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The impact of COVID-19 crisis on diverse democratic perspectives through gender perspective

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EDITORIAL THOUGHTS

Scientific CERV HEARD conference presents one of the activities that were foreseen in European project CERV, named “The impact of COVID-19 crisis on diverse democratic perspectives through gender perspective – HEARD”, which was successfully obtained in November 2022 by the Faculty of organisation studies in Novo mesto, together with 9 other project partners from Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. The primary goal of the conference was to get valuable insights about the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the democratic debate, the enjoyment of fundamental rights and the work and life of women through a gender perspective, from the researchers’ findings about the mentioned topics in order to improve detected political recommendations by the project activities. Beside today’s event, the future steps of the project will reflect in performed discussion about the findings of the project with politicians with the goal to see if the identified political recommendations for future pandemic situations are appropriate or should be improved.

We have seen that the COVID-19 pandemic has reflected in a significant global challenge that has profoundly impacted our lives, societies, and governance. The broad implications of these events have affected each aspect of human life, questioning the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights. The implementation of pandemic-related measures, such as lockdowns and emergency powers, had a substantial impact on democratic institutions and processes, giving rise to questions over the stability of democratic governance. However, despite these difficulties, it is evident that democratic institutions have demonstrated resilience by adjusting and finding new ways to operate during these rare circumstances. The pandemic also significantly impacted public trust in government institutions. The government's management of the pandemic had a direct impact on the fluctuation of trust levels of the public. The majority of countries upheld democratic principles and political stability, while there were occasional instances of protests and challenges to the established government. The outbreak of the pandemic sparked discussions over civil liberties, governmental interference, and the fragile balance between public health and private rights.

It was interesting to find out that Portugal received praise for their response, while France, Greece, and Slovenia encountered criticism. Italy had changes in its leadership, while Sweden depended on the guidance of experts. Political stability revealed significant differences: Portugal and Cyprus upheld stability, but Bulgaria and Italy saw instability. The pre-existing challenges in Bulgaria, such as corruption, and in Spain, such as regional nationalism, were intensified. The absence of political transparency, as observed in Italy and Slovenia, eroded overall trust. The crisis in Cyprus led to an increased need for transparency. Also, the resignation of experienced individuals weakened trust, emphasizing the necessity for balanced professional guidance and cooperation across several fields. During the pandemic, there was a surge in corruption and women faced more restrictions in participating in democratic discussions as a result of gender disparities and the responsibilities of caregiving. The political atmosphere in Cyprus, Spain, and Portugal was still affected by the pandemic even after it ended. The pandemic had an important impact on voting processes, characterized by dissatisfaction and suspected misconduct.

The media, as the main provider of information, encountered difficulties due to the dissemination of false information and conspiracy theories, resulting in a lack of trust. The media's role has transformed to prioritize essential updates, placing a strong emphasis on seeking guidance from health professionals and employing fact-checking techniques.

The pandemic worsened existing disparities, with a special emphasis on its impact on women. The increased caring responsibilities and closures of educational institutions had a substantial impact on the balance between professional and personal life for women, underscoring the necessity for support structures and their ability to endure challenges. Countries implemented limitations on movement and standard public health protocols, affecting the existence of individuals and their right to education. Issues about digital privacy and the distribution of vaccines have come to light. People voiced concerns regarding travel limitations and the severe nature of lockdown measures, acknowledging the necessity of balancing the right to travel with effective health protocols. The economic consequences of the pandemic had a greater impact on industries that employed a larger number of women, highlighting the need for a review of economic systems in order to achieve gender equality. Women encountered heightened difficulties, especially in industries impacted by lockdown measures, resulting in job losses and disruptions to working schedules. While governments implemented a range of support measures, they failed to establish dedicated efforts specifically targeting women. The issue of the digital gap, especially among elderly women, and the sudden increase in domestic violence were major areas of concern. The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a crucial marker for democracies, emphasizing the requirement for strong, comprehensive, and gender-aware governance. Today, we will examine the findings of researchers worldwide about the presented topics. These findings are crucial for our project, as they will assist project partners in developing more effective recommendations for future pandemic scenarios.

During the conference, we have noted that it is very important to see, that we take the covid-19 pandemic as an opportunity to learn and to find a solution, which will not marginalised the voices as we could see in current pandemic. We have to build cross disciplinary solutions and cooperations, effective policies to tackle with future pandemic situations, give more emphasis on the educational goals, have good public initiatives for increasing digital literacy and decide as a society, what is our prioritisation (and if culture and art is also a part of such prioritisation). We need to find a way to encourage respectful communication, ensure to have effective regulatory measures which tackle with all the challenges we encountered with the covid-19 pandemic and find a way to lower the levels of violence and hate (in every form – physical, virtual etc.) in order to make a world a better place. We need to increase digital competences in order to tackle greater gender equality and to decrease cyber-attacks. We have to find a way as a society to prevent that women (mainly mothers) carry such an intensified burden of pandemic on their figuratively speaking "shoulders". We need to ensure to have better working conditions while respecting healthy measures. We also need to ensure that the youth will not be so wrongly perceived as they were during the covid-19 pandemic and ensure, that they have the access to the public space (where me must ensure, that they stay public and are not privatised) and at the same time we need to give youth an ability to acquire their personal private space. One of the most important things is that we find balance in handling the future pandemic situation, so the burden in equally divided among the society and minimalised as possible.

Exodus of Women Workers Post Covid-19 Lockdown in India

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ): The area of research is to examine the impact of COVID-19 on women in India. It is often a neglected issue to gauge the impact on the other gender of any kind of calamities or even during such an event. This discriminatory approach at times gives us a partial perspective of the issue and its overall impact.

Purpose: The severity of the COVID-19 pandemic had collateral and scattered impact across the world, and it equally differed in terms of gender. As we know gender is an important metric to understand this bi-polarity in terms of gauging the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women workers. The increased burden of household chores, along with childcare, made it difficult for many women to manage their professional careers through the lockdown, and others who had to sit at home due to the lockdown, found it difficult to return to work due to multiple reasons.

Method: The methodology adopted will be both qualitative and quantitative. The research paper will analyse various Government reports, Data compilations, case studies, Reports of NGOs, and lastly the interviews of women workers.

Results: This paper will discuss the gender disparity in the working environment in India post-COVID-19, along with the significant aspects of how the labor market responded to the return of the women workforce. The results will focus on highlighting the challenges they faced in reviving their lost economic power.

Organization: It will study the impact at the organizational level by identifying how they were on various occasions miserably pushed down the ladder of growth and promotions.

Society: This paper will discuss the gender disparity in the working environment in India post-COVID-19, along with the significant aspects of how the labor market responded to the return of the women workforce.

Originality: It will discuss the ratio of the workforce pre and post-lockdown, the disparity in wages, economic abuses, domestic violence, and other professional discriminations during and post-lockdown. As per the available statistics as good as half of the women workforce did not return to work post-lockdown in India. It will address the conservative stereotypes of gender discrimination, the pretext of home quarantine to isolate them, the

moral obligation of managing the children, and the non-cooperation of other family members in her resurrection are some of the vital areas that will be highlighted in the paper.

Limitations / further research: The research is limited to studying the conditions of working women during and post-lockdown of COVID-19 and not the overall impact on the women.

Keywords: women and COVID-19, COVID-19 in India, women and COVID-19, the impact of lockdown, women workers, Covid-19 case studies.

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Avkash Jadhav (With a B.A. (Gold Medallist) in History and a Ph.D. in The Labour Movement, Dr. Avkash Jadhav's scholarly works revolve around Labour Studies, Religion and Philosophy, Human Rights, and Ancient and Modern Indian History, etc. He is a recipient of around 9 scholarships for his academic excellence like D.D. Kosambi Scholarship, Merit Scholarship, William Cohelo, and C.M. Kulkarni scholarship, etc. He was also granted the prestigious Asiatic Society Fellowship to pursue his studies on Gandhian Philosophy and a Major Research Fellowship from the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi to work on the Mill workers of pre-independent Bombay. As an academician, Dr Jadhav is known for his innovative pedagogical techniques, ranging from exhibitions, documentaries, and oral documentation to on-field research, interviews, surveys, and more. He has led more than 50 surveys on various issues and their results are now used by government agencies to formulate policies. He has participated in more than 300 international and national conferences, seminars & and workshops as keynote, plenary, and valedictory speaker, chairperson, resource person, research scholar, etc., and is affiliated with various academic bodies. He has around 44 publications to his credit and has authored books on the History of Bombay, USA & Modern Maharashtra. Currently, Dr. Avkash Jadhav is the Head and Associate Professor of the Department of History at St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Mumbai, the Founder-Trustee of KAASH Foundation, Mumbai, and also, the Director of the Centre for Academic and Professional Development. In 2017 and 2019, his credibility earned him a recommendation from the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India to represent the country at the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) Conferences in Sri Lanka and Afghanistan respectively. In 2012, Dr Jadhav was nominated as a Municipal Councilor in the B.M.C. from the academic section owing to his command over civic & and urban issues)).

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Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Increasing of Gender Disparity Issues

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ): What is the extent of the negative impact of the pandemic on the socio-economic vulnerability of women and the strengthening of gender disparity issues that existed before COVID-19, but became especially acute during the pandemic?

Purpose: The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the economy of many countries, exposing the socioeconomic vulnerability of women and the relevance of gender disparity issues. The aim of this study is to investigate gender disparity effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the increasing of gender disparity issues.

Method: During the study, numerous international and national theoretical sources were used. Issue results based on statistics relating problems of women's informal employment, the high volume of unpaid work performed, employment in less paid sectors more affected by quarantine measures. The factual base of the study was supplemented by interviews with representatives of 64 Moldovan women-run businesses, their views on equal access to finance, full-time employment opportunities and access to digital technologies, etc.

Results: Results of the study showed that women are employed mainly in low-paid sectors that were the first to be affected by the pandemic; unpaid hours of housework have increased; women are exposed to less social protection due to high levels of employment in the informal sector and are also more exposed to domestic violence.

Organization: The research base was supplemented by interviews with representatives of SMEs.

Society: The study has an impact on attracting attention and changing attitudes towards the issues raised in the survey among various groups of Public Authority, Civil society and Business community.

Originality: The originality of the study lies in summarizing the results of existing research on gender inequality, including the opinions of existing entrepreneurs in the southern region of the Republic of Moldova, and linking them to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Limitations/further research: A number of actions have been proposed to prevent similar consequences in future almost identical situations.

Keywords: gender disparity, gender inequality, work- life balance, domestic violence, COVID-19 pandemic.

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The Digitalized Citizens of the Republic of Korea as A Result of The Transition Toward Smart E-Governance

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ): How does the South Korean government interact with this crisis management from the electronic government scope? How the Korean citizens proved that they have become digitalized citizens? How does the explanation of the Myeong criteria about smart e-governance indicate the process itself of the produces or happens through the sharing of thoughts from the citizens?

Purpose: This study tries to examine the effect of the transition from e-government to e-governance on the Korean citizens who contributed to the transition toward smart e-governance during the COVID-19 time. As a result of the transition, the citizens got more familiar with the use of the internet as a daily life method of living style. The using of governmental websites is more and more than in any other nation in the world. As a result, the citizens became more knowledgeable and more educated about the internet, and they began to participate in the sharing of knowledge and supporting activities during COVID-19 as an innovation-based nation. The private sector has a partnership with the government to cope the COVID-19 and beyond it for the new digital deal government.

Method: This research is a qualitative paper based on the explanation of Myeong about the definition of "smart", and the term "E-governance" in his paper titled "E-government to Smart E-governance: Korean Experience and Challenges". Then, adding the new stage of the smart e-governance.

Organization: The private sector has a partnership with the government to cope the COVID-19 and beyond it for the new digital deal government. There are phases to the transition from electronic government to smart e-governance in South Korea from the mid-1980s to the present time.

Society: This paper tried to examine the effect of the transition from e-government to e-governance on the Korean citizens who contributed to the transition toward smart e-governance during the COVID-19 time. As a result of the transition, the citizens got more familiar with the use of the internet as a daily life method of living style. The using of governmental websites is more and more than in any other nation in the world. As a result,

the citizens became more knowledgeable and more educated about the internet, and they began to participate in the sharing of knowledge and supporting activities during the COVID-19 as an innovation-based nation.

Originality: First of all, this paper examines the phases of the transition from e-government to e-governance to smart e-governance in seven stages. The Inception from the mid-1980s till 1990 was about the building of the National Information System (NBIS) according to the governmental act of 1987 to promote computer expansion and usage. Followed by the second phase from mid-1990 to 2000 was about the promotion of the building foundation for high-speed internet according to the 1995 Act of Informatization. The third stage of lunch was from 2001 and 2002 about the eleven major initiatives for the e-government according to the act of enacting the e-government. The fourth phase was the diffusion from 2023 till 2007 according to the 31 road map projects of the e-government that concern the linkage among the government departments. The fifth stage was the convergence according to the 12-master plan in the act for sharing and cooperation from 2008. The sixth phase was from 2011 to 2015 about the smart governance blueprint. The seventh stage is the maturity phase according to the Ministry of Security and Public Administration (2014) from 2013 to 2017 represents the spreading of innovation in the I.C.T sector, the data sharing for the creative economy, and the act for the use of public data in 2013. “Under ‘Government 3.0’, the Korean government has emphasized the establishment of a ‘Service-oriented Government, Capable Government, and Transparent Government’ as the goals of digital governance.” According to Jooho Lee the “Government 3.0. The main strategic goals of Government 3.0 are to make the government more transparent, competent, and service-oriented by enhancing openness, collaboration, and two-way communication.” (Lee, 2016) Through the big data and the one-stop petition system, acting the SNS communicates with the citizens. According to Myeong (2019), the e-government to smart e-governance explains the Korean experience in the transition toward the next generation of government. The criteria depend on the values and the target of the e-government. The efficiency and the productivity, the transparency and the power. The type of industrial society is based on the e-government called the technocratic government known as type 1 where the government for the nation is not open for the civil society and the citizens. The second type is the industrial society based on e-government that will be called the information management-centred government. Both the first and second types are the product of the efficiency and productivity. The third type is monitoring the information government, while the fourth type four is the product of transparency. The fourth type is called the information society e-government where it is a transparent government. From the power perspective, the type fifth and sixth are called the Big Brother government, and the next generation of e-government represents the e-democratic government (Myeong 2019). Meanwhile, this paper argues that the South Korean government and citizens already changed to smart e-governance. To be able to prove this argument many research papers and studies have been reviewed. As this paper suggests there is an eighth stage for the transition toward e-

governance. That phase started with the COVID-19 pandemic measurement from the Korean government. One of the pieces of evidence that this paper argues for is the Sunhyuk Kim' (2010) article titled "Collaborative Governance in South Korea: Citizen Participation in policymaking and Welfare Service Provision" which explains how the South Korean state achieved participation or the participatory movement among its citizens. Another one of those studies is the study about the South Korean' government's action toward the COVID-19 epidemic. The third piece of evidence about the transition to smart e-governance in South Korea is the "New Digital Order" initiative announced by President Yoon Suk-Yeol' at New York and Harvard University, that new digital order "aims to create a basic direction for a digital bill of rights and to stimulate social discussion, as well as to actively lead global discussions on digital norms." The initiative about the digitalized age that the South Korean government is trying to actualize for the sake of the new era of AI. According to the MSIT, the Korean initiative is a way to enter the new period of the new norm of the world that will depend more on artificial intelligence. The fourth piece of evidence about the transition to e-governance is the Digital Government Masterplan 2021-2025. According to the master plan announced by the Ministry of Interior and Safety. The fifth piece of evidence about the transition toward smart e-governance is the conducting of the 2020 April 15th parliamentary elections even among the citizens in quarantine without spreading the virus because of the elections (Stephan & Liv, 2020).

Limitations / further research: The suggestions for further research are to make a comparison study with the other developed countries' experience in the transition toward smart e-governance. It would be better to conduct this research in a quantitative study.

Keywords: E-Governance, Digitalized Citizens of the Republic of Korea, Characteristics of The Transition.

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper will explain the transition from the electronic government into the smart e-governance in South Korea. According to Ministry of Security and Public Administration (2013a), there were seven stages for the transition from mid-1980 to 2011. However, this paper tries to add the eighth stage after the COVID-19 epidemic occurs in the world. How the South Korean government interacted with this crisis management from the electronic government scope. And how the Korean citizens proved that they became digitalized citizens. The human-computer interaction during the last decades resulted in digitalized citizens who can invent mobile applications to help the government track the Corona map for example. The more usage of the internet and the digitalized electronic governmental services will lead to more citizens becoming more aware of the measurement by the government. Electronic participation and e-democracy enable citizens to share their thoughts. How the explanation of the

Myeong criteria about smart e-governance indicates the process itself of the produces or happens through the sharing of thoughts from the citizens.

Characteristic	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
3-9 years	79.8%	82.9%	83.9%	87.8%	91.2%	91.2%	92%	91.7%
10-19 years	99.9%	100%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	100%	99.4%	99.5%
20-29 years	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.8%
30-39 years	99.8%	99.8%	99.9%	99.9%	100%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%
40-49 years	98.8%	99.4%	99.7%	99.7%	99.8%	99.8%	99.8%	99.6%
50-59 years	89.3%	94.9%	98.7%	98.7%	99.3%	99.8%	99.2%	98.6%
60-69 years	59.6%	74.5%	82.5%	88.8%	89.1%	91.5%	94.5%	94%
70 years and older	17.9%	25.9%	31.8%	38.6%	38.9%	40.3%	49.7%	54.7%

Figure 1. Internet usage rate in South Korea from 2015 to 2022, by age group. Adapted from "Usage rate of the South Korean government's website Gov. KR in 2020, by age group," by Statista, 2023.

The number of internet users in South Korea between 2015 and 2022 among the age group from 20 to 49 is the highest among the age groups according to Figure 1 by 99.9 percent. The all-age groups in Korea are using the Internet from 79.8 percent to 99.9 percent except for the age group above seventy years old 54.7 percent in 2022 compared with 2015 is higher than the 35 percent increase among the seventy years old group age (Statista, 2023).

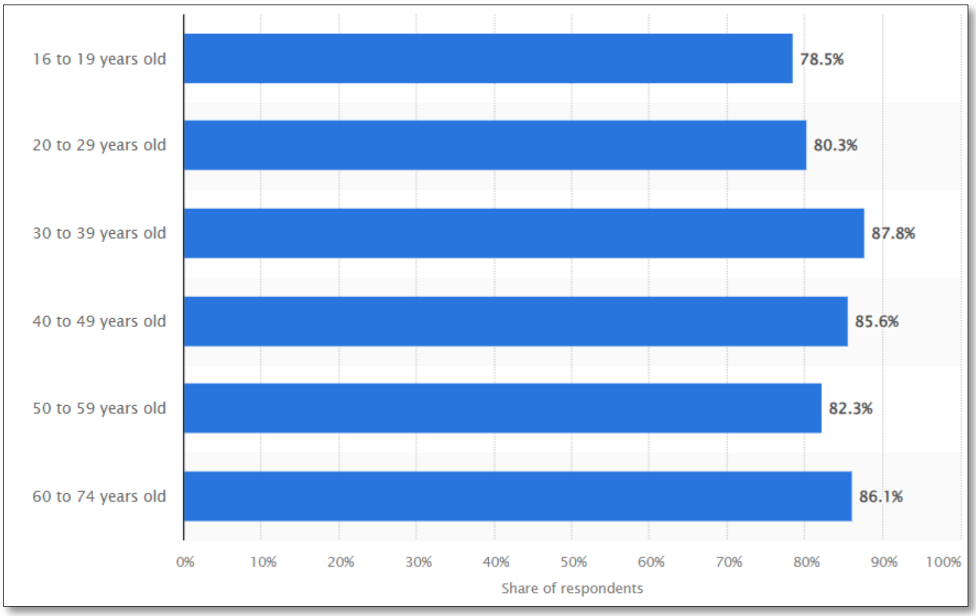

Figure 2. Usage rate of the South Korean government's website Gov. KR in 2020, by age group. Adapted from "Usage rate of the South Korean government's website Gov. KR in 2020, by age group," by Statista, 2023.

According to a result of a survey of government portal users in South Korea in 2020, the age group from 30 to 39 are the most users of the websites of the government by 87.8 percent. While the age group from 16 to 19 years old using government websites by 78.5%, and the 20 to 29 years old group using it by 80.3. The 40 to 49 years old group used it 85.6%, while, the 50 to 59 years old using it 82.3%, the remarkable note is the 60 to 70 years old group used it 86.1% which means the older group over 60 years old are more convenient in using the online governmental services than visiting by themselves. (Statista, 2023).

This study tries to examine the effect of the transition from e-government to e-governance on the Korean citizens who contributed to the transition toward smart e-governance during the COVID-19 time. As a result of the transition, the citizens got more familiar with the use of the internet as a daily life method of living style. The using of governmental websites is more and more than in any other nation in the world. As a result, the citizens became more knowledgeable and more educated about the internet and they began to participate in the sharing of knowledge and supporting activities during the COVID-19 as an innovation-based nation. The private sector has a partnership with the government to cope the COVID-19 and beyond it for the new digital deal government. "The value of democracy has become aggressively important for being plugged into political and government spheres, because of the impact of interactions between citizens and the government has exceeded the initial expectations of the e-government system…. E-democracy refers to any collective action that improves democratic values and the quality of public participation, which intends to narrow a participatory gap among citizens in policymaking or political processes." (Kim & Myeong, 2014).

The Development of Electronic Regimes

	First wave: Underdeveloped	Second wave: Developing	Third wave: Developed
Regime	E-government	E-democracy	E-governance
Priority	Website development, business applications	Authentic participation	Partnership
Value	Efficiency, effectiveness	Democracy	Trust
Key player	Governments	Citizens	Governments, nongovernmental partners, community groups
Keyword	Technology infrastructure	Citizens	Networks
Unit	Institution	Individual	Community group
Platform	Web 1.0, content management system (CMS)	Web 2.0	Social media

Figure 3. The development of electronic regimes. Adapted from Kim, Y., & Myeong, S. (2014). Puzzling out the wisdom of e-crowds in trustworthy e-government practices: From technological applications to networks. In A. Manoharan (Ed.), *E-government and websites: A public solutions handbook* (1st ed., ch. 8). M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

The author of this paper explained in a previous paper titled "The E-Participation in the Administrative Culture in the Republic of Korea as a Fourth Industrial Revolution Adoption" about digitalized Korean citizens according to the literature review "(Kim & Myeong, 2014) "Puzzling Out the Wisdom of E-Crowds in Trustworthy E-Government Practices" paper concept is to highlight the importance of the trust level between the citizens and the government. The changing to the electronic state as they described it; the state where everything depends on the I.C.T. and the networking connection. Citizens need to have a good understanding of essential participation in decision-making and online voting. The above schedule has three stages: the first wave of the electronic regime is the condition of the state that is about to enter the second wave of the electronic era, and this first wave is when the state is underdeveloped. In this early stage, the value is effective and efficient, the key player is the government. The second wave is the "developing" when the key player is the citizens and their values the democracy. The third wave is the "developed" when the key player becomes the governments, non-government groups, and community groups their value is trust in governance. "This notion of digitalization has become a key feature of the latter stages of Korea's compressed modernity: a phrase encapsulating how the country has leapfrogged conventional development stages to move from a traditional agrarian society to a paradigmatic information society." (Jin, 2017). However, the Republic of Korea did not invent such digital technologies as the Internet, broadband, and smartphones, an understanding of Korea's digital technologies is crucial because the adaptation, development, and penetration of these digital technologies are highly innovative. They have also been successfully diffused within such a short period."(Fayed, 2023).

This research is a qualitative paper based on the explanation of the Myeong explained the definition of "smart", and the term "E-governance" in his paper titled "E-government to Smart E-governance: Korean Experience and Challenges". Then, adding the new stage of the smart e-governance.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Myeong explained the definition of "smart", and the term "E-governance" in his paper titled "E-government to Smart E-governance: Korean Experience and Challenges". The "smart" term refers to self-monitoring through the usage of the I.C.T. While, "E-governance" refers to the network connectivity among the government actors and the citizens with the business actors. The administrative system is based on knowledge sharing through the I.C.T. (Ministry of Security and Public Administration, 2013a). There are different ways to define e-governance and e-participation. One of them according to William, Webster and Charles (2018) study titled "Smart governance: Opportunities for technologically-mediated citizen co-production", they defined that the governance of the smart city is a technological way to make the citizens participate electronically in local matters issues. Then, e-participation is the core value in this matter. Good governance is to make the behavior among the government officials and the citizens much easier and better in good communication. When the whole institution changes in the way they deal with technology and the citizens' lives (William, Webster, & Charles, 2018).

Stages	Major Actions
Inception (mid 1980s~mid 1990s)	Building five National Basic Information Systems (NBIS) Act on Computer Network Expansion and Usage Promotion (1987)
Foundation (mid 1990s~2000)	Building foundation for high-speed information and communications and promoting the Internet Enacting the Framework Act on Informatization Promotion (1995)
Launch (2001~2002)	Carrying out 11 major initiatives for e-government Enacting the Act on E-Government (2001)
Diffusion (2003~2007)	Carrying out 31 roadmap projects for E-government Laying the groundwork for linking and integrating multiple government departments and agencies
Convergence (2008~present)	Establishing Master Plan for National Informatization (2008) Carrying out tasks (12) for e-Government based on the principles of openness, sharing, and cooperation
Smart Government (2011~present)	Initiating the future e-Government blueprint, Smart Government (2011~2015)

Figure 5. Development stages of E-government in South Korea. Adapted from Myeong, S. (2019). E-government to Smart E-governance: Korean Experience and Challenges, in Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance.

According to Ministry of Security and Public Administration (2013a), there are phases to the transition from electronic government to smart e-governance in South Korea from the mid-1980s to the present time. In above table 1 the stages of the transition into smart governance are seven stages. The Inception from the mid-1980s till 1990 was about the building of the National Information System (NBIS) according to the governmental act of 1987 to promote computer expansion and usage. Followed by the second phase from mid-1990 to 2000 was about the promotion of the building foundation for high-speed internet according to the 1995 Act of Informatization. The third stage of lunch was from 2001 and 2002 about the eleven major initiatives for the e-government according to the act of enacting the e-government. The fourth phase was the diffusion from 2023 till 2007 according to the 31 road map projects of the e-government that concern the linkage among the government departments. The fifth stage was the convergence according to the 12-master plan in the act for sharing and cooperation from 2008. The sixth phase was from 2011 to 2015 about the smart governance blueprint. The seventh stage is the maturity phase according to the Ministry of Security and Public Administration (2014) from 2013 to 2017 represents the spreading of innovation in the I.C.T sector, the data sharing for the creative economy, and the act for the use of public data in 2013. "Under ***'Government 3.0'***, the Korean government has emphasized the establishment of a *'Service-oriented Government, Capable Government, and Transparent Government'* as the goals of ***digital governance***."(Karippacheril et al, 2016). According to Jooho Lee the "Government 3.0. The main strategic goals of Government 3.0 are to make the government more transparent, competent, and service-oriented by enhancing openness, collaboration, and two-way communication." (Lee, 2016). Through the big data and the one-stop petition system, the SNS communicates with the citizens.

Sunhyuk Kim' (2010) article titled "Collaborative Governance in South Korea: Citizen Participation in policy-making and Welfare Service Provision" explains how the South Korean state achieved participation or the participatory movement among its citizens. From the 1987 government of Roh Tae Woo to the five consecutive governments starting from the Roh' democratic government, the Kim Young Sam, Kim Dae Jung, Roh Moo Hyun, and Lee Myung Bak governments. They started the "Chamyu Jungboo Madang" that's means the people's participation space for governmental issues. During the Roh Tae Woo period, he began the three initiatives to ground the participation idea among the people as a main principle for the future democratic process. The three initiatives are direct democracy, local administration and governance, and online/offline citizen participation. The first one is through the referenda initiative recalls, the second through the spreading of the local district the autonomy and democratic principles, and the third is through the “Chamyu Jungboo Madang” that’s means the people's participation space for governmental issues.

	(E-government)	(E-governance)	(Smart E-governance)
Goal of E-Gov.	Efficiency of System	Info. Sharing & Connectivity	Open Big Data Individual-oriented Service
E-Gov. Services	Internal & Info. Provide	Gov. Reform & Single Portal	Platform Based My Gov. Services
Ecology of ICT	Gov. Driven & Outsourcing	Gov. Driven & Outsourcing	Gov.-Private-Citizen Partnership, Deregulation
Role of CIO	System Management	BPR, Intergovernmental Project	Initiator of Reform Communicator
Decision Making Initiatives	Political Elites & Gov. CEO	Gov., Professional, Public Officials	Individuals, Citizen, NGOs
Demand & Method for Decision Making	Political Needs	Policy Needs	Participation & Communication based on Big Data
Role of Central Government	Initiator	Contractor	Mediator
Role of Local Government	Dependent upon Matching Funds System Building	Matching Funds Constructing Local Gov. Portals	Local/Community Demand-based Personalized Services
Role of Entrepreneur	System Provider	New Tech. & System Application Develop	Convergent Services Creating New Services
Role of Citizen	Info. Service User	Partly Participation	Active Participation & Voting
Decision Maker	Top Down Budget Allocation	Policy/Budget Control based on Performance Evaluation	Focusing on Problem Solving Data Analysis & Vision
Demands by Paradigm Shift	Gov./National Informatization	Gov. Reform Local Autonomy	Cooperative Partnership & E-Governance

Figure 6. E-governance perspectives toward smart E-governance. Adapted from Myeong, S. (2019). E-government to Smart E-governance: Korean Experience and Challenges, in Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance.

According to Myeong (2019), the e-government to smart e-governance explains the Korean experience in the transition toward the next generation of government. The criteria depend on the values and the target of the e-government. The efficiency and the productivity, the transparency and the power. The type of industrial society is based on the e-government called the technocratic government known as type 1 where the government for the nation is not open for the civil society and the citizens. The second type is the industrial society based on e-government that will be called the information management-centered government. Both the first and second types are the product of the efficiency and productivity. The third type is monitoring the information government, while the fourth type four is the product of transparency. The fourth type is called the information society e-government where it is a transparent government. From the power perspective, the type fifth and sixth are called the Big Brother government, and the next generation of e-government represents the e-democratic government (Myeong, 2019).

According to Archana (2019) the Characteristics of E-Governance are “Improving information delivery”, “Citizen Participation in decision-making”, and “Accountable and transparent generations” (Archana, 2019). E-governance is “used for delivering government services with the use of information communication technology” (Archana, 2019). These characteristics are in Table 2 of Myeong's study 2019. The transition from e-government to e-governance and then into smart e-governance from the ***goal of the government*** is the efficiency of the system, then the information sharing, and later the open big data and individual-oriented services. From the ***e-government services perspective***, the three stages are Internal and information provided, then the government reform and single portal implementation, at the smart e-governance stage it becomes the platform based on “my government” services. From the ecology of the I.C.T., the first stage is government-driven and outsourcing, the second stage of e-governance is government-driven and outsourcing, and the third stage the smart e-governance is the government private-citizen partnership and deregulation. The ***role of the CIO*** is the first stage for system management, the second stage is for intergovernmental projects, at the third stage of smart e-governance is the interior of the reform communicator. In the ***decision-making initiatives*** the first stage will be for the political needs the second stage for the policy needs, in the third stage will be for the participation and communication based on the big data. When it comes to the ***role of central government*** the first stage is for the initiator, the second stage as a contractor, and the third stage as a mediator. The ***role of local government*** in the first stage is dependent upon matching funds for system building, and in the second stage is for the matching funds for the construction of local government portals. The ***role of the entrepreneur*** in the first stage is system provider, in the second stage is for the new technology and system application development. The third stage is for the convergent services and creating new services. The ***role of citizens*** is changing from e-governance to e-governance into smart e-governance as following the first stage the citizen is an information service user, in the second stage is a partly participator, in the third stage is an active participator and voter. For the ***decision-maker*** the first stage is the top-down budget allocation, the second stage is the policy and budget control based on performance evaluation, in the third stage focuses on problem-solving, data analysis, and vision. The ***demands by paradigm shifts*** in the first stage are for the government's national informatization, the second stage is for the government to reform local autonomy, in the third stage is a cooperative partnership and e-governance.

Meanwhile, this paper argues that the South Korean government and citizens already changed to smart e-governance. To be able to prove this argument many research papers and studies have been reviewed. As this paper suggests there is an eighth stage for the transition toward e-governance. That phase started with the COVID-19 pandemic measurement from the Korean government. ***One of the pieces of evidence*** that this paper argues for is the Sunhyuk Kim’ (2010) article titled “Collaborative Governance in South Korea: Citizen Participation in policy-making and Welfare Service Provision” which explains how the South Korean state achieved participation or the participatory movement among its citizens. “Where a national single window platform is typically implemented with a greater level of homogeneity, achieve digital resilience with inclusive innovation with a plurality of diverse platforms…South Korea’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been considered by international authorities and media as one of the world’s most effective….The Korean government comprehensively summarized how the country has taken various digital interventions to “flatten the curve” of COVID-19, including the testing, tracing, and treating of COVID-19 cases. Lessons from the South Korea case provide important research and policy implications for digital resilience, including building the following competencies: innovative and agile development of digital applications, efficient data governance, citizens’ active engagement, and public-private partnership. There were also citizen’s alternative digital responses to data sharing. A couple of notable Geographic Information System (GIS)-based applications and websites aimed to help people access and share information. Among them, ‘Corona Map’ and ‘Mask Map’ attracted many users as supplementary sources for information. After the first outbreak in Korea, the KCDC published the trajectory history of patients on its website. After 10 days of the first case, one college student developed a ‘Corona Map’ which shows the travel routes of confirmed cases on a website map service that is accessible via mobile or web. It is based on open source called ‘Open Street Map’” (Kyung Ryul, Sundeep, Jorn, & Pamod, 2021)

Another one of those studies is the study about the South Korean’ government's action toward the COVID-19 epidemic titled “P., Kyung Ryul, S., Sundeep, B., Jorn, A., Pamod. (2021), Digital *Resilience for What? Case Study of South Korea”*. The result of the study is quite interesting and important in the sense of the transition from electronic government to smart e-governance as the (Myeong, 2019) study divided the transition from electronic government to e-governance to smart e-governance. In the above paragraph from this study about resilience in South Korea, they noticed the efficient management of the daily data, and the openness of the personal government as Myeong (2019) mentioned for the government goal. In addition, the innovation by the citizens-driven initiatives like the student who invited the application of the Corona map. The decision-making process focused on problem-solving as Myoung 2019 mentioned in table 2 below. Therefore, this paper claims the argument about the transition to smart e-governance in South Korea. “Each ministry will create policies based on the direction of the digital bill of rights. Furthermore, a civil-private consultation body consisting of academia, industry, and consumer organizations will be established to actively promote social discussion. An "online public forum" will also be created by this August to enable citizens to freely discuss the digital order. In addition, the government will conduct annual surveys on the status of digital sophistication and use them as basic policy-decision-making data. Lastly, the government of South Korea plans to strengthen its role as a digital rule setter, leading global discussions on digital norms, as a digital model country.” (Ministry of Science and ICT, 2023).

The third piece of evidence about the transition to smart e-governance in South Korea is the “New Digital Order” initiative announced by President Yoon Suk-Yeol’ at New York and Harvard University, that new digital order “aims to create a basic direction for a digital bill of rights and to stimulate social discussion, as well as to actively lead global discussions on digital norms.” (MSIT, 2023). In the above paragraph the initiative about the digitalized age that the South Korean government tries to actualize for the sake of the new era of AI. According to the MSIT, the Korean initiative is a way to enter the new period of the new norm of the world that will depend more on artificial intelligence.

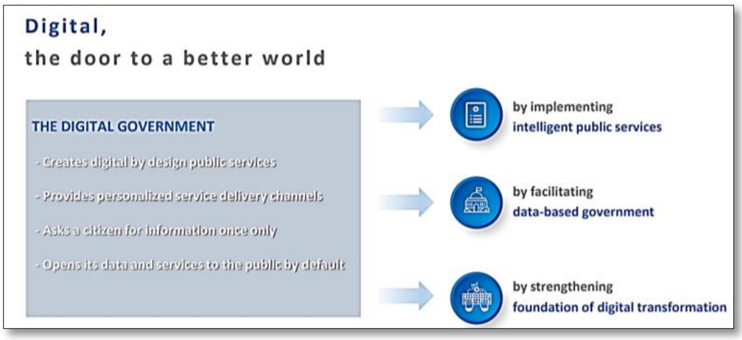

Figure 7. Overview of the Digital Government Masterplan 2021-2025, adapted from the Ministry of Interior and Safety (2021).

The fourth piece of evidence about the transition to e-governance is the Digital Government Masterplan 2021-2025. According to the master plan announced by the Ministry of Interior and Safety: the digital government master plan is to "create digital by design public services, provides personalized service delivery channels, asks a citizen for information once only, opens its data and services to the public by default." (Digital Government Masterplan 2021-2025). The methods to implement those initiatives are through actualizing the smart public service, through implementing data-based government service, and through establishing the digital transition. These three missions will produce smart e-governance; through "my data service", the "private & and public partnership", "international cooperation", and "cloud-based shared platforms and applications" (MIS, 2021). ***The fifth piece of evidence*** about the transition toward smart e-governance is the conducting of the 2020 April 15th parliamentary elections even among the citizens in quarantine without spreading the virus because of the elections. (Stephan, Liv, 2020) Democratic values and the election through voting rights are one of the characteristics of smart e-governance. In the 4th Industrial Revolution, the Digital New Deal in South Korea was supported by the state and the private sector. "The New Deal plans to invest 160 trillion Won (i.e. USD 132.6 billion) through a combination of state and corporate investments to create 1,901,000 jobs by 2025, based on two main policies: the Digital New Deal and the Green New Deal." (Stephan, Liv, 2020). This evidence according to Table 2 the public-private partnership in smart e-governance. In addition, the Korean government announced for the digital nomad visa for foreigners who are eligible to work remotely while staying in Korea.

3 METHODS

The author of this paper has published several papers about the empirical study of the electronic government and the electronic participation behavior among Korean citizens. In the paper titled "The Electronic Government Implementation Model In The Republic of Korea Based on The Theory of Planned Behavior TPB," the author applied a survey among Korean and foreign residents in Korea according to the theory of the planned behavior of Ajzen, and the TAM technology acceptance model. This paper will briefly discuss the survey results.

Table 1. Profile of the respondents. Adapted from Fayed, A. A. (2023). The electronic government implementation model in the Republic of Korea based on the theory of planned behavior TPB. Journal of Contemporary Philosophical and Anthropological Studies, 1(2), 22–35.

Category	Variable	Percentage
Gender	Male	36%
	Female	64%
Age	18-29	19%
	30-39	70%
	40-49	11%
	50-60	0%
	above 60	0%
Education	Secondary	0%
	Diploma	0%
	Bachelor	7%
	Master	60%
	PhD	33%
Occupation	Student	26%
	Employee	52%
	Researcher	11%
	Business owner	7%
	Retired	4%
Familiarity with the Internet in the Republic of Korea	Very familiar	59%
	Fairly familiar	37%
	Familiar	4%
	Not familiar	0%
	Not living in the Republic of Korea	0%
Familiarity with the Internet in your home country	Very familiar	59%
	Fairly familiar	26%
	Familiar	11%
	Not familiar	4%
	Not applicable	0%
Familiarity with e-government in the Republic of Korea	Very familiar	30%
	Fairly familiar	33%
	Familiar	26%
	Not familiar	7%
	Not applicable	4%
Familiarity with e-government in your home country	Very familiar	23%
	Fairly familiar	44%
	Familiar	22%
	Not familiar	4%
	Not applicable	7%
Use of e-government portal	Yes	78%
	No	22%
How many years have you living in the Republic of Korea?	Korean citizen	15%
	Foreigner less than 3 years	11%
	Foreigner 5 years	52%
	Foreigner 10 years	11%
	Foreigners above 10 years	11%

This part is about the survey participants' profile analysis results. “Therefore, one can get more information about the participant's age, gender, education, occupation, and the number of years they stayed in the Republic of Korea in case of the foreign residents. This survey questionnaire was distributed to both Korean citizens and foreigners who have lived or lived in the Republic of Korea for less than three years, more than five years, or more than ten years of staying. In addition, the survey questions contained information about the familiarity of the respondents with internet use in the Republic of Korea and their home country case of foreign residents. Not only about internet familiarity but also about the familiarity with the electronic government in the Republic of Korea and the home country's electronic government in the case of foreign respondents. The last general question is about whether to use the electronic government portal in the Republic of Korea or not.

The results of the survey respondents' profile are for the first age group between 18~29 and 19%, and second age group between 30~39 70%, and the third age group between 40~49 11%, however for the fourth and fifth age groups from 50 and 60 years old no one participated in the survey for the participant's age. For the participants' gender, the male participants are 36%, while the female participants are 64%. For the education question, the participants were distributed into five groups categorially from the Secondary, Diploma, Bachelor, and Master, until Ph.D. degrees 0%, 0%, 7%, 60%, and 33% respectively in order. For the occupation question, the participants were distributed into five groups Student, Employee, Researcher, Business owner, and Retired: the results are in respective order 26%, 52%, 11%, 7%, and 4%. That has a meaning that the employees are the group who are using the electronic government portal. Master's degree holders followed by Ph.D. holders are the group who are using electronic governmental websites.

This survey questionnaire was distributed to both Korean citizens and foreigners who are living or living in the Republic of Korea, For the number of years staying case of the foreigner residents: Korean Citizen, Foreigner less than 3 years, Foreigner 5 years, Foreigners 10 years, and Foreigners above 10 years. The results are respectively 15% for the Korean citizens, 11%, 52%, 11%, 11%. Most participants in this survey were from the group of foreigners who had lived in the Republic of Korea for five years which made them residents according to the law of immigration if they obtained the required points. In addition, the survey questions contained information about the familiarity of the respondents according to this scale a 1-5 Likert scale (1= Very Familiar, 5=not applicable or not living in the Republic of Korea) used, about the internet in the Republic of Korea and their home country in case of the foreigners' residents. The respondents for these choices: Very Familiar/ Fairly familiar/ Familiar/ Not-familiar/ Not living in the Republic of Korea in case of foreigners who left or Korean people who are living abroad. The results are respectively in the following order 59%, 37%, 4%, 0%, 0%: that means the biggest portion goes for the very familiar with the internet in Republic of Korea 59%, while no one is not familiar. Not only about internet familiarity but also about familiarity with the electronic government in the Republic of Korea according to this scale Very Familiar/ Fairly familiar/ Familiar/ Not-familiar/ Not applicable, the results are in respective order: 30%, 33%, 26%, 7%, 4%. That is a good result that indicates 30% are very familiar with the electronic government in the Republic of Korea and 33% are fairly familiar too. In the case of a foreigner's respondents to the home country's electronic government according to this scale Very Familiar/ Fairly familiar/ Familiar/ Not-familiar/ Not applicable, the results are in respective order: 22%, 44%, 22%, 4%, 7%. That indicates that most foreigners are fairly or normally familiar with the internet in their home countries. They are more familiar in the Republic of Korea. For foreigner respondents to the home country's internet according to this scale Very Familiar/ Fairly familiar/ Familiar/ Not-familiar/ Not applicable, the results are in respective order: 59%, 26%, 11%, 4%, 0%. That indicates that most foreigners are very familiar with the internet in their home countries more than they are with the electronic government in their home countries. Therefore, the Republic of Korea's lifestyle made foreigners more familiar with the electronic government portal. The last general question is about whether to use the electronic government portal in the Republic of Korea or not according to the yes or no answers are 78%, 22%." (Fayed, 2023)

The Author of this paper has research about the theoretically applied model. Presenting the intention to use the electronic government portal in the Republic of Korea as an easy way to get connected with the government. The electronic government application behavior concept is a tested model according to the TPB theory of planned behavior model.

The Planned Behavior Theory Explanation

According to (Ajzen, 1991) the theory of planned behavior is a theoretical framework explains which factors that affect the intention of the person which will affect his behavior. These factors are the attitude toward the behavior, the subjective norm, and the perceived behavioral control. Ajzen depended on the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982, 1991) that changed it to the perceived behavioral control. That explains more about the capability of the individual from the available resources and the possibilities of him to be able to proceed with a behavior. The subjective norm is about the context of the society where the individual should or must do certain reactions to the accidents that occur and those norms could make certain behaviors from the individual predictable within a society's known context. The attitude toward the behavior of the individual that affects the choice and the action of the person depends on his characteristics and personal differences. (Fayed, 2023)

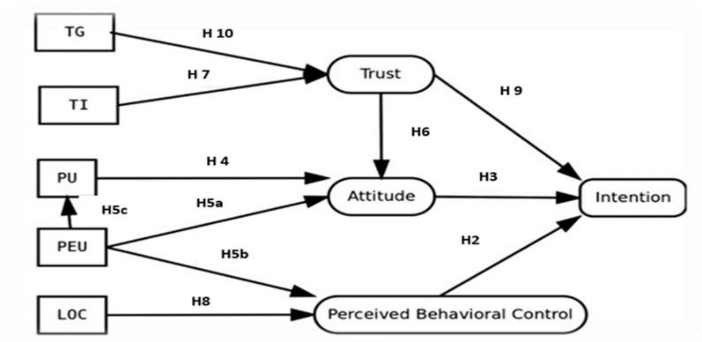

Figure 8. The tested model by Ifran based on the TPB of Ajzen

H2 "Perceived behavioral control over using an e-government service positively influences the intention to use the service." (Ozkan, Kanat, 2011)

Table 2. Hypothesis H2

Source SS	df MS	Number of obs	=	34
	F(4, 29)	=	9.70	
Model 12.5220856	4 3.1305214	Prob > F	=	0.0000
Residual 9.36026732	29 .322767839	R-squared	=	0.5722
	Adj R-squared	=	0.5132	
Total 21.8823529	33 .663101604	Root MSE	=	.56813
int1iamplanningtousethewe Coefficient Std. err.	t P>t	[95% conf.	interval]	
int2iwilltrytousethewebs .8814186 .2199682	4.01 0.000	.4315331	1.331304	
int4iwouldliketousethewe -.0690449 .2160657	-0.32 0.752	-.5109489	.3728591	
pbc1ihavethemeanstoobtain -.0929714 .1117486	-0.83 0.412	-.321523	.1355801	
pbc2itisuptometoobtaininf -.1964965 .1379476	-1.42 0.165	-.4786311	.085638	
_cons 1.815676 .7174586	2.53 0.017	.3483087	3.283044	

The above table of the regression indicates the correlation between the two variables in hypothesis one H2. The r-squared is 0.572, and the p-value is less than 0.5. Correlation is significant at the 0.000 level (2-tailed). The value of Sig (root means) is 0.5681. According to the Correlation test, there is a strong positive relationship adj R-squared (0.513) between technical factors and usefulness, therefore we reject the null hypothesis.

H3 “Attitude toward using an e-government service positively influences the intention to use the e-government service.” (Ozkan, Kanat, 2011)

Table 3. Hypothesis H3

Source SS	df MS Number of obs =	34	
F(7, 26) =	6.29		
Model 13.7573119	7 1.96533027 Prob > F =	0.0002	
Residual 8.12504102	26 .312501578 R-squared =	0.6287	
Adj R-squared =	0.5287		
Total 21.8823529	33 .663101604 Root MSE =	.55902	
int1iamplanningtousethewe	Coefficient Std. err. t P>t	[95% conf.	interval]
int2iwilltrytousethewebs	.3432817 .2685416 1.28 0.212	-.2087135	.8952768
int3iamconsideringusingthe	.5011012 .2402988 2.09 0.047	.0071599	.9950425
int4iwouldliketousethewe	.1166035 .2336225 0.50 0.622	-.3636144	.5968214
att1ithinkusingwebsitesto	.3157632 .4944826 0.64 0.529	-.7006603	1.332187
att2usingittoobtaininformat	-.1114661 .4919512 -0.23 0.823	-1.122686	.8997542
att3ithinkusingwebsitestoo	-.3891134 .2469149 -1.58 0.127	-.8966542	.1184274
att4usingwebsitestoobtainin	.1511588 .1808284 0.84 0.411	-.2205393	.522857
_cons	.1054202 .9871856 0.11 0.916	-1.923769	2.134609

The above table of the regression indicates the correlation between the two variables in hypothesis one H3. The r-squared is 0.628, and the p-value is less than 0.5. Correlation is significant at the 0.002 level (2-tailed). The value of Sig (root means) is 0.559. According to the Correlation test, there is a strong positive relationship adj R-squared (0.5287) between attitude and the intention to use the e-government service, therefore we reject the null hypothesis.

H4 "Perceived Usefulness of an e-government service will have a positive effect on the attitude toward the use of e-government service." (Ozkan, Kanat, 2011).

Table 4. Hypothesis H4

Source SS	df MS Number of obs	=	34

F(5, 28)	=	37.29		
Model 9.94717794	5 1.98943559 Prob > F	=	0.0000	
Residual 1.49399853	28 .05335709 R-squared	=	0.8694	
Adj R-squared	=	0.8461		
Total 11.4411765	33 .346702317 Root MSE	=	.23099	
att1ithinkusingwebsitesto	Coefficient Std. err. t	P>t	[95% conf.	interval]
att2usingittoobtaininformat	.797594 .1037269 7.69	0.000	.5851191	1.010069
att3ithinkusingwebsitestoo	.2221679 .0932606 2.38	0.024	.0311322	.4132036
att4usingwebsitestoobtainin	.0141283 .0555552 0.25	0.801	-.0996712	.1279279
ppu1reachinginformationfaster	-.0247222 .0667089 -0.37	0.714	-.1613692	.1119248
ppu2reachinginformationiseasi	.0414267 .0640075 0.65	0.523	-.0896867	.1725401
_cons	-.1976749 .3767723 -0.52	0.604	-.969458	.5741082

The above table of the regression indicates the correlation between the two variables in hypothesis one H4. The r-squared is 0.869, and the p-value is less than 0.5. Correlation is significant at the 0.0001 level (2-tailed). The value of Sig (root means) is 0.230. According to the Correlation test, there is a strong positive relationship adj R-squared (0.846) between Perceived Usefulness and attitude about the intention to use the e-government service, therefore we reject the null hypothesis.

H5a “Perceived ease of use of an e-government service will have a positive effect on the attitude toward the use of e-government service.” (Ozkan, Kanat, 2011)

Table 5. Hypothesis H5a

Source SS	df MS Number of obs =	34	
F(6, 27) =	33.19		
Model 10.0750747	6 1.67917912 Prob > F =	0.0000	
Residual 1.36610178	27 .050596362 R-squared =	0.8806	
Adj R-squared =	0.8541		
Total 11.4411765	33 .346702317 Root MSE =	.22494	
att1ithinkusingwebsitesto	Coefficient Std. err. t P>t	[95% conf.	interval]
att2usingittoobtaininformat	.7847742 .1049684 7.48 0.000	.5693969	1.000152
att3ithinkusingwebsitestoo	.2154094 .0834456 2.58 0.016	.0441932	.3866256
att4usingwebsitestoobtainin	-.0106462 .0550997 -0.19 0.848	-.1237015	.102409
ppeu1learningtousethewebsit	-.0134785 .1207997 -0.11 0.912	-.2613391	.2343821
ppeu2usingthewebsitespagesi	.0720482 .0898537 0.80 0.430	-.1123164	.2564128
ppeu3thewebsitespagesarecle	.0162209 .1007568 0.16 0.873	-.1905149	.2229567
_cons	-.2128456 .3718079 -0.57 0.572	-.9757323	.5500411

The above table of the regression indicates the correlation between the two variables in hypothesis one H5a. The r-squared is 0.8806, and the p-value is less than 0.5. Correlation is significant at the 0.0001 level (2-tailed). The value of Sig (root means) is 0.2249. According to the Correlation test, there is a strong positive relationship adj R-squared (0.854) between Perceived ease of use of an e-government service and attitude toward the use of e-government service, therefore we reject the null hypothesis.

H5b "Perceived ease of use of an e-government service will have a positive effect on the perceived behavioral control of the e-government service." (Ozkan, S., & Kanat, I. E. (2011).

Table 6. Hypothesis 5b

Source SS	df MS Number of obs =	34	
F(6, 27) =	5.29		
Model 16.9870429	6 2.83117382 Prob > F =	0.0010	
Residual 14.4541335	27 .535338279 R-squared =	0.5403	
Adj R-squared =	0.4381		
Total 31.4411765	33 .952762923 Root MSE =	.73167	
pbc1ihavethemeanstoobtain	Coefficient Std. err. t P>t	[95% conf.	interval]
pbc2itisuptometoobtaininf	.0927518 .1913547 0.48 0.632	-.2998756	.4853792
pbc3ibelieveifiwishican	.4371581 .2404892 1.82 0.080	-.0562849	.9306012
pbc4icaneasilyaccessthewebs	.2876239 .2536316 1.13 0.267	-.2327852	.8080331
ppeu1learningtousethewebsit	-.2974419 .411582 -0.72 0.476	-1.141938	.5470546
ppeu2usingthewebsitespagesi	-.2930434 .3320741 -0.88 0.385	-.9744031	.3883163
ppeu3thewebsitespagesarecle	.4333685 .3718808 1.17 0.254	-.3296679	1.196405
_cons	1.400928 .8920542 1.57 0.128	-.4294163	3.231272

The above table of the regression indicates the correlation between the two variables in hypothesis one H5b. The r-squared is 0.540, and the p-value is less than 0.5. Correlation is significant at the 0.0010 level (2-tailed). The value of Sig (root means) is 0.7316. According to the Correlation test, there is a strong positive relationship adj R-squared (0.438) between perceived ease of use of an e-government service will have a positive effect on the perceived behavioral control of the e-government service, therefore we reject the null hypothesis.

H5c "PEU will have a positive effect on the PU of the e-Government services." (Ozkan, S., & Kanat, I. E. (2011)

Table 7. Hypothesis H5c

Source SS	df MS Number of obs	=	34	
F(4, 29)	=	22.52		
Model 26.8985959	4 6.72464898 Prob > F	=	0.0000	
Residual 8.66022761	29 .298628538 R-squared	=	0.7565	
Adj R-squared	=	0.7229		
Total 35.5588235	33 1.07754011 Root MSE	=	.54647	
ppu1reachinginformationfaster	Coefficient Std. err. t	P>t	[95% conf.	interval]
ppu2reachinginformationiseasi	.6471253 .1654344 3.91	0.001	.3087739	.9854767
ppeu1learningtousethewebsit	.3845947 .2897813 1.33	0.195	-.2080745	.9772639
ppeu2usingthewebsitespagesi	-.6853561 .2792602 -2.45	0.020	-1.256507	-.1142049

ppeu3thewebsitespagesarecle	.4757997 .2348013 2.03	0.052	-.0044229	.9560224
_cons	.7978423 .3966427 2.01	0.054	-.013383	1.609068

The above table of the regression indicates the correlation between the two variables in hypothesis one H5c. The r-squared is 0.756, and the p-value is less than 0.5. Correlation is significant at the 0.000 level (2-tailed). The value of Sig (root means) is 0.546. According to the Correlation test, there is a strong positive relationship adj R-squared (0.722) between the perceived ease of use of an e-government service will have a positive effect on the perceived usefulness of the e-government service, therefore we reject the null hypothesis.

H6 "Trust will have a positive effect on the attitude toward the use of e-Government services." (Ozkan, Kanat, 2011).

Table 8. Hypothesis H6

Source SS	df MS Number of obs	=	34	
F(7, 26)	=	45.65		
Model 10.5802706	7 1.51146722 Prob > F	=	0.0000	
Residual .860905912	26 .033111766 R-squared	=	0.9248	
Adj R-squared	=	0.9045		
Total 11.4411765	33 .346702317 Root MSE	=	.18197	
att1ithinkusingwebsitesto	Coefficient Std. err. t	P>t	[95% conf.	interval]
att2usingittoobtaininformat	.8189687 .088267 9.28	0.000	.6375333	1.000404
att3ithinkusingwebsitestoo	.1152209 .0875498 1.32	0.200	-.0647404	.2951822
att4usingwebsitestoobtainin	.0571079 .0484716 1.18	0.249	-.042527	.1567428
ptg1websitesbeingknowledgeable	.1820301 .0886143 2.05	0.050	-.0001191	.3641794
ptg2websiteskeepingtheircommi	-.0306704 .0707799 -0.43	0.668	-.1761605	.1148197
ptg3websitesareinterestedint	.1303735 .0725951 1.80	0.084	-.0188478	.2795948
ptg4websitesconsideringmyinte	-.1121039 .0561254 -2.00	0.056	-.2274714	.0032635
_cons	-.5659908 .301671 -1.88	0.072	-1.186084	.0541029

The above table of the regression indicates the correlation between the two variables in hypothesis one H6. The r-squared is 0.9045, and the p-value is less than 0.5. Correlation is significant at the 0.000 level (2-tailed). The value of Sig (root means) is 0.1819. According to the Correlation test, there is a strong positive relationship adj R-squared (0.9045) between the Trust will have a positive effect on the attitude toward the use of e-Government services, therefore this study rejects the null hypothesis.

H7 "TI will have a positive effect on trust." (Ozkan, Kanat, 2011).

Table 9. Hypothesis H7

Source SS	df MS Number of obs	=	34	
F(2, 31)	=	18.94		
Model 9.05854004	2 4.52927002 Prob > F	=	0.0000	
Residual 7.41204819	31 .239098329 R-squared	=	0.5500	
Adj R-squared	=	0.5209		
Total 16.4705882	33 .499108734 Root MSE	=	.48898	
pac1mehavingaccesstoacompu	Coefficient Std. err. t	P>t	[95% conf.	interval]
pac2mehavingaccesstotheint	.6751807 .1218252 5.54	0.000	.4267166	.9236449

pti1legalandtechnicalstructur	.2221687 .0794638 2.80	0.009	.0601011	.3842362
_cons	.7942169 .6150279 1.29	0.206	-.4601408	2.048575

Table 16 indicates the correlation between the two variables in Hypothesis One H7. The r-squared is 0.5500, and the p-value is less than 0.5. Correlation is significant at the 0.000 level (2-tailed). The value of Sig (root means) is 0.488. According to the Correlation test, there is a strong positive relationship adj R-squared (0.9045) between the Trust in the internet will have a positive effect on the trust of e-Government services, therefore this study rejects the null hypothesis.

H8 "Local factors will have a positive effect on the PBC to use the e-government service." (Ozkan, Kanat, 2011)

Table 10. Hypothesis H8

Source SS	df MS Number of obs =	34	
F(5, 28) =	6.19		
Model 16.5070255	5 3.3014051 Prob > F =	0.0006	
Residual 14.9341509	28 .533362534 R-squared =	0.5250	
Adj R-squared =	0.4402		
Total 31.4411765	33 .952762923 Root MSE =	.73032	
pbc1ihavethemeanstoobtain	Coefficient Std. err. t P>t	[95% conf.	interval]
pbc2itisuptometoobtaininf	.1166032 .1647803 0.71 0.485	-.2209338	.4541403
pbc3ibelieveifiwishican	.2857127 .2478241 1.15 0.259	-.221932	.7933574
pbc4icaneasilyaccessthewebs	.2404665 .197785 1.22 0.234	-.1646777	.6456107
psk1mehavingenoughcomputers	-.3340305 .1980453 -1.69 0.103	-.7397078	.0716468
psk2metacklingtheproblemsi	.2099209 .226159 0.93 0.361	-.2533448	.6731866
_cons	2.18317 .9619087 2.27 0.031	.2127888	4.15355

The above table of the regression indicates the correlation between the two variables in hypothesis one H8. The r-squared is 0.5250, and the p-value is less than 0.5. Correlation is significant at the 0.0006 level (2-tailed). The value of Sig (root means) is 0.730. According to the Correlation test, there is a strong positive relationship adj R-squared (0.4402) between the Local factors that will have a positive effect on the PBC to use the e-government service, therefore this study rejects the null hypothesis.

H9 "Trust will have a positive effect on the intention to use the e-Government service." (Ozkan, Kanat, 2011)

Table 11. Hypothesis 9

Source SS	df MS Number of obs =	34	
F(5, 28) =	8.41		
Model 13.1332626	5 2.62665253 Prob > F =	0.0001	
Residual 8.7490903	28 .312467511 R-squared =	0.6002	
Adj R-squared =	0.5288		
Total 21.8823529	33 .663101604 Root MSE =	.55899	
int1iamplanningtousethewe	Coefficient Std. err. t P>t	[95% conf.	interval]
int2iwilltrytousethewebs	.3662851 .270906 1.35 0.187	-.1886406	.9212108
int3iamconsideringusingthe	.6766589 .3056358 2.21 0.035	.0505922	1.302725

int4iwouldliketousethewe	.0564281 .2133556 0.26 0.793	-.380611	.4934672
pac1mehavingaccesstoacompu	.1497751 .2709769 0.55 0.585	-.4052959	.7048461
pac2mehavingaccesstotheint	-.2607895 .2621269 -0.99 0.328	-.7977322	.2761532
_cons	-.2134907 .8976605 -0.24 0.814	-2.052265	1.625283

The above table of the regression indicates the correlation between the two variables in hypothesis one H9. The r-squared is 0.6002, and the p-value is less than 0.5. Correlation is significant at the 0.0001 level (2-tailed). The value of Sig (root means) is 0.55899. According to the Correlation test, there is a strong positive relationship adj R-squared (0.5288) between the trust will have a positive effect on the intention to use the e-Government service, therefore this study rejects the null hypothesis. H10 "TG will have a positive effect on the trust." (Ozkan, Kanat, 2011).

Table 12. Hypothesis H10

Source SS	df MS Number of obs	=	34	
F(5, 28)	=	12.48		
Model 11.3678852	5 2.27357703 Prob > F	=	0.0000	
Residual 5.10270308	28 .182239396 R-squared	=	0.6902	
Adj R-squared	=	0.6349		
Total 16.4705882	33 .499108734 Root MSE	=	.4269	
pac1mehavingaccesstoacompu	Coefficient Std. err. t	P>t	[95% conf.	interval]
pac2mehavingaccesstotheint	.5997774 .143731 4.17	0.000	.3053578	.894197
ptg1websitesbeingknowledgeable	.0834201 .1873787 0.45	0.660	-.3004078	.4672479
ptg2websiteskeepingtheircommi	.156037 .1413079 1.10	0.279	-.1334192	.4454931
ptg3websitesareinterestedint	-.2471473 .1415579 -1.75	0.092	-.5371155	.0428208
ptg4websitesconsideringmyinte	.3386206 .1201617 2.82	0.009	.0924804	.5847607
_cons	.5989498 .562042 1.07	0.296	-.552341	1.750241

The above table of the regression indicates the correlation between the two variables in hypothesis one H10. The r-squared is 0.690, and the p-value is less than 0.5. Correlation is significant at the 0.0000 level (2-tailed). The value of Sig (root means) is 0.4269. According to the Correlation test, there is a strong positive relationship adj R-squared (0.6349) between the trust in government will have a positive effect on the intention to use the e-Government service, therefore this study rejects the null hypothesis.

Reliability Cronbach's alpha

The table 13 indicates the scale of scale of reliability coefficient for the intention of using the electronic government portal is 0.8725.

Table 13. Cronbach's alpha for the intention of using the electronic government portal

Test scale = mean (unstandardized	items)
Average interitem covariance:	.3618538
Number of items in the scale:	4
Scale reliability coefficient:	0.8725

4 DISCUSSION

The lessons from the Korean Experience toward AI

The question that comes to the mind is how other countries could consider the Korean digitalization experience. From the reading and the research, the author did about the electronic government and the electronic participation process in Korea. The answer could be that the other countries should look closer to the Korean digitalized process from the early beginning. And examine how the transition took place in phases over the past forty years at least. Looking through the policies that the Korean government toward the opening of the digitalization of public administrative services and the education process to help the citizens to be active and open-minded to accept digitalization. That study could be very helpful for other nations not only in the transformation toward electronic governance but also toward the AI artificial intelligence phase which is the most remarkable nowadays. Obviously, Korea is very interested in the AI implementation. During President Yoon Suk Yeol of Korea's visit to the UN in September 2023, he declared the "Digital Bill of Human Rights: based on five principles: freedom, fairness, safety, innovation, and solidarity."(Arirang News, 2023-09-22, South Korean leader declares Digital Bill of Human Rights, sets out 'A.I. Solidarity' with the U.S. amid.) Later, during the AI Safety Summit in the UK last November 2023, The Korean president Yoon Suk Yeol, participated virtually after the agreement with twenty-eight governments about the AI risks to the world. He called for a "global standard on digital governance". (Arirang News, 2023-09-22, South Korean leader declares Digital Bill of Human Rights, sets out 'A.I. Solidarity' with the U.S. amid.) According to the UNICEF article data governance is the important key of AI governance (Stefaan G. Verhulst, Nov. 2023, Six reasons why Data Governance is the bedrock for AI Governance.) that Korean is doing through the digitization of data and services. Bear in mind that the Korean government already follows the "Korea's digital strategies are closely related to the OECD AI Principles and their five policy recommendations…in 2020, Korea amended its three main privacy laws to promote data use…Korea establishes a digital dam and AI hub…AI-oriented schools and making online education content available…Korea was also involved in developing UNESCO's Recommendations on the Ethics of AI, adopted in late 2021. Korea also hosted the Asia and the Pacific Region Consultation on the Ethics of AI.". (Song, 2022).

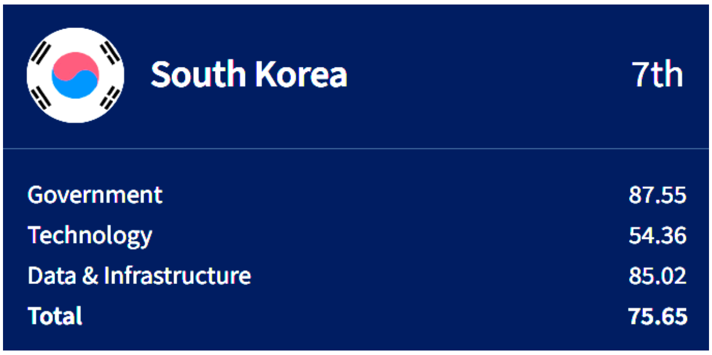

Figure 8. AI Readiness Index for Korea. Adapted from Oxford Insights

"A new 'Digital Platform Government (DPG) Hub' will be established to serve as a crucial infrastructure for this digital platform government, integrating both private and public data and services. Naver, SK Telecom, LG Electronics, and Kakao Brain have been chosen to provide the necessary AI infrastructure for the project" (Digital Watch, 2023a) "The Korean Ministry of Science and ICT announced at the LG Science Park in Seoul during the '4th AI High-Level Strategic Dialogue… to enhance the trustworthiness of AI-generated content with watermarks." (Digital Watch, 2023b).

According to the AI Readiness Index for Korea according to Oxford Insights in Figure 8 above, the Korean AI index is higher than the other 125 countries (Song, 2022) and that is a very good indicates about how the speed of the Korea toward the AI phase. They are very keen about the AI measurement and the guidelines, most importantly, on the protection of the system through giving the floor to the Korean private AI companies rather than Google like the above lines mentioned through the "Naver, SK Telecom, LG Electronics, and Kakao" (Digital Watch, 2023a), that measurement of the protection gave the credit for the national private sector. That also enhances the level of education that the Korean government and the private sector try to establish to develop the society's abilities for better AI phase readiness.

5 CONCLUSION

The private sector has a partnership with the government to cope the COVID-19 and beyond it for the new digital deal government. There are phases to the transition from electronic government to smart e-governance in Korea from the mid-1980s to the present time. This paper tried to examine the effect of the transition from e-government to e-governance on the Korean citizens who contributed to the transition toward smart e-governance during the COVID-19 time. As a result of the transition, the citizens got more familiar with the use of the internet as a daily life method of living style. The using of governmental websites is more and more than in any other nation in the world. As a result, the citizens became more knowledgeable and more educated about the internet and they began to participate in the sharing of knowledge and supporting activities during the COVID-19 as an innovation-based nation.

First of all, this paper examines the phases of the transition from e-government to e-governance to smart e-governance in seven stages. The Inception from the mid-1980s till 1990 was about the building of the National Information System (NBIS) according to the governmental act of 1987 to promote computer expansion and usage. Followed by the second phase from mid-1990 to 2000 was about the promotion of the building foundation for high-speed internet according to the 1995 Act of Informatization. The third stage of lunch was from 2001 and 2002 about the eleven major initiatives for the e-government according to the act of enacting the e-government. The fourth phase was the diffusion from 2023 till 2007 according to the 31 road map projects of the e-government that concern the linkage among the government departments. The fifth stage was the convergence according to the 12-master plan in the act for sharing and cooperation from 2008. The sixth phase was from 2011 to 2015 about the smart governance blueprint. The seventh stage is the maturity phase according to the Ministry of Security and Public Administration (2014) from 2013 to 2017 represents the spreading of innovation in the I.C.T sector, the data sharing for the creative economy, and the act for the use of public data in 2013. "Under 'Government 3.0', the Korean government has emphasized the establishment of a 'Service-oriented Government, Capable Government, and Transparent Government' as the goals of digital governance." According to Jooho Lee the "Government 3.0. The main strategic goals of Government 3.0 are to make the government more transparent, competent, and service-oriented by enhancing openness, collaboration, and two-way communication." (Lee, 2016) Through the big data and the one-stop petition system, the SNS communicates with the citizens. According to Myeong (2018), the e-government to smart e-governance explains the Korean experience in the transition toward the next generation of government. The criteria depend on the values and the target of the e-government. The efficiency and the productivity, the transparency and the power. The type of industrial society is based on the e-government called the technocratic government known as type 1 where the government for the nation is not open for the civil society and the citizens. The second type is the industrial society based on e-government that will be called the information management-centered government. Both the first and second types are the product of the efficiency and productivity. The third type is monitoring the information government, while the fourth type four is the product of transparency. The fourth type is called the information society e-government where it is a transparent government. From the power perspective, the type fifth and sixth are called the Big Brother government, and the next generation of e-government represents the e-democratic government Myeong (2019).

Meanwhile, this paper argues that the South Korean government and citizens already changed to smart e-governance. To be able to prove this argument many research papers and studies have been reviewed. As this paper suggests there is an eighth stage for the transition toward e-governance. That phase started with the COVID-19 pandemic measurement from the Korean government. One of the pieces of evidence that this paper argues for is the Sunhyuk Kim' (2010) article titled "Collaborative Governance in South Korea: Citizen Participation in policy-making and Welfare Service Provision" which explains how the South Korean state achieved participation or the participatory movement among its citizens. Another one of those studies is the study about the South Korean' government's action toward the COVID-19 epidemic. The third piece of evidence about the transition to smart e-governance in South Korea is the "New Digital Order" initiative announced by President Yoon Suk-

Yeol' at New York and Harvard University, that new digital order "aims to create a basic direction for a digital bill of rights and to stimulate social discussion, as well as to actively lead global discussions on digital norms." The initiative about the digitalized age that the South Korean government is trying to actualize for the sake of the new era of AI. According to the MSIT, the Korean initiative is a way to enter the new period of the new norm of the world that will depend more on artificial intelligence. The fourth piece of evidence about the transition to e-governance is the Digital Government Masterplan 2021-2025. According to the master plan announced by the Ministry of Interior and Safety. The fifth piece of evidence about the transition toward smart e-governance is the conducting of the 2020 April 15th parliamentary elections even among the citizens in quarantine without spreading the virus because of the elections (Stephan & Liv, 2020). The suggestions for further research are to make a comparison study with the other developed countries experience in the transition toward smart e-governance.

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The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Workers' Rights in Jordan

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ): How did COVID-19 affect workers' rights in Jordan?

Purpose: The author examines the challenges faced by workers in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic and the efforts made by the government to protect their rights.

Method: The critical and comparative research methods are used, along with a review of available research and reports from various countries.

Results: After examining literature and analysing country experiences, the author exposes the insufficiencies of the Jordanian government in safeguarding workers' rights during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Organization: The article highlights the need for policymakers, government, and private companies to protect labor rights during pandemics.

Society: The article discusses how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected work opportunities and work environments, resulting in an increase in poverty and health problems.

Originality: There are several articles highlighting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on labour rights. However, this article focuses on the Jordanian government's policy to safeguard labour rights and examines the legal aspects of the government's response.

Limitations / further research: This article discusses the difficulties faced by workers in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic and explores the measures taken by the Jordanian government to safeguard workers' rights. The article proposes that further research should be conducted on the various types of workers in Jordan and the extent of discrimination in their treatment during the pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19, labour rights, Jordanian labour law, COVID-19 in Jordan. Migrant workers, workers' safety and health.

1 INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented pressure on the world of work, resulting in the equivalent of 400 million full-time jobs lost in the second quarter of 2020 alone (COVID-19 and the world of work, International Labor Organization, 2020a, p. 1). Informal economy workers are the hardest hit, with an estimated 1.6 billion workers impacted by lockdown measures and/or working in the most affected sectors (Impact of lockdown measures on the informal economy, International Labor Organization, 2020b, p. 1). Young workers are particularly affected, with income losses likely to lead to a sharp rise in poverty rates. The crisis has also had a devastating impact on micro and small enterprises and own account workers in the informal economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rise in socio-economic vulnerability, resulting in increased concerns about child labor (ILO and UNICEF, 2020a, p. 5). Millions of workers have lost their income, and without savings or social protection, they are vulnerable to forced labor. Discrimination in employment has intensified, and there is a rise in informality, making it difficult for workers to organize and bargain collectively (Better Work Jordan, 2020, p. 8).

Jordan was already facing economic challenges due to a high refugee influx, youth unemployment, low female representation, and a large informal work sector when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The government took some of the world's strictest measures to curb the virus. However, human rights groups criticized some of these measures, arguing that vulnerable groups like migrant workers, refugees, and women have been disproportionately impacted (Business & Human Rights Recourses Centre, 2021). A new regulation passed on May 31st allows employers in sectors like tourism, transport, service, and apparel to deduct up to 60% of their non-remote workers' wages without seeking permission (Business & Human Rights Recourses Centre, 2021). The regulation applies to workers earning at least 210 Dollars per month, and the regulation mandates employers to renew fixed-term contracts only for Jordanian workers, excluding the large migrant and refugee population in the country. (Business & Human Rights Recourses Centre, 2021). The main question of this article is, “To what extent did the Jordanian government succeed in protecting workers’ rights during the COVID-19 pandemic?” This article provides an in-depth analysis of the challenges that workers in Jordan have encountered amid the COVID-19 pandemic. It explores how the pandemic has impacted various industries, such as healthcare, hospitality, and education, and how workers in these industries have had to adapt to new work environments and safety protocols. The article also examines the Jordanian government's response to protecting and organizing the work environment, including measures taken to provide financial assistance to affected workers and businesses, as well as initiatives to ensure safe and healthy working conditions. Overall, this article aims to shed light on the experiences of Jordanian workers during the pandemic and the efforts made to mitigate its impact on the workforce and economy.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The situation of workers' rights in Jordan has been an ongoing issue, which has seen some improvement compared to similar countries. Both government and private institutions have been making efforts to ensure workers' rights are protected and upheld. However, the outbreak of COVID-

19 has created a sense of urgency for the Jordanian government to achieve more in the field of workers' rights. Although the response of the Jordanian government to the pandemic was prompt, it revealed inadequate planning for urgent crises, particularly when it comes to the protection of workers' rights. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the critical issue of occupational health and safety measures for workers. According to Purkayastha, Damini and, Vanroelen, Christophe, and their colleagues (2021, p. 1) many sectors require face-to-face interaction with colleagues and clients, which puts workers at a higher risk of exposure to the virus. These sectors often lack regulated safety measures and personal protective equipment and work in crowded settings, which further increases the risk for workers.

This article aims to delve deeper and answer the question of to what extent the Jordanian government has succeeded in responding to protect workers' rights during the COVID-19 pandemic. The central hypothesis of the article is that the situation of workers' rights in Jordan was already challenging before the pandemic, which made the impact of the pandemic even more severe. Additionally, the pandemic has exposed the inadequacy of the Jordanian government's planning for an urgent crisis, which has become more apparent, including the protection of workers' rights.

It is critical to assess the efforts of the Jordanian government in protecting workers' rights during the pandemic, as the crisis has had a profound impact on the country's economy and workforce. This article will provide a detailed analysis of the measures the Jordanian government took to protect workers' rights during the pandemic while highlighting the challenges faced and the improvements required.

3 METHOD

The study has been designed with a specific focus on comprehending the relationship between workers' rights and policies that have been impacted by the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The research aims to use critical and comparative approaches to compare the situation of workers' rights before and after the pandemic in Jordan. The primary objective of this analysis is to evaluate the efficacy of the Jordanian government's response to the pandemic in terms of protecting workers' rights.

To accomplish this objective, the study relies on a range of global statistics and reports from reputable international organizations. These resources provide detailed information about the position of workers' rights before and during the pandemic, highlighting the significant changes that have occurred due to the pandemic. Additionally, the study analyses the topic of workers' rights during the pandemic, which has been widely discussed and researched, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by workers during this time.

Furthermore, the study will evaluate, and critique various government decisions related to workers' rights during the pandemic based on their goals and results. The analysis will consider the impact of these decisions on the overall protection of workers' rights in the country. The research will also identify any gaps or inadequacies in the government's response and suggest potential solutions to address these issues and improve the situation for workers. Overall, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse around workers' rights during the pandemic and provide insights into the Jordanian government's response to this critical issue.

The scope of this study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the working conditions of individuals in Jordan. The study will focus on the economic and health issues faced by workers while also comparing their current situation to that before the pandemic. Through this analysis, we hope to shed light on the challenges faced by workers and identify potential solutions to improve their well-being during these trying times.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the workforce, with migrant workers being among the most affected. These workers, who often face challenging living and working conditions, have been particularly vulnerable to the virus due to their limited access to healthcare and inadequate protective measures. As a result, they have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, facing increased health risks and economic stability risks.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruption to the global economy and has created new challenges for workers, particularly those in vulnerable positions. Despite limited resources, the government has tried to protect workers' rights during this challenging time in Jordan. However, these efforts have not been sufficient to address the scale of the problem.

The government of Jordan has taken commendable steps and made crucial decisions to safeguard the rights of workers amidst the ongoing crisis. The response was prompt and effective, but unfortunately, the measures were inadequate in terms of protecting workers' rights. Additionally, it appears that the protection measures were not targeted enough towards migrant workers, highlighting the need for more targeted and comprehensive interventions to ensure their safety and well-being.

The government and the private sector in Jordan are responsible for fulfilling their human rights obligations, as outlined by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP). Unfortunately, the pandemic has increased the risks to workers' human rights, as some companies have taken advantage of the crisis to evade accountability. Lack of transparency, failure to act on accusations, and inadequate channels for grievances have allowed dishonest companies to avoid responsibility for their actions. This has had serious consequences for workers, including reduced salaries, compromised health, and limited access to justice. As a result, workers have been left without the support they need to protect their rights and to ensure that they are treated fairly and with dignity in the workplace.

Jordan has been grappling with a host of economic challenges lately, which have only served to exacerbate the negative impact of the ongoing pandemic on the fundamental rights of workers. This has created a problematic situation for the people of Jordan, who are struggling to cope with the twin challenges of economic hardship and a lack of job security during these uncertain times.

The outbreak of the pandemic has brought to light the shortcomings of several companies, institutions, and employers in Jordan when it comes to ensuring the safety and well-being of their employees. They have failed to provide appropriate occupational safety and health standards, thereby putting their employees at risk of contracting the virus and other work-related hazards.

Challenges Faced by Workers in Jordan

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in major disruptions in the global workforce, leading to widespread consequences for workers' rights. Workers in Jordan have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic, experiencing significant obstacles in terms of employment opportunities and the overall work environment.

One of the most significant challenges for workers in Jordan has been the shift towards remote work and flexible arrangements (International Domestic Workers Federation, 2020). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work was already gaining traction as a trend in the workforce. However, the pandemic has accelerated the shift towards remote work in a way that has never been seen before. This has resulted in significant changes in employment contracts, working hours, and work environments. Many companies have had to quickly adapt to this new way of working, and this has not always been an easy transition. While some companies have been able to implement work-from-home strategies smoothly, others have struggled to do so effectively. Some sectors, such as the healthcare industry and manufacturing, have faced more significant challenges in implementing a remote work strategy due to the nature of their work. Moreover, the shift towards remote work has not been without its challenges for employees either. While some individuals have thrived in this new environment, many others have faced difficulties in adapting to the isolation and lack of social interaction that comes with remote work. Additionally, some workers may not have access to the necessary equipment or technology to perform their jobs effectively from home. In addition to the previously mentioned points, it is important to note that there are a significant number of workers who work on a daily wage basis and depend solely on their daily earnings to sustain themselves and their families. These workers are often engaged in jobs that require physical presence and cannot be carried out from home, such as construction work, delivery services, and transportation. Due to the closure of most non-essential activities during the initial phase of the pandemic, these workers were severely affected, as they were unable to earn their daily wages and support themselves and their families. The impact of this situation was felt particularly hard by daily wage earners in developing countries, where social safety nets are weak or non-existent, leaving them vulnerable to financial instability and hardship.

Another major challenge for workers in Jordan has been job security, which has been impacted by the economic disruption caused by the pandemic. Workers in industries such as tourism and hospitality have been particularly hard-hit, with many facing the prospect of layoffs or reduced working hours (International Domestic Workers Federation, 2020). This has had a significant impact on workers' livelihoods, as well as on the overall health of the Jordanian economy. In addition to these challenges, employers in Jordan are also grappling with the need to implement health and safety measures in the workplace in order to protect employees from the risk of COVID-19 transmission. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant changes to the way businesses operate. In order to maintain a safe working environment for employees and customers, businesses have had to make modifications to their physical workspaces. This includes implementing social distancing measures, installing protective barriers, and rearranging furniture to allow for more space between individuals. Moreover, businesses have had to adopt new cleaning and disinfection protocols to prevent the spread of the virus. This involves more frequent and thorough cleaning of high-touch surfaces, such as door handles, light switches, and shared equipment. It also requires the use of disinfectant products that are effective against the virus. All of these changes require more investment from employers. They may need to purchase new equipment, such as disinfectant sprayers or personal protective equipment (PPE) for their employees. They may also need to hire additional staff or allocate more time for cleaning and disinfection tasks. (International Domestic Workers Federation, 2020).

Jordanian Government Measures

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Jordanian government swiftly implemented a series of measures to contain the spread of the virus. Beginning on March 17th, 2020, a complete shutdown of movement was put in place as an initial step. This meant that people were required to stay at home at all times, except for essential needs such as obtaining groceries and medical care. As the situation evolved, the government subsequently eased these restrictions to allow some private-sector activities to resume, but with strict guidelines (Almasri, 2021). For example, anyone who needed to drive a car had to obtain a special permit, which was granted only for essential purposes. Meanwhile, non-essential activities were suspended until further notice.

Jordan has implemented a range of measures to address the negative socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups and should be commended for its efforts. The country has introduced the highest number of programs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and has been proactive in extending the social security safety net coverage and formalizing informal workers and enterprises (UNICEF, 2020b). Although most of Jordan's efforts have been focused on the Social Insurance sector, the government has taken several measures to help workers access liquidity during the crisis, including a decrease in subscription contributions, unemployment allowance, and advance payments on insured income. The Social Security Corporation (SSC) has played a critical role in supporting an estimated 960,000 workers during the crisis and has formalized 14,500 businesses through its retroactive registration policies (UNICEF, 2020b). However, it is important to note that these accomplishments may have potentially impacted the SSC's funds. While the abundance of SSC programs has provided much-needed support to workers, it has also created confusion and made it difficult for the average worker to determine which program they are eligible for (UNICEF, 2020b).

The government approved a series of emergency decisions called “Defense Orders,” which protected workers' rights. Daily-wage workers became the focus of more extensive campaigns organized by labor activists and civil society organizations, leading to the government offering in-kind and cash assistance for Jordanian daily wage workers (Almasri, 2021). The government implemented Defense Orders 6 and 9 to provide further protection, which specifically targeted vulnerable workers during this crisis. Defense Order 6 set conditions on worker dismissals and protected workers' wages, while Defense Order 9 provided several protections for daily-wage workers, including the right to claim unemployment benefits and make small withdrawals and loans from their social security accounts

(Almasri, 2021). The government of Jordan has issued orders that extend social protection benefits to migrant workers in the country. These measures are designed to provide a safety net for all workers, regardless of their nationality or immigration status. However, it is important to note that the reality of migrant work in Jordan is that it is predominantly informal and paid on a daily wage basis. This means that workers do not typically make payments into social security accounts, which can make it difficult for them to benefit from these extraordinary social protection measures. As a result, the government may need to explore alternative ways of delivering social protection to migrant workers, such as through targeted assistance programs or partnerships with civil society organizations. Despite these challenges, the government's commitment to extending social protection benefits to migrant workers is an important step towards ensuring that all workers in Jordan are able to access the support they need to stay healthy and financially secure (Almasri, 2021).

Migrant workers comprise almost half of Jordan's workforce and work across several economic sectors, including agriculture, construction, manufacturing, accommodation, and food services (Almasri, 2021). Agriculture and construction are primarily dependent on daily-wage work schemes and are staffed mainly by non-Jordanians. Though agriculture makes up only 6% of the Gross domestic product (GDP), it is a crucial contributor to other sectors, including both local producers and exporters, such as the food sector (Almasri, 2021). The construction sector has a low contribution to GDP. Still, it is considered a catalyst for other economic sectors and a significant employer of highly skilled workers, including engineers, providing opportunities for highly skilled Jordanians (Almasri, 2021).

Occupational Safety and Health (Osh) Measures

Occupational safety and health are crucial aspects of any workplace, and they revolve around ensuring the physical and mental well-being of employees and creating a safe working environment. Occupational health and safety practices are implemented to protect workers from potential hazards in the workplace, and they involve a range of measures. The most critical practices include providing personal protection equipment, such as helmets, gloves, and safety shoes, to employees to reduce the risk of injuries. It is also essential to regulate workload to prevent overworking or burnout, which can lead to physical and mental health issues (Al Damen & Majali, 2022, p. 223). This can be achieved by setting reasonable working hours, scheduling breaks, and ensuring adequate staffing levels (Al Damen & Majali, 2022, p. 223). Furthermore, enforcing safety policies is essential in preventing accidents and injuries. This can include measures like regular safety inspections, hazard identification, and risk assessments. It is also necessary to ensure support and communication from management to ensure that employees feel heard and supported in their concerns around occupational health and safety. Another vital aspect of occupational health and safety is providing work safety training to employees. This can help them understand potential hazards in the workplace and how to prevent accidents and injuries. It can also help them identify and report unsafe practices or conditions /Al Damen & Majali, 2022, p. 223).

It is crucial to have a health and safety system that aligns with the goals of the organization and the nature of the work carried out. This can involve developing policies and procedures tailored to the specific needs of the workplace, implementing regular training and education programs, and ensuring that all employees are aware of their responsibilities. However, applying occupational health and safety practices can be difficult for small and medium-sized companies due to the high cost and lack of a health and safety culture in some societies. This lack of culture may be due to poor education or poverty, which can force employees to ignore the importance of applying occupational health and safety standards (Al Damen & Majali, 2022, p. 223). It is essential to address these challenges by investing in education and training programs, providing support and resources, and developing a culture of safety within the workplace.

Despite the government measures, the pandemic has exposed several violations related to Occupational Safety and Health in Jordan, including overcrowded working and housing conditions that led to thousands of workers getting infected (Business & Human Rights Recourses Centre, 2021). Numerous experts and various human rights groups have expressed significant concern about the current state of occupational safety and health measures in workplaces across various industries. Particularly alarming is the situation in the construction sector, where five workers sadly lost their lives and six more sustained injuries during the first quarter of 2020. This tragic loss of life and harm to workers highlights the need for urgent action to improve safety standards and ensure that employees are protected from damage while carrying out their duties (Business & Human Rights Recourses Centre, 2021).

As per recent reports, there have been several instances where employers have failed to pay their employees their rightful wages and overtime pay. This problem has affected many workers, who have claimed that they have not received the total compensation they are entitled to. This issue not only violates employees' rights but can also cause financial difficulties for them and their families (Business & Human Rights Recourses Centre, 2021). Two significant companies were caught red-handed, failing to pay their workers overtime - even including women and migrant workers (Business & Human Rights Recourses Centre, 2021). Also, a report has indicated that During the pandemic, Jordan prohibits individuals and groups from freely forming associations and peacefully assembling (Business & Human Rights Recourses Centre, 2021). Some cases have been reported where people have been restricted from forming organizations or engaging in peaceful assembly (Business & Human Rights Recourses Centre, 2021). These limitations have prevented people from exercising their civil liberties, which are considered fundamental human rights. The restrictions on forming associations and assembling peacefully in Jordan have raised concerns about the state of civil liberties in the country. The authorities must ensure that people have the right to peaceful assembly and association during crises by international standards.

5 CONCLUSION

Despite limited resources, The Jordanian government has tried to protect workers' rights during the pandemic. However, these efforts have not been enough. Jordan's government and private sector have a responsibility to fulfil their human rights obligations as outlined by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP). The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risks to workers' human rights. Lack of transparency, failure to act on accusations, and inadequate channels for grievances have allowed dishonest companies to evade accountability. This has led to reduced salaries and compromised health for workers, hampered the proper investigation of abuse, and deprived workers of avenues to seek justice.

Given the current challenges posed by COVID-19, the Jordanian government and employers must take measures to protect workers' rights and ensure that they have access to safe and healthy working conditions. If there is no plan for infectious disease preparedness and response, employers should develop one to guide protective measures against COVID-19. Employers should stay up to date with the guidance from local and international health agencies and integrate those recommendations into workplace-specific plans. Plans should take into account the level of risk associated with various worksites and job tasks, such as exposure to the general public, customers, and coworkers, or to sick individuals or those at high risk of infection (Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 2020). Plans should also consider non-occupational risk factors and individual risk factors of workers. Employers should follow government recommendations regarding contingency plans for situations that may arise due to outbreaks, such as increased absenteeism, social distancing, staggered work shifts, downsizing operations, delivering services remotely, and other exposure-reducing measures (Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 2020). To protect workers, employers should emphasize basic infection prevention measures, including frequent and thorough hand washing, encouraging sick workers to stay home, respiratory etiquette, providing tissues and trash receptacles, exploring flexible worksites and work hours to increase physical distance, discouraging the sharing of work tools and equipment, and maintaining regular housekeeping practices, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, equipment, and other elements of the work environment. (Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 2020). During the pandemic, ensuring that workers receive fair and timely wages and overtime payments is of utmost importance while safeguarding their freedom of association. By prioritizing these critical measures, Jordan can foster a more resilient and equitable economy that serves the needs of all its citizens.

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COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on Cyber Threats

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ) Why cyber threats have been increased during COVID-19 pandemic?

Purpose: Highlighting the significance of developing cyber defence methods to combat cyberattacks that used in exceptional circumstances like pandemic periods.

Method: Utilizing a literature review approach to analyse cyber threats committed in pandemic periods It involves analysing existing scholarly works and studies to understand the challenges posed by evolving cyber threats in pandemic periods.

Result: The importance of creating extra cyber defence methods for supporting cybersecurity strategies in abnormal periods.

Organization: Cybersecurity strategies have been implemented by individuals, companies and nations, and all of them could be victims of cyberattacks.

Society: Pre cyber defence strategy for fighting cyberattacks in abnormal time will make people more confidence to use their digital devices without breaching their privacy.

Originality: Cybersecurity strategies in pandemic periods will be heightened by this study as there is a limited amount of research conducted on this particular subject matter.

Limitations / further research: This reach is limited to specific issue which is developing cyber defence tools to combat cyber threats in abnormal periods like pandemics. / It is crucial to clarify the cyber defence vulnerabilities that raised in covid-19 pandemic to enhance cybersecurity resilience in the future. This research is limited to specific issue which is developing cybersecurity measures to combat cyber-attacks generally with taking into account enhancing these measures during the exceptional periods. / It is crucial to clarify the IoT devices vulnerabilities which were raised in covid-19 pandemic

Keywords: Cyberattacks, Cybersecurity, Cybercrimes, Vulnerabilities, Covid-19, Awareness, International law, Treaty.

1 INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 is considered as member of the corona virus family, it was first detected on December 2019, when the Virus has affected millions of people globally and claimed thousands of lives around the world. Since then, it has rapidly spread worldwide through close contact with infected individuals. Many countries, have officially declared it as a pandemic, as confirmed by the World Health Organization (World Health Organization, 2020). This outbreak has posed significant challenges for international community, leading to an immediate surge in the demand for digital infrastructure. Unfortunately, this pandemic has increased reliance on technology and internet users became more attractive and profitable target for cyber attackers. Consequently, the global cyber threat landscape has been greatly influenced by the unprecedented coronavirus Pandemic (Shobika. & Sastra, 2022 p.538).

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, cyber-attacks were often undetectable, and instances of cyber physical damage were relatively rare. As a result, the issue of cybersecurity held less significance, with individuals often perceiving it as the responsibility of the IT department. However, with the surge in cyberattacks during the pandemic, both individuals and states have become more vigilant (Nagyfejeoi & Solms, 2020 p. 19). Hence, the objective of this study is to shed light on the impact of COVID-19 on cyberattacks. The initial chapter of the discussion will delve into the general frameworks of cyberattacks during the pandemic, while the second chapter of the discussion will elucidate the reasons behind the increase in cyberattacks during Covid-19 pandemic. Lastly, the final chapter of the discussion will explore international cooperation in cybersecurity measures, aiming to understand how the international community can effectively combat cyberattacks in future exceptional circumstances, including pandemics.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

It has been recognized that covid-19 played a crucial role within our life aspects including cybersecurity. Over time, cyberthreats become an asset for criminals and as they become methods in reaching to IoT devices encompass the new models and technical machines add that cyberattacks is organized on the basis of getting and economic value or other bad actions like sextual blackmails. The aim of the research was to find out if cybersecurity measures was applied and activated in the practical working environment. We presented the key areas that causes the ineffective of cybersecurity measures during the Pandemic.

Based on the insights described above, the purpose of the research was to examine why cyberattacks have been increased during COVID-19 pandemic as such, we formulated the following hypotheses: H1: The vulnerabilities of cybersecurity

3 METHODOLOGY

The researcher conducted a methodical and comparative literature review utilizing desktop research methodology to gather data spanning from December 2019 to May 2020. The official onset of the COVID-19 outbreaks in Wuhan, China was noted in December 2019, prompting researchers, scientists, and other authors to extensively produce literature on the topic (World Health Organization, 2020). By employing a systematic comparative literature review approach, the researcher was able to frame the research question, establish inclusion and exclusion criteria, and incorporate meta-analysis techniques to evaluate, combine, and disseminate research findings. Through a systematic comparative literature review, the researcher aimed to pinpoint the vulnerabilities of cyberattacks during the COVID-19 crisis. These vulnerabilities are pertinent to the research inquiry, enabling the researcher to assess and amalgamate the outcomes of the study to guide cybersecurity practices in IoT. H2: The lack of international collaboration on cybersecurity.

4 RESULTS

1- Cyberattacks have been increased in Covid-19 Pandemic due to the vulnerabilities of IoT devices, lack of individual awareness on cybersecurity and weakness of international collaboration on enhancing cybersecurity measures.

2-There is a necessity for an international initiative aimed at raising awareness about the importance of investing in security measures because cybersecurity is not only perceived as an international economic risk, but also as a threat to individuals' safety.

3-Due to the lack of cybersecurity awareness, conducting regular cybersecurity training sessions for stockholders, companies at all levels are a necessity. This should cover basic security practices, recognizing phishing attempts, and the importance of strong passwords.

4-Provide educational resources for increasing cybersecurity awareness is necessary, these resources could include articles, videos, and interactive modules, to help poor people particularly the elderly in finding the latest cyber threats.

5-There are no international legal rules addressing cyberattacks those cross countries borders. Therefore, the most appropriate method for ensuring cybersecurity among nations is adoption of a comprehensive international treaty that establishes consistent rules for fighting cyberattacks by developing cybersecurity measures.

6-Most countries around the world do not have national cybersecurity strategies in corporation with other national strategies. Therefore, a comprehensive and pre-emptive national strategy among each continent is essential in the fight against cyberattacks. This kind of strategies could encompass various measures aimed at safeguarding network and information systems from both system users and individuals impacted by cyberattacks.

7-There exists no global authority in the field of cybersecurity. Consequently, due to the frequent occurrence of cyberattacks originating from remote areas, their consequences tend to affect a broad and indiscriminate audience. It is crucial to establish international organization for cybersecurity awareness, it could learn internet users on effective measures in combating cyberattacks, particularly during exceptional periods such as pandemics.

8- Cyberattacks have been increased in Covid-19 Pandemic due to the vulnerabilities of IoT devices, lack of individual awareness on cybersecurity and weakness of international collaboration on enhancing cybersecurity measures.

5 DISCUSSION

We referred to multiple resources to reaching to these results including online databases like heinonline, internet sites and grey literature by identifying specific information searched, critiqued and reported within the December 2019 to June 2020 timeframe.

Cyberattacks In Covid-19 Era

The global impact of Covid-19 extended beyond health troubles, affecting various aspects of our lives. It ushered in a new pandemic where every sector, including education, corporate, healthcare, groceries, and trading, transitioned to virtual platforms. With our attention diverted towards the health crisis, cybercriminals seized the opportunity to target networks, businesses, and international organizations. Therefore, this section of the paper will tackle the cyber leap caused by the Pandemic by making a comparative study between the situation before and after Pandemic and then it will discuss the risks and methods of cyberattacks during the Pandemic.

Cyber leap during covid-19 pandemic

Although cyberthreats have been existed during covid-19 pandemic but it was not initiated during it. cyberattacks were already a significant concern globally, with various types of attacks targeting individuals, businesses, and governments. Therefore, it’s important to compare the situation of cyberthreats before and after Covid-19 period starting from December 2019.

When discussing the prevalence of cyberthreats and the percentage of cyberattacks, it is crucial to rely on data and statistics from a reliable source. In this regard, the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA, 2020) has emerged as a competent authority. Prior to the onset of the Pandemic, ENISA had released numerous reports and press releases addressing cyberthreats.

On 20 October 2020, ENISA issued a press release that shed light on the disparity in the number of cyberattacks before, during, and after the Covid-19 outbreak. It is worth mentioning a few key statements from this press release.
"The number of fake online shopping websites and fraudulent online merchants reportedly has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic".
"There will be a new norm during and after the COVID-19 pandemic that is even more dependent on a secure and reliable cyberspace".
"The number of phishing victims in the EU continues to grow with malicious actors using the COVID-19 theme to lure them in".
"The number of cyberbullying and sextortion incidents also increased with the COVID-19".

Examining in these sentences clarify that number of cyberthreats after Pandemic are not like before and the tools used in the attacks have taken new norms, another report issued in declared that number of Ransome attacks on hospitals as vital sector were increased during Covid-19 (Saleous et al., 2023, p. 216)

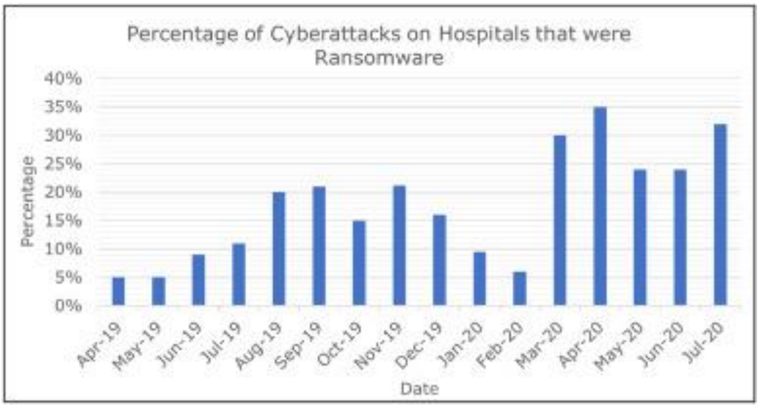

Figure 1. Percentage of ransomware resulted from Cyberattacks on hospitals for the period from April 2019- July 2020. Reprinted from "COVID-19 pandemic and the cyberthreat landscape: Research challenges and opportunities," by H. Saleous et al., 2023, *Digital Communications and Networks*, *9*(1), p. 216.

Status of cyberattacks beginning from December 2019

Although the usage of these applications proved to be extremely beneficial in controlling the hazardous situation in a systematic and timely manner since the beginning of Covid-19 Pandemic in 2019. The utilization of digital applications has witnessed a surge of over 10 percent due to the measures implemented by national governments (Lulian & Cosmin & Mihai, 2022 p.61) As a result of the pandemic, governments implemented different measures to reduce the spread of infections. These measures involved imposing national lockdowns, which resulted in restriction the movement of everyone except essential workers. Consequently, because most individuals and companies had to heavily rely on technology to continue their operations (Chigada, & Madzinga, 2021 p. 2) These measures have brought about new routine in their way of living and working.

Unfortunately, this has also led to an increase in the vulnerability of people and businesses. The COVID-19 pandemic has inadvertently paved the way for cybercriminals, who have taken advantage of using technologies and messaging platforms to exploit potential victims. They actively participated in the advancement of their unlawful techniques through the utilization of contemporary offensive instruments. Consequently, there has been a notable rise in activities related to child sexual abuse and exploitation, blackmail popular entities as well as medical scams.

Numerous organizations and reports offer estimations on the jump of cyberattacks during the Pandemic. As stated in the report named Cyber Security Trends Report (PurpleSec, 2022) “Cyberattacks up 600% Due to COVID-19 Pandemic," it was projected that global cyberattack costs would reach $6 trillion per year by 2021, a significant increase from $3 trillion in 2015. This projection encompasses both direct costs, such as stolen funds and system damages, as well as indirect costs like decreased productivity and reputational harm. Additionally, the report estimates that cyberattacks will amount to $10.5 trillion annually worldwide by 2025.

Cyberattacks: definition, types and consequences

Cyberattacks have been a growing concern for many years ago, as stated in the previous part, COVID-19 pandemic has unfortunately provided new opportunities and motivations for cybercriminals. These attacks were not limited to group of people, rather, they targeted organizations, companies and states. This chapter will tackle the notion of cyberattack and how criminals committed their attacks during the Pandemic and the results of their attacks.

A definitive consensus on the definition of cyberattacks has yet to be universally agreed upon due to the rapid evolution of technology. This constant evolution gives rise to new types of cyber threats and attacks, necessitating the need for the definition to continuously adapt and encompass these emerging forms of attack. To this extent, US department of defence defined cyberattacks as "actions taken in cyberspace that create noticeable denial effects (i.e., degradation, disruption, or destruction) in cyberspace or manipulation that leads to denial that appears in a physical domain and is considered a form of fires" **(**Computer security resource centre, 2015**).** Whereas a UK national security centre defined it as "malicious attempts to damage, disrupt or unauthorized access to computer systems, networks or devices, via cyber means"(Security operations centre, 2021).

However, it can be characterized as the intentional employment of disruptive actions, or the potential for such actions, targeted at computers and/or networks, with the intention of causing harm or furthering social, ideological, religious, political, or similar objectives (Shaun, 2014 p.539). Nevertheless, it is crucial to understand the nature of these actions when defining a cyberattack. Consequently, the subsequent section will elucidate the primary prevalent forms employed in cyberattacks.

Cyberattacks encompass a vast array of tactics and strategies utilized by malicious individuals to infiltrate computer systems, networks, and data. During Covid-19 pandemic, various approaches have been adopted by these strategies, the attackers have tried to exploit internet users in this exceptional period, their purposes were diversified, but most of them were based on blackmail internet users to get financial and sex benefits. To reach to their goals. They used the following attacks methods:

Firstly: Ransomware: hackers take control of an individual's data and request a payment in exchange for restoring access Secondly: Malware: it includes viruses, worms, Trojan horses and spyware. Thirdly: Social engineering threats: Exploiting the mistakes made by individuals in order to obtain access to information or services. Deceiving targets into opening harmful documents, files, or emails, visiting websites, and thereby providing unauthorized entry to systems or services. Fourth: Disinformation/misinformation: The surge in the utilization of social media platforms and online media has resulted in a surge in campaigns disseminating disinformation (Intentionally falsified information) and misinformation (sharing inaccurate data). Fifth: Supply-chain attacks: targeting the relationship between organizations and suppliers. Sixth: threats against data: targeting sources of data to get unauthorized access and disclosure. Seventh: threats against availability attacks preventing users from accessing data or services (European Parliament, 2023)

It could be argued that these were the most characteristic conventional techniques utilized by attackers. However, this does not imply that they refrained from utilizing alternative forms in their attacks. For instance, many cyber-attackers harnessed artificial intelligence (AI) as attacking tool to pose a significant threat in the field of cybersecurity. This situation introduced a fresh aspect to cyberattacks and cyber warfare, wherein AI algorithms are utilized to augment the effectiveness and complexity of these attacks.

Estimating the precise global damage caused by cyberattacks poses a challenge due to underreporting of incidents. Regarding the financial damage, it could be stated that the expense associated with a cyberattack can vary for various reasons, such as the magnitude and reach of the attack, the specific organization being targeted, the level of harm inflicted, and the efficacy of the organization's cybersecurity protocols. The financial loss encompasses direct monetary losses arising from theft, fraud, or the identification of network and digital device vulnerabilities. Additionally, it may encompass indirect losses such as the expenses incurred in restoring systems and data, as well as the potential costs associated with blackmail for the return of stolen data. Furthermore, cyberattacks and data fraud or theft are now two of the top five risks CEOs are expected in World Economic Forum report on global risks (The Global Risks Report, 2019)

The global business community face a huge indirect damage as a result of cyberattacks. It is worth noting that paying the ransom is often the most economical choice for companies. While this may inadvertently encourage ransom hackers to persist in their illicit activities and inspire others to engage in similar criminal behaviour, it is a quicker and more cost-effective solution for companies. Consequently, major corporations such as Microsoft and Facebook can afford to pay the ransom rather than risk losing their clientele due to cyberattacks (Kaitlyn Palmeter, 2022, p.278). However, many companies lack the financial resources to allocate funds for ransom payments, potentially resulting in the loss of their clients. This scenario creates an unfair competitive environment among businesses.

Cyberattacks have consequences that extend beyond financial loss. In certain instances, they can even pose a threat to national security, particularly when critical infrastructure, government agencies, or defence systems are targeted. These attacks have the potential to compromise vital services, diminish national defence capabilities, and undermine public safety. In some cases, state or state-sponsored actors may orchestrate these attacks with strategic intentions, such as weakening the capabilities of their adversaries, creating chaos or confusion, or attaining political and economic objectives. Consequently, these types of attacks can be classified as cyberwar actions (Kartikeye, 2021, p. 497). Professional Richard A. Clarke, in his book Cyber War (May 2010) defined cyberwar as "moves by using manner of way of a geographical region to penetrate every other States's computer systems or networks for the functions of causing damage or disruption" (Richard, 2010, p. 25).

The extent of the damage caused by cyberattacks is not restricted. Such malicious activities can tarnish the reputation of individuals, organizations, and even nations. Hence, the forthcoming section of the study aims to elucidate the reasons behind the heightened impact of cyberattacks during the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically focusing on the increased reliance on digital applications.

Vulnerabilities of cybersecurity measures during covid-19

Cyberattacks have taken advantage of the increased reliance on digital technologies during Covid-19 period, remote work, and online activities, exploiting the unique set of circumstances created by the pandemic**.** They targeted all devices connected to the internet of things (IoT) including humans' life machines like mobile phones, smart watches and TV's …etc. These attacks were committed directly for both communicating and sharing data on cyberspace (Enenu, 2022, p. 34). This chapter will explain in the first part the methods of breaking into IoT devices used by cyberattacks and the second part will clarify shortcoming of IoT devices.

How IoT devices were targeted before attackers during the pandemic?

IoT attacks encompass a range of techniques aimed at exploiting vulnerabilities in internet-connected devices. Although it is impossible to list every existing attack technique, we could explore some of these techniques. To this extent, one of the most desired attacks during the pandemic happened when storing information were existed in the cloud, all smart devices and data were vulnerable when the cloud's architecture was compromised by a hacker or when there were concealed security risks because hackers can access these devices and install malware or spyware, they compromised the user's privacy and security for threats.

Furthermore, attacking devices connected with Wi-Fi-networks is another technique; using Wi-Fi can make individuals more vulnerable to security risks because they typically share the same subnet mask. This means that if an attacker gains access to one IP address on a device, he could potentially compromise all other devices connected to the same subnet (Upasana Ghosh, 2022, p. 4).

It's worth mentioning that denial of service (DoS) and distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks have emerged as a significant menace to modern computer networks. Attackers inundate IoT devices or networks with excessive traffic, overpowering their capabilities and rendering them inaccessible to genuine users. Frequently, botnets consisting of compromised IoT devices are employed to carry out DDoS attacks on a larger magnitude (Gu & Liu, 2012. p. 9).

IoT Security Shortcomings during the pandemic

The exponential rise in cyberattacks can be attributed, at least in part, to the remarkable expansion of IoT devices in various sectors like smart networks, The security management of IoT poses a significant challenge due to the continuously changing of the connections between these devices (lee, 2020, p. 157)

To this extent, internet-connected devices, along with customers face significant vulnerabilities in terms of cybersecurity in behind different reasons. In relation to the devices themselves, majority of them possess limited encryption capabilities, which can potentially make them more accessible to unauthorized third parties. Furthermore, competitive nations possess the capability to produce internet of things (IoT) devices and intentionally place vulnerabilities within them, with the aim of gathering private sensitive information that refer to customers or other nations. Furthermore, the devices often lack adequate cybersecurity protections or even missed. Additionally, there are weak practices regarding to devices password management**,** as well as insufficient and untimely implementation of security (Ken Goldstein 2019, p. 10)

Furthermore, IoT device manufacturers frequently overlook the importance of issuing consistent firmware updates, thereby exposing devices to well-known security vulnerabilities that could easily be resolved through updates. This negligence may stem from the considerable expenses associated with these updates, as manufacturers may prioritize other aspects of their business, such as the development of new products or marketing endeavours.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the protection of data privacy has emerged as a significant concern in the realm of IoT. This is primarily due to the fact that IoT devices frequently gather and transmit sensitive information about users and their surroundings. The heightened prominence of data privacy concerns can be attributed to several factors, such as insufficient measures for safeguarding data, the widespread utilization of video conferencing software, and the implementation of contact tracing applications (David, 2021, p. 261). Unfortunately, these factors have resulted in privacy breaches and the improper utilization of personal data.

To sum up, due to the shortcoming mentioned above, it is crucial for users of IoT devices to safeguard themselves against cyberattacks. A fundamental measure that users can adopt is to acquire antivirus and firewall software, as well as implement patch management and password management. The initial action that every user should prioritize is to possess secure hardware that is password-protected. Additionally, any sensitive information should always necessitate two-way authentication for enhanced security. However, although personal efforts for combating cyberattacks is required but creating international strategy for cybersecurity measures is more comprehensive solution. Therefore, the next chapter of this paper will discuss the international collaboration on cybersecurity.

International collaboration on cybersecurity measures

While the COVID-19 pandemic has certainly increased the number of cybersecurity challenges, it would be more accurate to say that it has exposed vulnerabilities rather than weaknesses in cybersecurity methods. The pandemic has created new opportunities for cybercriminals and highlighted certain areas where cybersecurity measures worldwide were not adequately prepared. Therefore, this chapter will clarify the international challenge for enhancing cybersecurity to face cyberattacks by discussing the importance of creating cybersecurity awareness entity in the first part of this chapter and the second part will highlight the main reasons for conducting international cybersecurity treaty.

The absence of international organization on cybersecurity awareness

Generally, awareness can be defined as the comprehension that emerges from the interaction between an entity and its environment - simply put, being aware of the present circumstances (Nagyfejeoi & Solms, 2020 p. 19). The importance of upholding adequate cybersecurity measures has been underscored by the rising occurrences of cyberattacks amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, it is imperative to advocate for cybersecurity practices and cultivate a shift in behaviour and culture through educational initiatives targeting individuals of all ages, including children, adolescents, and the elderly.

The concept of promoting cybersecurity awareness is not a recent one. The European Union (EU) has taken steps to educate its citizens about the risks associated with cybersecurity by establishing ENISA on 10 March as a capable agency for cyber awareness (Strategy of European union agency for cybersecurity, 2020, p.3) ENISA's primary objective is to ensure a consistent and high level of cybersecurity throughout the union, in collaboration with the broader community. It accomplishes this by serving as a hub of expertise on cybersecurity, gathering and offering impartial and top-notch technical guidance and support to Member States and EU citizens regarding cybersecurity (Dimitra & Vagelis & and Paul, 2021 p. 2).

To this extent, ENISA has taken proactive measures in light of the COVID-19 restrictions by revamping the information security management program to adapt it for virtual delivery. The revamped program now features user-friendly e-learning modules, an interactive virtual classroom, and a series of practical tabletop exercises. To ensure a comprehensive learning experience, the theoretical portion of the course has been condensed to allow for an expanded focus on tabletop exercises. Additionally, supplementary material has been incorporated into the self-paced e-learning module, specifically designed to enhance the tabletop exercise. Notably, the self-paced e-learning module now includes a simplified version of the EU's ITSRM (IT Security Risk Management Methodology), further enriching the learning content (Fabio & Konstantinos & Konstantinos, 2021, p. 366).

On a worldwide level, there is a pressing need for a global campaign focused on increasing awareness regarding the significance of investing in security measures. Cybersecurity is not solely viewed as an economic peril, but also as a menace to personal safety (Jeff Kosseff, 2019, p.366) This campaign necessitates the utilization of international legal regulations to coordinate its objectives. It could set the basis for international cybersecurity awareness organization and might have a similar objective as ENISA, but on a global scale.

This proposed organization aims to foster a greater understanding of cybersecurity risks and effective strategies, foster global collaboration on cybersecurity matters, offer valuable resources and utilities to bolster the cybersecurity of individuals and organizations, and potentially deliver training and capacity-building initiatives to enhance the cybersecurity proficiency of individuals and organizations. Additionally, it could extend support to research and development endeavours focused on advancing cybersecurity technology, policy, and practice.

It could be concluded that establishing international legal framework will be one of the entity purposes. Setting the basis for international comprehensive treaty would be one of the most the organization priorities. Therefore, it can enhance cybersecurity awareness globally based on international legal rules. Here, the next part of the paper will tackle the main elements of this treaty**.**

International cybersecurity treaty

Starting from December 2019, the cost of cyberattacks has gradually escalated, and the absence of global cybersecurity regulations has had a detrimental impact on both public and private entities, leaving them vulnerable to cyberattacks as stated in the second chapter is the main reasons behind the failure in combating cyberattacks. Therefore, international treaty becomes a necessity for both spreading cybersecurity awareness and enhancing cybersecurity measures internationally. Here, there are critical elements could justify the need for establishing a cybersecurity treaty.

Formal justifications for conducting cybersecurity treaty

The formal justifications for establishing international cybersecurity can involve several reasons; Firstly, enacting treaty for cybercrimes called Budapest Convention 2001 on cybercrime opened the door for enacting cyber threats treaties (Budapest Convention on Cybercrime 2011), it emerged as the pioneering international treaty aimed at promoting global collaboration in addressing cyber-related criminal activities (Faye, 2020 p. 248). However, it is worth noting that there is currently no international treaty specifically dedicated to cyber-attacks, despite the interconnectedness of both domains in terms of facilitating unlawful actions committed using cyberspace. Consequently, it becomes imperative to encompass these two aspects within a unified framework.

It could be argued that cybercrimes and cyber-attacks are distinct from each other; cyber-attacks are focused on causing disruption, harm, or obtaining unauthorized entry to data or systems, whereas cybercrimes involve engaging in illegal criminal activities through the use of computers or the internet. Despite the difference in their objectives, both actions take place within the digital realm. It remains puzzling why there has been a cybercrimes treaty in existence for over two decades, while the field of cyber-attacks or cybersecurity lacks a comparable framework.

Substantive justifications for conducting cybersecurity treaty

Due to the transnational nature of cyberattacks and the complexity and urgency of combating them, it could be noted that the formulation and implementation of a unified international convention against cyber-attacks as a top priority. This is driven by several substantive reasons. The first one is related to the enforcement of existing international law poses a significant challenge when it comes to bringing cybercriminals to justice. Out of every 1,000 cyber incidents, only three actually face enforcement actions due to the complexities surrounding jurisdictional issues in prosecuting cybercriminals operating from overseas. This allows malicious cyber actors to act without fear of consequences for the harm they cause (Kaitlyn, 2022, p. 278). Consequently, the determination of the appropriate jurisdictional court in cases of cyberattacks becomes crucial in establishing international cybersecurity regulations.

Additionally, during the pandemic many states have been progressively enhancing their capabilities in dealing with cyber-attacks. These States have started incorporating cyber-related provisions in their military manuals and domestic regulations concerning military and intelligence operations. This signifies their strong commitment to combat cyberattacks. Additionally, some states have adopted the practice of publicly identifying and condemning the responsible States engaged in malicious cyber activities (François, 2021, p. 12). However, these efforts, although commendable, lack a comprehensive framework based on international legal principles. Consequently, they have not been successful in effectively reducing the alarming frequency of cyberattacks.

Furthermore, imposing penalties on businesses that choose to pay ransoms during exceptional periods such as a pandemic justifies international collaboration in the field of fighting cross-border cyberattacks. To this extent, paying the ransom is often the most economical choice for most businesses. Nevertheless, significant penalties would make this option more expensive. When confronted with hefty fines, businesses are more inclined to enhance their security measures. While imposing fines on victims in an international treaty may seem unfair, it is a proactive measure towards diminishing future ransom attacks.

UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) agreed that international law especially the UN Charter is applicable to the cyber space. It addressed the issue of international cybersecurity, affirming that cyberattacks are subject to international law, specifically the portion outlined in the UN Charter. GGE has affirmed that the principle of state sovereignty is applicable to activities and legal authority within the borders of a state (Jyoti. ,2018. p. 58). Consequently, the entirety of cyberattacks is not encompassed by current international law because sovereignty as principle means that states have the authority of chasing criminals who initiated crimes within the state border, and this creates jurisdictional legal problem if criminals have initiated their crimes in several states or if they have multiple nationalities. Therefore, it's important to enact international treaty cybersecurity to organize the jurisdictional concerns on cyberattacks.

It is imperative to emphasize the importance of international collaboration and formal consultation in addressing national cybersecurity incidents, cyberterrorism, and other malicious activities that specifically aim at compromising the military and security aspects of nations. In the absence of legal regulations that compel states to cooperate in identifying the origins and perpetrators of such attacks, numerous states are at a higher risk of being targeted.

The collaboration mentioned above necessitates the backing of incident response plans, which can be achieved through the establishment of cybersecurity policies, practices, and procedures among states. This will enable them to formulate their own plans effectively. Generally, these plans commence with guidelines on how to respond to the notification of an incident, validate its occurrence, escalate it accordingly, and conduct a thorough investigation.

Finally, the global and interconnected nature of the network means that ensuring cybersecurity is a worldwide concern. Any harm inflicted upon the network can lead to a series of detrimental outcomes (Jiang Su, 2023, p.183). Hence, seeking legislative resolutions collectively among nations can yield advantages for all. These benefits pertain to both national security and the safety of individuals, as cyberattacks can be orchestrated by organized entities.

6 CONCLUSION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant surge in cyberattacks and threats, which posed a multitude of challenges for global security, economy, and stability. This study aimed to explore the weakness of cybersecurity measures that raised in Covid-19 Pandemic in combating cyberattacks. It clarified that cyber attackers took advantage of IoT and networks vulnerabilities to reach to the users, it also analysed common cybersecurity threats, attacks and information systems security vulnerabilities during the pandemic. The study highlighted in the last chapter the insufficiency of current international collaboration on cybersecurity measures especially when addressing the distinct characteristics of cyberattacks. It concluded that enhancing these measures become a necessity to ensure cybersecurity on a global level.

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The Role of Communication Ethics and Gender Equality in Education: the Gender Dimension of Ethics

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ): How does communication ethics intersect with gender equality in educational settings, specifically focusing on the gender dimension of ethics?

Purpose: As we delve into the intricate connection between communication ethics and gender equality in education, we embark on a journey to cultivate a culture of responsibility, awareness, and empowerment. This synthesis not only shapes the experiences within educational institutions but also contributes to broader societal changes. The fusion of ethical communication practices and a commitment to gender equality emerges as a driving force in preparing individuals for a future where diversity, respect, and inclusivity are paramount values. The research aims to investigate the complex relationship between communication ethics and gender equality in education. The primary goal is to analyse current communication practices within educational institutions and their impact on gender dynamics.

Method: The research employed qualitative methods, including in-depth analysis of communication practices, examination of language usage, and exploration of ethical frameworks. Theoretical perspectives from communication studies and gender studies were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding.

Results: The findings reveal intricate connections between communication ethics and gender equality, emphasizing the need for intentional and ethical communication practices in educational settings. The study identifies key challenges and opportunities for promoting gender equality through improved communication.

Organization: The research contributes valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers, offering practical recommendations to enhance communication practices in schools and institutions. The goal is to create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment.

Society: The impact of the research extends to society by promoting social responsibility and contributing to the development of an environment that fosters gender equality. The findings encourage a broader societal awareness of the importance of ethical communication in educational settings.

Originality: This research brings originality to the existing literature by delving into the intersection of communication ethics and gender equality in education. It offers a nuanced perspective on the role of communication in shaping gender dynamics within educational contexts.

Limitations / further research: Limitations include the reliance on qualitative methods, which may limit generalizability. Further research could explore the implementation of specific communication strategies to enhance gender equality and assess their effectiveness in diverse educational settings. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term impact of improved communication practices on gender dynamics in education.

Keywords: communication ethics, gender equality, educational settings, ethical frameworks, inclusive environment, social responsibility, qualitative methods, longitudinal studies.

1 INTRODUCTION

The intersection of communication ethics and gender justice in educational change plays an important role in creating the learning environment. This research shows the relationship between communication ethics and gender equality, focusing especially on the gender dimension of ethics. As schools aim to create collaborative environments that foster intellectual growth and social development, understanding the relationship between leadership justice and gender equality becomes a priority (UNESCO, 2022).

Although there is no general acceptance of ethical communication, the most common information is used as an important part of human relations, and it is possible to create thoughts, influence behaviours and raise awareness in educational environments (Lipari, L. 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic has led to changes in discourse, influencing thinking about the issues and opportunities it presents for education (Corbera et al., 2020; Kaddoura & Al Husseiny, 2023). At the same time, gender equality promotes fair and equal treatment for all genders. This is the main purpose of education as stated in the Dakar Framework for Action (Framework D. 2000). In this article, we aim to examine how communication ethics supports or opposes gender rights, ideology and power. This research is not just academic, it is also an effort to understand how ethical communication can help eliminate gender barriers in education. It aims to demonstrate the transformative potential of a commitment to a communication environment that is not only ethical but also inclusive and empowering for people of all genders.

When we set out on this path, the goal was to address issues of fair communication and gender equality in education by identifying the challenges, opportunities and implications of creating learning environments that not only advance science but also impact people.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This framework builds on these theories and provides a broader perspective to examine the role of communication practices and gender equality in education in terms of gender equality. This part of the article describes the best thoughts on communication and gender equality in education. This will help to contribute to the central question of this study: how can we contribute to changing gender stereotypes in our education system and make it fair for all? Communication ethics regarding gender equality in education. The curriculum teaches moral values such as freedom, kindness, nonviolence, and justice to ensure that communication is self-respecting, promotes consumer health, avoids injuries, and contributes to the learning environment (Varkey, 2021, Danaher, Berry, Howard, Moore, & Attai, D. J.2023). As discussed by Noddings (1984), ethical auditing is necessary to promote ethical and academic dialogue. Meanwhile, Held (2005; 2008) explores how ethical care can be applied to many things, including education, by showing the relationship and consideration in context. It provides a perspective that fulfils the principles for women and provides an overview of honest communication, according to Edwards, Gatrell, and Sutton, (2024). According to the justice framework of negotiation, Bosio, E. (2023) shows the importance of negotiation and the relationship between negotiation. Cerrato, and Fortunato, (2023) suggest that honest communication in education involves accepting others, promoting understanding, and creating space for multiple voices to be heard. Although some authors defend the main points in the translation, adoption and impact of gender equality in education, others see it as an important factor influencing policy implementation. Following Ní Laoire, Linehan, Archibong, Picardi, and Udén (2021), we argue that context is crucial to understanding the complexities of gender equality in education.

Feminist standpoint theory believes that the experiences and thoughts of weaker groups, especially women, provide unique perspectives. She emphasizes the importance of understanding the gender experiences of students, teachers, and administrators to address power imbalances and promote equality. Gilligan (1982) proposed an alternative cultural approach to caring for women that emphasizes the importance of social, emotional, and social justice. This suggests that women tend to focus on care and responsibility when dealing with ethical dilemmas, compared to the greater importance of justice and human rights in ethical thinking. Code (1991) explores the intersection of feminist theory and knowledge construction, exploring the dynamics of how knowledge is constructed and how a feminist perspective can help challenge or reshape the dominant epistemological framework. Intersectionality theory draws from Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and recognizes the interplay of many social factors, including gender, race, and class. Examining gender at this intersection (Stewart, Wright, Smith, Roberts, & Russell, 2021) provides many insights into how it affects the person and the information in the study. Davis, Oliver, & Brunn-Bevel, (2023) necessitates intersectional thinking to identify discriminatory processes that focus on different issues.

Critical pedagogy, based on the work of Paulo Freire (1994), refers to educational changes that disrupt existing power structures and promote social justice. Applying this to our context, Corbett and Manuela (2021) call for communication practices that empower students, challenge gender, and encourage cultural reflection. Suzina and Tufte (2020) summarize Freire's vision of development and social change, explore how Freire's ideas have been used in the past, resolve current problems in the knowledge of his vision, and offer thoughts for the future. Inclusive education advocates creating a learning environment that meets diverse and individual needs. Additionally, Namanyane and Shaoan (2021) emphasized the importance of teaching methods in supporting inclusive education. Their arguments focus on the strategies needed to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that meets students' diverse needs. Scholars contribute to current debates about inclusive education through in-depth discussions of teaching processes, providing insights that promote diversity, equity, and access. Explaining ethics and gender equality in gender equality in education. It helps explore communication ethics that can help provide more informed and equitable education that acknowledges and addresses gender differences in interactions.

3 METHOD

This article analyses educational ethics with a focus on gender issues. The methodology used is analytical and critically considers claims related to ethical considerations of gender issues. A more detailed and visual illustration of the entire research process is shown in Figure 1.

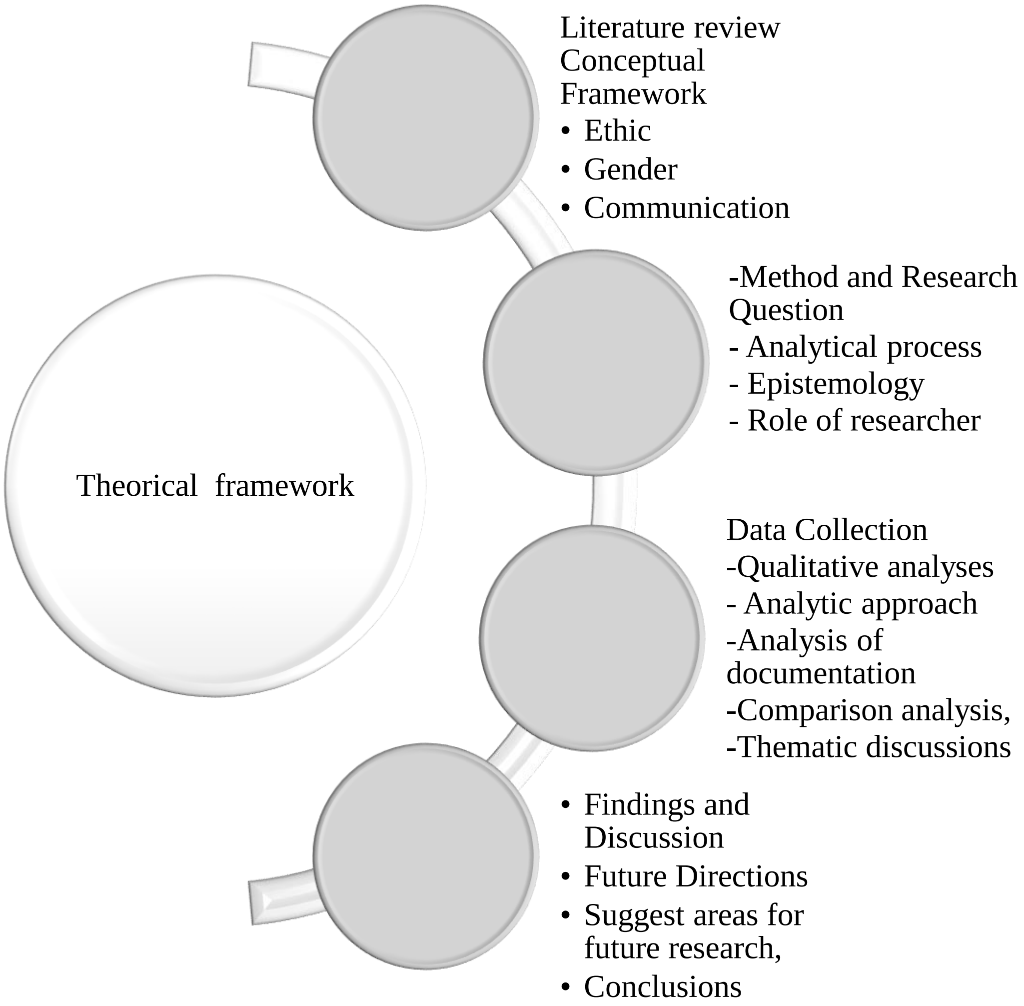

Figure 1. Research model

Scientific analysis involves the use of evaluation and developmental research based on the methodology described by Mertens (2005). Evaluation is a research methodology used to demonstrate the usefulness or value of a cause. This study was used to collect data on current issues facing education. In this type of research, evaluators participate in the development and implementation of educational policies and strive for the qualitative development of educational policies. Additionally, evaluators work in a social context and tend to react to issues that are the focus of attention.

Research on the role of communication ethics and gender equality in education aims to assess the key challenges and opportunities for promoting gender equality through improved communication. It also seeks to explore the complex relationship between communication ethics and gender equality, emphasizing the need for intentional and ethical communication practices in educational settings.

The goal is to explore the connection between communication ethics and gender. The ultimate goal is to spark greater public discussion about the role of ethical communication education in creating more inclusive and equitable educational environments.

To achieve the purpose of this paper, the following research questions are used:

- What is the current status of gender equality in education, and how does communication ethics affect this?
- How can research findings on the role of communication ethics in promoting gender equality influence the development of education policies that promote inclusion and equity? - Can teacher training in communication ethics help create a more gender-inclusive and equitable educational environment?
- How do communication practices, including the use of inclusive language, affect perceptions and experiences of gender equality in educational institutions?
- What are the long-term results of introducing ethical communication activities in educational institutions related to gender equality?
- How do students perceive and experience the impact of communication ethics on gender equality in the educational process?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected ethical considerations when addressing gender inequality?

The purpose of this study is to assess challenges and opportunities to promote gender equality through improved communication. It uses carefully selected relevant reports to provide a framework for understanding perspectives. The methodology includes a detailed analysis of ethical concepts in terms of gender, component analysis and study of their theoretical basis.

This study systematically examines claims related to gender discrimination, assessing their logical consistency, identifying assumptions, and critically evaluating their ethical implications. Promotes in-depth philosophical discussions based on an analytical approach and fosters dialogue about the ethical considerations inherent in gender discrimination. To analyse the data, this study used various analysis methods such as Tait's (2012) classification method, document analysis, and comparative analysis.

Document analysis includes historical representations of the concept, a review of the literature on the issue, and a critical analysis of the situation. A literature study, such as a study of the legal system, was carried out. The study reports from organizations operating at local, regional and international levels. Analysis of issues and documents addressing issues affecting the education sector is also presented, as well as theories and research by authors contributing to the field.

This study uses qualitative comparative methods to create an ideal model for comparison. Gender discrimination is a complex issue that requires careful consideration of concepts and claims. Modern analytic-philosophical approaches provide a rigorous methodology for comprehensively studying the ethical aspects of gender discrimination. This approach uses concept analysis and acceptance testing to ensure accuracy and clarity. By adopting this methodology, we can effectively improve our understanding of gender discrimination and identify the most effective ways to combat it. It is important to maintain philosophical rigour and continue to use analytical approaches to ensure a thorough investigation of this important issue.

The conceptual analysis examines the fundamental ideas that underlie gender discrimination. By studying these concepts, you can identify the root cause of the problem and better understand how to solve it. Meanwhile, claims analysis provides an opportunity to evaluate the various claims surrounding gender discrimination, allowing us to identify the most persuasive claims and understand how best to approach the issue.

The study was conducted in three carefully designed phases to ensure comprehensive analysis and meaningful conclusions. The first step included an extensive literature review and qualitative documentary research. In the second step, a comparative analysis of the analytical approaches was conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches. Finally, in the third stage, we conducted a thematic discussion with suggestions for future topics and returned to epistemological reflection on the literature. Well-designed research methodologies and careful analysis ensure that the results are accurate and up to date, making it an invaluable resource for anyone looking to delve deeper into the topic.

This review has some limitations. First, this study was mainly conducted through a theoretical and systematic review. Second, other stakeholders (e.g. active representatives of educational institutions/society, students, policymakers, quality assurance agencies, etc.) are invited to contribute to the discussion of the issue. Third, the results should be interpreted with caution and not generalized, as different methods may change the quality of observations and allow for more in-depth information to be collected.

Due to the nature of this study, it serves as a starting point for exploring educational strategies in harmony with policies and priority educational institutions pursuing sustainable social development. As a result, we will be able to better understand the ethical aspects of gender discrimination and determine the most effective ways to combat it. This study provides valuable knowledge to educators, administrators, and policymakers by providing practical recommendations for improving communication practices in educational settings.

4 RESULTS

Navigating Gender Equality in Education: The Impact of Communication Ethic

State Gender-related communication ethics have received global attention and sensitivity. Scholars tend to see ethics as having a growing influence on many educational issues. Gender equality in education is influenced by communication ethics, shaping perceptions and opportunities. Assessing the current state of gender equality in education globally shows significant progress, especially in primary and secondary school enrollment. Friedman, York, Graetz, Woyczynski, Whisnant, Hay, & Gakidou (2020). Many countries have achieved or are approaching gender parity at these levels. However, there are still challenges that persist in higher education, especially in STEM disciplines and specific humanities and social science fields (García-Holgado et al., 2020). This highlights the need for targeted interventions to address deep-seated stereotypes and biases.

Although there have been significant improvements in literacy rates among women, gender gaps still exist in some regions (Evans, et al, 2020; Bertocchi & Bozzano, 2020). Targeted initiatives are necessary to overcome barriers to quality education for women and girls. The educational landscape is changing, with more women pursuing and completing tertiary education. This contributes to a more educated female workforce, emphasizing the ongoing importance of supporting women's education at all levels.

The impact of communication ethics is evident in shaping gender equality in education. Ethical communication ensures fair representation in educational materials, challenges stereotypes, and fosters inclusive learning environments. Promoting inclusive language and practices eliminates gender bias, creating welcoming environments for individuals of all genders. Communication ethics plays a critical role in addressing gender-based violence within educational institutions, fostering a secure learning environment free from harm. Ethical teacher-student interactions are foundational for promoting gender equality, emphasizing awareness of biases, and encouraging open dialogue challenging gender norms.

Advocacy for gender-inclusive education policies is an extension of ethical communication, contributing to systemic changes that make gender equality a reality. Engaging parents and communities through ethical communication is vital for challenging harmful norms and creating a supportive network that reinforces equal educational opportunities for all. In the digital age, ethical communication is crucial for ensuring online spaces are safe and free from harassment, contributing to a more equitable and accessible educational experience.

While progress has been made, persistent challenges require ongoing efforts. The influence of communication ethics in shaping an inclusive educational landscape is evident, from curricular materials to interpersonal interactions. Laursen and Austin, (2020) argue that it is necessary to further advance gender equality, a commitment to ethical communication practices and adaptive strategies is imperative. Conducting updated and context-specific research will provide nuanced insights into the effectiveness of these efforts over time.

Intersecting Pathways: Communication Ethics and the Gender Dimension in Educational Equality

Communication ethics and gender considerations play an important role in promoting educational equality. All aspects of ethical communication practice can be examined and a focus on gender issues. The intersection of these two professions confirms the relationship between honest communication and the pursuit of gender equality. Wood (2008) examined how communication influences gender in culture. This study demonstrates how communication occurs between gender roles, norms, and identities.

There are a few important things to consider. First, to ensure fair communication, educational materials must include images that challenge negative stereotypes. Holmes (2021) examines social discourse, its origins, development and use in the context of language, gender and sexuality. Holmes provides insight into key concepts in the field and their implications for understanding the complexities of language use related to gender and sexuality. The gender aspect of ethics emphasizes fair representation, moves beyond binary standards, and creates an environment where all genders are respected. Second, ethical communication emphasizes power and encourages participation. The gender aspect of ethics complements this by emphasizing the elimination of persistent gender stereotypes and encouraging communication that empowers people of all genders. For us, ethical communication is key to preventing gender violence in schools. The gender dimension of ethics aims to eliminate gender-based violence, devalue the negative aspects of gender, and promote the idea of ethical communication. Student-teacher relationships are also characterized by honesty, respect, and open communication. The gender aspect of ethics teaches fair treatment, challenges injustice, and creates an environment for students of all genders. Equality Dialogue also advocates policies that support gender education. The gender aspect of ethics promotes gender equality and supports measures to promote gender equality in education and practice. Additionally, ethical communication provides parents and the community with an opportunity to challenge negative norms. The gender aspect of ethics focuses on social inclusion to break down gender expectations and promote equal education for all genders. Finally, ethical communication ensures online safety in the digital age. Gender aspects of ethics show how to integrate the issue of sexual harassment into online harassment and ensure that digital platforms promote mutual learning through laughter. A group of researchers (Elias et al., 2024) focused on the creation of a collective public and saw this as a public issue.

The intersection of communication ethics and gender aspects of education must therefore be inclusive. Schools must adopt equitable communication practices as part of a broader gender equality agenda to promote the empowerment and creation of shared enterprise for people of all genders.

Transformative Potential: Ethical Communication Training for Educators and Gender-Inclusive Education

Various scholars have provided valuable insights into the intersection of ethical communication training for educators and gender-inclusive education, highlighting the potential for positive change in educational environments. Bochner et al. (2007) emphasize the transformative power of ethical communication, arguing that integrating ethical principles into educational practices can create inclusive spaces challenging existing power structures and fostering a more equitable learning environment.

Ethical communication training for educators has significant potential to usher in transformative changes by raising awareness among educators about inherent gender biases in communication. This training enables educators to proactively create an atmosphere that is equitable, unbiased, and appreciative of diverse gender identities. Howe, & Moses (1999) stress the importance of ethical communication training for educators in dismantling gender biases and fostering inclusivity. Ethical communication can catalyze the transformation of institutional norms and practices, equipping educators with the essential skills to facilitate fair and equitable interactions within the classroom, challenge stereotypes, and ensure an inclusive approach.

Moreover, ethical communication training encourages educators to adopt inclusive language practices, creating a linguistic landscape that avoids reinforcing gender stereotypes and respects the various gender identities present in the classroom. Addressing gender-based violence is a crucial component, as educators are prepared to recognize and address such incidents, contributing significantly to fostering a secure and supportive learning environment.

After receiving training on ethical communication, educators become advocates for policies that promote gender-inclusive education, endorsing and supporting initiatives that prioritize equal opportunities and challenge systemic biases. The training extends its influence to community engagement, where educators are equipped to challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes, creating a network that reinforces the importance of equal educational opportunities for students of all genders.

In the era of digital interactions, ethical communication training prepares educators for the challenges of online communication, modelling respectful and inclusive practices to ensure virtual spaces contribute to a more equitable educational experience. Educators also become advocates for inclusive educational materials, contributing to the development of materials free from gender bias and challenging traditional gender roles.

Beyond individual actions, ethical communication training contributes to fostering a broader culture of inclusion within educational institutions. Educators, as role models, influence the overall atmosphere by promoting values of respect, empathy, and understanding among students of different genders. The training instils a culture of continuous improvement among educators, encouraging ongoing self-reflection and professional development to refine communication practices and remain responsive to evolving understandings of gender equality.

In conclusion, the implementation of ethical communication training for educators emerges as a strategic intervention with far-reaching implications. As Stephens, et al. (2023) argued addressing biases, fostering inclusivity, and promoting advocacy at various levels, educators become key architects in shaping an educational environment that transcends traditional gender norms, paving the way for a truly equitable and inclusive future.

Shaping Realities: The Impact of Communication Practices on Gender Equality Perception in Educational Settings

The way we communicate, especially using inclusive language, has a huge impact on people's perception and understanding of gender equality in education. Communication practices can reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes, and using inclusive language can help redress these needs by avoiding language that promotes sexism, promiscuity, and injustice. According to Maldonado et al. (2023), when communication is inclusive and avoids the use of exclusionary content, students are more likely to feel accepted, valued, and an important part of the learning community. This encourages participation as interactive communication helps create an environment where students participate regardless of gender.

By looking through the lens of the Freire tradition, we can see the educational process as a potential site of social change. Similarly, in collaboration, communication practices influence group dynamics, and inclusive language encourages collaborative learning and ensures that all genders have opportunities to interact. Smile to help. The analysis shows that the combined use of language and communication to address oppression of gender rights that could lead to gender violence encourages open dialogue to deal with and prevent such situations.

Inclusive communication also supports gender equality in schools. Aragonés-González et al. (2020) highlight the need to support law reform as an educational intervention, as well as the need to support teachers who specialize in sexuality and equality. Clear communication of these rules sets expectations for behaviour and treatment, and the use of mixed language promotes a commitment to equality and helps translate the rules into practice. Additionally, teachers who use inclusive language become advocates of gender equality in education, teach equality, and contribute to cultural change.

Navigating Ethical Challenges: The Impact of COVID-19 on Addressing Gender Disparities

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the rights, opportunities, and security of women and girls have been reversed (Cameron et al., 2021; Women, U.N. 2022). The latest report on Sustainable Development Goal 5 shows that progress towards achieving gender equality by 2030 is insufficient (United Nations, 2023). The report assesses inequality in four key areas: economic participation and empowerment, access to education, health and well-being, and empowerment: government (GGGR, 2023). Unfortunately, reports indicate that the next generation of women will have to wait for gender equality. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will increase the time required to close the global gender gap from 99.5 years to 135.6 years (WEF, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore many ethical considerations in addressing gender differences. The pandemic has impacted women, especially those from disadvantaged communities who face serious challenges to their health, safety, and financial security (Leal et al., 2023). The pandemic underscores the importance of addressing gender inequality and the urgent need to develop ethical standards that can lead to effective responses to these challenges.

One of the ethical issues arising in the context of the pandemic is the need to ensure that the policy response is supported by gender. This requires recognition that women may face unique challenges that mainstream responses do not always address. For example, women may be more vulnerable to domestic violence during the pandemic, and policies need to be taken into account when developing appropriate interventions. Similarly, policies should be developed to address the economic and employment problems faced by women who often work in jobs that are seriously affected by the epidemic.

Another important ethical issue is the need to address the underlying mechanisms of gender inequality. The pandemic has highlighted gender inequality in social, economic and political life (Fortier, N. 2020). Addressing this inequality requires support and effort, not an immediate response to the problem. This effort must address the root causes of gender inequality, such as inequality in education, healthcare, and wealth.

5 DISCUSSION

Regarding the first question of research, ethics in the context of gender-dimension issues refer to the moral principles and values that guide our actions and behaviours concerning matters related to gender. Gender ethics addresses fairness, equality, and justice in the treatment of individuals of different genders. It also examines the power dynamics and social norms that contribute to gender disparities and seeks to challenge and transform them. By promoting gender ethics, we can create a society that values and respects the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their gender identity or expression. This includes advocating for equal opportunities and access to resources for individuals of all genders, as well as challenging harmful stereotypes and discrimination. Gender ethics also encourage the recognition and celebration of diverse gender identities and expressions, fostering a more inclusive and accepting society. By incorporating gender ethics into our discussions and actions, we can work towards dismantling systemic barriers and promoting a more equitable world for everyone.

Regarding the second question of research, the analysis showed that gender equality in education is a complex and evolving landscape that has witnessed significant progress globally. The analysis of the second research question revealed that gender equality in education is a constantly changing and intricate terrain that has made significant progress on a global scale. According to Nussbaum M. (1996), the ethics of communication plays a crucial role in the larger conversation about women, culture, and development by offering insight into the challenges, opportunities, and unique abilities that women possess. Despite the progress made, the challenges persist. Many authors underscore the pivotal role of ethical communication as an integral component of educational practices, emphasizing its potential for instigating positive change within educational frameworks. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions to address communication ethics and the positive role it plays in these complex and deep-rooted issues. Efforts to tackle these challenges should focus on promoting gender equality and challenging social norms that discourage women from pursuing certain fields.

Regarding the third research question, it was argued that the influence of communication ethics in shaping gender equality in education is paramount. Ethical communication practices, such as inclusive language, fair representation in the educational system, and ethical teacher-student interactions, foster an environment that challenges gender stereotypes. Inclusive language and practices extend beyond semantics, creating welcoming environments for individuals of all genders and promoting a sense of belonging. The literature analysis showed that the impact of communication ethics goes beyond the classroom, addressing broader issues such as gender-based violence and advocating for gender-inclusive policies. The study showed that communication ethics serves as a powerful catalyst for advancing gender equality in education. By embracing the principles that communication ethics offers, educators contribute to a fairer and more equal society.

Concerning the fourth research question, the study found that the intersection of communication ethics and gender equality highlights the importance of inclusive practices in educational settings. Ethical communication involves fair representation and inclusive language, which challenges traditional gender norms. The study also emphasized that the gender dimension of ethics calls for the dismantling of power imbalances based on gender, creating an environment that empowers individuals of all genders. By promoting inclusivity in teacher-student interactions, addressing gender-based violence, and advocating for gender-inclusive policies, communication ethics can lead to systemic change in educational institutions. This change not only benefits students but also fosters a more inclusive and equal society. By actively promoting gender inclusivity in educational settings, we can contribute to breaking down societal barriers and stereotypes, allowing individuals of all genders to thrive and reach their full potential. The study highlighted the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences into the curriculum, which can further enhance the educational experience for all students, promoting empathy and understanding among different genders. Based on this information, we believe that programs that raise awareness of gender inequality, promote understanding of gender issues, and encourage teachers to create collaborative and supportive learning should be prioritized. This includes establishing reporting systems, providing counselling services, and implementing disciplinary measures to address gender-based violence issues.

In continuation of the fifth research question, it has been found that ethical communication training for educators is of utmost importance. This training can act as a strategic intervention, which has the potential to create an inclusive and gender-equitable educational environment. Such training can help educators become aware of inherent gender biases, equip them for fair interactions, and promote the use of inclusive language. By addressing gender-based violence and advocating for gender-inclusive policies, educators become agents of change. Gender-inclusive training can also empower educators and the parent community to challenge societal norms and stereotypes. This can encourage students to explore their full potential regardless of their gender identity. We are convinced that by creating a safe and inclusive space, educators can foster a sense of belonging and acceptance among students, ultimately enhancing their overall educational experience. The study further reinforces the belief that this inclusive approach to gender inclusion in education can lead to a more equal society that values and respects the rights and contributions of all individuals.

Although technology has the potential to transform education, many challenges and limitations prevent the effective integration of technology into existing education. Many education institutions lack the infrastructure, hardware, software and Internet connectivity needed to support technology integration. Teachers need qualifications and ongoing study to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to use technology in education. However, many teachers do not receive sufficient or appropriate training or struggle to find the time, resources and support for professional development. Teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding technology affect their willingness to include technology in teaching. Integrating technology into education also raises legal, ethical and policy issues such as data privacy, security, intellectual property and digital citizenship testing. We also need to teach students how to use technology ethically and responsibly and prevent or solve ethical problems. Some of the key recommendations we offer to help overcome or reduce the challenges and barriers to integrating technology into education include increasing funding, improving infrastructure, providing additional training and support, and changing attitudes and beliefs, laws and ethics.

In the context of the sixth research question, the study found that the perspectives of students on communication ethics play a vital role. The use of inclusive language, fair representation, and ethical interactions between teachers and students are critical in creating a positive educational experience. When students are encouraged to challenge gender norms and are provided with an environment that values diversity, they feel empowered. By understanding how students perceive communication practices, educators can improve their teaching methods to better support gender equality in educational settings. These discussions provide a comprehensive exploration of research questions, highlighting the transformative potential of ethical communication practices in shaping gender equity in educational settings. Additionally, by fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment, the academic performance and overall well-being of students can be improved. The study highlights the need for educators to create opportunities for open dialogue and encourage students to express their opinions and experiences, ultimately promoting a more equitable educational experience for all. Based on the analysis of findings, we emphasize that educational institutions/teachers are encouraged to improve relations with students and promote diversity and gender equality, by organizing events, activities, and projects to promote awareness of fair communication and to foster a culture of respect and inclusion. By following these recommendations, teachers can help promote gender equality and create an effective environment.

Concerning questions at the end of the research, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on gender equality, exacerbating existing inequalities and creating new challenges for women and girls worldwide. The study found that urgent action is needed to implement gender-sensitive policies to address this issue. The literature review highlights some ethical considerations, emphasizing the importance of policymakers and gender policies considering the growing challenges during the pandemic concerning gender equality. Moreover, the study underscores the necessity for ethical frameworks to guide effective responses to gender inequalities, with a focus on sensitively addressing gender-based issues. Existing literature highlights the intersectional nature of gender inequality, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and highlights the need for gender-sensitive policy responses and communication strategies. Research highlights the importance of incorporating ethical frameworks into policy development to prioritize sensitivity, equity, and diverse experiences in decision-making. Research also highlights the role of ethical communication in raising awareness of gender inequality and measures to combat it, challenging stereotypes, and promoting inclusive communication.

The pandemic has highlighted the urgent need to address gender inequalities and ensure that policy responses are based on sensitivity, equity, and understanding of diverse experiences, considering particular social contexts. To address these challenges, a comprehensive approach is necessary. The study suggests that communication ethics play a crucial role in promoting gender equality and raising awareness for prevention. In summary, an ethically communicated comprehensive approach, combining economic empowerment, prevention, multisectoral coordination, and the active involvement of women, is essential to address the challenges of gender inequality that have emerged during the pandemic. Empowerment, prevention, multisectoral coordination, and the active involvement of women are essential to address many of the challenges that have emerged during the pandemic considering gender equality. It also emphasized the need for ethical frameworks to guide effective responses to gender inequalities, with a focus on sensitively addressing gender-based issues.

6 CONCLUSION

Significant progress has been made towards gender equality, but challenges remain in certain areas and continued ethical efforts are needed to meet new challenges.

Communication ethics plays an important role in creating a fair and balanced education. From fair representation in educational materials to inclusive language practices, equitable communication helps reflect gender rights and empower people of all genders. Additionally, communication ethics can help eliminate problems of conflict and injustice that hinder women's education, oppression, and advancement in certain roles. By encouraging respectful and inclusive dialogue, fair communication encourages the exchange of diverse perspectives and creates opportunities for underrepresented genders to thrive academically and professionally. Based on the importance of ethics in communication, we offer the following recommendations, particularly regarding gender inclusion: i) the design and process of communication, and ii) reviewing educational materials to verify that they reflect gender equality. We believe that by implementing these recommendations, education institutions can help create an equitable, balanced, and inclusive education.

The intersection of communication ethics and gender equality demonstrates a need that must be fulfilled. It includes eliminating power inequalities, addressing gender-based violence, and advocating for gender rights in schools. This approach also includes equal support for personal development and leadership for all genders. It is also about creating a supportive and inclusive environment that values and respects the contributions of people from different backgrounds and genders.

Making communication fair for teachers is an important step in promoting gender equality in schools. This training equips teachers with the necessary skills to identify and address gender bias, promote social equity, and help create a gender-sensitive learning environment. We believe that by providing training to teachers, this strategy can improve teacher-student-parent relationships, curriculum development, and organizational culture. Ultimately, this will help promote gender education.

Teachers need qualifications and ongoing study to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to use technology in education. Teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding technology affect their attitudes and willingness to include technology in teaching. We also need to teach students how to use technology ethically and responsibly and prevent or solve ethical problems. Some of the key recommendations we offer to help overcome or reduce the challenges and barriers to integrating technology into education include increasing funding, improving infrastructure, providing additional training and support, and changing attitudes and beliefs, laws and ethics.

The long-term effects of interfering with ethical communication are far-reaching and go beyond education. These include creating a sense of purpose, influencing career choices, preventing gender-based violence, strengthening the family, encouraging support, and strengthening relationships between relationships. Research has also shown that these interventions have a positive impact on students' self-esteem and confidence, as well as their ability to communicate with others and work well. In addition, the long-term impact of ethical communication can help build relationships and participate in society by challenging harmful gender stereotypes and promoting respect for many people.

It is important to consider students' perspectives when it comes to the impact of ethical communication. Inclusive language, fair representation, and good student-teacher relationships can go a long way in fostering a positive learning environment. By exploring and valuing students' ideas, teachers can adjust their communications to promote gender equality, thereby increasing students' engagement and motivation. It is recommended to incorporate social justice and ethical issues into the curriculum, to help students develop critical thinking and a deeper understanding of social justice issues, promoting equality and society values.

The spread of COVID-19 has raised many moral issues regarding gender differences. To answer ethical questions about the impact of COVID-19 on gender issues, policymakers, organizations, and communities need to consider the specific issues faced by the gender aspect. Therefore, it is important to create special action plans/ regulations/codes of ethics that take into consideration gender perspectives. This approach will allow stakeholders to collaborate on solutions that promote fairness, justice, and equality. Given the issues discussed in the study, an important recommendation is to incorporate ethical frameworks that are responsive to gender politics while prioritizing sensitivity, equity, and diverse experiences. The study also highlights the need to use ethical communication strategies to raise awareness and combat gender inequality. Make sure your communication efforts are sensitive, respectful, and inclusive of diverse perspectives. Another very important recommendation is inter-sectoral coordination, which will help develop a comprehensive approach to eliminate multiple elements of gender inequality. Promote coordination and collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations and international partners to comprehensively address gender inequality. We believe that addressing gender inequality, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, requires a holistic, ethical and inclusive approach. Ethical policies and communication strategies are critical to ensuring gender equality and resilience in times of crisis.

In summary, there is a clear need for continued research and action on gender equality in education. This includes ongoing efforts to understand trends, change communication strategies, and advocate for policies that promote gender equality in education. Additionally, by engaging in ethical communication, intervention, and education, teachers and schools can influence student learning and growth in the workplace, as well as help build relationships and participate in society.

Considering the limitations and assumptions found in our study, we encourage future researchers to review all topics discussed extending the study to improve the overall results. Additionally, it is recommended to include a larger sample of participants to obtain a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of each participant and to better benefit from more detailed treatment and intervention strategies. In the future, researchers will evaluate other methods. This research allows researchers to leverage existing knowledge to improve understanding and implementation of ideas. This reflection was thought to address the issues raised and enhance the overall contribution of the paper to the field.

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Communicativeness of Covid - 19 Health Messages in Eastern Nigeria

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ): Which channel of information was most of the covid 19 messages frequently sent to residents of Eastern Nigeria? What was the most preferred theme of media messages on corona virus control by residents of Eastern Nigeria? What was the level of compliance to media messages on corona virus control messages by residents of Eastern Nigeria? What was the perception of corona virus control messages by residents of eastern Nigeria?

Purpose: The main purpose of this work was to evaluate audience response to media messages on corona virus control by residents of Eastern Nigeria. The specific objectives are: To identify the major information channel that residents most frequently received messages on the corona virus pandemic.; ascertain the most preferred theme of media messages on corona virus control protocol by residents; determine the level of compliance to media messages on corona virus control messages by residents; ascertain the perception of corona virus control protocol messages.

Method: The survey research method was used to carry out the study. The reason for choosing this particular research method was because of the nature of the study which involved eliciting responses of residents on the subject of instigation. The population of 36million was reduced to 500 per state so that each state had equal representation of respondents. A simple questionnaire of only 4 questions were given out and respondents indicated that they had low perception about covid 19 messages from the media. Two media theories of Agenda setting, and Attitude change theories were applied.

Organization: Mass media institutions should be ready to encourage the presenters to understand the basics of packaging and disseminating of genuine and germane health message themes for public safety from diseases. It has been concluded also that though majority of the respondents indicated that the messages were simple, but some stated the contrary, compliance was not adopted.

Originality: The originality is that it is done to cover all the states of Eastern Nigeria. They comprise five states – Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo with each having several radio

and television stations as well as running administration on social media platforms. The zone is bounded by the River Niger on the west, the riverine Niger Delta on the south, the flat North Central to the north, and the Cross River on the east.

Limitations / further research: The research was limited to only five states of Eastern Nigeria whereas there are 31 states in Nigeria. This limitation was compounded by the ongoing crisis in the Northern region of Nigeria making it difficult for researches to be carried out. It is expected that at the end of the social crisis, researchers can undertake similar research in the Northern region for comparing of outcome.

Keywords: Compliance, communicativeness, contents, health, media, messages, public, response.

1 INTRODUCTION

Certainly, every society is faced with numerous social and economic trials. Some encounters arise through different stages to full blown situations while some challenges come as crises. A bigger aspect of social challenges before communities, countries and nations originates from health care problems. Health cases face communities and countries due to the absence or scanty information about drugs, the treatment processes, the accessibility of professionals and the ways of preventing outbreak of diseases or infirmities. Sicknesses can be endemic or can be pandemic. All over the World, information about treatments, prevention or the control of diseases either as endemic or pandemic, form part of the many responsibilities of the media. Happenings of such health issues attract the attention of the print media, electronic media, internet or social media. Whichever form information gets out, the most important thing is that level of media intervention in the spreading of the messages (Swain, 2019).

The above emphasize the function of the mass media in reporting health matters, mainly in restraining the spread of the disease. Accordingly, the purpose of the mass media in health improvement and mediation goes further than just creating attentiveness on a specific health issue. It involves laying emphasize on a particular direction of reportage of such diseases. One healthcare emergency which the media have been involved in the dissemination of messages was on control protocols of the corona virus pandemic in communities, cities and countries.

The Corona Virus Pandemic of 2019 (COVID-19) imposed a critical situation of public health in the entire world. Efforts were and are still being directed towards ensuring appropriate levels of preparedness as well as reacts to combat the disease effectively, also to handle protocols coexisting with the prevention of the disease outbreak. As a result, many governments have given priority through adoption of different media-based strategies such as launching wide-scale COVID-19 awareness campaigns, quarantine protocols and lockdown of schools and workplaces. (Ebrahim, Saif, Buheji, Al-Basri, Al-Husaini, & Jahrami, 2020).

In keeping the audience enlightened, it is inappropriate to blame the media on the line of reporting the cases on death tolls as well as means of contacting the virus. From the provision of information concerning the disease outbreak, It is the responsibility of the media to strive for the purpose of shaping public perception concerning transmitting as well as the preventive means aimed to mitigate. It is important to understand that mass media play vital function in shaping audience views on matters such as the outburst of the diseases (corona virus). Media approach towards reportage of any endemic or pandemic can ascertain the public responds, and the necessity to take preventive steps or. A specific fundamental strategy deployed in the fight against coronavirus in Nigeria (including in Benin City in Edo State) was not without the dissemination of messages for consciousness and gathering the audience through different media platforms. This was to ensure adequate knowledge of the disease outbreak and also herald appropriate compliance to the preventive measures.

In compliance with WHO's recommendation regarding the massive dissemination of relevant covid-19 information to the public, the (NCDC), the Federal Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Health Ministries of various States including the State Ministries of Health, National Orientation Agency (NOA) of Nigeria and lots of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) collaborated the media to disseminate relevant information on Covid-19 through radio and other communication channels for public awareness. The drive for information dissemination has not change. Accordingly, in Eastern Nigerian states, it is not unusual that various media institutions of broadcast and the print jointly with health agencies have designed and implemented the dissemination of information campaigns on Covid-19 to persuade compliance with the safety protocols by residents of the state. There are broadcast jingles and posters in English language, pictures and even local dialects such as "Use Your Facemask" "Don't get too close to Others" 'Wash and sanitize your hands' 'Avoid social distance" Aside from broadcast stations, many related messages on corona virus protocols are pasted at gates of banks, schools, colleges, political offices and even on buses that ply the city routes. They are also found as fillers on pages of local newspapers and some national dailies. Yet, it appears that these protocols are largely violated even at various locations of the Nigerian Eastern states. The first case of coronavirus in Nigeria was detected on 27th February 2020, after which series of government interventions were put in place to control the growth and extension of the diseases. Principally, the Federal government declared a national emergency and constituted a Presidential Committee on COVID-19. The committee was directed to collaborate with the Federal Ministry of Health and all relevant agencies and organizations to control virus. Accordingly, test and quarantine centres were created at strategic locations, health personnel and facilities were placed on alert and lots of consciousness also, messages are disseminated in various media channels to audience.

These several media campaigns were done to enhance the knowledge of covid-19 among residents of states which included Benin City to ensure compliance with the safety protocols among the residents. Despite the consistent massive media campaigns on COVID-19, it was difficult to bring down the rising number of deaths across countries and states. There were suspected cases of deaths from the pandemic even in Eastern Nigerian States. Considering the absence of no cure, the effect on the collapse of social activities due to lock downs, some governments including that of Nigeria gradually called for the relaxation of rules. Businesses and social organizations were allowed to reopen but with directives for strict compliance to COVID 19 protocols of regular handwashing, keeping distances, wearing of face masks and acceptance of vaccinations. This directive was not to say that covid-19 had been conquered neither did it reduce media messages for compliance but heightened on various channels. It remains largely unclear how the campaigns are compiled to preventive measures of covid-19. Intense observations at public gatherings and public institutions, travelling buses, tended to show that few or insignificant percentage of persons appear to comply with the protocols of preventing corona virus. The authorized facilities at most of the public institutions are no longer functioning particularly the sanitizing pots, and the hand washing cans earlier installed mandatorily for the purpose of preventing further outbreak of corona virus have been discarded. Where such facilities are available, people tend to shun and refuse keeping to the directives. People freely hug, kiss, engage in handshaking and mix about in public gatherings. In spite of the refusal of some people to keep to the directives and protocols, the media messages are not being reduced or put off completely. Rather, media keep sending the jingles and announcements to the public. The statement of problem highlights that, it seems there is a gap in media dissemination of messages and the response of the people to the messages. It becomes questionable if the public have lost trust on media messages, then fail to react or respond, or whether the media are just sending out the messages for commercial purposes of making money from the sponsors. On the basis of the above gap, this research intends to have a survey of responses on media messages about corona virus control protocols and the level of compliance by residents of Eastern States in Nigeria. This is against the gap of a previous work by Ekhareafo and Abdulazeez (2021) on Edo state residents' awareness and responses to COVID 19 media messages which did not address compliance as issue taken as the major objective of the study. This is the premise which this work intends to present on whether the messages on COVID 19 protocols have been to the reach, accepted, complied and also the perception by residents of the state. The major objective of this research was to evaluate media messages on corona virus control protocol and the response by residents of Eastern states of Nigeria. The specific objectives are: To identify the major information channel that residents most frequently received messages on the corona virus pandemic. To ascertain the most preferred theme of media messages on corona virus control protocol by residents of Eastern states in Nigeria. The study is expected to provide new insights into the impact of using certain media channels existing in some communities for the dissemination of information among residents of communities. These results will offer media organizations and managers concrete guidance in timing and framing messages and strategies for information exchange and strengthening audience acceptance. Altogether, the research will contribute to a wider accepting of the changing aspects of knowledge exchange, providing useful procedures for information policy makers in countries.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

All information individuals need for the treatment or the control or the prevention of diseases can be easily obtained through media sources. This is because the media serve the communities as carriers of information in giving what is not known to the public through the print, broadcast or the social media platforms or even through the traditional means of communication. It can be through news, features and public paid announcements or through public relations contributions of firms. The media point of displaying health matters can be in the media structuring of messages to the public for acceptance, rejection or inducement of attitudinal response and behavioural change. (Nwakpu, Ezema and Ogbodo, 2020).

The research questions were therefore: What was the most outstanding channel on communication which the residents of Eastern Nigeria received the messages on covid 19? In addition, the research question was: What was the most preferred theme of the covid 19 messages from the media which the residents of Eastern Nigeria accepted or complied?

This study applied the Health Belief Model and Agenda-Setting theory. Theory of the Health Belief Model Social scientists Godfrey Hochbaum, Stephen Kegels, Howard Leventhal, and Irwin Rosenstock developed the Health Belief Model Theory (HBM) in the 1950s at the U.S. Public Health Service to explain why people don't use disease prevention methods or screening tests for early disease detection. The health belief theory sought to facilitate patients' responses to symptoms, compliance with medical treatments, and disease control and prevention. According to the health believe theory, a person's likelihood of adopting a behavior is predicted by their belief in the credibility of the recommended health behavior or action as well as their belief in their own personal threat of illness With the premise that the two elements of health-related behavior are: (1) the desire to avoid sickness, or conversely, get well if already ill; and (2) the belief that a particular health action can prevent, or cure, illness, the HBM is based on psychology and behavioral theory. In the end, a person's course of action frequently hinges on their judgments of the advantages and disadvantages of engaging in healthy behaviors. Six (6) separate constructs make up the health belief model theory. The real tenets of the health belief model theory, however, were the first four constructions.

The idea is crucial in explaining how the media works to guarantee that the general public recognizes hazards through communications and understands the importance of accepting and adhering to preventive measures in the fight against the deadly corona virus. Additionally, the media must take seriously the importance of making sure that the general public is aware of pertinent cues that can improve knowledge of viruses and the influences on attitude, such as regularly washing hands with soap, water, and sanitizer, maintaining social distance, and donning facemasks in the case of the corona virus.

The Agenda-Setting Theory of Walter Lippmann first proposed the idea of media agenda framing in 1922. He asserted that the "pictures in our heads" were a result of the media. When Cohen argued in 1963 that while the media may not always be successful in persuading people what to think, they are typically spectacularly successful in doing so, he did so forty years later. Agenda setting is a process by which the relative attentions given to items or issues in news coverage influence the rank and order of public awareness of issues and attribution of significance. An extension effect to public policy may occur (McQuail, 2000, Olujimi and Adekunle, 2010).

The Agenda Setting Theory aids in understanding how mass media content affects people, especially the intended audience. The influence of the media on culture and society is also explained by this hypothesis. It discusses how the media may have a significant impact on both the topics and the manner in which society's citizens discuss them (Udeze and Chukwuma, 2013). Setting the agenda refers to the "ability (of the news media) to affect the weight given to the topics of the public agenda." The hypothesis, which has been extensively researched and applied to different media, contends that the media can influence public opinion by selecting which topics receive the greatest attention. The study of agenda-setting explains how the media tries to sway viewers' opinions and creates a hierarchy of news prominence as a result of greater media exposure. The media's partiality toward topics like socio-cultural beliefs motivates its agenda-setting. These ideas grew and expanded quickly due to the agenda-setting and laissez-faire elements of communication research that emerged. Information must be presented during each phase of the agenda-setting process in a precise order for it to be successful. 2014 (McCombs and Stroud). Although agenda framing research has its roots in political communication studies, it has a wide range of applications outside of political contexts. Researchers have also looked at the news media's agenda-setting function from the perspective of "attributes," as opposed to the conventional agenda of "issues" (Stacks, 2015). The relevance is that agenda-setting allows the media to prominently portray COVID-19-related concerns, which can serve to draw attention to the virus and provide indications for taking action. This suggests that the media, through agenda setting, can increase public awareness of the virus and persuade individuals to adopt safety precautions and stop the spread of infection. Based on the intuitions of the two theories above, the purpose of the research was to examine how to the manner of communication in communities can aid knowledge and how to utilize the knowledge within the communities for health care. As such, the following hypotheses: H1: The frequent communication of health information significantly influences health message acceptance. H0: The frequent communication of health information does not significantly influence health message acceptance in communities.

Literature review: Media and COVID-19

The media most times is often seen as the “Fourth Estate of the Realm” and the “watchdog of the society”. This means, media play the role of information sourcing and dissemination, promotion, surveillance, social enlightenment, and mobilization. These functions set the media apart as an important link or factor in the relationship between the government and the governed and make them a sine-qua-non to societal growth and development (Msughter and Philips, 2020). This also implies that the media is no doubt critical in the contest against the coronavirus outbreak. In the midst of drastic increase of corona virus cases, deaths, and global spread, the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) announced on 11th March, 2020, that the virus has become a pandemic. Health personnel around the world confirmed cases from South East Asia, the Americas, Europe, Eastern Mediterranean, Africa, and Western Pacific. Schools and workplaces were shutdown, borders were shut down and countries forcefully imposed travel restrictions as preventive measure to limit spread of the disease outbreak. Under such dreadful conditions, the audience became anxious for information and guidance to help them respond in an evidence-based behaviour or manner towards the disease outbreak and transmission. In the situation, it was only the media that became the original source of information (Mheidly and Fares, 2020).

COVID-19 created public worry and forced the audience to seek help from the most accessible channels. For most people, it is the media, which includes print, as well as broadcast options and the social media. Basically, it is compulsory to control the spread of an epidemic or pandemic disease. It needs early recognition of symptoms, encourage diagnostic safety measures, effective home and space management and appropriate safety measures. On the other hand, requires the function of various departments ranging from government to healthcare agencies, the public and the media work together. Whenever an outbreak of disease emerges, there is need for provision through local channels of transmission and development in the spread of safety measures. The preventive measures are to be taken at each stem at a time. According to World Health Organisation, it involves the proper arrangement of audience, appropriate information on health system and proper management of communication risk. (Anwar, Malik, Raees, Anwar, 2020).

The exposure pattern on COVID-19 messages on the media directly affects the public reaction towards the outbreak disease, since the media serves as carrier of information during the quarantine period. The dissemination of accurate information about COVID-19, through many communications channel particularly on the safety and preventive measures, could effectually reduce the widespread of the disease-associated across the population.

The coronavirus spread nationwide at a short period of time due to the rapid advancements in technology, had turned the entire world into a global village. Global information transformed epidemics to pandemics within a very short time. The media method of news reporting can modify the behaviour of general public and their attitudes. Audience reaction can change the media reports and can affect emerging disease control. Media reports of the disease during the pandemic create fear and awareness among the general public. At the same time, it enables the audience to adopt the protective measures. This indicated that the process between media awareness and control of disease is a two directional approach. The media-disseminated information played an important role in affecting the risk perception and fear of the public during the disease outbreak. (Brug, Aro, Oenema, De Zwart, Richardus, and Bishop, 2004). At the inception of the corona virus outbreak, the general public really bothered about the severity of corona virus because of misguided information that "there was no evidence of human-to-human transmission" Such information was spread on mainstream media and even on social networking site. The audience awareness about the seriousness of COVID-19 appeared on media and prove the human-to-human transmission of the corona virus. Suddenly, corona virus rapidly became a global the viral infection spread to every nation. Themes of Coronavirus (COVID-19) were mostly about the messages for the safety measures and the spread of the disease. These covered certain tips and strategies and additional guidance on the symptoms. Some preventive and symptom messages were mild to moderate symptoms only, while others were severe COVID-19 symptoms. In all, the medical facts and themes were to aid in understanding how to protect selves and others. Individuals and groups were encouraged to stay informed with updates on the coronavirus disease outbreak. Also, the themes were on messages to encourage visits to coronavirus hub for more information on how to prepare, advice on prevention and treatment, and expert recommendations.

There are minor arguments which states that, media perform an influential role about health matters. The mass media - print, television, radio and internet - have an unparalleled reach mechanism. It has substantial power in setting agenda, for the public to take action in framing issues on what and how people should think about. This has caused professionals in public health to be sensitive towards the persuasive influence of the media (Leask, Hooker, King, 2010).

Different Communication tools including the media channel, have made the effort to control and eradicate epidemic diseases. Mass media of television, radio, newspapers, billboards, and booklets are ways of delivering preventive health messages as they have the potential to influence people's behaviour and deter them from engaging in risky health behaviours. Media can spur people into taking safety measures in dealing with the outbreak as a concrete presentation of information about diseases. There is a connection between media educational health campaign and increase in desire for health services in the course of the disease outbreak (Tchuenche and Bauch, 2012). The authors note that people involved in promoting an uptake of in-depth (research) information on health practice considering the media as one of the instruments that support the use of effective services.

There is a rapid widespread of media campaigns for the purpose of informing audience about health messages and promotion of other health protection. Recently a survey found that 75% of respondents rely on media coverage when making decisions on health care. Very few options exist other than the use of media with potential to influence social behavior, norms, and beliefs within the population. A systematic review concluded that media interventions have a play a vital role in influencing health care services and in providing health care information to the members of the public (Grilli, Ramsay, and Minozzi, 2009).

Undoubtedly, in history it is generally known that the mass media campaigns happened to be a tool that influence health behaviours in various aspect around the world. Such campaigns are mostly aimed at tobacco use, heart-disease prevention, cancer screening and prevention and control, sex-related diseases, child survival, as well as other health related problems. Typical campaigns of media messages that reach heterogeneous audiences is often via broadcast media. The newspaper, magazine, (Print), and another outdoor medium such: billboard, flyer, poster etc., are not left out. Most campaigns initiate digital technologies such as: mobile phones, social media or internet. Media campaigns are of short duration and may also extend over periods of time. However, they remain as a single entity or connect to other organized programme structures. Nevertheless, use of different methods of information dissemination might be adopted, if health campaigns are part of wider social marketing programmes. The power and strength of mass media campaigns depend on the ability to disseminate appropriate focused information to heterogeneous audience over periods of time and at a low cost per head (Wakefield, Loken, and Honik, 2010).

Archana, Tawde, Chablani and D'souza (2020) argued that, media "can be a delivery mechanism for getting the appropriate information to the appropriate audience in a proper way at the proper time to encourage personal change" (p. 338) and that "they can be a vehicle for increasing participation in civic and political life and social capital to promote social change". In media rich landscape, and especially with the advancements of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), increasing efforts incorporate mass media strategies into health education, promotion, and disease prevention practices. At the same time, scholars have documented mass media's reach to select audiences and specific, limited, and moderate effects in influencing health knowledge, attitude, and behaviour (Atkin and Rice 2009,. In the fully realization, mass media's role in facilitating the pursuit of health education and promotion, and disease prevention, health communicators need to exploit multiple mass media and interactive digital media channels and carry out carefully planned media strategies to reach intended audiences.

As the information gateway to the heterogeneous audience, the mass media in particular have crucial role to perform in combating the widespread of the viruses and mitigating both the health and social effect of the viruses. Different sectors of the communication medium are in a position to stem the tide of the coronavirus as they mass media has the tendency to reach different segments of the scattered audience. (Olujimi and Adekunle, 2010). The media have unparalleled ability to save millions of lives by providing them supportive environment for social change. Findings have demonstrated that populations with high media exposure exhibit clear indicators of a shift in behaviour. The present emphasis on healthcare delivery brings to light the potential significance of the media in raising public awareness and encouraging the use of high-quality healthcare services. 19 People that want to affect how medical personnel and patients behave regularly target the mass media with health-related stories. According to surveys, the media is the primary source of knowledge regarding significant health concerns, such as weight control, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, asthma and family planning. In this regard, Li, Wu, Lin, Guan, Rotheram-Borus, Lu, (2009), avert that “mass media in have been a major source of HIV information to the public, enhancing the content and penetration of HIV/AIDS campaigns within various channels of the media can be an important strategy in disseminating HIV knowledge and reducing HIV related discrimination” (p.424).

For instance, ignorance played a major role in the non-free flow spread of HIV/AIDS in underdeveloped nations, and in this context, the media plays a crucial role in informing the public about the pandemic's most important aspects. The media can also inform the public about false thoughts or beliefs that aid in the pandemic's spread. There are still misconceptions and inaccurate information about how the virus spreads and how to avoid it in the majority of sub-Saharan African countries. Since the media have the power to set the agenda and the ability to influence a wide range of demographics, they have the power to improve the situation by providing accurate and sensible information about the pandemic. Therefore, through public and private channels, the mass media must be actively involved in the process (Asp, Pettersson1, Sandberg, Kabakyenga, and Agardh, 2014). The primary purpose of the media is to provide health information and to regularly cover issues linked to health. For many audiences, the media serves as the primary source of information on crucial health topics. But because of how frequently health-related concerns are covered in the media, many monitoring systems increasingly rely on online news media trends to find potential disease risks. It has the ability to reach a huge demographic audience, especially those who would be difficult to reach through conventional modes of communication and is a reasonably affordable tool to inform the public about their health. For instance, media campaigns that only rely on communication to impact behavior and affect societal change have been found to be a viable preventative intervention technique for adult smoking cessation. When there is a greater danger of contracting the illness, people may tend to vaccinate more often in the case of vaccination safety measures. Thus, a pandemic or epidemic can be slowed down with the help of the mass media, which also has the ability to concurrently alter the knowledge and attitudes of a sizable population from the community, the country, and the world (Tchuenche and Bauch, 2012). Massive news coverage, particularly in regard to illness prevention, may be to blame for the failure of disease control It has been claimed that media coverage, particularly headlines and specific items, may have an impact on the timing and yearly receiving of vaccinations. The mass media uses a variety of strategies for disseminating health messages. Straight news reporting, theatre presentations, interview/discussion and phone-in programs, documentaries, opinion and feature pieces, cartoons, paid/public service announcements, news commentary, and editorials are some of the techniques. The media employs these strategies to spread important health information for public safety as widely as possible. Generally speaking, the media are tools for promoting public health. Each year, enormous sums are spent on the supplies that are used to create and distribute brochures, displays, newspaper articles, radio shows, and television shows. According to Catalan-Matamoros (2011), these media are a mechanism used at all levels of public health campaigns in the hopes that the three outcomes might occur: the acquisition of accurate health knowledge and information, the modification of health attitudes and values, and the establishment of new health behaviours.

Programmes designed to promote changes in health behaviour and prompt treatment of illness have demonstrated the effectiveness of mass media channels in health promotion and disease prevention efforts such as discouraging alcohol, tobacco, and drug use; reducing negative influence of violent television); emphasizing on eating disorders and promoting physical activity, curbing aggressive behaviour and violence and promoting responsible sexual decision making among other areas.

Catalan-Matamoros (2011), opined that, there are four crucial things the media must accomplish in order to spread health-related information. Involving partnerships of volunteer groups, for-profit organizations, and professional associations; bringing together partnerships of voluntary groups, private sector organizations, and professional associations; and informing and educating the public by establishing the agenda for public discussion about the health topic. This helps in modifying the climate of opinion, encouraging local and national policy changes to create a supportive environment within which people can change behaviour. The author also claims that, under the right conditions, the media may be a powerful instrument for promoting health.

Health promotion in the form of organized activities can be done using different vehicles such as media to transfer health messages. The electronic media, television and radio have been advocated as useful tools for transmission of health information. Television may be used to promote positive pictures and messages to the public since it reaches large numbers of people often. People in developing nations were more impacted by mass media interventions, according to studies done in various civilizations utilizing media campaigns.

Due to the impact of the World Health Organization's Charter, media advocacy has developed into a recognized approach for health promotion. In order to effectively communicate health information to the public, especially in the areas of prevention, risk reduction, and drug information control, it has been customary to seek a partnership or shared agenda with the mainstream media. Media advocacy is an effective method of promoting health and preventing disease. It also helps communities create demand for or support of health services and may have an impact on policy decisions regarding important public health issues (Marchibroda 2009; Ahmed and Bates 2013). For instance, the mainstream media offer powerful instruments for influencing people's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours by directly communicating preventative messages to them (Hopkins 2001). By using mass media as part of a comprehensive control programme strategy, several countries have been successful in reaching and influencing messages that encourage commitments against diseases (Schar and Gutierrez, 2006). The authors assert that preventive mass media campaigns must take into consideration fundamental points. These strategies involve the delivery of compelling new data or fresh viewpoints on health dangers. Use of emotionally appealing yet non-authoritarian visual or personal portrayal formats; inclusion of numerous communication tactics; provision of sufficient exposure to media messages over lengthily periods of time; incorporation of thorough formative process and assessment plans.

The early history of mass-media campaigns, involving health has led to continued efforts, in sharpening of design methodologies and more realistic campaign expectations. The sophisticated efforts provide evidence that media health campaigns can be effective in changing beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and even behaviours, when properly designed (Palmgreen, and Donohew, 2004).

There is widespread use of mass media campaigns to inform the general public about health messages. According to a recent poll by Barker, Lowe, and Reid (2006), 75% of respondents get their information on healthcare from the media. Health care behaviour may automatically change if population knowledge and beliefs are altered. A thorough research found that media interventions have a significant impact on how often people utilize healthcare services.

A rising body of evidence supports the idea that widespread promotion of healthy behaviours is necessary. Finding the most efficient way to change health behaviours is more important than ever given the growing expenses of traditional healthcare. Using mass media campaigns is one strategy that has received a lot of positive attention. In the past ten years, there have been more and more initiatives to employ mass media campaigns to persuade the public to act in ways that will benefit their personal well-being in the fields of disease prevention, health promotion, and public safety. Media campaigns have been employed in the past several decades in an effort to influence the health behaviours of large populations. These efforts have mostly focused on drug usage, immunizations, illness prevention, and a variety of other health-related topics. The distribution of messages in media that often reach big audiences, such as television, radio, outdoor billboards and posters, and print media like magazines and newspapers, is a hallmark of typical campaigns.

But media campaign messages can fall short and even backfire as exposure of audiences to the message might not meet expectations. It can be hampered by inadequate funding, the use of inappropriate or poorly researched formats, making boring messages or contents. The capacity of mass media lies in the ability to disseminate well defined behaviourally focused messages to large audiences repeatedly, over time, in incidental manner, and at a low cost per head. Furthermore, similar messaging may not be effective in changing the behaviours of varied audiences, and campaigns may not target those behaviours. However, it is widely known that media interventions have been effective in influencing and fostering societal norms as well as public health practices. For some years, especially in the developing world, family planning and reproductive health have been heavily promoted in mass media messaging (Nelson, 2006). Evidence supporting mass media messages as a mechanism to promote disease control programmes around the world seek to build knowledge about the negative consequences, the need for change of attitudes and beliefs.

A broad variety of media, including television, radio, newspapers, the internet, books, posters, and billboards, are frequently used in mass media campaigns to communicate information to large audiences. When it comes to lobbying, communication, and social mobilization, they may be quite useful. Media advocacy is using the mass media to enlighten the public about pertinent health concerns and challenges while also bringing attention to them. In order to alter the public's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours, behaviour-changing messages may also be conveyed through mass media campaigns (Nglazi, Bekker, Wood, Shey, Uthman, and Wiysonge, 2014).

Therefore, in addition to news items and feature pieces, understanding media impacts and knowing how to utilize the media effectively may be a crucial weapon. These programs aim to increase community awareness and improve people's attitudes regarding community behaviour change. Therefore, a well-targeted mass media campaign using live theatre or the creation of educational programs has the potential to greatly aid in community education and illness prevention (Saunders and Goddard, 2002).

Mass media campaigns may influence public opinion in both direct and indirect ways. Numerous initiatives try to influence specific message receivers. Such programs have a direct impact on how individuals make decisions, which includes removing barriers to change, assisting the audience in adopting or recognizing good social standards, and helping them correlate with positive feelings. Behaviour change can also be achieved when mass media set an agenda for and increase the frequency of interpersonal discuss on a specific health problem within an individual's environment. Awakening or enlightening public discourse on health issues may also lead to changes in public opinion or legislation, which can restrain people's behaviour and bring about change. For instance, a campaign against smoking due to the perceived negative effects it has on non-smokers may not be successful in getting smokers to give up, but it may help the public support and opinion of new policies that restrict smoking in a given community, country, or world at a given time, which may be successful in getting smokers to give up.

In the review of literature**,** Dhanashree, Garg, Chauhan, Bhatia, Sethi, Chauhan. (2019) did a study on "Role of mass media and its impact on general public during corona virus disease 2019 pandemic in North India: An online assessment "The objective was to understand the role and impact of mass media in the general public during COVID-19 pandemic. The study was conducted on a 10-year aged population by online survey through Google spreadsheets with semi-structured questionnaire in North India from June 23, 2020, and July 3, 2020. According to this study, during the lockdown, more people used the internet and television for news, while fewer people used newspapers, radio, and magazines. It was discovered that the use of social media was highest in the 20-29 age group followed by 10-19 years age group, with anxiety due to COVID-related news in the media reported to be highest in the 40-49 years age group (27.3%) and lowest (14.49%) in the 20-29 years age group. About 43.18% of people of 30-39 years of age developed fear, and 28% of people in the 50-59 years age groups felt panic due to COVID-related news in the media.

A study on "Mass Media use to Learn about COVID-19 and the non-intention to Be Vaccinated against COVID-19 in Latin America and Caribbean Countries" (LAC) was done by Bendezu-Quispe, Benites-Meza, Urrunaga-Pastor, Herrera-Anazco, Uyen-Cateriano8, Rodriguez-Morales, Toro-Huamanchumo, Hernandez and Benites-Zapata in 2022. The study was aimed at evaluating the association between the use of mass media to learn about COVID-19 and the non-intention for vaccination against COVID-19 in Latin American Caribbean countries. Generalized linear models were used to calculate crude and adjusted prevalence ratios (APR) with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (95%CI) to evaluate the association between the use of mass media and non-vaccination intention based on secondary data from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) survey on people's beliefs, behaviours, and norms regarding COVID-19. There were 350,322 Facebook users from LAC nations that were over the age of 18. 50.0% of the population was male, 28.4% was between the ages of 18 and 30, 41.4% had a high school diploma, 86.1% resided in a city, and 34.4% reported being in good health. The prevalence of using the mass media to learn about COVID-19 was mostly through mixed media (65.8%).

Gap in Literature

The number of empirical studies that have been reviewed indicates that more of them used online surveys as their primary research method, in contrast to this study, which only used offline surveys. The studies were not conducted on the overall populace but rather on certain provinces or districts, and they did not include corona virus management procedures. Some studies were limited to people of a certain age, but this particular study is generalized to determine how well health knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours are influenced by mass media messages. The examination of the literature reveals that research have been conducted on audience awareness of COVID19 and media messages, however studies specifically focusing on media messages concerning people of Eastern States of Nigeria adhering to corona virus control protocol compliance may be scarce. These fall under the category of the study's knowledge gaps.

3 METHODS

In this section is a descriptive presentation of the whole research procedure for easy understanding as shown in Figure 1. The Harold Dwight Lass well Direct communication approach model, states that a convenient way to describe an act of communication even in research is to answer the following questions:

- Who
- Says What
- In Which Channel
- To Whom
- With what effect?

This model is about process of communication and its function to society, According to Lasswell there are three functions for communication:

- Surveillance of the environment
- Correlation of components of society
- Cultural transmission between generation

Lasswell model suggests the message flow in a multicultural society with multiple audiences. The

flow of message is through various channels. And also, this communication model is similar to Aristotle's communication model. In this model, the communication component who refers the research area called "Control Analysis",
Says what is refers to "Content Analysis",
In which channel is refers to "Media Analysis",
To Whom is refers to "Audience Analysis"
With What Effect is refers to "Effect Analysis"

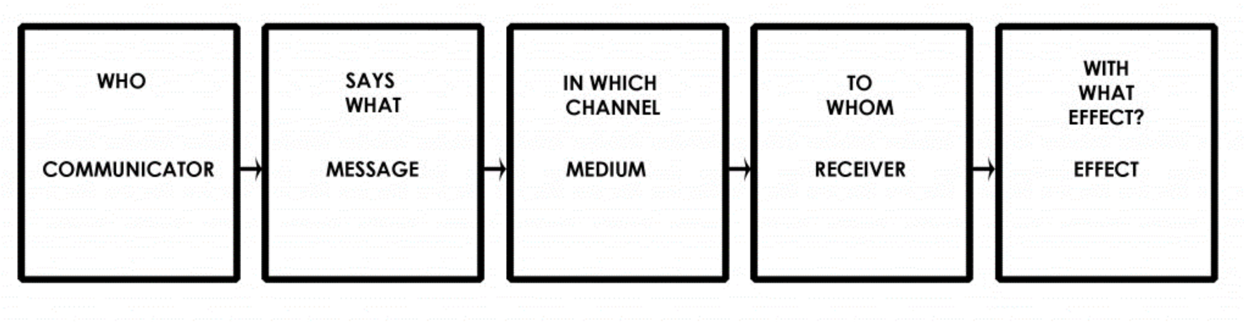

Figure 1. Direct Communication Research model

The research began with a thorough selection of the topic and looking at the communicators as the originators of the message who are the World Bank and the State ministries of health. It took the selection of the topic to ascertain the message and went ahead to select the media channels with a review of the existing literature on who are the basic communicators in the society to create a theoretical framework. The communicators were seen as the channels of communication. So, a direct model approach was adopted from the beginning to the end of the research just as the model looks at communication from one point to another and hence assessing the effects. The numerous sources and citations enabled efficient management of references and citations as well as the documentation of summaries.

In the first part of the study was the used of the survey research method. The choice of this method was primarily guided by the aim of obtaining and comparing the opinions of residents. This is because of the nature of the study, which required gathering opinions from citizens on the topic of investigation. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2005), surveys are necessary for studies looking at how people perceive or react to a problem.

The study's population was based on data from the World City Population Statistics of 2022, which included the populations of the Eastern states of Nigeria at 36 million persons.

The researcher carefully chose a manageable but representative sample size for the study because the population size for this study was quite huge. The convenience sample size calculation formula was used to determine the sample size at 500 people drawn from 100 persons per states. To guarantee that only individuals exposed to media messages on the prevention of the corona virus engage in the study, copies of the questionnaire were distributed using the purposive sampling techniques. Though a total of 500 copies were distributed, at retrieval only 492 copies were ascertained appropriate due to mutilated 8 copies. So only 492 persons took part in the study. It is important to point out that from the sample the results were necessary to be generalized to the entire population from opinions, suggestions on this topic.

In this first round, the surveyed gave thoughts, perceptions and viewpoints on the questions posed. Using simple table analysis, the answers received prepared the second round on this, as the respondents rated the analysed statements using a 4-point Likert scale. The measurement tool in this case was a questionnaire. The instrument was deemed to be quite appropriate as a result of its contribution to the production of data that was highly useful in generating answers to the research questions. The instrument had four questions which elicited responses that addressed the research questions using the four-point Likert scaling options of Strongly Agreed rated at (4), Agreed (3) Disagreed at (2) and Strongly Disagreed at (1). choice for respondents. After analysing the responses again, in the third round was the reviewing of the answers. From a methodological point of view, the research approach comprised a literature review, followed by the survey method in the first part and the use of quantitative methods in the second part. The researcher worked with three (3) assistants during the administration of the questionnaire. The close ended questionnaire for the survey method was tested in a pilot test to check the clarity and comprehensibility of the questions asked. In the first part of the research, Akpan (2020) suggests using the 10% formula for arithmetic calculation to calculate the sample size for research equipment in order to increase dependability. To conduct pilot research among academic and non-academic staff who almost matched the demographics of the population in Eastern Nigeria, 50 copies of the 500-person sample size of the questionnaire were used. The t-test pilot study's findings demonstrated that the respondents understood the questions for their interpretation of situations and events related to the topic under investigation. The pre-test answers ascertained how the respondents think or act in the situation under investigation. For the instrument's validation, face validity was done. Copies of the questionnaire were given to three lecturers in the Topfaith University. The lecturers assisted in examining the question framing and made the necessary observations to make sure the instrument could gather the necessary data for the study. Data processing in the study was done manually for appropriate and precise results to contribute to reliability of the analysis and a good internal consistency of the questionnaire. The generated data were compiled after the questionnaire was administered and copies were collected. Using quantitative statistics of frequency count and straightforward percentages in tables with explanations, the data were examined after collation.

4 RESULTS

Table 2. The type of channel of information respondents most regularly received messages on the coronavirus safety measures.

Channel	Ebonyi	Imo	Abia	Enugu	Anambra	Total	%
Television	19	16	24	11	12	82	17
Radio	64	69	58	63	70	324	66
Mag/NP	17	15	6	24	15	78	16
Social Media	-	-	4	2	2	8	1
Total	100	100	92	100	100	492	100

The data presented in table 2 above indicated that information channel the respondents most frequently received information of the preventive measures of COVID-19. In line with the data, 82 respondents representing 17% indicted television, 324 respondents representing 66% said radio, 78 respondents representing 16% said magazine while 8 respondents presenting 1% said social media. This implies that most or majority of the respondents most frequently received messages on the coronavirus safety measures via radio considering.

Table 3. The major themes of covid 19 messages

Theme	Ebonyi	Imo	Abia	Enugu	Anambra	Total	%
Distancing	4	20	39	10	21	94	19
Handwashing	75	62	30	40	40	247	50
Sanitizing	8	2	10	30	15	65	13
Facemasking	13	14	15	20	24	86	18
Total	100	98	94	100	100	492	100

Table 3 above shows the most preferred themes of the respondents with reference to media messages on COVID-19 safety measures. Data displayed on the table shows that 94 respondents constituting 19 % mostly preferred themes on social distancing, 247 respondents representing 50 % mostly preferred themes on washing of hands, 65 respondents constituting 13 % mostly preferred themes on the use of alcohol-based sanitizer while 86 respondents representing 18 % mostly preferred themes on wearing of facemasks. This implies that majority of the respondents mostly preferred themes on the compliance level of the respondents to media messages on the use of hand sanitizer.

5 DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the study were discussed in line with the data presented and related studies that were reviewed.

Research Question One: What was the major information channel residents most frequently received messages on the COVID-19 safety protocol? The aim of this research question was to ascertain the particular channel of information that served as an avenue through which the respondents always received information on the safety protocol of the COVID-19 pandemic. The data presented in table 4.2 above were utilized to address this research question. Data in the table indicated the information channel through which the respondents most frequently received information on the safety measures of

COVID-19. According to the data, 82 respondents representing 17% indicated television, 324 respondents representing 66% said radio, 78 respondents representing 16% said magazine while 8 respondents presenting 1% said social media. This means that majority of the respondents most frequently received messages on the corona virus safety measures via radio. This finding is in line with the finding of Bendezu-Quispe, Benites-Meza, Urrunaga-Pastor, Herrera-Anazco,Uyen-CaterianoA, Rodriguez-Morales, Toro-Huamanchumo, Hernandez and Benites-Zapat. (2022) which revealed that radio remains the most preferred and effective channel of information among health information seekers.

Research Question Two: What was residents' most preferred theme regarding media messages on the corona virus safety protocol? The essence of this research question was to establish the specific theme that was most preferred by the respondents regarding messages on the safety measures of the pandemic. The data in table 4.3 above were relevant in addressing this research question. Data in the table show the most preferred themes of the respondents with reference to media messages on COVID-19 safety measures. According to the presented data, 94 respondents constituting 19% mostly preferred themes on social distancing, 247 respondents representing 50% mostly preferred themes on washing of hands, 86 respondents constituting 18% mostly preferred themes on the use of alcohol-based sanitizer while 65 respondents representing 13% mostly preferred themes on wearing of facemask. This implies that majority of the respondents mostly did not prefer themes on the wearing of facemask. In accordance with this finding, Zimand-Sheiner, Kol, Frydman and Levy (2021) found that messages on wearing of facemask was mostly not appealing among other safety measures during the ravaging corona virus pandemic.

Findings were - majority of the respondents most frequently received media messages on the corona virus safety measures via radio. Majority of the respondents mostly preferred themes on the washing of hands. There was no high level of compliance to media messages on the COVID-19 safety protocol among majority of the respondents. Majority of the respondents perceived media messages on COVID-19 safety measures as simple for them to clearly understand.

6 CONCLUSION

In the first part of the study, it was established that information dissemination from the media cover every facet of human living. It was also noted that the media carry information regarding health care of people. This situation was not different during the Covid 19 pandemic. The responses received from residents of the eastern states of Nigeria showed that there are channels which some people prefer to get information and that there are some channels that people do not prefer getting information. It was also seen that various methods of knowledge dissemination contribute to the use of appropriate knowledge, especially on emergency health care for communities through oral and written instructions, guidelines, requirements, materials, databases. It established that encouraging friendly communication form the foundations to express ideas, opinions, perspectives, experiences, thoughts, beliefs, concerns, opportunities for improvement to transform individuals and communities while implicit knowledge can turn into explicit knowledge through repetitions.

When asked about channels of information which people prefer in the Eastern Nigeria, respondents mentioned various media channels. They emphasized that information reached them primarily through radio instead of television or newspapers and the social media channels. In line with the data, 82 respondents representing 17% indicted television, 324 respondents representing 66% said radio, 78 respondents representing 16% said magazine while 8 respondents presenting 1% said social media. This implies that most or majority of the respondents most frequently received messages on the coronavirus safety measures via radio considering. Therefore, establishing a culture that encourages information exchange through contemporary channels of social media was crucial. In the second part of the research question, was to analyse or to examine the most preferred themes of the covid 19 among residents it was realized that the people preferred hand washing instead of other themes. Table 4.3 above shows the most preferred themes of the respondents with reference to media messages on COVID-19 safety measures. Data displayed on the table shows that 94 respondents constituting 19% mostly preferred themes on social distancing, 247 respondents representing 50% mostly preferred themes on washing of hands, 65 respondents constituting 13% mostly preferred themes on the use of alcohol-based sanitizer while 86 respondents representing 18% mostly preferred themes on wearing of face-masks. This means that cost was not involved unlike the buying of sanitizers. The use of existing media institutions especially the radio has shown to be a positive factor for information exchange. Based on the research results obtained, we can conclude that radio remains an effective means of creating information for safe health care in any environment, and the introduction of messages that are simple and friendly. It is believed that management of media institutions must continually adapt its policies and practices to the changes that best meet the individual and community needs. The empirical contribution shows a statistically significant use of existing knowledge and information exchange among residents of communities in selected states in Eastern Nigeria. The results of this research provide owners, managers, and other professionals in media with concrete evidence for the design of measures and strategies for information exchange among audience.

This study has contributed to knowledge on the power of the media to disseminate information to the society and herald the well-being of members of the society as can be clearly seen in the findings which revealed the critical role the media played in raising awareness and heralding the required health behaviour. In spite of the media service there still remain individuals who fail to comply with messages from the electronic and print media due to trust or confidence in the media. This could be one of the reasons there was non-compliance and response to corona virus infections and death rates as reported by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) during the ravaging period of the virus. In accordance with the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made: The media information channels should continue to be more proactive by informing and mobilizing the people to practice basic hygiene for prevention of the outbreak of diseases such as the corona virus. Media should be encouraged in the packaging and disseminating of health message themes for public safety from diseases. In the process of the study, number of limitations and assumptions were noted. One limitation was the geographical restriction to one region in one country, which could affect the generalizability of the results. Also, considering the criteria of the porous security situation in Nigeria, focus was only on urban communities of Eastern Nigerian states, which could limit the generalizability of results to other communities. The limited participation and level responsiveness of study participants should also be noted, reflecting the changing aspects and the impact of similar global happening on communities' existence.

Arising from the noted limitations and assumptions in the study, it can be suggested that future researchers expand the scope of their studies to multiple regions of any country to increase the generalizability of the results. It is also recommended to restrict the sample of persons to gender, peer groups or occupational groups, to gain fair insight into knowledge exchange. Researchers could apply extra methods such as interviews in future studies to increase the responsiveness of participants and focus on observing the long-term impacts of global events on communities. By these approaches, there may be wider understanding on the application of communication strategies in dissemination of health care knowledge.

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Profile of Pedagogical Specialists in Bulgaria Through the Dimensions of Their Leisure Time During Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ): What is the ability of teachers to set a limit between personal and professional activities in the general budget of their time during the period of COVID-19?

Purpose: The aim of the research is to outline the profile of pedagogical specialists in Bulgaria through the dimensions of their leisure time during the period of COVID-19.

Method: It has been used a qualitative research approach in order to develop a theoretical framework of the research. The other method is a questionnaire, with which the necessary information was collected from the surveyed teachers.

Results: This report presents the results of a scientific study "Leisure time of pedagogical specialists in Bulgaria", which is being conducted in 2021, in order to outline the profile of their leisure time. The positive effect of its implementation is expressed in the assessment by the surveyed pedagogical specialists about the leisure time they have and the activities they use it for, especially in relation to the situations caused by the pandemic situation and the measures taken to limit the spread of COVID-19 through continuous non-attendance distance learning in a digital environment.

Organization: The positive effect of conducting the present study is expressed in the assessment by the surveyed pedagogical specialists about their leisure time and the activities they use it for. It's possible to establish the need of more time for recreation and rest, to restore the necessary strength and enthusiasm for the full performance of professional commitments.

Society: The results of the research provoke the search for means and methods to support teachers in their preparation for future pedagogical activities. In this way, it is possible to bring together the pedagogical community at the national level, share experience, exchange and borrow ideas and good practices, which will save time for the preparation of lessons and provide more free time for recreation, rest and entertainment for the teachers.

Originality: The dynamically developing educational system with changing demands on teachers is a prerequisite for their professional commitment. In order to maintain their physical and mental strength, it is necessary to consider the leisure time available to them and the activities in their personal program of activities, recreation and entertainment. Therefore, the research is useful and up to date regarding the improvement of the professional activity of teachers.

Limitations / further research: The next stage of the study of the leisure time of pedagogical specialists in Bulgaria may include in-depth research through interviews and focus groups, during which forms, means and methods to support their work in preparing them for future pedagogical activities will be discussed.

Keywords: teachers, leisure time, COVID-19 pandemic, professional development, teacher's professional activities, digital environment.

1 INTRODUCTION

Leisure time has been the subject of research in various scientific fields. Sociology considers leisure time as an indicator of people's lifestyles. Economic sciences consider leisure time as a main component of the time budget and as an alternative to its counterpart - working time. Psychology is interested in the subjective-personal attitude of people towards their leisure time, focusing on their emotional experiences and time perception. History traces the development of leisure forms as a part of cultures across the world. Ethnography studies the ethnic, cultural and domestic features of various cultures. In this context, it also describes how leisure time is spent by a given ethnicity. Medicine and sciences related to physical culture and sports, and in particular - sports tourism, as well as the entertainment industry, are interested in providing prerequisites for the healthy and emotional strengthening of people in their leisure time, as well as for their entertainment. Statistics are also relevant to leisure, insofar as it is necessary to quantify a number of its characteristics, especially the magnitude and number of activities in it. Linguistics helps solve some serious problems with naming leisure activities. (Popov, 2010)

All this shows that science considers leisure time with high importance. It is an essential part of people's lives. In recent decades, leisure time activities are interesting to researchers, as they can indicate standard of living, public culture of a society and its way of life. This can be an indicator of the development of a civilization, a measure of any society. Of course, the allocation of more leisure time as an indicator of a high standard of living should be combined with a quality characteristic of its implementation, taking into account what activities are carried out. Various factors influence leisure time organization: economic status, social environment, education, culture, gender, profession, availability of time, consumer values, demographic characteristics, people's lifestyle, fashion and taste preferences, advertising and public relations, government and government policy, etc. In the changing and evolving world from ancient times to the present day, people's ideas about the meaning of leisure time and its use are constantly changing. Several authors study this social phenomenon, creating different concepts.

2 THEORETICAL OVERVIEWS

The problems of proper use of the leisure time come within the scope of Pedagogy of leisure time, which, according to H. Opashovski, connects and supports the social, cultural, creative and communication education of different social and age groups. That is why leisure time should be that part of people's active life during which they can fully develop their qualities and skills. As Boyadzhieva writes, "Traditionally, leisure time is defined as that part of social time that remains outside of work, social obligations and the satisfaction of biological needs. Within this time, recreation, entertainment, and cultural consumption take place. Leisure time allows for the restoration of equilibrium by giving the opportunity to satisfy and develop that part of personality which professional life and duties are hindering." (Boyadzhieva, 2009) The beneficial use of leisure time is extremely important, as it helps to expand one's horizons, for intellectual growth, emotional experiences, and personal enrichment. Leisure time implies voluntary actions, freedom of choice, self-initiative with purposeful organization. Leisure time and hobbies in modern times are powerful mechanisms both for socio-cultural preservation and reproduction, and for socio-cultural mobility and development (Rasheva-Merjanova, 2007). Thinking in this direction and referring to the works of several scientists (Opashovsky, J. Dumazodier, N. Boyadzhieva, K. Vasileva, L. Popov, M. Pateva) it can be summarized that leisure time is charged with a humanistic meaning. During leisure time, the basic needs of the person in the field of culture, knowledge, the needs for harmony in the biosocial nature of the person, the needs for social contacts in the family, among friends, in society are satisfied. (Patheva, 1979) Its correct utilization supports the construction and development of the personality.

Modern Sociology draws a clear distinction between off-work and leisure time, as well as a further differentiation of leisure time into semi-free and free time. When it comes to the leisure time, the German author Erich Weber distinguishes between negative and positive prescriptions of the leisure time "free from" and "free for", i.e. free from obligatory activities and free for activities chosen personally for enrichment in a certain way. One of these personal enrichment activities is investing in human capital. (Kicheva-Kirova, 2005) On one hand, investing in human capital during leisure time brings benefits, both personally and for society. On the other hand, it is necessary for a person to spend time for rest, entertainment, creative activities, time for communication with family and friends, which are an opportunity for relaxation and recovery. The conscious use of the leisure time for recreation and activities other than professional activities, family care, satisfaction of various physiological needs, brings positive energy to a person and increases their capacity for more productive work. Therefore, we need to think about both the hours of leisure time we have and the activities we use it for. (Wilson, 1937)

Authors from various scientific fields - sociology, economic sciences, psychology, pedagogy, history, ethnography, medicine, and the sciences related to physical culture and sports, tourism and the entertainment industry - conduct research to measure the leisure time that people have and the activities it is spent on. After researching publications in recent decades, it was found that there is a lack of research on the leisure time of teachers in Bulgaria. Such research would shed light on the challenges and needs that pedagogical specialists have in their profession. They share in conversations that the hours they would use for recreation, entertainment, and self-improvement are invested in planning, preparing, and implementing their curriculum. The dynamically developing educational system and its changing requirements for teachers is a part of their commitment to professional activities. To maintain their physical and mental strength, they need to consider both the number of hours of available free time, whether they manage to make full use of these hours of rest, and what activities are in their personal program of leisure and entertainment.

2 METHOD

The current study "The leisure time of pedagogical specialists in Bulgaria" aims to outline the profile of pedagogical specialists in Bulgaria precisely through the dimensions of their leisure time. It was attended by teachers leading classroom and extracurricular activities in kindergartens, schools, schools for extracurricular activities, centres for personal development support. From the month of March 2020 until the time of conducting the survey in September 2021, they have carried out their professional commitments through long distance learning in a digital environment in connection with the measures taken to limit the spread of COVID-19. It is also important to consider that during this period the COVID-19 restrictions have altered their personal and professional lives.

Using a questionnaire created for the purposes of the study, information was collected on:

- the amount of leisure time available to the respondents.
- the activities utilizing leisure time.
- the degree of satisfaction received from the way leisure time is spent.
- their ability to spend time for rest and recreation.
- their ability to draw a clear line between professional and non-professional activities in the overall budget of the time they have, while observing the imposed measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 in personal and professional terms.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study is based on 116 actively working teachers (96 % women and 4 % men) from small, medium and large settlements on the territory of Bulgaria. The percentage of respondents from the capital is the smallest, which means that the results will present an up-to-date picture with an emphasis on teachers in the country. The age of the participants is between 30 and 64 years ago. Their average age is 46 years ago. Almost all (93 %) work in state/municipal institutions, and according to the type of training, 27 % are primary school teachers (grades I – VII inclusive), 23 % work in kindergarten, 14 % in personal development support center, 11% in secondary school (grades I – XII inclusive), 9 % in vocational high school, 5 % in primary school (grades I – IV inclusive), 4 % in specialized high school, 3 % in specialized school (sports, culture, arts, religious school), 3 % in a private school (for extracurricular activities), 2 % in a high school (grades VIII – XII inclusive), 1 % in a unified school (grades I – X inclusive). The range of disciplines in which the surveyed specialists teach is diverse: all educational areas in the kindergarten (Bulgarian language and literature, Mathematics, Environment, Visual arts, Music, Construction and technologies, Physical Education) and general education and special subjects: History and Civilization, Civics Education, Bulgarian Language and Literature, English Language, German Language, Geography and Economics, Music, Fine Arts, Physical Education and Sports, Information Technology, Man and Nature, Man and Society, Biology and Health Education, Chemistry and Conservation Environment, Technology and Entrepreneurship, Physics and Astronomy, General Economic Theory, Statistics, Psychology, Informatics. The representatives of schools for extracurricular activities and personal development support centers are teachers of Music, Music Theory, Musical Instruments, Bulgarian Folk Dances, Sports, English Language, Astronomy, Career Guidance and Counseling, Acting, Applied and Visual Arts, Natural Sciences. Among the respondents are specialists who work with children with special educational needs, speech therapists, resource teachers, school psychologists and a children's choir accompanist.

The duration of leisure time, which the respondents themselves determine from the total time per day budget, is diverse. As can be seen from the results in Figure 1, most teachers define the duration of their leisure time from 1 to 3 hours per day. Some of them share that "The length of leisure time is different every day.", "I don't have any at this stage of my life.", "The length is relative - it depends on my daily commitments, and the time range is different.", "My leisure time varies on average between 2-3 hours a day and 7-8 hours a day, depending on the time of year."

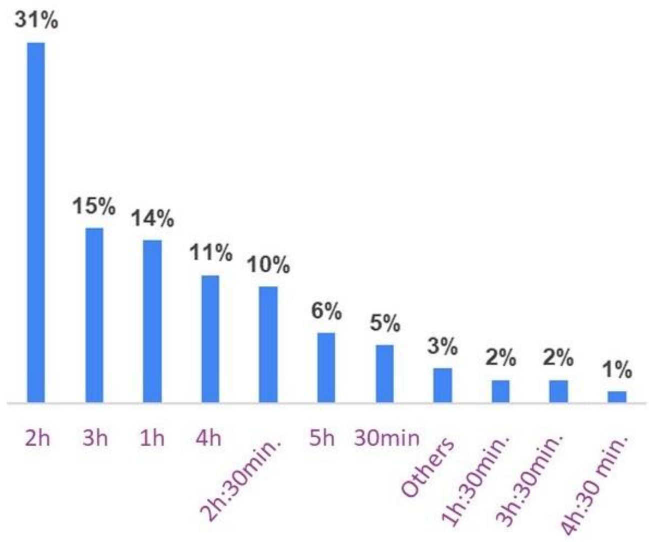

Figure 1. The leisure time of pedagogical specialists

All teachers share that leisure time is present in the general budget of time they have, regardless of its duration. How many of them are satisfied with the way they organize their leisure time can be understood from the data in Figure 2. It is encouraging that more than half of the respondents evaluate their leisure time as usefully used in relation to the goals they set. Some of them do not spend their leisure time in a meaningful and desirable way for them, and others share that: "There is something to be desired in organizational terms. I set goals that I often fail to fulfil.", "I organize my leisure time to the fullest when I have the opportunity.", "Sometimes - yes, but sometimes there is no time even for the planned things."

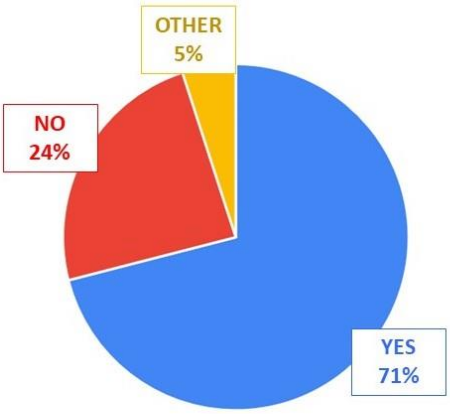

Figure 2. Do you organize your leisure time productively?

Questions about satisfaction with the way respondents spend leisure time at home and outside, as well as about the activities they engage in most often (at home and outside) (Figures 3 and 4) are used for more in-depth analysis. When viewing leisure time based on the activities they most often perform, the initial opinion about organization of leisure time is divided between the answers "I am satisfied" and "I am partially satisfied". Although answers are distributed 50:50, responders' positivity shows that they manage to organize their leisure time with pleasant and satisfying activities.

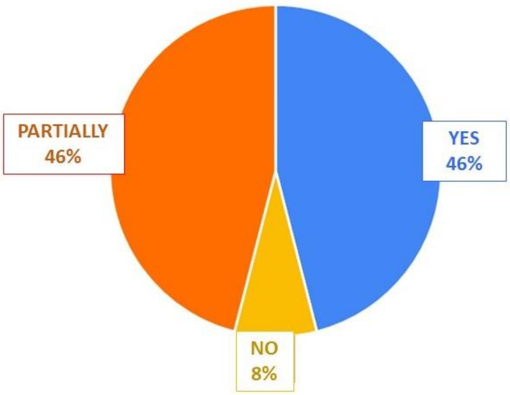

Figure 3. Are you satisfied with the way you spend your leisure time at home?

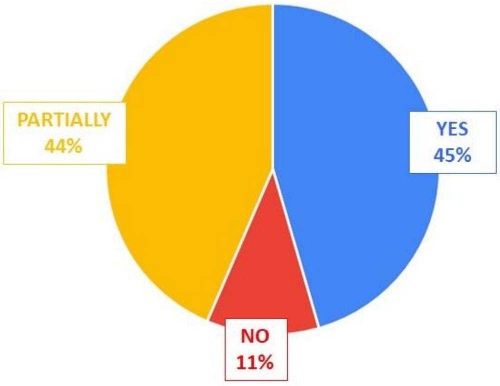

Figure 4. Are you satisfied with the way you spend your leisure time outdoors?

Teachers invest their leisure time at home and outside in a restricted environment, caused by the pandemic situation in a variety of activities. Among the most frequently performed activities at home (daily and almost daily), the following stand out: communicating with my family, talking with acquaintances, friends, neighbours, colleagues, watching TV, preparing learning materials for the upcoming learning activities, "surfing" the Internet and social media (for fun), listening to music. Secondary activities performed once or twice a week and less than once a week include reading a book for pleasure, listening to the radio, playing board or other games with the family, pursuing a hobby, participating in online training/webinars. Keeping in mind the nature of their activities at home, it is assumed that they combine them with other activities of their daily life.

Preferred outdoors activities of the respondents (daily and almost daily) are organizing activities for the learning process at school and art-related activities (music, dance, drawing, photography, theatre school, other). Once or twice a week, the respondents meet and go for a walk with friends or organize walks and excursions. Less than once a week they attend a cinema, theatre, concert, exhibition, music club, sports competitions, and events (as spectators), attend training or other forms of professional qualification. Analysing the frequency of performing activities outside home shows that the respondents spend less time for fun, rest and recreation outside of their daily duties and commitments. A comparison between the activities that respondents do at home and outdoors activities during their free time shows that most often their activities are at home and less often outdoors. This may also be due to the fact that for the past year and a half they have been living in a pandemic situation and to varying degrees complying with the measures imposed to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Among the activities most often carried out by teachers during their leisure time, both at home and outside, those related to their professional commitment and development also stand out: "I prepare teaching materials for the upcoming lessons", "I organize activities for the learning process at school", “participate in online trainings/webinars”. It should be noted that the activity "I prepare learning materials for the upcoming learning activities" at home ranks second after communication with the family. This shows that Bulgarian teachers use a large part of their leisure time for professional activities, instead of recreation, rest, and fun. (Figures 5 and 6)

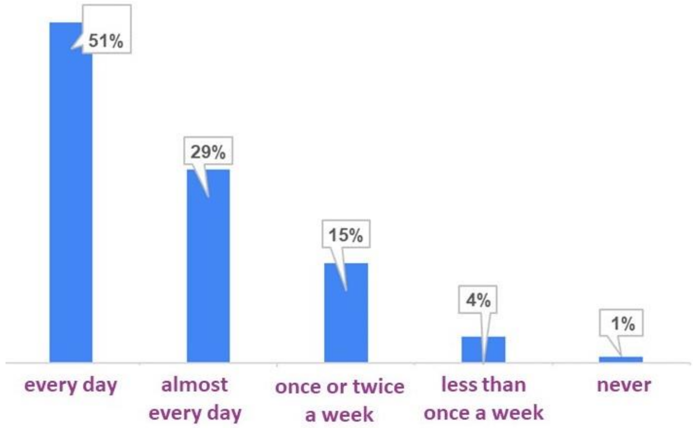

Figure 5. I prepare learning materials for upcoming learning activities (at home).

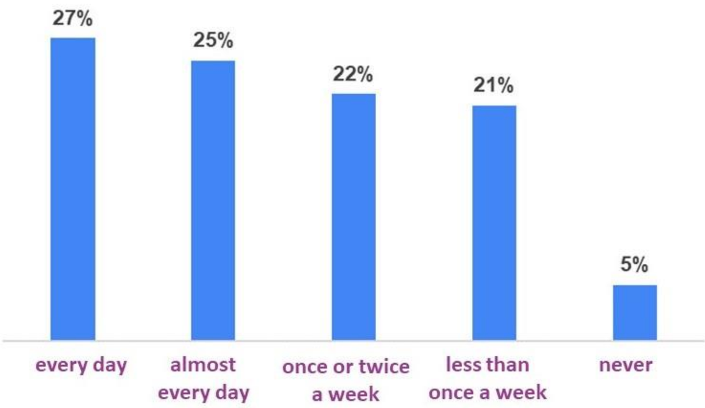

Figure 6. I prepare learning materials for upcoming learning activities (outdoors).

Almost all surveyed educators invest a large part of their leisure time to prepare teaching materials for the upcoming lessons with their students. This is expressed in adapting and supplementing the provided educational content according to the needs and interests of the students by creating auxiliary visual materials and adapting foreign teaching models proven by practice. Some of the participants show creativity and develop their own options for presenting the learning material included in the curriculum and the necessary learning aids. (Table 1)

86%	Adapting and supplementing the offered educational content according to the needs and interests of the students.
78%	Creating auxiliary visual materials.
43%	Modifying innovative teaching models.
38%	Adapting foreign teaching models.
28%	Development of own variants of study programs (courses).
13%	Development of own didactic system (teaching aids).

Figure 7. Preparation for the training process

4 CONCLUSION

The positive effect of conducting the present study is expressed in the assessment by the surveyed pedagogical specialists about the leisure time they have and the activities they use it for. Through it, it is possible to establish the need for more time for recreation and rest, to restore the necessary strength and enthusiasm for the full performance of professional commitments. On one hand, the teachers share that they have hours of leisure time and organize them fruitfully, and on the other hand, the satisfaction with the way they spend it is partial. Added to these results is the fact that the respondents invest a large part of their leisure time in professional commitments, forced by the circumstances to adapt the resources they work with for the new type of training – in a digital environment. The pandemic restrictions and introduction of digital distance learning influence the assessment of free time and its use for leisure activities.

The next stage of the study of the leisure time of pedagogical specialists in Bulgaria may include in-depth research through interviews and focus groups, during which forms, means and methods to support their work in preparing them for future pedagogical activities will be discussed. These could be electronic platforms or cloud spaces for shared pedagogical resources, organization of training and team building, during which both pleasant and useful activities will be combined, periodic webinars for sharing good practices from teachers to teachers as well of school and extracurricular activities. This would bring together the pedagogical community at the national level, share experience, exchange and borrow ideas and good practices, which will save time for the preparation of lessons and provide more leisure time for recreation, rest and entertainment for pedagogical specialists in Bulgaria.

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The Human Right to Education from a Gender Perspective. Contributions of Spanish Research in Pandemic Time due to COVID-19

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ): The Declaration of Human Rights indicates that everyone has the right to education (UN, 1948, article 26). Gender studies show differences that exist between women and men to establish measures that address inequalities. These gender differences have been considered in research during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research question that this research wants to answer is the following: What are the differences between genders (women-men) that research has identified in the educational field during the pandemic period?

Purpose: The aim of this work is to identify the main results of Spanish research carried out from 2020 to 2023 that consider gender differences in the educational field.

Method: A systematic review of the literature has been carried out based on Framework ReSiste-CSH (Codina, 2020) and SALSA framework (Grant & Booth, 2009). Systematic reviews are characterized by clear traceability in the research. They provide evidence to outline a state of the art on a topic and identify research opportunities.

Results: The work provides a list of research focused on the object of study with a description of the main results. The analysis of these works confirms that there are differences based on gender that must be taken into account in crisis and states of emergency such as the one experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Organization: Some of the results indicate that there were differences in the management of educational organizations based on gender during the pandemic.

Society: The gender differences perpetuated during the pandemic period manifest the need to continue working for gender equality.

Originality: The synthesis of works provides a general vision of a state of exception. This can be useful for works that analyse gender differences.

Limitations / further research: This research has been carried out using Scopus database due to its scientific nature. Works published on other platforms may be left out of the

initial search. In relation to future research, the results obtained allow comparison with other countries and their approach to the pandemic due to COVID-19.

Keywords: COVID-19, Gender, education, Spain**.**

1 INTRODUCTION

Lockout in Spain due to COVID-19 was from 14th of March to 21st of June 2020. 51 million of people were under lockout measures and a bit more than 10 million of students stopped having in-person classes (Spanish Government, 2022). The pandemic brought with it the installation of a mandatory distance education model at all educational levels. This implementation was carried out without a prior plan to address various difficulties that the population could encounter, reducing the equity, functionality, and quality of education (Vela, 2022).

The *COVID-19 International Student Well-Being Study* provides data on 125 higher-education institutions (HEI) across 26 high- and middle-income countries. This ranking reflects Spain's position as the third-highest country in terms of depression symptoms among higher education students (below only by Turkey and South Africa) (Van de Velde et al., 2021).

Heard Project "focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the democratic debate, the enjoyment of fundamental rights and the work and life of women through a gender perspective" (*Federação de Associações Juvenis do Distrito de Braga*, 2024). The City Council of Mislata (*Ayuntamiento De Mislata*) as a partner in Heard Project, has promoted the analysis of inequalities in pandemic time for the promotion of equality and inclusive society.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights indicates that "everyone has the right to education" (UN, 1948, article 26). Complementary, the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2017) emphasizes the quality of education (Goal 4). Therefore, it is important to analyse whether the pandemic situation has influenced gender differences.

The main objective of this work is to identify the main results of Spanish research carried out from 2020 to 2023 that consider gender differences in the educational field. Connected with this objective, we want to identify the main topics that emerge in these studies developed during pandemic time.

2 METHOD

A systematic review of the literature has been carried out based on Framework ReSiste-CSH (Codina, 2020) and SALSA framework (Grant & Booth, 2009). Systematic reviews provide evidence to outline a state of the art on a topic and identify research opportunities. They are characterized by clear traceability in the research. In this methodology four phases are identified: Research, Appraisal, Synthesis and Analysis.

Phase 1 *Research* the objective of identifying a first group of candidate documents to form the evidence base. To do this, it was necessary to choose a reliable source. It was decided to search in

SCOPUS database due to its reliability. Three keywords were identified for the research: COVID-19, Education and Spain. The terms *Education* and *Spain* were found in the UNESCO Thesaurus (UNESCO, 2022). The term *COVID-19* was not included in the thesaurus but is considered an important keyword to carrying out the research. From there, the following search equation was drawn by combining Booleans: *Covid** AND Spain AND *educa**. A range of years between 2020 and 2023 was selected. The results were filtered by the following areas: Social Sciences, Psychology, Arts and Humanities, Multidisciplinary & Neuroscience. The search was carried out on titles, abstracts and keywords. As a result of this first phase, 495 documents were identified.

The included studies were analysed in Phase 2 *Appraisal*. This phase had the objective of selecting the documents to be analysed based on inclusion and exclusion, pragmatic and quality criteria. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Educative area	Referred to formal education	Non-formal education or not related to the field of education.
Geographic area	Focused on Spain	Analysis of other countries
Accessibly	Available with full text	Without access to the complete document
Research language	Publications in English, Spanish or Catalan	Other languages
Interventions	Sample differentiated by gender	No gender analysis identified.
Year range	2020-2023	Before or after 2020-23
Type of research	Empirically based publications	Non-scientific literature
Research design	Quantitative, qualitative or mixed research	-

In relation to the pragmatic criteria false positives were eliminated from the search and only those documents consistent with the search object, referred to the Spanish context, were used.

Regarding the quality criterion, only academic works that showed quality were selected. Performing the search in Scopus already represents a first quality filter. Dixon-Woods' (2006) criterion have been followed. Based on them, the purposes and objectives of the research were analysed, research designs consistent with the research objectives were identified, the research processes, the contribution of data, its analysis and the interpretations of the conclusions were reviewed.

In phase 2- Appraisal, a review was carried out on titles, abstracts and full text. Of 495 documents, 45 were selected. After a second review, 27 articles were selected that formed the basis of evidence.

The objective of Phase 3 of *Synthesis* is to systematize the analysis of documents to provide information that allows data to be compared or analysed. An exhaustive reading of the 27 articles was carried out to extract the following data: authorship, year, title of the research, study design and main result connected to gender. This information was organized in an Excel document for better management. This work provides a list of research focused on the object of study with a description of the main results.

Finally, in Phase 4 *Analysis*, a content analysis was carried out to categorize the contributions and identify the trends in gender, COVID-19 and education studies.

Our research question is as follows: What are the differences between genders (women-men) that research has identified in the educational field during the pandemic period?

For answering this question, we developed a systematic review. To provide evidence of the scientific-academic production available on a topic, systematic reviews provide a series of steps that ensure the scientific nature of the research. Framed within the SALSA framework, the Systematized Reviews in Human and Social Sciences or ReSiste-CHS methodology (Codina, 2020) appears to be an appropriate option for the study topic focusing on the field of formal education.

This research’s results aim to identify theoretical references that support the importance of continuing to fight against gender inequalities, especially in times of crisis or emergency.

3 RESULTS

Four Principal trends about COVID-19, Gender & Education were found: High Education, gender differences at homes related to progeny’s education (Family and Education), Teachers & gender differences and Childhood & adolescents. The main results are indicated below and the tables in which the research is identified are shown.

High Education

- Female students showed less self-efficacy, higher scores anxiety and state of anxiety during COVID-19 (Alemany-Arrebola et al., 2020).
- Students suffered the most the pandemia than teachers or administrative staff. Negative emotions were higher in woman (Romeo et al., 2021).
- Gender gap on women in engineering education during the lockdown (an after). Official academic results evidenced a bigger deterioration (Bordel et al., 2021).
- Gender gap on higher education distance learning (UNED) confirmed a women underperformed in terms of passing and scoring. These differences bigger in women between 30 and 45 years old (Castellanos-Serrano et al., 2022).
- Gender gap in education was identified related to software skills, specialists in ICT specialities and woman representation in ICT specialities (González Vidal & Gewerc, 2021).

- The pandemic increased the desire to help others, and that was significantly higher among women and nursing and medical students (March-Amengual et al., 2023).

Table 2 provides more information.

Table 2. Research about High Education in Pandemic time due to COVID-19

Authors	Date	Study design	Main result connected with gender
Alemany-Arrebola et al.	2020	N=427 students from the University of Granada (Spain). Men=8, 9.7%; Woman=342, 80.1%. Methodology Retrospective or ex post facto study with a cross-sectional design to collect data	The relationship between anxiety and self-efficacy was inversely proportional. Male students showed highest self-efficacy contrasting with females' students, that had higher scores of anxieties and state of anxiety during COVID-19, which can impact in their academic results.
Roldan & Reina	2021	N=124 university students of Physical activity and sports sciences from a south-east Spanish university. Men=69, women=55	In students of Physical Education trained with distance learning there were no gender differences on self-efficacy regarding how to work with people with disabilities.
Romeo et al.	2021	N=1,328 people from the community (teachers, administrative staff and students) of the Universitat of Barcelona (UB). Woman= 69.5%, men= 28.2%, non-binary= 1.4%, not answer= 0.9%. Cross-sectional research with questionnaire	Students suffered the most during the pandemic than teachers or administrative staff. In the students group negative emotions were higher in females. In general, females' environment showed them more affected by the pandemic, and they had more negative effects regarding teleworking (discomfort, irritability, and impatience). The impact on sleeping and eating were higher in women than in men.
Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al.	2021	N=1,633 teachers. Women=79,9%, men= 20,1%	Anxiety, depression and stress symptoms were found in a high percentage of teachers. Females manifested higher scores of anxieties and stress versus men. This percentage was higher in older than in younger people. The percentage was also higher in teachers of infant and primary education than in Secondary, High school or University. Teachers with job instability suffered most psychological symptoms.
Palacios-Hidalgo & Huertas-Abril	2021	Quantitative approach, quasi-experimental design (questionnaire). N= 66 pre-service primary teachers, University of Córdoba	In a group of pre-service primary teachers of English and bilingual education this research examined the self-perceived digital competence. In general, they expressed positive attitudes in relation to their digital

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		(Spain). Men= 15, 22.7%, Women= 51, 77.3%	literacy, but men surveyed indicated higher scores about their self-perceived competence on searching, accessing and selecting online content for teaching purposes.
Bordel et al.	2021	Professors (N=34), coaches (N=5) and students (N=108) from the computer engineering degree from Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. Woman= 30%. Analysis official academic results and survey.	Results showed a gender gap on females in engineering education during the lockdown (an after). Official academic results evidenced a bigger deterioration. And through the survey they manifested more stress, worry and they contributed more to their housework.
González Vidal & Gewerc	2021	Comparative education methodology. Analysis of DESI 2020, Digital Economy and Society Index	Gender gap in education was identified related to software skills, specialists in ICT specialities and females' representation in ICT specialities. STEM content and gender perspective in Education should be updated with training programs.
Torres-Gordillo & García-Martínez	2022	N= 168 students from the University of Seville. Quantitative, nonexperimental ex post facto study	Students of the Degree in Early Childhood Education expressed moderate to high level of expected employability. But expectations about salary and how the university is perceived regarding employability were higher for men.
Castellanos-Serrano et al.	2022	N= 7,477 students of the Faculty of Economics Science and Business from the 2016/2017 to 2020/2021 academic years, UNED. Analysis from UNED's student data collection	The asses of the gender gap in academic results on higher education distance learning (UNED) confirmed that women underperformed in terms of passing and scoring. This difference is bigger in females between 30 and 45 years old, that maybe would experience maternity. Women's results after COVID-19 lockdown were worse than before. A hypothesis about this would be that they still develop the same family duties.
March-Amengual et al.	2023	N=2,344 students of health-related bachelor's degrees who started their studies after the COVID-19 outbreak in Spanish. Cross-sectional study using an online survey.	The pandemic increased the desire to help others, and that was significantly higher among females and nursing and medical students. Women were predisposed to study health degrees due to the willingness to help others and vocation, whereas men's motivation was good salary prospects and job prestige.

Family & Education

- Paternal and maternal roles were different in the educational field during the confinement in time devoted to educational activities with their children. (Caballo et al., 2023; Quílez-Robres et al., 2021; Seiz, 2021). Mothers helped more to their children than fathers.

- The lack of leisure time in women, caused among other reasons by the time dedicated to children's studies, caused deep dissatisfaction (Caballo et al., 2023).
- There was a digital gap between fathers and mothers. Digital competences decreased as their age increased. Parents were the agent with the lowest digital competence versus primary and secondary school students and teachers (Guillén-Gámez et al., 2023).
- Education provided greater psychological distress and negative feelings (Matud et al., 2023).

Table 3 provides more information.

Table 3. Research about gender differences at homes related to progeny's education in pandemic times due to COVID-19.

Authors	Date	Study design	Main result connected with gender
Quílez-Robres et al.	2021	N = 165 families from the Aragonese region. Questionnaire.	In the situation of confinement by COVID-19 crisis, paternal and maternal roles were different in the educational field. 41,7% of fathers did not help to their children in academic activities, whereas 71% of mothers expressed to dedicate their time to this task. This dedication could influence in the detriment of their leisure time and anxiety levels.
Seiz	2021	N= 1,287 answers by men and women with children under age 18. Online survey national territory	During the COVID-19 lockdown, there was a gender gap on the time devoted to educational activities (homeschooling). The average showed than mothers dedicated to this issue 1h 60' while fathers dedicated 1h. Mother's high education did not influence in this result.
Caballo et al.	2023	N=1,309. Women= 85,9%, men=14,1%. Descriptive quantitative methodology (questionnaire)- national territory.	In an analysis of work-life balance of families with children attending primary school, 81,4% of the mothers said to supervised children's homework versus 35,4% of fathers. This caused deep dissatisfaction because of the lack of leisure time.
Guillén-Gámez et al.	2023	N= 786 students, teachers and parents from Andalusia. Ex-post-facto design (questionnaire applied in the second semester of the 2019/2020 academic year.	Parents were the agent with the lowest digital competence versus primary and secondary school students and teachers. All of them showed at least a basic level of digital competence. Fathers manifested a higher level than mothers, whose competence decreased as their age increased.
Matud et al.	2023	N= 1758 individuals from the general population, 50.8% women, aged between 18 and 79 years old. Questionnaire	In a study about gender differences in stressful events during the second wave of COVID-19, results in females and men associated a higher educational level with greater psychological distress and negative feelings.

Teachers & gender differences

- Female teachers manifested higher scores of anxieties and stress versus male teachers. (Garvey et al., 2023; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). This percentage was higher in older people than in younger people. The percentage was also higher in teachers of infant and primary education than in Secondary, Bachelor or University. Teachers with job instability suffered most psychological symptoms (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021)
- Female primary teachers scored higher levels than male on unpleasant feelings (irritation, nervousness, sadness, anxiety) during home confinement (Arruti et al., 2022).
- Technostress and perceived organizational support were found to be significantly correlated. Women experienced more technostress and anxiety (Solís et al., 2023).

Table 4 provides more information.

Table 4. Research about teachers & gender differences in pandemic due to COVID-19

Authors	Date	Study design	Main result connected with gender
Portillo et al.	2020	N=4586 Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education, Professional Training, and Higher Education teachers form Basque Country. Questionnaire.	Digital skills competences were the educators' greatest difficult during the lockdown. Gaps were found between teachers related to gender, age and type of schools. Females score was lower than men. Age gap indicated that continuous training is needed. Private schools' teachers manifested better digital competences than public schools' teachers. Differences between stage of Education were also identified: preschool teachers had the lower technological competences.
García Martín & García Martín	2021	N=100 teachers. Use analysis of 15 tools for teaching online by questionnaire	80% of teachers were satisfied using digital tools. There were gender differences. Female teachers used more gamification tools and male teachers showed a higher use of educative platforms and tools for collaborative content creation.
Garvey et al.	2023	N=668. Women= 495, 74.1%. Men=172, 25.7% and 1 other. Online survey, national application	Mental health of primary and secondary education teachers was more affected than pre-school, vocational training and university teachers. During strict lockdown 74.4% of Spanish teachers had some level of anxiety and 15.3% had symptoms of severe anxiety. These symptoms remain over the 15% of the teachers when they come back to face-to-face classes. Gender differences were found. 81% of women had any level of anxiety versus 55,8% of men.

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Solís et al.	2023	N= 771 teachers in different educational stages. Application online survey in various autonomous communities in Spain.	Technostress and perceived organizational support were found to be significantly correlated. Women experienced more technostress and anxiety. Private schools support was higher than public schools. Secondary education and baccalaureate technostress was higher in urban schools' teachers.
Arruti et al.	2022	N= 489 Primary Education Teachers from Basque Country. Questionnaire	Women Primary teachers scored higher levels than men on unpleasant feelings (irritation, nervousness, sadness, anxiety) during home confinement.
López Noguero et al.	2023	N= 43 headmasters and headmistresses of schools in the city of Seville. Questionnaire. Quantitative, descriptive, ex post facto, cross-sectional, and correlational.	Gender differences were found in the school management during the period of confinement. Headmasters and headmistresses were agreeing about the effectiveness of gestion and organization during pandemic, but headmistresses were more critical and self-demanding about their management. Headmistresses evidenced more difficulties for coordination with the management team that would relate to their management style. Also, they were more critic about platforms' effectiveness.
Tolppanen et al.	2023	N=218 teachers (Male: 46, Female: 172). Questionnaire	Female teachers in a pre-pandemic study showed a greater willingness to take pro-environmental measures than men. After the pandemic, the predisposition among male teachers increased, reducing this gap.

Childhood and adolescents

- In relation to anxiety regarding mathematics in primary education, the study identified greater calm when taking exams at home during confinement. Girls presented higher levels of fear and nervousness about the subject (Arnal-Palacián et al., 2022).
- The use and commitment of ICTs had a greater predisposition on male primary students (Dúo-Terrón et al., 2022).
- In the analysis of primary education students about their improved or worsened academic performance during the pandemic, 38,3% considered that their results had worsened. Of this percentage, 57.14% were boys (Prieto et al., 2023).

Table 5 provides more information.

Table 5. Research about childhood, adolescents and education in pandemic due to COVID-19

Authors	Date	Study design	Main result connected with gender
Arnal-Palacián et al.	2022	N=496 primary school students. Boys: 227 (45.8%), Girls: 269 (54.2%). Questionnaire	In relation to anxiety regarding mathematics in primary education, the study identified greater calm when taking exams at home during confinement. The girls presented higher levels of fear and nervousness about the subject.
Dúo-Terrón et al.	2022	N=924 students from the sixth grade of primary education of Ceuta (Spain) aged between 10 and 13. Questionnaire.	The use and commitment of ICTs had a greater predisposition on male primary students. They were more interested in the Internet as a resource for information. Boys were more likely to solve problems with devices or giving advice to friends or family for buying digital devices or applications.
Espejo-Sile et al.	2022	N=1,498 students. Girls=51.4%, boys= 48.6%, aged between 11 and 17 years old.	Low school performance and school suspension predicted lower compliance with COVID-19 regulations. Girls were less compliant than boys with restriction regulations due to COVID-19.
Moliner & Alegre	2022	N=368 students from 9th grade, ages 14 to 15. Data analysis pre-post pandemic (quantitative). Group discussion (qualitative)	In High School students' Mathematics achievement scores were worse during and after pandemic. No statistically significant differences were reported by gender in this fact.
Prieto et al.	2023	N=107 primary school students, 58 girls and 49 boys. Questionnaire.	In the analysis of primary education students about their improved or worsened academic performance during the pandemic, 38,3% considered that their results had worsened. Of this percentage, 57.14% were boys. There were no significant relationships between gender and school grades with the mask use on concentration and learning in schoolchildren.

4 DISCUSSION

In this work, we have conducted a systematic review that provided an analysis of the research carried out between 2020 and 2023 in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic in the field of formal education. Based on Framework ReSiste-CSH (Codina, 2020) and SALSA framework (Grant & Booth, 2009) 495 documents were found and 27 were selected.

A synthesis of the 27 selected documents has been provided and through the analysis of these works, four Principal trends about COVID-19, Gender & Education have been identified. Those trends are High Education, Gender differences at homes related to progeny’s education (Family and Education), Teachers & gender differences and Childhood & adolescents. Information in Tables provides an overview of the topic in a state of exception. This can be useful for works that analyse gender differences.

The analysis of these works confirms that there are differences based on gender and education that must be considered in crises and states of emergency such as the one experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is a digital gap that is identified among teachers, families and students. In these three groups, women show lower digital competence than men. These data are connected to the results of the European Commission's publication *Women in the Digital Scoreboard* which indicates that Spain has a low position in relation to skills associated with Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), and it also identifies a gender gap (ONTSI, 2019).

In the educational field, women, in addition to this digital gap, show higher levels of anxiety. In the family sphere, during the pandemic, women dedicated more time to attending to their children's educational tasks. Regarding the educational field, in higher education the pandemic affected the choice of careers related to care. Finally, about the situation of children and adolescents during the pandemic, in addition to the digital gap, it is important to bear in mind into account anxiety levels and how they can affect the learning of certain subjects such as mathematics. A hypothesis in relation to these results is that anxiety is related to emotional and cognitive processes (Alemany-Arrebola et al., 2020).

5 CONCLUSION

Gender differences perpetuated during the pandemic period manifest the need to continue working for gender equality. If we want a quality education as the UN point out, it is necessary to address gender differences and identify the areas in which these gaps occur in order to address them.

This work has provided evidence on research carried out during the pandemic that reveals gender differences in the educational field. The importance of co-responsibility at home, promoting co-education in students and addressing the digital gap in the three educational agents appears to be an important issue to address.

In relation to the limitations of this research, it should be noted that due to its reliability, the research of articles was carried out only in Scopus. Other works can increase the number of articles and analyse whether the identified trends are maintained, or some other line of research is found.

Regarding further research, the results obtained allow comparison with other countries and their approach to the pandemic due to COVID-19. These continue setting objectives to address the fight against inequalities.

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Note: Articles with * are selected by the systematic review.

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The Impact of the Lockdown in Youth Relationships

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ): The privileged place for young people to meet and socialise is educational institutions, leisure and public spaces. Young people (aged 15 to 25) rarely have their own space (they usually live with their families or with flatmates). During the lockdown, access to these spaces was minimised, resulting in young people becoming isolated and spending a lot of time on social media. Romantic relationships among teens changed form. Those young people who continued to meet romantically with each other had to find new ways and/or violate official government rules related to COVID-19. The lockdown deprived the entire population of the right to move and assemble freely. But in the case of young people, it also deprived them of the right to equal inherent dignity. Young people have in many cases been targeted as irresponsible, a threat to public health. The different social representations in relation to sexual possibility between young boys and girls further aggravated the personal sense of deviance and immoral identity, especially in young girls and members of the LGBTQ community.

Purpose: The research had a twofold aim: (i) to develop the mental resilience of young people, especially girls and young members of the LGBTQ community; (ii) redefining the use of public space to meet the needs of young people who are underrepresented in decision-making processes.

Method: through coordinated group discussions (participation of about 30 young people in more than 10 meetings) and through an anonymous questionnaire entitled "Me, my body and the others" (completed by 320 people from all over Greece).

Results: Young women and members of the LGBTQ community expressed a greater degree of difficulty. Group expression of problems empowered the group which proceeded to create a series of digital comics entitled "Sexu-all-ity" and to design and publish a map of the public spaces of Larissa through the perspective and desired use of young people.

Organization: The research was conducted in April-May 2020 in collaboration with the informal youth group MAKE USE. Both group members (18-30 years old) and youth workers were empowered by the process and results and started to claim their rights through a series of actions that are still ongoing.

Society: the MAKE USE group has carried out many activities to reclaim the public space from young people, has carried out information campaigns in schools and educational structures and has published the MAKE USE map which has particularly increased the representation of young people of the city in the public discourse.

Originality: Young people need to have romantic relationships on decent terms, while they do not have their own space, gives another dimension to the public space. Public space becomes the privileged field of young people's relationships which is an indisputable huma right.

Limitations / further research: due to the qualitative methodology and the specific geographical area of the survey, its results cannot be generalised. They can, however, inspire other researchers to further research.

Keywords: Gender stereotypes, romantic relationships, public space, isolation, mental health, deviant identity, youth empowerment, youth representation.

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Work, Life Balance and COVID-19: Perspectives of Employed Women in Pakistan

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ): Women have always played a crucial role in society, ensuring stability, advancement, and long-term growth. Further, women no longer fall behind in the workforce when it comes to careers in the modern world. The current study investigate the answer of the question that "Does women who are heavily involved in the home and care-giving spheres, as well as the agricultural, educational, industrial, banking, and service sectors facing what type of challenges?

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to determine the variables that working women in Pakistan faced in preserving a healthy work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Method: In order to achieve this goal, a simple random sampling technique was used to collect the sample of respondents form 39 divisions of Pakistan. Further, a self-administered questionnaire approach was used and questionnaire was distributed through online and personal visit to 450 women were randomly chosen from the 39 divisions of Pakistan who work in a variety of professions, including banking, healthcare, education, the ready-made garment industry, public and private corporations, government service, and entrepreneurship. Numerous statistical procedures, including multiple regression analysis technique along with other basic analysis tests have been used to analyze the collected data.

Results: The study discovers that Pakistani women's work-life balance has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Women's level job related stress, job satisfaction, psychological ownership and productivity are strong predictors of WLB of working women's

during COVID-19, which highlights the need for workplace assistance, flexibility, and work-life balance policies for staff members.

Organization: Findings of current study indicated that, if a work-life balance strategy should be implemented by every organization in order to preserve a positive working environment for staff members, which will increase output and job satisfaction. Moreover, current study will help the policy makers and managers in organizations to develop the sustainable policies to retain the potential women employees. Hence, this study helps the organization in sustainable development of organizations and human resources.

Society: This study will also highlight the social issues of employed women's leading the work-life balance issues and help to drive the ways to maintain the work-life balance of women's in their social as well as working life.

Originality: Current study is among the fewer studies to address the comprehensive issues of employed working women's work-life balance in Pakistan. Further, this study expands the literature and theoretical grounds of COVID-19 impacts and new norms after the COVID-19 shift.

Limitations / further research: Present study is limited to the boundaries of Pakistan. However, in future this study will conduct and generalized to the whole region of South Asia.

Keywords: job satisfaction, psychological ownership, productivity, work life balance, pakistan.

1 INTRODUCTION

Pakistan, a nation characterized by rich cultural heritage and diverse demographics, stands at a pivotal juncture in its socioeconomic trajectory. Amidst its dynamic landscape, women's participation in the labor force has emerged as a significant force driving change and progress. Historically, Pakistani women have contributed extensively to the economy, not only in traditional roles within the home and caregiving domains but also in sectors such as agriculture, industry, and services (Ali, 2018). In Pakistan, women play a significant role in various sectors of the economy, including home and caregiving, agriculture, industry, and services. Their participation in the labor force has been steadily increasing, outpacing that of men in recent years. This trend aligns with the shift in economic development paradigms, particularly influenced by Amartya Sen's capability approach. Sen's capability approach emphasizes providing equal opportunities to all individuals, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic background. It advocates for expanding the definition of development beyond traditional measures like GDP growth to encompass factors such as education, health, and overall well-being (Sen, 1999).

In recent years, there has been a noticeable surge in women's labor force participation, a trend reflecting shifting societal norms and evolving economic paradigms (World Bank, 2021). This transformation occurs within the context of broader global frameworks of development, particularly influenced by scholars like Amartya Sen and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sen's capability approach emphasizes the importance of providing equal opportunities for all individuals, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status (Sen, 1999). This approach challenges traditional notions of development, expanding the focus beyond mere economic indicators to encompass broader dimensions of well-being and human flourishing.

Aligned with these principles, the international community, including Pakistan, has committed to the SDGs, a comprehensive agenda aimed at addressing pressing global challenges and fostering sustainable development by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). The SDGs provide a roadmap for nations to tackle issues ranging from poverty and inequality to climate change and gender empowerment.

Central to the achievement of the SDGs is the recognition of infrastructure development as a critical enabler of progress (World Bank, 2019). Infrastructure, encompassing sectors such as transportation, energy, water, and sanitation, serves as the backbone of economic activity, facilitating trade, enhancing connectivity, and improving the quality of life. Importantly, investments in infrastructure have the potential to advance gender equality by creating opportunities for women's economic empowerment and social inclusion.

The three main objectives of this development agenda are closing the gender gap, women's participation in economic advancement, and gender-based opportunities and development. These are difficult goals that the entire globe must pursue. In Pakistan as well as the developing globe, this scenario gets increasingly dire. Pakistan's female labour force participation (FLFP) is significantly lower than that of peer South Asian and advanced nations, with the exception of India, which also has a low participation percentage. According to research on female labour force participation (FLFP), infrastructure development plays a beneficial role in both direct and indirect ways for female employment and participation (Cubas & Norando,2010; Chowdhury,2010; Mushtaq et al.,2013). The research also looked at how various infrastructure elements affected the participation of women in the labour sector. Nevertheless, this area of the literature is lacking, particularly when it comes to the developing countries. (Daniel et al. 2018) and (Lei et al. 2019) draw attention to the benefits of transit infrastructure on labour force participation in Lima and India.

Pakistan's transport infrastructure is appalling, with low-quality roads and no public transport options. Figure 2 shows a substantial reduction in the number of female-served public transport options, which contributes to low female participation in all economic activities. his study aims to explore the role of infrastructure development in promoting women's participation in the labor force in Pakistan. By examining the interplay between infrastructure investment, economic growth, and gender equality, this research seeks to contribute to our understanding of how strategic interventions in infrastructure can unlock opportunities for women's empowerment and drive sustainable development in the country. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses, this study aims to provide insights and recommendations that can inform policy-making and contribute to the realization of the SDGs in Pakistan's context.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Stressful environments, a manager who doesn't support you, and lengthy workdays can all lead to an imbalance between WL, according to (Amstad et al. 2011). Work-family conflicts are more detrimental to job-related results than they are to family-related ones. (Davidson 2014) identifies six essential components of work-life balance: self, time, stress, change, technology, and leisure management approaches. In general, in order to have a successful work-life balance, an individual must meet the most important physiological needs, which include getting enough sleep, eating a balanced diet, and exercising. (Khairunneezam et al. 2017) define work-life balance as a functional concept that connects employees' energy to divide their attention, time, and dynamism between work and the other significant aspects of their lives. Achieving work-life balance necessitates juggling a range of tasks and responsibilities and reducing conflicts between work and home life, according to (Isabel et al.2015). It goes beyond just allocating time between these two domains. Numerous indicators about the COVID-19 pandemic indicate that women's productive and economic life are significantly impacted. The ability of women to support their children and themselves is already hampered by this impact (ILO, 2020).

Numerous empirical students have conducted research on how work-life balance affects workers' productivity (Sivatte et al., 2015; Fapohunda, 2014; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Bloom et al., 2006). The right definition of work-life balance is now widely accepted by both companies and employees. The majority of academics have looked into work-life policies in great detail, including flexible work schedules, positive initiatives, and child care facilities offered by many businesses (Sivatte et al., 2015). According to (Telefilm North America 2012), the project's main performance factors include staff happiness, budget, technology, and adaptability. The reason these aspects are connected to the work-life balance plan is that they will affect employees' diligence and efforts. As a result, (McMahon and Pocock 2011) advise managers to "identify future needs," "ask staff for feedback," and "revise provisions as necessary." Furthermore, it was already well recognized that workers in the film industry trading unit ability, time management, and adept skills are their important performance indicators (ibid). The methods listed above may show employees' support, motivate staff members, and raise individual worker performance levels, all of which may have an effect on the operation of the business.

Job stress, characterized by overall psychological stress stemming from conflicts in one's professional life, has been extensively studied in the literature (Allen, 2000). Research by (Shahid et al. 2022) and (Amstad et al. 2011) elucidates how factors such as lengthy work hours, a demanding work environment, and a lack of managerial support can all contribute to an unbalanced work-life schedule. Importantly, conflict between work and family commitments has been found to have a greater impact on job-related outcomes than family-related conflicts. This imbalance often leads workers to experience feelings of despair and overwhelm. To address this issue, organizations should strive to maintain a flexible and supportive work environment. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced additional challenges, particularly in Pakistan, where many private organizations have resorted to measures such as reducing salaries or terminating staff to cope with operating costs during lockdowns (The Daily Star, Mar. 2020). This situation places female employees, especially those who are the primary wage earners in their families, under significant emotional and financial strain.

Furthermore, as highlighted by (Tremblay 2012), individuals with associate degrees must possess the ability to adapt to workplace and home environment changes seamlessly to mitigate stress. Embracing technological advancements can enhance workers' adaptability, efficiency, and productivity. It is imperative for companies to take responsibility for providing a work environment that prioritizes comfort, relaxation, and overall job satisfaction to help employees navigate these challenges effectively.

A state of mind known as psychological ownership is characterized by people believing that the object of ownership—whether it be tangible or immaterial—or a portion of it, belongs to them. (Kostova, Pierce, and Dirks, 2003). To focus on the workplace, psychological ownership refers to the belief that workers have that their work is their own, and because of this, they feel compelled to make significant contributions to the attainment of organizational objectives. Due to the benefits of psychological ownership, which include heightened motivation, loyalty, and corporate stewardship, they become devoted and unrepentantly productive (Joy, Pickford, & Roll, 2016). It is important to remember that psychological ownership is intrinsic (being a feeling), even when other extrinsic elements at work can have a big impact on it. There are three components to psychological ownership: connection to one's work, or affection, is one of the three aspects. It's an emotion that one associates with their work (e.g., feeling that one's organization is like a second home). Affection and psychological ownership are intimately related in an organization. An employee with a strong sense of attachment to the organization is likely to be more dedicated to its smooth operation. Since affection is an emotion, it contributes to the relationship that exists between psychological ownership and engagement at work. According to the research, people may extend their self to these objects and view them as integral components of themselves when they grow possessive feelings for significant tangible or ethereal items. They therefore make an effort to uphold, safeguard, and solidify their attachment to these items, which also benefits their mental health (Fashola, Kenku, & Obasi, 2018). Additionally, it characterizes a psychological state in which a person feels that their job is their own and that it is an extension of who they are. Workers with high work engagement levels are said to be totally present, committed, focused, and attentive in their roles at work, giving their all to their work.

Research by (Kumari 2012) highlights a significant, gender-specific association between work-life balance (WLB) and job satisfaction (JS) in the context of public sector banks in India. This finding underscores the importance of WLB initiatives in enhancing employee retention, productivity, and dedication within organizations. Similarly, a study conducted by (Yadav and Dabhade 2013) further supports this notion by demonstrating a high correlation between job satisfaction and work-life balance among working women in sectors such as banking and education. Moreover, (Lee and Noor 2017) emphasize the strong correlation between WLB and JS among working individuals, suggesting that a balanced approach to work and personal life positively impacts job satisfaction levels. These findings underscore the interconnectedness of these two concepts and highlight the importance of fostering a supportive work environment that promotes work-life balance. In contrast, (Andrade, & Kupka, 2019) point out that dissatisfied workers are more likely to exhibit behaviors such as absenteeism, tardiness, and high turnover rates, which can detrimentally affect organizational efficiency. Conversely, contented employees are motivated to perform at high levels and deliver quality service, ultimately contributing to overall organizational effectiveness. Additionally, (Nijanti et al. 2016) emphasize the importance of considering both pleasure and action as integral components of work-life balance. This suggests that achieving a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment in both professional and personal domains is essential for overall well-being and performance in the workplace.

Overall, these studies collectively underscore the importance of work-life balance in fostering job satisfaction and organizational success. By prioritizing initiatives that promote WLB and address the needs of employees, organizations can cultivate a positive work culture, enhance employee morale, and ultimately drive greater levels of productivity and efficiency.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 ushered in unprecedented challenges for individuals worldwide, as lockdown measures and social isolation became the new norm. Families, in particular, faced unique hardships, with working mothers bearing a disproportionate burden due to their dual responsibilities of work and caregiving. The pandemic exacerbated existing gender role compartmentalization, with women facing heightened pressure to fulfill socially prescribed roles as the "Ideal worker" in the workplace and the "Ideal mother" and "Ideal wife" at home (Hamid et al., 2019).

As the pandemic unfolded, its toll on global health and well-being became increasingly evident. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), the cumulative number of confirmed COVID-19 cases surpassed 601 million, resulting in over 6.4 million deaths. Lockdowns and physical distancing measures led to disruptions in various aspects of daily life, including education, as schools and universities closed their doors. The shift to remote work and online education became necessary adaptations to continue operations amidst the crisis (Alon et al., 2020).

Scholarly research underscores the unequal impact of COVID-19 on women, who grapple with the dual demands of their jobs and increased household responsibilities. The pandemic has exacerbated work-family conflicts, as women navigate the competing demands of their professional and domestic roles, including childcare, household chores, and eldercare (Gao & Sai, 2020; Champeaux et al., 2020). The pressure to uphold standards of "good mothering" has led many women to prioritize family duties over work obligations, hindering their career advancement and academic pursuits (Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2021).

In Pakistan, where patriarchal norms prevail, the pandemic further exacerbated gender disparities, particularly for working women. The enforcement of lockdown measures drastically altered work and home dynamics, with women shouldering a greater burden of household responsibilities due to limited access to external support, such as maid assistance (Mahmood, Jafree & Qureshi, 2022). Moreover, entrenched gender biases within academia present additional hurdles for female faculty members, impeding their career progression and academic success (Bhatti & Ali, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, further compromising women's ability to maintain work-life balance and navigate the complexities of their professional and personal lives (Ali & Ullah, 2021; Shahid, 2021).

This research seeks to explore the specific challenges faced by female academics in Pakistan in maintaining work-life balance during the pandemic and examine the implications of these challenges on their well-being and professional trajectories. By shedding light on these issues, this study aims to inform interventions and policies aimed at supporting women's empowerment and gender equality in the academic sector and beyond.

H1: There is an association between employee productivity and WLB.

H2: There is an affiliation between Job Stress and WLB.

H3: There is a relation between employee's job based psychological ownership and WLB.

H4: There is a relation between employee job satisfaction and WLB.

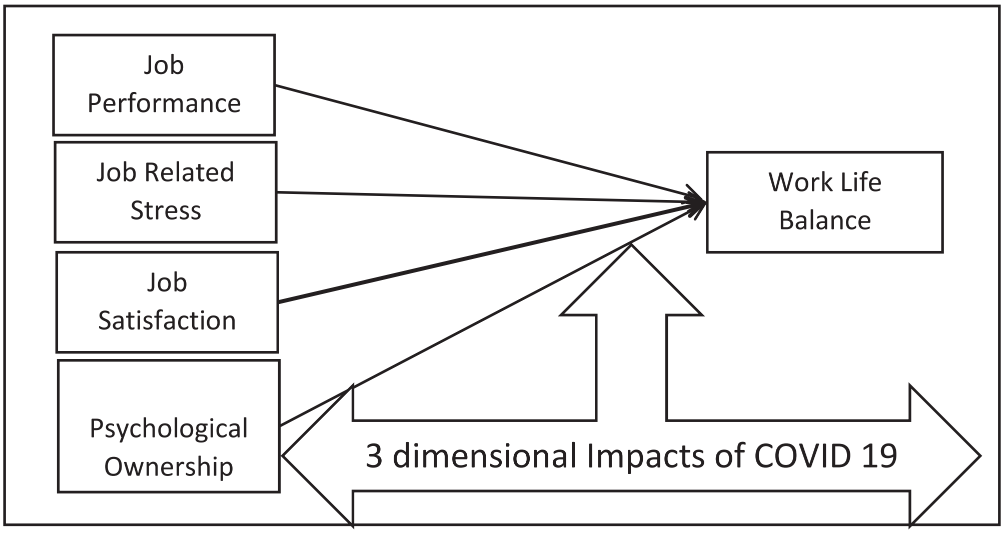

Figure 1. Research model

3 METHODOLOGY

The present study is a descriptive research endeavor that aims to investigate the work-life balance experiences of female employees in Pakistan. A sample of 450 female employees from diverse public and private organizations across the country has been selected through random sampling. Both primary and secondary data are utilized in this research.

For primary data collection, surveys were employed to gather relevant information from working women. Questionnaires were distributed, and interviews were conducted to collect firsthand insights. The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale, where respondents rated each item on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Additionally, 100 respondents were individually interviewed to supplement the survey data. Secondary data, comprising pertinent material from books, journals, newspapers, and magazines, was gathered to augment the primary research findings.

Data analysis is conducted using the SPSS 20 software, employing descriptive statistics to summarize the collected data. Additionally, reliability analysis, multiple regression analysis, ANOVA (analysis of variance), and hypothesis testing are employed to gain further insights into the research questions and hypotheses. By employing a robust methodology encompassing both primary and secondary data sources, along with various statistical techniques for data analysis, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the work-life balance experiences of female employees in Pakistan.

4 RESULTS

Reliability and Validity of data

According to (Cooper and Schinder 2001), reliability is the consistency of a collection of items used to measure the research variables. A popular technique for assessing internal consistency, or how closely connected a collection of things is to one another, is Cronbach's alpha (Cooper & Schinder, 2001). For Cronbach's alpha to be considered dependable, its satisfactory value must exceed 0.60 (Malhotra, 2002). Cronbach's alpha in this study is.880 (Table 2), indicating that the scale's internal consistency is at a reasonable level.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.870	.870	4

Regression Analysis

The value of R (0.912) and R Square (0.845) reflect that there is significant relationship between IV and DV with the standard error of 0.402. Further, Table 3 indicate that during the COVID 19 WLB of Pakistani working women's nearly 85% dependent on job satisfaction, productivity, job stress and psychological ownership. While the remaining 15% is dependent on some other factors that are not included in this study.

Table 2. Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.912	0.845	.819	.40120

Table 3. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	16.675	4	3.452	30.120	.000
Residual	81.791	49	.112		
Total	98.466	53			

Regression Coefficients

The beta values in Table 5 can be used to identify the relative contribution of each predictor to the model. Put differently, one may utilize the beta coefficients to elucidate the respective significance of the 4 dimensions or components in contributing to the variation in the elements influencing Pakistani women's work-life balance during the COVID-19 epidemic.

Table 4. Co-efficients

Model	Un-standarized Coefficent		Standarized Coefficent	T	Sig
	B	Std.Error	Beta		
1 Constant	.184	.255		.624	.462
Productivity	. 319	.112	.314	2.930	0.201
Job Stress	.815	.201	.452	10.019	.000
Job satisfaction	. 329	.056	.280	7.532	.000
Psychological Ownership	.445	.100	.259	6.451	0.101

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the significant impact of COVID-19 on the work-life balance (WLB) of women in Pakistan. Through multiple regression analysis, it is evident that each underlying dimension considered in the study holds significance, with all coefficients showing positive associations. As a result, the alternative hypothesis (Ha), positing that COVID-19 has a substantial impact on Pakistani women's WLB, is supported, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0), which suggested no impact of COVID-19 on the WLB of women in Pakistan.

The regression model successfully predicts the variance of WLB in relation to the four predictors or independent variables considered in the study. These variables have demonstrated a significant influence on the WLB of working women in Pakistan, as indicated by the calculated R, R2, modified R2, F ratio, beta, and t values.

Overall, the results confirm the expected relationship between COVID-19 and women's work-life balance, highlighting the importance of addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic to support the well-being and productivity of women in the workforce. Moving forward, targeted interventions and policies aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of COVID-19 on WLB are imperative to ensure the continued empowerment and advancement of women in Pakistan's labor market.

5 CONCLUSION

Work-life balance is a crucial concept that supports employees in effectively managing their time and attention between work responsibilities and other important aspects of their lives. Achieving work-life balance entails dedicating regular time to activities such as socializing with friends, spending time with family, engaging in community service, pursuing personal growth, practicing self-care, and participating in non-work-related interests. When employees are able to strike a balance between their professional and personal lives, they experience greater satisfaction and well-being.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of work-life balance for women has become increasingly apparent. Studies have shown that women's work-life balance is closely linked to factors such as job stress, job satisfaction, and psychological well-being. Organizations that prioritize work-life balance policies and provide ample opportunities for female employees contribute to a healthier and more supportive work environment.

However, the pandemic has presented unique challenges for women, particularly those in academic roles. Traditional household responsibilities have intensified, exacerbating the already existing gender roles. The shift to virtual learning environments has added further strain, leading to role conflict for women who are expected to fulfill the roles of "ideal workers" at their jobs and "ideal mothers" and "ideal wives" at home. These societal expectations have caused psychological distress and contributed to a severe form of gender role limitation among women academicians.

The findings of this study align with Butler's "theory of performativity," which suggests that individuals are constrained by socially imposed roles and expectations. The pandemic has exacerbated these existing hierarchies, highlighting the need for policy reforms to address gender disparities in work-life balance. It is imperative for both government and private institutions in Pakistan to prioritize work-life policies that support the well-being and professional advancement of women. By implementing supportive measures and fostering a more inclusive work culture, organizations can create environments where all employees, regardless of gender, can thrive both personally and professionally.

The research implications suggest a pressing need for organizational policy development to address work-life balance challenges faced by women in Pakistan. This includes implementing tailored policies such as flexible work arrangements and childcare support. Gender equality initiatives are crucial for promoting equitable environments, while fostering a supportive work culture that values employee well-being. Providing professional development opportunities and advocating for policy reforms at the national level are essential steps toward creating an inclusive work environment that empowers women to succeed both personally and professionally.

Future research should delve deeper into the specific types of work-life balance policies and practices implemented by organizations in Pakistan. Understanding the effectiveness of various policies, such as flexible work arrangements, childcare support, and remote work options, can provide valuable insights for organizations aiming to enhance work-life balance for their employees. Conducting longitudinal studies would allow researchers to track changes in work-life balance among women in Pakistan over time, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term impacts of factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and evolving societal norms. Comparative studies between different sectors, industries, and organizational sizes can shed light on variations in work-life balance experiences among women in Pakistan. Exploring differences in work-life balance challenges and support mechanisms across sectors can inform targeted interventions and policies. In-depth qualitative research, such as focus group discussions or in-depth interviews, can provide rich insights into the lived experiences of women navigating work-life balance in Pakistan. Qualitative approaches can uncover nuanced perspectives, contextual factors, and coping strategies employed by women in managing work and personal life responsibilities.

The study's reliance on a sample of female employees from various public and private organizations in Pakistan may introduce sampling bias and limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should strive to include a more diverse and representative sample to ensure broader applicability.

The study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between variables. Longitudinal research designs would provide a more robust understanding of the dynamic nature of work-life balance among women in Pakistan.

The study may not fully capture the influence of cultural, societal, and organizational factors on women's work-life balance experiences in Pakistan. Future research should consider contextual nuances and cultural dynamics to provide a more nuanced understanding of work-life balance challenges and solutions.

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The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees and Labor Migrants Women

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Abstract

Research Question: What is the negative impact of the COVID 19 on the refugees and migrants' woman?

Purpose: The chapter deals with the most acute situation of the 21st century caused by a new type of infectious disease called COVID-19. It highlights the situation of such vulnerable groups of society as refugees, asylum seekers, and labor migrants, which even worsens their tough living conditions. In an alarming time of global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, major international actors are calling for increased protection of the most vulnerable groups, including victims of trafficking, migrants, and refugees, and advocate greater access to healthcare for all people regardless of their social and migration status. The purpose of the research is to find out the ways and solutions of the negative impact. Moreover, its goal is to highlight the mechanisms that can be implemented to protect migrants' rights.

Method: The research is based on the following research methods of political and social studies: method of analysis; the observation and evaluation methods. It is based on the research, analytical works, books, and articles written in the field. As for the theoretical framework here we can say that mostly it is based on the Theories of Migration and Mobility, the Concept of Transnational Migration, and the theory of Human Rights.

Results: The work shows that during the COVID 19 the rights of minorities, especially women are severely violated, since the first and the most utmost is that they are shut it the refugees' camps with very poor sanitary conditions, where the virus and other infection disease can easily spread. Moreover, they have very limited access to the medical units and educational activities.

Organization: Since the organization is called Multicultural Group, it has a great interest to monitor the rights of minorities and to the process of integration.

Society: We have to admit that the wellbeing of society is connected with the state wellbeing and security. Since if the society is secure and its rights are protected it means that internal situation of the state is stable.

Originality: The originality of the paper is that in the period of the world's new challenges the representatives of vulnerably groups appear in very acute situation, and that the governments were ready neither for the COVID 19 nor for the larch surges of refugees.

Limitation / further research: The organization is going to monitor the situation and conduct the further research in this area.

Keywords: refugees, migrants, COVID 19, women, politics, government, healthcare units.

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Impact of the COVID-19 on the Lost Millennials – the Gendered Aspects of the Situation of 25+ NEETs

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ): What is the gender-based aspects of the situation of 25+ NEETs in the partner countries? What kind of impact did the COVID-19 crisis have on the 25+ NEETs?

Purpose: The project *Lost Millennials – Transnational research network for the evaluation of initiatives targeting 25+ NEETs* is a research project under the second call of the Fund for Youth Employment of the EEA and Norway Grants. The project has focused on a regularly neglected group of the generation of Millennials: young people aged 25-29 not in employment or education and training (25+ NEETs). This generation started their working life shortly after the economic crisis of 2008, perceiving uncertainty and lack of security for work and wellbeing, they are more likely to be inactive or in precarious jobs.

Method: There were multiple researches carried out during the project, thus the utilised methods were diverse as well: literature review, expert and stakeholder interviews, data analysis, and project evaluation, mapping of policies and initiatives.

Results: Every single country in the project exhibits a gender gap in its rate of 25+ NEETs with higher rates of women NEETs**.** Notably, the size of the gender gap differs for NEETs across different age categories; older NEETs show larger gender gaps. A reason for the overrepresentation of women in these NEETs rates might be marriage, family formation and care responsibilities. The pandemic also had different effects on different genders, which were in some cases further amplified by the safety measures and were not lessened by the support measures.

Society: The results of the project have indicated three main aspects: 25+ NEETs are a very heterogeneous group; there are content and financial insufficiencies of existing policies and programmes affecting them; and there is insufficient emphasis on the assessment of such policies and programmes.

Originality: This group of vulnerable people is in many cases invisible policy-wise, and usually not treated as a group with common challenges and in need of dedicated effort.

Limitations / further research: There are vast differences between countries in the composition of this group and the policy-environment, thus comparison and EU-level strategies are hard to make. Further research would be beneficial to address the matter even more thoroughly.

Keywords: NEET, employment, gender gap, COVID-19.

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COVID 19: Private as a Projection of Extraordinary: Crisis as an Opportunity

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ): This article deals with the concept of "private" as a unique space, producing state of emergency and its implications. Main hypothesis here represents "crisis" as an opportunity for their successful overcoming. Special attention will be given to "private" in feminist perspective as a sphere, dominated and described as predominantly feminine. So the main research question here will be whether is possible to use the concept of private as a generator and mirror of social change?

Purpose: This article is all about women and not only about them. Its main purpose is about bringing possibility to see crisis as a challenge, abundance and turbulence at the same time. There are things known and there are things unknown and in/between are the doors. So, this article pretends to be a journey through the two years pandemic and the possibilities that collective trauma as COVID-19 brings to our common fruitful being together.

Method: The methods used for achieving that purpose are mainly of the sphere of feminist narrative ethics and content analysis of related documents, stories and papers.

Results: The pandemic measures restricted our possibilities for travel and free movement as it has never been before (with series of changing measures compromising the very idea of travel) and our need to be together face to face, which changed job and education significantly. Self-isolation, so popular in many spiritual teachings and practices, became a norm for moral behaviour. Many of these restrictions seemed controversial and bring people confusion and distress. They had great impact on the private sphere, where there was a popular saying that this lockdown left you either pregnant, single, broke or fat. Pandemic reformulated our closest relationship, bringing us with our family, but distancing from our friends and colleagues. Lockdowns gave us time for love but also wars at home due to spending long periods with the same people at the same place. There was baby boom and even online marriages, but also high divorce or break up rate. For some couples, for example these with toxic patterns or a history of domestic violence, lockdowns were much more risky than getting the COVID-19 infection itself.

Organization: The research impact of such survey is both valuable for at least two kind of social actors-analysis and benefits for public sphere are impossible without considering the value and deep meaning of private. In fact, it is impossible to think of work labour without considering the importance of private.

Society: The social impact of such research affects not only so-called woman`s spaces such as home, children, relations, kitchen but in fact the interconnectedness of all beings. Feminist perspective is extremely valuable, but often neglected.

Originality: May be the originality here lays in the author`s point of view-to describe crisis as something fruitful and from a feminist perspective

Limitations / further research: Some limitations are connected with the specific of feminist narrative ethics.

Keywords: private, state of emergency, crisis, transition, life.

1 INTRODUCTION

A crisis is a phenomenon or set of phenomena in a personal, corporate, institutional or societal, an unstable or dangerous condition affecting an individual, a group, a community or society as a whole. It is considered to carry negative changes to security, the economy, politics, society or the environment, especially when the phenomena occur suddenly. Often referred to as a different variant to conceptualize crisis is the Chinese word (and symbol) for crisis, meaning both 'danger' and 'opportunity'. Therefore, the present report aims to outline the crisis as a particular kind of projection of the personal, the private, the authentic and the related projections of the extraordinary and the exceptionalism. In a sense, the awareness of one's own limits is also possibility of overcoming them, and the path, truth, and life are existential characteristics for each of us and at the same time a source of specific attitude and orientation to the world.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

A distinctive feature of fundamental feminist approaches both in the field of bioethics and in that of ethics at large, is that they almost always suppose induction, i.e. the particular and the personal (‘the personal is political’) experience, the situational and the embodied almost always take the lead. Feminist bioethics has the goal to answer an exceptionally important and, in a feminine way, practical question, namely how this induction functions and what it constructs in the actual, embodied life of both sexes, what is the social and political structure which defines it and, in whose framework, it exists (Scully 2010b: 136). The answer, in my opinion, supposes action that is practically feasible and introduces the great ethical narrative and its central dilemma between what is and what should be, i.e. what can be done.

Within the framework of bioethical discourse, experience is not just a reason for the emergence of bioethical problems, but also a turning point with regard to their ethical re-assessment and potential solution. The process of moral decision-making reflects two very important determinants in the ethics of care: the relationship and the emotions of Susan Dodds and Ruth Groenhaut unfold a current combining both the ethics of care and a notion of dignity. (Dodds 2007; Groenhaut 2004). They underline the meaning of human nature's holistic essence, the particular social contexts of individuals and emotions in the ethical sphere, the impossibility of taking into account actions outside the motives of individuals' personal stories and the contexts in which they emerged. They define some of the situation's most important ethical parameters and, in a sense, distance themselves from abstract ethical principles on a normative level. Thus, for example, despite the various currents in the ethics of care, most of them have as their point of departure the understanding that care is fundamental in the evolution of human societies because no human being would be able to survive without it. In this sense, care is always directed towards something particular whose necessities require an answer, and thus represents personal responsibility. Relating a concept of this kind to the notion of 'philanthropy,' for example, would easily prove the latter's groundlessness and inexpedient in a very feminist, indeed feminine, way, insofar as most philanthropists happen to be men.

Feminism's situatedness stirs up a particular ethical conflict in at least three regards:

immersed in their individual situation, women practically ignore the morally problematic

trends which such a situation presents, i.e. a process of decision-making fragmentation is

observed. On the other hand, common moral prescriptions and criticism remain indifferent towards the specifics of individual experiences and circumstances and, compared to universal ethical standards and categories, the value of individual narrative is questioned because this narrative could reduce ethics to the subjective assessment of the situation depending on individual preferences, without extant objective criteria. Singular experiences and narratives lead to bias and can consequently be criticised as insufficient grounds for moral choices and decisions. In this sense, feminist authors insist on a more different and more flexibly constructed concept of autonomy, as opposed to the one usually utilised in bioethical discourse. The traditional concept of autonomy does not take into consideration the details of individual world experience. In this sense, the feminist critique of the problematic notion of objectivity commands attention.

Within the subject-object dichotomy, the objective exists independently of the knowing subject, objective knowledge supposes a perspective from nowhere or beside our own situatedness, emotional distance from the object of knowledge, value-neutrality, control and representations whose content is independent of the knowing subject. In a nutshell, this cluster of ideas occupies all that we are used to assume as scientific knowledge at least since the middle of the 17 th -18 th century, and in a certain aspect represents the object of feminist critique as an insufficient normative ideal that explains how science works. In the first place, the subject-object dichotomy supposes a clear distinction between the knower and the known. However, when the object of study is the knowing subject itself, it becomes clear that a significant part of its features has been socially constructed and cannot be value neutral.

According to Antony, a productive approach would differentiate productive from misleading attitudes and values without necessarily being deprived of these. (Anthony 1993) Emotional distance, functioning as an established scientific ideal, could itself lead to epistemological errors. Value-neutral scholarship, particularly in the sphere of social science and the humanities, is practically impossible, and the ideal of such scholarship is delusional. More than anything else, the object of study bears witnesses to our point of view, individuality, attitudes and preferences, and the very process of study reflects our own internal compass, choice of proposed goals, methods, hypotheses and proofs (Anderson 1995, 2004, Longino 2002). Within the framework of controlled observation methods which provide the objects with the possibility to be what they are, feminist authors contrast observation through participation, dialogue, active political commitment, and care, united by the value of cooperation with regard to the objects of study, whose final goal is self-empowerment (if they are humans). And since the scholar's personality has influence on the process of selecting and presenting the facts, and on the conclusions drawn from them, it bestows upon the scholar the responsibility to defend their observations and findings, which in turn enriches scholarship with an invaluable contribution, namely consistency and authenticity.

Thus, for example, many feminist authors point to and defend as necessary the emotional engagement with the object of study (Jaggar 1989, Anderson 2004). Ethnographers should hence gain the trust of the subjects in order that the latter be discovered, and the collected data – understood. Keller introduces the concept of dynamic objectivity, in which the emotional attention and care towards the object serve to enhance its perception. (Keller 1985)

Emotional involvement includes reflection, i.e. the ability to walk in the studied object's shoes, as far as this is possible, and also to support the object's inclusivity in the world. As a matter of fact, the concepts for the critique of objectivity proposed b feminism would aid and contribute towards the egalitarisation and engagement of scholarship out in the world, with a focus on those that it studies, as opposed to the enclosed boundaries of scholarly communities within which scientific knowledge perpetuates and reproduces itself. To illustrate this critique of objectivity, feminist authors have at their disposal a major trump – their own lives. Between the trump and the objects of their scholarship there always exists a distinctive wholeness. In a certain sense, metaphorically speaking, feminist ideas are always conceived in the realm of the personal, the particular and the tangible – in their own kitchen, and onwards to the kitchen of the world. Negotiation and finding one's own voice represents an exceptionally important aspect of feminist philosophy.

3 METHOD

The narrative perspective, or the idea of narrative representation as a way of making sense of the world and experience, extends beyond psychology to most of the humanities - literary criticism, sociology, anthropology, political science, history, philosophy, etc. Metaphorically speaking, according to narrative psychology, man is the author of his identity, but just as the writer uses the ready-made words and grammatical rules available in the language to create his unique work, so each person uses the "collective stories" and narrative frameworks available in a given culture to create his unique story. According to narrative psychology, each story is a separate reality, a separate "possible world" as Bruner calls it, a separate interpretation (of the world, one's own life, etc.) (Bruner, 1986). In contemporary Western society, because of the pluralism of values, one lives surrounded by multiple stories (narrative frameworks for perceiving experience), "possible worlds," composing from all of them and from one's own experience one's own story, or narrative identity. In other words, narrative is taken as a means of representation, but also of *creating* reality, of meaning. Cognition is therefore subjective, mediated by language, and the world does not exist 'in itself' but there are as many worlds as there are people to perceive external reality.

In the eleven essays in Narrative psychology: the storied nature of human conduct (the first publication explicitly devoted to narrative psychology), Sarbin defines the purpose of narrative psychology as the study of the ways in which people make sense of the world through stories. Sarbin discovered the following new research areas in psychology: narrative creation, narrative telling, and perception of/through narrative. (Sarbin, 1986) The primary mechanism by which the social environment exerts influence is language. It is in language that different social discourses, narrative frameworks, are 'encoded'.

Within the narrative, the individual integrates his reconstructed notion of the past, the present and the imagined future - and these three contexts exist in a bizarre unity, simultaneously and non-linearly in human consciousness. If he succeeds in changing the narrative of the past, the individual also changes his present and future, and vice versa: if he changes the narrative of the present, he also changes the narrative of the past. In fact, changing the narrative is possible when it is realized and not limited by the emotions one has experienced. In this sense, a pandemic can be an occasion to concentrate either on the lacks and the inevitable losses, or on what is available and what we gain by rethinking it. Awareness of the limits of personal stories while sharing them can and does serve as a tool for social change. What do I mean?

Narratives have the power to shape the ways in which individuals interact. In the developmental processes of societies, the sharing of stories and experiences builds trust, cultivates norms, transfers knowledge, and creates emotional bonds between people. Storytelling is the sharing of knowledge through narratives and humour that communicates lessons, ideas, and concepts; in short, it connects characters, constructing them as protagonists, shapes identity, and last but not least, motivates action (Ganz, 2001), especially in moments of challenge related to finding alternatives. Storytelling uses emotions as a resource to accomplish goals. In this sense, the two most important components are the storytellers and the listeners - it is they who lend credibility to the narrative. There are three main motifs in any narrative: the story of self, the story of us, and the story of the present. In a sense, stories reflect, but they also simultaneously create reality within the narrative itself. In this sense, motivating the sharing of stories and overcoming barriers to knowledge is key (Davies, 2002).

Stories also have some undeniable advantages over facts, opinions or answers to direct questions (Doty, 2003).At first, they function in the social environment as mechanisms for negotiating truths and as social spaces in which the storyteller, by sharing, benefits from both the attention and the silence of the group, i.e., gains the feeling of being listened to. Last but not least, stories create emotional safety and distance between actual events and their narrative. The ability of narrative to convey meaning, joining the world, is in fact the very life-giving essence of the constructed world. The biographical moment is present in every act of creation, in every work of art. Even in science, which we already know cannot be completely "value neutral" or objectified and alienated to infinity by the powers of the subject itself.

According to Hilde Lindemann Nelson, two components make up the narrative approach: moral principles are modified depending on the context and the situation always presupposes a narrative form or structure in order to make moral sense· (Lindemann Nelson 1997a) One of the guiding ideas of narrative psychology is that humans perceive significant events not simply in their factualness (i.e., not objectively and scientifically), but have an underlying need to give *meaning* and *organization* to these events by "situating" them within a more general framework of meaning, time, and value, namely organizing events in the form of a story or narrative that has temporal coherence, meaning coherence, and value coloration. Stories are, first and foremost, given from the outside. One key characteristic of stories, however, is that they are subject to interpretation. In other words, stories are culturally given, but their *meaning* is subject to interpretation. It is in the interpretation and the giving of subjective meaning that the role of the individual lies. The possibilities of the narrative approach are manifold: from reading stories (becoming familiar with cases) that affect us and enrich our moral perception, to telling stories (giving moral meaning to experience and lived experience), to comparing stories (casuistry) and using linguistic analysis, and we come to provoking stories or so-called cases (Nussbaum, 1992, 1995, Lindemann Nelson 1997a).

To some extent, this perspective ties in with postmodernism, in relation to which truths are many and, at the very least, more than one. The main goal here is, the maintenance of a constant and open dialogue between different truths, the creation of an open, moral space (Rorty 1989).

One possible aspect of this perspective is one against which sufferers should be able to tell their story, without the risk of being calculated within average cases- that is, without being placed into categories and quick explanations (Frank 1995) .

In this sense, the fundamental and common point of all these approaches, is that of 'speaking', which however always takes place in the form of an open dialogue with the other. The very act of sharing enriches and expands the moral experience, bringing back the singular cases, and the exception into part of the big picture. Butler is one of the main authors of feminist theories of narrative identity, one of the most important strands of contemporary feminist theories of the self (Butler, 2005). Cavarero popularized the "narrative self" as an alternative to the self-constituting subject in traditional philosophy (Cavarero, 1997)

This self does not excel in terms of self-telling; on the contrary, others may actually have a better view of the self. For this reason, self-telling must occur in a communal, political context. Subjectivity is necessarily directed at others. Butler, drawing in part on Cavarero's views, suggests that the self is continuously constructed through giving an account of itself to others. Memory has long been seen as a site of self-identification, and the telling of life story is exclusively linked to memory. However, feminists argue that narrative and memory are relative, often involving shared social practice (Brison 2002; Campbell 2003)

Rather than proclaiming an ideal of self-knowledge that presupposes a fixed self that the reliable, rational knower locates at the heart of everyday life, feminist narrative theorists advocate for self-cultivation within contextual practices.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Towards realms of private: meaning of healing

Medicine is defined by the practice of healing, but this understanding of healing is confined to physical explanations. Literally, ‘to heal’ means to make ‘sound or whole’ and stems from the root ‘haelen,’ the condition or state of being ‘hal,’ i.e. ‘whole.’ ‘Hal’ is also the root of ‘holy,’ defined as ‘spiritually pure’ (Egnew, 1994). More often than not, healing is considered an individual experience, as opposed to a collective one. It is about overcoming the sense of loss or isolation due to a traumatic reaction to some physical or psychological event. According to Thomas Egnew, it is not necessary for respondents to associate wholeness with physical health or the cure of disease. Thus, healing is independent of illness, impairment, cure of disease, or death. It is about regaining your place and connectedness with the world, it is about feeling well despite illness, so it is creating a safe space within yourself without pain or suffering. According to most authors, such as Michael Maede, the lost home that we are seeking is ourselves; it is the story we carry within ourselves (Maede, 2012). So, the key to healing, whether it is an individual or collective goal, is to be able to tell the world this story. Thus, healing is indeed a kind of narrative. Bernie Siegel notes that healing is a reinterpretation, in a sense, of life because it transforms brokenness and guides patients toward their lost connection with themselves, others, and the world (Siegel, 2013). It is hence very important not only to be able to find, research, and accept the story of your life but also to receive continuous care during the process, to win listeners. It is about accepting the past without judgement, fear, or pain and creating a new story. During this process of care and healing, however, both patient and physician can be open and vulnerable in sharing together an emotional, safe space. So healing is about connection, words, voice, letting in, and letting go. The mystery of health here is that one can feel whole again even if he or she is dying. It is about the integrity of the body, soul, and mind. For Carl Hammerschlag harmony occurs ‘when what you know, and what you say, and what you feel are in balance’ (Hammerschlag 2012: 45). Brene Brown defines this phenomenon as ‘wholeheartedness’, some call it authenticity (Brown, 2012). But to achieve it after a traumatic event, we have to open the door to ourselves and we must express outside all that we find inside. For this purpose, we need light, a mirror, and scissors to cut the knit.

The Extraordinary: first year of the pandemic

There are things known and there are things unknown and in-between are the doors. So, this article intends to be a journey through the two years of the pandemic and the possibilities that a collective trauma such as COVID-19 brings to our fruitful being together. 2020 was a unique year that we all will remember because we simply cannot forget it. It had 29 days in February, 300 days in March, and 5 years in April. A year, written by Stephen King and directed by Tarantino, with a score by Yoko Ono. A paradoxical year, which unites and produces impossible oppositions and made a complete mess of our time and space perception. From a bioethical perspective, this year was a real treasure, transforming so-called case studies into norms, and turning the state of exception into a rule for all of us. A year that made the impossible real and imaginable for all. This year reminds me that all our knowledge, our experience, and instincts, are very much needed in times of crisis. Not only in academia but in fact, most of all outside of it. If I have to describe this year, I would say that the main feeling was that we were all in this together. Our freedom of movement was suddenly restricted because of the safety measures and our precious, biological life which according to Giorgo Agamben is just an abstraction, was defined as the highest security priority and biovalue (2020). We were all in lockdown. To defend our biological existence and to survive was necessary to impose restrictions. And after that to begin asking why. Self-isolation and social distancing became claims of responsible citizenship and personhood. They are basic concepts in many spiritual teachings and as such, can be used in this way. But their mandatory and obligatory character turns them also into some kind of voluntary house arrest. We are all different, according to the motto of a photo exhibition devoted to this pandemic year. And we responded to the sudden lockdown in March in different ways. There were jokes. There were depressions. Some suffered while others got used to it quickly. There were long phone conversations or candlelight dinners in front of the webcam. There were partings and there were love stories. Life during lockdown was what anyone of us had ever experienced during the period. This was an adventure every one of us will long remember. For some of us, it was too intense. For others, it was a survival test. There were also people who saw it as an opportunity as well as people who saw it as yet another challenge. Because we people are all different.

The synthesis of public (norm) and private (incorporation), profane and sacral, open (on air), and closed (online) generated entirely new identities, among which is one of the corona coasters. My hero is ordinary. The pandemic hero or the so-called corona coaster one day was loving his bubble, doing workouts, baking banana bread, and going for long walks. The next day he was crying, drinking gin for breakfast, and missing people he did not even like. All that within 24 hours. We had macro narratives or norms, which can be described as a thesis – for example, wash your hands – and we had micro narratives, which were the ways we incorporated the macro narratives into our lives. There was humour, indeed, and there were some good ideas. For example, memes showing a pregnant woman who was asked about the father, and she replied ‘I don’t know because he was wearing a mask.’. It sounds amusing but such kinds of advice were given to people by the health authorities.

In 2020 we had some notions of freedom and fear but on a relatively subtle level. The pandemic measures restricted our possibilities for travel and free movement as never before, compromising our very need to be together face to face, and changed employment and education significantly. Self-isolation, so popular in many spiritual teachings and practices, became a norm for moral behaviour. Many of these restrictions seemed controversial and brought people confusion and distress. They had a great impact on the private sphere, where there was a popular saying that this lockdown left you either pregnant, single, broke, or fat. The pandemic reformulated our closest relationships by bringing us even closer to our family but distancing us from our friends and colleagues. Lockdowns gave us time for love but also wars at home due to spending long periods with the same people in the same place.

There was a baby boom and even online marriages, but also a high divorce or break-up rate. For some couples, for example these with a history of domestic violence, lockdowns were much riskier than getting the infection itself. There was a significant increase in such cases not only in Europe but also worldwide. For women to work from home was not an easy task because their workload and responsibilities doubled and combined the daily house chores, time with the family, and the job itself. All at the same time and in the same place. In domestic violence cases, logically, due to a large amount of time spent together, time for conflicts also increased. Stress caused by the pandemic, the radical changes brought about by the new ways of work and life, social isolation, and the decline of public spaces were frustrating factors that accounted for one of the most common family issues, such as domestic violence. And while the lives of such women were in real danger, other couples had to deal with less difficult but also troublesome situations and questions, for example, whether or where to go with their children.

Restrictions were crucial to some small and local businesses and very hard on public services such as restaurants, cafés and so. Many families endured hardships related to the loss of income or jobs. Many couples are of mixed origin or live separated, in different places. Lockdowns and travel restrictions were a real challenge to them because they did not know where it will be possible to see and be with each other. This could be regarded as a possibility to rethink long-distance relationships and their place in current affairs. Because we still need to see each other face to face. For working parents, it was a possibility to spend more time with their children and a matter of accepting to admit how difficult is to be a worker, mother, and teacher at the same time. For single parents, it was a time of survival – trying to keep their jobs, manage their work schedules, and find their rhythm and inner peace in times of chaos. For many of them, their work was not on secure basis or impossible to do at home. Often, they could not rely on the help of babysitters or grandparents, and in some cases, their children did not have mobile devices or laptops to study online at home. As a mother, I will also remember long the spring of 2020 when I was at home, working three jobs and raising two sons in 1st and 7th grades. In times of crises, the vulnerable became even more vulnerable and it is a matter of common solidarity to help, share and give hope to each other.

Fortunately, most parents and children survived not only the virus, but also the measures. These were the tiny, little, and gentle micro narratives of the private space. The biggest macro narratives – norms, statistics, measures – seemed sometimes confusing even for the people legitimised to approve and promote them. But we were just in the beginning and everything was somehow uncertain and subtle. There was a popular joke that we need lockdowns because they work, and we need a second lockdown because the first one did not work. Months later, Hastings Centre published a survey that confirms the data that the restrictions did not work and even caused significant collateral damage (Herby, Jonung, and Hanke, 2022).

Some of the measures bordered on the absurd. For example, you were allowed to go for a short walk with your dog, but not with your child. As a result, the colours of the world looked brighter than ever due to reduced air pollution and transportation. You were not allowed to go to a mountain or a park, but schoolyards or cemeteries remained open. We all had to adapt in more or less forced or subtler ways. For some, security came first, while others longed for freedom and tried to both follow the rules and work around them. As spring turned to summer and was then followed by autumn, we realised that natural cycles cannot be suspended. May will be May and the leaves will fall in the autumn, as usual.

Maybe the most significant cultural change in 2020 was having to rediscover the simple fact that we all are mortal. We began to speak of death and somehow appreciate life. The topic of death was not a taboo as usual, even though the COVID-19 death rates were relatively small, and the pandemic was just a reminder for every one of us to find their centre. From a culture of demonising or blaming death, we arrive at the realisation that it is as natural as breathing or drinking water. We had to change our old attitudes to master the joys of life, still as simple and available as ever. We felt the new waves, but we also did the same things. For example, if someone sat at home all day, he or she would be considered lazy in 2019, while doing the same in 2020 is deemed responsible. In 2020 we stayed at home because this would save lives and – controversially – when we were allowed to visit supermarkets, toilet paper was the most needed item and our source of security. For young generations, people between 20 and 40, the pandemic was a significant change in their way of life – a traumatic event that brought many of them increased levels of anxiety, fear, and hypochondria. In a global aspect, the pandemic gave some a sense of nostalgia for the old 'normal' and the freedom and security that this 'normal' was associated with, but the emergency also gave us an opportunity to dream and rethink what we want to preserve or let go of the previous world.

On or offline, we were all in this together, because it was not about letting me out, it was about letting me experience. What do I mean? As a collective and individual trauma, COVID-19 functioned as an outer factor or experience which did not succeed to be internalised and accepted by the individual or the groups. This was true for younger generations as well because they did not have such memories or experiences until this one. There is a growing amount of studies that show significant changes and deterioration of youngsters' mentality due to lockdowns, online schooling, lack of movement and sports, and so on. As a trauma, the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with terms like isolation, quarantine, and social distancing which is in fact oxymoron. For some categories of vulnerable people isolation was, in fact, their way of life prior to the pandemic, and in 2020 they began to reconnect with others, finding that their state of exclusion is similar to all. In the case of drug addicts' isolation threatened their fragile condition, bringing higher rates of suicides or deaths due to overdose. The quarantine was imagined as a flirtatious joke in queues in shops when a boy liked a girl and told her that he wants to be quarantined with her. Social distancing became a key metaphor for the 'new normal' in society, according to Giorgio Agamben, who viewed that tendency as potentially dangerous for social cohesion (2020). Health ministers were symbolically empowered to promote new forms of biovalue and biocapital and their voices shaped some of the trauma`s aspects.

The COVID-19 world in 2020 embodied a state of emergency, exception, and producing normativity. It was a kind of forced immobility and slow living. Taking care of yourself was important in correlation with others and we can even talk of continuity of care or care cycles from a bioethical perspective.

As an opportunity, a look into the COVID-19 pandemic gave us the possibility to communicate better with each other, in strange and newly discovered ways, both off and online. It was about communication and communities and a new way of living back in our most private spaces, which we call homes. This look inwards gave focus to our precious – whether are close relatives, family, children, or pets. It also gave us time, as a sudden gift, to rethink our current relationships, not only with others but mostly with ourselves. Outside, our faces were covered, and we kept our distance. There were articles claiming that wearing masks makes you more beautiful by focusing on your eyes and they, as we know, do not lie. And people began to look into each other's eyes. To be responsible was somehow sexy and there were beautiful masks, funny masks, masks with slogans, and so on. We invented our ways to laugh and accept. But the face is the most human of things, according to Agamben and if we remember language, if we do not forget that we can speak, then we become freer and not bound to things and rules because language is not a tool, it is our face, the openness in which we are (Agamben, 2020). Thus, in the context of impossible or postponed meetings, our faces remained a source of security and we were still the same beings even online.

5 CONCLUSIONS

And in the big pandemic, narrative people were able to find similar micro narratives and to use them as sources of comfort and guidance like written stories in books. Everyone finds their own way to cope. Stories need to have a beginning, a middle, and an end he pandemic and the lockdown were the beginning; we are now living through the middle section, even though we do not know how long it will last; and we still have no idea how far off the end is. So, it is comforting to find any sort of parallel that does have an ending. Of course, there is literary parallel for this, as well as the old hymn 'Just for today,' I have just realised. It is Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* (the film is great, but the book is better. So every one of us was forced to find their way of coping with the emotions, preserving what is healthy and letting go of what is not, because in every crisis there are two ways in front of us – to change or to die, and it is a matter of adaptation. According to Arundhaty Roy:

"historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks, and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it." (2020).

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1.

COVID-19 and Domestic Violence: Challenges and Opportunities in Italy

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Abstract

Research Question (RQ): The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equity and violence against women in Italy: challenges and opportunities.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equity and violence against women in Italy. It aims to identify the challenges and opportunities that have emerged as a result of the pandemic in relation to these issues. The research seeks to shed light on the specific ways in which the pandemic has influenced gender equality and women's rights in Italy, particularly in terms of increased violence and discrimination. By understanding these challenges, the research also aims to identify potential strategies and interventions that can be implemented to address and mitigate the negative impacts on gender equity and women's safety.

Method: The research purpose was achieved through analysing the effects of the pandemic on work, gender equity, and violence against women, with a particular focus on the Italian democratic system. To achieve the research purpose, various data collection methods were used. Quantitative analyses were conducted to assess the prevalence and patterns of violence against women during the pandemic. Data were collected on reported cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of gender-based violence, as well as data on the utilization of support services and helplines. Qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and case studies, were employed to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of women affected by gender-based violence during the pandemic. This involved exploring the various factors contributing to violence against women, including social and economic factors, cultural norms, and access to support services. Additionally, a review of existing literature and policy documents was conducted to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of gender equity and violence against women in Italy, as well as the existing legal and policy frameworks in place to address these issues. The results of the quantitative and qualitative data analyses were triangulated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equity and violence against women in Italy. The research also

identified key challenges and opportunities that have emerged and provided recommendations for policy and practice to address these issues and promote gender equity and women's rights.

Results: Research results have highlighted how during the pandemic, help requests have increased and the designated protection services have found alternative ways to ensure assistance and protection for women victims of violence, such as remote meetings and medical assessments prior the women's entrance in shelters.

Implications: The research findings have important implications for organizations and practices in addressing gender equity and violence against women during the pandemic.

Organizations can use the research findings to better understand the prevalence and patterns of violence against women and the factors contributing to it. This knowledge can inform the development of policies and practices within organizations to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Practitioners can also use the findings to create supportive and safe work environments for employees who may be victims of violence, ensuring their access to support services and necessary resources.

Originality: The research can also inform the development of training programs for practitioners and employees to raise awareness about gender-based violence and provide tools and strategies for prevention and intervention. This can contribute to creating a culture of respect and equality, where violence against women is not tolerated. Furthermore, the research findings can guide the development of public policies and legal frameworks to address gender equity and violence against women. Policy makers can use the research to inform the creation of legislation and initiatives that protect women's rights and provide support services to victims of violence. This can lead to improved access to support services, helplines, and shelters for women experiencing violence. Overall, the research can have a significant impact on managers, organizations, and practices by providing evidence-based insights and recommendations to address gender-based violence and promote gender equity in the workplace and society.

Limitations / further research: While this research provides valuable insights into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equity and violence against women in Italy, there are some limitations that should be acknowledged. These limitations can serve as suggestions for further research in this area.

Firstly, the research relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases and underreporting. Some individuals may be hesitant to disclose their experiences of violence, which could lead to an underestimation of the prevalence of violence against women during the pandemic. Future research could explore alternative methods of data collection, such as anonymous surveys or data from support service providers, to mitigate this limitation. Secondly, the research focuses specifically on the Italian context. While this provides valuable insights into the situation in Italy, it may not be generalizable to other countries or regions. Further research could explore the impact of the pandemic on gender equity and violence against women in different cultural, social, and economic contexts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. The research does not specifically address intersectionality, which refers to the overlapping systems of oppression and discrimination that individuals may face based on their gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other factors. Future research could explore the intersectional dimensions of gender-based violence during the pandemic to better understand the unique challenges faced by marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

Keywords: gender equity, violence, COVID-19, Italy, research, data collection, qualitative analysis, policy recommendations.

1 INTRODUCTION

The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic has worsened an already critical situation for women in Italy. Despite improvements in recent decades, the crisis has highlighted constant deficiencies in crucial areas such as female employment, the sharing of care work, and the fight against male violence against women, which can be attributed to the interplay of material, social, and cultural conditions that support gender-based stratifications.

Regarding the phenomenon of violence, it is not only a matter of recording an increase in violent episodes against women and fragile people during the pandemic, as reported by activists from Anti-Violence Centers (CAV), international organizations such as the UN and WHO, and the scientific community. It is even more relevant to investigate whether and how Covid-19, and the necessary measures to contain its spread, have affected the support system for women victims of violence, in which interpersonal relationships are crucial. The pandemic has indeed influenced both individual emotional aspects and the organization of work: many places have suddenly become inaccessible, and closures, social distancing, and the use of masks have had evident effects on in-person relationships. However, women have continued to contact CAVs, and the established reception methodology used by the operators may have contributed to sustaining the system. In this sense, the anti-violence system can also be considered a privileged observatory for reflecting on other professional sectors in which the relational dimension is crucial, such as the medical-healthcare, educational, and social-assistance sectors. In these sectors, the health emergency has highlighted some critical issues that seem attributable to the reforms of recent decades, which have been oriented towards standardized models based on a technical-organizational care approach, to the detriment of the relational dimension.

The Italian system for combating male violence against women stems from the commitment of feminist associations and women who, over the years, by opening CAVs and Refuge Houses (RH), have developed an intervention methodology based on the "relationship between women".

This methodology is central in all phases of the activated paths: with women seeking support, in teamwork among operators, in network work with general services (primarily health services, social services, local authorities, schools, law enforcement) active at the local level. The objective of the interventions is to exit violence through the empowerment of autonomy and subjective capacities that are realized through personalized paths, in which the centrality of speaking out and the protagonism of the so-called "users" are maintained.

The Italian system has evolved unevenly and has seen a late intervention by national and regional public authorities in terms of regulation and funding.

In this process, the tension between the need for standardization of paths and the need to maintain their personalization, required by the particular characteristics of the violence phenomenon, has become evident. The risk is that regulatory action impacts the methodology adopted by CAVs as well as the type and quality of interventions activated.

The images of homemade bread, (heterosexual) families around the table in large bright kitchens, pop stars singing happily on the large sofa, used to convey the injunction to stay at home in the early weeks of lockdown in March 2020, sharply contrasted with the fact that home is not always a safe place for women and children when forced to live continuously with potential abusers, without being able to physically interact with their social networks or seek and obtain help from CAVs and services such as emergency rooms, social services, local authorities, among others.

Covid-19 has not stopped violence against women. While in the first half of 2020 the Central Directorate of Criminal Police recorded a general decrease in crimes against persons, with a sharp drop in homicides, the number of femicides remained almost stable: in 2019, 56 women were killed between January and July, while in 2020 there were 59 (the increase mainly concerns the month of January).

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In Italy, approximately one in three women encounters some form of violence during their lifetime. Measuring victimization data during the pandemic period has been challenging, but an estimate can be derived from the number of help requests received by helpline 1522, CAVs, and the police. The initial silence observed during the early weeks of lockdown was followed by a surge in requests, often stemming from severe or urgent situations (Istat, 2020). Examining the calls made to 1522 in 2020, Istat (2021) reported a 79.5% increase in phone calls and a 71% increase in chat contacts compared to 2019. Analysis of reports to the public prosecutor's offices by the "Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on Femicide and all forms of gender-based violence" (Femicide Commission, 2020) revealed a decline in crime reports related to gender-based violence in March and April, the months of stricter social containment measures, followed by a significant increase in the subsequent period. As for the engagement of women with CAVs, there is no significant rise noted, although 8.6% of requests were associated with incidents specifically linked to the pandemic, according to women themselves.

The fluctuating pattern of help requests is influenced by various factors. The Femicide Commission (2020) interprets the initial lack of contact between women and CAVs or general services during the early weeks of lockdown as a consequence of women's inability to physically distance themselves from their abusers, as well as the prevailing economic, social, and health uncertainties. These circumstances made it exceedingly arduous for women in violent situations to pursue transformative actions, such as separation or divorce. Simultaneously, the Commission observed a reduced capacity of local communities in detecting and addressing violence during the pandemic due to changes in the working methods of schools, emergency rooms, and social services. Conversely, the increase in women seeking help can be attributed to possible exacerbations of their situations, the dissemination of information campaigns regarding helpline 1522 and other support channels, and their growing confidence in seeking assistance with the expectation of receiving appropriate responses.

In terms of public policies, it is crucial to shift the focus from women's silence, which is often stigmatized for not reporting violence or not displaying enough determination in seeking help. Instead, efforts should be redirected towards creating an environment where women feel safe while transitioning away from abusive situations. The Department for Equal Opportunities of the Council of Ministers (Dpo) promptly initiated the "Libera puoi" campaign, aimed at raising awareness and providing information. Additionally, a protocol was established in collaboration with the Federation of Pharmacists' Associations (Federfarma and Assofarm), enabling women to seek help at pharmacies through receipts. The World Health Organization (WHO), the European Commission, and FIFA have launched the #SafeHome campaign, and the State Police has expanded the utilization of the Youpol application to report cases of domestic violence.

3 METHOD AND RESULTS

Between April 8 and May 4, 2020, a questionnaire was distributed by Irpps-Cnr to 227 CAVs in order to gain insights into the changes in professional practices and routines during phase 1 of the pandemic. The findings revealed that just over a third of the CAVs were working exclusively remotely, while only 11% allowed access to their premises with reduced hours and/or staff. Despite these changes, almost all CAVs maintained contact with women through phone, email, and social media, which were previously used primarily for initial contact before in-person appointments.

The survey also examined the shifts in types of interventions. The analysis indicated an increase in requests for remote services that do not require the involvement of other entities in the anti-violence network, such as telephone support (55%), psychological counselling (29%), and legal counselling (18%). On the other hand, there was a decrease in requests for support related to work and housing autonomy, assistance for minor children, in-person interviews, and orientation to other local services, which were closed to the public. Furthermore, 90% of CAVs reported a significant decline in requests for support from migrant women. These findings highlight the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on vulnerable and marginalized groups. Operators also reported greater challenges in their interactions with municipal social services, police stations, and law enforcement when dealing with disabled, foreign, and elderly women.

While the relationship between CAVs and social services, law enforcement, and police stations remained relatively unchanged or even intensified during the lockdown, there was a notable deterioration in the relationship with ordinary and juvenile courts. Consequently, the operators emphasized the importance of enhanced coordination among all stakeholders involved in combating male violence, aiming for a more effective and organized system.

The hospitality sector in times of emergency has been greatly impacted by the effects of COVID-19. In addition to the ongoing need to ensure the safety of women, children, and operators, there was an added challenge of protecting those already in Refuges (CR) from potential infection. Implementing new procedures faced various structural obstacles, including a chronic shortage of beds, overcrowding, and bureaucratic requirements for transferring individuals to CRs.

During the initial phase, operators expressed concerns that the circular issued by the Ministry on March 21, 2020, which called for local authorities to find alternative accommodations for hospitality, was not effectively executed. The Femicide Commission also observed that the precautionary measure of urgently removing the abuser from the family home continued to be rarely implemented. Additionally, the lack of technological resources to conduct remote activities, reported by 37% of CAVs, posed significant challenges, particularly in CRs where access to distance learning for minors was not feasible.

The questionnaire developed by Irpps-CNR also asked CAV operators to highlight priorities for policymakers. Alongside coordination with the network, the two most selected priorities were continuous financial support for CAVs and direct provision of funds to women. Eige (2021) acknowledges that Italy has responded to the calls of the WHO, UN, and European Commission by adopting specific measures to combat violence and support women during the pandemic. Information campaigns and measures aimed at hospitality were implemented, with DPO allocating €5,500,000 on April 29, 2020, for interventions carried out by RH and CAVs in response to the health emergency. However, the limitations that persist in policies underscore the need for a profound change in the approach to addressing this issue.

The pandemic has acted as an accelerator, shedding light on both the structural weaknesses of the anti-violence system and the effectiveness of the methods practiced by CAVs. It is imperative to adopt a transformative approach to anti-violence policies, taking into account the lessons learned during this crisis.

Analysis Of Results

In 2020, there was a decrease in the number of reported cases of stalking, abuse, and sexual violence. The trend of gender-based "spying crimes" such as abuse, stalking, and sexual violence, reported to the police, has been declining from January 2019 to April 2021. This decline is evident both in terms of absolute numbers and when considering the incidence of these crimes on the population. Unlike other reported crimes, the impact of restrictive measures on spying crimes has been relatively limited, as these crimes predominantly occur within domestic settings, involving family members or partners.

The crime of abuse towards family members and partners specifically refers to situations where both the perpetrator and the victim are from the same family. In March 2020, during the full lockdown, there was a relative decrease in reports, likely due to the forced and prolonged cohabitation imposed by the health emergency. The number of reports gradually increased in April 2020, and this upward trend continued from May to August. Several factors contribute to the decrease in reports, including increased control exerted by partners and family members over women and the difficulty of seeking help outside the family circle due to fear of the pandemic. Generally, the reports exhibit a seasonal pattern, with an increase in cases during summer and a decrease in December, possibly due to the holiday season, followed by a rise again in January. This trend was even more pronounced between November and December 2020, likely corresponding to localized lockdown measures implemented by the government in the latter part of the year.

Despite the decrease in reported cases, it is important to note that incidents of violence in intimate relationships have not stopped. However, social distancing measures and service closures have hindered women's access to Centers for Anti-Violence (CAVs) and support services, leading to modifications in the work of operators. The fact that women continued to seek help during the health emergency indicates both increased societal awareness of the issue and recognition of the availability of qualified support. In other words, the organizational vulnerabilities exposed by the pandemic were mitigated by the ability of operators to adapt and implement new response strategies, leveraging their expertise, experience, and methodologies.

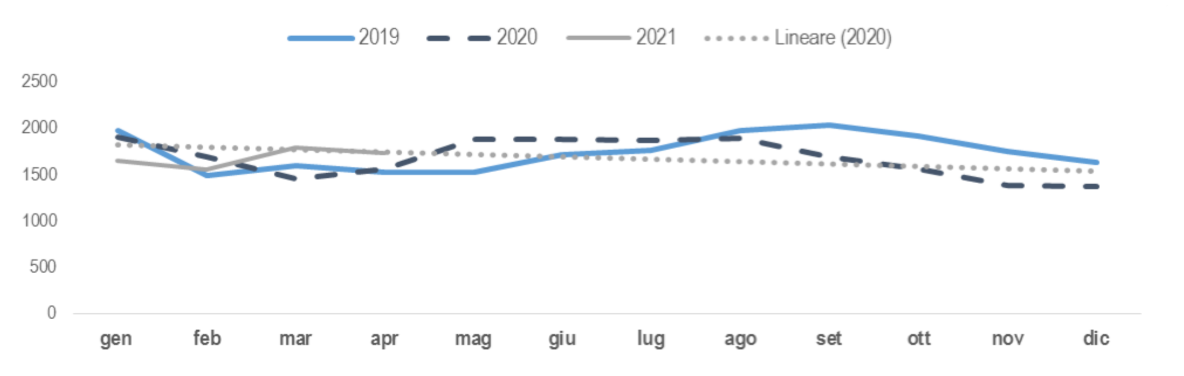

Figure 1. Domestic violence reports (January 2019 - April 2021)

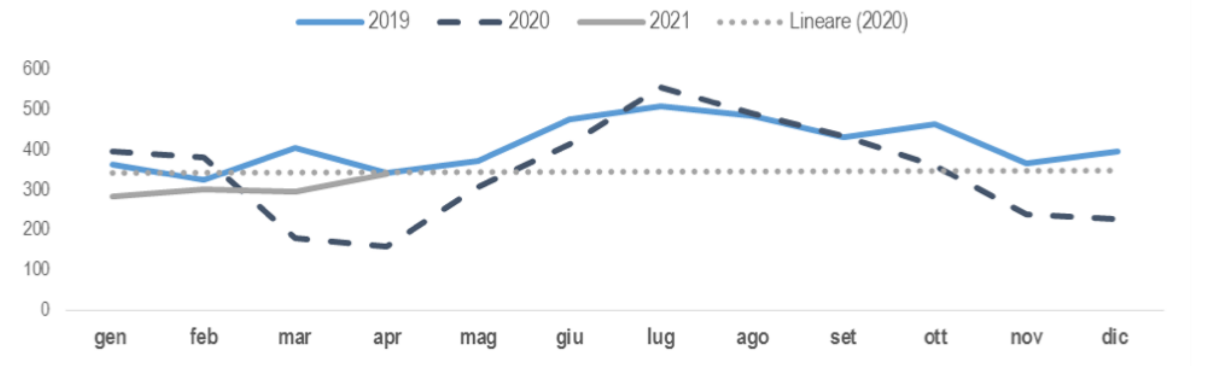

Figure 2. Stalking reports (January 2019 - April 2021)

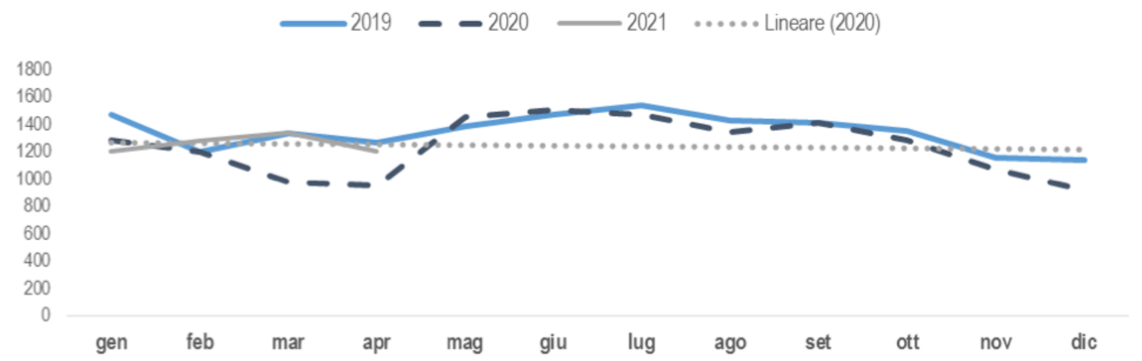

Figure 3. Sexual violence reports (January 2019 - April 2021)

4 CONCLUSION

However, in order to avoid the recurring refrain of "everything must change so that nothing changes," there is a need for a new gender and holistic approach to tackling male violence. This approach should be based on structural and ongoing investments, as well as territorial coordination between services that value the skills and experiences gained by Centers for Anti-Violence (CAVs). Furthermore, it is essential to promote the training of personnel in general services, while emphasizing the importance of the relational dimension and methodologies that place the "user" at the centre of interventions.

In summary, anti-violence policies should undergo a transformational shift, with a focus on empowerment and the elimination of traditional segmentation in public policies. This entails implementing social and health measures such as housing and employment support, education, and security measures. Additionally, strategies aimed at addressing the phenomenon of violence must permeate throughout society, recognizing the socio-cultural roots of violence. The ultimate goal is to create an environment where everyone in Italy feels safe.

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Appendix 2.

Challenges and debates in the culture and arts sector in Bulgaria during and after the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

Research Questions: This text tackles several sub questions of the main research topic, indicated in the title, some of which are: Have sustainable solutions been developed to address both crisis-driven and chronic issues in the cultural sector in Bulgaria? What trends have emerged, and how can we use the experience in the post-pandemic period dedicated to recovery and transition to sustainability?

Purpose: The study aims presenting the aanalysis of about 20 case studies in several Bulgarian cities, that were investigated during and in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic - addressing local difficulties and challenges encountered by artists and cultural workers; it seeks to outline the measures were taken to compensate for the damages caused by the sector's closure and its restricted activities, and what internal debates were stirred within the sector.

Methods: The research uses mixed-methods approach, as it covers the most topics and problems, in order to collect diverse data. The methods comprise: secondary data analysis (Eurobarometer, Eurostat, national databases), participant observations, semi-structured in-depth interviews, work with media and other publications, content analysis of publicly conducted discussions and debates.

Results: The data analysis indicates the presence of two types of problem within the examined field: those that emerged during the pandemic crisis and those which already existed but were amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic. Useful practices developed by practitioners and artists at a local level were also identified:

- Caused by the pandemic crisis: institutional chaos, financial losses, shrinking market of art products, digital content damaging the perception of culture and the connection to the audience;
- Amplified by the pandemic: lack of steady financial policy and regulation, lack of transparency and clear rules;

- Discussed practices: increased partnerships and networks, open debates on the balance of objectives and funds in the cultural sector; ongoing support programs on the EU level.

Organization: This research in the cultural and arts sector endeavours to elucidate the strategic role of effective management practices in optimizing organizational performance and innovation within creative institutions.

Society: The study seeks to provide actionable insights that empower cultural organizations and policymakers to leverage the arts for positive societal change while fostering projects that connect the local community to the natural environment.

Originality: Although the problems in the culture and arts sector in Bulgaria are being subject of inquiry within the frame of the political and social instabilities that the country has faced recently, there hasn't been a focus specifically on the coping of artists, cultural workers and the democratic empowerment of audiences and social groups through culture during times of crisis and insecurity.

Limitations/Further Research: Future research could explore diverse methodologies and incorporate longitudinal studies, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dynamics shaping the cultural and arts landscape.

Keywords: cultural sector, urban space, cultural initiatives, pandemic effects, entrepreneurship, sustainability, cultural policy, resilience

1 INTRODUCTION

The constraints imposed by the critical situation in which the pandemic placed the world have affected in one way or another all economic sectors, levels of society, and social groups. The effects on the well-being, resources, and mental and physical health of citizens. The state of emergency was a pivotal moment, in a sense, for the development of democracy in many of the affected countries, impacting the exercise of fundamental rights, the right to lawful employment, freedom of movement, and freedom of expression. Access to education and culture was also affected, which is already a problematic part of the development of democratic societies within and outside the European Union. In the sphere of culture and the arts, professionals from various subfields and areas suffered – from performers to creators of cultural content, organizers of visual and performing arts, organizers and managers of cultural organizations; but also all recipients of various forms of art and cultural manifestations. Public events were halted, as were rehearsal activities and any activities affecting the development of creators and content creation; the existence of spaces for cultural and educational events was put at enormous risk, and thus the existence of the communities gravitating around them.
The digital realm has facilitated unprecedented access to the pinnacle of cultural expression, with renowned artists live-streaming performances from the comfort of their homes and libraries granting

unrestricted entry to their literary treasures. Moreover, the advent of creative challenges has sparked a groundswell of participation, evidenced by the myriad reinterpretations of iconic artworks crafted from everyday materials and shared across online platforms.

Yet, amidst this digital renaissance, questions linger regarding the true impact of digitalization on cultural accessibility and inclusivity. While it has undoubtedly broadened the horizons for some, concerns persist regarding its potential to exacerbate existing disparities, leaving marginalized communities further marginalized. Nevertheless, amidst the solitude and constraints imposed by the crisis, a surge of ingenuity and introspection has emerged, underscoring humanity's resilience and adaptability.

2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, METHODS, AND CASE STUDIES

This brief report presents the research that I have been conducting over the past few years. The research subject is the independent cultural sector; the objective is to grasp processes and dynamics through social and political changes, to tackle problems and new practices that actors of different sub-fields within the sector, face and develop. It encompasses three main phases, which are not necessarily strictly sequential in time:

- Cultural entrepreneurship: identity narratives and transformation of spaces in cities
- Cultural policies: a view, combining trends identified through quantitative data and anthropological accounts of diverse agents in the cultural sector
- Social inclusion through culture: access, diversity, sustainability, community building

The research uses the so-called mixed method research. It includes:

- Secondary quantitative data analysis: retrieving and systematizing data from Eurostat, Eurobarometer, ESS
- Secondary qualitative data analysis: retrieving and analyzing documents, reports, visual and video materials, public discussions on specific topics
- Participant observation in
- Semi-structured in-depth interviews with practitioners, artists, managers

Inevitably, the research process had to encompass the following topics and questions, giving a specific aspect to the ongoing inquiry of the cultural sector in Bulgaria

- Is it possible to maintain the momentum felt in the independent cultural sector in Bulgaria during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- Have sustainable solutions been developed to address both crisis-driven and chronic issues?
- What trends have emerged, and how can we use the experience in the post-pandemic period dedicated to recovery and transition to sustainability?

- Atelier "Plastelin" (association and independent art space), Sofia
- “AfriKaya” (Center for African Culture), Sofia
- "Dizzy Grooves" (rhythm and mentorship workshop), Sofia
- "Music elevator" (project of Koncerti.bg association), Sofia
- “Kosta Karakashyan Studio” (contemporary dance/performance studio), based in Sofia
- Theaters Night (multi-city initiative), based in Sofia
- “Nonument” (site-specific performance series and German-Bulgarian collaboration)
- “Antistatic” (contemporary dance festival), Sofia
- “Association for Free Theater”, Sofia, Plovdiv
- Kultivizor (online platform for independent commentaries and reviews of cultural events, including a podcast series), Sofia
- Café "Otshreshta" (place for cultural events until April 2020), Plovdiv
- Café "Peika" (place for cultural events from September 2020), Plovdiv
- “Duvar” collective (informal group for working with residents of Stolipinovo), Plovdiv
- “The Architect’s house” (cultural center), Stara Zagora
- “On the street” (collective for urbanism, culture and activism), Stara Zagora
- “TAM” (association and space for cultural events), Veliko Tarnovo
- “CUT/КЪТ” (art and community publication/zine), Veliko Tarnovo
- Varusha South (community festival), Veliko Tarnovo
- “Culture point” (collective and space for creative development), Varna
- Foundation for Entrepreneurship, Culture and Education, Varna
- BUNA (new forum for contemporary visual arts), Varna

A scheme for systematization that was used, was the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). The results can be summarized in this manner:

- S: Community building and inclusion of different groups
- W: Dependency on external factors and insufficient organizational resources
- O: Further development of activities and further development of audiences
- T: Effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and instable target groups

The identified by the respondents negative aspects of their work was inevitably linked to the Covid-19 pandemic and the instability of the sector during a crisis. The insights of the respondents and participants in various public events can be grouped in three main categories. They are:

- Caused by the pandemic crisis: institutional chaos, financial losses, shrinking market of art products, digital content damaging the perception of culture and the connection to the audience
- Amplified by the pandemic: lack of steady financial policy and regulation, lack of transparency and clear rules

- Discussed practices: increased partnerships and networks, open debates on the balance of objectives and funds in the cultural sector

Below is a summary of the problems and practices that were identified during the research process:

3 ISSUES ARISING WITH COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- Need for constant public presence online - it is an alternative, but it cannot be a solution for a long time;
- Displacement from real physical spaces brings different damages; this leads to the grounds of those responsible for “making the policies' to require a digital form of cultural content and from the cultural institutes – to legitimize themselves;
- Procedural and regulatory chaos – as the insurance status of freelance artists is very different, it is difficult or almost impossible a large part of them to be covered by possible support measures of the cultural sector;
- Financial losses, for example from participation fees in large international forums, exhibitions, fairs - where, except for presentation and realization of partnerships, also serve to form new ones, contact with collectors and accordingly income as for the artists, as well as for the Bulgarian galleries representing them.

Financial:

- Lack of structural funding - there are not enough exchange programs on partnership beginnings, sufficient scholarships for artists and research in the field of culture and arts
- Very insufficient budget for culture, but also insufficient budgets for cultural institutes in small settlements
- The state does not allocate funds for the purchase of works by the museums and galleries through the private ones that present the corresponding visual art

Regulatory:

- There is a lack of administrative infrastructure related to the legal framework
- There are no scheduled tariffs for freelance artists to work with government agencies, institutions; freelance artists are not a distinct group, but a very diverse category

Deficiencies of the organization, innovation, production, market

- A real market situation cannot be said to exist in Bulgaria - that's why it is so imperative the intervention of the state;
- Artists often create a product that is not sold, but "stored";
- Delaying important changes in the regulatory framework;
- Lack of transparency, clarity and strict rules in the definition of who can get help, who should be encouraged to apply for project funding, etc.

- The lack of a concise cultural policy: according to the participants this problem is at the root of the ambiguity and conflicts in the sector. The question of what should be done in Bulgaria is left open: what funds should be prioritized towards art education, tangible and intangible heritage, contemporary art, freedom of authors, to expand the activities of NGOs etc.
- The more the difficulties and pressures on the cultural increase sphere, the more opportunities open up for discontent and resistance, to network and generate partnerships';
- The allocated funds under the program for the cultural sphere in 2020 were a "raft" for many actors and an opportunity to stabilize the organizations, but, in the aftermath of the pandemic there is still insecurities and accusations in lack of transparency, concerning the allocation of available resilience funds and future support programs;
- A balance and compromise must be found in the debate "how much government, where and how".

4 COPING AND COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

- Search for new forms and practices for the inclusion of audiences, because with the pandemic they "shrank", became exclusive and artists discovered the possibility of individual work with people in small groups;
- Personal contact with the consumer of culture: both collectors and audiences;
- Investment in other type of artistic projects - educational, involving people in different and creative ways;
- Thinking of a new type of collectivity;
- Together gaining strength to participate in social processes and shaping win-win policies;
- Increased inequalities: the digitization of cultural life leads to more profound differences and confronts art with the dilemma of whether to "translates" cultural forms, or "produces" them, but for limited audiences who have access
- More work with vulnerable groups and creation of pressure points, requiring adequate policies and opportunities for development.

5 FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND PERSPECTIVES

In the aftermath of the pandemic, unfolding are some important processes in the cultural and arts sector that should build the capacity of the interested parties, artists, practitioners and stakeholders to cope with future health or other types of crises. More research initiatives should be focused on:

- The "Recovery and resilience plan": its effects, application, public debates and analysis of the post-pandemic period measures.
- The "New European Bauhaus Initiative" It operates under three principles: sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion. In other words, an approach to culture through the merging of art, creative industries, environmental responsibility, social causes and urban spaces.
- Rethinking of the "place-branding" approach and shifting it to "community-branding" in cities. Trend: talking more about the emphasis on the force of collectives and citizens-artists

initiatives, the diversity of cultural products which means more diverse and transdisciplinary agents involved, than talking about "creative places". This part of the future research is important because the Covid-19 crisis demonstrated, as reported by respondents and systematized in public debates, any form of cooperation – a cultural "cluster", an art community, neighborhood group meetings or a network of collaborating instead of competing organizations – is beneficiary to the democratic development of society and to the equality of voices and opinions, regardless of gender, ethnic background or social group.

Meet the partnership

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