, 2020, to April 30, 2020, a total of 2900 trauma patients presented to the ED, which included 50 assault patients. Assault patients (N=50) during the COVID-19 lockdown was compared to assault patients the previous year (N=78) using a Chi-square two way test for homogeneity. This method used identified relationships between proportions of ED visits from the two populations of total trauma volume for the single assault categorical variable. A statistically significant ( $P=0.01$ ) increase in assaults was found during the COVID-19 lockdown, particularly during the period after school closures. Demographically this increase was associated with white (72%) males (62%). The comparison years of 2019 to 2020 showed increased mechanisms of assault was largely penetrating, which included cut/pierce (2.6% vs. 18%) and knife (0% vs. 12%) injuries. Blunt injuries from 2019 to 2020 were reduced (84.6% vs. 56%). Domestic violence perpetrators by husbands during the COVID-19 lockdown showed a dramatic reduction during the study periods (33.3% vs. 0.0%). Increases in domestic violence during the comparative years were largely associated with male partners (0% vs. 25%) and unspecified non-family members (0% vs. 25%).

**Conclusions:** Although overall trauma acuity was reduced during the COVID-19 stay at home mandates, a significant increase in domestic violence assaults was observed. Largely the assaults were perpetrated against white men by partners and unspecified non-family members, which were predominantly penetrating injuries.

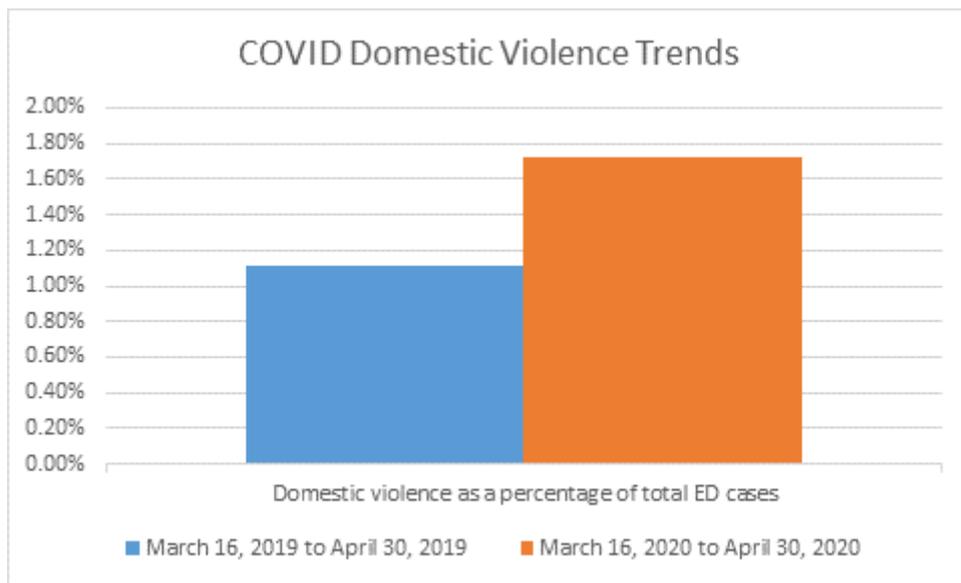
**Keywords:** COVID-19, Resilience for Survival, Domestic Violence, Lockdown, Rural ACS Verified Level One Trauma Center

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\*Effects of domestic violence trends during COVID-19 lockdown (chi-square,  $p < 0.05$ ).

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## Higher Education and Globalization in the Context of the COVID-19 Crisis

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### Abstract

The competition of civilizations forced the European universities to adapt to the competition with the Chinese and American universities. European integration cannot advance without the collaboration between European universities. An answer to these challenges is the CIVICA project, the European University of Social Sciences, a consortium of the following universities: Bocconi University (Italy), Central European University (Hungary), European University Institute (European Intergovernmental Organization), Hertie School of Governance (Germany), The National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (Romania), Sciences Po (France) and the School of Economics in Stockholm (Sweden). This experiment aims to become one of the European pilot universities, in the first round of applications for Erasmus+ in February 2019. The experiment takes into consideration the most important resource of a country: the human resource. The network of universities that are part of the CIVICA consortium will group approximately 38,000 students, 7,000 teachers and 3,000 people from the administrative apparatus. The London School of Economics is part of the CIVICA consortium, as an associate partner. At the Bucharest conference, the public presentation of the consortium and its objectives, the rectors of the seven universities set out to educate the future generations of professionals in social sciences, in order to solve the most pressing problems of the world. Creating a European identity is essentially the long-term, fundamental objective of the CIVICA consortium. In the context of this conference, we interviewed a few representatives of CIVICA, and their answers will be analyzed in this paper's section dedicated to the results of the research.

**Keywords:** globalization, higher education, CIVICA, e-learning, COVID-19

## **Spiritual Resilience and Transactional Analysis Model – Holistic Paradigm for Facing a Global Crisis**

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"The Mind-and-Heart Prayer Itself Will Ensure the Continuity of Eternal Existence"

– Bishop Naum of Strumica,  
The Metropolitan of the Diocese of Strumica,  
Macedonian Orthodox Church – Ohrid Archbishopric

### **Abstract**

Faced with the challenge of Covid pandemic, the world will change its existence forever. In such circumstances of the common global crisis, humanity will form new narratives between suffering and survival. From the positioning to this experience, it will depend on whether it will remain a trauma or the deepest inner resources will be activated by building "new personal relationships" on a transpersonal level, and by forming a new alliance, versus the current alienation from nature and the planet. Spiritual resilience is the dimension of the overall mental framework, besides the cognitive, emotional and neurobiological one. This paper postulates the preventive, co-creative, and salutogenic capacity of this essential potential of one's spiritual self even in the most painful and stressful life events. It offers the models based on Christian psychotherapy and Transactional analysis in re-emerging one's inner power in forming adaptive coping mechanism and well-being. Within the TA we operate with the classical approach and two dimensions: intrapersonal and interpersonal and in the domain of spiritual TA- transcendent level regarding the cor self. Christian psychotherapy offers the union of the Holy Eucharist as a pastoral dimension of unity and the individual ascetic discipline through the FCP Method. Expanding the frame of reference – from the narrow anthropocentric to the wider and unlimited theocentric model – such a holistic approach can be successfully applied to all organized forms: family, organizations, and global community, thus creating a strong, aware, and compassionate society.

**Keywords:** spiritual resilience, transactional analysis, global crisis, adaptive coping, Holy Eucharist

## The Protective Role of Self-Efficacy for Resilience in the COVID-19 Period

**Andrea Kövesdi**

**Éva Hadházi**

**Sándor Rózsa**

**Krisztina Törő**

**Gábor Csikós**

**Rita Földi**

### Abstract

We perceived the COVID-19 pandemic as a stressful living condition when we launched our resilience research among parents and their children (11-18 years old) in Hungary in early April 2020. The ability of resilience (Masten, 1990) was a particularly topical issue for survival and recovery during the candidate period, when several new challenges had to be faced. Our study focuses on resilience, self-efficacy, and health anxiety. In our research, we also look for protective factors for parents and children. Our results demonstrate a positive significant association of parental resilience with quality of life, well-being, and self-efficacy. Negative significant association was found with perceived stress and health anxiety. Similar connections with parental relationships were demonstrated among children and adolescents. In the parental sample, we demonstrated that partly the perceived stress and partly the decrease in self-efficacy have a mediating effect on resilience. Health anxiety directly reduces resilience, and stress mediates the resilience. Self-efficacy moderates the relationship between health anxiety and resilience. Higher self-efficacy of the parents is a protective factor in terms of resilience to health anxiety.

**Keywords:** protective role, self-efficacy for resilience, COVID-19

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## Faculty Learning Community: A Strategy of Resilience for Survival

**Molly Zhou**

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### Abstract

This presentation will focus on the discussion of faculty learning community as strategy of resilience for survival. In this presentation, the author will share the practices of FLC own FLC practices to support resilience strategy building in higher education. The FLC facilitator's reflection and FLC survey results will be shared as well. Faculty learning community is not a new concept. Some research indicated that faculty learning communities (FLCs) are effective in breaking the discipline divide, improving teaching quality, promote collaboration, good practices, improving campus climate on teaching and learning and quality of teaching and student learning (Frost, 2018; Banasik & Dean, 2016; Sicut, et. al. 2014). Faculty learning communities increase knowledge, value, motivation, and enthusiasm for teaching (Lancaster, et. al., 2014). These benefits enhance FLCs function as resilience strategy. In a nutshell, FLCs add knowledge, innovation, and scholarly inquiries (Nadelson, 2016; Gordon, 2015; Bazeley, Waller, & Resnis, 2014). FLCs facilitate growth through interdisciplinary teaching, curriculum design and redesign, research and scholarly inquiry, and resource sharing (Boman, et. al., 2017; Andreoli, et. al., 2017). To survive higher education at a time of uncertainty and COVID epidemic, FLC offers advantages for faculty in resilience building.

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Faculty Learning Community, Resilience, Leadership, Teaching and learning

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## **PsyCap Interventions While Telecommuting: A Response to COVID-19-Related SCARF**

**Samantha Coleman**

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### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 crisis, has ignited widespread psychological distress due to a perceived threat to one's physical health, finances, and personal life. Additionally, for working parents, childcare responsibilities have exacerbated these stressors, as they aim to home school their children and/or work within virtual environments. These factors, individually and collectively, can impact emotional regulation and relationship management within the "new normal" of telecommuting. SCARF: A brain-based model steeped in neuroscience research will be reviewed in an effort to understand how COVID-19 has activated threat responses in the five social domains of Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Fairness. Additionally, the construct of psychological capital and PsyCap interventions will be highlighted as recommendations for how organizational leadership can minimize threat responses and maximize employee well-being by increasing their hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism.

**Keywords:** psychological capital, SCARF, COVID-19, leadership, employee well-being, telecommuting, threat responses, emotional regulation, PsyCap interventions

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## **Building Resilience in Times of Uncertainty (COVID19); Strains and Aspirations in Western Balkans**

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### **Abstract**

The global outbreak of COVID-19 did not spare the countries of Western Balkans as well. From the lock-down phase and home-lock-up mode until the gradual reopening, some countries of the region are still dealing with a deterioration of the situation after lifting the quarantine restrictions. Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Bosnia, and Herzegovina have witnessed a progressive increase in rate with the COVID-19 cases, until recently (June 2020). Western Balkans although COVID-19 concerns related to social and economic impact is also caught up in a fragile momentum considering: challenges and aspirations about European path that countries are following, the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue on stagnation; the melding of external forces; slow democratization and transformation process and most crucial building resilience in such an unpredicted and sluggish region. Through a qualitative methodology, this paper aims to weigh-in the current situation and the recession impact caused by COVID-19 in the region, among other strains and concerns. At the same time, it highlights strategic commitments, Western Balkans countries have undertaken regarding Euro-Atlantic integration that is already in place and if there is any dragging risk considering situations pressures at the moment, and after this endurance and trying phase. The conclusion phase will assent to some observations and suggestions about a prospective post- isolation COVID-19 nexus.

**Keywords:** Western Balkans; resilience; COVID-19; challenges; perspectives

## Heart Rate Variability in Patients with Mild and Asymptomatic COVID 19

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### Abstract

While most people with COVID-19 have mild or no symptoms, even patients with mild infection should be inspected attentively to reveal possible complications timely. Among such probable mild symptoms can be named heart rate variability. **Materials and methods.** 39 patients of Sumy Primary Care center #1 with mild and asymptomatic COVID-19 were enrolled in the study. Control group included patients with similar symptoms but negative COVID-19 test results. The COVID-19 diagnosis was verified with polymerase chain reaction. Patients have been subjected to physical examination, blood tests, 12-lead ECG with heart rate variability measure. **Results.** It was detected that the averages of normal-to-normal (NN) intervals (SDANN), root mean square differences of successive NN intervals (RMSSD), heart rate, and low-frequency (LF) power–high-frequency (HF) power ratio were significantly higher in group with confirmed COVID-19 ( $p<0.05$ ). We also found that a gain in the LF/HF power ratio was statistically linked to a decrease of blood magnesium level (18.6%,  $p<0.05$ ). It was detected that HRV could be controlled by treatment with magnesium supplements 100 mg/day( $p<0.05$ ), but more precise results require longer observation. **Conclusion.** Hence, COVID-19 can cause changes of heart rate variability, which requires further investigation of possible long-term consequences and approaches to correction.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, heart rate variability, magnesium, ECG.

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## **Innovating Humanity - Opioids to COVID-19, Learnings and Health needs for our future**

**Dr Sean Hall MD.,**

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### **Abstract**

The past decade has significantly changed the world we live in; specifically looking at events surrounding the global opioid crisis and now COVID-19, the medical offerings for treatment, risk control and subsequent management have been found wanting. The medical/pharmaceutical industries are ripe for innovation as new threats plague our existence, suggesting our lack of readiness to combat our immediate needs may offer insights into our readiness (or lack thereof) for other potential impacts. With chronic illnesses on the rise, these medical crisis's adds to the overall human and economic burden. This presentation looks at the path, discusses examples of innovation Medlab has undertaken, and theorises the future and its needs. Irrespective of specifics, innovation in medicine, drug design and regulatory models are much needed to ensure the health and safety of the future human race.

**Keywords:** opioids, COVID-19, innovation, chronic illnesses, Medlab

## Stop It! Consumer Resilience as a Buffer Against Daily Stressors Accompanying COVID-19

**Alena Bermes**

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### Abstract

In the time of COVID-19, consumers are not only experiencing a global health emergency, but also an extraordinary influence on every aspect of their daily lives. Numerous (daily) stressors induced by the pandemic endanger consumers' well-being and incite them to alter their behaviors, generally drawing attention to the multidisciplinary concept of resilience. While some of these stressors seem rather apparent (e.g., financial burdens), others have been overlooked by researchers and policy makers. Moreover, although resilience has long been identified as an effective buffer against adversity in adjacent fields of research, surprisingly, research in the consumer realm is scarce. Therefore, next to identifying overlooked stressors, this research seeks to examine the mitigating power of resilience in consumption-related stress processes amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. An empirical study was conducted in Germany in April 2020. First, drawing on the transactional stress theory, we show that social media fuels perceived information and social overload (i.e., perception of too many demands from online contacts), which in turn foster psychological distress and, ultimately, decrease consumers' well-being. This is particularly remarkable since it is widely recommended to turn to social media to stay in touch with friends despite social distancing. Second, drawing on the psychological resilience theory, we demonstrate that consumers' resilience intervenes within the social media-induced stress process at various points and serves as a shield against information and social overload. In addition, it directly inhibits the associated distress and decrease in well-being. The empirical results provide crucial insights and beneficial implications for researchers and practitioners.

**Keywords:** consumer resilience, COVID-19, pandemics, daily stressors, social media, overload perception

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## Spiritual Resilience and Transactional Analysis Model – Holistic Paradigm for Facing a Global Crisis

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### Abstract

Faced with the challenge of Covid pandemic, the world will change its existence forever. In such circumstances of the common global crisis, humanity will form new narratives between suffering and survival. From the positioning to this experience, it will depend on whether it will remain a trauma or the deepest inner resources will be activated by building "new personal relationships" on a transpersonal level, and by forming a new alliance, versus the current alienation from nature and the planet. Spiritual resilience is the dimension of the overall mental framework, besides the cognitive, emotional and neurobiological one. This paper postulates the preventive, co-creative, and salutogenic capacity of this essential potential of one's spiritual self even in the most painful and stressful life events. It offers the models based on Christian psychotherapy and Transactional analysis in re-emerging one's inner power in forming adaptive coping mechanism and well-being. Within the TA we operate with the classical approach and two dimensions: intrapersonal and interpersonal and in the domain of spiritual TA- transcendental level regarding the cor self. Christian psychotherapy offers the union of the Holy Eucharist as a pastoral dimension of unity and the individual ascetic discipline through the FCP Method. Expanding the frame of reference – from the narrow anthropocentric to the wider and unlimited theocentric model – such a holistic approach can be successfully applied to all organized forms: family, organizations, and global community, thus creating a strong, aware, and compassionate society.

**Keywords:** spiritual resilience, transactional analysis, global crisis, adaptive coping, Holy Eucharist

## A Fashionable Mask: Branded Value Proposition during the Coronavirus Pandemic

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### Abstract

The coronavirus pandemic has changed not only the social, economic, political spheres of nations, but also fashion industry, having to cancel fashion shows. Fashion brands started offering value proposition changed under new conditions to give the value to their customers with changing needs. A lot of fashion brands follow their pandemic sustainable business strategy to help medical staff with masks, gowns, and sanitizers for free, to donate to medical organizations, coronavirus research in Universities' laboratories that also increases their EVA. A mask takes mostly two functions – utilitarian and emotional, i.e. new technological and fashionable part of the mask production/consumption. There are creative ideas in mask making by technological brands like a self-cleaning mask, collaborations of high-tech companies and fashion industry representatives like hijab-wearing masks for Arab medical female staff, fashion brands creating fashionable masks by using double sustainable business strategy like cutting masks from vintage clothes and donating from proceeds, popculture brands creating masks with their branded themes, fashion brands creating cloth masks made of the latest trends, artists creating unique masks using artisan techniques, a technological and fashionable mix like face-recognition masks, and also politicians setting up mask trends like the Slovakia president to have the mask matching the look in color or Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary to promote indigenous print on a mask. The fashion brand analysis shows that the value proposition is based on value increase in EVA during the coronavirus pandemic, because they understand the necessity of sustainable business strategy to gain the longer-term customer loyalty.

**Keywords:** mask, fashion, brand, value proposition, coronavirus, sustainable business strategy, new technologies.

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## Artificial Intelligence as a Resilient Tool for Fighting Inequalities in the COVID-19 Crisis

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Iscte

### Abstract

Can artificial intelligence (AI) be a sustainable way to help solving the Covid-19 global problem? What does the way how welfare states, charity organizations and labour markets are dealing with the pandemic crisis tells us about the AI capacity for reducing exposition of underprivileged groups to the disease? It is becoming more and more visible how the new coronavirus pandemic is affecting specifically the most deprived and vulnerable groups, and also the big difference that welfare states and their policies make. What did the pandemic show about the relations between social inequality, welfare state provision and AI? This presentation will discuss the role of AI as a tool for public policies fighting inequalities that were amplified during the Covid-19 crisis. It will be analysed how the welfare state, the labour market and social communities are already incorporating AI tools and how this can eventually produce more resilient paths. Accelerated and amplified by the Covid-19, several processes of AI penetration in health, education, healthcare, social security, public administrations, labour and surveillance of citizens, became a subject of public discussion. Artificial intelligence is currently a process of long-term change in health and biotechnologies, long-distance education, teleworking, automation, robotization, consumption behaviours, surveillance and human enhancement. An in-deep analysis of the Portuguese case will support the lessons that can be learnt from AI and its use in public policies in a context of pandemic crisis, leading to a set of political recommendations, to promote its application as a resilient tool to fight inequalities.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, artificial intelligence, resilience, social inequalities, welfare state, public policies, social communities, capitalism

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## Public Health Communication in France during the Spanish Flu and the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Role of Experts

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### Abstract

In times of crisis, a government's communication with the public is fundamental, as one of the government's main tasks is to provide critical information to protect the population. In the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, public health communication has been paramount because of the elevated risk of contagion. Moreover, in public health communication, experts play a pivotal role by providing reliable information on the basis of their technical expertise. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is often compared to that of the Spanish flu, a pandemic occurring in 1918-1919, whose global spread decimated tens of millions of people. This contribution aims to assess the role of experts in the two crises by highlighting the differences in France's public health communication during the two events. Assuming that the objectives of public health communication during the two pandemics were more or less identical, i.e. to prevent the spread of disease and inform and protect the public, the paper inquires about the means used to achieve them, focusing on the contribution of experts. The main characteristics of public health communication during the Spanish flu will be investigated by analysing articles published in the period between 1918 and 1919 in two French newspapers *Le Matin* and *Le Petit Parisien*. In terms of the current COVID-19 pandemic, this paper will probe articles published since December 2019 in the newspaper *Le Monde*.

**Keywords:** public health communication, expert, pandemic, COVID-19, Spanish flu.

## **Second Language Distance Learning: The Issue of Language Certification in the Time of COVID-19**

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### **Abstract**

Language teaching has undergone numerous changes as a result of COVID-19, and has adapted to the new scenario and digital tools. While the programs for university and language school courses have been modulated to the new teaching conditions, language courses aimed at obtaining certifications require the final exam to remain the same. The present study focuses on eight adult students of Italian as a foreign language. These adults are interested in certification and were previously enrolled in a language course in Italy, but this course was transformed into an online offering due to the coronavirus. Some questions arose: how can one ensure the continuity of the new online language course? What didactic activities and teaching materials could be applied to facilitate online teaching aimed at obtaining a language certification? The aim of this study is to look at the pros and cons of online teaching for obtaining a language certification, and at effective methods and operational procedures for online teaching during COVID-19. The study results have been collected from the teacher's own didactic experience and through distance learning questionnaires to which the students were subjected.

**Keywords:** Language Certification, COVID-19, Adult Education, Second Language Distance Learning, Italian as a Second Language

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## What Can We Learn from the Islamic Tradition About the Pandemic?

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Department

### Abstract

First of all, we must explain this, there is a big literature about pandemics in Islamic religious literature. So, there a lot of things we can learn about pandemy from Islamic literature. Once a day prophet Mohammed said that about pandemy, if there is a pandemy anybody doesn't go out form there, and if there is pandemy in anyplace outside don't go into that place untill pandemy stops. This verse of prophet Mohammed tells us everything about pandemy. Beacuse this verse is about isolation. And also prophet Mohammed says cleanliness is the half of belief. And also he says cleanliness comes from beleif. So there are a lot of things in Islamic literature about pandemy that we can learn. So, we hope that we can tell some important points about pandemy approch of Islam. We hope we can do some contributes about this subject. Of course, this is not the last word about this subjct but it is a word about this subject that we can learn some important points form Islamic literature.

**Keywords:** Islamic tradition, Pandemic

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## Algerian University During the Corona Virus Pandemic: COVID-19 - Bechar University as a Sample

**Souad Guessar**

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### Abstract

In March 2020, the World Health Organization announced that the new Corona virus is a global pandemic. The World Health Organization and the public health authority of various countries are working to contain the spread of the virus through quarantine. But these crises raise the level of stress and psychological tension on individuals and society. As well as Algeria is not an exception and this research will be on the extent of the impact of the pandemic on the conduct of lessons at the universities level in Algeria, which were not equipped for such situations during the outbreak of the emerging corona virus, and try to analyze the situation and then proposing some solutions that can work if it hurts humanity and the Algerians, especially an epidemic like the Corona virus pandemic (COVID-19).

**Keywords:** Corona, virus, lessons, universities, and Algeria.

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## COVID-19 and Trust in Organizations

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### Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused profound changes at the micro, macro, meso social level, respectively in interpersonal relations, in the functioning of societies and also in the activity that happens in organizations. These personal, social and economic transformations had a profound influence on trust in organizations, often questioning the psychological contract which is central to the motivation for effective and efficient performance. This whole context puts in cause the authentizotic organizations, as generators of meaning to their members and, consequently, as promoters of productivity. This presentation aims to focus on some of the consequences of the reduction or breakdown of trust that the fight against COVID-19 had on organizations, as coordinated collective units, and the respective challenges that arise in this new context to organizational success.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, psychological contract, trust in organizations, authentizotic organizations, organizations.