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CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) CRISIS AND SUICIDE IN BANGLADESH: SOME EXPLANATIONS THROUGH DURKHEIM'S SOCIOLOGY OF SUICIDE

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Abstract*: Whilst the world is experiencing an unprecedented and devastating public health crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, scholars have apprehended that economic, social and mental health consequences brought by the pandemic might intensify suicidality amongst people. At this backdrop, this content analysis traces the relationship between suicidality and the COVID-19 pandemic employing Emile Durkheim's classical theoretical postulation of the sociology of suicide in the context of Bangladesh. The analysis is based on case reports identified through online newspaper search spanning from January 01 to May 15, 2020. During this period, 10 Covid-19 induced suicide cases were identified. The analysis of the findings captures the linkages between COVID-19 crisis and suicidal behavior according to Durkheim's four-fold typology of the social causation of suicide. The identified cases were fit into egoistic (2), anomic (5) and fatalistic (3) categories. No case was relevant to the altruistic category. As there is no national suicide prevention strategy in Bangladesh, this analysis highlights several immediate and short prevention strategies. Furthermore, this analysis contributes to our sociological understanding that Durkheim's macro-level theory has the potentials to analyze micro-level/case-based suicide incidents.*

Keywords: *Durkheim, suicide, sociology of suicide, COVID-19, social impact, Bangladesh*

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak has signposted devastating long-term socio-economic and political disturbances in every society in the world (UNDP, 2020). People are passing through extreme trembling and frightening times by experiencing the dismantling impacts of the pandemic and also by analysing the uncertainties awaiting ahead (Charles and Anderson-Nathe, 2020). Pandemic associated restrictions such as spatial distancing, home stay result in huge economic and psychosocial burdens (Bhuiyan et al, 2021; Rahman et al., 2021). In Bangladesh, people with low and middle income have extensively experienced financial scarcity, losing jobs, disruption of small and medium size businesses, economic hardship, food crisis during COVID-19 pandemic (Bhuiyan et al, 2021; Rahman et al., 2021). On the contrary, psychosocial traumatic experiences included fear, frustration, stress, hopelessness, loneliness exerted continuous substantial impacts on social and mental well-being (Rahman et al, 2021; Mamun and Griffiths; 2020). Overall, Covid-19 is heightening the risks of the social order and equilibrium by posing enormous challenges to the entire human population in so many ways (Bonea and Rosca, 2022; Chakraborty and Maity, 2020; Dan et al., 2020).

Given the situation, COVID-19 induced economic and psychosocial crises might affect people's suicidal behaviors that areboth fatal and non-fatal. Fatal suicidal behavior or suicide is defined as the act of intentionally ending one's own life while non-fatal suicidal behavior includes suicide ideation, suicide plan and suicide attempt. Suicide ideation refers to thoughts of ending one's life; suicide plan refers to the formulation of a specific method for ending life; and suicide attempt refers to engagement in potentially self-injurious behavior with an intent to die (Nock et al., 2008). Scholars opine that suicidal behaviors, amongst others, are the direct resultant impacts of economic recession, joblessness, poverty and various kinds of mental health disturbances (Goldman-Mellor et al, 2010; Rafi et al, 2019; Arafat and Mamun, 2019). Specifically, in line with Durkheim's philosophy, suicide is a multifaceted complex public health discourse affected by a variety of social factors such as mental illness, imitation, and temperature (Khan et al., 2021).

On the other hand, scholars have sedulously apprehended that multifaceted impacts induced by the COVID-19 pandemic will cause distress and disturbances which could eventually trigger suicidal behavior (Druzin, 2020; Gunnell et al., 2020). Suicide is already an established critical global public health concern causing around 800,000 deaths annually along with many more attempts (WHO, 2019). While it is expected that the steps that have been undertaken will reduce the rate of new virus infections, the adverse impacts of those steps and interventions might heighten the risks of suicidal behavior (Reger, Stanley and Joiner, 2020). Economic, psychosocial, and health-associated risk factors deriving from the COVID-19 crisis such as anxiety, social isolation, quarantine fears, decreased access to community and religious supports, barriers to mental health treatment, national anxiety, helplessness, loneliness, nervousness, frustration, economic uncertainty, and disruption in routine activities can push many people to suicidality (Mamun and Griffiths, 2020; Moutier, 2020; Reger al., 2020). For example, reports from the United States of America (USA) confirm that suicide crisis hotlines reported a 300% surge in calls since the COVID-19 pandemic

began (Cunningham, 2020). Although challenged by the experts, President Donald Trump claimed of scaling-up suicides in the USA if the economy remained shut down and isolated for long due to the spread of the coronavirus (Parra, 2020). Experts from Australia have warned for a 25-50% increase in suicide rates due to COVID-19 and called upon the government to take measures to overhaul the existing suicide prevention system (Suicide Prevention Australia, 2020).

Alarmingly, the distresses and consequences along with the risk of suicidal behavior caused by this pandemic might not be ceased by the end of this catastrophe. Instead these might likely to be continued for longer or even be escalated further (Gunnell et al., 2020). In particular, the effects might even be worse in resource-poor countries experiencing economic hurdles with minimum welfare supports for the mass people (Gunnell et al., 2020). Given the dangers associated with suicidal risk factors that derive from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative to adopt appropriate prevention strategies which must be harmonized with the national public health priority. It is suggested that COVID-19 linked suicidal risk factors are preventable if apt measures are adopted (Mamun and Griffiths, 2020). Notably, crisis always opens-up opportunities. The suicide prevention services must be channeled through these opportunities (Reger et al., 2020).

From that point, we extend this conversation by taking Bangladesh as a case to argue that COVID-19 led suicide prevention strategies are decisively crucial for this country as several Covid-19 induced suicide cases have already been reported by the media in this country. Unfortunately, suicide is never considered as a serious public health issue in Bangladesh although causing approximately 10000 deaths annually (Mashreky, Rahman and Rahman, 2013). There is neither any national suicide prevention strategy nor any surveillance mechanism in Bangladesh (Khan, Shimul, and Arendse, 2021). Khan et al., 2020).

At this backdrop, the specific aim/objective of this analysis is to establish the linkage between the COVID-19 pandemic induced suicide cases and the theoretical underpinning of Emile Durkheim's classical analysis of sociology of suicide (Durkheim, 2005). Given the extent of the problem, Durkheim's classical analysis of sociology of suicide can provide explanations about possible causes of suicide. Some suggestive measures also follow this analysis. In this analysis we have interchangeably used suicidal behavior or suicide to mean either suicide or suicide attempt.

2. Methodology

We investigated the online newspaper portals to identify the suicide cases that took place owing to the complexities associated with the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. The investigation covered the period from January to May 2020. "Suicide and COVID-19 in Bangladesh", "suicide and coronavirus in Bangladesh" were the key search words. We used several inclusion criteria such as COVID-19 is explicitly mentioned as the cause of suicide, the method indicates the intention to self-harm/suicide and the incidents took place in Bangladesh. We consulted reports that were published both in Bangla (the native language of the country) and English only and did not apply any exclusion criteria based on the demographic profiles of the

deceased. Our search identified ten suicide cases and one suicide attempt which we bracketed into ten cases as there was a couple's incident. The cases were identified and collected from 10 news portals in Bangladesh (i.e., Daily Bangladesh, Bangla News, Somoy News, ProthomAlo, Dhaka Tribune Bangla, Kalerkantho, Abhijug, Dhaka18.com, BhorerKagoj, and The Daily Star Bangla). The cases picked from the Bangla news portals were translated into English, and the cases picked from English news portals were paraphrased. For data analysis, the relational approach was adopted to examine the relationships between the suicide cases and Durkheim's typology of suicide. The incidents took place in March (3), April (5), and May (2). Notably, as the newspaper reports were published online and publicly available, no formal ethical clearance was needed. However, we have used name initials to anonymize the cases.

We understand some limitations of this content analysis. Firstly, it is based on the newspaper reports which can never produce an in-depth description of a person's life and circumstances to understand an individual suicide just the same if it was attained through direct interviews of the significant others or family members of the deceased. As authors, we are also not comfortable ascribing motives in many of the cases to media framing. Suicides are suspicious deaths and require meaning-making by audiences (Timmermans, 2007). Nonetheless, this is perhaps the only source to guide the future researchers in the field. Secondly, caution is suggested for making any broader generalization based on this individual case-based analysis. Finally, we are not disregarding the possibilities for failing to identify and locate the relevant cases due to the extensive nature of the web search.

3. Results: COVID-19 Related Suicide Cases

In the following, we describe the cases of suicide brought to our notice during the study period in Bangladesh:

Case 1

March 2020.A young Bangladeshi man, named ZH, from Gaibandha district died by suicide through hanging. Family members claimed that the young man may have decided to take his own life as he was suspicious that he had been infected by coronavirus. They indicated that he recently returned home from the capital city Dhaka with a fever and cold. The local community strongly suspected that he may have been infected with the virus and directly blamed him as a virus carrier. The deceased became traumatised due to harsh stigmatisation by the community. However, no virus infection was found as per the autopsy report (Daily Bangladesh, 2020; Mamun and Griffiths, 2020).

Case 2

March 2020. A farmer named AH (35) died by suicide in Magura district out of fear of neighbors' suspicion and harsh jokes about the coronavirus infection. AH used to maintain a simple life. He had no disputes with his wife or anyone else in the family. On the very day, he got up in the morning, offered prayer and went to the field to tie the goats. There he hanged himself from a tree to death. Reportedly, he had been

suffering from common fever for the past four days which had made him scared of being infected with the virus. For days now, some of his neighbors have been threatening him with jokes that he has been infected with corona. Following that, AH visited two local doctors and took medicine. Although his fever was cured, he started having a severe headache. Moreover, neighbors assumed that he had in his mind the panic of being grabbed by the police as a victim of corona and shot to death. Unfortunately, AH took his own decision to die due to panic, anxiety and failure to cope with community reactions (Bangla News, 2020).

Case 3

March 2020. A 13-year-old boy named AF from Rajbari district killed himself after his mother refused to let him go out of the house to keep him safe and protected from the possible infection of the virus. He thought family restriction as a kind of overregulation on him. He could not bear that restriction and sought escape to death by hanging from the wall of the house (Somoy News, 2020).

Case4

April 2020. A 30-year old Bangladeshi man, named WI, from Jhenaidah district died by suicide through hanging. He was debt-ridden and unable to find work to provide for his four children. Furthermore, securing food for his family amidst the nationwide shutdown due to the coronavirus outbreak proved difficult and they had been starving for one week as they received no relief from any organization or government (Prothom Alo, 2020).

Case5

April 2020. A couple (SH, 30, and his wife RB, 25) from Jessore district killed himself by hanging. According to the relatives of the victims, both of them were emotionally broken for being indebted. They developed a deep sense of frustration over the debt burden during COVID-19 pandemic. The husband used to work as a foreman. Due to countrywide shutdown, he was out of work and got scared of how to repay the loan. Finding no other solutions, the agreeably took their lives as a means to get rid of the liability forever (Dhaka Tribune Bangla, 2020).

Case6

April 2020. A child named AK (10) from Sirajganj district hanged herself to death due to starving. Relatives have claimed that the family has been starving for several days. The father of the deceased is a weaver by profession. The factory he used to work was closed for ten days due to the shutdown. He said, "The administration is working hard to prevent the spread of coronavirus. I can't work for ten days. I am spending the day lying at home. I did not have cash in hand. So I couldn't buy rice and dal. The girl was crying because there was no food in the house. I kicked him out. The girl then killed herself out of a deep sense of agony" (Kalerkantho, 2020).

Case7

May, 2020. Unable to feed his family, BK from Jhenaidah district wanted to escape from the responsibility by attempting suicide. He survived luckily. Going to the ground

to find out the fact journalists asked him about the reasons for the attempt. He said, "I used to work as a cook in a restaurant at Kaliganj. I was fine with my family. But due to the coronavirus, the owner closed the restaurant. I have been sitting at home for almost two months. Everything is over. I have got nothing to eat with my family for the last two days." He further informed that he did not receive any relief assistance yet! Also, the image of wailing on the faces of hundreds of poor working people in the same area is not getting any government relief supports! Locals demanded the government to take a serious look at the issue of relief distribution; otherwise, the burning of hunger will lead many to die by suicide like BK (Abhijug, 2020).

Case 8

April, 2020. A housewife named MB (45) from Nilphamari district hanged herself to death due to starvation and hunger. The deceased's husband, a day laborer, became unemployed due to COVID-19 induced shutdown. As there is no income in the family, the husband and wife started quarrelling. On the day of the incident, MB had a serious dispute with her husband over food. Later at night, MB took the ultimate decision to end up everything (Dhaka18.com, 2020).

Case 9

April, 2020. A housemaid named RA (13) died by suicide by hanging at her owner's house in the capital city. She had been working at this house for a year and a half. Recently, the maid asked the housewife to buy two sets of dresses for her. The housewife said she would buy dresses for her when the market would reopen after the lockdown. But RA wanted them immediately. She got very upset and thought that the housewife is unwilling to meet her demands. But it was the COVID-19 lockdown that matters in this case (Bhorer Kagoj, 2020).

Case 10

May 2020. A 45-year-old policeman named TH living in the capital city jumped from the roof of his house to death. His family claimed that the man was very concerned about the coronavirus infection. Recently he had a test which gave him a negative result. But he was not satisfied with the result; rather was worried that he might have infected by the virus. Regarding the cause of the suicide, the Officer-in-Charge of the concerned police station said, "Initially, his family members said that he was very worried about Corona. However, on April 29, his corona test report came negative. Even then, he and his wife expressed doubts about the test. All in all, he was mentally depressed." He left his wife with two daughters (The Daily Star Bangla, 2020).

4. Discussion

Ascertaining the exact causes of suicide is an issue of long-standing debate amongst scholars and interventionists (Crowell, et al., 2014). It is due to the fact suicide is a highly complex and multi-causal phenomenon, involving interactions of psychiatric, psychological, sociological, neurobiological, philosophical, demographic and cultural components, any effort to conceptualize the context of suicide form one theoretical

stream would likely be narrowly focused, insufficient and incomplete (Mukherjee and Kumar, 2017).

Disagreement notwithstanding, we attempted to explain the context of these cases through sociologically induced meaning and understanding given the deleterious social impacts of the current crisis. The current pandemic is considered much more a health issue rather an overtly pronounced social crisis as it is affecting and attacking the societies and their people at their core (United Nations, nd.). The stressful experiences what the crisis is generating might induce risks for people at all levels of the society (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, nd.). Therefore, scholars opine that the efforts towards mitigation of the devastating effects COVID-19 must be supported by the knowledge of social and behavioral sciences (Van Bavel et al., 2020).In the same vein, we also view that the critical linkage between the disruptions of the societies generated by COVID-19 and the causal relations to suicidality could be explicitly explained if the sociological perspective is consulted, and that may contribute significantly to the noble goal of suicide prevention(Abrutyn and Mueller, 2014).

The sociological approach examines society's influence on its members and how do various social conditions/forces cause suicide behaviors (Stone, 1999). Central to sociological understanding comes from Emile Durkheim's hallmark sociological work, Le Suicide, first published in 1897 (Heilbron et al., 2014). Le Suicide also played a key role in establishing sociology as a distinct academic discipline. Although following Durkheim, there were several competing paradigms developed within the sociology of suicide such as Halbwachs (1930), Cavan (1928), Douglas (1965), Atkinson (1967), among others, we specifically turn out to Durkheim because it is not only one of the highly influential works within the field of sociology, but also sociology's most visible work for non-sociological social scientists (Fincham et al., 2011; Abrutyn and Mueller, 2014; Authors, 2020). Secondly, due to space constraints, other approaches which are following Durkheim within sociology are deliberately kept aside. Although disagreements/criticisms exist over Durkheim's macro-level theory/population-level focus to predict individual-level cases/motives of suicide or meaning of individual acts of suicide (Van Poppel and Day, 1996; Berk, 2006), alternative arguments/evidences are also available highlighting his theory to have implications for specifying suicidality of the individuals through a micro-level or micro-sociological level analysis (Berk, 2006; Abrutyn and Mueller, 2014; Rose, 2015).

Durkheim posited the idea that the suicidal characteristics are not essentially owned or managed via an individual's motivations rather societal forces are invariably linked to suicidal acts (Pickering and Walford, 2000). The two key societal forces have influential effects on suicide: social integration and regulation. Integration refers to the degree to which the individual is attached with the society, while regulation refers to the degree to which society regulates the beliefs and behaviors of individuals through social norms and customs (Selby, Joiner Jr and Ribeiro, 2014). Durkheim conceived a four-fold schema of suicide: egoistic, altruistic, anomic and fatalistic. These different categories of suicidal behaviors echo an exceptional pattern of problematic social integration and moral regulation. For example, altruistic suicide occurs due to a high degree of social integration while egoistic suicide occurs due to deficits in social integration. On the contrary, fatalistic suicide is caused due to an extreme degree of social regulation while

anomic suicide is caused due to deficit in social regulation (Durkheim, 2005; Selby et al., 2014). Durkheim's approach to understanding the social make-up of suicide is widely convincing and there is still a lot to learn from his theoretical postulations (Jaworski, 2014). In the same vein, we find significant relevance to analyze the COVID-19 related individual suicide cases in Bangladesh under the framework of Durkheim's classical four-fold typology of suicide. Our analysis in Bangladesh confirms three categories of Coivid-19 induced suicide such as fatalistic, egoistic and anomic. We did not find any altruistic suicide yet.

The first and second suicide case falling into fatalistic suicide. According to Durkheim, "*it is the suicide deriving from excessive regulation, that of persons with futures pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive disciplines*" (Durkheim, 2005: 276). In the first case, the victim became disrupted due to excessive surveillance of the community as a suspicious virus carrier. In case two also the person got frightened about the negative community reactions as being a suspected virus bearer. Moreover, he became concerned about the forced police intervention and the likelihood of fatal consequences. The case number three also exemplifies a fatalistic suicide with a different kind of insinuation. In this case, the mother did not allow the teen-aged boy to go out during the lockdown period to keep him safe. It seems that it was difficult for the teen-aged boy to adhere to the strictest isolation regulations. These examples confirm that the excessive social regulative/normative processes strictly tyrannized the persons and pushed them to suicidality. These examples further echo the analysis of Durkheim's fatalistic suicide by Stack (1979, p.102), who says, "fatalistic suicides involve an escape from a normative situation from which there is no appeal."

Several cases directly fall under the category of anomic suicide which becomes prominent when a society goes through extensive crisis or disruption (Tomasi, 2000). Durkheim hypothesized that economic and social changes result in a state of anomie or normlessness which destabilizes the traditional regulatory process of the society and increases the griefs and sufferings of the people. Eventually, due to heightened sufferings and griefs, societies, individuals and groups experience an increase in suicide rates (Jaworski, 2014; Hodwitz and Frey, 2016). However, Durkheim also viewed that the abrupt growth of prosperity could also lead to the same sort of deregulations. Essentially, every change, better or worse, might likely to make individuals vulnerable to suicide (Tomasi, 2000)). Durkheim particularly opined that economic crisis is not the only source of anomic suicide; rather it also stems from conjugal anomy/unhappy households (Durkheim, 1897/2005). We traced a case as such.

In line with the above presuppositions, the cases that we identified are destructed by serious levels of economic insecurity, family discords caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in case number four, the debt-ridden man took his own life because he failed to provide food to the starving family. He could not find any source of income because of the virus outbreak. On the other hand, a couple committed suicide under case number five. They were already debt-ridden. Losing the opportunity to earn a regular income due to lockdown, they got scared about their debts and finding no other alternatives they escaped from the scene by dying by suicide. Under the case number six, a 10-year old starving girl took her life as her father could not manage food owing to the shrinkages of the source of income. Similarly, under case number seven,

the victim became unemployed after the shutdown. He could not manage food for the starving family that eventually provoked him to kill himself. The case number eight results from the family conflict between the husband and the wife over lack of food. The woman who killed herself had a conflict with her husband who became unemployed due to lockdown. In short, all the cases are the perfect reflections of social anomic situation. Durkheim (1897/2005) rightly said that during economic disasters some sort of declassification occurs which downgrade the position of certain individuals. In this respect, people must restraint themselves and learn to make self-control. But it is often impossible for the society to control its people to adjust with the disturbances and to practice the increased self-repercussion. If the disturbances are profound, suicide rates in the general population are anticipated to experience a spiking, and will only come down once the equilibrium is back (Hodwitz and Frey, 2016).

In our conviction, case number nine and case number ten should be fitted into egoistic suicide. In both cases, the victims demonstrated their low-level integration with the existing social realities over individual realties. In Durkheim's (1897/2005) view, egoistic suicide happens when individual ego engulfs social ego. Durkheim further marked that low integration to common social beliefs or practices develops feelings of meaninglessness or purposelessness in individuals, which, eventually, stand as provocative means to take their lives (Berk, 2006). The domestic help who took her life was annoyed at the prevailing system of lockdown, and so on the closure of the market places. Perhaps, she was not convinced of the justification of the social importance of this system which barred her desires to be attained. While doing so, she does not express her tight knot with the existing social practices. In case number nine, we saw the policeman was worried about the likelihood of being a bearer of the virus. He was not convinced about the negative test result. In this case, this man was showing what Durkheim (1897/2005) termed as exaggerated individualism as he was more concerned about his fate and destiny. Being a government employee, there was no reason to be unemployed during the COVID period as we have seen for several cases in this analysis. He did not think about his family and social responsibilities to the state as a police official. These two cases are explicit reactions of what Durkheim said, "*but society cannot disintegrate without the individual simultaneously detaching himself from social life*" (Durkheim, 1897/2005: 209). While being detached from social life, individuals lose all sorts of attachments that make life meaningful and worthwhile (Berk, 2006).

5. Findings

The findings portray a conspicuous link between COVID-19 induced extra-social crises/causes and suicidal behavior. As the COVID-19 related abrupt reservations and restrictions increased, the day-to-day activities and mobility of the people plummeted causing serious destructive effects on the levels of individuals and society and contributed to an anomic condition of the society. Based on the extra-social causes and nuances of the suicide cases caused by the pandemic, we have found that anomic (5) suicide is the most common category of suicide whereas the category of fatalistic (3) and egoistic (2) suicide are also prevalent. We have not found any case of altruistic suicide. We argue that the abrupt measures taken for reducing the COVID-19 prevalence have accentuated the economic insecurity, family discords and so on

creating a momentary vacuum disabling individuals' ability to deal with the crises, moreover, the excessive social regulative/normative processes recoiled the individual mobility, destabilized social integration, and pushed individual to escape from a normative situation. We believe that the heightened suicidality is a common trend during or after any social, economic or natural crisis and turmoil (Krug et al., 1998; Yip, 2009; Chang et al., 2013; Fountoulakis et al., 2014; Iemmi et al., 2016), demanding specific measures to combat the suicidal behavior. In this regard, COVID-19 gives us an explicit message to enhance suicide prevention and intervention strategies (Reger et al., 2020). Therefore, based on our analyses on the emerging crises, we propose several short-term and immediate strategies to address the suicidal vulnerability for all at-risk groups in Bangladesh, given the fact the country does not have any national suicide prevention strategy. These may include: a) tele-mental health care supports and distance-based suicide prevention; b) access to mental health care and support; c) mobilize people to get connected with near and dear ones through social media, telephone and video; d) ethical compliance of the media reporting on suicide to tackle contagion effect (Reger et al., 2020); e) advise people keep away from pandemic news as this information can be disturbing to sensitive viewers (Suicide Prevention Australia, 2020); f) stringent measures against social stigma associated with virus infection; g) social protection and livelihood/financial supports to the vulnerable poorer groups; and, h) promotion of problem-solving strategies to cope with the situational impact of the current crisis. Above all, long-term social reconstruction policy must include suicide prevention as an essential component.

6. Conclusions

We would like to begin this concluding section cautioning that as there is no national suicide prevention strategy in Bangladesh, this analysis highlights several immediate and short prevention strategies keeping in mind the impact of the pandemic. Furthermore, this analysis contributes to our understanding that Durkheim's macro-level theory courteously supports micro-level research implications. We find Durkheim's theory is still relevant in analyzing the impact of the massive social disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on suicidality. No matter it was a macro-level theory, often produces skepticism for its implications at micro-level individual case analysis. If the breeding of suicidality is not dismantled at the micro-level, it would lead to massive macro-level havoc. So, Durkheim's theory provides powerful messages for us to be cautious and vigilant against suicidal behavior. It may be taken up by the scholars as a source of future investigation to make a balance between micro and macro level analysis.

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OCCUPATIONAL STRATEGIES OF THIRD COUNTRY MIGRANTS ON THE ROMANIAN LABOR MARKET

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Abstract: The article analyzes how third country migrants in Romania make use of occupational strategies to access the domestic labor market. The analysis develops around formal and informal occupational strategies, the latter ones further divided according to Granovetter's (2018) 'strong ties' and 'weak ties'. Empirical evidence has been collected from the narratives of twenty oral history interviews with migrants in Romania. Results indicate a reliance of third country migrants on formal and informal occupational strategies for securing employment, especially there where the public sector or private businesses fail to create the adequate employment opportunities. Both kinds of strategies are used alike, with the formal strategy strongly depending on education, hard work and free will, while the informal strategy mainly depending on the 'ties'. Moreover, findings indicate that 'weak ties' tend to push migrants towards the secondary labor market of part-time and poorly paid jobs. In addition, research results also spot a tendency of male migrants to easier engage into creating and using either 'strong' or 'weak ties', while female migrants struggle to secure personal connections with the domestic population that might help them find a (better) job.

Keywords: occupational strategies, social inclusion, labor market, third country migrants, immigration

1. Introduction

The Romanian Ministry of Labor and Social Protection has increased the quota of newly admitted foreign workers on the domestic labor market to 100,000 in 2022, compared to 5,500 in 2016, an increase of 1718%, which symbolizes the growing internationalization of the labor market in Romania and the anchoring of the latter in the global labor system (Romanian Government, 2016; Romanian Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, 2021). With a rising number of foreign citizens residing in Romania for numerous purposes (education, work, family reunification, asylum etc.), the local labor market faces new challenges and opportunities alike. While citizens from the EU and the European Economic Space (Norway, Island, Liechtenstein) enjoy similar labor conditions with the

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native populations, people from outside of these spaces have to face more difficult employment processes and, often, restrictive labor legislation due to their non-EU/EES status. Thereupon, in order to find employment and be included on the Romanian labor market, third country migrants (understood as non-EU/EES migrants, as per the interpretation of Art. 20(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, see EUR-Lex, 2016) have to develop various occupational strategies.

The aim of the research is to examine the occupational strategies used by migrants with a third country background to secure labor market inclusion in Romania. After extensive research being carried out at international level in the 1960's/1970's, the sociology of work and occupations received a rather diminished attention after the 1990's, which led Kurtz (2009) to question whether the study of occupational sociology was not abandoned to early. This study is positioned among Kurtz's idea of an untimely abandonment of occupational sociology and carries out an analysis of occupational strategies employed by third country migrants in Romania to find out whether stratification or discrimination occurs from occupational opportunities.

The analysis in the article is created around the formal and informal occupational strategies, the latter being further divided into what Granovetter (2018) called "strong ties" and "weak ties". The paper starts with a theoretical framework on the sociology of occupations, respectively on occupational strategies, and then continues with the discussions around the field research. The field research is based on a pool of twenty oral history narrative interviews with third country migrants residing in Romania. The methodological details of the data collection and analysis are presented in a dedicated section, before the article moves on to the Discussions, where the empirical analysis is backed up by testimonies and remarks made by the immigrants in the oral history interviews. A variety of research studies have dealt with the labor migration to Romania and the social inclusion of migrant workers (Coşciug, 2018; Oltean and Găvruş, 2018), the Social Change Review also dedicating a special issue to "Debating Immigration in a Country of Emigration", mostly concerned with the aforementioned aspect. However, less attention has been paid to the occupational strategies that immigrants – much less third country immigrants – develop in order to secure labor market inclusion, an aspect that this paper attempts to cover.

This paper argues that third country migrants rely on either formal or informal occupational strategies to secure employment, and also that the use of 'weak ties' in order to find employment results in a tendency of pushing migrants towards the secondary labor market. The research question asks how third country migrants make use of occupational strategies in order to find employment? Employment is understood as labor market inclusion that creates the conditions for proper social participation of migrants in the host society.

2. The Sociology of Occupations

The sociology of occupations (often also presented as occupational sociology) is a branch of the sociology of labor dealing with how the occupational construction connects with and affects miscellaneous aspects of social life, such as family, leisure,

social relations, societal participation etc (Paradeise, 2003; Paugam, 2008). Employment-related aspects are studied in order to seek for connections with social life in general, to find out more about the significance of employment for society or about the relevance and the meaning of having a (specific) job to the lives of people (Bhowmik, 2009; Smigel, 1954). According to Taylor (1968), the study of occupational sociology contributes to a better understanding of society.

Kalleberg and Sorensen (1979: 361) defined an occupation as a professionally homogenous group of people, with similar abilities, competencies and training. Such people thus create an analogous group of (potential) employees who are in search of a job that relates to their skills and training. This congruity stemming from the professional background (consisting of either education and training, or of labor experience gained on the job) creates social power that distances and distinguishes professional groups from each other, thus leading to the social division of labor: different workers with different skillsets will have different employment opportunities. Kalleberg and Sorensen's definition is aligned with Friedmann and Naville's (1961) understanding of the occupational sociology, which the latter ones present as being the study of professional commonalities in terms of occasions of work between diverse individuals. Friedmann and Naville also draw attention that occupational sociology does not have rigorously delimited borders, incorporating a variety of facets that connect labor with social life.

3. Occupational Strategies

In-depth research has revealed the significance of occupational strategies for successful social inclusion and their contribution to meaningful social participation (Wicks, 2003).

At large, occupational strategies can be defined as "the basic professional orientation in which the future professional activities can be embedded" (Stock-Homburg, 2010: 806). In a narrowed down understanding, occupational strategies can also be simply acknowledged as the totality of methods that a job-seeker can use in order to find employment. Studies concerning the occupational strategies of migrants often turn to this narrowed understanding, as it is believed that one of the most important steps for migrants to be included in the host society is to first of all find employment; once employment is found, the migrant might also think about the future. Cohen (2000) also defines occupational strategies from the point of view of social inclusion, namely as a persons' vision of how to integrate in a rapidly changing labor market. In other cases, occupational strategies are also understood as one's strategy to increase his or her autonomy of practice (Protassieff, 2014). As such, occupational strategies can be regarded as professional and social action plans that migrants use to find employment. Because people can use different methods to find employment, occupational strategies can lead to social inequalities and discrimination, as demonstrated by Glazer (1991) and Kurtz (2009).

Broadly speaking, we can distinguish between formal and informal occupational strategies. The formal strategy supposes that the migrant applies for a job by free will and as a response to an open and public job announcement. However, due to restrictive labor legislation, the use of formal occupational strategies often fails, directing immigrants towards informal strategies in order to find jobs and apply for them.

Informal occupational strategies are based on the networking with the social circle. Members of the social network provide hints and help for finding employment. Granovetter (2018) further divides the informal strategy in "*strong ties*" and "*weak ties*". Strong ties are established with family members, colleagues and a close circle of friends, while weak ties with a more distant circle of acquaintances. According to Granovetter, weak ties prove more efficient in circulating job information and referrals, ultimately in helping one find a job, as strong ties are more concerned with providing emotional support in the private life. Therefore, the absence of weak ties might significantly hinder the occupational mobility of immigrants (Amado, 2003).

Research has also demonstrated that informal occupational strategies prove to be more efficient when it comes to finding employment in the secondary labor market rather than in the primary labor market (Alexandru, 2011). While the primary labor market requires formal education to access well paid jobs with safe working conditions, good job security and potential for promotion (King, 1974; Maxwell, 1987), access to the secondary labor market of low status and poorly paid jobs (in services, retail, manufacturing etc.) is usually intermediated for migrants through weak ties (Miller Jr., 1982; Wilson, 1998).

4. Methodology

This qualitative research is based on twenty semi-structured oral history interviews with migrants living in Romania, conducted between June 2021 and January 2022. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the interviews were carried out online, per Zoom. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. The interviews were held in either Romanian or English, based on the knowledge or preferences of the participants. Table 1 provides a list of the participants to the interviews, with their gender, country of origin, age and employment status at the moment of the interview. The participants are listed chronologically, from top to bottom, in the order in which the interviews have been conducted. For anonymization purposes, the real names of the participants will be replaced by pseudonyms.

Table 1: List of participants in the oral history interviews and their employment status at the moment of the interview

Pseudonym (Female/Male)	Country of origin	Age at the moment of the interview	Employment status at the moment of the interview
Darcelle (F)	Cameroon	20	Student, unemployed. Has previously had a short, less than a month labor experience at a call center with French language.
Dabir (M)	Yemen	26	In recruitment process with a large multinational IT company. Had two jobs in the native country, at a restaurant and in cosmetics retail. In Romania, had a brief spell of one month and a half at a business

Pseudonym (Female/Male)	Country of origin	Age at the moment of the interview	Employment status at the moment of the interview
			dealing with cryptocurrencies, and then occasional collaborations with movie casting and shooting agencies.
Maashar (M)	Palestine	21	Student, unemployed. Thinking about opening his own business. Previous intenrship at a marketing agency in Romania. Occasional work at grandfather's furniture store in Palestine.
Amalia (F)	Republic of Moldova	21	Student, volunteer at a student organization.
Ghawer (M)	Lebanon	20	Student, unemployed.
John (M)	USA	55	Working as a missionary in Romania since 1999
Abdul (M)	Afghanistan	20	Student, unemployed, volunteering
Milena (F)	Belarus	36	Unemployed. Worked for two years in a call-center in Romania before resigning to take care of her child.
Stephanie (F)	The Philippines	37	Employed at a call center, after an experience with another call center
Sebastián (M)	Mexico	49	Employed at a call center
Valeria (F)	Republic of Moldova	22	Employed on a project-basis at an NGO. Previous labor experience in Romania at a fast-food chain.
Yardan (M)	Yemen	23	Works online for an international business. Previous work experiences in Yemen and in Malaysia. Internship at a retail store in Romania.
Bhavesh (M)	India	46	Self-employed, runs an international recruitment agency. Previous experience at another Romanian-based international recruitment agency.
Nabina (F)	Kenya	20	Student, unemployed.
Rayya (F)	Iraq	24	Employed as university lecturer in Romania. Worked at an embassy in Irak as well.
Gloria (F)	Dominican Republic	45	Works as nutrition consultant and researcher at a private medical clinic. Experience as medical researcher and medical university professor in the Dominican Republic and in the United States of America.
Ramzia (F)	Sudan	25	Student, employed in a retail store. Worked as university lecturer for one year in her native country before migrating to Romania.

Pseudonym (Female/Male)	Country of origin	Age at the moment of the interview	Employment status at the moment of the interview
Muhammetnazar (M)	Turkmenistan	22	Employed as sales manager and marketing executive in businesses of friends.
Jagdish (M)	Bangladesh	24	Works as delivery boy at an on-demand courier service. Volunteered at the Red Corss in Bangladesh.
Raviraj (M)	Bangladesh	21	Works as delivery boy at an on-demand courier service. Taught private lessons for pupils in Bangladesh.

Source: own compilation of data

The average age of the participants is situated at 28.9 years, hence a young sample, with the youngest participants aged 20 and the oldest 55. The young age can also be the explanation of the fact that, at the moment of conducting the interviews, eight respondents were not employed. Nine females and eleven males responded.

The oral history format of the interviews encouraged participants to present a narrative of their own lives, prior and after migration to Romania. Part of the questions targeting the personal narrative concerned the labor experience of the migrants. The questions prompting participants to discuss about their labor experience were the following:

- What was your first job? How old were you and what did you do?
- How long did you have that job?
- What lessons did you learn?
- What kind of jobs did you have?
- What do you think are your personal skills or characteristics that can help you the most?
- Are you currently employed in Romania? How did you find the job? Was it easy for you to get the job?
- Any challenges that you had on the Romanian labor market?
- What personal skills/abilities do you think can help you on the local job market?
- What are you doing to improve your working condition in Romania?

If respondents opened the subject of labor experience by themselves, the interview was left free-floating with their answers.

5. Discussions

The oral history interviews revealed that third country immigrants employed occupational strategies to overcome social barriers set by their non-native status (i.e., by the non-fit of third country job-seeker and the legislation of the Romanian labor market), which restricted their job opportunities and job options for meaningful

participation on the local labor market and, implicitly, in society. These strategies helped the migrants become better included in the Romanian host society. With regard to Berry et al.'s (2002) four possible socio-cultural responses of out-groups to in-groups, it can be said that all migrants interviewed harnessed the potential of the occupational strategies to find a job and improve their ties with the local society. In none of the cases did the interviewed immigrants report to have completely abandoned their own socio-cultural identity (assimilation), become marginalized or separated from the welcoming society. On the contrary, Raviraj (Bangladesh) mentioned how participation on the labor market has helped him and his friend learn more about the Romanian people and society:

> "*[While working,] we already learned shortcuts in the city, we learned about consumer's preferences, about people's tastes*".

One of the findings of the research was that third country migrants developed occupational strategies shortly after migration, in their first months or weeks of their stay in Romania, which indicates an awareness among migrants of the importance of having a job for proper social participation. In most of the cases, migrants used informal occupational strategies, as very often, the formal strategies proved their limits because of the complex and restrictive procedural and legal barriers set by the Romanian labor market. What many migrants complained about during the oral history interviews was the reluctance of companies to employ internationals due to the supplementary paperwork that needs to be done.

Employment becomes even more complicated for migrants with only a temporary residence, especially students. According to Art. 3, Chapter II, Section I of the Government Ordinance 25/2014 of 26 August 2014 regarding the employment and secondment of foreigners on the Romanian territory, "*foreigners holding the right of temporary residence for studies may be employed in Romania only with an individual part-time employment contract with a maximum working time of 4 hours per day*". Muhammetnazar (Turkmenistan) recalls his difficulties in finding a job and admits that, the reason he accepted to participate in the oral history interview, was to express himself about these difficulties:

> "*To be frank, it was a disaster, and it still is. Why I did accept your invitation to join this interview is because I want to express myself about the difficulties we face, especially in the job market, after we graduate or while we're studying as a foreigner. Of course, there are some political and some cultural things, but it is very difficult as a foreigner to position yourself in the labor market here, and it's not just me. It's very difficult to find internships, very difficult to find jobs because most of them require full time position, and legally, as a foreigner studying in Romania, you have a part time permit allowance to go to work. It is very hard and companies just reject your application because you're a part timer. And, as you can imagine, it was a disaster. It was very hard for me to find part time jobs. The only options you have – doesn't depend in what background you study – is just to work at call centers*".

Most of the migrants who found jobs by using a more formal approach did so mainly in mid- to large-sized multinational companies operating in Romania, which – thanks to their size, organizational structure, organizational and legal competencies, budgets etc. –

are more prepared to take on the challenge of going through the bureaucratic procedures with the governmental institutions in order to employ migrants. Indeed, several of the migrants interviewed worked for multinational companies, being employed after following the formal procedure of answering to a public job opening, applying for the job and being interviewed, but all of them were past their thirties and had already accumulated labor experience when they migrated to Romania, an advantage that counted for their employers. However, for students, as Yardan (Yemen) – himself having done a paid internship with a multinational conglomerate in Bucharest – tries to tone down the negative situation that third country nationals are exposed to,

> "*It's easy to find work, but it's not easy to find a good work, or a good job*".

Gloria's occupational strategy, although not easy, was effective for allowing her to work what she wanted to work. Unlike many migrants, Gloria used a formal occupational strategy. A highly-skilled trained medic with vast professional experience gathered in her native country and abroad, Gloria could not find employment in the Romanian medical sector, because the public sector rejects foreign-breed doctors and the private sector does not make it easier either, by refusing to acknowledge study diplomas obtained outside of the European Union. Asked to reflect on how come it was so difficult for a trained professional like her to find employment in Romania and how she eventually managed to obtain a job in the Romanian medical sector, Gloria stated:

> "*The truth is that Romania does not recognize diplomas. Otherwise, I did a nutrition course and it was good that I did it because I found a job as a nutrition consultant. In this capacity, I can participate in various kinds of medical work that I had done in the Dominican Republic as well: research, nutritional consultations etc.*"

Because her job applications were rejected in the proper employment path due to cumbersome legislation that does not recognize third country diplomas, Gloria initiated and pursued an own occupational strategy, which saw her actively engage in taking specialization courses in Romania (in spite of her already existing qualifications), which, eventually, helped her access the Romanian medical labor market and continue doing what she did before migration. In Gloria's case, her occupational persona – her professional background and her desire to continue doing what she did before emigration – strongly influenced the occupational strategy. Gloria created a formal and not necessarily easy occupational strategy which saw her invest her personal resources in doing a course that opened up opportunities for her and helped her live a life in Romania that offered her a purposeful and gratifying life, yet only after having to overcome initial occupational challenges and barriers.

The fact that a university professor of physiology and pharmacology with experience in teaching and research accumulated at Rochester University and Columbia University in the United States of America could not be hired in the Romanian medical system due to legal-procedural flaws that did not recognize her study diplomas and work experience abroad, is an indication of the occupational barriers maintained by the Romanian labor market; in order to combat these, migrants often have to develop their own occupational strategies or to resort to informal ways of gaining access to the labor market, which cost them additional energy, time and money.

However, Gloria's quest for a better occupational position does not stop here, a proof that immigrant's occupational strategies are "gradually refined over time" (Wicks, 2006: 267). Aware of her worth, formation and position, Gloria declared at the moment of the interview that:

> "*Next year I will take my citizenship to open my doors, my gates, as you say.*"

Gender Occupational Segregation Induced by Informal Ties

Many of the immigrants interviewed reported to have found their jobs through informal occupational strategies, confirming Granovetter's (2018) stance that labor advancement comes along with the proper 'weak ties' (and a proper timing, might be added). The conducted research also proved Granovetter's idea of the strong ties' failure in providing adequate support for employment, due to two main reasons: first, that the migrants did not have an extended strong tie network in Romania; second, that many of the migrants interviewed complained about the inability to approach local people and create strong ties with them.

The strong tie networks of the interviewed migrants were often reduced to the spouse and maybe one or two closer friends. Another interesting aspect to notice in connection to this issue is a gender stratification to the detriment of women, such as Stephanie (The Philippines), Milena (Belarus) and Ramzia (Sudan), who complained about having communicational problems even with the family of the spouse or their in-laws.

> Stephanie (The Philippines): "*It's hard for me to really get to know somebody. I know they can speak English, but it's very challenging for me to get to know them better as a person, as a friend. So, a relationship at work is okay (n.a., with work colleagues), but to be friends like in super-friends is hard*".

> Milena (Belarus): "*I have acquaintances, but I can't say that they are very close friends, who would call me often, day by day as back home, to ask me how I am. It's not true friendship. I have a fairly close Romanian neighbor, but she is not a friend to whom you can be one hundred percent open, to talk about your problems, to discuss*".

> Ramzia (Sudan): "*I did not make a lot of friends here in Romania*".

Such inabilities act as detrimental for migrants seeking employment. On the other side, men found it easier to create both strong and weak ties, which also helped them find employment, such as in the case of Bhavesh (India):

> "*I used to go to the house of my mother in law, and she used to teach me [Romanian] also. Going to the house of mother in law for almost two months and learn from her two hours every day, I think that was a great help for me. [...] I will say the most important thing [for labor market inclusion] is the language*".

With the help of his mother in-law, Bhavesh managed to learn Romanian, which then opened lots of occupational opportunities for him. In the end, with the help of the Romanian learned from his in-law, Bhavesh was able to venture into entrepreneurship

and opened a head-hunting company that brings Asian workers to Romania. For Bhavesh, the language is a key business asset, as he is able to intermediate between employers and workers. The importance of knowing the language is also noticed by Sebastián (Mexico):

> "*Here, to get a good job, you need to speak the language, because mostly if you don't speak Romanian, you're bound to do call center work*".

Many migrants find employment as call-center operators thanks to the fluency in their native languages. After the accession to the European Union on January 1st, 2007, Romania developed to a sought-after destination for IT services, Business Process Outsourcing, and call center support (Pop et al., 2013). The cheap labor and the proficient foreign language skills of the native population became Romania's competitive advantages in the international quest to attract foreign investments (Dumitrașcu, 2015; Soul, 2019; Stegar, 2018). Foreign businesses were relocated to Romania, many of them call-centers, which resulted in an increased attractiveness of the Romanian labor market for migrant workers or foreign-born residents as well. Yet the standardized call center work often means easily accessible but highly demanding (oftentimes leading to overwork and exhaustion) and low-paid jobs, with few career advancement opportunities. On the one hand side, call centers operating in Romania provide an easy access to the labor market for young migrants (often being their first ever work experience), but on the other hand side, these are labor-intensive business models with rather poor remuneration and part-time contracts.

Sebastián and Bhavesh found it easy to practice the language with members of the family or with neighbors than did Stephanie, Milena, or Darcelle, which also indirectly impacted upon the former's ability to find employment. Unlike Stephanie and Milena, Sebastián mentions that:

> "*I get along really well with the two neighbors that I see every day when I go to [the supermarket] to buy something. Normally I stop and chat a little bit. I have friends. Most of the friends that I know here are because of my wife. And we keep in contact. At least once a month we try to get together and do something*".

Sebastián' ability to access a social network via the spouse proved impossible for Stephanie and Milena. Darcelle, as well, mentioned that: "*I don't have close friends from Romania*". Obtaining tips for employment becomes difficult the more limited the social network is.

The research also confirmed Granovetter's (2018) point that weak ties prove more useful in accessing jobs than strong ties do. However, in the cases of both Ramzia and Valeria, the weak ties made connections to labor-intensive, part-time weekend jobs on the secondary market. For Valeria (Republic of Moldova), a 'weak tie' working at a migrant NGO made the connection to a fast food chain:

> "*It was easy for me to get hired, it wasn't a problem. I was hired in 2018 to 2019 [...]. It wasn't hard for me to get hired because, again, [the person working at the NGO] helped me. I had to work four hours a day on Saturday and Sunday*".

While for Ramzia the employment hint came from an international friend, for Valeria it came from a native citizen who was involved in an organization offering support for immigrants. In neither of the cases, however, as with Darcelle, Milena or Stephanie, did the tip come from an unconditionally established relationship with a native citizen.

The importance of weak ties was also highlighted by Abdul (Afghanistan):

> "*[Friends] helped me a lot. They helped me in every aspect of my life in Romania. If I wanted a job, they offered to help with the job*".

Access to the Primary and to the Secondary Labor Markets

With few exceptions, there where the informal weak ties proved useful in accessing a job, the migrants were directed towards the secondary labor market. Studies demonstrated that migrants are usually channeled towards the secondary market, where they tend to be stuck with low wages and low occupational mobility (Durand et al., 2016; Mar, 1991; Massey et al., 2016). However, it has to be mentioned that the migrants interviewed for this research were part of the higher tier of the secondary market (middle upper class), with better payment and career opportunities.

For accessing the primary labor market, informal occupational strategies proved rather un-useful, the access mainly depending on the migrants' own efforts to improve their employment conditions, such as in the case of Gloria, who free willingly pursued a specialization course, or of Rayya, who completed her PhD. Rayya is one of the rather few migrant examples who managed to access a position with the help of strong ties, at the recommendation of her faculty Dean and only because she was already active in academia, where she proved her worth over time:

> "*I found the job at the university after one year from staying here in Romania. When I was having my PhD presentation, the Dean was sitting there and he said, you know, we need some professors to teach in English so, what do you say? I told him, yes, okay*".

6. Conclusions

This paper asserted a reliance of third country migrants on formal and informal occupational strategies for securing employment. The findings of this study confirm Granovetter's (2018) idea of a higher efficiency of weak ties for finding jobs. Some of the interviewed migrants found jobs based on referrals from acquaintances, yet it has to be mentioned that these referrals mostly directed the migrants towards the secondary labor market. An explanation therefore can be that the migrants' social network of acquaintances is largely restricted to very few other migrants, who are not really well connected into the labor market, yet who are willing to help. Even more help might be offered by domestic acquaintances, however many of the migrants reported that they had difficulties in establishing close friendships with Romanians. To increase their chances of employment, among others, migrants should try and enlarge their informal network of acquaintances. In such a case, migrants would improve their labor and also societal participation. Especially there where the business or the state fails to provide sufficient opportunities, migrants should turn to their free will and network of social relationships.

Another important finding of this research was that the primary labor market (medicine, academia, research, high-tech etc.) was mainly accessed via formal occupational strategies, with migrants putting in personal efforts to obtain the job, while access to the secondary labor market (part-time jobs in call centers or labor-intensive services etc.) relied on the weak ties of the informal occupational strategies. Formal strategies proved more efficient in the case of liberal professions and when the migrants sought employment in multinational companies, the latter being open to international workers and having professional and large enough HR departments to take the burden of the supplementary paperwork required by the public authorities for allowing the employment of migrants.

Following Kalleberg and Sorensen's (1979) idea of professional homogeneity, it can be said that a considerable part of the migrants interviewed found employment in call centers of business process outsourcing businesses. Although call center operations cannot really be considered a profession (such as medics or professor), they still represent an occupation sought-after by migrants. Occupational strategies for taking up a call center position are reduced to a minimum. Because of the widespread availability of call center jobs in Romania and the ease of employment (minimal standard requirement of fluency in a foreign language, with or without former labor experience), occupying a position in such a business often relies on the mere free will of the migrant to apply for the job. The downsides, however, are the poor payment and the lack of advancement opportunities, thus pushing migrants into the depths of the secondary labor market.

By the ease of access, call center jobs contribute to facilitating the inclusion of migrants in the host society, yet while it also mostly confines them to that position. For being in the books for accessing better paid jobs, migrants need to develop a set of occupational strategies. The strategies met in the historical narratives of the interviewed migrants were:

(a) finding employment rapidly, in a matter of a few weeks after migration, so as to accumulate the necessary professional experience to qualify the migrant for a superior position;

(b) actively participating in specialization courses or professional reconversion courses;

(c) gradually refining one own's occupational strategies over time;

(d) obtaining citizenship to have equal rights with the domestic labor supply;

(e) using 'weak ties' to obtain tips and hints about available jobs;

(f) using 'weak ties' to learn the Romanian language so as to be able to compete with the local labor supply for better jobs;

(g) accessing short-term, part-time internships while still young, so as to accumulate labor experience that can prove helpful during screening and recruitment processes;

(h) volunteering with NGO's (prior or after migration) for the same purpose of gathering labor experience;

(i) completing academic degrees (bachelor, masters or doctorate) for increasing employment chances.

In terms of Glazer's (1991) idea of social discrimination stemming from occupational opportunities, the oral history interviews revealed several discrimination patterns that occurred among third country migrants seeking employment in Romania:

(a) discrimination between students and workers with accumulated labor experience;

(b) discrimination between migrants able to use Romanian language against those not speaking Romanian;

(c) discrimination between migrants mastering (Romanian and) several foreign languages against those not knowing foreign languages;

(d) discrimination between migrants with short term residency permits against those with long term residency permits;

(e) discrimination based on the type of the short-term residency permit held by the migrant (for employment, secondment, for family reunification, for studies etc.);

(f) discrimination based on accomplished degree and qualifications (i.e., medics having more problems in finding employment than migrants with studies in economics and business administration, IT and computer sciences, or linguistics and philology);

(g) discrimination based on the amount of time having been spent by the migrants in the host society;

(h) gender occupational discrimination, with women having more difficulties in establishing weak ties, but especially strong ties, than men do.

Future research might focus more on the primary and secondary market dichotomy, on what specific occupational strategies are prone to either of the cases, or on what impact the language skills briefly described in this paper have on accessing the labor market.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF POSITIVE FACTORS IN PROTECTING ADVERSE MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES AND SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR AMONG CITIZENS OF THE COMMUNITY OF PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE COUNTRIES

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Abstract: Research on positive factors underlies strategies for promoting mental health and preventing suicidal behaviors. Objectives: To assess the importance of social support, self-esteem, and resilience in protecting against adverse mental health outcomes and suicidal behavior in different Portuguese Language Countries. Method and Results: We collected an online sample of 1006 citizens from the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLC), mean age of 41.76 years. Instruments assessed psychological symptoms, suicidal behaviors, social support, self-esteem, and resilience. We found statistically significant differences between CPLC countries, and positive factors were found to be inversely correlated with adverse mental health and suicidal behavior. Conclusions: Positive factors protect mental health and prevent suicidal behaviors. Self-esteem was particularly important, likely due to its intrinsic nature which has an overall influence on other psychological assets. Cultural differences should be taken in account when planning preventive and protective programs that should be specific to cultural needs.

Keywords: mental health; suicidal behavior; social support; self-esteem; resilience

1. Introduction

Mental health problems are a major risk factor for suicide (Botega, 2014), and although suicide rates have been decreasing globally, this is not the case for all countries (World

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Health Organization [WHO], 2021b). Suicide is a serious public health problem as it is among the leading causes of death worldwide (WHO, n.d., 2021a). Improving mental health and reducing mortality from suicide is, therefore, a priority for the WHO, which seeks to identify and promote socioemotional skills and positive and protective factors for mental health (WHO, 2021a, 2021b).

Several studies have explored the protective factors of mental health, particularly social support, self-esteem, and resilience, in various populations (Batista & Pereira, 2020; Kurtović et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2021; Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2017; Matel-Anderson et al., 2018; Pereira & Silva, 2021; Watson et al., 2019; Williams, 2018; Yıldırım & Tanrıverdi, 2021). An understanding of this phenomenon is critically important to mental health outcomes as it underlies prevention strategies and social and clinical interventions (Arango et al., 2018).

From the perspective of Positive Psychology, social support and self-esteem are good predictors of resilience (Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2017) and this mental capacity to adaptively overcome adverse circumstances contributes to better mental health and decreases the risk of suicidal behavior (Almeida, 2016; Matel-Anderson et al., 2018; Sher, 2019; Venicio & Daiuto, 2017). Social support refers to the emotional, instrumental, or informational help derived from a network of people such as family, friends, and significant others (Alsubaie et al., 2019; Gariépy et al., 2016), while self-esteem can be described as a favorable or unfavorable attitude towards oneself at a given time (Arsandaux et al., 2021; Soto-Sanz et al., 2019). Resilience concerns the active psychological process of mobilizing personal resources and coping mechanisms when faced with distress in challenging circumstances, resulting in successful adaptative outcomes (Botha & van den Berg, 2016; Karaman & Efilti, 2019). For this reason, resources such as social support and self-esteem may, therefore, be good predictors of resilience considering that, when mobilized, they contribute to adaptative outcomes under challenging circumstances.

There are many studies that report an inverse correlation between social support and the presence of depressive and anxious symptoms (Alsubaie et al., 2019; Gariépy et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2018). Social support has also been found to act as a protective factor as it mitigates the risk of suicide in adults (Stickley & Koyanagi, 2016). A review by Gariépy et al. (2016) revealed that people's main source of social support tends to differ by age, as adults and older adults tend to rely more on the support of significant others, followed by support from family and friends, while younger people tend to rely more on parental support. Nevertheless, social support has been consistently portrayed as a protective factor for depression across all ages (Alsubaie et al., 2019; Gariépy et al., 2016; Martínez-Hernáez et al., 2016), and it is extremely relevant to more vulnerable groups such as older people or sexual minorities (Batista & Pereira, 2020; Pereira & Silva, 2021; Watson et al., 2019).

Higher levels of self-esteem have also shown to be a protective factor for mental health (Karaca et al., 2019). A strong sense of self-esteem is essential in reducing psychopathological problems, since this builds a strong sense of competence and self-efficacy to deal with adversity and stressful events (Acácio, 2021; Bovier et al., 2004; Lee, 2020). Poor self-esteem can be one of the consequences of depression, which

enhances negative beliefs that distort the perception of the world, others, and oneself, or it can be one of the factors that trigger psychopathology (Acácio, 2021; Manna et al., 2016). Overall, women tend to have more psychological symptomatology and lower self-esteem than men (Acácio, 2021), and girls tend to exhibit higher levels of depression and suicidal behavior than boys (Barrera et al., 2020; Manna et al., 2016). Low self-esteem is one of the biggest predictors of suicidal behavior in young people (Barrera et al., 2020; Soto-Sanz et al., 2019), whose unfavorable attitude towards oneself can contribute to emotional and behavioral problems and poor peer relationships, which may in turn contribute to suicidal tendencies (Barrera et al., 2020). This may be explained due to the high-risk profile that young people represent, as poor socioemotional adjustment increases vulnerability to mental disorders (Fonseca-Pedrero et al., 2020).

Resilience is a protective factor for mental health even when individuals are exposed to adverse experiences (Färber & Rosendahl, 2018; M. Liu et al., 2020). More recently, resilience has gained prominence in research, specifically in the field of suicide prevention (Sher, 2019), and there are several studies that show that promoting resilience allows for the development of greater flexibility in dealing with psychological distress and reducing the impact of psychopathological symptoms (Rossetti et al., 2017; Venicio & Daiuto, 2017).

2. Positive factors in CPLC

In Portugal, social support is one of the most frequently mentioned positive factors in literature. In general, the greater the satisfaction with perceived social support, the lower the presence of depressive and anxious symptoms and, consequently, the lower the risk of suicide (Cortesão, 2020; Faria et al., 2019; Morgado, 2018). Furthermore, the presence of social support also influences the levels of resilience, which in turn is inversely correlated with the presence of psychopathological symptoms in the Portuguese population (Almeida, 2016), and corresponds with findings from international literature.

Studies from Brazil also present conclusions that agree with existing investigations. Positive factors have been found to protect against adverse mental health and suicidal behavior and to be determinants of positive outcomes when interacting with risk factors, constituting resources for a successful adaptation to difficulties (Pereira et al., 2018). Additionally, results have found that social support and the establishment of relationships with peers contributes to decreasing the development of psychopathology, a better adjustment to challenging contexts and a positive self-perception (de Souza, 2017; Oliveira & Barroso, 2020), self-esteem represents a protective factor for suicidal behavior (Pereira et al., 2018; da Silva, 2019), and resilience allows flexibility in adaptive problem solving, which is important in the field of suicide prevention (Venicio & Daiuto, 2017).

As for African Countries with Portuguese as an Official Language (PALOP), there is a scarcity of studies on the influence of these positive factors on mental health and suicidal behavior. Among existing literature, a review from Pires et al. (2019) concluded that the Mozambiquan population shows a high burden of mental illness due to the lack of conventional health services and cultural adaptation of therapies.

The CPLC has a population of close to 250 million and occupies an area of about 10.7 million square kilometers across four continents. Most of these countries are rich in cultural diversity and, at the same time, have a human development index below the global average. Although the CPLC shares the influence of Portuguese culture, countries within the CPLC have differing socioeconomic development patterns, which may influence the effect of positive factors on mental health and suicidal behaviors.

Taking into account the existing literature and the lack of studies on the protective factors of mental health and suicidal behavior in the CPLC, we developed the present investigation, which aims (1) to assess the importance of social support, self-esteem, and resilience in protecting mental health and suicidal behavior, (2) to determine differences in the relationship between protective factors and mental health and suicidal behavior by country of residence, (3) to assess levels of association between variables, and (4) to determine the effect of sociodemographic variables, country of residence, social support, self-esteem, and resilience in predicting mental health and suicidal behavior.

3. Materials and Methods

Participants

This study included 1006 participants who were citizens of the CPLC and between 18 and 80 years of age (mean = 41.76; SD = 14.19). Of these participants, 576 identified as female, 424 as male, and 6 as another gender. In terms of country of residence, 40.7% of the participants lived in Brazil, 29.9% lived in PALOP, and 29.4% lived in Portugal. Regarding sexual orientation, 87.5% of the participants self-identified as heterosexual, 6.5% as bisexual, and 6% as gay/lesbian. Racially, 49.9% of participants were white/European, 25.1% were African/Black, and 24.9% were mixed race. This sample was largely professionally active, as 60.4% were employed and 14.2% were students; in contrast, 4.7% were unemployed and 5.2% were retired. The majority of participants had obtained at least a bachelor's degree (90.1%) and were of average socioeconomic status (58%). In terms of marital status, 37% of participants were married to a person of the opposite sex, 21.9% were single and were not dating, and 16.8% were single and dating. More detailed information on these variables can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the CPLC participants
(n=1006; Mage=41.76; SD=14.185)

Country of residence		n	%
	Portugal	296	29.4
	Brazil	409	40.7
	PALOP	301	29.9
Gender	Male	424	42.1
	Female	576	57.3
	Other	6	0.61
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	880	87.5
	Bisexual	66	6.5
	Gay/Lesbian	60	6

Country of residence		n	%
Race/ethnicity	White/European	502	49.9
	African/Black	253	25.1
	Mixed	251	24.9
Professional status	Employed	608	60.4
	Unemployed	47	4.7
	Student	143	14.2
	Student-worker	82	8.1
	Self-employed	65	6.4
	Retired	52	5.2
	Medical leave	3	0.3
	Volunteer/community work	6	0.6
Educational attainment	≤ High school	100	9.9
	Bachelor's degree	249	24.7
	Master's degree	339	33.7
	Doctorate/Ph.D.	318	31.6
Socioeconomic status	Low	35	3.5
	Low-middle	109	10.8
	Middle	584	58
	Middle-high	227	22.5
	High	51	5.1
Marital Status	Single w/o dating	221	21.9
	Single w/dating	169	16.8
	Married w/same sex	14	1.4
	Married w/different sex	372	37
	De facto union w/same sex	12	1.2
	De facto union w/different sex	134	13.3
	Separated/divorced w/same sex	11	1.1
	Separated/divorced w/different sex	60	5.9
	Widower of different sex	13	1.3

Source: own representation

Measurement instruments

This study utilized six separate questionnaires to capture sociodemographic variables, psychological symptoms, suicidal behavior, social support, self-esteem, and resilience. The sociodemographic questionnaire asked about the participants' age, country of residence, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, professional status, educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and marital status.

To identify the presence of psychological symptoms (depression, anxiety, and/or somatization), and thus measure participants' mental health, we utilized the Brief Symptom Inventory-18 (BSI-18). This instrument includes 18 items to assess psychological symptoms experienced over the previous week and includes three different scales for depression, anxiety, and somatization. Additionally, the global severity index measures general psychological distress levels and is obtained by adding all 18 items together, with higher scores indicating worse mental health (Nazaré et al., 2017). This Portuguese-language version has adequate internal reliability, with very

good Cronbach's alpha values for the community group sample for all three scales and for the global severity index. Reliability analysis for this study was α=.926.

To assess suicidal behavior, we included the Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire–Revised (SBQ-R), which has four items and utilizes a four-point Likert scale to measure suicidal ideation, intention, and attempt (e.g., the item 'Have you ever tried killing yourself?' assesses suicide attempt; the item 'How likely is that you will attempt suicide someday?' assesses future suicide risk). The Portuguese-language version used in this study is a straightforward translation of the items a psychometric appropriateness with a standardized coefficient alpha of .69 (Campos & Holden, 2019).

To measure social support, the Portuguese-language version of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) was utilized (Carvalho et al., 2011). This instrument measures social support from family, friends, and significant others through a seven-point Likert scale, with options ranging from 'Totally disagree (0)' to 'Totally agree (7)' (e.g., 'There is a special person that is close when I'm in need'; 'My family truly tries to help me'; 'I can talk about my problems with my friends'). The MSPSS has appropriate psychometric properties, with a Cronbach's alpha ranging between .87 and .95 for the three dimensions of social support. Reliability analysis for this study was α=.928.

To measure self-esteem, we utilized the Portuguese-language version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), which has ten items scored on a three-point Likert scale with responses ranging from Strongly disagree (0) to Strongly agree (3) (e.g., 'I feel I have a number of good qualities'; 'I take a positive attitude toward myself') (Pechorro et al., 2011). The Cronbach's alpha for the total sample was good (.79), indicating good psychometric properties. Reliability analysis for this study was α=.866.

To measure resilience, we utilized the Portuguese-language version of the Conner-Davidson Resilience Scale–10 (CD-RISC-10), a ten-item instrument with a five-point Likert response scale, with responses ranging from 'Totally disagree (0)' to 'Totally agree (5)' (e.g., 'I am able to handle stress'; 'I am able to not get discouraged by failure'). The CD-RISC-10 has good psychometric properties (α=.85) similar to the original version, and, therefore, is adequate to use among the Portuguese population (Almeida et al., 2020). Reliability analysis for this study was α=.893.

Procedures

A website was created to disseminate the questionnaire online through mailing lists and social media from May to October 2021, using a convenience sample method. This research was approved by the Ethical Committee of the University of Beira Interior (Portugal): CE-UBI-Pj-2021-047, and it respects the ethical principles of informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, respect for physical and psychological integrity, beneficence, and the right to withdraw at any time. The data bases were encrypted, and no identifiable participant information is accessible by the research team, namely the IP addresses.

4. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics for sociodemographic variables were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 28.0. To compare differences in positive factors (social support, self-esteem, and resilience), psychologic symptomology/mental health, and suicidal behavior between the comparison groups (CPLC), we carried out a one-way ANOVA. We collapsed the participants from PALOP into one group due to the small sample size. Pearson's correlations were conducted to identify the correlations between the positive factors, mental health, and suicidal behavior. Finally, two hierarchical linear regression analyses were performed to examine the effects of independent variables (age, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, country of residency, social support, self-esteem, and resilience) on the dependent variables (mental health and probability of suicide in the future).

5. Results

Differences in mental health, suicidal behavior, and positive factors by country of residence (Portugal, Brazil, PALOP) are presented in Table 2. Statistically significant differences were found between the CPLC countries for social support, self-esteem, resilience, adverse mental health, and suicidal behavior (p<.05), with the exception of suicide attempt throughout life (F(2) = .451; p = .637) and suicidal attempt in the last 12 months (F(2) = 1.913; p = .148).

Table 2: Mental health, suicidal behavior and positive factors by country of residence

	Country of residence	M (SD)	F(df)	*p*
Social support	Portugal	5.79 (.95)		
	Brazil	5.53 (1.14)	9.526(2; 989)	.000**
	PALOP	5.42 (1.07)		
Self-esteem	Portugal	3.13 (.54)		
	Brazil	3.19 (.53)	6.712(2; 990)	.001*
	PALOP	3.29 (.47)		
Resilience	Portugal	3.78 (.63)		
	Brazil	3.87 (.64)	29.037(2; 991)	.000**
	PALOP	4.14 (.54)		
Psychological symptoms	Portugal	.76 (.58)		
	Brazil	.93 (.71)	11.101(2; 991)	.000**
	PALOP	.71 (.63)		
Suicidal ideation	Portugal	1.48 (.60)		
	Brazil	1.56 (.66)	11.441(2; 945)	.000**
	PALOP	1.33 (.55)		
Suicide attempt	Portugal	1.17 (.58)		
	Brazil	1.20 (.63)	.451(2; 989)	.637
	PALOP	1.16 (.55)		
Suicidal ideation (<12 months)	Portugal	1.33 (.86)	7.112(2; 987)	.000**
	Brazil	1.44 (.92)		

	Country of residence	M (SD)	F(df)	p
	PALOP	1.20 (.63)		
Suicidal attempt (<12 months)	Portugal	1.06 (.38)		
	Brazil	1.03 (.23)	1.913(2; 986)	.148
	PALOP	1.08 (.42)		
Suicide risk	Portugal	1.44 (.97)		
	Brazil	1.38 (.99)	5.525(2; 981)	.004*
	PALOP	1.20 (.71)		
*p<.05 **p<.001				

Source: own representation

Table 3 shows the Pearson's correlation coefficient test results between the positive factors, mental health, and suicidal behavior. Social support, self-esteem, and resilience were all inversely correlated with adverse mental health (social support: r=-.275; p<.001; self-esteem: r=-.531; p<.001; resilience r=-.412; p<.001) and suicidal behavior (social support: r=-.223; p<.001; self-esteem: r=-.291; p<.001; resilience: r=-.237; p<.001).

Table 3: Pearson's correlations for mental health, suicidal behavior,

and positive factors

	1	2	3	4	5
1 – Psychological symptoms	–				
2 – Suicide risk	.357**	–			
3 – Social support	-.275**	-.223**	–		
4 – Self-esteem	-.531**	-.291**	.298**	–	
5 – Resilience	-.412**	-.237**	.202**	.610**	–

**p<.001   *Source: own representation*

We carried out a hierarchical linear regression analysis to assess the effect of sociodemographic variables, country of residence, and positive factors in predicting mental health (Table 4). The variables 'age', 'gender', 'sexual orientation' and 'socioeconomic status' were added to the first block (Model I). The second block (Model II) included all variables from Model I as well as 'country of residence'. The third block (Model III) included positive factors variables ('social support', 'self-esteem' and 'resilience') as well as all variables from Model II. The first block explained 11.5% of the variance in mental health and this variance did not change when the 'country of residence' variable was added (Model II). The third block, however, explained 33.5% of variance in mental health, with self-esteem being the strongest predictor among the positive factors.

Table 4: Hierarchical linear regression analysis predicting mental health

Variable	Model I			Model II			Model III		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Age	-.007	.002	-.146**	-.007	.002	-.147**	-.003	.001	-.065*
Gender	.191	.041	.147**	.195	.042	.15**	.156	.037	.12**
Sexual orientation	.106	.04	.085*	.109	.04	.087*	.051	.035	.041
Socioeconomic status	-.163	.027	-.199**	-.161	.027	-.196**	-.062	.024	-.075**
Country of residence				.013	.028	.015	.054	.025	.063*
Social support							-.08	.018	-.131**
Self-esteem							-.439	.046	-.349**
Resilience							-.144	.037	-.139**
R²		.115			.115			.335	
F		29.841**			23.895**			57.481**	

*p<.05, **p<.001   *Source: own representation*

We performed another hierarchical linear regression analysis maintaining the same structure of the previous model but changing the dependent variable to assess the effect of the same variables on suicidal behavior (Table 5). The first block (Model I) explained 5.4% of the variance in suicidal behavior and adding the variable 'country of residence' on the second block (Model II) explained 6% of the variance in suicidal behavior. Finally, the third block (Model III) explained 14.2% of the variance in suicidal behavior, with self-esteem being once again the strongest predictor.

Table 5: Hierarchical linear regression analysis predicting suicidal behavior

Variable	Model I			Model II			Model III		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Age	-.001	.002	-.014	-.001	.002	-.008	.002	.002	.031
Gender	.08	.06	.044	.044	.061	.25	.031	.059	.017
Sexual orientation	.364	.058	.208**	.345	.059	.197**	.296	.056	.169**
Socioeconomic status	-.092	.039	-.081*	-.105	.039	-.092*	-.016	.038	-.014
Country of residence				-.098	.04	-.082*	-.085	.04	-.071*
Social support							-.127	.029	-.149**
Self-esteem							-.355	.073	-.202**
Resilience							-0.42	.058	-.029**
R²		.054			.06			.142	
F		12.988**			11.635**			18.648**	

*p<.05
**p<.001

Source: own representation

6. Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to assess the importance of social support, self-esteem, and resilience in protecting against adverse mental health outcomes and suicidal behavior among citizens of the CPLC. The study findings demonstrate that, as seen throughout existing literature, these three factors have a positive impact in protecting against mental health symptoms and suicidal behaviors, generating a positive self-assessment and overall self-confidence which, in turn, provide positive coping mechanisms that allow people to adapt and overcome challenges and difficulties (Liu et al., 2021).

The results showed that PALOP participants reported lower levels of psychological symptoms and suicidal behaviors, which is consistent with the fact that they also had the highest scores for self-esteem and resilience. Although many regions of PALOP face a myriad of hardships, including chronic conflict and violence and intergenerational structural disadvantages and inequalities (WHO, 2021a), social relationships and resilience-enablers combined with cultural practices bolster positive adjustment capabilities in these populations (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Theron, 2020; van Schalkwyk & Wissing, 2010). Research on resilience found that African cultures value religious beliefs and practices (Botha & van den Berg, 2016; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Theron, 2020), and that both spirituality and religious orientation may lead to more resilient outcomes (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). One explanation for this may be that religious practices and beliefs contribute to emotional regulation abilities (Botha & van den Berg, 2016). Additionally, many African cultures promote a strong sense of community, hospitality, and union, which in turn promotes interactions with people, animals, and the environment, which serve as relevant protective relationships (Theron, 2020).

Despite the fact that overall symptoms do not constitute a clinical sample, Brazilian participants showed the highest levels of psychological symptoms. These results mimic tendencies of previous mental health investigations in this country, including findings that suicidal behaviors have underlying risk factors such as mental disorders, challenging environments, and sociodemographic characteristics (Blay et al., 2018; Botega, 2014; Mangolini et al., 2019; Ramos-Oliveira et al., 2017; D. F. Silva & Santana, 2012). In fact, Brazil has a high prevalence of anxiety disorders and depression (Mangolini et al., 2019), which has been continuously justified throughout literature by the highly unequal and adverse socioeconomic contexts, given the existent accentuated social inequalities (Ramos-Oliveira et al., 2017; Silva & Santana, 2012) and income disparities (Blay et al., 2018). These inequalities reflect on poor mental health services, with effects on availability, access, and quality of mental health care services (Ramos-Oliveira et al., 2017). This is further aggravated by exposure to violence in urban settings, which carries an exacerbated risk for mental health problems (Blay et al., 2018).

The present study found that Brazilian participants had the highest levels of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts, which align with findings from previous investigations (Botega, 2014). WHO reports (WHO, 2021b) also state that Brazil is among the top ten countries globally with highest absolute number of suicides due to its large population, although the suicide mortality index is lower than Africa and Western Europe (WHO,

2021b). Despite its multifactorial nature, the risk for suicidal behaviors increases with the presence of mental disorders and previous suicide attempt history (Barbosa & Teixeira, 2021; Botega, 2014). Given that Brazilian participants in the present sample exhibited the highest levels of both these risk factors and suicidal behaviors, these associations are in accordance with existing literature. A few studies have tried to explain the high levels of mental health problems and suicidal behaviors in Brazil amidst its psychosocial context, finding that socioeconomic problems (e.g., unemployment, homelessness), oppressive climate (e.g., sexism and racism), socio-demographic characteristics that increase vulnerability to mental disorders, and a lack of social support all contribute to higher rates of suicidal behaviors in this country (Abuabara et al., 2017; Félix et al., 2016).

On the other hand, Portugal showed the highest scores for suicide risk (i.e., probability of suicide in the future), despite having the highest levels for social support among the three groups. As previously stated, social support is an important protective factor in mitigating suicide risk (Cortesão, 2020; Faria et al., 2019; Morgado, 2018; Stickley & Koyanagi, 2016). This inconsistency may be due to higher rates of masked suicides, where inaccurate registration procedures and miscommunication between all elements involved in death registration (e.g., police officers, codifiers) lead to underreporting (Gusmão et al., 2021; Pritchard & Hansen, 2015). Portugal presents a high level of undetermined deaths compared to other European countries (Värnik et al., 2010), making it impossible to determine whether the cause of these deaths was accidental, self-harm, or assault (Pritchard & Hansen, 2015). Another justification for our results may be that in the northern and southern regions, where suicide rates tend to be higher, there are also strong cultural roots expressed through social values, attitudes, and behaviors (e.g., religious beliefs and practices) that may discourage suicide reporting (Santana et al., 2015). Furthermore, there is reluctance to report suicide within Catholic countries such as Portugal (Pritchard & Hansen, 2015), which may reinforce the underreporting of suicidal tendencies (Santana et al., 2015), thus increasing future suicide risk by maintaining suicide stigma.

In the perspective of Positive Psychology, individuals and professionals should aim not only to eliminate or mitigate negative states, but also to improve positive states by strengthening individuals' positive experiences and reinforcing positive resources that are important to achieving well-being (Harding et al., 2019; van Schalkwyk & Wissing, 2010). In the present study, social support, self-esteem, and resilience were found to be negatively correlated with psychological symptoms and suicidal behaviors, results that agree with previous investigations (Almeida, 2016; Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2017; Matel-Anderson et al., 2018; Sher, 2019; Venicio & Daiuto, 2017). Positive relation-ships, positive self-image, and constructive coping mechanisms promote adjusted psychological well-being, as they build psychological resources and strengths that create a sense of accomplishment when dealing with adverse circumstances. Additionally, they help to develop a sense of comfort and self-worth when interacting in relationships, thus playing a vital part in protecting against adverse mental health outcomes and suicidal behaviors (Theron, 2020; van Schalkwyk & Wissing, 2010).

When it comes to engaging in self-harming behavior, high social support is related to a high level of willingness to seek help and support from others, and, therefore, acts as a

way of reducing tension and enhancing emotional regulation (van der Wal & George, 2018). As such, social support helps alleviate risk factors for psychopathology and suicidal behavior (e.g., emotional dysregulation, social isolation) by building and reinforcing relationship bonds, promoting a sense of belonging, and buffering negative effects of stress through healthier coping mechanisms. These social resources may help compensate for a lack of internal resources, reducing the risk of mental health problems and suicidal behaviors (Karaman & Efilti, 2019; Szanto & Whitman, 2021; Yıldırım & Tanrıverdi, 2021).

Furthermore, our research shows stronger correlations, as well as predictive power, for self-esteem in relation to mental health and suicidal behaviors. Previous studies have shown that self-esteem is inversely correlated to psychological symptoms and suicidal behaviors, effectively predicting these outcomes (Acácio, 2021; Barrera et al., 2020; Bovier et al., 2004; Karaca et al., 2019; Lee, 2020; Soto-Sanz et al., 2019). This may be because self-esteem promotes a positive outlook on personal competence and good judgement of one's skills and self-worth (Karaman & Efilti, 2019; Kurtović et al., 2018).

Likewise, resilience, seen as intrinsic strengths (e.g., optimism, hardiness) that reflect adaptative coping strategies and positive emotions, creates fundamental skills to effectively manage difficult situations, reducing negative psychological burden (e.g., intrusive thoughts, feeling of imprisonment) through adequate emotional and cognitive processing (Liu et al., 2021; Moore & Woodcock, 2017; Yıldırım & Tanrıverdi, 2021).

The above-mentioned positive factors operate in a dynamic manner, in the sense that they exert mutual influence over each other: individuals with higher resilience will, in turn, develop a more positive perception of themselves, increasing self-esteem; this raises awareness of their own resources and skills that, in the same way, contribute to building resilience and to developing relationships which form reliable sources for social support and promote autonomy and self-acceptance (Harding et al., 2019; Kurtović et al., 2018).

This study is not without its limitations. The fact that data was collected online and the convenience sample was highly educated compromised representativeness. Additionally, although the CPLC shares a common language, we cannot deny the influence of cultural differences in terms of sociopolitical and demographic realities which may have interfered with results. The questionnaire may have also been subject to social desirability bias, given the sensitive nature and personal demand and vulnerability posed by some of the dimensions assessed (e.g., suicidal behaviors). Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the study hinders the ability to monitor changes over time and establish causal relations between variables. Another difficulty was the lack of research and/or lack of access to research regarding the study variables within PALOP. This is aggravated by the absence of mental health data in some of these countries (WHO, 2020) and the use of western instruments with no cultural adaptation and validation in African countries (van Rensburg et al., 2015).

Our results contribute to existing research on positive factors and mental health, spreading awareness about the importance of health, educational, and social policies. These policies endorse formal environments for the development of positive skills,

which are vital to the promotion of mental health, well-being, and general quality of life. This holds governments responsible for the development of policies and measures that emphasize and prioritize plans for mental health promotion and suicide prevention, and for investing in mental health professionals' suicide prevention training, as well as other non-specialized health care workers (e.g., physicians, nurses) and gatekeepers (e.g., teachers, policemen, firefighters) (WHO, 2020). It also highlights the relevance of epidemiologic studies that contribute to the assessment and planning of prevention and promotion programs in schools and communities. It should serve as an incentive to scientific research on the topic of positive and protective factors for mental health and suicidal behavior, particularly in PALOP. Future studies should include longitudinal, mixed-method, and qualitative designs that complement the quantitative data collected, focusing on the specific interactions of the positive factors and their mediation and/or moderation effects. Additionally, future research should investigate the development, implementation and assessment of social support, self-esteem and resilience-based programs among children and adolescents, families, and communities.

This study highlights positive factors such as social support, self-esteem, and resilience as protection against the manifestation of psychological symptomatology and suicidal behaviors. Self-esteem took on an especially relevant role in this study, and this might be explained due to its intrinsic nature that has an overall influence on other psychological assets. Our study also comes to show that it is imperative to take cultural differences into account when planning preventative and protective programs that should be specific to cultural needs. Finally, positive psychology research comes to reinforce the investment in positive adaptation mechanisms, which have been continuously proven to be strong predictors of augmented mental health and human development indicators.

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Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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CHILDHOOD AMONG CROCODILES: USING PLAYING AND DRAWING AS RESEARCH TOOLS OF A HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIP IN BAZOULE, BURKINA FASO

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Abstract: *Stemming from a multi-species ethnographic research on the cohabitation between humans and crocodiles in village of Bazoulé, Burkina Faso, the article describes the use of play and drawing as research instruments for understanding how children see crocodiles, the precepts informally transmitted to them by adults about this animal and, ultimately, the unverbalized perception of this human community about crocodiles.*

Keywords: *Multi-species ethnography, ecosemiotics, anthropology beyond human, human animal relationships, ecology, West Africa, crocodiles, playing, drawing, visual anthropology.*
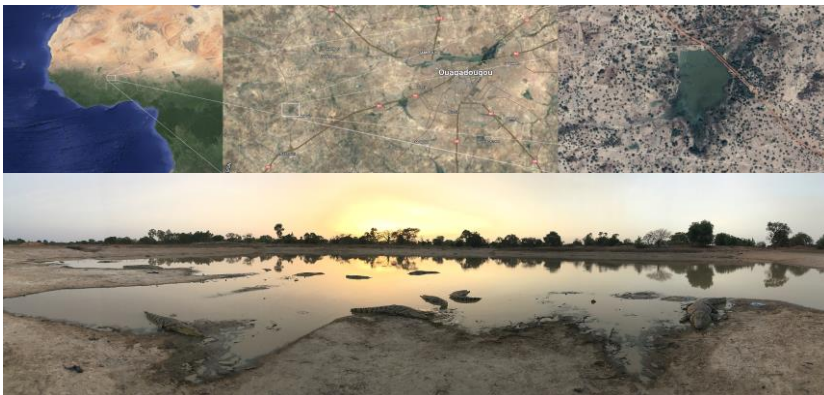
Figure 1: *(top) Google Earth sattelite pictures showing the localization of Bazoulé on world map as well as the lake in the rainy season (August). (Bottom) a panorama of the lake in the dry season (May).*

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Introduction

In the village of Bazoulé in central Burkina Faso, about 40 km southwest of the capital Ouagadougou, people and crocodiles intersect daily in the perimeter of a seasonal lake with a maximum extent of about 350-600 meters at the end of the rainy season (August) and almost dry by end of dry season (May). Animals water themselves, residents draw water for households, children play unsupervised on the shores of the lake heavily populated by crocodiles of the *crocodylus suchus* species (Ouedraogo et al., 2017). *Crocodylus suchus* is a species very similar to the Nile crocodile (*crocodylus niloticus*), so much so that it was officially differentiated only in 2003 (Schmitz et all, 2003). Between January 2016 and May 2017, 268 crocodile specimens were counted in Bazoulé, of which 25% were newborns, 17% were cubs, 12% were sub-adults and 10% were adults (Ouedraogo et al., 2017). The nearest households are less than 100 meters from the edge of the lake. Crocodiles can be found not only in the vicinity of the lake, but also at distances of hundreds of meters from it. Sometimes they enter gardens, yards or even houses. However, neither humans nor domestic animals are attacked. There is even a tourist association founded in 1996 that includes about 10 locals who act as guides. Tourists, including many children on school trips, end up taking pictures not only in the immediate vicinity of the crocodiles, but even sitting on them. The locals' explanation is that the spirits of human ancestors manifest in these crocodiles and influence their behavior towards humans. In response, people regard crocodiles as sacred, give them food offerings (live chickens), sprinkle them with water to cool them down when they arrive at households in the dry season, and even bury them at a site several hundred meters away from the lake.

This type of relationship is not unique either in West Africa or in the world. Pooley (2006) lists such human-crocodile relationships in Amani (Mali), Kachikally (Gambia), Paga (Ghana), Yamoussoukro (Côte d'Ivoire), Lake Baringo (Kenya), Lake Rukwa (Tanzania). Such relationships are also recorded in Gujarat, India[1] or in the Antankarana, Betsileo and Bara regions of Madagascar (Pooley, 2006). As for Bazoulé, it was most likely formed by a combination of several factors:

– offering small food (chicks) to dominant crocodiles prevents hunger attacks on larger animals and humans.

– the hydrographic isolation of the lake leads to the isolation of the crocodile population and allows the consolidation of repetitive generational patterns (the young crocodile population observes and copies[2] the behavior of mature crocodiles – who are not aggressive towards humans – in order to access the easy food source which are the chickens offered to them by humans).

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[1] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-46983559

[2] Crocodiles are fast learners. This includes situational recognition and adaptive behavior (researchers and hunters know that a crocodile can rarely be caught twice in the same way); using sticks and branches as tools to further camouflage; cooperative behavior to improve hunting efficiency (see for example Dinets et all, 2012; Dinets, 2013; Dinets, 2014; Dinets, 2015)

- artificial selection in two ways: preferentially giving food to less aggressive specimens that thus have a better chance of surviving and passing on their genetic material, and labeling exceptionally aggressive crocodiles as "foreign crocodiles" that are not populated by ancestral spirits human and as such can be exterminated.

Figure 2: *(toip) A tourist is interacting with a crocodile. (bottom) A local is feeding a crocodile with a live chicken tied to a stick. Photo credits: Adrian Câtu.*

- the protection provided to humans by the dominant crocodile specimens against the more aggressive young specimens. Dominant specimens establish their territory in the immediate vicinity of the easy food source that is humans and, through their territorial behavior, protect those from the younger and potentially more aggressive specimens.

- the mythological beliefs of the majority Mossi ethnic group starting from the idea of a creator God who withdrew from his creation and left behind a void where humans are partly responsible for restoring and preserving divine harmony (Niang, 2014).

Playing and drawing as research tools

One of the objectives of my research in Bazoulé was to understand the particular way in which the locals *perceive* the crocodile. I witnessed scenes where tourists from other areas of Burkina Faso – some of them living in areas with crocodiles and/or having had previous experiences with them – were simply terrified of approaching them and refused, almost in tears, despite the reassurances and personal example of the guides. To me, these attitudes reflected two different *perceptions* of the crocodile. By "perception" I mean here not only a mental model that apriori projects certain characteristics upon the perceived object (multi-culturalism), but more, a collection of *lived* experiences, not necessarily culturally elaborated in their entirety, and deeply embedded in the lives of the participants, so much that we can no longer speak of multi-culturalism but of multi-naturalism (Viveiros de Castro, 1998). This mental model is constructed through a recursive semiotic network through which humans and non-human actors – plants, animals, objects – are constantly (re)defining each other; a network based mostly on indexical and iconic signs and only to a lesser extent on symbolic signs (Kohn, 2007; 2013).

However, in order to access "that basic level where inferences are made about the types of beings that exist and how they relate to each other" (Descola, 2014) it is necessary to go beyond the exploration of "those attributes that are distinctive to people – language, culture, society and history" (Kohn, 2013, 6). In order to understand these different "natures", we must be able to access that liminal zone where the interferences between people and the ecosystem occur – in other words, on both sides of the interface that delimits the "interiority" of people and distinguishes it from the "materiality" that surrounds it (Descola, 2014). And we cannot understand "what is distinctive to humans using methods that are distinctive to humans" (Kohn, 2013, 6.). In the study of human-animal relations, multi-species ethnography (Kirksey and Helmreich, 2010) or ecosemiotics (Kohn, 2013) are already established for this purpose. In what follows, I would like to present a case study of two other research tools applied to the human-crocodile relationship in Bazoulé: play and drawing.

Beyond the intuitive meaning of "playing", Hamayon (2016, p. 31) talks about "a theoretical gap in this field". There is no clear definition of what "playing" means. Things are all the more complicated as Latin differentiates between *jocus* (joke or verbal playing) and *ludus* (playing in act) (Hamayon, 2016, 27), and English differentiates

between *game* and *play*, although both "war *games*" and "*playing* a concerto" are very serious activities – not to mention the "olympic *games*" in most languages. Playing is not even specifically human: animals learn "by playing" through an "interactive activity whose actions and signals are similar but not identical" to those of real activity (Bateson, 1987, p. 127). Playing is even attested in crocodiles (Dinets, 2015) in the form of intense locomotor activities for no apparent reason or playing with objects (including flowers). About the crocodiles of Bazoulé, the locals say that they "are amused themselves" when they twist in the water or make waves, for no apparent reason.

In order to use playing as a research tool, I do not see defining or classifying it rigorously as absolute preconditions. From the point of view of ethnography, we can consider "playing" as a human activity just like any other. But then how can it be, as I stated, a research tool "beyond human"? My argument is that play is first and foremost an iconic semiotic ecosystem: it is *something* that simulates *something else* by similitude, which is the same as saying *something* that "takes the place of *something else* for someone in terms of certain properties" (Peirce, 1990). This observation is valid for both the "play" and the "game" context. Thus, analysis of playing is ultimately an indirect analysis of how that *something* which the game is modeling is being perceived; especially those perceptions which are not just usually unverbalized, but perhaps never become verbalized.

The same argument applies equally to drawing. Originally, drawing is constructing an iconic sign of the drawn object. However, it is not a faithful reproduction: the deviations from a faithful reproduction constitute as many subsequent indexical signs that point not to the object, but to the designer. A child "will draw 'what he knows'" (Farokhi and Hashemi, 2011): his drawing will reflect the attributes he perceives as essential and often unverbalized – or unverbalizable – from his mental representation of the drawn object. The drawing also balances the situation of inferiority in which the child finds himself in verbal communication with an adult, that "communicative advantage" of the adult (Clark, 1999, p.40 apud Mitchell, 2006) while "placing images in the foreground of communication with children can lead to a clearer understanding of what they are thinking" (Wagner, 1999) – and drawing in particular can be "very effective in translating the complexity of their experience" (Nieuwenhuys, 1996:55 apud Mitchell, 2006).

Playing among the crocodiles

Countless times I observed children playing on the shores of the lake, from the smallest, who could not yet walk, to teenagers. Practically, this was an everyday fact. In general, the youngest children did not move away from their older siblings (4-5 years old), thus implicitly respecting the safety distance that the latter kept from the crocodiles, whatever that was. When it came to children who had not yet learned to walk, the older brothers would step in and occasionally move the younger ones when a crocodile changed its position and got too close. This distance varied from one child to another and from one situation to another, but in most cases it was no more than 4-5 meters. On one occasion, a boy of about 5 years accompanied me a few tens of meters on the shore, quite far from his 9-10 months brother who during all this time played in

the mud 4-5 meters from a group of crocodiles who were warming themselves in the sun. It wasn't until a crocodile came out of the water and started striding towards him that the boy went to his brother and moved him a few meters away from the crocodile's direction of travel. At no time did the boy rush or give the impression of being in any way frightened, but rather gave the impression that he was performing a formality while the object of his attention was me. As for the small child, he was clearly frightened by my Caucasian skin and not by the crocodile: on several occasions he turned his back on me, his face towards the group of crocodiles; and when his brother moved him right next to me, he showed signs of distress and began to cry, stretching out his arms to his brother to be removed from there.

Starting from 8-9 years, the safety distance of children from crocodiles is practically reduced to zero. Children begin to touch crocodiles or step on them with no other precaution than to avoid sudden movements around them, as well as not hitting them, neither on purpose nor in play. In general, children do not play in close proximity to crocodiles (1 meter or in direct contact), neither among themselves nor with crocodiles. In this particular space, movements are natural but not sudden. Even though some children were enthusiastic and ostentatious in showing me that they were not afraid of crocodiles and sat on them, this ostentatiousness was rather a reaction to my own reluctance, and it manifested itself only in their attitude towards me, not in the actual interaction with the crocodile, which was in no way theatrical or exaggerated: in close proximity to the crocodile, the children did nothing more, or differently, than they usually do.

One time I talked with the mother of two boys aged 3 and 5 respectively about how she views playing around crocodiles:

Author: "If your children told you they were going to play by the lake, how would you react? Would you tell them anything in particular?"

Mother: "No! Why?! Just don't stay there after sunset. Now that the rainy season is over and there is water in the lake, there is no problem."

Author: "Is it more dangerous at night?"

Mother: "In the dark, the crocodiles come out of the water and [children] can step on them"

Author: "What about in the dry season?"

Mother: "Then I would tell them not to go too close to the lake. When there is no water and no fish in the lake, crocodiles are nervous"

The "ignorant stranger" game

Figure 3: *(top) A teenager and a child around a crocodile (photo: Raphael Kabore). (bottom) A child interacts with a crocodile (photo source: Facebook)*

Observations of the children's spontaneous play confirmed to me that they do not pay any special attention to the crocodile. The crocodile did not appear spontaneously as an object of their games but was rather a neutral background element, similar to plants or water. The children's games did not reflect anything they might have heard from their parents about it. So I imagined another game – "of the ignorant stranger" – in which I played the role of a visitor completely unfamiliar with crocodiles and local customs while the children had to "teach" me. I have played it with great success with a group of 6 children between the ages of 6 and 12 and there are several reasons why I consider this game to be one of the best research tools I have used in Bazoule.

First of all, this game made it possible to surface in an acceptable way (and quickly overcome) the tensions which stem from the asymmetrical relationship between the children on the one hand, and the researcher on the other hand – the latter being an alien, an adult and a member of a profoundly different culture. My autoirony and willingness to play were quite effective in leveling this age asymmetry for them, and the *play setting* gave them the confidence to say and act more freely than they did when I asked them things (and when they had the impulse to adapt their answers according to my reactions, trying to please me). On the other hand, the very nature of this game entailed a cartoonishly thickened version of my own clumsy, clueless character. Thus, any attitudes, comments, or feelings the children had repressed towards me suddenly became permitted, transferred onto the character I was playing. Moreover, the self-irony and the caricature thickenings of my character made the children understand that I was also aware of many of those "oddities" that they perceived in me in relation to them, and that I accept and even share the amusement or resentment they're towards these. Thus, some attitudes, comments, or feelings about me that they would normally have censored, and thus would have implicitly remained in their attention field, suddenly became acceptable for expressing, and thus freed their attention field.

Second, this game gave the children a sense of power in relation to me. They taught me, they "piloted" me towards the crocodiles, and this also made them responsible for giving me as much information as possible. They also tested the limit: at one point, an older child, giving a disparate opinion, directed me head-on towards a crocodile, which I already knew could be interpreted by it as a sign of aggression. I then confronted the child, asking him if he was sure of what he was telling me, if this was really what he would advise an ignorant stranger. This line temporarily interrupted the convention of the game because I was suddenly asking *about* the character I was playing and not *as* this character. This interruption confronted the child with the asymmetry I was talking about earlier and forced him to recognize the limits of the game: he laughed and admitted that no, that's not what he would do – then I restarted the game without him testing this limit again.

Third, my actions during this game, to a greater extent than the questions and comments in our "serious" discussions, helped the children to understand quite precisely what those things were that I wanted to clarify. By directly observing my behaviors that seemed strange to them towards the crocodiles, the children understood to a much better extent my uncertainties and limitations as a researcher and helped to elucidate them. Thus, this game actually reversed the relationship between me and them: my actions in relation to the crocodiles, sometimes frankly naive, became the object of their research, on which they transmitted their observations and conclusions to me[1].

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[1] See also "reverse anthropology" (Kirsch, 2006; or Wagner, 1981).

What was this game actually about? On the shore of the lake, next to the crocodiles laying under the sun, I explained to the children that we were going to play a game in which I would be a foreigner who had no idea about local customs and had never seen crocodiles before, and who would start doing all kinds of things that come to his mind – and the children will have to correct him and guide him so that he learns "how" things are done. I already had a pretty clear idea of the allowed behavior towards the crocodiles and the "don'ts", but in the spirit of the game, I started by asking the children "what is that". Of course, the question amused them. "Crocodile! Animal!" came their answers. "Would it bite me?" was my next question. "No!", continued the chorus, amused. "But does it have teeth? Why doesn't it bite?" With this last question I was not successful: the children basically answered, "Because it doesn't bite". "Can I come closer?" "Yes!". At this point I told the children that "I" am going to start approaching the crocodile and they must guide me and definitely stop me if I do something dangerous. In retrospect, I would have liked not to advance myself the idea of "dangerous", so as not to introduce a possible theme that they did not have in mind; but I was concerned because I had decided to take some risk and let myself be completely "piloted" by the children, knowingly ignoring what I already knew about approaching crocodiles. So I went head-on at one of them, even though I had been warned it could interpret that as an aggression. To my relief, the kids stopped me, laughing, when I was 2-3 meters away. "Why should I stop?", I asked. They didn't explain, but they were unanimous that it wasn't a good idea to continue my approach. I then made a small detour, trying to approach from the side, but to my surprise they stopped me again. "Well, can I get close to the crocodile or not?" "Yes! No!" Here was the moment when one of them, expressing a disparate opinion, encouraged me to continue and only relented after I temporarily stepped out of the "stranger" role and confronted him. "Not to this one" another child finally explained to me. "This one is nervous." "How do you know?" They shrugged. "He's completely still, he's not doing anything, he's been here since we came.", I insisted. "How do you know he's nervous?" "Well, it moved", answered a child, surprised that I didn't see something that was obvious to them. The animal had apparently moved twice since we had been there, in the space of 20 minutes. I hadn't noticed him, but they hadn't missed these movements. "And he also has his head risen", added another child. Indeed, the crocodile's head was not resting on the ground, but was in the air, several inches from the ground. Moreover, I noticed at that moment that the body was not seated either, but slightly raised from the ground, resting on its legs and not lying on its belly. I then headed towards another one, asking from the start if he was calm ("Yes!") and how to approach him (they signaled me to continue my trajectory which naturally brought me to his side). I ended up practically glued to the crocodile, on its side, near its hind legs. My attention was focused almost exclusively on the crocodile, as this was the first time, I had done this alone: until now, there had always been an adult in close proximity, and I had relied on him for safety. I had seen how agile crocodiles were, even on land, and how they were capable of bursts of energy without any warning sign. And now I was alone with the children, on their hands. It was at this point, and for these reasons, that the game took a hilarious turn. The crocodile suddenly moved — I think maybe half a meter forward. My reaction was disproportionate: I jumped sidewise like I was burned, stepping on a puddle of water that splashed me, to the laughter of the children. From that moment they were more concerned with imitating me, laughing among themselves, than paying any attention to me. I tried to get their attention again to teach me how to ride the crocodile, but I had already lost them.

The game of "ignorant stranger" confirmed to me that in Bazoulé children are so used to crocodiles that the attention and fear of a stranger towards this animal seem to them hilarious and almost incomprehensible. They marveled that I did not perceive the signs of a crocodile's mood, that I did not recognize individual specimens, and that I was so reluctant to approach them. I interpreted the fact that one of the children tried to mislead me as an attempt to force me to admit that my naivety was fake, because he simply could not believe that it could be real. I also interpret it as a sign that they never considered me in any real danger: otherwise, their respect for adults, especially strangers or teachers (among whom they included me) would not have allowed them to put me in real danger, not even for fun. A priori, my main expectation from this game was to hear from them any advice about crocodiles that they would have heard from adults – but this did not happen. On the contrary: children often had difficulty verbalizing why I should avoid this or that action. All this indicates that the locals do not see crocodiles as a potentially dangerous animal: the children do not receive any special education related to them, but learn by observation and participation, just as with domestic animals, and what they get to know, does not get verbalized.

Ethical aspects of using a game as a research tool

The "game" is defined by a convention accepted by the participants, and which delimits it strictly contextually from the external reality. Demarcation is produced by rules and – most of the time, but not always[1] – is also spatial and temporal. A game can be defined, in fact, in general, as *a context which is strictly delimited from the outside world through convention agreed upon by participants* – a fact argued by phrases like "political *game*", "theatre *game*", "Olympic *games*", "in *play*"; or, in English, "*playing* guitar", "war *games*", "football *game*", to give just a few examples. But what happens from an ethical standpoint when this demarcation is no longer strict? This problem is conceptual in the case of the "ignorant stranger" game, because the game itself, carried out as a game in the framework agreed by the participants, produces *real* information that then transcends this space and will be used outside its context. The "ignorant stranger" not just *pretends* – within the context of this game – that he would publish an article with the information he learns from the other participants, but actually *will* publish this article in a context *outside* the game. And he would publish that information after previously telling the other participants that they will have to feed that information to *his character* as a way of *playing*. In other words, doesn't this game *manipulate* the participants regarding the limits of the game?

On closer inspection, things are a bit more nuanced. In addition to the explicit conventions on the game, there is also an implicit one: that the character of the "ignorant stranger" is not an independent "character" unrelated to the researcher, as it would be, for example, a character played by an actor – it is instead a distorted projection of the researcher himself, as we would see for example if we looked at him in a distorting mirror, or as we look at an interlocutor in a video conversation on the phone. An argument is the obvious and explicit similarity between the situation of the

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[1] Pokémon Go, for example, consisted of finding virtual characters that were located on a real map and that could be "seen" in real space, in real time, with the help of the phone's video camera. It was not, therefore, spatially and temporally delimited from the world outside of it; yet, it was delimited by the strict convention that the sought-after characters (pokémons) were virtual, without a counterpart in physical reality.

character and that of the researcher, between the curiosities that one and the other respectively have, between the ignorance of both. Another argument is that the very convention of the game *places the "ignorant stranger" in the real world*. The "ignorant stranger" is interested in the *real* lake of Bazoulé, the *real* community and the *real* crocodiles there. As such, the very convention of the game implies that any information transmitted to the "stranger" is assumed to be *real*. The question that remains is what this character does with this information outside of the context of the game. Given the transparent connection I noted above between the character and the researcher, I believe that the players do not even expect (or even want) the information they provide to be forgotten once the game ends – precisely because that the character is assumed to be a caricatured but "functional" version of the researcher. In retrospect, I wish I had explicitly discussed this with them, either by even asking them if they wanted the information to be forgotten after the game, or if they wanted the "ignorant stranger" to write an actual article which I would later bring them to read at some point...

"Draw me a crocodile"

I also asked several children to draw a crocodile in their notebooks, considering, like Farochi & Hashemi (2011), that "a child will draw 'what he knows'", namely that the attributes he perceives as essential in his mental representation about the crocodile will surface in the drawing. The interpretation of such images must avoid the trap whereby "the ethnographer turns into a visual translator who tells the viewer 'What they should see' and what the drawings 'mean'" (Myers, 1995 apud Mitchell, 2006) and is not a easy undertaking, because it must take into account the visual codes related to the socio-cultural contexts of the draftsman and the ethnographer. The absence of methodological rigor can give rise to false interpretations or circular arguments: for example, I could identify a pattern in the image only because I interpret that image in relation to a visual code that belongs to me and that is not shared by the author of the drawing who follows another visual code which I don't know, and which I try to deduce precisely on the basis of some differences which actually originate from me. To reduce these errors, I asked the children to draw "according to the model", as faithfully as possible, tso I can then evaluate the differences between the drawing and the photograph of a crocodile. All the drawings were made under the same conditions: by the lake, with the same pen and on a sheet of my notebook. To avoid spontaneous copying of patterns from one to another, the children drew without being watched by others and did not see the drawings made by others before them. The interpretation of these drawings is based on the theoretical framework outlined by Mitchell (2006), Guillemin (2004) and Rose (2016: 115-116; 128-145).

In interpreting the drawings, I was interested in aspects such as the size and positioning of the crocodile on the page; relative sizes of body parts, exaggeration or diminution of some of those; the concentration or fragmentation of the lines in certain parts, or on the contrary, the possible white spaces in its body; elements which would "humanize" the crocodile; spontaneous depiction of interactions between crocodile and human or non-human elements; and most of all similar patterns occurring in images drawn by different children. Of course, some of these deviations will always be due to the inability of the author to faithfully reproduce a real shape, but others will reflect the organization of the inner image he has of the drawn object. Moreover, the patterns

which repeatedly occur in the drawings of distinct authors are relevant to the children's collective imagination regarding the crocodile. I also tried later to discuss the particularities of the drawings with their authors, but this did not work: the children were accustomed from school to interpret any observation of an adult as criticism which they accepted without challenging his authority, and immediately tried to take the notebook and modify his drawing to "correct" the aspects I was asking him about.
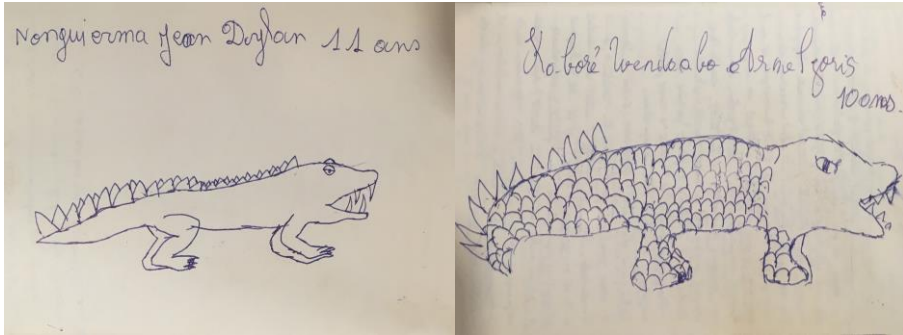
Figure 4: *Drawings of crocodiles made by Bazoule children in the author's notebook. There are noticeable similarities: the slight exaggeration of the teeth balanced by a significant diminution of the mouth, which is drawn simplistically, moderately open, and much smaller than reality. The eyes are large and well-defined, in contrast to the well-camouflaged eyes of the real crocodile. The head is outlined by smooth curves, larger than its actual proportion and without scales. The legs, tail and body are represented relatively faithfully. Both children have exaggerated scales along the spine.*

Figure 5: *For comparison, the drawing made by an 8-year-old child from Romania, with the same tools as the children in Bazoule, using as a model a photo taken by the author. The mouth is large, with many teeth, the claws more pronounced, and the attitude, aggressive. The body is blackened, as a further expression of the danger perceived by the child.*

The drawings showed remarkable similarities. The subject was generally centered and took up most of the page, with no additional elements or interactions. In general, older

children drew the crocodiles slightly smaller than the page, and younger children tended to fill the page. This may be due to the increased drawing skills of the older children, but equally to the children's perceived relationship between their body sizes and those of the crocodile. The crocodiles are depicted at the same level as the viewer, although children are normally taller than them and as such are used to seeing them from a plunging, top-down perspective. The mouth is medium open, but much smaller than, and the teeth, though slightly exaggerated in size, are diminished in number. The head is larger than life, without features or scales and drawn by smooth, non-aggressive curves. The eyes are large, clear, well-defined, in contrast to the small, camouflaged eyes of the real crocodile. The body and limbs are relatively faithfully represented, but the scales appear intermittently, except in the area along the spine, where they are rather exaggerated.

The representation of the head, mouth and teeth reflect a rather non-aggressive image of the crocodile, as an animal that children are not afraid of in any way. The teeth are slightly exaggerated in size, but placed in a much-diminished mouth, drawn on a head with completely non-aggressive shapes. The large and clear eyes of the crocodile, as well as the scaleless head appear rather as "humanizing" elements of it, indicating communication rather than intimidation. The only element that denotes a more "warlike" aspect of the animal are the scales in the dorsal area. The crocodiles are represented statically: they do not hunt, fight, swim, and the children did not spontaneously add any environmental elements (lake, swamp, other animals, or people) to their drawings. All of these aspects are consistent with the relaxation we have seen in the children around the crocodiles, and show no concerns about aggression, no fear of any of their physical or behavioral characteristics, and no sense of intimidation.

Conclusions

In Bazoulé, observing the spontaneous playing habits, playing the interactive game of the "ignorant stranger", as well as analyzing the children's drawings, dispelled the ambiguity that I still had about how people perceived crocodiles. They confirmed more than anything else the real nature of this human-animal relationship and eliminated the hypothesis it might have been just an idealizing narrative of the community. Moreover, these research methods contributed to the deconstruction of the researcher's bias: they showed that children (and by extension the adults) did not pay any special attention to the crocodile, so is such an attention had been observed to the community during the research, it was in fact only a response to the attention of the researcher himself.

When regarded as semiotic systems, playing and drawing can complement classical research methods, revealing unverbalized community perceptions of the researched object in a way unconstrained by community norms or linguistic thinking.

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INVESTIGATING THE PLEASURE READING HABITS OF EFL LEARNERS IN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Abdurahman Ahmed ENDRIS[1]

Abstract: Reading literacy is significant for learners' academic success, and high levels of reading literacy can be established through strong engagement in pleasure reading. It seems that the advancement of competing media, such as television and computer games and the fluctuating socio-cultural contexts have made a significant influence on learners' pleasure reading habits. The purpose of this study was therefore to investigate lower secondary school learners' pleasure reading habits using descriptive survey design. The data were collected from 377 randomly selected learners in North Wollo Zone, Ethiopia, using a survey questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential (independent samples t-test) statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings of the study indicated that majority of the learners' habits toward pleasure reading was poor. The findings of the study also showed that the students' mostly read for academic purposes. It was also found that there was no significant difference (p > .05) between gender and age of learners regarding their pleasure reading habits. Lack of reading materials, low English ability, and lack interest in reading are the major factors that affect learners' pleasure reading habits. Based on the results, it can be suggested that integrating pleasure reading programme in the curricula, being accessible to a wide range of books (based on the learners' level and interest) in the school libraries, and establishing school reading clubs in input-poor English as a Foreign Language contexts like Ethiopia is essential to promote learners' pleasure reading habits.

Keywords: lower secondary school; pleasure reading; pleasure reading habit; reading

1. Introduction

It is undeniable that reading literacy is significant for learners' academic success. It is because reading literacy is a prerequisite for successful performance in any school subject (Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Drucker, 2012). Various research findings also show that reading is a key predictor of learners' academic success (Al-Mahrooqi & Roscoe, 2014). This shows that reading is the foundation for almost all processes of learning.

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Reading is essential mainly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context like Ethiopia, where there is scarcity of input, as it offers great opportunities for learners to be exposed to English.

Despite its importance, most of the lower secondary school learners of Ethiopia lack the required performance in reading (Ambachew, 2003; Endris, 2018; Teshome, 2014; Tiruneh, 2014). Difficulty with reading negatively affects achievement in all areas of the curriculum (Hassell, & Rodge, 2007). Moreover, learners who are poor in reading often develop poor reading habits (Tunde-Awe, 2014).

The students' lack of proficiency in reading might be because reading is a very complex process that involves various components:

"*Reading ability is not only about the ability to decode the written word but also involves other skills, such as comprehension and interpretive skills and these are interactive and simultaneous*" (Grabe, 1991: 379).

Reading literacy includes not only comprehension, but also behaviours that support lifelong reading (Mullis, Kennedy, Martin, & Sainsbury, 2004). This indicates that reading is multifaceted process that incorporates the cognitive (comprehension) and behavioural (reading habits) aspects.

In order to involve in the complex process of reading successfully, foreign language (FL) learners should be engaged in pleasure reading, as they learn to read better by reading more (Day & Bamford, 1998; Krashen, 2004; Stoller, 2015). Pleasure reading, also called extensive reading, is reading for enjoyment (in or out of the classroom), in contrast with academic reading for education purposes (Day & Bamford, 1998). According to Nuttall (1982: 168), "*the best way to improve one's knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers the next best way is to read extensively in it*".

In addition to offering abundant input, learners' freedom to choose their own reading materials based on their level and interest is the main principle of a pleasure reading programme (Day & Bamford, 1998). This shows that pleasure reading is crucial to provide a large quantity of input for learners in EFL contexts like Ethiopia, where English input is inadequate. pleasure reading is also vital to create a tension-free environment as students themselves select reading materials based on their level and interest. Pleasure reading is important "*to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading*" (Richard & Schmidt, 2002: 193-194).

A number of studies have also revealed that students who read regularly become better readers, and better reading leads to success in school and life. According to Krashen (1989), learners, who exposed to pleasure reading, become better readers, and achieve higher scores on tests than learners who do not. Besides, Spaulding (2014), in his extensive literature review and synthesis, indicates that learners from grade four to college who enjoy and engage in pleasure reading experience higher academic success than those who do not. Several studies (e.g. Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Richards & Schmidt, 2002; Asraf & Ahmad, 2003; Sheu, 2003; Nakanishi, 2015) have also provided positive evidences for the effectiveness of pleasure reading for overall language

proficiency at different levels and in diverse EFL situations. Positive effects of pleasure reading on the behavioural (reading habits) and affective (motivation and attitude) aspects of reading have also been reported (Day & Bamford, 1998; Asraf & Ahmad, 2003; Grabe, 2009). These research findings suggest that pleasure reading is crucial to enhance students' academic achievement and reading habits.

However, various international research findings in different countries have reported that a growing number of young people do not read for pleasure. According to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), for instance, on average across the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, more than half of the 15-year-olds reported not reading for pleasure (OECD, 2010). The data also revealed that between 2000 and 2009, across OECD countries the number of students who report reading for pleasure daily dropped by five percent (ibid). Similarly, Mullis et al. (2012) survey of 10-year-olds reported that although 74% of students labeled themselves as motivated readers, on average only 28% of them really liked to read (PIRLS, 2011). Likewise, some studies (e.g. Nippold et al, 2006) have shown that interest in pleasure reading declined during the age range (11–15 years), and boys were more likely than girls to report that they spent no time reading for pleasure (Clark & Foster, 2005; Nippold et al, 2006). This indicates that the likelihood that learners will enjoy reading and engage in pleasure reading is influenced by demographic factors like gender and age.

The deteriorating of pleasure reading habits is more serious in Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular. Research findings (e.g. Okebukola, Owolabi, & Onafowokan, 2013) have also expressed concerns about African children's deteriorating pleasure reading habits, and Ethiopians are not an exception.

Nevertheless, a review of the literature shows that little research has been conducted on learners' pleasure reading habits in Ethiopia. Hence, the present study was conducted to investigate the lower secondary school learners' pleasure reading habits in Ethiopia.

2. Review of Related Literature

Reading is a complex process affected by the cognitive and socio-cultural factors. This study is, thus, guided by cognitive and sociocultural theory. The following sections present a brief review of concepts of the theories that lend themselves to the framework of this study.

Cognitive Views

Reading is a complex cognitive process affected by different factors. The factors relate to the reader, the text, and the purpose of reading. That is, reading is a cognitive and interactive process between reader and text based on the purpose of reading. Thus, providing appropriate input seems to be essential to facilitate the complex reading process. Thus, one of the most important concepts under the paradigm which guides this study is Krashen's (1985) "input hypothesis" and his suggestion of the importance of "comprehensible input." In his input hypothesis, Krashen (1982) stresses the importance of providing learners a large amount of comprehensible input for acquiring

language. Regarding this, Waring, (2006) also suggests that pleasure reading helps learners to read enormous amounts of language at a comfortable level to gain input. Based on input hypothesis, the input to which learners are exposed should be a little beyond their current level of language competence, i.e., 'i + 1.' Based on this hypothesis, when learners frequently and repeatedly meet and focus on a large number of input which is a little beyond their level of competence, they gradually acquire the forms. Regardless of whether or not one thoroughly agrees with these hypotheses, increasing interest in pleasure reading has been observed among researchers and educators involved in L2/FL instruction.

Day and Bamford (1998) proposed a new model, which is different from Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis. According to this model, pleasure reading is beneficial if it provides the language learners with input, which is slightly below their current level of competence (i.e., 'i – 1'). In this model, 'i – 1' provides a situation for automaticity training and developing a large sight vocabulary rather than learning new target structures (Mikeladze, 2014). In fact, 'i – 1' is viewed as the learners' comfort zone where language learners can quickly build up their reading confidence and reading fluency (Chiang, 2015). Recent research findings, however, reveal that both 'i + 1 and 'i – 1' text difficulty levels significantly improved the participants' reading comprehension (Bahmani & Farvardin, 2017). This suggests that pleasure reading is effective regardless of the level of materials learners choose. That is, whether the learners choose easier or harder stories, they gain more or less similar results. In other words, self-selection of reading materials based on students' needs is a key to a successful implementation of pleasure reading.

Nevertheless, some interactionist theorists (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Swain, 1993) claim that comprehensible input alone is not sufficient and must be supplemented by output. It is believed that learners need to be pushed to produce output that is meaningful and syntactically appropriate. Pleasure reading can play in this cognitive approach to language acquisition is that it can provide input, allow for interaction, and offer the opportunity to produce output.

However, the cognitive theory of the reading process as a solitary individual activity in which the reader processes and interacts with the text in isolation is not entirely adequate. Scholars also agree that the cognitive processes are greatly influenced by social factors (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). This indicates that the reading process is influenced by the socio-cultural contexts, which are crucial issues in reading development. To fill this gap, the sociocultural theory has been added to the framework for this study.

Socio-Cultural Views

The socio-cultural context, where the teaching learning of reading takes place also affects the reading process (Snow, 2002). Hence, this study is also framed within the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978), which emphasizes the dominant role that social relationships and participation in culturally-organized practices play in learning. It stresses the role that social interaction plays in learning reading and the nature of reading as a communicative activity rather than as a formal linguistic system. Regarding

sociocultural context, theoriests (e.g. Vygotsky, 1978), of learning and reading describe how children acquire reading through social interactions with more expert peers and adults. He argues through his concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that providing students with assistance enables them to complete reading activities they would be unable to do alone (ibid). In general, the reading process is influenced by a variety of sociocultural factors connected with the school, the classroom, peer and teacher, etc., and these factors influence how and how much students read and contribute to their reading habits (Geld & Stanojević, 2007).

Pleasure Reading

Grabe and Stoller (2002: 286) define pleasure reading as an approach in which "*learners read large quantities of materials that are within their linguistic competence*". According to the Extensive Reading Foundation Guide (2011), pleasure reading is an approach in which "learners read very easy and enjoyable books" (ERF, 2011: 1). From the above definitions, there are three key ideas regarding pleasure reading. The first is that the learners read large quantities of materials. The second is that to read large quantities, the materials should be easy and interesting. The third is reading materials should be in line with the learners' reading proficiency level to read a lot.

Day and Bamford (2002: 137-140) expand the scope of the definition of pleasure reading by proposing the top ten principles of pleasure reading:

The reading material is easy; a variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available; learners choose what they want to read; they read as much as possible; the purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding; reading is its own reward; reading speed is usually faster rather than slower; reading is individual and silent; teachers orient and guide their students, and the teacher is a role model of a reader.

Pleasure reading is one of the effective approaches to improve EFL learners' language skills by offering abundant language input (Day & Bamford, 1998; Krashen, 1982) and pleasurable environment.

Studies on Pleasure Reading Habits

Some studies have been conducted on the pleasure reading habits of EFL students. For instance, Majid and Tan (2007) conducted a survey study on the reading habits of upper primary school learners in Singapore. Data were collected from 440 learners, aged between 9 and 12 years, from three primary schools. The findings suggest that a majority of the participating students were motivated to read for academic purposes, such as to achieve good scores. Reading was the third most preferred pleasure activity after hobbies and playing on computer. It was also found that girls were more keen readers than boys were.

Tella and Akande (2007) also conducted a study on the reading habits and accessibility of books in primary schools in Botswana. Hence, 150 students, aged 10-13 years were participated in the study. The results indicated that learners did not have a good reading habit: only 36.7% of them read daily, and most of them read only textbooks for examination purpose.

Besides, Kavi, Tackie, and Bugyei, (2015) carried out a study to investigate reading for pleasure among Junior high school students of Ghana using case study approach. Data were collected from 87 students, 5 teachers, and 1 principal. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students; whereas, interview was used to gather data from the teachers and the principal of the school. The findings suggested that majority of the respondents did not read for pleasure, and they mainly read to pass their examinations. It was also found that most of the learners read between 1-2 hours daily. The research findings also showed that majority of the participants consider television watching as a serious shortcoming to their engagement in pleasure reading. In general, the findings of the above studies indicate that the learners had poor reading habits, and they mainly focus on study-related reading to pass examinations or score high grades.

However, the cause of this possible decline is unclear. Some critics would claim that it is the result of national strategies and tests; others would argue that it is the result of competing media, such as television and computer games (Clark & Foster, 2005).

Although some studies were conducted on reading habits in other countries, as discussed above, as far as the reading of the researcher is concerned, little research has been conducted on students' pleasure reading habits in Ethiopia in general and lower secondary school students in particular.

The main purpose of this study was, therefore, to investigate Ethiopian lower secondary students' pleasure reading habits. It is expected that the findings of this study will be useful for EFL teachers, schools, curricula designers and educators to design appropriate intervention that promote learners' pleasure reading habits.

Specifically, the study was conducted to assess learners' reading frequency, purpose of their reading, determine whether their pleasure reading habits would show gender and age related differences, and identify the possible challenges that affect learners' pleasure reading habits. To achieve the stated objectives of this study, the following research questions were raised:

1. How frequently do EFL learners read for pleasure?

2. Is there a significant difference in EFL learners' pleasure reading habits as a function of demographic factors (sex and age)?

3. What are the possible challenges that affect EFL learners' pleasure reading habits?

3. Methodology

The This study was carried out to investigate the lower secondary school EFL learners' habits toward pleasure reading in North Wollo Zone, Ethiopia. For this purpose, a mixed (both quantitative and qualitative) methods design was used in this study. Descriptive survey was used in this study as it enabled the researcher to describe the learners' pleasure reading habits as it is. The qualitative one was used to enrich the survey data.

Participants

The total population from which the sample was selected was 660 students (grades 7-8) in four schools (two rural and two urban areas) in North Wollo Zone, Ethiopia. The schools and the participants were selected using simple random sampling technique by lot. Hence, 377 learners were participated in the study, and the sample size (57.1%) was thought to be representative of the target population. Detailed information related to demographic characteristics of participants is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Demographics of the participants

		Number	**Percent**
Sex	Male	178	47.21
	Female	199	53.31
Grade level	7*	146	38.72
	8**	231	61.27

*Average age range of grade 7= 13.8year
** Average age range of grade 8 = 14.6year

Instrument

A Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of three parts was developed based upon aspects drawn from reading habits literature. It was designed to investigate the students' pleasure reading habits. The first part requests participants to provide their personal information on two demographic factors: sex and gender. The second part requires participants to offer their ideas regarding pleasure reading habits. That is, two of the items focus on reading frequency: the number of books read last year and time spent daily on reading. One item asks students to respond about their purpose of reading. The third part of the questionnaire focuses on the factors that affect the students' pleasure reading habits. The questionnaire items were translated to students' mother tongue (Amharic Language), to avoid misunderstanding of the ideas.

Before the actual data collection, the designed instrument was validated by content and face validity methods. The translated questionnaire was given to two TEFL instructors at Woldia University to get valuable comments. Based on the comments, necessary modifications were made.

To confirm the reliability of the instrument, the test-retest method was used. That is, the modified questionnaire (the Amharic version) was piloted to one section (n = 49) out of the envisaged population. Five weeks after the first administration, the

questionnaire was administered a second time to the students (n = 49). The reliability coefficient (Pearson r) of the questionnaire was 0.81.

Procedures

First, the researcher received approval from the school principals, teachers and students. In this regard, the participants were assured that their participation in the study is voluntary and the information they provide is confidential. Then, the administration was given to the participants in in their classrooms at the selected schools by the researcher. The administration took about 15 minutes.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Both descriptive (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) and inferential (independent samples t-test) statistics were used for different purposes. Frequency and percentage, and mean and standard deviation were employed to analyze the frequency and distribution of scores, respectively. Independent samples t-test was used to investigate whether there is a difference in students' pleasure reading habits as a function of demographic factors (gender and age).

4. Results

Pleasure Reading Frequency

Regarding the first research question, an attempt has been made to investigate the students' pleasure reading frequency. Hence, the students were asked the number of books read last year, and the amount of time they spend daily on reading. The results are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Number of books read last year

Items	Frequency	Percent
None	288	76.4
1	61	16.2
2-3	20	5.3
more than 4	4	2.1

As indicated in Table 2, the majority (76.4%) of the lower secondary school students did not read any book for pleasure over the last one year. Only 16.2% of them read one book, 5.3% read 2-3 books, and 2.1% read more than 4 books.

In addition to the number of books read, the participants were also asked the amount of time they spend on pleasure reading per day.

Table 3: Time spent on reading daily

Items	Frequency	Percent
None	176	46.7
5-10 min	62	16.4
10-20 min	39	10.3

Items	Frequency	Percent
20-30 min	33	8.8
30-60 min	31	8.2
1-2 h	31	8.2
2-3 h	5	1.3

As indicated in Table 3, the majority (46.7%) of the students did not read per day at all, and 16.4% of them read 5-10 minutes daily. This shows that the students' pleasure reading habits was low.

Purposes of Reading

Table 4: Purposes of reading

	Frequency	Percent
Pass exam	202	53.6
Knowledge	144	38.2
Pleasure	12	3.2
Information	19	5

As indicated in Table 4, the students mostly read for academic purposes (passing examinations or scoring better grades) (53.6%) followed by knowledge (38.2%) and information (9.4%). Nevertheless, only 3.2% of them read for pleasure.

Pleasure Reading Habits of the Participants in Terms of Demographic Factors

The study also examined whether there was a difference in students' pleasure reading habits (in terms of the number of books read and time spent on reading) a function of demographic factors (sex and gender). An independent-samples t test was conducted to assess whether the mean scores are statistically significant or not; the results are given in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Pleasure Reading habits of the participants in terms of sex and age

Items	N	Mean	SD	t	P
No of books read last year					
male	165	1.22	.52	.17	.86*
female	209	1.22	.48		
grade 7**	146	1.19	.47	-.79	.42*
grade 8***	231	1.23	.51		
Time spent on reading					
male	165	1.93	1.24	-.25	.79*
female	209	1.97	1.22		
grade 7	146	2.03	1.24	.90	.36*
grade 8	231	1.91	1.22		

* $p > .05$
** Average age range of grade 7 = 13.8 year
*** Average age range of grade 8 = 14.6 year

Regarding the number of books read, the results, as shown in Table 5, indicated that there was no difference between male (M = 1.22, SD = .52) and female (M = 1.22, SD = .48), and between grade 7 (M = 1.23, SD = .47) and grade 8 (M = 1.22, SD = .51) students. With regard to time spent on reading, the results also showed that male (M = 1.93, SD = 1.24) and female (M = 1.97, SD = 1.22) and grade 7 (M = 2.03, SD = 1.24) and grade 8 (M = 1.91, SD = 1.23) students were almost similar in their mean scores.

As can be seen in Table 5, the independent samples t-test result also indicated that the comparison of the mean score of male and female and grade 7 and grade 8 students on reading frequency was not significant. That is, the scores t(372) = .17, p= .86 and t(372) = -.79, p= .42 indicate that there was no significant difference between males and females and grade 7 and grade 8, respectively regarding the number of books read last year. In relation to time spent on reading, the t test results t (372) = -.25, p= .79 and t (372) = .90, p= .36 also showed that there was no significant difference between male and female and grade 7 and grade 8 students, respectively.

Factors Affecting Pleasure Reading Habits
Table 6 shows the extent of the factors affecting students' pleasure reading habits. Six factors that are assumed to be affecting pleasure reading habits of students are given.

Table 6: Factors affecting pleasure reading habits

Items	Frequency	Percent
Lack of time	52	13.8
Low English ability	83	22
Lack interest in reading	53	14.1
Lack of self confidence	7	1.9
No reading model	20	5.3
Lack of reading materials	156	41.4
Other	6	1.6
	377	100

As can be observed in Table 6, lack of reading materials (41.4%), low English ability (22%) and lack interest in reading (14.1%) are the major factors affecting students' pleasure reading habits.

5. Discussions

The purpose of this study was to investigate lower secondary school students' habits toward pleasure reading in North Wollo Zone, Ethiopia. Regarding pleasure reading frequency, the findings of the study revealed that the students' pleasure reading habits was poor. That is, a great majority of respondents did not read something in English for pleasure over the last one year (see Table 2). The findings of this study also indicated that majority of the students did not read per day at all (see Table 3).

The findings of this study seem to be inconsistent with Kavi and his colleague's (2015) study. That is, while most of the junior high school students of Ghana read between 1-2 hours daily, majority of the participating students in Ethiopia did not read per day at

all. This might be due to lack of suitable reading materials based on the students' level and interest. In relation to this, the findings of this study also showed that lack of reading materials, low English ability, and lack interest in reading are among the major factors that affect students' pleasure reading habits (see Table 6).

Regarding the purpose of reading, most of the students read for academic purposes (passing examinations or scoring good grades) (see Table 4). This finding is consistent with most of the previous studies (Majid & Tan, 2007; Tella & Akande, 2007; Kavi, et al, 2015). For instance, according to Tella and Akande (2007), Botswana pupils read only textbooks for passing tests. Likewise, majority of the upper primary school students of Singapore were motivated to read to obtain better grades in examinations (Majid & Tan, 2007). This could possibly be due to stressful Ethiopian education system, which places great emphasis for academic reading and good grades. In such situations, students often face pressure from their teachers, parents and the community to improve their academic performance, and the lower secondary school students may not be free from this force. As a result, the students have no interest for pleasure reading.

Concerning the demographic factors, most of the lower secondary school students, irrespective of gender and age differences, their pleasure reading habits were poor, and the independent samples t-test results also indicate that there was no significant difference between male and female and grade 7 and grade 8 students, respectively (see Table 5). However, this finding appears to be inconsistent with most of the previous studies (Clark & Foster, 2005; Nippold et al, 2006; Majid & Tan, 2007) that showed there were significant differences between boys and girls supporting girls regarding pleasure reading habits. That is, girls read more books, and spend more time on pleasure reading than boys do. The result of this study is also contradictory with earlier studies in relation to age. That is, interest in pleasure reading declined during the age range (11–15 years) (e.g. Nippold et al, 2006). This suggests that Ethiopian lower secondary school EFL learners (without gender and age difference) develop poor habits toward pleasure reading. This might be due to lack of reading materials, low English ability, and lack interest in reading (see Table 6). This finding is encouraging in that all these problems are addressed by an extensive reading approach (Day & Bamford, 1998; Day & Bamford, 2002; Extensive Reading Foundation Guide, 2011).

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

It is indisputable that reading literacy is essential for learners' academic success, and high levels of reading literacy can be established through strong engagement in pleasure reading. However, the findings of this study showed that Ethiopian lower secondary school students' pleasure reading habits was poor. That is, most of the students did not read any book in English for pleasure over the last one year, did not spend significant amount of time on reading per day, and they mostly read for academic purposes. It was also found that there were no significant differences between gender and age regarding learners' pleasure reading habits. The results of this study also indicated that lack of appropriate reading materials, low English ability, and lack interest in reading English are the main factors that hinder the students' pleasure reading habits.

Based on the findings of the study, it would be possible to conclude that integrating pleasure reading programme in the EFL curricula is necessary. It would also be possible to conclude that being accessible to a wide range of books based on the learners' level and interest in the school libraries, and establishing school reading clubs in input-poor English as a Foreign Language contexts like Ethiopia is essential to promote learners' pleasure reading habits.

On the basis of the findings, some implications are forwarded for teachers, schools, curricula designers and educators to design appropriate intervention that promote students' pleasure reading habits. Various research findings showed that pleasure reading enhances the cognitive (comprehension) and behavioural (reading habit) aspects of reading (Krashen, 1982; Day & Bamford, 1998). Therefore, integrating extensive reading approach into the EFL curriculum is one of the mechanisms to develop students' pleasure reading habits. That is, access to a wide range of interesting reading materials based on the learners' needs and linguistic level, freedom to choose, and assign time and place to read; with little or no testing are the key features of a successful extensive reading programme (Day & Bamford, 1998). Teachers should also serve as good role models of reading for the students and motivate them to read more (ibid). In addition, a functional school library (with a borrowing system) that should be well-equipped with reading materials should be established. This helps students to engage in pleasure reading out of the classroom and at home as an extension of classroom activity that will continue throughout their lives. Moreover, teachers should implement extensive reading as extracurricular activity by establishing reading/book clubs. Furthermore, the media can play a great role in educating children and parents how to keep a balance in their pleasure activities, including watching television and pleasure reading. Finally, to design and implement an appropriate extensive reading programme that improves students' pleasure reading habits, all parties (teachers, school principals, educators, government officials, the media and other concerned bodies) should be involved.

However, there were several limitations in this study. The first one is that it was conducted in four schools; in a relatively small total sample, there were also too many grade 8 students. The research was also limited by the fact that the sample schools did not include privately owned schools, as there were no private lower secondary schools in North Wollo Zone. Therefore, large-scale study in various schools and contexts enable greater generalization regarding the students' pleasure reading habits in Ethiopia. Besides, the present study was limited by quantitative data. Thus, conducting further research using both quantitative and qualitative data could be important. Finally, it would be useful to conduct an experimental study on the effectiveness of a pleasure reading programme on language skills, reading habits, attitudes and motivation. It might also be interesting to carry out a second survey to determine learners' pleasure reading habits after the pleasure reading intervention and then compare the findings with the findings of this study to identify possible changes in pleasure reading habits.

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The author declares that there are no conflicting interests regarding the content of this article

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THE ANATOMY OF A DOCTRINAL ENTHUSIASM TURNED INTO NATIONAL DESPAIR

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Abstract: *The concept of the rule of law was a rather new one for the former socialist states, including the Republic of Moldova, but it was a necessity since the fall of the totalitarian regimes in the early 1990s. Until then, there was a broad range of scientific studies on the rule of law in Western literature. The domestic doctrine took up the rich Western scientific sources with enthusiasm and without stepping down the democratic character of the rule of law, emphasized the individual's freedom as a key element, even though the rule of law implies many other defining features. This undue optimism on the possibilities of the institutions to guarantee the rights and freedoms of individuals has not been accompanied by an analysis and a review of the staff of those institutions that should have promoted a new approach of the relationship between the citizen and the state and, as a result should have put themselves in the service of society, to protect citizens. The researchers left out the question of the quality of the human factor, the human resources that originated in a society where everything was controlled by the Communist Party bodies and proceeded to work within a society where nothing (or almost nothing) was subject to society's control. The independent media was established later, mostly as a response to the communist's arrival to power (in 2001). Article developed within the Project `Modernisation of Governing Mechanisms Focused on the Protection of Human Rights", cipher 20.80009.1606.15 in the Scientific Research Laboratory `Compared Public Law and e-Government", Law Faculty, Moldova State University*

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1. Preliminary findings

The concept of the rule of law presented for the ex-socialist states, including the Republic of Moldova, a new concept, but of an urgent necessity after the fall of the totalitarian regimes, i.e., at the beginning of the 90s of the last century. Taken with great enthusiasm by politicians, lawyers and ordinary citizens, the idea of *the rule of law* was considered to be a possible and achievable reality as soon as possible for a state that wants to embrace democratic values, to implement aspirations, but also practices of the societies in which it managed to establish itself.

Until then, in Western publications there was a rich spectrum of sources that referred to the scientific description of the Rule of law, its defining features, but also the pitfalls that can occur on the way to the rule of law, the dangers that could be avoided if they were taken into account. If the first category of works had been taken with great enthusiasm, then the last ones, which warned of the pitfalls – had not been considered. The national doctrine inspired itself form the works on the principles and values of the rule of law, without pedalling too much and insistently on the democratic character of the rule of law, bringing to the fore freedom and human rights as the main element of the rule of law, although the rule of law involves many other defining elements. In this sense, we have found a great support in the publications of Romanian university professors Tudor Drăganu (1992), Sofia Popescu (1998), Ion Craiovan (1995), Ion Craiovan and Ioan Ceterchi (1993), Ion Deleanu (1995), Ioan Huma (2009), of some French authors (Chevalier, 1994) whose works reached us also with the generous help of the colleagues from Romania.

It should be noted that, coming from a regime that demagogically exacerbated socio-economic rights, these rights were not given due attention, more attractive being initially political and civil rights as fundamental rights and freedoms.

The rule of law has undergone certain stages of development in the world, which have demonstrated the need to take into account the society in which are expected to be built the rule of law, the construction of certain components, mechanisms and fundamental procedures, capable of being permanently improved, through appeal to the experience of other states that are at a stage of development comparable to the national one, but which have managed to make substantial progress on the path to democracy and the rule of law. The solutions practiced by the states in transition to the rule of law depend on the nature of the regimes that preceded them, related to the governance of law. Returning to the regime that preceded the Declaration of Independence in the Republic of Moldova, we find a complete lack of political, state and even doctrinal interest concerning the governance of law, the separation of powers, the possibility of protecting the individual before the state, etc., when, in fact, the previous regime had emphasized only on people's observance of the laws. These being the realities, it is obvious that a democratic culture could not be established immediately and practiced, because the remnants of the paternalistic culture subsisted, the respective culture being created and promoted by the soviet regime in the sense, as Sofia Popescu (Popescu, 1998, p.165) wrote, of the unconditional acceptance of the centre of power, of its exclusive domination, the orientation of all hopes, especially of the material ones,

towards the centre of power, the rejection of any criticism or appeal concerning the power, intolerance of other points of view, official or personal.

Against this political and cultural background, insufficient attention was paid to the issue of adequate civil society and a lack of cooperation of the rulers with civil society organizations. However, the doctrine had a positive attitude towards the establishment of a civil society capable of increasing the level of democratization of society, campaigning to expand the dialogue of politicians with the society within serious dialogue platforms, which will discuss the most pressing issues of the society. The reality was more complicated, as governments reduced the possibilities for involving civil society in the decision-making process, including attempts to create a parallel civil society (Official Monitor, nr.301-315/18.08.2017) that would glorify governmental actions. However, it should be noted that real civil society organizations have stood the test of time and played an important role in assessing the decisions of the rulers and in expressing relevant reactions to human rights violations and anti-democratic and unconstitutional slips.

The scholars argued that the origin of the rule of law lies in liberal doctrine, which focuses on the values of humanism, freedom and dignity of the human person, political pluralism, balance of power, equality before the law, but the classical liberal doctrine was already abandoned even by the states of the West, all the more did not match the realities of a state recently out of totalitarianism.

2. Retrospective landmark

After the proclamation of independence, the Republic of Moldova chose the path of market economy development and implemented Privatization Programs. However, the former state-owned enterprises were brought to the brink of bankruptcy, state-owned goods were sold at ridiculous prices, and in this context the subsequent privatizations can be described as an insult to the people who created those properties. As a result of the privatizations, very few, closer to power or even to power, got rich, and the vast majority gave for nothing the privatization vouchers to investment companies, whose activity proved to be inefficient. In 1995, in the National Report on Human Development in the Republic of Moldova, signed by W. Temple, UN Resident Coordinator, the resources of the Republic of Moldova included the electronics industry and agro-industry; if the agro-industry still exists, the electronics industry is completely missing.

Relatively successful was the privatization of housing, by 2000 92% of housing had already been privatized, and for the remaining ones the deadline was extended until May 31, 2024. Through this formula of exemplifying the way in which actions have been initiated aimed at capitalizing on fundamental rights and freedoms, we emphasize that sharing visions such as the ideology of the rule of law and the proclamation of intent are not enough to follow the path to practical realization, they require actions in accordance with well-thought-out mechanisms, capable of contributing step by step, stage by stage, to the cultivation and establishment of democracy and democratic values in the country's realities.

The realization of the principles of the rule of law required certain steps, among which the creation of conditions for society's involvement in decision-making, for organizing free and fair elections, the widest possible communication of power with society, decision-making transparency at the level of central and local authorities. An essential role in these activities was to be played by the independent media, which, for economic reasons, was formed later.

The state was to build its relations with the citizens on the basis of mutual respect and to guarantee their legal regime by the fact that the state itself obeys its own law, and the state authorities understand that they obey their own legal regime, established by law.

A certain momentum in the preparation of the transition from authoritarianism to democracy was felt in connection with the adoption in 1994 of the Constitution, art. 1, par. (3) which stated: The Republic of Moldova is a rule of law, a democratic state, in which human dignity, rights and freedoms, free development of human personality, justice and political pluralism are supreme values and are guaranteed. Doctrinarians (especially jurists) began to reflect in their works the essence of the rule of law (Avornic and Lupu, 1996) without relating it to the social state and to the democratic regime; institutions and mechanisms capable of turning the principle into reality were characterized. Among these institutions, mechanisms and principles were mentioned: the institution of control of the constitutionality of laws, administrative litigation, independence of the judiciary and judges, designed to give citizens leverage to defend their rights and legitimate interests.

In the context of promoting the rule of law with a new breath, scientific research was revived that updated the theories promoted by thinkers since the modern period. The principle of separation of powers has become the subject of research, subject of doctoral theses, being correctly argued that the mutual limitation of the three powers can be a guarantee in the protection of human rights.

A particularity must be taken into account, and it is determined by the development of societies and openings to the outside world. The changes at the social level impose both new formulas of analysis and of realization in practice of the state social organization of the separation of powers and the law. Referring to the multiple formulas in which the separation is currently carried out (*separation of professions, separation of powers, separation of the church and the state, separation of the civil society and the state, separation between representatives and the represented ones, separation of facts and values, or of science and life*), P. Manent (2001, p.25) reveals overlapping points and intersections between them. In particular, talking about the separation of powers, which in the three (legislative, executive and judicial) also cumulates / indicates the real power of the fourth (mass-media), which in the society of high technologies, globalization, has a decisive role in the configuration of the social system, on the functionality of state institutions, on its legal policy, manifesting itself as a real power, capable of directing, influencing, imposing itself, and imposing. In relation to this, revisions are needed on the formula in which they contribute, or should do so, in order to build a democratic society in which the law is for the benefit of society and of each person.

Outside openings, multiple connections between states, knowledge of social realities from other socio-cultural backgrounds etc. determine the increase of individuals' expectations, of the hopes for a better future. In this context, people's aspirations, oriented towards the democratization of societies, are related to the concrete social-state conditions, but also to the living standards of other societies built on the idea of the rule of law, in which human rights are guaranteed. Thus, the rule of law and human rights become a meeting place between people, between social realities, distinct disciplinary areas, but which overlap and are convergent from a conceptual point of view.

The undoubted relevance of these dominant concepts is demonstrated, once again, by the fact that neither the country of origin, nor the institution of affiliation, nor the age or the professional training is an impediment in being interested in the quality of citizen and man. Especially, if we refer to the current context of the Republic of Moldova, which in addition to the crisis caused by the pandemic, until recently was also traversed by frequent political crises, a context in which deeds and words went in different ways, in which the theoretical/normative framework of law and the applicative one (in the sense of realization) have often been contradictory. Consequently, multiple claims and interrogations about the value of the law and its usefulness have been formulated and continue to be formulated both by citizens who want effective law institutions and by representatives of state institutions and academia who are looking for solutions. It is in this course of interrogations and searches of those who wish – in fact and *de jure* – to enjoy the benefits offered by the rule of law through its institutions, being aware of the essence of the relationship between personal and general interest, to proceed to a new formula for valuing responsibility and solidarity. Or, as many of those who understand the depth of these issues, they find the statement *so true: Rights are not demanded, are not received, but are lived.*

As long as the legal dimension dominates social, political and private life, as long as the citizen is – through the Hobbsian formula of the social-state organization – the one who ceded his rights and assumed obligations, through that of J.J. Rousseau (2001) – all persons renounce their natural rights in order to receive them back as civil rights, and through that of J. Locke – empowered to terminate the social contract, if one of the parties does not honour its obligations, there remains place for improvement, revision, claim, rationalization. Probably, trying to ensure one of the fundamental needs, that of security, the individual continues to hope for a perfect formula of social organization, where he will be provided with favourable conditions for development and, at least, there will be a mechanism, an instrument through which his minimum social conditions will be created, in which his civil rights will not be violated, and he will live in *a just society*. Democratization means that states make promises: that people will lead safer lives, that the judiciary will function impartially, that the population will have the chance of a better standard of living, etc. For all this to happen, states must be able to perform complex functions (Grungel, 2008, p.76).

3. Registered problems and solutions

The effort of states to implement democratic values, to establish true democracies has not always been successful: some states succeed in building and maintaining democratic

traditions, others are in constant transition and self-search, the third category being in a continuous process of democratization, a process in which they are not able to overcome the transition stage, in order to establish and deepen a genuine and real democracy, which is specific to a rule of law. The syntagma rule of law refers not only to the presence of the formula in question in the text of the Constitution (art. 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova), but also to its implementation at the level of social, political, and legal practices, being a priority, a guide in the activity of all social actors (politicians, representatives of the legislative, executive, and judicial authorities, civil society, citizens).

The critical point of reference for the states that have followed the path of the rule of law and democratization, as is the case of the Republic of Moldova, and have failed to go through the three consecutive stages (liberalization, transition and consolidation (Grungel, 2008, p.76, et alii.)), stopping somewhere in the middle and stagnating, are the fundamental rights and democratic values to which today's legal policy relates from a historical and philosophical point of view. The Republic of Moldova, beginning with the Declaration of Independence, has quickly assimilated dominant concepts specific to the rule of law and followed the path of sharing democratic values. Freedom, equality/justice, and solidarity are present in the national legislation, being elucidated as fundamental values, but the Republic of Moldova is still considered a state in an uncertain process of democratization.

Another problem arises from the six formulas of manifestation of separations, in particular from the one referring to the separation of facts and values, of science and life, which was quite pronounced in the conditions of the Moldovan society, this formulating another problem, that refers to the need to eliminate the gap between legal theory and practice (Ciobanu, 2020), between promises made by rulers and their fulfilment. Even if the theoretical framework systematizes, eliminates controversies and contradictions, builds arguments, however for legal practice they are often overlooked, most often being neglected, avoided, or even denied.

Regardless of the option, the law as a reality constructed on the basis of the great diversity of lived reality, will produce consequences, and will build new realities. The transfer from the plane of theories about law to the plane of legal practice makes the transfer to the realization of law. A theory of law, as R. Dworkin (1998), points out, must be both normative and conceptual. Contemporary law is marked by the fact that it continuously generates new concepts, theories, classifications, and rules, but also by the inability, impossibility to achieve and increase its practical efficiency and effectiveness. From a theoretical point of view, conceptual solidarity, capitalized also through extrajudicial matters, with a greater degree of abstraction, could contribute to the identification of internal resources for the realization of law, taking into account ongoing evaluations and discussions on legal practice controversies, as well as by appealing to pertinent explanations and assessments of the scientific environment. From a normative point of view, a variety of topics remain in the spotlight, such as: the theory of legislation, a theory of adjudication and one of conformity – all three address the issue of the legal norm from the point of view of the legislator, judge, and ordinary citizen.

For the author of the paper *Taking Rights Seriously* the theory of law must go far beyond the problematic framework of legal branch fields, placing itself at the level of metascience, approaching a generalizing perspective, including topics that are not treated in other fields, conceptualizing them and, through this, manifesting not only its disciplinary individuality, but also its practical utility. As a result, based on the expectations of individuals, the law must review its own identity and usefulness, in particular to determine through joint efforts the realization of the law, which is currently one of the most important issues on the agenda of national authorities. In this case, change and modernization must be a conscious and assumed act of responsibility and social and intellectual solidarity (in the sense of professionalism). Thus, in this context, solidarity acquires the quality of a methodological principle of the path towards the modernization of institutions and the realization of law. Perceived as an assumed rational act of change, of continuity of actions, decisions, social policies, solidarity is found at the intersection between structures (institutions) and the action capacity of the social actor (person), social changes being continuous, procedural, sectoral (Vlăsceanu, 2011, p.115), solidarity is necessary to be reported to the most important institutions (Pop, 2003, p.100), that govern social life today: the institution of rationality and rationalization, the institution of scientificity and the institution of the social actor.

On this line of thinking on the rule of law and democracy in the Republic of Moldova, returning to that act of will create the Constitutional Court and the decisions of the first panel of constitutional judges that inspired confidence in the soundness of arguments advanced in doctrine regarding its position on the part of the sovereign people when politicians do not respect the Constitution. The Constitutional Court has given impetus to the legitimate hope of the people that it (the Court) is on its side and cannot be categorized as an ally of the legislative or executive power (Aramă, 2000, p.41, 67). The following compositions of the Constitutional Court were not (with small exceptions) at the level of the first composition, the danger of politicizing the institution becoming real, which ultimately resulted in its participation, in 2019, in the process of usurpation of state power.

Moreover, the adoption of the Law on Administrative Litigation came a decade late – it was not until 2000 that it was enacted and published as evidence of the protection of the individual against the arbitrariness of state bodies, primarily the executive branch, but not only. However, since the first years of application of this Law, attempts have been made to reduce the scope of the possibilities of this institution.

The signals that came from the Western doctrine regarding the possibility of establishing a government of judges were not taken into account by the local authors, considering them to be exaggerated for the national legal space. As a result, the judges were given immovability in the absence of an integrity test, expressing an exaggerated confidence in the moral qualities of the representatives of the judicial guild. The independence of judges is not a goal, but a means of promoting justice in social relations, but the abuse of independence and self-discipline may be caused by the lack of effective control, including society through its organizations and the media, over this phenomenon, called juristocratic dictatorship (Cattaneo (1994), apud. Popescu, p.152).

An exaggerated optimism about the possibilities of these institutions to ensure the rights and freedoms of individuals was not accompanied by an analysis and review of

the staff of those institutions that had to promote a new approach to the citizen-state relationship and as a result put themselves in the service of the society, to protect citizens. From the researchers' equation were omitted the aspects regarding the quality of the human factor, the human resources that came from a society in which everything was controlled by the organs of the communist party to a society in which nothing (or almost nothing) was subject of the control of the society.

Vicente Baretto, as mentioned by Prof. Sofia Popescu, related the issue of the rule of law to that of tolerance, stating that in the West tolerance has been associated with religious freedom, and in the modern state this concept has extended to political tolerance. In the process of democratization, the nature of tolerance changes in the sense of assigning the state with an active role in overcoming economic and social inequalities. We could say that in the former union republics of the USSR the claim of national rights was met with resistance from the Russian-speaking or Russified communist nomenclature, which led to zero tolerance between the ethnic majority of the population and national minorities, a unique case (or at least rare in history), where minorities have launched strikes against the decreeing of the language of the majority of the population of the Republic of Moldova as a state language, a natural thing in any state, but not in the Republic of Moldova, which was created following the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, as a result of which the intellectuals, people with studies (the vast majority) either took the path of emigration, or were exterminated or sent into exile in Siberia. Under these conditions, the state apparatus and the staff of the university institutions consisted largely of people who came from outside the national territory and who had no knowledge, possibly no desire, to own something specific to the population they led. In some places and among the non-natives not recruited in the state apparatus (salesmen, secretaries, petty officials) a certain opinion was formed about the superiority of those who came over the natives, all leading to unfavourable consequences, culminating in virulent reactions to the decree of Romanian as a language state and the use of this pretext for the separation of the territory on the left bank of the Dniester and the creation of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic with the exit from the jurisdiction of the constitutional bodies of the Republic of Moldova.

Here and there, and among the non-natives not recruited in the state apparatus (salesmen, secretaries, petty officials) a certain opinion was formed about the superiority of those who came over the natives, all leading to unfavourable consequences, culminating in virulent reactions to the decree of Romanian as a state language and the use of this pretext for the separation of the territory on the left bank of the Dniester and the creation of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic with the exit from the jurisdiction of the constitutional bodies of the Republic of Moldova. Of course, this aspect could be corrected by an intelligent language policy, which, in general, was not achieved, but the politicians who remained at the helm of the Republic of Moldova speculated on the language issue and national identity, appealing to their claim, especially during the election period to ignite the spirits. Under the guise of this situation, politicians (at least some of them) took care of their own interests, enriching themselves on the existence or promotion and practice of separatism in public discourse.

In a state with such limited social cohesion, where poverty threatened the majority of citizens, their response was to bring politicians to power, who, on the one hand,

promised to return to ensuring the minimum socio-economic rights of existence, in the situation in which there were new economic realities, crises, including those on the international arena, and on the other hand, the political opponents of the former propagated the rapprochement with the European Union as a solution to internal problems. The doctrine enthusiastically welcomed this desideratum, at the same time showing that the European democratic institutions are clearly superior to those that, according to their model, had been established, in a broken formula, in the Republic of Moldova.

The free, independent press began to investigate, which led to the establishment of an oligarchic regime, which committed numerous frauds, but whose exponents remained unpunished in the situation in which the regime subordinated its organs of justice, prosecution, police, i.e. of the apparatus that was to defend the rule of law and to support the citizens in their fight for legality, responsibility, as premises for the building of a democratic society and a prosperous life for the citizens. A ray of hope has emerged in connection with the establishment of the new power, resulting from the parliamentary elections in the summer of 2021, but it remains to be seen to what extent it will succeed in meeting the expectations of society, which, from what we see, want a state that protects the citizen and democracy, with functional laws, with judges, honest prosecutors and politicians who are interested in the well-being of the citizen.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, we will point out that the long transition to the rule of law has encountered many obstacles, including those generated by objective factors, such as lack of experience in organizing state institutions, economic crises, the inability to use the old economic links, but also subjective factors: insufficient attention to the democratization of the society, which does not end with the vote of citizens in elections; lack of an independent press; the quality of human resources used to build new democratic institutions, etc.

Currently, there is little hope and confidence in the reality of establishing the rule of law in the Republic of Moldova. But in the current conditions, being aware of the mistakes made so far, in order not to reach again the beginning of a road that leads nowhere, it must be a responsible assumption of all: both from an involved and conscious civil society, of the scientific environment dedicated to solving the problems faced by the state of the Republic of Moldova and their citizens, through the evaluation, appreciation and pertinent expertise of the strategic directions of development, of independent media institutions, as well as a credible, competent government interested in promoting and capitalizing on the opportunities offered by democracy and the rule of law.

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HOW MUCH INDIAN HOUSEHOLDS SPEND IN HIGHER EDUCATION?
TOBIT ANALYSIS USING NATIONAL SAMPLE SURVEY DATA

Nivedita SARKAR[1]

Abstract: *Higher education in India is undergoing massive expansion, with enrolment figures touching 38.5 million and Gross Enrolment Ratio attaining 27.1%. However, this expansion is brought about by extensive privatisation, catering around 70% of students enrolled in the sector. This shift also marks a departure in perceiving higher education as a public good – impacting its sources of funding – disproportionately straining the pockets of households. Drawing on National Sample Survey data (2017-18), the present study examines the pattern and quantum of household expenditure and estimates key determinants of household expenditure in higher education. Employing Tobit model, the study brings out the interplay of gender, caste and class in shaping households' decision to allocate resources in higher education.*

Keywords*: Household Expenditure, Higher Education, Tobit, India*

1. Background

Widening participation in higher education (HE, henceforth) is one of the most important policy concerns for every nation – since it is widely recognized as a potent tool for economic development, as well as achieves socially equitable outcomes. Existing literature has already established strong positive association between improved educational indicators and economic growth – translating to improved development outcomes (Nelson and Phelps, 1966; Romer, 1990; Hanushek and Woessmann, 2010). Significant examples of this are China and many East Asian countries – recording striking per capita income growth, at least, partially explained by improved educational indicators (Chakrabarty, 2009; Hanushek and Woessmann, 2010).

In this context, investment in education in general and HE in particular becomes crucial, which is incurred both by the state and non-state agents (private institutes/households). It may be argued that both these investments are interrelated and interdependent; such that, in absence of one component the probability of under-allocation of resources by the other agent increases (Panchamukhi, 1989). Magnitude of

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spending by households or individuals at any level of education is based on their expectations about future returns, in terms of both economic and non-economic benefits. Interestingly, this is only a necessary condition but not sufficient one. Indeed, under certain circumstances households may withhold education expenditure, even if the expected private rates of return – monetary and/or non-monetary – are high due to several other economic, social and cultural constraints (Tilak, 2002a). In fact, several studies show that household expenditure in education is influenced by myriad factors ranging from gender, caste, religion, location of residence, family background (such as parental education and occupation), household economic status, family size and cultural conditioning (Campbell and Siegel, 1967; Tierney, 1980; Houle and Ouellet, 1982; Mora, 1996; Tilak, 2001, 2002; Kingdon, et.al. 2005; Chakraborty, 2009; Kambhampati, 2008; Rena, 2010 etc.). These factors have enormous impact on the nature and quantum of educational expenditure incurred by households (Jayachandran, 2002; Tilak, 2002, Kambhampati, 2008). Many studies confirm that individuals with privileged socio-economic background are over-represented among students enrolled in tertiary institutions around the world and India is not an exception (Tilak, 2002; Hasan and Mehta, 2006; Deshpande, and Yadav, 2006; Azam and Blom, 2008; Chakrabarty, 2009; Basant and Sen, 2010, 2014). Since returns to HE are substantial, inequality in access to HE is likely to accentuate the social and economic divide between groups (Herbst and Rok, 2011). To counter this tendency, government spending on HE can play a critical role by providing access and creating equality of opportunity in favour of disadvantaged groups. However, in the neoliberal regime the policy focus has shifted from the framework of public financing in HE to greater reliance on private expenditure. This leads to exorbitant increase in out-of-pocket expenditure of households, having detrimental impact on marginalized sections. In this context, the current study aims to unpack the dynamics of household expenditure on HE, given the dearth of studies in India, using nationally representative data.

2. Existing Literature

According to the recent data of UNESCO (2022)[1] Indian households share 22% of total educational expenditure incurred by the nation. However, due to lack of disaggregated data and the general impression that household spending on education is negligible, researchers did not provide ample attention in scrutinizing the role played by Indian households. This has changed recently with some very important studies. These studies, investigating the determinants of household expenditure on education, found that gender, caste, parental education along with religion and location of the family play pivotal roles in determining the quantum of household expenditure (Panchamukhi 1990; Filmer and Pritchett 1998; Tilak 2002, 2009; Kambhampati, 2008; Choudhury, 2019; Duraisamy and Duraisamy (2016); Chandrasekhar et.al., 2019). Thus, it could be argued that household investment decisions regarding expenditure on HE depend on– (a) individual and household related economic and social factors; (b) individuals' psychological factors; (c) institutional factors and (d) government policies for the education sector along with labour market signals. The present study will only focus on

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[1] https://www.education-progress.org/en/articles/finance

individual (gender), household related social factors (caste, parental education, household size), household's economic factor and institutional factors i.e., type of institutions (government/private), broad disciplines (STEM/non-STEM subjects)[1] in determining household expenditure on HE.

Household Economic Factors: Participation in HE requires significant household investment; therefore, intuitively, economic condition of household has considerable impact on the magnitude of educational investment. The affluence level of a household could be measured through income of the household and household wealth. There are very few studies which have given emphasis on wealth effect to examine the determinants of participation in HE in India; Filmer and Pritchett (1998) formulated a wealth index for 14 major Indian states and analyzed the wealth effect on school enrolment across gender and social groups. The study reports a large amount of variation in the magnitude of wealth effect on educational attainment across various states. In case of HE studies by Chakrabarty 2009; Tilak and Choudhury 2019; Chandrasekhar et al 2019 highlight positive relationship between consumption expenditure and HE attainment. These studies further underscore that the impact varies drastically across gender, caste and location of residence. In this context some studies attempted to unpack the dynamics of household's economic condition and intra-household resource allocation by Engle Curve analysis (Kingdon 2005; Azam and Kingdon 2011; Kaul 2018). Along with this, resource devolution theory (Downey 2001) also has important contribution in capturing the intra-household dynamics of educational expenditure, which argues, with finite resources as number of children rises, allocation per child falls, resulting lower educational attainment for the later order children (Psacharopoulos and Mattson, 2000). The impact is more adverse if the child is a female (Azam & Kingdon 2013).

Individual and Household Social Factors: Literature has highlighted the existence of substantial gender divide in household expenditure and participation in HE (Chanana, 2007; Prakash, 2007). Differential social expectations from males and females, in addition to pledging dowry to marry off even educated girls (usually married to spouses with HE and better employment status) are cited as reasons for this discrimination. Though, for urban middle- and high-income families, the dynamics is different (Chanana, 2007), where demand for dowry is often inversely related to HE attainment, since potential earning capacity of female increases.

Several studies have attempted to estimate, whether there is significant difference in household expenditure on education, across caste groups. Exploring three rounds of NSS data of India, Rani (2021) reported that children belonging to marginalized SC/ST households have a lower propensity to spend in all levels of education. Along with caste, class and gender, educational background of parents also play decisive role in household investments on HE. Studies reveal that having parents with high educational attainment, increases the probability in getting better allocation for HE (Psachalopoulos and Mattson 2000; Chandrasekhar et al. 2019).   Additionally, mother's education is

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[1] STEM courses comprise of Science, Medicine, Engineering, management, chartered accountancy, IT/computer courses. Non-STEM comprises of humanities, law, education, agriculture, courses from recognized ITI (Industrial Training Institutes)

more decisive than father's educational attainment in influencing the investment decisions particularly in rural areas (Tilak 2002). The study further shows that, in rural India it is not the most educated person in the family, rather head of the family decides expenditure on education. However, this kind of aggregate results fail to explain cultural aspects of communities and state level specificities influencing HE.

Literature further highlights, apart from various socio-economic factors, institutional factors (such as type of institution, discipline of study, accessibility) and availability of financial support like, student loans and scholarships have direct bearing on quantum of household spending. However, studies investigating their impact on household spending are limited in the Indian context, except for a few recent studies (Sarkar, 2017; Choudhury, 2019).

The current study – drawing on latest unit level National Sample Survey (NSS) would (i) examine the patterns of household expenditure on HE across various disaggregated level (gender, caste/social group, location, income groups, type of higher education institutes [HEI]) and (ii) determinants of household expenditure in HE in India.

Along with individual and household characteristics, two important institutional factors (type of institution and discipline of study i.e. STEM or non-STEM courses) are included in examining the determinants of household spending on HE in India.

3. Database and Estimation Strategy

Data: The present study draws on latest round of NSS data [75th round] conducted by Government of India in 2017-18. This is a nationally representative data; hence, suitable for generalization. This particular survey, titled as Social Consumption: Education, covered 113757 Indian households (64519 rural households and 49238 urban households) across states. The survey comprised information on household characteristics, demographic particulars of every individual, educational detail of students in the age group of 3-35 years and particulars of educational expenditure of students attending various levels of education. Information is also furnished for students currently not attending school in the age group 3-35 years with the reasons for dropping out. The present study restricts the sample to those who were attending HEIs and belonging to the age-group 18-23 years[1].

Estimation Strategy: To find out the key determinants for household expenditure Tobit regression models are estimated. Expenditure on HE, the dependent variable, is zero for many households, thereby being censored at zero. In such case, Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression model cannot be used. Thus, to furnish consistent estimates, maximum likelihood Tobit analysis is used, the specification of which is as follows:

$$Y_i^* = \beta^1 X + \varepsilon_i \qquad (1)$$

The observed value of Y:

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[1] Most studies all over the world have considered 18-23 years age cohort as pursuing HE age cohort.

$$Y_i = 0 \quad \text{If } Y_i^* \leq 0 \tag{2}$$

$$Y_i = Y_i^* \quad \text{If } Y_i^* > 0 \tag{3}$$

where Y_i^* is the latent variable and Y_i is its observed counterpart, X is the vector of explanatory variables detailed out in table 1, β is the vector of parameters to be estimated and ε is the normally and independently distributed error term.

Table 1: Description of variables used

Dependent variable	
Ln_hhexp	Logarithm of household expenditure on HE
Explanatory variables	
Reference Category – Male	
Female	If individual is female =1, 0 otherwise
Reference Category – Others	
ST	If individual is ST = 1, 0 otherwise
SC	If individual is SC= 1, 0 otherwise
OBC	If individual is OBC = 1, 0 otherwise
Reference Category – Urban	
Rural	If individual is in rural sector = 1, 0 otherwise
Ln_mpce	Logarithm of monthly per capita consumption expenditure
Reference Category – Government Institutes	
private_aided	If individual goes to private_aided institute =1, 0 otherwise
private_unaided	If individual goes to private_aided institute =1, 0 otherwise
Reference Category – Eastern Region	
North	If individual is from Northern region =1, 0 otherwise
North_East	If individual is from North Eastern region =1, 0 otherwise
West	If individual is from western region =1, 0 otherwise
South	If individual is from southern region =1, 0 otherwise
Reference Category – HH_illiterate and below primary	
HH_ elementary	If household head has completed elementary level of education =1, 0 otherwise
HH_ secondary	If household head has completed secondary level of education =1, 0 otherwise
HH_highersecondary	If household head has completed higher secondary level of education =1, 0 otherwise
HH_ gradabove	If household head has completed graduate and above level of education =1, 0 otherwise
Reference Category – STEM	
Non STEM	If individuals have opted for Non STEM =1, 0 otherwise

4. Results and Discussions

Household Expenditure in Higher Education

HE in India is undergoing a stage of massive expansion, with enrolment figures touching 38.5 million and Gross Enrolment Ratio being 27.1% (AISHE 2020). However, the expansion of this sector results from expanding supply mainly by the private players; which caters to around 70% of total enrolment (AISHE 2020). This shift also marks a departure from the public good nature of HE – implicating the sources of funding HE, disproportionately straining the pockets of the households. Table 2 depicts that on an average households spend around Rs. 26533 for each ward enrolled in HE, which accounts for 17.3% of the total annual household consumption expenditure in 2017-2018. Data further highlights that a major share of expenditure (61%) goes in favour of spending towards fees.

Table 2: Annual per-student household expenditure on higher education

Items of expenditure	average annual spending per student (in Rs)	share of total educational spending (%)	share to annual household consumption expenditure (%)
Tuition Fee	17,935	61.2	11.7
Books and Uniform	3,176	10.8	2.1
Transport	3,500	12.0	2.3
Private tuition	3,007	10.3	2
Other items	1,664	5.7	1.1
Total expenditure (Average)	26,553	100	17.3

Source: Author's computation using NSS 75th round unit level records

Role of Caste, Location and Type Institutions: Looking through the lens of Class: In India along with class, caste is one of the most pervasive and enduring factor of inequality in every sphere of life. Further, class and caste are highly intertwined in this country and economic class has huge impact on the affordability to pay for higher education. Thus, a system which is highly privatised in nature and heterogeneous in terms of quality – has huge potential to create barriers to marginalised communities to access HE without state interventions. This further impacts the choice of courses (STEM/non-STEM) and type of institutions (government and private), thereby impacting the average expenditure patterns across upper caste and backward caste households. In case of expenditure incurred by the households in HE one can easily locate a stark difference across various caste groups affecting their enrolment. Table 3 depicts households from the backward castes (STs, SCs and OBCs) spend significantly lower than that of the upper caste (UC) households (Others). However, it is not only about class (proxied by MPCE quintiles)as one can observe that even within the same income quintile, disparity persists in HE spending between marginalized vis-à-vis upper caste households. This divergence becomes maximum in the highest income quintile, wherein it is seen that STs spend Rs. 26215 and others spend Rs. 53500 on an average

in HE annually. This may be due the reason that in India the income range of the top most income quintile is quite vast and the large chunk of people from the marginalized caste group are actually bunched at the bottom layer of this income group, which affect their spending decisions.

Table 3: Average household expenditure on higher education
across social groups and quintiles

MPCE Quintiles	Social Groups			
	ST	SC	OBC	Others
Quintile 1	9162	10350	11034	12939
Quintile 2	9887	11199	12606	12509
Quintile 3	10572	12320	15831	14413
Quintile 4	16416	18179	20971	22214
Quintile 5	26215	31432	41103	53500
Total	16457	17501	24350	35420

Source: Author's computation using NSS 75th round unit level records

Table 4 provides an intersectional picture of gender, class and location in context of household expenditure on HE. It shows that urban households incur a higher spending than their rural counterparts. Gender wise disparities in allocation of resources are quite prominent. Except for poorest income category in rural area, across all economic classes females receive lower allocations for HE than that of males. The disparity is maximum within the highest income category of the urban areas. One can further notice that at the aggregate level gender gap in resource allocation for HE doesn't improve, rather broadens with improving economic status. Probably a patriarchal society and heavily privatized heterogeneous HE system produces this pattern.

Table 4: Average annual household expenditure on higher education across gender,
location and expenditure quintiles

MPCE Quintiles	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Quintile 1	9541	10105	9746	23303	18298	20575	10768	11466	11043
Quintile 2	11906	11247	11646	14929	14514	14728	12263	11778	12066
Quintile 3	14247	13654	14016	16691	14998	15843	14711	14016	14423
Quintile 4	20866	18559	19895	22241	21365	21837	21352	19658	20614
Quintile 5	31447	28900	30377	55496	40444	48889	50399	38141	45066
Total	16465			39124			26553		

Source: Author's computation using NSS 75th round unit level records

From table 5, it emerges that at all India level and across rural and urban areas, average spending of individuals studying in private unaided institutes is more than double when compared to their counterparts in government institutes. At aggregate level, an

individual in government institute spends Rs.14097, vis-à-vis Rs. 41280 who are enrolled in private unaided institutes. Also, inter-class disparities with respect to spending on HE are the least in case of government institutes and most in case of private institutes.This is mainly due to the fact that the fee structure in government HEIs are regulated, homogeneous and much lesser than private HEIs.

Table 5: Average annual household expenditure on higher education across sectors, type of institutes and expenditure quintiles

MPCE Quintiles	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Govern-ment	Private Aided	Private Unaided	Govern-ment	Private Aided	Private Unaided	Govern-ment	Private Aided	Private Unaided
Quintile 1	7520	12098	13011	10490	12257	25100	7820	15120	14627
Quintile 2	9002	12602	17604	9734	16207	20567	9083	13113	18175
Quintile 3	10219	17774	19175	9668	20998	24347	10094	18414	20392
Quintile 4	12262	22526	28150	12871	24809	31291	12485	23415	29289
Quintile 5	15880	29981	49074	24670	59886	66329	22823	52666	63268
Total	10495	19072	25677	19609	48144	55696	14097	32115	41280

Source: Author's computation using NSS 75th round unit level records

Further, choice of subjects (STEM vis a vis non-STEM courses) also plays an important role in shaping a household spending on education[1]. On an average, the per student spending on STEM courses is more than three times higher than their non-STEM counterparts (per student spending on STEM courses is Rs. 45487 vis-à-vis Rs. 14564 for non-STEM courses).It implies that affordability and choice of course are in a way intertwined which hints at the prevalence of an exclusionary trend, making it disadvantageous for a substantial portion of the eligible population who comes from the lower income households, mostly the students from marginalized caste groups.

4. Factors influencing expenditure on Higher Education: An Econometric Analysis

This section attempts to discuss the results from the Tobit models estimated for various controlling factors.

Tobit estimates reveal that household's economic status is not only important in deciding the quantum of expenditure, but also extremely significant in shaping decisions regarding selection of the stream of education as well as type of institute. At all India level, it emerges that with unit increase MPCE (proxy for economic status), expenditure on HE increases by 60%. The impact of economic class on educational spending is relatively higher in urban India. Data shows (table 6: Models 4 & 5) in urban India an unit increase in MPCE increases the HE spending around 63% as against 52% in case of rural India.

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[1] A detailed analysis of NSS 75th round data reveals within STEM – 54.4 percent individuals are from the highest income quintile and a meagre around 5 percent are from the lowest income quintile.

As expected in a patriarchal society, between males and females, impact of a higher economic status on HE spending is more prominent (positive) in case of males. Table 6 (Models 2 & 3) shows, at all India level, household expenditure on females' HE is 6% lower than that of males. Similar trend has been corroborated by various other studies (Tilak 2002; Kingdon 2005; Aslam and Kingdon 2008; Azam and Kingdon 2011; Saha, 2013; Duraisamy and Duraisamy, 2016; Nordman and Sharma 2016; Tilak and Choudhury, 2019; Rani, 2021). Interestingly, the estimates (Table 7: Models 6 & 7) further reveal that females belonging to the richest expenditure quintile experience higher level of discrimination wherein the household spending is 12% lower than the male counterparts (for poorest income groups households incur 2% lower expenditure for females compared males). Studies by Chanana (1993) and Jayachandran (2015) highlight that several cultural attributes such as patrilocality, patrilineality, dowry system, reliance on sons for support during old age influences household level decision making which eventually contributes in deepening gender inequality in India.

Being from the UC certainly puts an individual at an advantageous position which is reflected in the spending patterns. SC/ST/OBC households incur significantly lower expenditure on their wards' HE when compared to the UCs across all subgroups. Model 1 shows at all India level, STs, SCs and OBCs spend 27%, 18% and 9% lower than UCs, respectively. Similar trends have been corroborated by previous studies (Tilak, 2002; Rani, 2021). What emerges as an area of concern is that if we further disaggregate the data on economic lines, one sees that even within the richest income groups STs and SCs incur to the tune of 34% and 30% lower expenditure than UCs (Model 7). This aspect of greater divergence within upper class Indian households is also corroborated by Madan (2020).

Importance of having a higher educated household head in determining the quantum of expenditure on HE is quite evident in many studies (Huston 1995; Kingdon 2005; Tilak 2002, Rani 2021). The present study shows (Model 1) that at aggregate level individuals with higher educated (graduate and above) household heads spend 19% more than those households which are headed by someone who either illiterate or have below primary education. The tobit coefficients further show between males and females, higher educated household heads have a higher impact on HE spending in case of males than females. Further, in the lowest income quintile, higher educated household head emerges as a significant factor influencing spending in HE (Model 6 depicts an increase of 38% in HE spending).

The study of Agarwal (2009) argues, disparities at the regional level are mostly due to clustering of HE institutions in and around urban areas. Though participation is growing in rural sectors, it is still far lower than urban counterparts (Azam and Blom, 2009).Table 6 suggests that females are in disadvantageous position both in urban and rural areas. However, the females are at a greater disadvantage in terms of lower spending in the urban sector, as the urban females incur around 8% of lower expenditure for their HE than their male counterpart; for rural households the coefficient is insignificant.

A region wise analysis reveals that the spending on HE varies widely across regions and economic class. For example, at the highest income quintile, we see HE spending is

higher by 37% and 28% in north-eastern and northern regions, respectively, if compared with their eastern counterparts (Model 7). It could be argued that the north eastern regions generally face the cost differential due to its hilly landscape (Rani 2021), and migration to other states for HE – which might get reflected in the household expenditure. However, the region wise pattern of household expenditure is quite erratic. Rani (2021) documents, while according to the 56th (1995-96) and 71st (2014) rounds of NSS data southern states incurred higher expenditure on HE, 64th round (2007-08) data depicts that northeastern states spend higher. Similar trend is evident in the current data of 75th round (2017-18).

Type of educational institute where the students are enrolled in, has critical role in determining the quantum of household expenditure. Along with common wisdom, both the descriptive statistics and Tobit regression results suggest that non-government institutes (both private aided and unaided) entail significantly higher expenditure across all subgroups under examination. At all India level (Model 1), individuals enrolled in private unaided HEIs spend 69% more than those who are studying in government HEIs. The maximum divergence between government and private unaided institutes is seen within highest income quintile, where individuals enrolled in private unaided institutes spend on an average 94% more than those are enrolled in government institutes (Model 7).

Along with type of institutes, type of courses also plays important role for determining expenditure. Given the patterns of expansion of HE in India – particularly in domain of STEM courses which is mostly in private sectors – it could be easily understood that individuals enrolled in STEM courses need to spend much higher than those who are enrolled in general (non-science/non-technical/professional) courses. As can be seen from the data, in Government and private unaided institutes the spending in Non-STEM courses is lower by 37% and 56%, respectively (Models 8 & 9). Again, the maximum divergence is observed within the highest income quintile, wherein, spending in Non-STEM courses is 65% lower as compared to their STEM counterparts (Model 7).

Table 6: Tobit maximum likelihood estimations for regression results by gender and location

	All India (Model 1)		Female (Model 2)		Male (Model 3)		Rural (Model 4)		Urban (Model 5)	
	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE
Female	-0.06***	0.02					-0.03	0.03	-0.08***	0.03
ST	-0.27***	0.07	-0.17***	0.06	-0.34***	0.1	-0.26***	0.08	-0.25***	0.09
SC	-0.18***	0.04	-0.15***	0.05	-0.2***	0.05	-0.17	0.05	-0.16***	0.06
OBC	-0.09***	0.02	-0.11***	0.04	-0.08**	0.03	-0.06	0.03	-0.13***	0.03
Rural	-0.02	0.03	-0.03	0.04	-0.01	0.04				
Ln_Mpce	0.6***	0.02	0.56***	0.03	0.62***	0.03	0.52***	0.03	0.63***	0.03
private_aided	0.48***	0.03	0.48***	0.04	0.48***	0.05	0.38***	0.05	0.64***	0.04
private_unaided	0.69***	0.03	0.65***	0.04	0.71***	0.04	0.6***	0.04	0.8***	0.04
North	-0.02	0.04	-0.07	0.05	0.01	0.06	-0.04	0.06	0.08	0.05
South	-0.02	0.05	-0.03	0.06	-0.02	0.07	0.07	0.07	-0.08	0.05
West	-0.09**	0.04	-0.12**	0.05	-0.07	0.06	-0.01	0.07	-0.15***	0.05
North_east	0.13***	0.05	0.16**	0.07	0.1	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.18***	0.06
HH_elementary	0.03	0.03	0.08*	0.04	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.04	0.11**	0.04
HH_secondary	0.01	0.03	0.05	0.05	-0.001	0.04	0.01	0.05	0.07	0.05
HH_highersecondary	0.004	0.04	0.02	0.05	0.001	0.05	-0.04	0.05	0.09**	0.05
HH_grad_above	0.19***	0.03	0.19***	0.05	0.21***	0.05	0.04	0.06	0.28***	0.04
NonSTEM	-0.49***	0.03	-0.48***	0.03	-0.48***	0.04	-0.39***	0.04	-0.58***	0.03
_cons	5.03***	0.19	5.29***	0.25	4.82***	0.27	5.56***	0.25	4.76***	0.24
R2	0.22		0.19		0.24		0.15		0.24	
N	26921		11441		15479		11408		15513	

Source: Author's computation using NSS 75th round unit level record

Note: *** implies significance at 1% level; ** implies significance at 5% level; * implies significance at 10% level; Coeff.:Coefficient; SE: Standard error

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Table 7: Tobit maximum likelihood estimations for regression results by type of institution and household economic condition

	Lowest Economic Quintile (Model 6)		Highest Economic Quintile (Model 7)		Government (Model 8)		Private Unaided (Model 9)	
	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE
Female	-0.02	0.07	-0.12***	0.04	-0.03	0.03	-0.11***	0.03
ST	-0.13	0.13	-0.34***	0.06	-0.22***	0.06	-0.17**	0.08
SC	-0.14	0.11	-0.30***	0.06	-0.17***	0.05	-0.14**	0.07
OBC	-0.06	0.1	-0.16***	0.04	-0.09**	0.04	-0.09**	0.04
Rural	-0.25***	0.09	-0.19***	0.05	0.05	0.04	-0.04	0.04
Ln_Mpce					0.52***	0.04	0.64***	0.03
private_aided	0.44***	0.12	0.74***	0.05				
private_unaided	0.52***	0.12	0.94***	0.05				
North	-0.15	0.13	0.28***	0.07	0.17***	0.04	-0.3***	0.06
South	0.19	0.14	0.02	0.07	-0.2***	0.06	-0.18***	0.06
West	0.03	0.09	-0.02	0.07	-0.11***	0.04	-0.29***	0.07
North_east	-0.04	0.13	0.37***	0.09	0.09*	0.05	-0.04	0.13
HH_elementary	0.01	0.09	-0.15***	0.06	0.002	0.04	0.002	0.06
HH_secondary	0.11	0.09	-0.13**	0.06	0.07	0.05	-0.06	0.05
HH_highersecondary	0.25*	0.14	-0.12**	0.06	-0.08	0.05	0.07	0.06
HH_grad_above	0.38***	0.1	0.16***	0.05	0.17***	0.05	0.14***	0.05
NonSTEM	-0.32***	0.12	-0.65***	0.04	-0.37***	0.04	-0.56***	0.04
_cons	9.27***	0.15	10.1***	0.08	5.5***	0.32	5.68***	0.31
R2	0.09		0.17		0.13		0.23	
N	1434		14386		9686		10613	

Source: Author's computation using NSS 75th round unit level record
Note: *** implies significance at 1% level; ** implies significance at 5% level; * implies significance at 10% level; Coeff.:Coefficient; SE: Standard error

6. Conclusions

The objective of this paper was to capture the patterns and the determinants of household expenditure on HE across various levels of disaggregation, using the latest nationally representative data (NSS 2017-18) in Indian context. The study further made an attempt to throw light upon the persisting inequalities in the domain of HE – as educational inequality has huge repercussions on other facets of life and contributes in deepening social and economic inequalities.

Over the years, due to privatization, there has been a massive increase household expenditure on HE. Data reveals, from Rs. 14532 in 2007-18 it has touched Rs.26553 in 2017-18. This increased shift of burden on households has several implications, one being, differences in the quality of education accessed by various sub-groups. This in turn impacts the learning of students, eventually impacting their labour market opportunities and outcomes. Further, substantial gender bias in educational spending – wherein females are at a much-disadvantaged position, would have huge impact on their labour market outcomes. This would further impact the intra-household allocation of resources favouring the sons in a patriarchal society, eventually perpetuating the gender inequality even more.

The disparities in spending among the marginalized groups (ST, SC, OBCs) vis-à-vis UC (Others) households portray a worrisome picture. The rapid erosion of publicness of HE, implying a growing domination of the private sector, has been continuously burdening marginalized households to the extreme, thereby accentuating the inter-caste inequalities. Thus, the dwindling proportional representation marginalized students in HE should draw attention of policymakers and must be remedied by strengthening public funding of HE.

Appendix

Table 13: Descriptive statistics

	All India	Female	Male	Rural	Urban	Lowest Quintile	Highest Quintile	Govern-ment	Private Unaided
Male	57.8%			60.2%	54.7%	61.6%	56.5%	57.7%	57.7%
Female	42.2%			39.8%	45.3%	38.3%	43.5%	42.2%	42.3%
ST	6.1%	5.5%	6.6%	7.9%	3.9%	9.1%	5.6%	6.9%	4.1%
SC	15.8%	15.0%	16.4%	19.5%	11.2%	21.9%	9.5%	16.9%	14.6%
OBC	44.0%	43.5%	44.4%	45.5%	42.2%	51.7%	38.9%	41.3%	49.4%
Others	34.0%	36.1%	32.6%	27.1%	42.7%	17.3%	46.0%	34.9%	32.0%
Rural	55.5%	52.3%	57.8%	N/A	N/A	88.0%	20.7%	60.5%	48.0%
Urban	44.5%	47.7%	42.2%	N/A	N/A	12.0%	79.3%	39.5%	52.0%
Govern-ment	45.7%	45.7%	45.7%	49.8%	40.6%	54.3%	37.8%		
private_aided	24.8%	24.8%	24.8%	24.7%	25.0%	24.1%	26.3%		
private_unaided	29.2%	29.3%	29.2%	25.3%	34.1%	21.4%	35.5%		
North	27.4%	29.4%	26.0%	30.3%	23.9%	35.1%	23.9%	26.6%	26.0%
South	24.9%	26.5%	23.7%	21.0%	29.7%	6.7%	31.9%	12.4%	44.2%
West	28.7%	26.1%	30.5%	27.0%	30.7%	23.7%	31.1%	26.0%	25.5%
East	15.9%	15.0%	16.6%	18.0%	13.3%	29.9%	11.1%	29.5%	3.5%

	All India	Female	Male	Rural	Urban	Lowest Quintile	Highest Quintile	Government	Private Unaided
North_east	3.1%	3.0%	3.1%	3.7%	2.3%	4.5%	2.0%	5.6%	.8%
HH_illiterate_ below_primary	17.0%	15.0%	18.5%	23.8%	8.5%	26.1%	6.2%	18.8%	16.4%
HH_elementary	23.3%	22.9%	23.6%	29.0%	16.1%	27.7%	15.5%	25.6%	20.0%
HH_secondary	15.1%	15.5%	14.9%	14.8%	15.6%	15.5%	15.3%	13.5%	16.7%
HH_higher-secondary	11.1%	12.2%	10.2%	8.9%	13.7%	6.0%	13.3%	10.7%	10.8%
HH_grad_above	12.4%	13.8%	11.3%	6.4%	19.8%	5.2%	21.5%	10.0%	15.1%
STEM	36.6%	33.0%	39.3%	27.2%	48.3%	19.4%	52.9%	24.3%	53.5%
NonSTEM	61.2%	64.3%	59.0%	70.7%	49.4%	78.8%	44.2%	74.0%	44.3%
N	26923	11443	15480	11409	15515	1434	14388	9687	10613

Source: Author's computation using NSS 75ᵗʰ round unit level records

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ETHICS CODES USE IN TURKISH SUPPLY CHAINS: DRIVERS, COMPANY PERFORMANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract: *New understandings and methods in supply chains bring new research issues to the literature. Research identifies that pros and cons of ethics in supply chains and in their sustainability is one of the most argued and researched topics. Despite the large amount of work around the world, ethics literature requires some fundamental evidence from Turkish supply chain components. This research aims to explore the drivers and outcomes of ethics codes use of Turkish companies regarding their supply chain sustainability by providing a holistic view. We collect data through a structured interview in order to see Turkish companies' critics on the generally accepted points as a result of the literature review. The target companies are a part of supply chains located in Turkey from different industries. According to the findings, (1) internally corporate culture and externally customers are most agreed drivers to employ ethics codes; (2) enhancing customer and supplier relationships; and achieving better prices, quality and efficiency are the agreed benefits of ethics codes use; and (3) Turkish firms reach economic sustainability and social sustainability, but, low level of environmental sustainability after the use of ethics codes in their supply chains. The work is important in that it is one of the few studies in Turkey settings.*

Keywords: *ethics codes; drivers; benefits; supply chains; sustainability*

1. Introduction

According to the eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, humans have the moral duty to obtain right behavior and to avoid wrong behavior (Darwall, 2018). Ethical behaviour is established by practices and activities which are right and achieved through generally accepted moral principles (De George, 1987; Treviño et al., 2006) and contributes to the well-being of the society (Guillén et al., 2002). On the other hand, unethical behaviour violates the moral principles and is harmful for the organisation and the well-being of the society (Andreoli and Lefkowitz, 2009).

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In today's era of Industry 4.0., organizations become "open systems" since they need to be more dynamic, constantly changing and dependent on wider external environments because of their interdependence, competitiveness, and interactions (Soni and Soni, 2019). Thus, companies should respond and adapt themselves to the external environment.

Victor and Cullen (1988) develop the idea of ethical climate as the established normative systems of an organization (Martin et al, 2006). Ethical climate is about the organizational procedures, polices, and practices with moral consequences. Business ethics related to employees and society has been present in some form since the first industrial revolution in the late eighteen and early nineteenth centuries (Soni and Soni, 2019). Many companies around the world aware of the benefits of ethical behavior and have well-established set of protocols to create an ethical corporate culture (Roberts-Lombard et al, 2020).

With the progress in the production systems and human behavior, the understandings are becoming different. Society and people behavior, expectations, and idea are changing. The notions which were not important or missing in the past are appearing in today's people/business life. One of the most argued and researched issue is pros and cons of ethics in supply chains and in their sustainability. According to Marmat et al's (2020) review of relevant literature produced during 2008-2017 about previous theories on ethical behaviour, they are related to ethical issues, organisational factors, environmental factors and stakeholders. While drivers and outcomes of ethical codes have been extensively studied by earlier works, Turkish literature is weak in providing details of ethics in supply chains. In this study, we have a holistic approach regarding the points provided in the literature review. We explore the drivers and outcomes of ethics codes use of Turkish companies regarding their supply chain sustainability. The results are important in that they will reflect the most current response of Turkish supply chains.

The literature reports that employees in developing economies are expected to be involved in unethical practices more compared to the other regions of the world (Kashif et al., 2018; McCarthy et al., 2012). Since the adoption rate is weak in developing economies, it is highly important to determine their thoughts. In this study, we explore the ethical understanding of companies regarding their supply chains in Turkey as a developing economy. The scarcity of research, especially in Turkey, takes our attention to run this research. We expect that the findings and implications of the study will be beneficial to the regional economy and research.

In the rest of the paper, the ethics literature regarding Sustainable Supply Chains, methodology of the work, the results and conclusion sections are presented.

2. Literature Review

If companies target economic profitability as their primary factor, ultimately ethics and business have a conflict (Duska, 2000). Staying ethical in the process is the right thing to do but it may not be the "right" thing for the business (Wood, 2002). Employing ethical codes through the business is costly too (Pärli and Vögtli, 2020). New trends,

methods and understandings may provide both opportunities and risks for companies (Kozáková et al, 2021). In fact, ethics and ethical considerations can help to reduce risk and improve the outcome (Kooskora and Meel, 2003) through right implemented ethical codes. If the ethics is not developed, implemented and managed truly, the result may be a disaster. Therefore, companies should develop, implement and manage some codes both to protect the organizations for possible risks and to behave ethically. Collins (2012) suggests some practices to decrease the ethical risk and improve performance by establishing and empowering an ethical environment (ethical people, codes of ethics, ethics training, ethical leadership, and environmental management).

Code of ethics is not only a set of rules about good and bad behavior; it is a plan of expected professional performance, core values, and standards in order to ensure public safety (Russell 2019). Corporate code of ethics, as a platform for evaluation, provides guidelines for rigorous ethical business practices (Roberts-Lombard et al, 2020). A code of ethics is a critical step to develop corporate ethical standards (Hasnas, 2013). A clearly defined code of conduct improves employee commitment to take responsibility for their actions (Price and Van der Walt, 2013).

Ethical codes may be different in different settings. Kozáková et al (2021) examine the extent of ethical codes in 225 subsidiaries of multinational companies in Slovakia and identify that (1) companies with lower extent of ethical code use general phrases (2) companies with a lower number of employees do not need extensive ethical code due to clear rules set by owners; since the direct way is not possible for multinational companies, they realize the communication of ethical rules via ethical codes with specific purposes; and (3) companies with foreign ownership use different managerial approaches.

While a code of ethics is a broader set of principles that influence an employee's moral judgment, a code of conduct, published publicly to present the way the company does business, is a specific set of guidelines addressing employee's actions to conduct business honestly and with integrity (Pärli and Vögtli, 2020). Despite the distinction, they are often merged into one document and named as codes of conduct (Pärli and Vögtli, 2020).

According to Berenbeim (2000), there are three phases regarding corporate codes of ethics. (1) Integration of global markets requires globally extended values; (2) Embracing codes of ethics as a part of evolving company governance processes to develop corporate governance practices; and (3) Increased awareness and understanding of codes of ethics by senior managers.

The UN global compact triggers establishing guidelines on human rights, labour, corruption, and the environment (Williams, 2004). This is followed by the use of ethical standards across global supply chains (Krueger, 2008). Formal codes of ethics cannot preserve corporate reputations (Sinkovics and Archie-acheampong, 2019), but in combination with good and honest relationships with suppliers, they will have the desired effect (Bendixen and Abratt, 2007).

The ethical relationship among supply chain members has of great importance for effective supply chain management (Sharma and Sharma, 2013) since ethical

relationship enhances accountablity and responsiveness and therefore trust, commitment and long-term relations with each other (Fynes and Voss, 2002; Humphreys et al., 2001). In order to strengthen the ethical relationships among chain members (Sharma and Sharma, 2013, Whysall, 1998), every member should be fair, honest and sincere to achieve trust, loyalty and reputation (Kujala, 2001; Whysall, 2000; Mallen, 1996).

The costs of unethical behaviors also have impact on the stakeholders (Yin et al, 2021). Considering Stakeholder Theory (Freeman et al. 2004), supply-chain partners should not be ignored in terms of the effects of unethical behavior (Yin et al, 2021).

Suppliers arrange their investments or marketing strategies based on the prospects of their supply-chain network (Subramani, 2004). For example, customers' inaccurate order information can misguide suppliers in their inventory and production decisions (Lee et al, 2004). Customers' unethical behaviors negatively affect suppliers (Yin et al, 2021).

Fraudulent financial information of customers might falsify suppliers' investment decisions (Yin et al, 2021). If customers present false pictures by engaging in financial misconduct, their suppliers more likely invest more to preserve their customers' false prosperities (Kumar and Langberg, 2009).

Beside the issue of establishing and setting up codes of conduct in the organization, some countries are arguing the phases beyond this stage. However, some countries suffer from human rights.

Ethics Codes and Drivers

Ethics code is more necessary especially for multinational companies (Kaptein, 2004). According to extent, there are several types of ethics codes: (1) regulatory documents for specific behaviors (small companies); (2) clearly explained broad principles (mid-sized companies); (3) elegant codes including social responsibility (big companies) (Langlois and Schlegelmilch, 1990).

Organisational culture and intensity of the ethical issue are the most influencing factor in enhancing ethical conduct (Ferrell et al, 2007; Lybecker, 2008; Liu et al, 2019) in supply chains. A strengthened corporate culture where executives understand the need for a code of ethics easily develops and implements code of ethics through the chain (Roberts-Lombard et al, 2020). From an organisational culture perspective, having an ethical orientation improves firm profitability (Myer et al., 2016). Suitable organizational culture influences values of employees (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2008; Verhezen, 2010).

Companies should guide employees on operating honestly and sincerely (Alzola, 2015). Company management should understand employee behaviour and its consequences in specific context (Roberts-Lombard et al, 2020). Leadership is a critical element in the development of an ethical corporate culture (DeConinck, 2015). Role model managers can enhance employee ethical behaviour commitment (Nygaard et al., 2017).

According to Banik and Lin (2019), both international and domestic elements have increased the growing interest in ethics research in China. They include the global demand for Chinese products, China's entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001 (and therefore the force of foreign partners and competitors) (Yin and Zhang, 2012), the effect political leaders (and therefore the force of laws and administrative regulations) (Banik and Lin, 2019).

Therefore, we suggest that *organisational culture, suppliers, government (or regulatory bodies), suppliers, laws, market, customers, shareholders, competitors and global influencers affect the adoption of ethics codes in supply chains.*

Benefits of Ethics Codes

Literature report the positive impact of ethics on firm performance (Margolis and Walsh, 2003; Saeidi et al., 2015; Kang et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2015). In line with our results, a supply chain, with joint ethical beliefs and practices, should consider the company, its suppliers and its customers through developed relationship marketing with stakeholders (Roberts-Lombard et al, 2020).

Successfully implemented ethics increases the welfare and safety of community members, employees, and firm image and attracts loyal customers and employees (Gunasekaran and Spalanzani, 2012; Agyabeng-Mensah et al, 2020). Loyal employees decrease labor turnover and recruitment cost (Longoni et al., 2018).

In order to successfully develop and implement ethics along the supply chain, firms need the co-operation of their customers and suppliers which inturn facilitate the achievement of expected supply chain goals (Agyabeng-Mensah et al, 2020).

The partners' capability to adapt their products to the changes in demand/supply is a flexibility indicator (Kumar and Rahman, 2016; Miemczyk and Luzzini, 2016). While flexibility, in general, increases sales significantly, process flexibility enhances controlling output levels and therefore the performance of SCs (Banik and Lin, 2019).

Product quality, a criterion of performance in different industries, influences customer satisfaction, health and safety (Wang et al., 2012; Akdeniz et al., 2014; Banik and Lin, 2019). Responsiveness is a central indicator in the performance of SCs (Mao and Jin, 2014; Meckenstock et al., 2016). Responsiveness increases the producers to meet customer expectations and therefore is fundamental in meeting organized leading times and reaching the expected quality as the indicators of sustainable performance (Banik and Lin, 2019).

Effective implementation of ethics requires the collaboration of supply chain partners in improving performance benefits (Zhu et al., 2005; Shang et al., 2010). Similarly, collaboration among supply chain partners is essential for effective implementation of sustainable supply chain practices to achieve expected performance results (Zhu et al, 2005; Sarkis et al, 2011).

Therefore, we assert that *after implementing ethics codes in their respective supply chains, companies acquire some benefits including reduction in costs, enhanced customer and supplier*

relationships, efficiency, effectiveness, assets, quality, innovativeness, price competitiveness, flexibility, market share and collaborations.

Supply Chain Sustainability

Sustainability is useful for both the future ability of the firms and the present company needs (United Nations General Assembly, 1987). Sustainability have three dimensions including the activities about the social and environmental impacts of a company and supports its financial infrastructure (Brockhaus et al. 2013; Chardine-Bauman and Botta-Genoulaz 2014; Morali and Searcy 2013; Laurin and Fantazy, 2017). Sustainability is the long-term stability of the economy and environment through the integration of its three facets (Emas, 2015). However, sustainability cannot get the necessary attention in competitive business settings (Becker, 2014) because it takes long-term attention.

Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) considers social, environmental and economic aspects of sustainable development (Carter and Rogers, 2008; Seuring and Müller, 2008; Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014; Touboulic and Walker, 2015) by targeting a perfect stability among them (Sikdar, 2003). Therefore, SSCM aims long-term performance of the value chain (Carter and Rogers, 2008).

Sustainability aspects of supply chain management have not been reviewed adequately in literature (Subramanian and Gunasekaran, 2015). Mani et al. (2018) suggest integrating social sustainability dimensions into the management of supply chains especially in emerging economies.

Beside the sustainability of supply chains, Eriksson et al. (2015) suggest studying the role of social values and ethics and moral responsibility in supply chain sustainability. Larger components of supply chains expect the adoption of socially, ethically and environmentally sound practices to achieve sustainable development goals from the smaller components (Gonzalez et al, 2004).

In order to successfully develop and implement social value and ethics along the supply chain, firms need the co-operation of their customers and suppliers which inturn facilitate the achievement of expected supply chain sustainability goals (Agyabeng-Mensah et al, 2020). There is a growing interest on the relationships between business, ethics, and economic development and business responsibilities for both their shareholders and wider society (Banik and Lin, 2019; Jora et al., 2020).

Research suggests insignificant influence of social values and ethics on economic performance while supply chain sustainability significantly improves economic performance (Feng et al., 2018; Afum et al., 2020; Agyabeng-Mensah et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2020; Agyabeng-Mensah et al, 2020).

Therefore, we assume that *after implementing ethics codes in their respective supply chains, companies become sustainable in three aspects of sustainability (economic, environmental and social).*

3. Methodology

A structured interview is preferred as the data collection method. Derived points as a result of the literature review are used to develop the interview questions. Since the interviewees are comfortable with Turkish, we chose Turkish as the language of communication. The interview questions ask (1) whether they have used ethics codes in their companies, (2) which of the asserted forces are influential for using ethics codes, (3) which of the listed benefits are observed, and (4) what sustainability dimensions are improved as a result of adopting ethics codes.

Convenient sampling method is the selected sampling method while determining the target companies from different industries. The companies, as a part of supply chains, are located in Turkey. The study does not differentiate subject companies regarding the type of their supply chains (global, regional, or local supply chains) or their industries.

The interview does not aim to identify the nature of applied ethics codes. We target to reach the companies with more than 10 employees. We reach company managers who are probably aware of business ethics, ethics use, and their supply chains.

Interviewing process is performed by face-to-face conversations. Interview questions are not explained to the interviewees in order to prevent biasing. Anonymity of the interviewees and the companies are guaranteed to enhance their willingness and contribution. Interviewing process took around two months. Mobile phones are used to record the interviews. Recorded interviews are then put into a written form. Each interview is planned to be completed in no more than half an hour.

We prefer using percentage frequency distribution of the responses to visualize the findings. Percentage frequency distribution is advantageous to simply display the data (Sharma, 2007) and provides timely and reliable information about the situation of the market (D'Elia, 2005).

4. Results and Discussions

Demographics

We have performed 79 interviews from 79 different Turkish manufacturing companies from various industries in 23 different cities. Regarding the demographic information of the interviewees, we identify that (1) the average age of interviewees is 39.26; (2) there are 68 males; (3) the degrees of interviewees are: 1 PhD; 14 master; 50 undergraduates; and 14 others; and (4) the average of their work experience is 14.51 years.

The sample space includes 24 limited companies, 53 stock joint companies, one governmental organization and one half-governmental organization (Table 1). Despite there is a state-owned organization and a half state-owned organization, all organizations are manufacturers.

Table 1: Interviewed companies

Company Type	Number
Government	1
Half-Government	1
Limited	24
Stock Joint	53
Total	**79**

Source: Own representation

As observed from the results, almost all the companies have more than 10 employees (Table 2) except four of them. The companies are mainly SMEs (77%). However, there are also some large companies (23%).

Table 2: Interviewed companies' size (in number of employees)

Company Size	Number	Percentage
1--10	4	5
11--50	24	30
51--100	8	10
101--500	26	33
500+	17	22
Total	**79**	**100**

Source: Own representation

Existence of Ethics Codes

All the companies, except one, use ethics codes in their organizations (Table 3). The majority of the companies have ethics codes in written form. According to Langlois and Schlegelmilch's (1990) categorisation, the interviewed Turkish companies, in general, seem to be in the first category regarding the codes. The manager of the company, which does not apply ethics codes, says that "*we cannot apply ethics codes since our behavior changes with respect to customer expectations.*" Another company representative says that "*we apply the codes but it is an absolute cost for us.*" Contrarily, one other interviewee says that "*if we apply ethics codes truly and manage the process well, it is not costly.*" One of the interviewees supports this argument and says that "*the use of ethics codes is a cost for the company at the beginning. But later on, it will decrease the costs*." Some of the interviewees assert that their companies have SEDEX, one of the worldwide ethic codes certificate providers, certificates.

Table 3: Existence of Ethics Codes

Ethics Codes	Number
exist (written)	45
exist (not written)	28
does not exist	1

Source: Own representation

Drivers of Ethics Codes

As suggested by the literature, corporate culture and customers are the two agreed drivers to employ ethics codes for the majority of Turkish companies (Table 4). The interviewees consider the push of their suppliers, competitors, market and laws to adopt ethics codes. However, they almost do not count the effect of their shareholders, government and global influencers.

One of the interviewees says that "*corporate culture is the most important factor since we determine the codes by considering its characteristics. We also choose our employees with respect our culture.*" Another manager says that "*corporate culture is important and it secures the application of ethics codes.*" An interviewee confirms the role of executives in ethics codes by "*while developing and applying ethics codes, the role of top management is extremely important.*" Contrary to the literature, we do not identify that the government, global influencers, and laws drive the use of ethics codes in Turkish companies. Despite the force of laws are not felt, one manager states that "*the laws should be considered while determining the ethics codes.*"

Table 4: Drivers of Ethics Codes

Drivers of Ethics Code Use	Number
Corporate Culture	61
Suppliers	33
Government	13
Laws	27
Market	29
Customers	57
Shareholders	15
Global Influencers	12
Competitors	30

Source: Own representation

Benefits of Ethics Codes

Regarding the benefits of ethics codes use, the interviewees mostly agree that they enhance customer relationships and supplier relationships; achieve better prices, quality and efficiency (Table 5). They fairly count increased flexibility, innovativeness, market share and effectiveness. Moreover, they almost do not consider increased assets. The representative of a hospital says that "*since we apply ethics codes, we have an improved market share.*" In line with our results, a supply chain, with joint ethical beliefs and practices, should consider the company, its suppliers and its customers through developed relationship marketing with stakeholders (Roberts-Lombard et al, 2020).

One of the managers inserts that "*ethical behavior absolutely has a positive impact on company image. Unethical behavior has a negative impact through increased negative posts in the media and therefore increases costs for the company.*" Regarding the co-operation of customers and suppliers, an interviewee commented that "*the results of ethics use especially appear in the eye of customers. If customers choose your products, you are in the right way. If you can apply ethic codes on your staff and supply chain members, you are doing it properly.*"

One other interviewee says that "*the use of ethics codes decreases the problems among chain members and the trade becomes fun.*" Another interviewee asserts that "*it's not proper to relate the responsibility of ethics code use to a chain member. All members should be careful in the use of ethics codes.*" In addition to these comments, one interviewee considers the issue more holistically and says that "*beside company-wide use of ethics codes, we need to be careful regarding the other chain members' ethics codes.*" One other interviewee asserts that "*we can check whether our suppliers' SEDEX certificates, if they have, and adapt ourselves to their codes.*" Regarding the relationship with suppliers, one interviewee asserts that "*the ethical relationship with suppliers should be according to the determined procedures, not thorough other channels.*" In terms of flexibility, we observe that Turkish companies in general do not consider flexibility as an outcome of using ethics codes. However, one interviewee says that "*after implementing ethics codes, our suppliers' satisfaction levels increases. This leads to fast interaction among us which in turn facilitates our responsiveness and flexibility.*" Turkish companies consider the quality as an outcome of ethics codes. Coherent with the literature, Turkish companies also evaluate increased supplier relationships as a benefit of ethics codes.

Table 5: Outcomes of Ethics Code Use

Outcomes of Ethics Code Use	Number
Costs	17
Customer Relationships	42
Efficiency	36
Effectiveness	22
Assets	8
Quality	31
Time	14
Innovativeness	14
Prices	36
Flexibility	12
Supplier Relationships	37
Market Share	21
Collaborations	25

Source: Own representation

Trust is another benefit which appears in the results of the interviews. Many interviewees agree the importance of trust in supply chains regarding their corporate image. One of the interviewees says that "*since we are continuously interacted with supply chain members, ethics codes are important to enhance trust among us.*"

Supply Chain Sustainability

One of the interviewees confirms the role of ethics in achieving sustainability: "*the application of ethics codes is very useful for our sustainability and long-term stability in the market.*" Another company manager says that "*use of ethics codes is among our most important principles especially in terms of economic sustainability.*"

Despite the literature provides some insignificant impacts of social values and ethics on economic performance, Turkish firms agree that they have economic sustainability after using ethics codes; interviewed companies agree that they have, to some extent, social sustainability, but, low level of environmental sustainability (Table 6).

Table 6: Sustainability after Using Ethics Codes

Sustainability Dimensions	**Number**
Economic Sustainability	47
Environmental Sustainability	24
Social Sustainability	33

Source: Own representation

5. Conclusions

This study has been planned to explore the drivers and outcomes of ethics codes use of Turkish companies regarding their supply chain sustainability. We mainly explore that (1) internally corporate culture and externally customers are most agreed drivers to employ ethics codes; (2) enhancing customer and supplier relationships; and achieving better prices, quality and efficiency are the agreed benefits of ethics codes use; and (3) Turkish firms agree that they reach economic sustainability and social sustainability, but, low level of environmental sustainability after the use of ethics codes in their supply chains.

Based on the results, we may conclude that companies recognize the demand of their customers in applying ethics codes in their supply chains. They also believe that they can apply ethics codes with the help of their organizational culture as their internal driver. They also observe that they can increase their relationships with the customers after adopting ethics codes. These relationships may help them reach economic and social responsibility but not environmental responsibility.

According to one interviewee's comments, "*forming up the ethics codes should be company-specific. These codes' efficiency and effectiveness should be enhanced through trainings.*"

We confirm him and suggest that companies should develop their ethics codes based on mainly their corporate culture. They should hire future employees in order to support the expected climate. They should also consider their suppliers and customers while developing their ethics codes. Therefore, it is expected that they will enhance company benefits and achieve sustainability in their supply chains.

The results imply that companies better improve their relationships with the customers to recognize their vulnerability while developing ethics codes. Moreover, they should organize training programs for their staff to overcome the barriers for developing and running ethics codes. Also, they should hire qualified employers capable of behaving in line with the established ethical climate.

Given that the literature explores drivers and outcomes of ethical codes in developed countries. However, there is weak evidence in Turkish literature about ethics in supply chains. This study holistically explores the drivers and outcomes of ethics codes use of Turkish companies regarding their supply chain sustainability.

Since the adoption rate of ethics codes is weak in developing economies, it is crucial to understand their considerations. Turkish literature weak in providing details about ethics codes in supply chains. This study is among the few studies regarding the use of ethics codes in supply chain sustainability in Turkey. Therefore, we expect that this research will be beneficial especially for Turkish research and economic entities.

Although the work may confirm the generally accepted principles related to ethics use in supply chains, it is among the few works accomplished in Turkey. Since the literature needs some fundamental research from Turkish supply chain components, we aim to provide a holistic view of this developing economy.

This study is limited in that it has a generic picture of ethics codes use in Turkish supply chains. It evaluates the supply chain as a whole. Therefore, it does not consider specific industries or specific members (e.g. suppliers, producers, etc.) of supply chains. We expect that future studies may use the findings of this study to further examine different aspects of Turkish supply chains.

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THE ROLE OF BUILT HERITAGE IN SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT- KEY FACTORS IN SPATIAL PLANNING OF RURAL AREAS

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Abstract: This research paper's main objective is to present the current status of the residential Built settlement in the rural areas of Chettinard region in Tamil Nadu, a state rich in heritage, religious, and cultural aspects in India. The research paper also correlates to the traces of the human life (socio-cultural and economic) and communities' perception towards built heritage in Rural areas. For this purpose, the studies have been conducted on two of its villages which have been recommended as a heritage-village by the state government in UNESCO's tentative list. In this study, a mixed study approach is followed using both visual survey and questionnaire survey as the study tools. The main objectives of this study were to determine the public reaction towards the conceptual framework to be designed for an ideal sustainable heritage-based village. Secondly, through the empirical and quantitative data analysis to capture the hurdles and identify the gaps that affect the resident's understanding and their perception in developing their villages. The paper also uses GIS as a software tool for a better understanding and cataloguing of the built heritage in a holistic manner.

Keywords: Rural Heritage, Vernacular architecture, Community Participation, Human Perception, Settlement pattern

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I. Introduction

The influence of architecture and built structures lies in its ability to shape human understanding and community togetherness. The architecture and the built form greatly impact the perception of the observers and the residents. Human experiences are varied and are subjective towards different people which become rather difficult to quantify [1]. Conservation and protection of a settlement and understanding the values practiced by the local community helps in preserving the heritage character of rural areas [2]. Many reasons resulted towards the disappearance of heritage villages, except for urbanization, such as out-migration of the youth for a better job, a requirement for more quality living conditions which the current conditions of these villages cannot offer. Heritage village settlement layout can't match the ever-growing traffic congestions, villager lack of consciousness and awareness towards protection have resulted towards the deterioration of these villages [3]. Historical buildings commonly face neglect for long years, out of repair, and lack of basic living facilities. Especially in the needy area these problems are magnified [4]. While protecting these heritage villages unlike protecting the cultural heritage, needs constant consideration of the residents and the community [5]. The core objective of preserving the village architecture is to keep a community spirit and activity. Along with the architectural fabric of the settlement, it is also very crucial to preserve the overall landscape of the villages, to create a holistic ambience. It is the core landscape that reflects the functionality and cultural attributes of the local landscape. Rural areas are the cusp of heritage, culture, and tradition which should be cultivated towards creating a sustainable model. (Wei, 2015)

II. Importance of rural heritage in sustainable rural development

The built heritage is the most important parameter that can be considered for the development and transition in rural areas because it has a probability to influence people's perspective (Courtney, 2006). Heritage can also become a catalyst for the future development and sustainability of a village settlement. It is also indicated in certain researches that while enhancing the heritage character of a village, a framework can be devised for people who live in rural zones to make them an integral part of the development process. Additionally, the framework aims to give rural areas a positive, renewed image and to develop a trend for migrating the youth back into these rural areas. It is also indicated that cultural meanings and construction assets such as vernacular construction techniques can be mobilized for rural and regional development, and cultural identities become important for uplifting local economies (Kausar, 2010)

III. Study area

The study area focuses on the Chettinard region which is located in the southern region of Tamil Nadu in southern India. The total area is around 1,550 Kilometre, in a semi-arid plain, comprising 73 villages. These villages have been catalogued in the tentative

list of UNESCO. It has a total inhabitant of 110,000 chettiar's. Out of the 73 villages, two villages are taken as study areas for the questionnaire survey. The first village taken as a study area is Kandanur with a total population of 3500 inhabitants. The central core area of the villages comprises unique chettiar houses dating back to the 1900's. The highlight of these houses irrespective of their small size and scale is that they are richly decorated. The second villages taken for the study is Rayavaram, which comprises of 5000 inhabitants. The settlement is designed such as that the chettiar houses laid out in four zones around a Shivam temple. The residential houses are designed in Art-Deco style.

IV. Unique architectural feature -the art-deco style

Built settlement growth pattern was captured through a span of three years i.e. 2002, 2011,2019

Figure 1: *Built settlement growth pattern was captured through a span of three years i.e.*
2002, 2010,2019 with the help of GIS software

In the Chettinard region the unique architectural feature which is prevalent is the construction of the residential houses in "Art-Deco "style which is also known as "French Art-Deco Style". The features consist of heavy geometrical influence upon the facade of the houses. The houses are adorned with loud and vibrant colours along with lots of sculptures in various niches on the façade. These residences were mainly constructed in 1940's to 1950's. The architectural features represent the influence from both east and West along with their traditions contributing to the uniqueness. (Renganathan, 2018, Thirumaran, 2018, Iniyan, 2015)

The Chettiar community majorly comprised of the merchant class, because of their travels, a lot of diverse influence can be observed in their settlement layout (Pannerselvam, 2016). Their villages were designed following the principles of town planning which consists of intricate water management system, advanced structural system, streets designed in orthogonal pattern, intricate ornamentation etc. These settlements were built in harmony with Tamil traditions focusing on rectangular plots, houses with an inner courtyard spanning up to 3-4.

Parameters	Images	Architectural Features
Settlement pattern		1. Aligned with the street axis, running from the North to south
Buildings		2. Two Meter raised plinth 3. Flat roof enclosed by a balustrade 4. Double-roof system 5. Chajjas acting as sun breakers 6. Entrance of the house is towards east 7. Courtyard planning
Materials		8. Lime plaster 9. Timber (teak, rose wood, sandal wood, Burmese teak 10. Porcelain tiles

Figure 2: Showing the "Art Deco Style Houses with Intricate details.
Source: Pictures taken by the author.

V. Methodology

In the following study, questionnaire survey research is used as a study tool which proved to be a viable method for testing the perception of the community towards sustainable development. The questionnaire was then analysed in both empirical and descriptive method of analysis to catalogue the hurdles and identify the gaps as stated in Table 2 (Mahalakshmi, 2017). Overall, the study reports data gathered from over a hundred survey respondents from a convenience sampling (n=186) and serves as a preliminary attempt at bringing research into 'sharper focus' by surveying the public perception of Heritage architecture (Kesavaperumal, 2019). The survey deals with a different type of empirical observation, namely the quantification of people's subjective perceptions of heritage villages. To capture the perception and understanding of the concept of sustainability of Heritage Villages. It is also to understand the extent to which people associate with their roots which can be observed through their connection to particular built heritage. It is also observed that through the history, certain aspects of built heritage can be viewed as more or less important by the residents, community groups or generations as the association towards the past can be perceived as a personal and sentimental.

A wide spectrum of respondents was taken into account for detail understanding of their perception. Initially the house owners of their heritage residential buildings were taken into consideration. Then as the research progressed the questionnaire was also shared with the members of the local panchayat (Local governing body active at village level). Also, the response was catalogued for the various government officials working in the field of rural development in the ministry of Panchayati raj. The responses of the tourist visiting this village area was also catalogued.

Table 1 – Data collection towards the number of Heritage houses

	Kandanur	Rayavaram
Total Residential Buildings	2647	1202
Heritage Building	342	307
New Construction	2305	893
Sample Size for Survey	98	88

VI. Data collection

A comprehensive site survey was conducted for the area under study forming the historic core, combined with a detailed photo survey of the relevant components in the rural environment (Taher Tolou Del, 2020). The well documented photo survey of the elevations and places of interest facilitated a better understanding of the identified patterns and their locations. Their villages were designed and constructed following accurate and sophisticated design principles of urban planning i.e. orthogonal streets, specific water management system, technical innovation, artistic creativity an approach, etc. These settlements are also built-in harmony with the Tamil traditions of

constructing in rectangular plots, houses with an inner courtyard which often ranged around 3 or 4 courtyards.

To understand the evolution of the rural settlement and to catalogue its existence in the rural areas, the help of GIS (Geographic Information System) is taken (Toz, 2004). First, we created a base map of the spatial database of the two villages. Then we tried to attach specific attributes such as the timeline of the construction, the year of the last intervention or restorations or reconstructions over time, etc. to each vector (Yogapriya, 2018). The main objective was to identify the residential buildings which were constructed through vernacular style and which residential buildings were renovated with their material study used in construction (Rajangam, 2017). In this way it was possible to generate a number of maps that emphasize the old village system and the houses which have been abandoned by its residents. This attribute and the data base are updated in real time, and in this way the government can decide their restoration policies in a more precise way, comparing with the traditional methods. The updated data regarding the preservation and conservation status of residential houses represent an important factor in monitoring, protection and documentation of local heritage and, in the same time, offer the possibility to involve the people of local community into heritage management for a sustainable development.
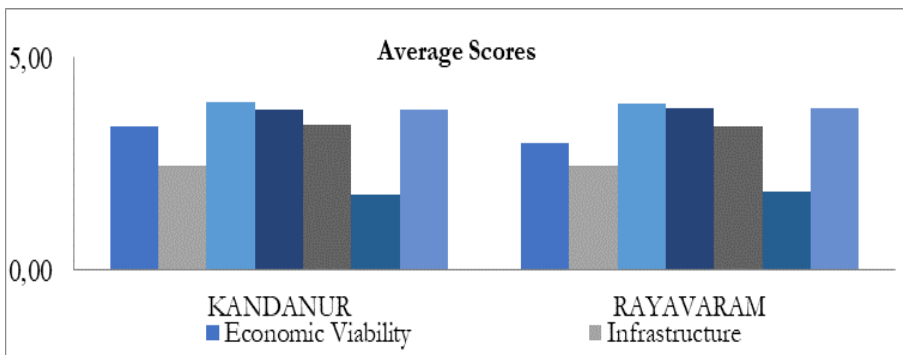
Figure 3: *Showing the analysis done comparing the parameters for heritage village of Kandanur and Rayavaram*

A detailed questionnaire survey was also conducted based on the parameters derived from the literature study. A total of 186 respondent were interviewed, 98 respondents in Kandanaur and 88 respondents in Rayavaram. A Statistical analysis is performed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. Pearson correlation was applied to see the relationship between the variables. One-way Anova followed by Tukeys HSD post-hoc test for multiple comparison was applied to see the mean difference between the villages. P-value less than 0.05 considered as significant at 95% confidence level. The statistical software SPSS version 24.0 was used in the analysis. The different parameters under which the study was initiated are 1) Economic Viability 2) Infrastructure 3)

Heritage 4) Social and cultural Character 5) Governance/ Policy framework 6) Environment 7) Settlement Pattern.

VII. Findings

Sustainable development in terms of Heritage is primarily focused on the preservation of monuments. The concept of Rural heritage preservation is unknown or rarely taken into consideration in India. while developing any policy or framework, the rich diversity in India, creates a hinderance. A common policy or framework cannot be developed due to the rich diversity in the topographical features, socio-cultural fabric, economic resources, climate differences etc. Therefore, development through preservation can be employed to build up a status of the rural areas, along with its infrastructure, services and above all its regenerating communities.
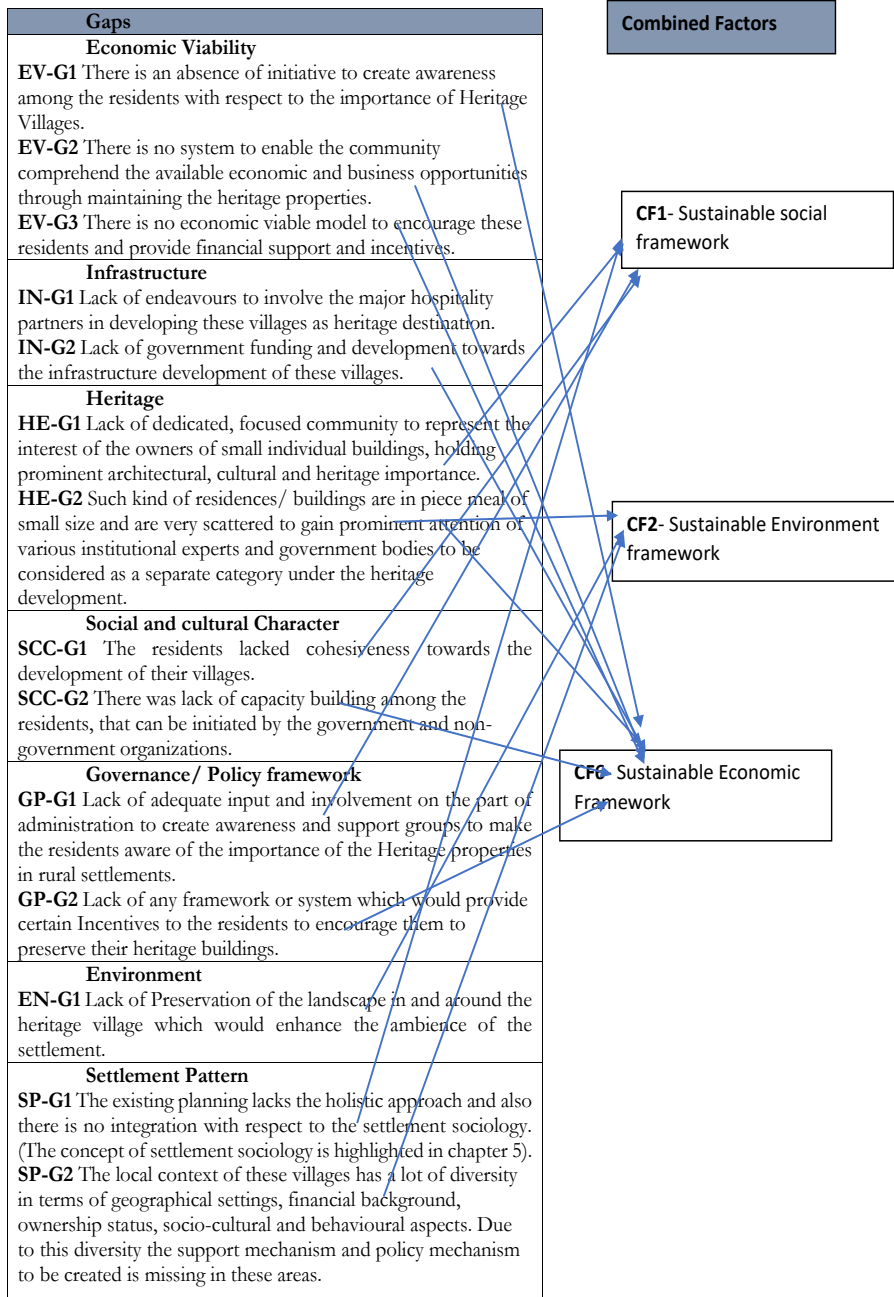
Economic, social, and environmental dimensions are accepted as the three basic pillars of sustainability on which development is formulated. The sustainability model also focuses on individual development in every aspects. Even though, sustainability is a broader term, its ability to force stakeholders such as decision makers and public authorities, to reflect on how a development is affecting the dimensions of sustainability makes it a valuable model. Heritage has a value in rural development. It supports rural sustainability dimensions and adds extra value. exploiting the potential in heritage during rural regeneration projects which would add values and support sustainability in these villages.

The major gaps identified with regard to the questionnaire survey and objectives of the research are taken into consideration. The research focuses on the different aspects as how the different parameters derived from the literature study are linked and contribute towards the research (theory, policy and practice) in the conservation of built heritage. Though this whole process of research it was to find out the issues that hindered the development of the sustainable built fabric and the factors that act as barriers in the conservation of heritage in rural settlements. The major issues arisen from the study are highlighted in table 2.

VIII. Results and discussion

By analysing the spatial distribution of the characteristics of the residential buildings we have obtained a number of historical, social, and cultural landmarks (Dicle Aydin, 2015). Thus, by linking the construction year of buildings with their inclusion in the list of historical construction over time. Most of intervention works, regardless of their complexity and nature (consolidation / restoration / renovation / repainting), were conducted with financial support from the community members (Loli, 2018). Figure 1 highlights the growth of the settlements and by cataloguing it for three years such as 2002, 2011, 2019 for Kandanur and 2002,2010,2019 for Rayavaram. They built is catalogued according to style of their construction, whether they fall under the heritage category or new construction style (Chattopadyay, 2016 and Saradi, 2016)

Table 2. Identification of the Combined factors of the Gaps

Gaps
Economic Viability
EV-G1 There is an absence of initiative to create awareness among the residents with respect to the importance of Heritage Villages.
EV-G2 There is no system to enable the community comprehend the available economic and business opportunities through maintaining the heritage properties.
EV-G3 There is no economic viable model to encourage these residents and provide financial support and incentives.
Infrastructure
IN-G1 Lack of endeavours to involve the major hospitality partners in developing these villages as heritage destination.
IN-G2 Lack of government funding and development towards the infrastructure development of these villages.
Heritage
HE-G1 Lack of dedicated, focused community to represent the interest of the owners of small individual buildings, holding prominent architectural, cultural and heritage importance.
HE-G2 Such kind of residences/ buildings are in piece meal of small size and are very scattered to gain prominent attention of various institutional experts and government bodies to be considered as a separate category under the heritage development.
Social and cultural Character
SCC-G1 The residents lacked cohesiveness towards the development of their villages.
SCC-G2 There was lack of capacity building among the residents, that can be initiated by the government and non-government organizations.
Governance/ Policy framework
GP-G1 Lack of adequate input and involvement on the part of administration to create awareness and support groups to make the residents aware of the importance of the Heritage properties in rural settlements.
GP-G2 Lack of any framework or system which would provide certain Incentives to the residents to encourage them to preserve their heritage buildings.
Environment
EN-G1 Lack of Preservation of the landscape in and around the heritage village which would enhance the ambience of the settlement.
Settlement Pattern
SP-G1 The existing planning lacks the holistic approach and also there is no integration with respect to the settlement sociology. (The concept of settlement sociology is highlighted in chapter 5).
SP-G2 The local context of these villages has a lot of diversity in terms of geographical settings, financial background, ownership status, socio-cultural and behavioural aspects. Due to this diversity the support mechanism and policy mechanism to be created is missing in these areas.

Combined Factors

CF1- Sustainable social framework

CF2- Sustainable Environment framework

CF6- Sustainable Economic Framework

IX. Conclusion

Through the descriptive and empirical analysis of the data acquired many gaps were highlighted. Through investigation it was also established that the built structures (residential houses) can play a prominent role for the development of these villages. A well preserved and of high aesthetic quality heritage-based buildings can adds value to the settlement. While analysing it was found to be major factor to attract tourist and generate economy. The architectural identity of a place can be of high importance and should definitely be preserved and maintained. These traditional settlements should be developed and encourage mainly for its cultural and its bequest value. Restoration of the heritage features of a place requires lot of financial input. Mostly it requires a holistic approach such as design proposals that will remove the hindrances and uplift its identity and reveal its hidden or lost architectural marvel. Architectural proposals inspired from the local tradition and history aiming at harmonically unite the old with the new can ensure a successful regional upliftment.

The analysis of the community perception also revealed that a lot of intervention is needed from the governments side. The local community is well developed financially and economically but lacks in public spaces for the younger generation. The infrastructure lacked the modern facility and little intervention was done by the authorities towards making these villages a tourist destination. The number of tourists coming here annually have also reduced drastically due to lack of modern facilities.

As we saw in this paper, the Geographic information systems are very useful tools in the scientific process of managing and conserving cultural heritage. These systems offer the opportunity to collect, process, review and summarize complex data on the influence of environmental (biological and physical), socio-economic and political (tax law) factors on the historical monuments and help us to identify the current conservation status of the local heritage, correlates to the traces of the human life form, to the community attitude towards the built heritage, to the natural risks etc.

Declaration of conflicting interests
The authors declare no conflicting interests.

Other compliance with ethical standards
The research focuses on visual survey, and questionnaire survey where random residents of the settlements were questioned. Their personal details are not documented for this research paper.

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