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## PECULIARITIES OF THE VALUE OF BUILT HERITAGE IN CHISINAU

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**Abstract.** Valuation of privately owned real estate included in the Register of State Protected Monuments is a serious challenge for practicing values in the Republic of Moldova. The present research highlights methodological and conceptual peculiarities concerning the value and valuation of functional buildings, which cannot be modernized in accordance with the requirements and preferences of modern society. The objectives of the research include: identification of structural changes in the value of built heritage over time; identification of problems and recommendations on how to value a specific category of real estate. The authors find a negative economic value of the analyzed category of real estate, but a positive real value (especially market value). The peculiarities of the value of the land and the value of the building recognized as a national monument are highlighted. The influence of the value of the land on the value of the real estate and the structure of the value of the monument of local importance are illustrated.

**Keywords:** *economic value, cultural value, valuation, real estate, property rights.*

**Rezumat.** Evaluarea bunurilor imobile aflate în proprietate privată incluse în Registrul monumentelor ocrotite de stat este o provocare serioasă pentru evaluatorii practicieni din Republica Moldova. Prezenta cercetare scoate în evidență particularități metodologice și conceptuale privind valoarea și evaluarea clădirilor funcționale, care nu pot fi modernizate în conformitate cu cerințele și preferințele societății moderne. Obiectivele cercetării cuprind: identificarea modificării structurale în timp a valorii patrimoniului construit; identificarea problemelor și recomandarea modalității de evaluare a unei categorii specifice de bunuri imobile. Autorii constată valoare economică negativă a categoriei de bunuri imobile analizate, însă o valoare reală (în particular valoare de piață) pozitivă. Sunt scoase în evidență particularitățile valorii bunului imobil și valorii construcției recunoscute monument național. Este exemplificată influența valorii terenului asupra valorii bunului imobil și structura valorii bunului imobil monument de importanță locală.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *valoare economică, valoare culturală, evaluare, bun imobil, drept de proprietate.*

## 1. Introducere

Din punctul de vedere al evaluării economice, proprietățile vechi sunt bunuri ale patrimoniului istoric, cultural și/sau arhitectural, care pot beneficia de protecție legală sau statutară reieșind din importanța lor culturală și economică [1]. Aceste bunuri imobiliare sunt recunoscute de o comisie guvernamentală ca având semnificație istorică sau culturală. Proprietățile date sunt de obicei asociate cu patru caracteristici: 1) importanța lor istorică, culturală și/sau arhitecturală; 2) protecția juridică pe care o primesc; 3) limitări și constrângeri privind utilizarea, transformarea și transferul acestora; 4) cerința de a fi accesibile publicului.

În Republica Moldova statutul proprietăților istorice este recunoscut fie prin includerea în Registrul monumentelor ocrotite de stat [2], fie prin includerea în Registrul monumentelor locale [3]. Mai mult de jumătate (cca 53%) din numărul monumentelor ocrotite de stat sunt amplasate la nordul țării, iar cca 40% în centru, Tabelul 1.

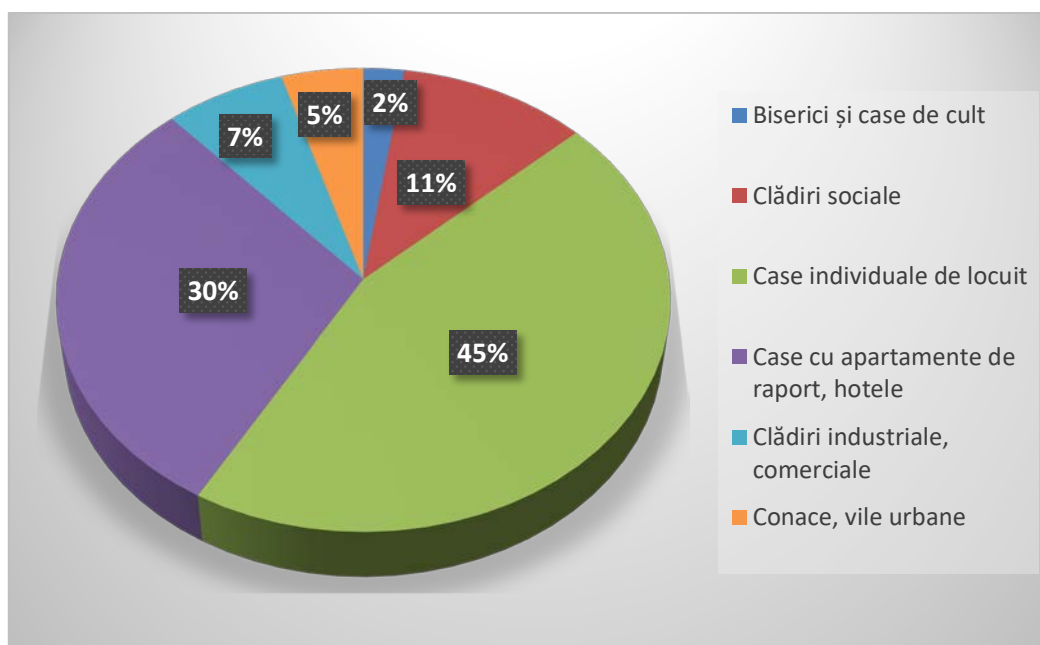
Tabelul 1

**Monumente incluse în Registrul monumentelor ocrotite de stat în profil regional la 13.01.2014**

Locația Zona de Dezvoltare	Total	Inclusiv:		Inclusiv:		Ponderea în total, %
		De importanță națională	De importanță locală	Arheologie	Arhitectură / Istorie / Artă	
CENTRU	2276	2030	246	867	1409	39,95
NORD	3005	2034	971	1764	1241	52,75
SUD	416	287	129	59	357	7,30
TOTAL	5697	4351	1346	2690	3007	100

Sursa: elaborat de autori în baza [2].

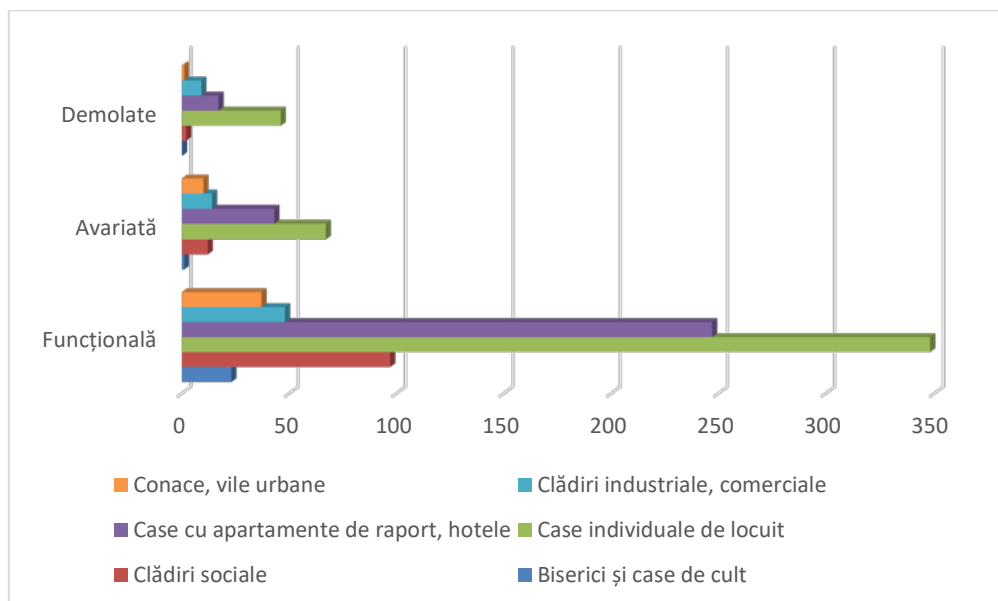
În orașul Chișinău, sunt amplasate compact cca 821 monumente construite din care mai mult de jumătate sunt cu destinație locativă (Figura 1), iar cca 22% din acestea sunt în stare avariata sau deja demolate, Figura 2.



**Figura 1.** Structura patrimoniului construit amplasat în Chișinău

Sursa: elaborat de autor în baza [2, 3].

Din anul 1993, centrul capitalei Republicii Moldova este recunoscut ca monument de categorie națională cu denumirea oficială „Nucleul istoric al Chișinăului” în Registrul monumentelor protejate al Republicii Moldova. Granițele centrului au fost definite astfel încât să cuprindă zona în care orașul și-a luat naștere și a crescut până în 1812, precum și unele porțiuni din teritoriul ocupat de oraș la începutul secolului al XX-lea.



**Figura 2.** Starea fizică a patrimoniului construit amplasat în mun. Chișinău.

*Sursa: elaborat de autori.*

Un număr considerabil al clădirilor istorice se află în proprietate privată, concomitent fiind amplasate pe terenuri din proprietate publică. După cum este prezentat în Figura 3, suprafața de teren în proprietate privată și aflată sub jurisdicția administrației publice locale (APL) (ilustrată în violet și galben) reprezintă aproape 50% din suprafața totală a Centrului Istoric al orașului Chișinău. De obicei, aceste terenuri din jurisdicția APL conțin construcții proprietate privată a persoanelor fizice și/sau persoanelor juridice. În majoritatea situațiilor proprietarii nu posedă mijloace financiare pentru a păstra construcțiile în stare autentică.



**Figura 3.** Patrimoniul construit conform drepturilor de proprietate asupra terenului în Centrul Istoric al or. Chișinău [4].



Concomitent în or. Chișinău, pe lângă clădiri cu valoare arhitecturală (Figura 4), constatăm un număr mare de obiective a căror elemente de valoare arhitecturală au fost distruse (Figura 5), precum și clădiri doar cu valoare istorică și culturală (Figurile 6, 7). În nucleul istoric putem observa și clădiri edificate din lut sau pământ, fără temelie, consolidarea cărora este dificilă sau uneori imposibilă la condițiile cerințelor actuale.



str. Alexei Mateevici, 72. Monument de arhitectură de importanță națională, construit în perioada anilor 1902–1903.

*Sursa: elaborat de autori.*



Str. Alexandru cel Bun, 36. Monument de arhitectură de importanță locală, edificat la mijlocul sec. XIX.

*Sursa: elaborat de autori.*

**Figura 4.** Monumente cu valoare arhitecturală.



a)



b)

Str. Avram Iancu 29. Monument de arhitectură de importanță locală (cu fațade în stil neoclasic), construit în jumătatea întâi a sec. XIX.

**Figura 5.** Monument cu valoarea arhitecturală pierdută în urma intervențiilor: a) starea curentă; b) starea în 2008 [5].



a)



b)

Str. Alexandru cel bun 27/a și b. Monument de arhitectură de importanță locală, edificat în partea a doua a secolului XIX.

**Figura 6.** Monument cu valoare istorică și culturală: a) Starea curentă; b) starea în 2008 [5].



**Figura 7.** Casă în care a locuit atletul Ivan Zaikin (monument de arhitectură de importanță locală), edificată în primii ani a secolului XX. Starea curentă.

*Sursa: elaborat de autori.*

În conformitate cu Codului Civil al Republicii Moldova [6], ediția curentă, „*bun imobil se consideră terenul înregistrat în registrul bunurilor imobile sub număr cadastral distinct*” (art.459 aliniatul 2), iar clădirile și construcțiile subterane reprezintă parte componentă a imobilului în calitate de „*lucruri și lucrări atașate permanent de teren*” (art. 460 aliniatul 1). Această definiție conceptuală a fost adoptată în 2019, varianta anterioară în contextul rigorilor istorice a permis situația prin care dreptul de proprietate asupra terenului poate aparține unei persoane, iar asupra construcțiilor - altei persoane fizice sau juridice, privată sau publică în orice combinație.

Recent a fost aprobat Codul urbanismului și construcțiilor [7] cu intrarea în vigoare pe 30 ianuarie 2025. Codul cuprinde reglementări și restricții pentru clădirile cu statut de monument național și local înscrise în Registrul monumentelor din Republica Moldova protejate de stat, precum și pentru cele situate în zonele de protecție a monumentelor. Astfel, conform art.253 se interzice a efectua lucrări de modificare a aspectului arhitectural al construcțiilor (fațade, elemente de tâmplărie exterioare, acoperiș).

Ministerul Culturii al Republicii Moldova a aprobat în anul 2021 un instrument de informare primară numit „*Ghid de intervenții asupra clădirilor istorice din Chișinău*” pentru a ajuta proprietarii de clădiri istorice, specialiștii și factorii de decizie în selectarea soluțiilor și abordărilor adecvate de conservare. În plus Ministerul a aprobat, în 2022 metodologia de elaborare a unui instrument considerat esențial pentru crearea de politici și strategii locale eficiente în managementul și dezvoltarea durabilă a localităților istorice. Acest instrument cuprinde planul de referință istorico-arhitectural și proiectul pentru zonele de protecție a localităților istorice [9]. Acest fapt va conduce nu doar la păstrarea monumentelor, dar și la încetinirea dezvoltării nucleului istoric.

Drepturile asupra bunului imobil, precum și diferențierea drepturilor pe părțile componente ale acestuia, dar și interdicțiile procedurale și reglementările tehnice influențează direct valoarea economică a patrimoniului construit.

## **2. Structura valorii drepturilor asupra bunurilor imobile - patrimoniu cultural**

Proprietățile istorice (bunuri imobile recunoscute obiecte de patrimoniu istoric, cultural, arhitectural) cuprind diferite categorii de bunuri imobiliare. Unele au fost restaurate integral, altele restaurate parțial (cum ar fi doar fațada), iar altele nu au fost restaurate deloc. Unele proprietăți au fost parțial adaptate la standardele actuale, în timp ce altele au fost modernizate pe scară largă. Cu toate acestea, toate proprietățile istorice au un anumit nivel de caracter istoric.

Valoarea bunurilor imobile, conform practicii mondiale [10-14] și naționale [15] este estimată prin trei abordări, din trei puncte de vedere asupra valorii: abordarea prin piață, abordarea costurilor și abordarea veniturilor. Clădirile istorice pot fi evaluate folosind metodele din cadrul abordărilor respective, atâta timp cât caracteristicile și specificul metodelor se vor respecta, se vor lua în considerație materialele utilizate în construcțiile vechi, eficiența și performanța actuală a clădirilor istorice în comparație cu bunurile moderne, precum și considerarea caracterului adecvat al metodelor de reparare / restaurare sau restaurare / reabilitare a elementelor constructive și de decor a clădirilor, precum și amploarea protecțiilor legale sau statutare pe care le au.

Valoarea reală a patrimoniului cultural construit, după cum s-a demonstrat în cercetările noastre anterioare [16], se va determina (1) prin metoda actualizării veniturilor, dacă există suficientă informație pentru aplicarea acestei metode; sau (2) prin determinarea sumei valorii economice și a valorii culturale/arhitecturale a construcției. Metodologia propusă permite a estima valoarea construcției plus valoarea terenului ocupat de aceasta (suprafața terenului considerat este egală cu suprafața construcției la sol), cu alte cuvinte, permite estimarea valorii dreptului de proprietate asupra construcției.

Considerând prevederile definerii din Codul Civil al Republicii Moldova urmează a evalua drepturile depline de proprietate asupra bunului imobil. Astfel, valoarea bunului imobil trebuie determinată prin considerarea valorii întregului lot de teren „înregistrat în registrul bunurilor imobile sub număr cadastral distinct”. Rezultă că valoarea bunului imobil poate fi reprezentată astfel:

$$Vb.i. = Vt + Vp.c. = Vt + VE + VCA \quad (1)$$

unde:  $Vb.i.$  – valoarea bunului imobil;  $Vt$  – valoarea terenului;  $Vp.c.$  – valoarea de piață a clădirii;  $VE$  - valoarea economică a clădirii;  $VCA$  – valoarea culturală / arhitecturală a clădirii;

Prin urmare, în timp structura valorii bunului imobil recunoscut patrimoniu național se modifică, Figura 8. Dacă până în momentul  $m_0$  valoarea construcției se diminuează preponderent sub influența factorilor fizici (uzura fizică) și modificării preferințelor consumatorilor, apariției tehnologiilor și materialelor noi (deprecierea funcțională). Apoi, în momentul includerii bunului imobil în Registrul monumentelor, valoarea economică se diminuează brusc. Această diminuare este condiționată de restricțiile cu privire la reparația, reconstrucția, modernizarea clădirii. În urma lucrărilor de restaurare, reabilitare și includere în circuitul economic valoarea economică va crește. Concomitent este recunoscută oficial valoarea culturală, care capătă o expresie bănească și în timp doar crește.

Valoarea lotului de teren, în conjunctura legislativă actuală, de asemenea, se va modifica la momentul înscrierii clădirii în Registrul monumentelor protejate de stat sau în registrele monumentelor istorice de însemnătate locală. Acest fapt este condiționat de prevederile articolelor 79 și 87 a Codului urbanismului și construcțiilor conform cărora „Amplasarea unor noi construcții pe terenurile adiacente monumentelor istorice și în zonele de protecție ale acestora se efectuează respectând documentația de urbanism aprobată și cu prevederile legislației în domeniul protejării patrimoniului cultural și arheologic” și „Autorizarea execuției construcțiilor pe terenurile din zonele protejate se efectuează în baza documentației de urbanism și de amenajare a teritoriului, conform prevederilor Codului urbanismului și construcțiilor și ale legislației cu privire la patrimoniul natural, cultural și construit protejate de stat”.

Restricțiile urbanistice și tehnice impuse de legislația în domeniul protejării patrimoniului cultural va influența direct valoarea terenului.



dezacordul respondenților cu alternativă expusă spre alegere din chestionar; pentru anumite caracteristici ale bunului imobil valorile așteptate pot avea o credibilitate redusă. În mare parte, această formă de evaluare depinde și de situația financiară a respondenților, precum și de faptul dacă întrebarea este pusă ca: 1) o dorință de a accepta; sau 2) o dorință de a plăti. Dorința de a accepta are o probabilitate de rating mai mare, datorită efectului de renunțare, care este estimat mai înalt decât efectul unui câștig.

Un alt grup de metode recomandate pentru evaluarea patrimoniului cultural cuprinde modalitățile de transformare a indicatorilor economici (costuri, beneficii) în valoare. Ne referim la metodele: cost-beneficiu, costul de transport, metoda valorii monetare [18]. Al treilea grup de metode se axează pe analiza pieței imobiliare, inclusiv a construcțiilor noi. Ne referim la metodele: prețuri hedonice; valorii de înlocuire; valorii de reconstituire (producția repetată).

Metodele incluse în aceste grupuri de asemenea posedă un șir de dificultăți în aplicare, precum imposibilitatea aplicării metodelor din al doilea grup în caz că clădirea nu generează venit și nu este inclusă în circuitul economic (inclusiv turistic); imposibilitatea aplicării metodelor din al treilea grup în cazul lipsei pieței imobiliare sau existența unei piețe rudimentare, nedezvoltate.

Prin urmare, în funcție de situația concretă, evaluatorilor practicieni li se recomandă [19-21] estimarea valorii culturale, arhitecturale prin metoda analizei comparative a vânzărilor, prin metoda datelor secundare (pentru zone compacte) și prin metodele practice în evaluarea obiectelor de proprietate intelectuală: metoda excedentului de profit, metoda eliberării de royalty sau metoda expert.

### **3. Particularități a valorii economice pentru unele categorii de bunuri imobile**

Cercetările anterioare ale autorilor au demonstrat necesitatea reexaminării clădirilor din Registrul monumentelor protejate de stat și clasificării clădirilor pornind de la starea fizică a bunurilor imobile aflate în proprietate privată în vederea: 1) excluderii din Registrul monumentelor istorice (sau includerea parafei „lipsă”) în cazul în care construcția a fost demolată, iar pe acel teren s-a construit o nouă clădire; 2) identificarea situațiilor, pentru care se admite construcția noilor clădiri cu condiția păstrării sau restaurării fațadei autentice a clădirii vechi – în caz că clădirea este ruinată și există doar unele elemente a acesteia; 3) identificarea situațiilor, pentru care se permite doar reconstrucția clădirii – fără modificarea tehnico-arhitecturală; 4) identificarea clădirilor, pentru care se permite reconstrucția / reabilitarea cu modificarea parțială a unor indicatori tehnico-arhitecturali.

De asemenea, autorii au propus modalitatea de evaluare a patrimoniului construit care se află în stare funcțională [16, pp. 75-85]. Însă, în această categorie de clădiri putem identifica construcții a căror utilizare este inefficientă din punct de vedere economic. Ne referim la clădirile ce nu dispun de valoare arhitecturală, ce au fost construite din lut sau pământ, unde lipsește fundația, iar reabilitarea funcțională a acestora este imposibilă sau problematică în condițiile cerințelor curente.

Pentru astfel de clădiri (proprietate privată, fără valoare arhitecturală, imposibilitatea modernizării funcționale) expresia monetară a VCA este determinată doar de amplasare, iar VE adesea este negativă. Drept urmare, pentru astfel de bunuri imobile valoarea de piață este determinată preponderent de valoarea terenului.

Spre exemplu, valoarea de reconstituire a „apartamentului la sol” cu suprafața de 35,9 m<sup>2</sup> (parte din clădirea considerată monument de importanță locală construită în anul

1918 cu suprafața totală pe perimetrul interior de 289 m<sup>2</sup>) cu o cameră, bucatărie, nod sanitar și antreu constituie 24.000 euro. Deprecierea fizică determinată: prin metoda expert constituie 35%; prin metoda normativă în baza vârstei cronologice – 57%.

Deprecierea funcțională a fost determinată prin capitalizarea pierderilor din chirie. Au fost analizate ofertele de chirie a apartamentelor analogice amplasate în Centrul istoric în clădiri vechi (sf. sec. XIX - încep. sec. XX) și clădiri noi (sec. XXI). În urma calculelor deprecierea funcțională constituie cca 16400 euro sau 68,5% din valoarea de reconstituire a obiectului evaluării. Prin urmare, valoarea economică a construcției (apartamentului) considerând uzura fizică și deprecierea funcțională este negativă. Însă, analiza pieței indică că apartamentele amplasate în clădirile vechi din Centrul istoric sunt oferite pe piață cu 673 euro/m<sup>2</sup> – 1100 euro/ m<sup>2</sup> în funcție de starea fizică a clădirii și tipul reparației interioare a apartamentului.

A fost realizată o analiză comparativă a chiriei pentru apartamentele cu o odaie din clădirile noi amplasate în Centrul istoric și la periferia acestuia în sectorul administrativ Centru. S-a constatat o diferență lunară în medie de cca 240 euro. Astfel influența amplasării determinată prin metoda capitalizării surplusului de venit datorat amplasării în Centrul istoric a obiectului evaluării constituie cca. 26400 euro. Valoarea dreptului deplin asupra terenului (doar a cotei ce revine obiectului evaluării) estimată prin analiza comparației directe constituie 33500 euro.

Astfel, în termenii indicați în figura 2:  $V_t = 33500$  euro,  $VE = - 800$  euro,  $VCA = 26400$  euro. Prin urmare, valoarea bunului imobil cu dreptul de proprietate privată (teren cu construcție) constituie 59100 euro, iar în caz că terenul aparține municipalității valoarea construcției aflate în proprietate privată constituie maxim 25600 euro. În cazul examinat, terenul valorează cu 30% mai mult decât construcția considerată monument național, iar valoarea dreptului deplin asupra bunului imobil structural este formată din 57% valoarea terenului și 43% valoarea construcției.

#### 4. Discuții și limitări

Evaluarea bunurilor imobile aflate în proprietate privată incluse în Registrul monumentelor ocrotite de stat este o provocare serioasă pentru evaluatorii practicieni din Republica Moldova. În Centrul istoric a orașului Chișinău există multe bunuri imobile asupra cărora dreptul de proprietate este diferențiat pe componentele fizice. Ca regulă, dreptul asupra terenului aparține administrației publice locale sau centrale, iar dreptul asupra construcției aparține unei sau câtorva persoane fizice (sau juridice). În această situație valoarea dreptului privat asupra bunului considerat patrimoniu național nu va cuprinde valoarea lotului de teren aferent.

În cazul legiferării drepturilor parțiale asupra terenului aferent, valoarea acestor drepturi urmează a fi estimată separat.

În cazul evaluării bunului imobil (sau a încăperilor izolate) cu mai multe construcții aflate în proprietate privată, urmează a fi considerat dreptul deplin asupra construcției (încăperilor izolate) și doar dreptul fracționat, de folosință, asupra terenului, care se află în folosința comună a vecinilor.

O atenție deosebită urmează de atras modalității de aplicare a metodologiei de evaluare. Unii evaluatori practicieni nu aplică abordarea prin cost în cadrul evaluării bunurilor imobile cu o vârstă avansată argumentând prin faptul că vârsta cronologică a depășit durata de viață normativă respectiv metoda cheltuielilor nu oferă o indicație corectă

asupra valorii. Se invocă faptul că rezultatele căpătate prin diferite abordări nu se încadrează în intervalul de toleranță acceptabil și este suficientă aplicarea abordării prin piață. În prezentul studiu am demonstrat posibilitatea utilizării abordării prin cost, necesitatea și modalitatea considerării particularităților bunului imobil în procesul evaluării.

Aplicarea corectă a abordării prin cost este necesară în diverse situații practice, ea devine primordială în cazul apariției litigiilor judiciare (spre exemplu încălcarea normativelor de construcții pe terenurile vecine cu impact asupra obiectului evaluării), dar și în cazul evaluării bunurilor imobile cu drept de proprietate diferențiat pe componentele fizice.

Merită de atras atenție asupra faptului că clădirile de patrimoniu amplasate în Centrul istoric al orașului Chișinău nu posedă depreciere economică dar posedă valoare culturală condiționată primordial de amplasarea acestora.

## 5. Concluzii

Anterior înregistrării clădirilor în calitate de bun de patrimoniu național, valoarea acestora se diminuează preponderent sub influența factorilor fizici (uzura fizică) și modificării preferințelor consumatorilor, apariției tehnologiilor și materialelor noi (deprecierea funcțională). Apoi, în momentul includerii bunului imobil în Registrul monumentelor, valoarea economică se diminuează brusc. Această diminuare este condiționată de restricțiile cu privire la reparația, reconstrucția, restaurarea sau modernizarea clădirii. În urma lucrărilor de restaurare, reabilitare și includere în circuitul economic valoarea economică va crește. Concomitent, în momentul includerii în Registrul monumentelor, este recunoscută valoarea culturală a clădirii / construcției, care în timp doar crește.

Valoarea bunului imobil (în definiția Codului Civil al Republicii Moldova) patrimoniu național este compusă din valoarea economică, valoarea culturală / arhitecturală a clădirii și valoarea terenului.

În cazul clădirilor de patrimoniu (fără valoare arhitecturală), care nu pot fi (nu se permite din considerente tehnice) modernizate funcțional valoarea economică adesea este negativă, iar valoarea culturală este determinată doar de amplasarea bunului imobil. Valoarea terenului, pentru această categorie de bunuri imobile, prevalează asupra valorii construcției.

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## A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF HEMP (*CANNABIS SATIVA L.*) USE: SCIENTIFIC, LEGISLATIVE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS

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**Abstract.** *Cannabis sativa L.* culture has encountered various legislative challenges throughout history, and these have varied according to the social, political and economic context of each period. Historical stigma and prohibitions brought restrictions on cannabis, and anti-drug and prohibition policies adopted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to the prohibition of the cultivation of *Cannabis sativa L.* Its incorrect association with drugs of abuse and its classification as a narcotic substance complicated the legislation. Problems in differentiating between recreational and medical use have created confusion in law. Global inconsistency in cannabis rules and regulations has created difficulties in international trade and research cooperation. The recent evolution of legislation, marked by ambiguities and inconsistencies regarding the medical, industrial, and food use of cannabis, has raised questions and challenges. Production and marketing issues, such as strict regulations and licensing hurdles affect the cannabis industry in the Republic of Moldova too. These challenges are constantly changing, reflecting the diversity of perspectives and societal developments.

**Keywords:** *Industrial hemp, Cannabis sativa L., Cannabis indica, marijuana, legislation, convention, food, economy.*

**Abstract.** Cultura de *Cannabis sativa L.* a întâmpinat diverse provocări în domeniul legislativ pe parcursul istoriei, iar acestea au variat în funcție de contextul social, politic și economic al fiecărei perioade. Stigmatizarea și interdicții istorice au adus restricții asupra canabisului, iar politici antidrog și prohibiție, adoptate în secolul al XX-lea, au dus la interzicerea culturii de *Cannabis sativa L.* Asocierea incorectă cu drogurile de abuz și clasificarea sa drept substanță narcotică au complicat legislația. Problemele în diferențierea între utilizarea recreațională și cea medicală au generat confuzii în legislația. Incoerența la nivel global în privința normelor și reglementărilor privind canabisul a creat dificultăți în comerțul internațional și cooperarea în cercetare. Progresul recent al legislației, caracterizat prin ambiguități și inconsecvențe în privința utilizării medicale, industriale și alimentare a canabisului, a generat dileme și dificultăți semnificative. Problemele legate de producție și comercializare, precum norme stricte și obstacole de licențiere afectează industria canabisului și în Republica Moldova. Aceste provocări sunt în continuă schimbare, reflectând diversitatea de perspective și evoluțiile societale.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Câneapă industrială, Cannabis sativa L., Cannabis indica, marijuana, legislație, convenție, alimentație, economie.*

## 1. Introducere

De-a lungul istoriei, cânepa industrială (*Cannabis sativa* L.) a reprezentat o sursă tradițională de hrană în Europa, influențând diverse culturi din întreaga lume [1]. Semințele de cânepă, datorită conținutului lor bogat în proteine, acizi grași esențiali și alți nutrienți, au reprezentat o sursă tradițională și valoroasă de hrană [2]. Diverse componente ale plantei de cânepă, inclusiv frunzele, florile și extractele, au fost utilizate de-a lungul secolelor ca surse nutritive și suplimente alimentare [3,4]. Cânepa a adus diversitate culinară, cu frunzele și florile sale utilizate pentru a îmbogăți aromele și nutrienții diferitelor preparate [5,6]. Înainte de Revoluția Industrială, uleiul de cânepă obținut din *Cannabis sativa* L. s-a remarcat ca unul dintre cele mai consumate uleiuri vegetale, contribuind la răspândirea utilizării extractelor de cânepă și a canabinoidelor [7].

Mai multe țări europene, printre care Italia, Germania, Lituania, Polonia, Suedia și Slovacia, au documentat pe larg beneficiile pentru sănătate asociate consumului de cânepă (*Cannabis sativa* L.) [8,9]. Cercetările indică faptul că cânepa deține proprietăți antioxidante, antiinflamatoare și neuroprotectoare [10,11]. De asemenea, studiile au demonstrat potențialul său de reducere a simptomelor asociate anxietății, depresiei și durerilor cronice [12]. De-a lungul timpului, cânepa a fost percepută și ca o sursă durabilă de hrană, fiind o cultură agricolă rezistentă la secetă și insecte [13,14]. Prin intermediul fitoremedierii, absorbției metalelor grele, creșterii biomasei, rotației culturilor și redresării solurilor degradate, *Cannabis sativa* L. se dovedește a fi o resursă valoroasă pentru combaterea poluării solului și pentru îmbunătățirea calității mediului înconjurător [15]. Utilizarea rațională și sustenabilă a acestei plante poate aduce beneficii semnificative în domeniul protecției mediului și al conservării resurselor naturale [16].

Popularitatea culturii s-a dezvoltat în regiunile temperate, în principal datorită potrivirii sale pentru producția de fibre textile și sfori. În schimb, adoptarea sa în regiunile tropicale este limitată într-o anumită măsură din cauza randamentelor mai scăzute în acele condiții. Cânepa, împreună cu inul, reprezintă una dintre cele mai vechi fibre naturale utilizate de către oameni [17].

În ciuda importanței istorice și a diverselor aplicații, planta *Cannabis sativa* L. a întâmpinat multiple provocări [18,19]. Convenția Unică a Organizației Națiunilor Unite (ONU) a clasificat în mod incorect cânepa industrială, alături de floarea de *Cannabis indica* (marijuana), ca o substanță narcotică, generând confuzii de-a lungul timpului [20,21]. Această clasificare eronată a creat obstacole în special la cultivarea plantelor de cannabis [22,23]. Sectorul industrial al cânepii (*Cannabis sativa* L.) a întâmpinat obstacole semnificative din cauza procedurilor de licențiere complicate, a reglementărilor neclare la nivelul Uniunii Europene (UE) și național referitoare la produsele alimentare derivate din cânepă și a complexităților suplimentare ale reglementărilor [24,25]. Subiectul principal al acestui studiu constă în analiza aspectelor importante, procedurilor și provocărilor asociate *Cannabis sativa* L. în contextul legislației europene și naționale, investigând evoluția acesteia.

## 2. Materiale și metode

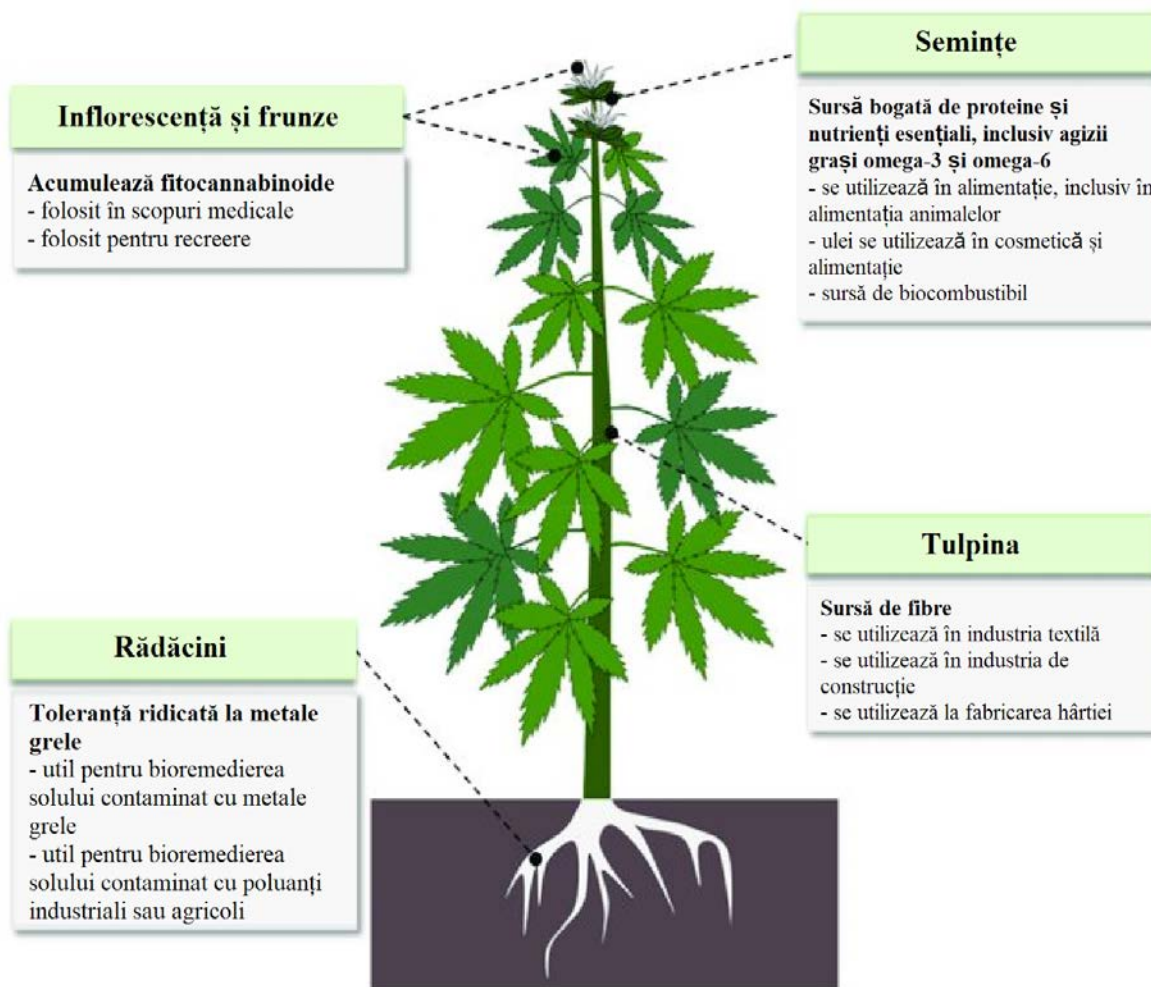
Obiectele acestui studiu au fost Legi, Hotărâri de Guvern, Convenții și publicațiile ce analizează aspecte importante legate de *Cannabis sativa* L. în contextul legislației europene și naționale, publicațiile științifice ale autorilor străini din domeniul agricol și industrial în vederea cultivării și utilizării cânepii în medicină, industria alimentară etc. Au fost căutate

studii publicate în ultimile 15 ani în PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Science Direct și surse deschise de pe internet, folosind mai multe combinații de cuvinte cheie, incluzând următoarele: *Cannabis sativa* L., agricultură, cultivarea cânepii, legislație, impactul social, potențial funcțional și terapeutic, compoziția chimică cânepii, economie, dezvoltare durabilă.

### 3. Rezultate și discuții

#### 3.1. Utilizări tradiționale și constituenți fitochimici ale cânepii (*Cannabis sativa* L.)

Cânepa industrială, denumită științific *Cannabis sativa* L., este o plantă cu frunze verzi, cultivată de mii de ani în regiuni precum Asia Centrală, cu India și China fiind printre primele locuri de cultivare [26–28]. Încă de pe vremea strămoșilor noștri, *Cannabisul sativa* L. a fost utilizat pentru diverse scopuri, inclusiv ca sursă de fibre pentru textile, alimente, uleiuri și medicamente [29]. Mai mult decât atât, această plantă a fost parte integrantă a practicilor religioase și recreative ale diferitelor culturi de-a lungul istoriei [30]. Compușii activi din punct de vedere chimic din cânepă includ o gamă variată de substanțe, precum canabinoizi, terpenoizi, flavonoizi și alcaloizi [31]. Printre acești compuși, canabinoizii sunt cei mai importanți, fiind clasificați ca terpenofenoli și fiind concentrați în principal în tricomuri, găsite în special pe florile femele ale plantei [32]. Dintre cei peste 100 de canabinoizi descoperiți până în prezent, cel mai cunoscut și mai puternic este trans- $\Delta$ -9-tetrahydrocannabinol (D9-THC), cunoscut mai ales pentru efectele sale psihoactive [33–35].



**Figura 1.** Posibilități de valorificare a plantei *Cannabis sativa* L. [21].

Primele comunități umane care au renunțat la stilul lor nomad și au adoptat o viață mai așezată au început să cultive *Cannabis sativa* L. [36]. Aceste grupuri au fost printre primii agricultori care au început să dezvolte soiuri variate de plante, selectând și cultivând specii care ofereau o gamă largă de beneficii, cum ar fi alimente bogate în amidon, fibre robuste rezistente la apă și plante cu proprietăți medicinale și euforice [37]. De fapt, variantele moderne de *Cannabis sativa* L. folosite predominant în producția de materiale textile, cordaje, frânghii și hârtie au un conținut minim de D9-THC (Figura 1), substanța psihoactivă din cânepă [38]. În schimb, plantele destinate consumului de droguri recreative sau medicinale conțin concentrații mult mai mari de D9-THC decât soiurile utilizate în industria textilă [39]. Astfel, astăzi, cultivarea și consumul de cânepă cu conținut ridicat de D9-THC sunt interzise în majoritatea țărilor, fiind permise doar în scopuri medicale și de cercetare [40,41].

Cânepa industrială *Cannabis sativa* L. este o plantă versatilă cu numeroase beneficii pentru sănătatea [42], deoarece semințele de cânepă sunt o sursă bogată de proteine și nutrienți esențiali, inclusiv omega-3 și omega-6, care sunt esențiale pentru sănătatea cardiovasculară și funcționarea creierului [43]; antioxidanți, cum ar fi vitamina E, care ajută la protejarea celulelor împotriva stresului oxidativ [44]; fibrele alimentare din semințele de cânepă contribuie la o digestie sănătoasă și la menținerea unui nivel echilibrat de zahăr în sânge [45]; uleiul de cânepă posedă proprietăți antiinflamatorii, reducând inflamațiile în organism [46], iar industria farmaceutică beneficiază de compușii chimici din cânepă, inclusiv canabinoizi precum canabidiolul (CBD) [47,48].

CBD-ul are potențial terapeutic și este utilizat în diverse produse farmaceutice pentru gestionarea stărilor de sănătate, cum ar fi anxietatea și durerea [49,50]. Este important de menționat că, deși cânepa industrială conține compuși chimici, cum ar fi canabinolii, aceasta conține nivele foarte reduse de tetrahidrocannabinol ( $\geq 0.2\%$ ), substanța psihotropă prezentă în mod obișnuit în canabisul recreațional [51–53]. Astfel, produsele din cânepă industrială nu provoacă stări de euforie sau intoxicație.

Studiile au indicat, de asemenea, o potențială utilizare a canabisului în bioremedierea solurilor contaminate [54]. Canabisul a arătat o toleranță ridicată la metalele grele precum cadmiul, cuprul și nichelul, precum și o absorbție eficientă a atrazinei din sol, făcând din planta un agent eficient de bioremediere pentru metalele grele [55]. Canabisul este cunoscut pentru abilitatea sa de a absorbi și de a acumula metale grele și alte substanțe toxice din sol. Acest proces este cunoscut sub numele de fitoremediere sau bioremediere foliară [56].

Canabisul are un sistem radicular puternic și extins, care îi permite să extragă substanțe toxice din sol și să le acumuleze în părțile aeriene ale plantei [57,58]. Această abilitate face ca canabisul să fie o opțiune promițătoare pentru curățarea terenurilor contaminate, precum cele afectate de poluarea industrială sau agricolă. De asemenea, au fost demonstrate proprietăți de reducere a nivelurilor de poluanți organici persistenti, cum ar fi hidrocarburi aromatice policiclice (HAP-uri) și pesticidele [59].

Utilizarea canabisului pentru bioremedierea solurilor contaminate prezintă mai multe avantaje. Este o soluție ecologică, non-invazivă și cost-eficientă în comparație cu alte metode de remediere, cum ar fi excavarea și eliminarea solului contaminat sau utilizarea produselor chimice. Procesul de fitoremediere poate îmbunătăți calitatea solului și poate restabili ecosistemele afectate.

### **3.2. Provocări legislative privind potențialul de valorificare al *Cannabis sativa* L.**

Legislația referitoare la cultivarea plantei canabis a traversat un proces evolutiv substanțial pe plan global, reflectând modificările în percepția și înțelegerea publică a acestor specii și a compușilor lor activi. În cursul istoriei, această evoluție poate fi împărțită în mai multe etape distincte. Inițial, în perioadele tradiționale și istorice, canabisul a fost cultivat și utilizat pentru scopuri diverse, precum medicinale, religioase și recreative, cu reguli și reglementări adesea absente sau puțin restrictive [60]. Odată cu avansul comerțului internațional și o creștere a preocupărilor legate de abuzul de substanțe în secolul al XIX-lea și începutul secolului XX, multe națiuni au început să impună reguli și interdicții stricte privind canabisul și alte droguri [61]. Acest lucru a fost facilitat și consolidat de tratate internaționale precum Convenția de la Haga din 1912 și Convenția Națiunilor Unite privind substanțele psihotrope din 1961 [62,63].

Convenția Unică a Națiunilor Unite privind Drogurile Narcotice (CUNDN) reprezintă un acord internațional instituit în anul 1961 și ulterior supus unor modificări prin intermediul amendamentelor din 1972. Acest tratat are ca obiectiv central coordonarea și reglementarea politicilor globale referitoare la substanțele psihoactive, inclusiv supravegherea producției, distribuției, comerțului și consumului acestora.

Unul dintre aspectele dezbătute intens legate de CUNDN a fost clasificarea cânepii industriale în aceeași categorie cu canabisul recreațional, recunoscut pentru efectele sale psihoactive. Această abordare a implicat includerea cânepii industriale sub regimul strict de control al substanțelor psihoactive, chiar și atunci când varietățile de cânepă industrială conțin cantități neglijabile de tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), compusul psihoactiv din canabis.

Această clasificare a fost supusă criticii din partea unor cadre academice, activiști și producători de cânepă industrială. Academicianul și activistul Ethan Russo, un expert recunoscut în domeniul fitochimiei și al utilizării medicinale a canabisului a argumentat că CUNDN nu a reușit să distingă clar între varietățile de cânepă utilizate în scopuri industriale și cele utilizate în scopuri recreative sau medicinale, ceea ce a dus la o reglementare inadecvată a cânepii industriale [64,65]. Russo a susținut că această lipsă de distincție a creat confuzie și a împiedicat dezvoltarea durabilă a industriei cânepii industriale [66,67].

Cu toate acestea, chiar și după unele încercări de modificare a acestei situații prin amendamente și regulamente ulterioare, clasificarea inițială a cânepii industriale drept substanță controlată în cadrul Convenției Unice a ONU a rămas subiectul unor dezbateri intense și dispute în comunitatea internațională. Unele state au adoptat politici mai flexibile în ceea ce privește producția și utilizarea cânepii industriale, în timp ce altele au menținut o abordare mai restrictivă, urmând prevederile convenției inițiale.

Perioada prohibiției, care a dominat a doua jumătate a secolului XX, a fost caracterizată de politici dure de interzicere și pedepse severe pentru posesia, cultivarea și distribuția canabisului, în cadrul unei campanii globale împotriva drogurilor [68]. Odată cu intrarea în era dezincriminării și legalizării medicale în anii '90 și 2000, unele state și țări au început să adopte politici mai flexibile, permițând accesul la canabis în scopuri terapeutice sub condiții și restricții stricte [69,70].

Mai recent, legalizarea recreațională și reglementarea canabisului a devenit o realitate în multe locuri, cu legi care variază în funcție de cantități permise, vârsta minimă de acces și alte aspecte legate de distribuție și producție. În prezent, pe plan global, există o varietate de abordări legislative și politici referitoare la canabis, iar acestea continuă să evolueze în funcție de cercetările științifice și schimbările sociale.

Diferențierea între plantele *Cannabis sativa* și *Cannabis indica* (marijuana) a fost subiect de dezbatere și de încercare de reglementare în multe jurisdicții. În unele cazuri, această distincție a fost abordată în baza observațiilor științifice referitoare la caracteristicile genetice și chimice ale celor două specii. De exemplu, conform studiilor lui Hilling (2004) [71] și Pearce (2014) [72], *Cannabis sativa* este asociată cu niveluri mai scăzute de THC și cu o concentrație mai mare de CBD în comparație cu *Cannabis indica*.

Aceste diferențe chimice pot fi relevante pentru elaborarea politicilor și reglementărilor privind canabisul, deoarece nivelurile de THC și CBD pot influența efectele medicale și psihoactive ale plantei. De aceea, unele jurisdicții au încercat să adapteze legislația lor pentru a ține cont de aceste diferențe [73]. Unele state au adoptat reglementări care permit utilizarea medicală a canabisului cu conținut scăzut de THC, care este de obicei asociat cu specia *Cannabis sativa* [74].

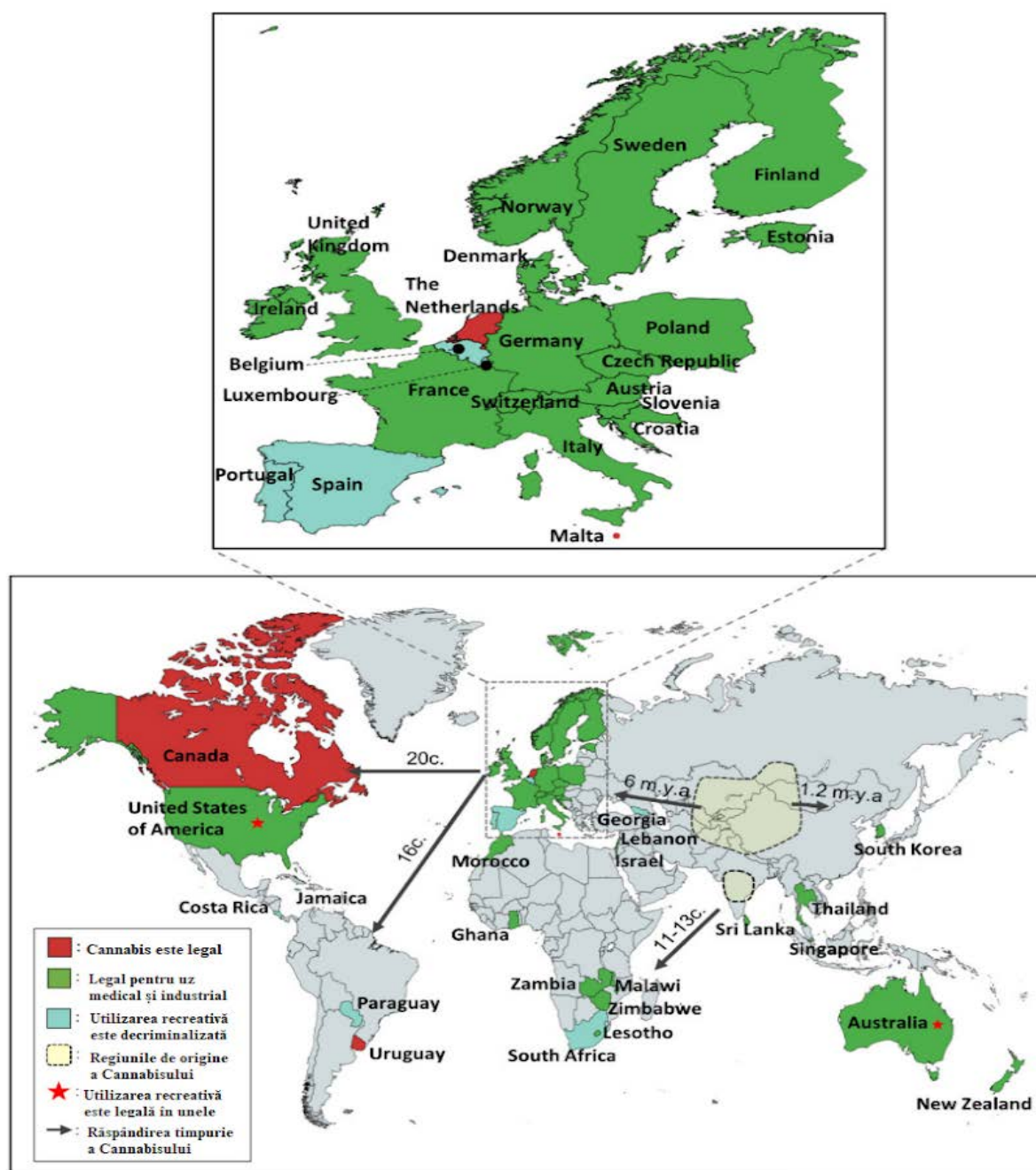


Figura 2. Statutul actual de legalizare a canabisului (a. 2023) [21].

Cu toate acestea, este important de menționat că nu există o concordanță universală în ceea ce privește diferențierea și reglementarea specifică a acestor două specii de canabis. Convențiile internaționale precum Convenția Națiunilor Unite împotriva Traficului Illicit de Droguri și Substanțe Psihotrope din 1988 nu fac distincții clare între *Cannabis sativa* și *Cannabis indica* în ceea ce privește clasificarea lor ca substanțe psihoactive [75]. În plus, unele jurisdicții pot avea definiții și reglementări specifice referitoare la canabis care nu se bazează neapărat pe distincția între *Cannabis sativa* și *Cannabis indica*, ci mai degrabă pe concentrația de THC sau pe alte criterii. Prin urmare, în ciuda eforturilor de diferențiere între aceste două specii, există o varietate de abordări legislative și politici în ceea ce privește reglementarea canabisului la nivel internațional.

Diferențierea practică și precisă a celor două subspecii de canabis (*Cannabis sativa* L. și *Cannabis indica*) este imperativă în domenii precum agricultura, aplicarea legii, precum și în industrii cum este cea alimentară și farmaceutică. Autoritățile din Europa, America și alți membri ai Statelor Unite folosesc cantitatea de canabinoizi ca metodă de identificare. Această metodă de clasificare a canabis-ului a fost folosită pentru prima dată de Small și Cronquist (1976), în care o concentrație de 0,3% (substanță uscată) de D9-THC este propusă a fi o demarcație chimică între marijuana și cânepă industrială [76]. Plantele cu concentrație de THC  $\geq 0,3\%$  sunt considerate ca cânepă (de tip fibre), în timp ce cele care conțin THC de  $< 0,3\%$  sunt considerate marijuana (tip de droguri).

În ultimii ani, s-a observat o amplificare a interesului față de cultivarea cânepii industriale în multiple regiuni ale lumii [77]. Diversitatea țărilor și regiunilor au inițiat procese de revizuire și relaxare a reglementărilor referitoare la cultivarea cânepii industriale, determinând o expansiune considerabilă a suprafețelor cultivate. Printre statele recunoscute pentru activitatea în acest domeniu se numără Canada, China, Franța, Olanda, Spania și Statele Unite etc. (Figura 2).

De remarcat este faptul că Canada și Statele Unite au cunoscut o creștere remarcabilă în sectorul producției de cânepă industrială [78], acest fenomen fiind în special atribuit interesului sporit pentru produsele derivate din cânepă, precum uleiurile și fibrele textile de înaltă calitate. Canada este una dintre țările lider în cultivarea cânepii industriale. În anii recentți, s-au cultivat sute de mii de hectare de cânepă în diverse provincii canadiene. Franța este una dintre principalele țări producătoare de cânepă industrială în Uniunea Europeană [79]. Olanda este recunoscută pentru practicile sale agricole inovatoare, iar cânepa industrială a devenit o cultură interesantă pentru fermieri. Spania a înregistrat o creștere a cultivării cânepii industriale, cu un accent pe producția de semințe și fibre. Analiza aspectelor legislative privind procesul de obținere a autorizațiilor de cultivare a plantei *Cannabis sativa* L. pentru diferite țări ale lumii este prezentat în Tabelul 1.

Tabelul 1

**Analiza aspectelor legislative privind procesul de obținere a autorizațiilor de cultivare a plantei *Cannabis sativa* L.**

Statul	Nivelul admis de THC	Organ abilitat care eliberează autorizația de cultivare	Control suplimentar
Portugalia	0,2%	Agencia Națională pentru Medicamente și Produse de Sănătate din Portugalia. INFARMED [24,61,77].	-

## Continuare Tabelul 1

Italia	0,2 - 2%	Ministerul sănătății.	Agenția Italiană a Medicamentelor (Agenzia Italiana del Farmaco, AIFA) [25,68].
Romania		Agenția Națională a Medicamentului și a Dispozitivelor Medicale (ANMDM).	Inspectoratul General al Poliției Române (IGPR); Ministerul Agriculturii și Dezvoltării Rurale [25,77].
Cehia	1 % din 2022	Institutul pentru Controlul Medicamentelor [61,68].	-
Canada	1 %	Autoritatea pentru Cannabis (Cannabis Authority).	Biroul pentru Cannabis al Sănătății Canada (Cannabis Office of Health Canada), sub Ministerul Sănătății; Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) [78].
Franța	0,2 – 0,3 %	Agenția Națională a Medicamentului și a Dispozitivelor Medicale (Agence Nationale de Sécurité du Médicament et des Produits de Santé, ANSM)	Direcția Generală a Sănătății (DGS); Oficiul Central de Represiune a Traficului Illicit de Substanțe Narcotice (OCRTIS); Ministerul Agriculturii [79].
SUA	0,3 %	Departamentul pentru Controlul Cannabisului; Biroul pentru Reglementarea Marijuanei [74,75].	-

**Notă:** THC – tetrahidrocanabinol, INFARMED – Institutul Național Portughez pentru Medicamente și Produse de Sănătate, AIFA – Agenția Italiană a Medicamentului, ANMDM – Agenția Națională a Medicamentului și a Dispozitivelor Medicale din România, IGPR – Inspectoratul General al Poliției Române, CFIA – Agenția Canadiană de Inspecție a Alimentelor, ANSM – Agenția Națională a Medicamentului și a Dispozitivelor Medicale, DGS – Direcția Generală a Sănătății OCRTIS – Oficiul Central de Represiune a Traficului Illicit de Substanțe Narcotice.

În ceea ce privește Uniunea Europeană, cultivarea cânepii industriale implică un proces riguros de obținere a autorizațiilor de cultivare [77]. Aceste autorizații sunt emise de autoritățile naționale și, de regulă, solicitantul trebuie să îndeplinească cerințe specifice și să respecte limitele de conținut de THC, conform reglementărilor stabilite [80]. Această abordare are scopul de a asigura că cultivarea cânepii industriale în UE se desfășoară în conformitate cu standardele și normele stabilite, asigurând în același timp controlul adecvat al concentrațiilor de substanțe psihoactive [81].

Cu toate acestea, țările UE, promovează activ cultura de *Cannabis Sativa* L. și oferă fermierilor posibilități de a o cultiva, crește și ulterior procesa, prin crearea și reglementarea cadrului legal care să permită și să controleze această activitate. Aceasta include stabilirea normelor pentru securitate, calitate și distribuție.



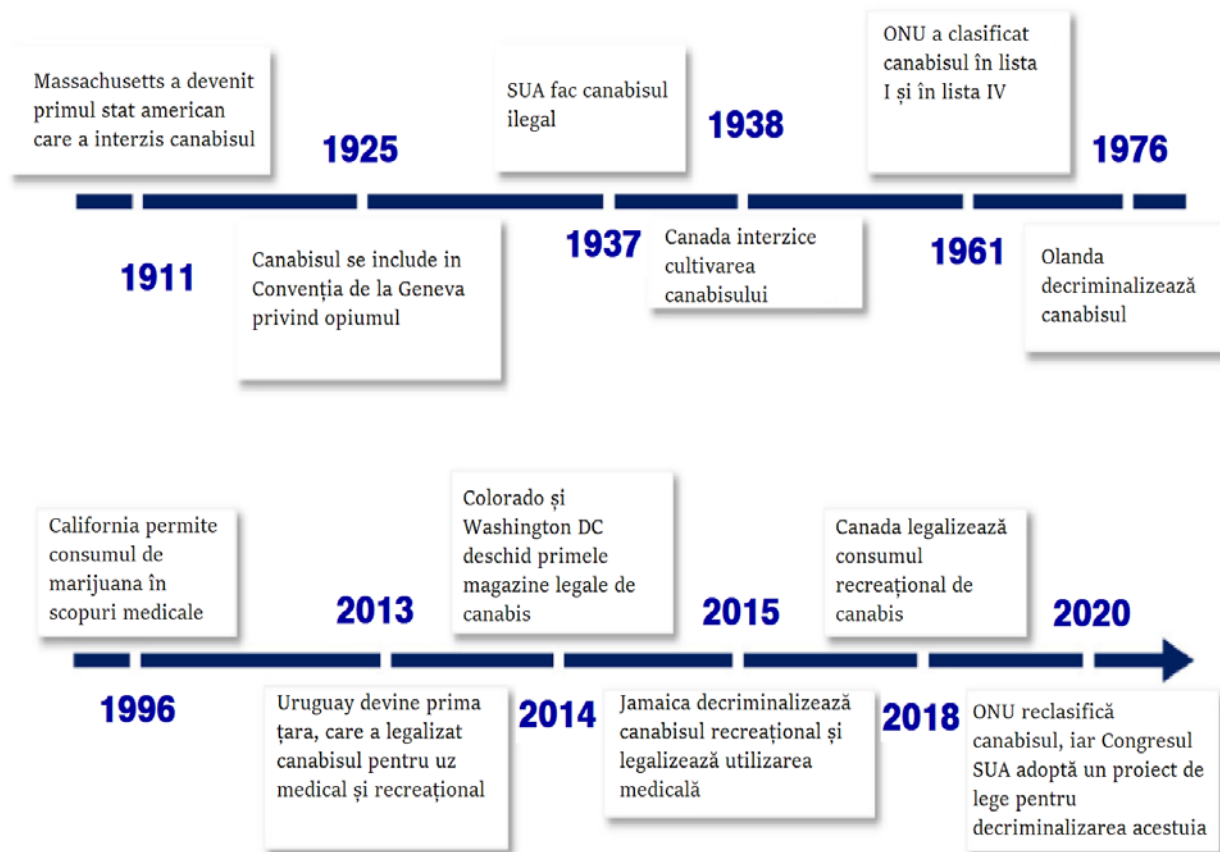
Uniunea Europeană reglementează cultivarea cânepii industriale prin intermediul unui cadru legal care asigură standardele și condițiile pentru această activitate în statele membre. Principala reglementare care acoperă cultivarea cânepii în UE este Regulamentul nr. 1307/2013 al Parlamentului European și al Consiliului privind normele aplicabile regimurilor de sprijin direct acordate fermierilor în cadrul politicii agricole comune (PAC) [82,83]. Aspectele cheie, ce sunt incluse în reglementări UE privind cultivarea cânepii includ:

- *Definiția cânepii.* Regulamentul furnizează o definiție precisă a cânepii industriale, clarificând distincția față de canabisul cu conținut ridicat de THC. Se stabilesc niveluri maxime de THC acceptate pentru a califica o plantă drept cânepă industrială.
- *Autorizații de cultivare.* Cultivarea cânepii industriale în cadrul UE necesită obținerea de autorizații specifice de cultivare. Aceste autorizații sunt emise de către autoritățile naționale și, de regulă, solicitantul trebuie să îndeplinească anumite cerințe și să respecte limitele de conținut de THC.
- *Supraveghere și testare.* Fermierii care se ocupă de cultivarea cânepii industriale sunt supuși unui sistem de supraveghere și testare a culturilor pentru a se asigura că nivelul de THC rămâne sub limita legală. Acest proces implică colectarea de probe și efectuarea de teste periodice efectuate de laboratoare autorizate.
- *Varietăți de cânepă.* Lista de soiuri de cânepă industrială autorizate pentru cultivare în cadrul UE este stabilită și actualizată în mod regulat. Fermierii trebuie să selecteze soiurile incluse în această listă pentru a se asigura că activitățile lor sunt conforme cu reglementările în vigoare.
- *Diferențierea de canabisul recreațional.* Regulamentul stabilește o distincție clară între cânepa industrială și canabisul recreațional sau medicinal, care sunt supuse unor reglementări separate. Aceste reglementări au scopul de a promova dezvoltarea sustenabilă a industriei cânepii industriale în cadrul UE, favorizând utilizările sale în diverse sectoare, precum textilele, construcțiile, produsele alimentare și industria farmaceutică.

Prima țară care a legalizat consumul de canabis pentru uz medical și recreațional a fost Uruguay în 2013 [84,85]. De atunci, mai multe țări au urmat exemplul. Optimismul pentru legalizarea globală a canabisului, cel puțin pentru uz medical, a câștigat avânt în 2019, în urma unui raport al Organizației Mondiale a Sănătății (OMS), care a criticat plasarea canabisului în sistemul de programare a narcoticelor Națiunilor Unite [86,87]. OMS a concluzionat că includerea canabisului în lista IV ignoră valoarea terapeutică a plantei și, prin urmare, ar trebui reprogramată. Recomandările OMS au fost adoptate de Comisia Națiunilor Unite pentru Narcotice în decembrie 2020, ceea ce înseamnă că canabisul este în prezent listat doar în lista I a sistemului de programare, Figura 3. Reclasificarea canabisului de către Națiunile Unite oferă un cadru important pentru națiunile care revizuiesc legile privind reglementarea canabisului și a produselor sale.

În Statele Unite ale Americii, procesul de obținere a autorizației de cultivare a canabisului este gestionat de către departamentele de reglementare la nivel de stat, întrucât legislația referitoare la canabis variază considerabil între statele individuale [88]. În ciuda faptului că canabisul rămâne ilegal la nivel federal în SUA, numeroase state au adoptat legislație specifică care permite utilizarea medicinală sau recreațională a acestei plante. Fiecare stat dispune de o agenție sau un departament dedicat reglementării

canabisului, care poartă diverse denumiri, precum Departamentul pentru Controlul Cannabisului, Biroul pentru Reglementarea Marijuanei sau entități similare.



**Figura 3.** Evenimente majore din istoria legală a cannabisului [21].

Pentru a obține autorizația de cultivare a cannabisului, fermierii sau producătorii trebuie să respecte cu strictețe reglementările specifice ale statului în care activează. Aceste reglementări pot include cerințe riguroase referitoare la securitate, calitatea produselor, sisteme eficiente de evidențiere a trasabilității și alte aspecte esențiale legate de cultivarea și producția cannabisului. Este crucial ca acești actori implicați în industria cannabisului să fie conștienți și să respecte în totalitate cerințele legale și reglementările pentru a asigura conformitatea și siguranța în cadrul operațiunilor lor.

Sprijinul pentru legalizarea cultivării plantei de cannabis este în creștere. Camera Reprezentanților SUA, pe 4 decembrie 2020, a adoptat un proiect de lege pentru dezincriminarea cannabisului în țară. Proiectul de lege nu a fost încă aprobat de Senatul țării. Cu toate acestea, multe state și-au schimbat legile privind reglementarea cannabisului. În prezent, 36 din cele 50 de state din SUA, inclusiv Washington DC, au legalizat utilizarea cannabisului în diferite scopuri. Din cele 36 de state, 18 state permit utilizarea recreativă, iar restul au permis utilizarea cannabisului în scopuri medicale [89].

### 3.3. Aspecte legislative naționale privind consumul și utilizarea *Cannabis sativa* L.

Conform Hotărârii de Guvern nr. 1382 din 08.12.2006 al Republicii Moldova cânepa este definită ca orice plantă din specia cannabis [90], fiind o definiție foarte generală care nu permite divizarea speciilor de cannabis, deoarece cannabisul este un gen de plantă cu flori din familia Cannabaceae, care cuprinde diverse specii botanice. Există o dispută în ceea ce privește numărul exact de specii recunoscute în acest gen. În general, se recunosc trei

specii principale: *Cannabis sativa*, *Cannabis indica* și *Cannabis ruderalis*. Fiecare dintre aceste specii are caracteristici botanice și chimice distincte și se adaptează diferit la diferite medii de creștere. *Cannabis sativa* este cunoscută pentru înălțimea sa mare și pentru utilizările sale diverse, inclusiv în producția de fibre și semințe. *Cannabis indica* este asociată adesea cu efectele sedative și relaxante și este utilizată în principal în scopuri medicinale. *Cannabis ruderalis* este considerată a fi cea mai mică și mai puțin cultivată dintre cele trei specii și este adesea întâlnită în regiunile cu climă rece. Astfel în practica Republicii Moldova, care este semnatară a Convenției unice internaționale asupra stupefiantelor Nr. 8 din 30.03.1961 [62], planta de cânepa la general (toate speciile, cu varietățile sale de *Cannabis*) poate fi cultivată actualmente doar sub autorizarea Comitetului permanent de control asupra Drogurilor (CPCD) de pe lângă Agenția Medicamentului și Dispozitivelor Medicale cu respectarea anumitor cerințe protective complexe în conformitate cu Art. (10), alin. (1) Legii nr. 382 din 06.05.1999 [91].

Catalogarea generală plantei de *Cannabis* (Cânepă) din motiv că aceasta conține stupefiant s-a dovedit a fi o măsură, care actualmente, pas cu pas este eliminată din circuitul legal internațional prin dezincriminarea plantei de *Cannabis* în multe țări ale lumii, inclusiv și în țările Comunității Europene (CE), unde *Cannabis sativa* L. se cultivă în regim liber sau fără de autorizările Ministerelor Agriculturii din țările respective, dar trebuie să fie condiționată de utilizarea de semințe din soiurile enumerate în „Catalogul comun al soiurilor de plante agricole”.

Conform pct. 4 cap. I a Hotărârii de Guvern Nr. 1382 din 08.12.2006 *pentru aprobarea Regulamentului cu privire la reglementarea activităților de cultivare a plantelor care conțin substanțe stupefiante sau psihotrope*, cultivarea cânepii se permite persoanelor fizice, înregistrate în calitate de întreprinzător individual, și persoanelor juridice, în scopuri științifice și/sau pentru producerea de semințe și/sau fibre, în cazul deținerii autorizației pentru genul respectiv de activitate, eliberate de către Comitet.

Totodată pct. 7 al cap. II prevede că Autorizația se eliberează persoanei fizice, înregistrate în calitate de întreprinzător individual, sau persoanei juridice care deține terenuri private sau arendate în condițiile legislației, încăperi, construcții și uneltele necesare pentru exercitarea activității de cultivare a plantelor care conțin substanțe stupefiante și/sau psihotrope. Pentru cultivarea cânepii, în scopul producerii semințelor și fibrelor, se permite utilizarea semințelor plantelor care conțin o cantitate neesențială de elemente psihoactive se rezuma la pct. 15 al cap. III al prezentei Hotărâri.

Actualmente, în Uniunea Europeană pentru ca planta de *Cannabis sativa* L. să nu fie confundată cu alte specii de cannabis sunt urmați pași concreți de cercetare și analiza a plantei respective. Acestea sunt bazate pe proceduri de prelevare recomandate de Uniunea Europeană pentru plantațiile industriale și au fost adaptate pentru a lua în considerare aspectele practice și varietatea produselor de cannabis de pe piața ilicită. Pentru produsele de cannabis care prezintă caracteristici botanice caracteristice, o combinație de test de culoare, cromatografie în strat subțire și fizice (macroscopice și examenul microscopic) este considerat o abordare analitică minimă acceptabilă pentru identificarea pozitivă. Au fost formulate reguli generale pentru selectarea metodei de către Grupul de lucru științific pentru droguri [92], la fel este efectuată și analiza chimică a plantei pe lângă celelalte tipuri de analiză cum ar fi: analiza fizică/morfologică, analiza microscopică.

Efectuarea analizei chimice a plantei se efectuează per general în conformitate cu legislația națională. Dacă nu există cerința legală pentru oricare dintre abordări, este o

practică obișnuită să se măsoare THC-total întrucât aceasta reprezintă cel mai bine activitatea farmacologică a materialului. THC-total poate fi obținut prin decarboxilarea acidului tetrahidrocanabinolic (THCA) în THC. De menționat ca Legislația Republicii Moldova nu prevede conținutul total de THC, nu este indicată limita substanței psihotrope activă în planta.

Astfel, motivul de dezincriminare a plantei de cannabis constă în faptul, că această plantă conține trei specii înrudite și diferite de bază: *Canabis sativa* (Cânepa Industrială, sau Tehnică), *Canabis indica* (Marijuana sau cannabis cu conținut psihotrop considerabil 20%) și *Canabis Ruderalis* (Cânepa sălbatică), care trebuie diferențiate, pentru a oferi libera cultivare de *Cannabis sativa* L. cu conținut de THC în stem uscat ce nu depășește 0,2% în scopuri exclusiv industriale (fibre și semințe) sau în scopuri horticole, cum admite art. 28 al Convenției unice internaționale asupra stupefiantelor [93].

Ținând cont de faptul că Republica Moldova este o țară agrară, cultivarea cânepii ar putea aduce numeroase avantaje. Aceasta ar putea contribui la diversificarea economiei naționale, furnizând noi oportunități de investiții și afaceri, ceea ce ar reduce dependența de sectoarele economice tradiționale. În plus, ar putea fi create locuri de muncă în agricultură, industria prelucrătoare și sectorul serviciilor, reducând astfel nivelul șomajului și îmbunătățind calitatea vieții cetățenilor. De asemenea, exporturile de produse din cânepă ar putea stimula veniturile din comerțul exterior și ar putea consolida poziția Republicii Moldova pe piața internațională. Utilizarea cânepii în agricultură necesită resurse mai puține, precum apă și pesticide, în comparație cu alte culturi, contribuind astfel la conservarea resurselor naturale și la protejarea mediului înconjurător. Potențialul medical și farmaceutic al cannabisului ar putea aduce beneficii semnificative pentru sănătatea populației, prin utilizarea produselor medicinale derivate din cannabis în tratarea diferitelor afecțiuni. În același timp, cultivarea cânepii ar putea reduce dependența de importurile de produse similare, contribuind astfel la consolidarea securității alimentare și economice a țării.

Utilizarea cânepii în industria alimentară prezintă numeroase posibilități pentru Republica Moldova. Aceasta ar putea include integrarea semințelor de cânepă în produsele alimentare existente sau crearea unor produse alimentare noi. Semințele de cânepă sunt bogate în nutrienți esențiali, cum ar fi proteinele, fibrele și acizii grași omega-3 și omega-6, făcându-le o opțiune valoroasă pentru alimentație. Utilizarea cânepii în industria alimentară ar putea contribui la promovarea unui stil de viață sănătos și echilibrat în Republica Moldova, oferind alternative nutritive și delicioase pentru consumatori. De asemenea, ar putea sprijini agricultura locală și producătorii autohtoni, stimulând dezvoltarea economică și durabilă a țării.

#### 4. Concluzii

Reglementările privind cultivarea și folosirea cânepii industriale (*Cannabis sativa* L.) sunt extrem de variate în întreaga lume. În unele jurisdicții, există restricții sau chiar interdicții asupra cultivării cânepii, ca urmare a confuziei sau a asocierii cu cannabisul recreațional. Cânepa industrială este adesea confundată cu cannabisul recreațional din cauza asemănărilor lor botanice, generând astfel stigmatizare și influențând negativ acceptarea publică a culturii de cânepă.

Construirea și întreținerea infrastructurii necesare pentru cultivarea și procesarea cânepii sunt adesea costisitoare și nu sunt întotdeauna disponibile în toate regiunile. Îmbunătățirea lanțului de aprovizionare și a infrastructurii ar putea contribui semnificativ la

optimizarea eficienței producției. În anumite zone, cultivarea cânepii poate concura direct cu alte culturi agricole pentru resursele necesare, precum apa și terenul agricol disponibil. Managementul durabil al resurselor este esențial pentru a minimiza efectele negative asupra altor activități agricole.

Standardele și certificările clare referitoare la calitatea și durabilitatea produselor derivate din cânepă sunt esențiale pentru a câștiga încrederea consumatorilor și pentru a facilita comerțul global. În timp ce cânepa este adesea percepută ca o cultură ecologică, utilizarea excesivă a pesticidelor și a altor substanțe chimice poate avea consecințe negative asupra mediului. Implementarea unor practici agricole durabile este esențială pentru a minimiza aceste riscuri.

Promovarea produselor din cânepă întâmpină dificultăți din cauza stigmatizării istorice și a asocierii cu canabisul de droguri. Educația publică și campaniile de marketing pot juca un rol important în îmbunătățirea percepției publice asupra cânepii industriale.

Soluționarea acestor probleme necesită o abordare integrată, care să implice eforturi la nivel guvernamental, cooperare internațională și angajament din partea industriei și a consumatorilor pentru a sprijini dezvoltarea durabilă a industriei cânepii industriale.

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## EFFECTS OF INTEREST RATE STRUCTURE AND ENERGY PRICES ON MANUFACTURING OUTPUT IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract.** Until recent years, the performance of the Nigeria's manufacturing sector has been characterized by downward pressures. Given the present shocks in the global energy markets and upward review of borrowing costs by the Central Bank of Nigeria, the historical developments around the manufacturing output appear to be subject to renewal. Consequently, this study investigates the impact of interest rate structure and energy pricing on the Nigerian manufacturing output from 1980 to 2021. Secondary data obtained from World Development Indicators and the CBN's Statistical Bulletins were anchored by an autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) model and error correction modelling. The findings revealed that manufacturing output is inelastic in its response to changes in interest rate while it is elastic in its response to energy price. This is less puzzling as the Nigerian manufacturers seem to favour availability of credit facilities over low interest rates. Also, productive activities respond immediately to a given shock in the energy price, especially the price of diesel. On this basis, this paper concludes that energy pricing is a strong predictor of Nigeria's manufacturing output. Consequently, policy makers should institute a preferential treatment on energy distribution towards the manufacturers. This would make production more attractive, thereby boosting their capacity utilization.

**Keywords:** *interest rate, energy pricing, manufacturing output, ARDL, Nigeria.*

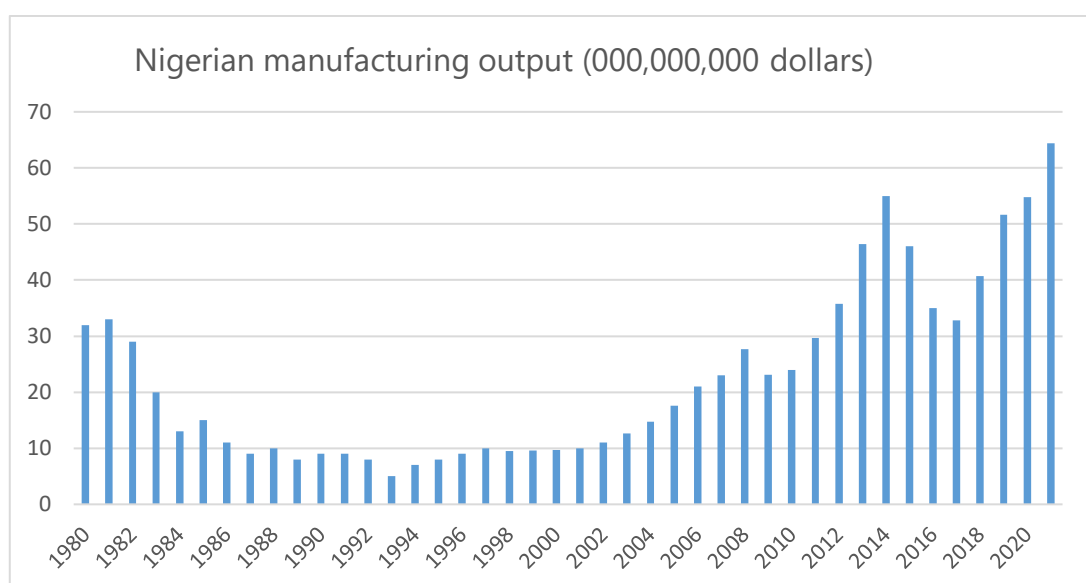
**Rezumat.** Până în ultimii ani, sectorul de producție din Nigeria a fost caracterizat de presiuni în scădere. Având în vedere șocurile actuale de pe piețele globale de energie și revizuirea ascendentă a costurilor îndatorării de către Banca Centrală a Nigeriei, evoluțiile istorice din jurul producției par să fie supuse reînnoirii. Acest studiu investighează impactul structurii ratei dobânzii și al prețului energiei asupra producției nigeriene din 1980 până în 2021. Datele secundare obținute din indicatorii de dezvoltare mondială și Buletinele statistice ale CBN au fost ancorate de un model de întârziere distribuită autoregresiv (ARDL) și de corecție a erorilor de modelare. Rezultatele au arătat, că producția de producție este neelastică în răspuns la modificările ratei dobânzii, dar elastică în răspuns la prețul energiei. Acest lucru este mai puțin surprinzător, deoarece producătorii nigerieni par

să favorizeze disponibilitatea facilităților de credit în detrimentul ratelor scăzute ale dobânzii. De asemenea, activitățile productive răspund imediat la un șoc al prețului energiei, în special al prețului motorinei. Lucrarea concluzionează, că prețul energiei este un predictor puternic al producției în Nigeria. În consecință, factorii de decizie politică ar trebui să instituie un tratament preferențial privind distribuția energiei față de producători. Acest lucru ar face producția mai atractivă, sporind astfel utilizarea capacității acestora.

**Cuvinte cheie:** rata dobânzii, prețul energiei, producția de producție, ARDL, Nigeria.

## 1. Introduction

The output of the Nigerian manufacturing sector is currently on an increasing trajectory. With average growth of 10.07% in the last twenty years [1], the sector appears to be experiencing long-term booms, having recorded downward pressures for most of the last two decades of the nineteenth century. However, there was a downturn in the Nigerian manufacturing sector in the periods 2008-2009 and 2015-2017. The former period was associated with the spillover effects of the global financial crash [1], while the latter was connected with the contagious consequence of fall in oil prices [2]. Figure 1 contains these stylized facts.



**Figure 1.** Trend of Nigerian manufacturing output, 1980-2021.

**Note:** Y-axis: Manufacturing Output; X-axis: Year. Source: CBN Statistical Bulletin, 2021.

The manufacturing sector plays a significant role in economic development, given its pivotal role in accelerating the rate of structural transformation and economic diversification [3]. According to [4], a country's optimal use of its factor endowment and minimal dependence on manufactured import depends on how well it prioritises its manufacturing sector. Accordingly, the Nigerian government has engaged in concerted efforts towards augmentation and sustenance of productivity of the manufacturing sector [1]. Nevertheless, empirical evidences are not robust enough to credit the governments' efforts [2].

The economy-wide interest rate has remained a subject for critical argument especially owing to its influences on savings mobilization and encouragement of investment. Generally, interest rates are the lenders reward for lending and the borrowers'

prices for utilizing credit [5]. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) minimum rediscount rate (MRR) now monetary policy rate (MPR) is the official yardstick which guides all other interest rates in the financial markets and the general economy at large [6]. In 1987, the CBN adopted the fixed interest rate regime which was eventually modified in 1989 by amending required spreads between deposit and lending rates [7].

Year 1991 and 1993 were characterized by Nigerian government's prescription of maximum margin between bank's average cost of funds and its maximum lending rates, announcement of savings deposit rate and maximum lending rate; and removal of maximum lending rate ceiling in a bid to curb rising inflation rate [8]. However, direct interest rate control was restored in 1994. Given the undesirable economic effect of subsequent controls in 1994 and 1995, total deregulation of inter was readopted in 1996. However, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the CBN has chosen to peg the interest rates through its Monetary Policy Committee who meet at least four times in a year [9].

Given the use of sophisticated machines in manufacturing, industrial production often requires substantial energy usage [3]. This implies that manufacturing increases demand for energy which in turn calls for the need to match energy supply with energy demand. Furthermore, this implies that energy is an input in production. According to [10], absence of energy implies manual production. A problem in the Nigerian manufacturing sector is inadequate energy supply [11]. Although successive Nigerian governments appear to have made efforts towards development of a competitive and strong manufacturing sector, the intention behind these efforts have not been sincere in that employment generation, poverty reduction, inequality reduction and improved standard of living are prioritized over industrialization [12]. The focus of the Nigerian authorities should rather be on energy pricing as instituting favourable pricing of energy promises to accelerate the growth of industries and increase their sectoral contribution to the GDP [1].

Given historical developments of the Nigeria's secondary sector, interest rate structure and energy pricing seem to be major determinants of fluctuations around the sectoral contribution of the sector. Consequently, this study intends to investigate the impact of interest rate and energy pricing on the manufacturing output in Nigeria. Following this introduction, the following sections respectively focus on literature review; methodology and analytical framework; results and discussion; and conclusion, implications and recommendations.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

The loanable funds theory, which was mostly credited to [13], was built on the classical assumption that investment flows are tilted by changes in the interest rate. According to the loanable funds theory the price of loanable funds rate while loanable funds emanate from savings. Supply of money through bank credit creation and incentive to save determines the supply funds available for lending (credit) [14], while demand for loanable funds is determined by demand for investment expenditure and the demand for holding money [15].

Consequently, if money demand rises, supply of loanable funds will fall, as the market-determined interest rates have fallen. In contrast, an increase in liquidity preference causes the supply of loanable funds to increase to accommodate the resulting increase in

the interest rates. Equilibrium is achieved when demand for loanable funds equates supply of loanable funds [13].

Instead of treating the interest rate as exogenous variable, the Keynesian theory of interest rate considers the rate of interest as an endogenous variable. In the Keynesian theory, the interest rate is taken as the reward for lending money for a specified period [16, 17]. Individuals decide the portion of their income to consume and to save in cash or bank. Consumers' decision to hold money as cash or saving in bank is termed 'liquidity preference' [17]. The crux of Keynesian liquidity preference theory is the integration of monetary theory and value theory [18], on the one hand, and the theory of output and employment through the rate of interest, on the other hand [19]. Thus, when the money supply rises; interest falls; aggregate investment and demand rises as output and employment also rise. It can thus be argued that the Keynesian theory of interest rate is much relevant in decomposing the impact of interest rate changes on output performance of manufacturing companies.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

Countries emphasize the role of capital accumulation due to the role of capital in production and the growth process. In simpler terms, increasing investment is directly proportional to increasing output [20]. This connection explains the attention paid to interest rate regimes by users of capital (including manufacturers). In this vein industrialization necessitates substantial investments funded via capital accumulation. But capital accumulation is influenced by fluctuations around the lending rate [6]. Thus, changes in interest rate affect the manufacturing output through their effect on capital accumulation [11].

The study on the effect of bank lending rate and growth of the manufacturing sector in Nigeria from 1973 to 2009 conducted by [20] found that capacity utilization and bank lending rates influence manufacturing output. Noting the importance of good interest rate management, the paper urged the CBN to consider the impact of its monetary policy on capacity utilization of manufacturers. An extension of the study by [20] was carried out by [21] who reported results similar to findings of [20]. Similarly, another study by [11] analyzed similar variables as [21] and also concluded that capacity utilization of manufacturers and real investors respond to the prevailing interest rate decisions of the CBN.

Based on the axiom that interest rate regimes and manufacturing output have bivariate relationships, the study by [22] explored the impact of interest rate regimes on the Nigerian manufacturing output by separating the impact of interest rate regimes on the Nigerian manufacturing output in the pre-SAP and post-SAP periods. Findings reveal that interest rate has a long-run impact on manufacturing output in Nigeria. More specifically, a 1% rise in the borrowing cost leads to a 3% fall in the industrial output. This finding has attracted many other researchers to investigate similar relationship. The study by [22] was replicated by [23] but using additional explanatory variables (such as exchange rate and banking reforms). Findings from the study of [23] echoed what as already obtained in the literature. Also, other studies discovered results not different from earlier findings in the literature [24, 9].

The study performed by [25], analyzed the role of energy supply on the industrial sector of Nigeria. The paper submitted that the Nigerian manufacturing sector was performing below expectation due to inadequate infrastructure especially epileptic energy

supply. The submission of [25] has triggered other researchers to see into the validity of the paper's claim [26, 27, 28, 2]; however, none of the later studies has refuted the claim of [25]. The study by [29] was more particular about the impact of energy prices and the findings further established that availability and prices of energy determine the manufacturing performance in Nigeria.

Elsewhere, the study conducted by [30] investigated the effect of energy consumption and growth of manufacturing sector in Malaysia, using the time series data between 1980 and 2010. The study found a strong, positive relationship between energy supply and real industrial output. Earlier, studies examined the relationship between disaggregated energy consumption and manufacturing growth in Turkey, United States and South Africa. These studies pointed to the variation in energy pricing as a significant determinant of industrial performance [31, 32, 33].

### 2.3 Methodological Review

In the literature, the most common analytical techniques adopted by many studies to investigate the impact of interest rate structure and/or energy pricing on manufacturing output is the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) and the Error Correction Model (ECM). Such studies include [6, 11, 20, 22, 23, 32]. According to [34], the popularity of the ARDL/ECM technique is hinged on their robustness in showcasing the short-run and long-run dynamics of the interest rate and energy supply changes. According to [11], ARDL is the most appropriate technique for studies involving variables that are prone to short-run shocks.

Another common estimation framework is the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) as used by [10, 21, 35]. Yet, some other studies favoured the use of vector autoregression (VAR). [9], for example, proposed that interest rate structure and banking reforms are important variables that can explain variations in manufacturing output. However, both variables influence each other and thus are best treated as both dependent and independent variables. Thus, VAR becomes the most applicable technique when the regressors have the tendency to affect each other.

## 3. Materials and Methods

### 3.1 Model Specification

This study employed the ARDL methodology in the estimation procedure. This analytical approach enabled us to measure the fluctuations around interest rate and energy pricing as they might impact manufacturing output. The model proceeds as follows.

We begin by specifying the general model as contained in equation 1. This follows [6] who submitted that performance of manufacturing companies in Nigeria is determined principally by the interest rate regime as well as the energy prices. Also, [36] gave a theoretical assertion that real investors decide where to mobilize their resources depending on expected returns which in turn are shaped by interest rate fluctuations and the conditions of energy markets.

$$manout = f(intrate, enepri), \quad (1)$$

where: *manout* is manufacturing output, *intrate* is the interest rate and *enepri* is energy price. In econometric terms and within the auspices of ARDL technique, we specify the following model. Again, the justification for the inclusion of the variables is derived from the empirical work of [37].

$$\Delta manout_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 intrat_{t-1} + \alpha_2 enepri_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{\rho} \beta_i \Delta manout_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^q \varphi_i \Delta intrat_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^r \phi_i \Delta enepri_{t-1} + e_t, \dots \quad (2)$$

where:  $\alpha$ s are long-run coefficients,  $\beta$ s,  $\varphi$ s and  $\phi$ s are short-run coefficients,  $\rho$ ,  $q$  and  $r$ , are all optimal lags.  $\Delta$  is a notation for change.  $e$  is stochastic error term distributed with constant mean and zero variance. All the variables are in log form.

### 3.2 A priori Expectation

We hypothesize that  $\alpha_1 < 0$  and  $\alpha_2 < 0$  in the long run. Generally, interest rate is supposed to have negative effect on the manufacturing output. A higher interest rate is a discouragement to manufacturers of goods and services. By similar argument, higher energy price is a disincentive on the manufacturers to produce more output

### 3.3 Data Requirements and Sources

This study uses time series annual data sourced from the World Development Indicators (WDI) of the World Bank and the Statistical Bulletins of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). In particular, information on energy price comes from WDI while that on each of interest rate and manufacturing output are obtained from the CBN. Given the important role of diesel in the production process of manufacturers, diesel price is taken as proxy for energy price in this study. Interest rate is as represented by the monetary policy rate of the CBN. Finally, manufacturing output is the contribution of the manufacturing sector to the total GDP.

### 3.4 Estimation Technique

This study adopted the autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) estimation approach which assumes that series are either integrated of order one or order zero. The ARDL approach involves bounds testing used to determine long run relationship among variables under study. Long run relationship is confirmed if the F-statistic is greater than the upper-bound critical value at the chosen level of significance while Short run relationship is confirmed if the F-statistic is less than the lower-bound critical value at the chosen level of significance. Having ascertained long run relationship, the error correction model is specified and estimated as

$$\Delta manout_t = \alpha_0 + \sum_{i=1}^{\rho} \beta_i \Delta manout_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^q \varphi_i \Delta intrat_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^r \phi_i \Delta enepri_{t-1} + \xi ECM_{t-1} + e_t, \quad (3)$$

where:  $\xi$  is the speed of adjustment co-efficient, measuring how much deviation from the long-run will be restored within the time period (in this case one year).  $\xi$  is expected to be negative and statistically significant to support the cointegrating relationship. While equation 2 includes both long- and short-run dynamics of the variables in a single model, equation 3 contains the short-run representation and a component to measure the deviation of the short run from the long run form. This study estimates equation 3 to follow contemporary studies of [11] and [34]. All other variables are as defined above.



## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 presents the estimated descriptive statistics of variables in the ARDL model. The mean interest rate for the forty-two year period (1980-2021) is 16.6%. With this average rate being higher than the rates in recent years, it goes that the Central Bank of Nigeria has historically been setting high borrowing costs to influence financial transactions within the Nigerian economy. In addition, the average rate lies roughly at midpoint of minimum rate (7.75%) and maximum rate (31.65%), suggesting that the bank rate in Nigeria is subject to high volatilities. This is upheld by standard deviation of 5.1%. The time series of interest rate is positively skewed, meaning that its distribution has long right tail. Also, with a threshold of 3, the kurtosis of interest rate shows that it is leptokurtic, implying that its distribution is fat-tailed as there are many outliers in the series.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Variables						
	Mean	Std. dev	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Intrat (%)	16.64	5.11	7.75	31.65	0.58	3.21
Enepri (\$)	0.42	0.47	0.01	1.67	0.97	2.94
Manout (\$)	2.29E+10	1.58E+10	5.10E+09	6.44e+10	0.96	2.88

Source: Authors' computation.

The average energy price is \$0.42. With this figure being far from the maximum price (\$1.67) coupled with the fact that the highest price was recorded only in 2021, it explains that high energy pricing in the Nigerian manufacturing sector is a recent phenomenon. The standard deviation of 0.47, which is more than the mean value, is a reflection of high fluctuations of energy price. This poses little surprise as the downstream oil and gas sector in Nigeria is deregulated and prices are allowed to tour round the market until it settles at where the market thinks a sense of decorum. Like those of interest rate, the distributions of the energy price are also positively skewed. However, they are platykurtic, indicating that they are thin-tailed with only a few outliers. The behaviour of energy pricing regarding skewness and kurtosis has similar rhetoric as those of manufacturing output. More similarly, the standard deviation \$15.8 billion is relatively not distant from the mean manufacturing output \$22.9 billion.

### 4.2 Correlation Analysis

The stylized facts on functional relationships that exist among the variables are indicated by correlation coefficients. Table 2 presents these coefficients. The correlation between interest rate and energy price is -0.35. This is pro-intuitive. Higher borrowing costs might imply less credit for the manufacturers, which in turn leads to less demand for energy products. And the basic demand theory predicts that a depressed demand generates a downward pressure on price. The negative association between interest rate and manufacturing output (-0.64) also follows the standard theoretical proposition. Monetary tightening reduces aggregate demand, which in turn reduces investment activities of firms. Furthermore, the negative relationship between energy price and manufacturing output is self-instructive. Higher price of an energy product should amount to less demand for such product and thus less output. The available data appear to support this basic principle. The regression analysis later in this section sheds more educative light on these correlation coefficients.

Table 2

Correlation Coefficients			
	Intrat	Enepri	Manout
Intrat	1.00		
Enepri	-0.35	1.00	
Manout	-0.64	-0.79	1.00

Source: Authors' computation.

### 4.3 Stationarity Analysis

Tables 3a and 3b respectively presents computed values of Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) and Phillips-Perron (PP) statistic of each of the variables using both constant only and constant and trend specifications. The fact that the computed ADF and PP statistic values in Table 3a exceed critical values in table 3b only at first difference shows that the series are not stationary at levels, but are all stationary at first differences. It goes that the series are all I(1). That the series are not I(0) lends credibility to the use of ARDL as the analytical technique used in this study.

Table 3a

Unit Root Tests						
Variables	Form of test	Constant		Constant and Linear Trend		Order of Integration
		Levels	First Differences	Levels	First Differences	
Intrat	ADF	-0.8865	-7.0880	-1.0662	-7.0314	I(1)
	PP	-0.7054	-7.0511	-1.8831	-7.0159	I(1)
Enepri	ADF	-1.1176	-6.1160	-1.5469	-6.1291	I(1)
	PP	-1.0938	-6.1353	-1.7042	-6.1329	I(1)
Manout	ADF	-0.4591	-6.4631	-2.7033	-6.3628	I(1)
	PP	-0.3171	-7.3301	-2.7033	-7.2652	I(1)

Note: ADF-Augmented Dickey Fuller; PP- Philips-Perron. Source: Authors' computations.

Table 3b

### Asymptotic Critical Values of ADF and PP

		Constant		Constant and Linear Trend	
		Levels	First Differences	Levels	First Differences
1%	ADF	-3.6463	-3.6463	-4.2528	-4.2627
	PP	-3.6394	-3.6463	-4.2529	-4.2627
5%	ADF	-2.9540	-2.9540	-3.5485	-3.5530
	PP	-2.9511	-2.9540	-3.5485	-3.5530
10%	ADF	-2.6158	-2.6158	-3.2071	-3.2096
	PP	-2.6143	-2.6158	-3.2071	-3.2096

Note: ADF-Augmented Dickey Fuller; PP- Philips-Perron. Source: Authors' computations.

#### 4.4 Bounds Test

Table 4 presents the result of the bounds test for cointegration. The fact that the computed bounds F-statistic (8.238) is exceeds both lower and upper limits of the critical values at 10%, 5% and 1% shows that both short-run and long-run relationships among interest rate, energy price and manufacturing output can be determined empirically and thus inferences can be generated from them.

Table 4

#### Bounds Test for Cointegration

H<sub>0</sub>: No Long run Relationship

F Statistic: 8.238

#### Critical Bound's Values

	10%	5%	1%
Lower Bound I(0)	3.17	3.79	4.41
Upper Bound I(1)	4.14	4.85	5.82

Source: Authors' computations.

#### 4.5 Short-run Dynamics

As Table 5 presents, the past values of the manufacturing output have positive impact on the present values. That is, a period of boom in the industrial sector is likely to have extensive impact over succeeding period. In similar vein, a period of output contraction may also be long lasting. Over the short run, output produced by the manufacturing firms is impacted by the structure of the interest rate. However, this impact is weak. More interestingly, past values of the interest rate are statistically insignificant in affecting fluctuations around the manufacturing output. It goes that the Nigerian manufacturers are not adaptive in considering previous episodes of the CBN's monetary policy rate while making output decisions. In contrast, the responsiveness of industrial output with respect to both present and previous values of the energy price is inverse, strong and statistically significant. The error correction term (ECM) is negative and statistically significant. This supports the results of the bounds testing of existence of long-run relationships among the variables. In specific terms, about 59% of the previous year's deviation from long-run equilibrium will be restored within one year – this is indicated by the ECM component.

Table 5

#### Short-run Estimates

Dependent Variable:

manout

Optimal Lag: 3,4,3

Lag Selection Criteria: Schwarz Bayesian Criterion

Variable	Coefficient	t-statistic
$\Delta[\text{manout}(-1)]$	0.16**	8.96
$\Delta[\text{manout}(-2)]$	0.38**	-4.53
$\Delta[\text{inrat}]$	-0.08*	2.87
$\Delta[\text{inrat}(-1)]$	-0.07***	-1.01
$\Delta[\text{inrat}(-2)]$	-0.04***	1.67
$\Delta[\text{inrat}(-3)]$	0.55***	-0.08
$\Delta[\text{enepri}]$	-1.46*	-5.89

Continuation Table 5

$\Delta[\text{enepri}(-1)]$	-1.34**	4.23
$\Delta[\text{enepri}(-2)]$	2.33**	-7.11
ECT(-1)	-0.59*	-4.04
$R^2$	0.78	
F-stat	2438 (0.00)	

**Note:** variables in log form; \*, \*\*, \*\*\* indicates significance at 5%, 10%, insignificance. *Source:* Authors' computation.

#### 4.6 Long-run Dynamics

Table 6 presents estimates of the long-run coefficients. The elasticity of the manufacturing output with respect to interest rate is -0.06. This shows a weak impact of interest rate on the manufacturing output. However, the elasticity of the manufacturing output with respect to energy price is 1.34. This suggests that energy price has a strong impact on manufacturing output. More specifically, increasing the interest rate by 100 basis points leads to a fall in manufacturing output by only 6%. Whereas, a fall in energy price by 1% enables the industrial output to rise by 1.34%. Furthermore, manufacturing output can be said to be interest rate inelastic while it is energy price elastic.

Table 6

#### Long-run Estimates

Variable	Coefficient	t-statistic
Intrat	-0.06**	-5.27
Enepri	-1.34*	8.36
$R^2$	0.81	
F-stat	2871 (0.00)	

**Note:** \*, \*\* indicates significance at 5% and 10%. *Source:* Authors' computation.

### 5. Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

This study investigated the impact of interest rate structure and energy pricing on the Nigeria's manufacturing output. Having obtained descriptive and correlation statistics on the data, stationarity and bounds tests were also carried out to ascertain the statistical properties of the data. Given that the data were well-behaved, further inferences were generated with the aid of ARDL as estimation technique. It was found that interest rate is statistically significant, but weak predictor of manufacturing output. This finding is perhaps hinged on the premise that the Nigerian manufacturers pay little attention on the decision of the Monetary Policy Committee of the CBN with regard to interest rate policy. Rather, availability of credit is likely the main determinant of the manufacturer's propensities to finance production by borrowing. The Nigerian businesspeople appear adapted to high interest rate regimes in the financial sector. So it is hardly a shock that the CBN reviews the monetary policy rate upward or downward. What seems important to the Nigerian businesspeople is the ease of accessing the credit.

On the other hand, energy pricing, represented in this study by the dollar price of diesel, is a strong factor determining the industrial output. The regression results pointed that output is energy price elastic, indicating that a small change in the price of energy elicits more than proportionate change in the manufacturing output. This finding is markedly straightforward. Manufacturing companies mainly use diesel to power their plants and generators. So a shock in the price of diesel will expectedly be felt hard by them. This

makes them respond almost instantly to a given change in diesel price (especially when it is reviewed upward by marketers). It goes without saying that the outrageous price of diesel in Nigeria has dragged production in many firms, while making business unattractive to many others.

The findings of this study shed light on the priority of the Nigerian government if it is serious with increasing manufacturing output in Nigeria. The decision to fully deregulate the energy market in Nigeria might require a revision. This is because diesel price, a major energy product used by manufacturers, is at all-time high at the detriment of industrial production. Against this backdrop, the following are recommended to guide the policy and decisions of the government and the CBN towards bolstering the level of manufacturing output in Nigeria:

- Government should review the price of diesel downward. This should be done to make production more attractive to manufacturers
- Government should institute a framework of treating manufacturers differently from other users of energy. The framework should be one that encourages production
- The CBN should consider instructing banks and other financial institutions to make credit available to manufacturers
- The CBN should ensure timely provision of foreign exchange to manufacturers that import materials
- Government should announce disciplinary measures for any marketer that hoards diesel supply to manufacturers

In this study, interest rate and energy price were taken as independent variables while manufacturing output is dependent variable. The study is limited in that it uses only secondary (aggregate) data on these three variables. Future researchers may consider looking into firm-specific data and see if similar conclusions can be obtained. While the study establishes that energy price is a strong determinant of manufacturing output, similar conclusion cannot be said of interest rate. However, the researcher has a suspicion that availability of credit may be considered as more important than interest rate by the Nigerian manufacturers. This generates the room for future research on exploring the statistical relevance of credit flows as a factor affecting manufacturing output.

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## SUPPORT FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS AS A PRIORITY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** The development of entrepreneurial interest among young people represents an important alternative in terms of using the potential of young people. Youth unemployment represents a significant loss of human capital that could contribute to economic growth. The last challenges that young people faced (mass emigration abroad, general demographic decline, the COVID-19 pandemic), shows that it is absolutely necessary to support young people in starting their own businesses. Analysing the experience of the European Union in supporting young entrepreneurs, we found that the inclusion of young people in economic activity is characterized by certain specific difficulties. Based on the obtained results, we can conclude that most of the analysed countries aim to develop entrepreneurial skills among young people through various mentoring and coaching programs, the dissemination of good practices and the sharing of experience. For the Republic of Moldova, the experience of the analysed countries demonstrates that the main support for young people to be interested in entrepreneurship, as a way of self-employment, is the promotion of public policies that must clearly indicate the need to develop and promote entrepreneurial education and culture, including the development entrepreneurial skills and an entrepreneurial mindset at all levels of education.

**Keywords:** *employment, youths, entrepreneurship, education, skills, self-employment.*

**Rezumat:** Dezvoltarea interesului antreprenorial în rândul tinerilor reprezintă o alternativă importantă în ceea ce privește utilizarea potențialului tinerilor. Ultimele provocări cu care s-au confruntat tinerii (emigrarea în masă în străinătate, declinul demografic general, pandemia COVID-19), ne arată că este absolut necesar să sprijinim tinerii în lansarea propriilor afaceri. Analizând experiența Uniunii Europene în sprijinirea tinerilor antreprenori, am constatat că incluziunea tinerilor în activitatea economică este caracterizată de anumite dificultăți specifice. Pe baza rezultatelor obținute, putem concluziona că majoritatea țărilor analizate urmăresc scopul să dezvolte abilități antreprenoriale în rândul tinerilor prin diverse programe de mentorat și coaching, diseminarea bunelor practici și împărtășirea experienței. Pentru Republica Moldova,



experiența țărilor analizate demonstrează că principalul sprijin pentru ca tinerii să fie interesați de antreprenoriat în calitate de modalitate de auto-angajare, este promovarea unor politici publice care trebuie să indice clar necesitatea dezvoltării și promovării educației și culturii antreprenoriale, inclusiv dezvoltarea abilităților antreprenoriale și a unui mentalitate antreprenorială la toate nivelurile de educație.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *angajare, tineri, antreprenoriat, educație, competențe, auto-angajare.*

## 1. Introduction

The development of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) sector represents one of the main priorities in the economic growth of the country, being included in the most relevant strategic policy documents [1, p. 12]. Thus, a special emphasis is placed on entrepreneurial education and stimulating the opening of new businesses, especially by young people. The focus is on young people because they are the main human resource for the development of any society. Young people are a valuable asset to their countries, and investing in them brings extraordinary social and economic benefits, as Mayson Sukarieh and Stuart Tannock mentioned [2]. To understand the youth of the present period, it is necessary to do more than document the experiences and lives of young people [2, p. 4].

Globally, there are over 3 billion young people under the age of 25. Nearly 90% of all young people live in developing countries. According to statistical data, in most developing countries, young people aged 14 to 35 represent more than 35% of the population. At the same time, young people represent a significant share of the national unemployment rate.

Although numerous efforts are made to employ young people, they remain marginalized in the mainstream economy and we can still observe high poverty rates among them.

Besides insufficiency of own start-up capital, even in wealthy developing countries, young people do not have mind-set development programs that can help them break down the barriers around them. Many young people in many countries, despite graduating from high schools and universities, do not know the basic roles of the economy. To this day, many young people in developing countries, for example, believe that they can work either in the government sector or in the private sector without seeing the importance of commercial entrepreneurship (businesses with the aim of making a profit) or social entrepreneurship (non-profit). This certainly slows down the cycle of the economy and wastes very precious resources.

For the Republic of Moldova, young people represent an important segment of the population that can significantly influence the country's economic and social development. However, young people do not have the necessary conditions for development. Taking into consideration the fact that migration of the Republic of Moldova population is at a high level, and mostly those who leave are young people, it is absolutely necessary to support young people in launching their own businesses and training them in initiating and developing their businesses. Inclusion of young people in the business sector is a solution to retaining young people in the country.

## 2. Applied research methods and materials

Within our research, the views of various researchers and the experience of the European Union in the field of involving young people in economic development processes

were analysed. During the quantitative empirical data analysis, we used official data of EUROSTAT and of the Republic of Moldova.

### 3. Obtained results and discussions

Therefore, involving young people in economic development processes involves forming a durable connection between the world inside and the environment around them. From this understanding, it becomes evident why young people are important for the economy because they are not only current but also future consumers, innovators, workers, entrepreneurs, recyclers, producers, and leaders [3, p. 7].

Actually, young people in the Republic of Moldova make up only about 25% of the total population, Table 1. Over the past years, the country's population has decreased by 243 thousand people, and the number of young people has decreased by 228 thousand. Similarly, during the period of 2014-2021, the proportion of young people aged 15-34 has also decreased, from 30.79% to 24.03%.

The share of young men is slightly higher than that of young women in the total number of young people, 51% and 49% respectively. Also, relatively more young people live in rural areas - 57-58%, compared to 41-42% of young people living in cities.

Based on these data, our research found a different situation even within the general category of young people, taking into account the grouping of young people into two statistical groups – 15-24 years and 25-34 years. Thus, the level of economic activity and employment (Table 2) is significantly lower at the age of 15-24 years (since many young people are still studying), and significantly higher at the age of 25-34 years.

Table 1

#### Distribution of young people in the Republic of Moldova by age group, gender, and place of residence, years 2014-2021

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total population in the country, including,	2857815	2835978	2803186	2755189	2707203	2664224	2635130	2615199
• young people aged 15-34	879930	854193	820454	778125	736880	700943	674038	651882
<b>Share of young people aged 15-34 in the total population of the country, %</b>	<b>30.79</b>	<b>30.12</b>	<b>29.27</b>	<b>28.24</b>	<b>27.22</b>	<b>26.31</b>	<b>25.58</b>	<b>24.93</b>
Young people aged 15-34, by areas:								

Continuation Table 1

• Urban	371348	356604	339857	321932	305230	291870	282637	275356
• Rural	508582	497590	480598	456195	431653	490074	391402	376527
Out of the total number of young people:								
• Males	443417	432379	415296	392110	370442	352882	340169	329812
• Females	436514	421814	405160	386017	366439	348061	333870	322071

Source: developed by the author based on data [4].

According to the statistics of Table 2, the employment rate of youth aged 15-24 years has averaged 18% in recent years, while for youth in the age group 25-34 years it has averaged 50%. However, for both groups the unemployment rate is higher than the economic average level and is 11% for the 15-24 age group and 4-5% for the 25-34 age group.

In the Republic of Moldova, according to statistical data, the employment rate among young people is higher for those with higher education, which is around 50%. Young people with vocational education occupy second place. Among them, the employment rate reaches 35%.

The economic crises faced by the Republic of Moldova have led to an increase in the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate is higher among young people compared to the general population, especially among those aged 15-24.

Initially, higher rates were recorded in rural areas, but in recent years, the urban population has recorded a much higher index compared to the rural population (for example, in 2021, it was 10.2% compared to 4.6%). Especially, the unemployment rate among women is comparatively higher than that of men in this age group, Figure 1.

Table 2

**Activity rate, employment rate, and unemployment rate among young people in the years 2014-2021, %**

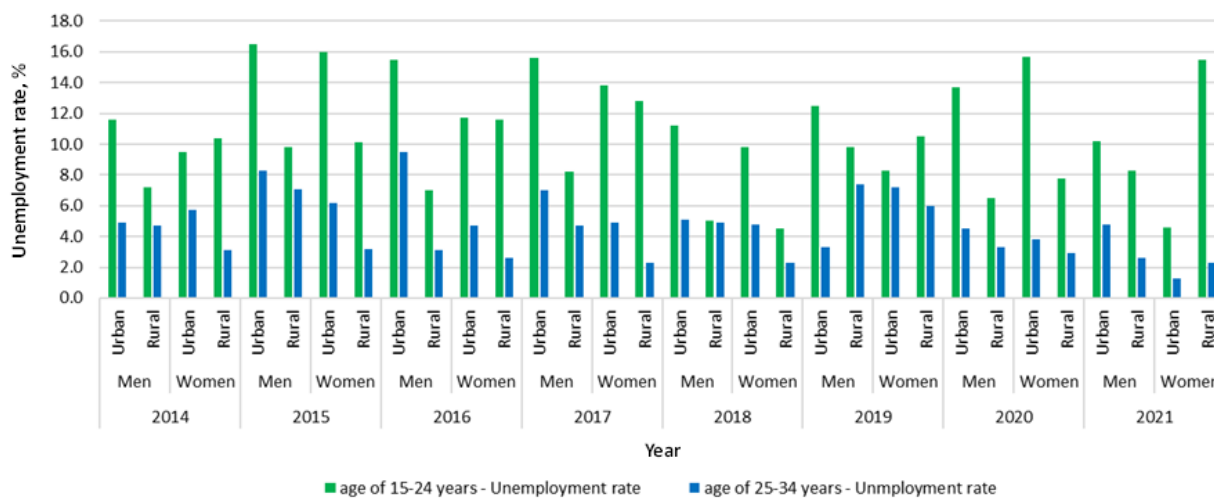
Age groups	Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
15-24 years	Activity rate	20.6	22.2	20.8	20.8	22.5	21.2	18.3	18.1
	Employment rate	18.6	19.5	18.5	18.3	20.9	19.0	16.3	16.4
	Unemployment rate	9.3	12.3	11.0	11.9	7.1	10.4	10.9	9.2
25-34 years	Activity rate	52.6	53.1	53.9	51.5	52.5	55.2	52.1	53.5
	Employment rate	50.2	49.7	51.2	49	50.3	52.1	50.2	52.0
	Unemployment rate	4.6	6.4	5.2	5.0	4.3	5.8	3.7	2.9

Source: developed by the author based on data [5, 6].

One possible cause of the reduction in the unemployment rate in rural areas among young people is the job market itself in the country. Thus, young people have fewer opportunities to find well-paying jobs. More and more citizens prefer to leave the country or

not look for work at all. A characteristic of this age group is also the desire of young people to continue their studies. Similarly, young people prefer to receive financial support from relatives who are working abroad.

The high level of youth unemployment cannot be explained solely by the lack of employment opportunities, but also by the perception of youth regarding pay. Many young people consider the salary offered to be low.



**Figure 1.** The unemployment rate among young people by gender and region.

*Source: compiled by the author based on data [7, 8].*

In addition, we found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a crisis, job losses, reduced income and other consequences, the most affected category was young people. The high level of unemployment among young people in the Republic of Moldova has persisted in recent years, as evidenced by absolute data on the number of unemployed per country.

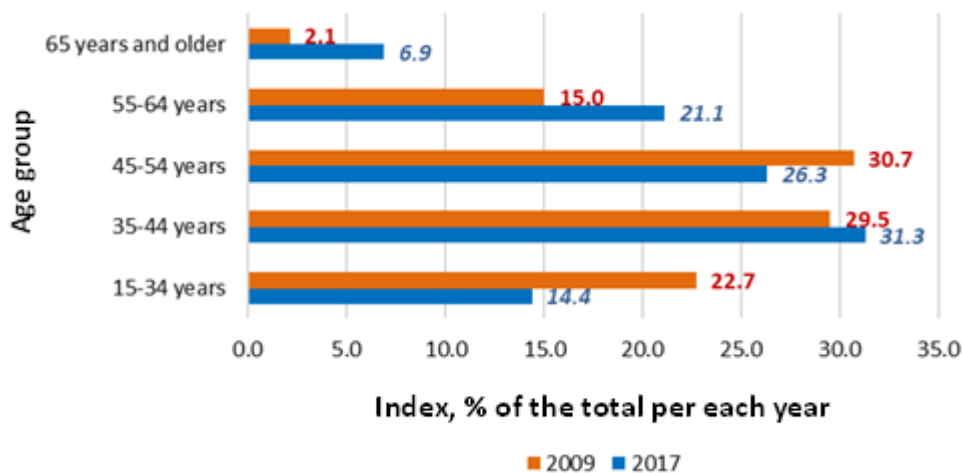
The youth unemployment rate remains the highest compared to other age groups and has been increasing in recent years. According to the data and conclusions of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, the causes of the high youth unemployment rate are related to the limited access of young people to the labour market, caused by several barriers. Some of them are:

- (i) longer and more uncertain transitions from school to work;
- (ii) inability to meet the requirements of employers who, in a market economy environment, opt for qualified and experienced labour forces; unwillingness of employers to hire young graduates;
- (iii) insufficient correlation between educational offerings and labour market requirements, which leads to the employment of young people in lower quality jobs than their qualifications;
- (iv) the level of salaries offered by employers being below the expected level; and
- (v) the migratory behaviour assumed that has formed in Moldovan society in the last two decades. [9, pp. 29-30].

We consider that, in addition to those mentioned by the authorities of the Republic of Moldova, factors that constitute obstacles and barriers to accessing the labour market are:

- low awareness among young people about job market opportunities;
- the problem of insufficient job vacancies and low attractiveness of existing job vacancies;
- young people who prefer to work "off the books";
- many young people prefer to emigrate to EU countries;
- unwillingness of some young people to get a job;
- longer and more uncertain transitions from school to work;
- inability to meet the requirements of employers who, in a market economy environment, opt for qualified and experienced labour forces;
- insufficient correlation between educational offerings and labour market requirements, which leads to the employment of young people in lower quality jobs than their qualifications;
- the level of salaries offered by employers being below the expected level;
- the migratory behaviour assumed that has formed in Moldovan society in the last two decades.

At the same time, in the demographic of enterprises in the Republic of Moldova, it is noted that the proportion of young entrepreneurs is at a fairly low level. Thus, according to the Analytical Report of the National Bureau of Statistics on the participation of women and men in entrepreneurial activity [10], the comparative situation of entrepreneurs by age groups in 2009 and 2017 (Figure 2) shows a reduction of approximately 8.3% of entrepreneurs in the 15-34 age group - from 22.7% in 2009 to 14.4% in 2017.



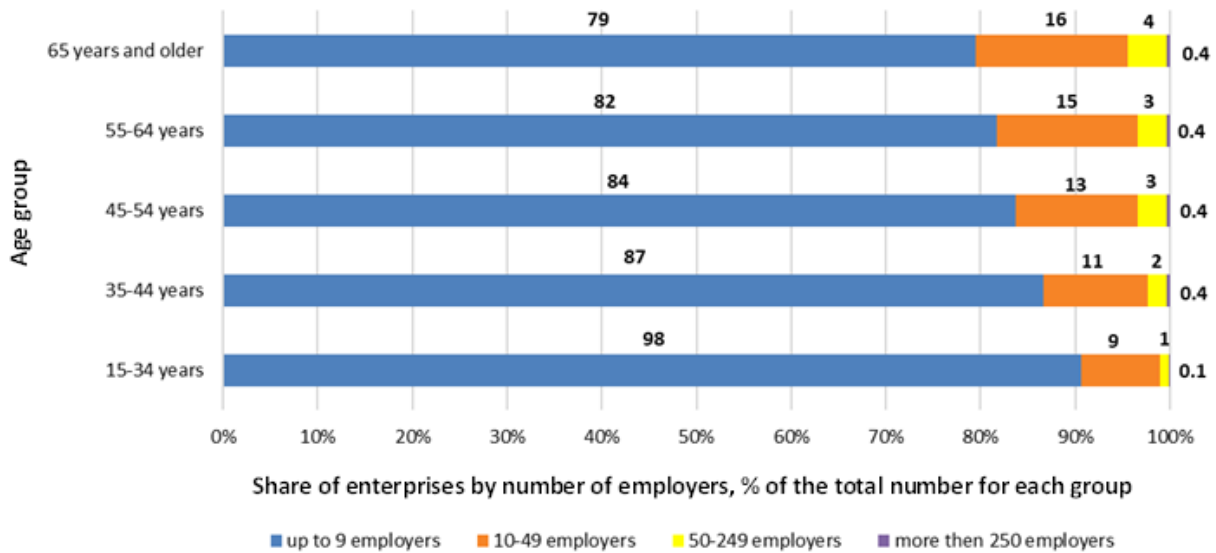
**Figure 2.** Distribution of entrepreneurs by age groups in 2009 and 2017.

*Source: compiled by the author based on data [10, p. 35].*

Same, in 2017, approximately 98% of all young entrepreneurs had their businesses in the SME sector, respectively - 89% in micro-enterprises and 9% - in small enterprises, Figure 3.

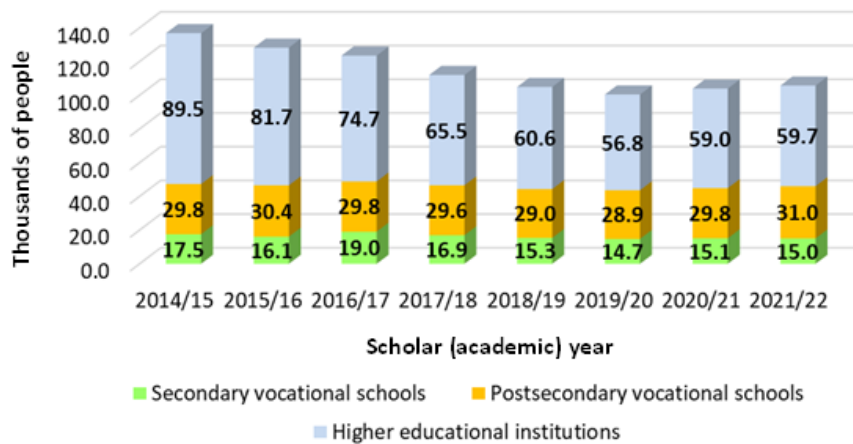
The main fields of activity with the highest entrepreneurial interest for young entrepreneurs [9, p. 38] were and continue to be ITC sector (23.2%), Transport and Storage (16.5%), Agriculture (15.9%), HORECA (Hotels, Restaurants and Cafe stores) sector (15.85%), and other services (18.5%).

It is necessary to mention that the statistical database regarding youth entrepreneurship is extremely limited, and specific indicators or indexes dedicated to the evidence and evaluation of youth entrepreneurship are practically absent.



**Figure 3.** Distribution of entrepreneurs by age groups, size of enterprise, 2017, %.  
 Source: selected by the author from [10, p. 37].

In addition, to assess the prerequisites for youth involvement in entrepreneurship, we analysed the level of education of youth (Figure 4), which directly determines the opportunity and interest in employment.



**Figure 4.** Number of students in the Republic of Moldova, thousands of people.  
 Source: elaborated by the author based on data from [11].

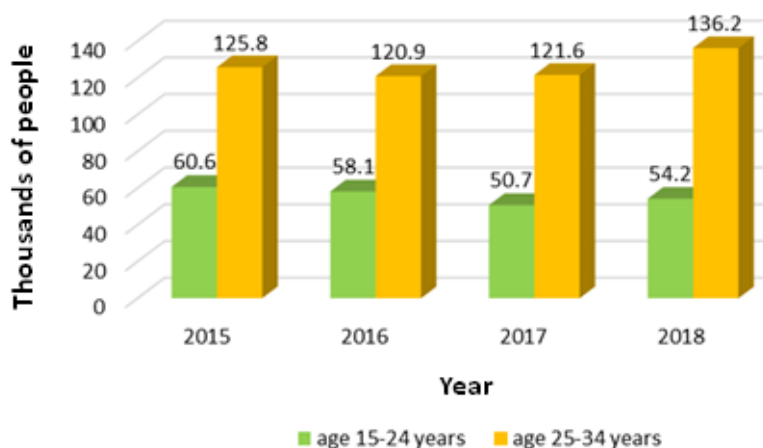
Thus, in the 2021/2022 academic year, the number of young people studying was 105.7 thousand, which is 31.1 thousand or 22.8% less than in the previous year. In the 2020/21 academic year, the number of students (from secondary and vocational technical education) was 140.9 thousand, which is 10.9% lower than in the 2016/17 academic year.

The number of students in vocational technical education institutions does not change significantly during the analysed period, while the number of students in colleges and centres of excellence increases in the last year. On the other hand, the number of people studying in higher education institutions has significantly decreased during the analysed period. For the 2021/2022 scholar (academic) year, there were 29.8 thousand fewer people registered than in the 2014/2015 academic year.

The youth participation rate in education is decreasing, both for women and for men, both in rural and urban areas. Many young people refuse to continue their studies for

various reasons, the most frequent being the lack of financial means to pay for their studies and the desire to work. For men, the motivation is more specific - the desire to work, while for women, it is related to issues of financing their studies and various family responsibilities. For women in rural areas, these problems are much more prominent than those in urban areas are.

Currently, the total number of young people studying in secondary and higher educational institutions is declining and will continue to decline in the coming years due to low birth rates. Another reason for such a sharp decline in the number of students is the mass outflow of young people abroad, and youth emigration rates have been constantly growing in recent years, right up to the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 5). According to our research, young people leave the country mainly because they do not agree with the working conditions or remuneration offered in the country. Young people are more likely to decide to leave the country. Thus, every fourth young person works abroad or in search of work.



**Figure 5.** Emigration of young people abroad before COVID-19 pandemic, thousands of people.

*Source: elaborated by the author based on data from [12].*

Young people are often not satisfied with the employment prospects in the Republic of Moldova. Of those who emigrate abroad, over 70% are men. Young people from rural areas are more likely to leave because it is more difficult for them to find well-paid jobs in the countryside. While men often choose Russia (until 2020) for a job abroad, women choose Italy. The proportion of young women working in Italy is four times higher than that of young men. The countries where most young people are employed are Russia, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

It should also be noted that young people still intend to migrate in search of a job, mostly for short periods of less than one to three years, and only one in ten intends to return to the country.

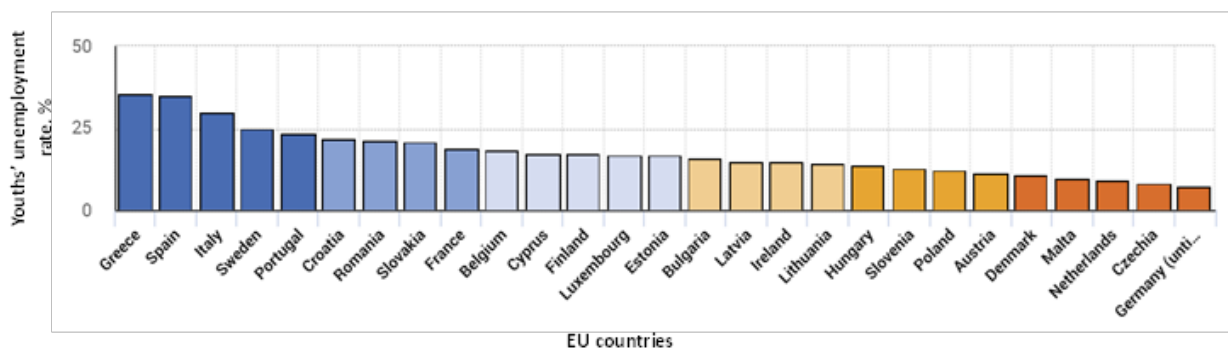
Involving young people in the business sector is a solution to retaining young people in the country. The main policy documents adopted in our country clearly indicate the need to develop and promote entrepreneurial education and culture, including developing entrepreneurial skills and an entrepreneurial mind-set at all levels of education.

The future prosperity of Europe largely depends on its youth. Additionally, young people represent a significant number and proportion of the EU population, numbering

almost 100 million in the EU, or one-fifth of the total EU population. These circumstances are due to the attention paid to youth by European politics. Despite the enormous opportunities offered by EU policies, young people face a number of specific challenges related to education and training systems, which, exacerbated by the economic crisis, make it difficult to access the labour market [13, p. 3].

Analysing the European Union's experience in supporting young entrepreneurs, we find that engaging young people in the workforce is characterized by certain specific difficulties. Thus, young people have fewer chances to be professionally employed. The youth unemployment rate remains the highest compared to other age groups and has been increasing in recent years. Within European countries, there are large variations of this indicator (Figure 6). For example, in Germany and Austria, the youth's unemployment rate is around 10%, while in countries like Greece and Spain, it is over 30% [14].

The task of reducing youth unemployment has become one of the main tasks in most countries of the world. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) Global Youth Employment Trends 2022 [15], youth employment worldwide fell by 34 million between 2019 and 2020, largely due to the COVID-19 crisis [15, p. 15].



**Figure 6.** Youth unemployment rate in the European Union, 2021.

*Source: elaborated by the author based on Eurostat data [14].*

Entrepreneurship is increasingly seen as one of the most effective opportunities to strengthen youth employment strategies. It is valued as an innovative approach to integrate youth into the labour market.

Even as the role of entrepreneurship in driving economic development and job creation is increasingly understood, little effort has been made to consider it from the perspective of young people. The requirements and demands for young people are basically the same as for the adult population as a whole, but the specific needs of young people and their special entrepreneurial potential, as well as their decisive contribution to economic and social progress, are underestimated [17, pp. 5, 45, 63].

According to the “Enterprise Action Plan 2020” [18], entrepreneurship is an important driver of economic growth and job creation for EU countries. Across the European Union, the basic conditions for entrepreneurship vary greatly and young people benefit from different incentives and face specific (local) barriers to starting a business. Also, regarding the issue of supporting young entrepreneurs, there is a difference between countries with different income levels and levels of development.

In this context, it was necessary to conduct a comparative study of the situation regarding young entrepreneurs in different countries. For this, we took the following countries as reference points:

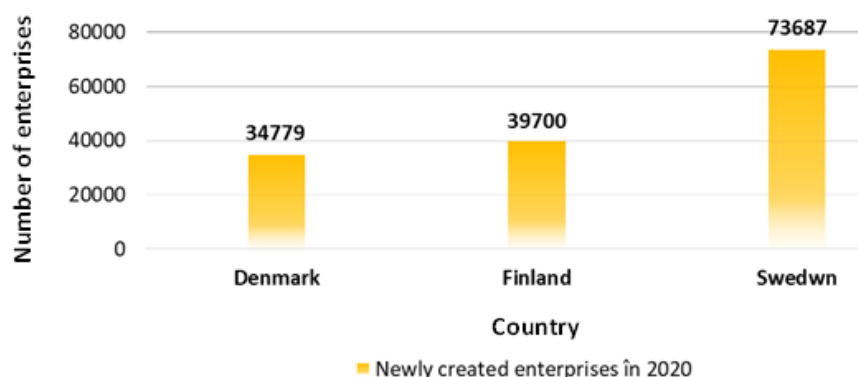


1. Sweden, Denmark, Finland;
2. Portugal and Spain;
3. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia;
4. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova.

The research results show the following specific aspects for these groups:

**1. Sweden, Denmark, Finland.** The first category includes countries that have the best results in supporting young entrepreneurs and their development. According to the OECD, only in 2020, about 148,168 new enterprises were created in these three Scandinavian countries, Figure 7.

Thus, registering a company in Denmark has three main advantages: a favourable geographic location for trading in Northern Europe, developed infrastructure, and highly skilled specialists who speak two languages (Danish and English). Setting up a business in Denmark can be done in a few hours and at very low cost, and once registered, companies are placed in a corporate hub with rapid access to other developed countries. With a well-established practice of research and development, especially in the energy sector, Denmark is also an ideal place to develop new products and drive innovation, but without adequate legal assistance, maximizing a commercial business can be a challenge.



**Figure 7.** Newly created enterprises in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden in 2020.

*Source: elaborated by the author based on data [19-21].*

In turn, Sweden, according to the World Bank's "Doing Business 2020" report, ranks 10th out of 190 in terms of ease of doing business. Sweden is known for its favourable business climate, global competitiveness, multilingual staff, and commitment to innovation. This is due to a developed market economy and an efficient educational system. The government has provided several methods to facilitate the creation and operation of a business, including online platforms for registering a company.

Finland is known for its entrepreneurial education system. The Finnish government emphasizes the promotion of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial education. In Finland, all counselling services and other business services are available to young entrepreneurs, as well as anyone who wants to start a business.

These countries have adopted various policies and programs to support young entrepreneurs, in which policies and programs are designed to support all citizens equally. The goal is to establish an easy-to-understand system for future and existing entrepreneurs. Support for future or existing entrepreneurs is provided in the form of training measures, coaching/networking opportunities, and to a small extent, through (micro) financing. As a result, the number of newly created enterprises is increasing. For example, in Sweden in

2020, the number of companies founded by young entrepreneurs increased by 14% compared to previous years [22-24].

A characteristic of these countries is entrepreneurial education within the education system. Young entrepreneurs benefit from a wide range of support programs, including funding, mentoring, and access to business networks. In addition, these countries have a favourable business environment, with strong infrastructure and a culture of innovation.

**2. Portugal and Spain.** The second group of countries is represented by Spain and Portugal - two countries that have been strongly influenced by the economic crisis and where the unemployment rate, especially among young people, is over 30%.

Specific to these countries is the implementation of a series of programs and projects, both at the national and regional and local levels [25, 26]. The emphasis is on:

1. Professional training;
2. Entrepreneurial coaching and mentoring;
3. Business consulting, including incubators/accelerators.

Entrepreneurship is seen as a way out of unemployment, especially for young people, and is widely promoted in the national media and by a number of public and private institutions. All assistance programs have websites and application requests are broadcast to the public. Many of the activities and projects supporting entrepreneurship have been widely publicized, with the introduction of an increasing number of initiatives that offer visibility to entrepreneurs. These actions are mainly aimed at the general public, initiatives that target underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, such as young people.

Thus, various competitions are organized. The national competition for young entrepreneurs (*Certamen Nacional de Jóvenes Emprendedores*) is open to entrepreneurs under 35 years old. Another notable entrepreneurship competition is the Confederation of Young Entrepreneurs Associations (CEAJE) award. CEAJE is a private non-profit association that represents the interests of its members. The National Young Entrepreneur Award is held annually to celebrate remarkable entrepreneurs under the age of 40.

Young entrepreneurs benefit from extended discounts on social contributions: men under 30 and women under 35 benefits from reduced contributions for three years, while the benefit ends after two years for other beginners.

However, more awareness-raising actions are needed for different target groups to increase awareness of the numerous supports for entrepreneurship that are available, as not all have the same coverage.

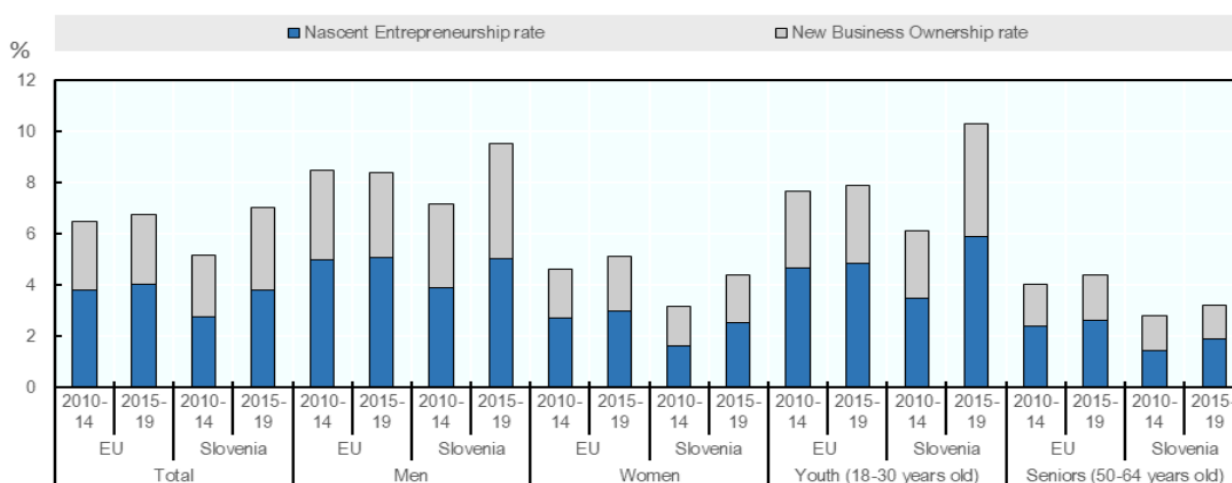
**3. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia.** Since the proclamation of independence, these countries have promoted reforms in business administration.

Entrepreneurship development has been at the centre of *Estonia's* economic development over the past 25 years. Estonia is the right country for technological start-ups, offering new businesses an efficient and flexible infrastructure, as well as support for start-ups through the government program Start-up Estonia. According to the Intelligent Community Forum, Tallinn is one of the smart cities in Europe. There are various accelerators, such as Prototron, Start-up Wise Guys, Mektory Start-up Center, etc., which emphasize and promote innovative projects.

*Lithuania* is a small but one of the most innovative and technically advanced countries in Europe. According to the World Bank, there is very little administrative burden for starting new businesses, and Lithuania is ranked among the most favourable countries in the EU in this regard.

Latvia offers a number of advantages for those who want to develop a business, including ease of registration and business operations, a relatively low tax burden for companies. Similarly, all three Baltic countries provide access to the EU single market. In these countries, several activities related to supporting young people are implemented [27-29], especially programs related to initiation into the profession, preparation for employment in the field of work.

Slovenia [30] has launched several projects and activities over the years aimed at promoting entrepreneurial activity (Figure 8). Thus, at the European Union level, Slovenian youth were the only population group that had a higher developing entrepreneurship rate than the EU average.



**Figure 8.** The proportion of the Slovenia population (aged 18-64) who self-declare themselves involved in developing entrepreneurial activities or new business ownership.

Source: elaborated by the author based on OECD data [30, p. 16].

There are several specific strategies for groups that aim to help disadvantaged groups in the labour market. Over the years, several entrepreneurial inclusion programs for disadvantaged groups have been implemented in Slovenia, but currently, most of them are no longer operational. In Slovenia, innovative companies are promoted through Start-up Slovenia programme.

**4. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova.** These countries represent the Eastern Partnership countries. The main objective of these countries is to consolidate political association and economic integration with the European Union. In 2021, Belarus suspended its participation in this partnership.

Youth are increasingly at the centre of political debates as an engine of development in Eastern Partnership countries. Many studies have been conducted in the Eastern Partnership region in the past decade to identify the challenges facing young people. One of the most important and widely discussed topics in this regard is the issue of youth unemployment. This is the main reason why too many young people in the Eastern Partnership countries are forced to leave their countries in search of a "better life" (for example, about 25% of young people aged 15 to 29 live abroad). This, in turn, disrupts the potential that could have been used for the development of their home countries. Understanding this issue, the governments of Eastern Partnership countries have begun to take more measures to prevent it.

The level of prioritization of youth entrepreneurship development may differ from country to country, but the importance of youth entrepreneurship development is indicated in various state documents of Eastern Partnership countries, including youth laws, youth policy implementation strategies, government programs, SME strategies, etc. The only exception is Georgia, where neither youth policy nor SME development strategy has been identified [31].

A serious problem is the absence of systematic and continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented projects and programs. There is no consistent statistical data available on youth entrepreneurship, so there are no official general statistics on youth entrepreneurship in the Eastern Partnership countries.

In these countries, SMEs are widely developed to combat youth unemployment. It is important to note that youth entrepreneurship is part of the SME strategies of most Eastern Partnership countries. Now, several programs have emerged in Eastern Partnership countries, including tax incentives, financial support, and consulting.

The level of SME development in Azerbaijan is lower. Also, in Belarus, the economy is still dominated by large state-owned enterprises, a culture inherited from the USSR.

Overall, SMEs in the Eastern Partnership region represent between 83% and 99% of private enterprises. Thus, in many countries, the procedure for registering SMEs has been facilitated.

**For the countries in all the analysed groups**, it is specific that many activities related to youth entrepreneurship development have been halted or temporarily suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic. We believe that European Union countries should also pay attention to a special category - immigrants (foreigners who entered the country for long-term stay) who need to be integrated into society. The events in Ukraine, triggered on February 24, 2022, have created a situation where many European countries, including the Republic of Moldova, are facing a large influx of refugees.

Analysing foreign experience in supporting young entrepreneurs, we can mention the following:

- ✓ Among the state bodies and organizations used to support disadvantaged people in the countries mentioned above are chambers of commerce, various business incubators, various private organizations and funds for business support and development, exchange networks of experience, etc.
- ✓ Activities related to supporting young entrepreneurs include various training courses and programs, mentoring programs, business angel services, early education in entrepreneurship (the most eloquent example - Finland), access to financing, development of entrepreneurial skills and competencies.
- ✓ Organizing and conducting various competitions for young entrepreneurs;
- ✓ Creating optimal conditions for entrepreneurship development.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the above, we can conclude that in most of the analysed countries, the emphasis is on training and developing entrepreneurial skills among young people through various mentoring and coaching programs, disseminating good practices, and sharing experience.

The experience of the analysed countries demonstrates that support for disadvantaged individuals, in our case - young entrepreneurs, is very welcome.

For the Republic of Moldova, it is opportune to take into account that the support for young entrepreneurs needs to be designed from the perspective of a long-term strategy. As a result, the number of young entrepreneurs will increase, and young people's perception and attitude towards entrepreneurial activities will change.

Same, a wide range of tools is needed to support young entrepreneurs. This support is necessary not only during the launch of the business but also in the first years of operation.

In our opinion, it is reasonable to adopt the Finnish model of entrepreneurial education, through which young people become much more confident in their own abilities and are open to new challenges.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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## E-COMMERCE INNOVATION IN EMERGING FASHION MARKETS: A CASE STUDY OF MOLDOVAN DESIGNERS' DIGITAL EXPANSION AND ROLE OF SUPPORT PROGRAMS

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**Abstract.** This paper explores the transformative role of e-commerce in the emerging Moldovan fashion market, focusing on the digital expansion of local designers. It examines the industry's shift from traditional manufacturing to innovative online sales channels, highlighting the challenges and opportunities this transition presents, including the need for new skills, legal framework adaptability, and investment. The study also discusses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the adoption of e-commerce among Moldovan fashion firms. With the support of programs like the Fashion Omnichannel Mentorship Program, these firms are enhancing their digital presence and competitiveness. The paper emphasizes the importance of mentorship and tailored support in enabling Moldovan brands to thrive in the digital marketplace, contributing to their growth and success in the global fashion industry.

**Key words:** *fashion sector, ecommerce, support programs, value added.*

**Rezumat.** Lucrarea explorează rolul transformator al comerțului electronic pe piața emergentă a modei din Moldova, concentrându-se pe expansiunea digitală a designerilor locali. Acesta examinează trecerea industriei de la producția tradițională la canale inovatoare de vânzare online, evidențind provocările și oportunitățile pe care le prezintă această tranziție, inclusiv nevoia de noi competențe, adaptabilitatea cadrului legal și investiții. Studiul discută, de asemenea, impactul pandemiei de COVID-19, care a accelerat adoptarea comerțului electronic în rândul firmelor de modă din Republica Moldova. Cu sprijinul unor programe precum Fashion Omnichannel Mentorship Program, aceste firme își îmbunătățesc prezența digitală și competitivitatea. Lucrarea subliniază importanța mentoratului și a sprijinului personalizat pentru a permite mărcilor moldovenești să prospere pe piața digitală, contribuind la creșterea și succesul lor în industria modei globale.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *sectorul modei, comerț electronic, programe de sprijin, valoare adăugată.*



## 1. Introduction

The fashion industry globally has experienced a significant transformation with the shift towards e-commerce, primarily driven by technological advancements and changing consumer behaviors. This transition to digital sales channels is particularly impactful for emerging markets, where e-commerce presents a unique opportunity for growth and global reach. In the context of Moldova, a country with a burgeoning fashion scene, this shift holds particular significance. Moldova's fashion industry, traditionally reliant on low-value 'Cut & Make' services for European clients, is witnessing a paradigm shift with local designers embracing e-commerce to expand their customer base beyond physical borders. This move not only enables these designers to tap into larger markets but also to test and refine their offerings in smaller, local markets like Moldova before scaling to regional markets such as Romania, which serves as a gateway to the broader European digital marketplace. The transition to e-commerce represents a critical step in the evolution of Moldova's fashion industry from a manufacturing focus to a design and brand-centric model.

### 1.1. E-Commerce Trends in The Global Fashion Industry

E-commerce in the global fashion industry has seen unprecedented growth over the last decade, reshaping both the marketing and sales models as well as the product design in fashion. This growth spiked during the pandemic, with online purchases increasing by 30% annually in 2020 in the USA and Europe. It's predicted that from 2022 to 2025, e-commerce will grow at an annual rate of 10% in the USA and 11% in Europe, aligning with pre-pandemic levels [1]. China's online retail sales have also grown, though at a slower rate post-2021. Global e-commerce revenues are expected to reach \$4.11 trillion in 2023, with fashion products ranking second after electronics. A projected market volume of \$6.35 trillion is anticipated by 2027, with a significant contribution from China. The number of e-commerce users is expected to reach 5.29 billion by 2027, with an average revenue per user (ARPU) projected at 0.93k USD [2].

There is a significant correlation between the overall growth in e-commerce revenues and the prominence of fashion products within the e-commerce sector. As e-commerce expands globally, fashion products remain a top category, underscoring the industry's adaptability and innovation in embracing digital sales channels. This trend reflects the dynamic nature of consumer preferences and the increasing reliance on online platforms for fashion retail, demonstrating a robust and symbiotic relationship between e-commerce growth and the fashion industry's digital evolution [3].

E-commerce has introduced new sales and business models, with fashion brands building their operations around direct online sales to consumers and adopting omnichannel strategies, which combine physical and online distribution methods. Yet, the recent slowdown in e-commerce growth necessitates a careful recalibration of these distribution strategies to manage upcoming changes.

### 1.2 E-commerce market trends in Moldova

In Moldova, the e-commerce sector is at an early stage of development, presenting significant potential for expansion and improvement. The value of e-commerce transactions in Moldova has grown over time, reaching 314 million euros in 2021, indicating a strengthening e-commerce market. According to Statista, the value of the B2C e-commerce market in Moldova is estimated to be much higher, at around 911.90 million euros in 2023

[2]. A compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12.72% (34.6% in 2023 alone) is expected, leading to an estimated market volume of 1472 million euros by 2027 [2].

There are significant interdependencies within the e-commerce market in Moldova. Key trends such as the overall growth in transaction values, the average value per transaction, and the increasing usage of active cards for e-commerce suggest a gradually maturing market [3]. These factors, combined with year-over-year dynamics, reflect the evolving consumer behaviour towards online shopping, the increasing trust in digital transactions, and the growing sophistication of the e-commerce infrastructure in Moldova. Overall the e-commerce ecosystem is becoming more robust and integrated. Despite over 90% of e-commerce transactions being cash on delivery, non-cash payments are on the rise [3]. Moldova has seen a steady increase in the number of active cards between 2017 and 2021, influenced by digital technology advancements, e-commerce growth, and the adoption of contactless payments [3]. The number of e-commerce platforms in Moldova has significantly increased in recent years, with the most substantial annual growth occurring in 2020, the first year of the pandemic. The majority of Moldova's e-commerce transactions are carried out in the international market rather than locally, indicating a preference for overseas online shopping and the need for local businesses to adapt to this trend.

### **1.3 E-Commerce disparities and growth potential: a comparative analysis of Moldova and Romania's online markets**

Despite growth, in Moldova e-commerce represents a modest portion of its total trade at 4%, which is below the global average of 19%. Moldovans spend an average of 155 Euros per year on online purchases, equating to about 13 Euros monthly. This expenditure is a small fraction, only 4%, of the average monthly consumption basket. This data suggests there's significant potential for e-commerce growth in Moldova, both in terms of market penetration and per capita spending [3].

Moldova, looking towards neighbouring Romania as a reference and a gateway for expanding digital sales into the EU's broader Single Digital Market, exhibits a stark contrast in e-commerce spending. Moldovan annual online shopping expenditure is significantly less compared to Romania, with Moldovans spending about one-fourth of what Romanians do on e-commerce annually [4]. This disparity highlights the differences in e-commerce penetration and consumer spending patterns between these neighbouring countries.

The nearby Romania is the 37th largest market for eCommerce with a predicted revenue of US\$7,970.1 million by 2023, placing it ahead of Finland. Anticipated to grow at a compound annual rate of 6.2% from 2023 to 2027, the Romanian e-commerce sector is forecasted to reach a market volume of approximately US\$10.15 billion by the end of the period. In 2023 alone, the market is expected to surge by 13.1%, significantly contributing to the global growth rate of 8.7%. This growth pace is twice as fast compared to Moldova's. This upward trajectory is reflective of a broader trend where e-commerce worldwide is poised for continued expansion in the coming years. Fashion constitutes 17.6% of online sales in Romania, being the second largest product category sold online after consumer electronics [5].

### **1.4 Overview of Moldova's fashion manufacturing industry**

Moldova's fashion manufacturing industry, traditionally reliant on 'Cut & Make' clothing manufacturing services for European brands, faces a transformative opportunity

with the rise of e-commerce. This industry has shown resilience and adaptability, particularly in exports to Europe, with consistent growth between 2018 and 2022.

This growth has been sturdy, with annual y-o-y growth rates ranging between 5% and 10%, during 2018-2022 (See Table 1 below). Despite global economic pressures and pandemic's impact, the industry has shown a robust recovery, with turnover figures in 2022 reflecting a strong rebound from the dip in 2020. The Moldovan fashion manufacturing industry experienced a significant blow due to the COVID-19 pandemic [6], which led to an 11% annual decrease in exports between 2019 and 2020, and has started to rebound in 2021 and 2022. In 2022, the turnover of enterprises in this sector reached 7.6 billion Moldovan Lei, representing a significant increase from 4.5 billion Lei in 2015, by 69%. This revival is attributed to the resurgence of the fashion industry in Europe, driven by trends like "nearshoring" – the relocation of production closer to Europe to reduce dependency on Asian countries like China, Bangladesh, and Vietnam. This shift is motivated not only by supply chain disruptions but also by a growing awareness of the need for sustainability, adherence to social and ethical standards in employment, and protection of design and product copyrights.

Table 1

### Export and Employment Trends of Fashion Manufacturing Industry of the Republic of Moldova, 2018-2022

Indicators	Years				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>EXPORT – total national, US dollars</b>	2,706,173	2,779,164	2,467,106	3,144,505	4,332,145
<b>EXPORT – fashion manufacturing industry, US dollars</b>	427,587	379,230	338,977	390,719	422,238
Raw hides (raw material), tanned hides, natural furs, and products made from them, US dollars.	22,385	18,903	15,468	18,582	22,404
Textile materials and articles made from these materials, US dollars.	368,754	325,363	289,786	333,966	357,222
Footwear, headgear; sun umbrellas; whips; riding crops; cravats and parts thereof; processed feathers and down; articles made of feathers and down; artificial flowers; articles of human hair, US dollars.	36,448	34,964	33,723	38,171	42,611
EXPORT – fashion manufacturing industry weight in national exports, %.	16%	14%	14%	12%	10%
EXPORT – fashion manufacturing industry annual growth, %.	100%	-11%	-11%	15%	8%

Source: National Statistical Bureau [7].

However, Moldova's fashion manufacturing industry faces challenges in value addition and global market competition. The industry's dominating Cut and Make model, while cost-effective, has limited the industry's capacity for value addition and makes it susceptible to global market fluctuations and competition from lower-cost regions. Productivity and profitability challenges have been manifesting, with a notable decline in exports per employee until a recovery phase in 2021-2022, which saw growths of 24% and 14%, respectively.

The operational focus on cost-effectiveness does not foster the development of higher-value activities such as original design or local branding. This results in struggles for the industry, characterized by low productivity and profitability, and consequently, lower wages. Per National Statistics Bureau, average wages in the industry, although on the rise, still lag compared to the national average - 8,073 lei in 2022 compared to 4,145 lei in 2015 - remaining 26% lower than the national average wage of 10,954 lei in 2022. The industry's reliance on the 'Cut & Make' model is likely to face increased pressure in the future without a strategic pivot towards higher-value-added processes [7].

In recent years, Moldova has seen an increase in local companies producing under their own brands, a business model adding significant value. This rise is supported by competitiveness projects funded by USAID, the Swedish Government, and UK Aid. These enterprises, including independent designers and branded manufacturers, are becoming pillars of Moldova's fashion industry.

From 2010-2015, there was notable growth in local fashion brands aiming to capture the domestic market and reduce imports. The collective brand "Din Inimă. Branduri de Moldova," curated by the APIUS Moldova fashion manufacturers association, has become a key platform for promoting over 70 local fashion brands. Although small, the local apparel market has seen overall growth, with a rise in the retail sector's share of clothing, footwear, and leather goods sales, suggesting a doubling of official clothing sales over five years, reaching 1.35 billion Lei in 2015. Moldova's domestic market constitutes a pivot for emerging designers and fashion labels to test their designs, interact with consumers, and earn their first cash [8].

However, these young fashion brands face challenges, including strong competition from foreign brands and price sensitivity among local consumers. They struggle with long-term challenges like limited promotional capabilities, small marketing budgets, and restricted access to affordable retail spaces in the capital city of Chisinau.

To overcome these barriers and succeed in the market, these brands are encouraged to look towards exporting to the EU markets or leveraging e-commerce for global reach. E-commerce presents a pivotal opportunity for local brands, especially given the recent increase in domestically produced brands.

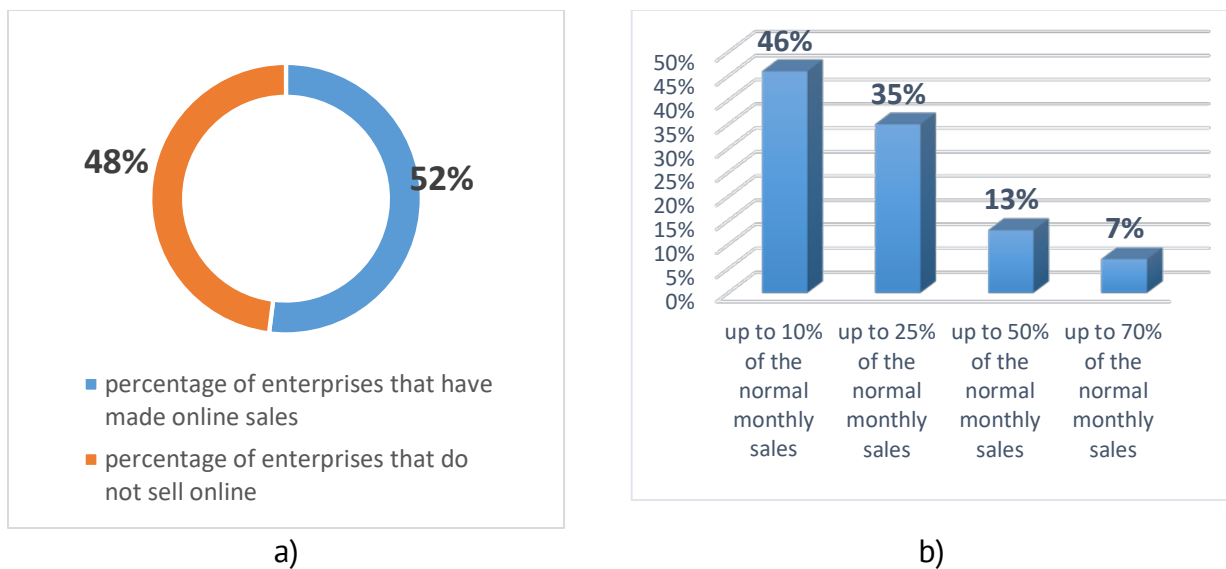
Leveraging digital sales channels enables these brands to access global markets directly, overcoming traditional barriers and responding more agilely to market demands. With the Moldovan government's trade liberalization efforts and increasing proficiency in e-commerce among local companies, there's potential for substantial growth in the digital marketplace.

The transition from traditional manufacturing to design innovation and brand development through e-commerce could redefine Moldova's position in the global fashion industry.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Understanding the ecommerce needs of local fashion firms: COVID-19 catalyst for digital transformation

Figure 1 below illustrates the adoption of online sales by fashion firms in Moldova during COVID-19 that has been a tipping point for accelerating ecommerce adoption as a business model by local firms, as well as for the consumers. This data, sourced from a survey of 63 firms conducted by APIUS as part of the Fashion Manufacturing Industry's evaluation of COVID-19's impact supported by the Moldova Competitiveness Project, funded by USAID, Sweden, and UK in 2019, reflects the evolving e-commerce landscape in the country [6]. The Figure 1 indicates a significant shift in the adoption of online sales by fashion industry firms in Moldova. In 2019, nearly half of the surveyed firms (48%) were engaging in online sales, as the COVID-19 pandemic encouraged fashion manufacturers to expand online presence and diversify sales channels given closure of physical shops. At the same time, the 2019 survey showed that nearly half of these businesses had not engaged in online sales. Of those that did, many reported that online sales accounted for a small percentage of their total monthly sales, indicating substantial room for growth in e-commerce. This suggests a growing emphasis on digital channels, despite the dominance of traditional sales methods, and highlights the impact of COVID-19 as a potential catalyst for this shift [6].



**Figure 1.** Use on Online Sales by Fashion Manufacturing Firms in Moldova, 2019-2023. Source: survey, sample 63 clothing manufacturers [3]: a) Online Sales Use by Enterprises; b) Percentage of online sales in enterprise total monthly sales.

Moldovan fashion firms face several challenges when it comes to adopting e-commerce and digital sales. These challenges include:

- ❖ **Additional Investment Requirements:** The need for significant additional investments to transition their products into the online environment.
- ❖ **Lack of Know-How and Online Operation Skills:** Limited knowledge and skills to effectively operate in the online environment, including digital marketing, website management, and online sales strategies.
- ❖ **Legal Framework Limitations:** Existing limitations within the legal framework that regulate e-commerce activities, which may hinder the smooth operation of online

sales. This particular concerns local accounting specifics, cross-border deliveries and product returns (issues with Moldovan customs requiring repeat customs clearance for international returns), underdeveloped and expensive logistics (including last-mile delivery in Moldova and Romania) [3].

❖ **Lack of Competitive Local E-commerce Service Providers:** Limited availability of local service providers offering competitive prices for e-commerce services, such as website development and maintenance, product listing services, as well as digital marketing and social media services.

These challenges collectively pose obstacles to the successful adoption of e-commerce by Moldovan fashion firms, requiring targeted solutions and support to overcome them.

## 2.2. Description of the Fashion E-commerce Support Program

The Fashion E-commerce Support Program is a collaborative initiative supported by a partnership between APIUS (Moldova's fashion manufacturers association) and ZIPHOUSE Fashion Hub, with support from development partners USAID, Sweden and UK via Future Technologies Activity [8]. Its primary objective is to accelerate sales for fashion firms in Moldova by enhancing their presence across both online and offline platforms. The program aims to increase competitiveness, drive profitability, and enhance economic resilience among participating firms. This is achieved through a comprehensive approach that involves streamlining and digitizing current procedures, improving the consumer experience, and creating new digital sales channels to penetrate new markets [8].

The Fashion E-commerce Support Program was implemented through multiple iterations from 2019 to 2023, with periodic and iterative program adaptations made based on the outcomes and feedback received. The program adaptations were branded based on maturity level of participants and types of priority interventions, respectively GoOnline for early intervention, Fashion Omnichannel for ecommerce adoption, and Ecommerce Mentorship for digital sales strategic expansion and cross-border and international growth [8].

**The key objectives** of the Fashion E-commerce Support Program are as follows:

- **Accelerate Digital Sales:** The program aims to boost omnichannel sales for local fashion firms by leveraging both online and offline sales channels.
- **Increase Competitiveness:** It seeks to enhance the competitive edge of participating firms in the fashion industry including capacity to export regionally and globally and cater to the new generation of consumers.
- **Drive Profitability:** The program aims to improve the financial performance and profitability of fashion businesses, increasing sales of own branded fashion products.
- **Economic Resilience:** By diversifying sales channels and adopting digital practices, the program aims to increase the economic resilience of participating firms that was particularly valid during COVID and is valid for the long term, as digital sales enable global exports and market diversification.

### 2.2.1 Methodology for Firm Selection

The selection of firms to participate in the program is based on certain criteria and priorities. Eligible applicant firms are chosen through the following criteria [8]:

- ❖ *E-commerce Improvement:* Priority is given to applicants who plan to enhance their e-commerce practices, indicating a commitment to adopting digital sales channels.

- ❖ *Innovation and Sustainability*: Firms looking to integrate innovative, sustainable, and energy-efficient practices and tools into their operations are favoured.
- ❖ *Export Enhancement*: Priority is given to firms that have strategies to increase the volume and value of their exports, contributing to broader market reach.
- ❖ *Sales Acceleration*: Firms aiming to accelerate local and international sales receive special attention.
- ❖ *Women-Owned Companies*: Additional priority is given to women-owned companies, promoting gender diversity in the industry.
- ❖ *Rural Resilience*: Firms contributing to rural resilience are also prioritized, emphasizing their role in strengthening rural economies.

The selection process involves reviewing applications and conducting online interviews with eligible firms to strategize and determine short to mid-term action plans [8]. This initial assessment helps in identifying the areas where firms require assistance.

### 2.2.2 Support and Intervention

Eligible applicant firms selected to participate in the program receive a combination of financial and technical support. The program is designed to address the specific needs and objectives of each participating firm. The support and interventions provided may include [8]:

- *Financial Support*: Firms receive financial assistance to fund activities that enhance their digital presence, streamline operations, and improve sales channels.
- *Technical Support*: Expert guidance and mentorship are provided to help firms implement digital practices, improve customer experiences, and explore new sales opportunities.
- *Action Plans*: Individualized action plans are developed for each firm to outline the steps and strategies needed to achieve their objectives.
- *Capacity Building*: Firms may receive training and capacity-building sessions through local and international mentors, group and individualized training and coaching sessions, knowledge building events to enhance their skills and capabilities.
- *Monitoring and Evaluation*: Progress is monitored and evaluated throughout the program to ensure that firms are achieving their goals and making improvements.

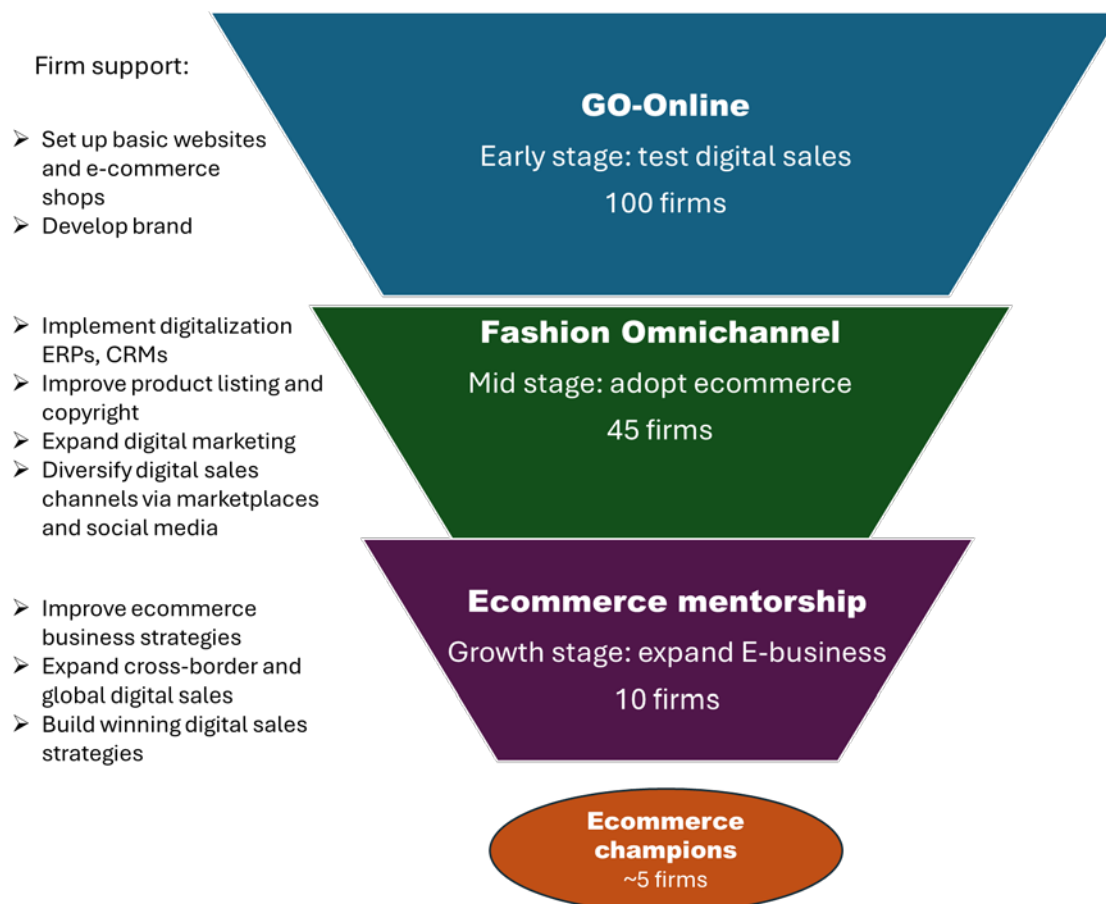
The program provides a menu of support activities, as per Figure 1 below [8], that are aimed at helping participating fashion firms in Moldova adapt to modern retail trends, improve customer interactions, and excel in both online and offline sales channels. The support activities are to be provided by local and international mentors, as well as consulting and marketing subcontractors, that can help beneficiary firms to develop the required knowledge and skills to succeed in the new business model. The support activities for program participants can be summarized as follows [8]:

1. **Enhancing the Buyer Experience in Physical Stores**: Implementing improvements to create a more engaging and customer-friendly environment in brick-and-mortar stores.
2. **Implementing Integrated Digital Solutions for Managing Inventory**: Streamlining inventory management processes to efficiently handle finished products across

production sites, warehouse, physical stores and online channels, avoiding excessive stocks.

3. **Implementing Omnichannel Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Solutions:** Adopting CRM solutions that enable seamless interactions with customers across multiple channels, both online and offline.
4. **Implementing Customer Loyalty Program Management Solutions:** Developing and managing customer loyalty programs to enhance customer retention and engagement.
5. **Implementing Innovative Merchandising and Showcase Solutions:** Introducing innovative merchandising techniques and display strategies to attract and engage shoppers.
6. **Implementing Innovative Display Solutions and Augmented Reality Technologies:** Incorporating cutting-edge display technologies, including augmented reality, to create captivating in-store experiences.
7. **Designing/Redesigning Interior Spaces for Efficiency and Enhanced Consumer Experience:** Redesigning interior spaces to optimize operational efficiency, increase product visibility, and elevate the overall shopping experience for customers.

Figure 2 illustrates the evolution of ecommerce support programs in response to the maturity level of participating firms in the ecommerce business model. The figure showcases a progression where support programs have adapted and become more tailored to the specific needs and capabilities of firms as they advance in their ecommerce journey.



**Figure 2.** Adaptation of ecommerce support programs based on firm maturity.

*Source: Compilation by author, based on project reports [8, 9].*



At the initial stages of firm maturity, programs focus on fundamental aspects such as introducing products online and providing basic know-how.

As firms grow and gain experience in the online market, support programs evolve to address more advanced challenges such as legal regulations, integration of CRM and loyalty programs, innovative merchandising and product listing, as well as diversification of digital sales channels by integration in local and international market places. This adaptation reflects a strategic approach to meet the changing needs of firms at different stages of their ecommerce development, ultimately fostering their growth and success in the digital marketplace.

### **3. Analysis of Ecommerce Support Program Impact on Various Growth Aspects of E-commerce**

The analysis below provides the description of the various iterations of the Fashion Ecommerce support programs and elements provided for the growth aspects of e-commerce businesses, ranging from early-stage initiatives to advanced development stages.

**GoOnline (for early-stage firms):** designed and executed between 2020 and 2021 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, served as a rapid response initiative aimed at bolstering firms' digital presence and evaluating digital sales strategies. The program was spearheaded by COR Creative Industries Association in partnership with ZIPhouse Fashion Hub, overseeing program management expenses and providing modest incentives ranging from \$500 to \$1500 to participating companies for the establishment of websites, e-shops, social media business accounts, and online shops. This initiative, co-funded by the Moldova Competitiveness Program, Invest Moldova Agency, and EBRD, amounted to a total of \$241,283. GoOnline garnered participation from over 100 firms, of which 45 fashion brands graduated and were accelerated for e-commerce capabilities throughout the program's duration, including 15 fashion startups [8,11].

**Fashion Omnichannel Program (for growing ecommerce business):** initiated in October 2021, by ZIPhouse Fashion Hub in partnership with APIUS Moldova fashion industry association [12], attracted 28 eligible applications and conducted thorough online interviews with all applicants to formulate strategic short to mid-term action plans and determine FTA's assistance. Currently, 15 beneficiaries are actively engaged in ongoing assistance projects. The program, generously supported by Future Technologies Activity, a technical assistance project funded by USAID and Sweden, with a technical support budget of up to \$75,000, is dedicated to aiding SMEs within the fashion industry in increasing online sales and enhancing the customer experience in physical stores. Moreover, it serves as a valuable precursor to the Ecommerce Mentorship Program for advanced firms, facilitating a deeper understanding of e-commerce technology adoption within the fashion sector and enabling the testing of innovative interventions to foster growth and efficiency [9-11].

**Ecommerce Mentorship Program (for advanced firms) [9-10]:** Launched in October 2022, this program received applications from 78 companies in the fashion, lifestyle, and food products sectors. Out of these, 63 were deemed eligible, and 10 have already successfully completed the program's assistance. At its core, the program focuses on mentorship, boasting a team of 24 mentors with diverse expertise in ecommerce, ranging from website user experience UI/UX, digital marketing, product photography, copyright to logistics, tax, cross-border trade and consumer protection, who offer pro-bono strategic

guidance and coaching to participating companies. The program shortlisted 50 qualified local services providers in e-shops, digital solutions and marketing/branding. Additionally, the program awarded complementary grants to four dominant local e-commerce marketplaces, aimed at simplifying the entry and listing processes for local SMEs and their products. These marketplaces currently carrying limited or no local products (all imported stock) are expected to facilitate the onboarding of more than 300 local SMEs. Education and knowledge enhancement remain fundamental aspects of the program, featuring a five-week e-commerce education course titled "E-Commerce from Zero to Profit." This course, which involved nine lecturers, including successful entrepreneurs and prominent fiscal advisors, had great interest and attended by 37 participants in person, while the online version published on ecomertonline garnered over 60 website visitors [9,10].

### **3.1. Analysis of ecommerce mentorship program usage by beneficiary firms**

Upon examining the two charts in Figure 3 below related to the E-commerce Mentorship Program for Moldovan brands, we can draw several insights into how the program's resources—both in terms of the number of interventions and the time allocated—were distributed among various consultancy activities to facilitate expansion into domestic and Romanian markets, as well as global sales in the case of ecommerce champion firms.

The first chart, "Consultancy by intervention type (No. interventions)," shows the distribution of different types of consultancy interventions. Content development leads with 19% of the interventions, followed by Traffic Acquisition at 23%. User Experience (UX) Optimization and Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) each account for 13% of interventions, with Complex Integrations and Business Processes Setup following behind.

The second chart, "Consultancy by allocated time (hours)," illustrates where the program focused its time investment. Both CRO and UX Optimization commanded a quarter of the total time each, highlighting a significant emphasis on these areas. Business Processes Setup was also a major time investment, comprising 20% of the allocated time. However, Infrastructure Setup, Content, and Traffic Acquisition each only accounted for 5% of the time, despite their larger share in the number of interventions, especially Traffic Acquisition.

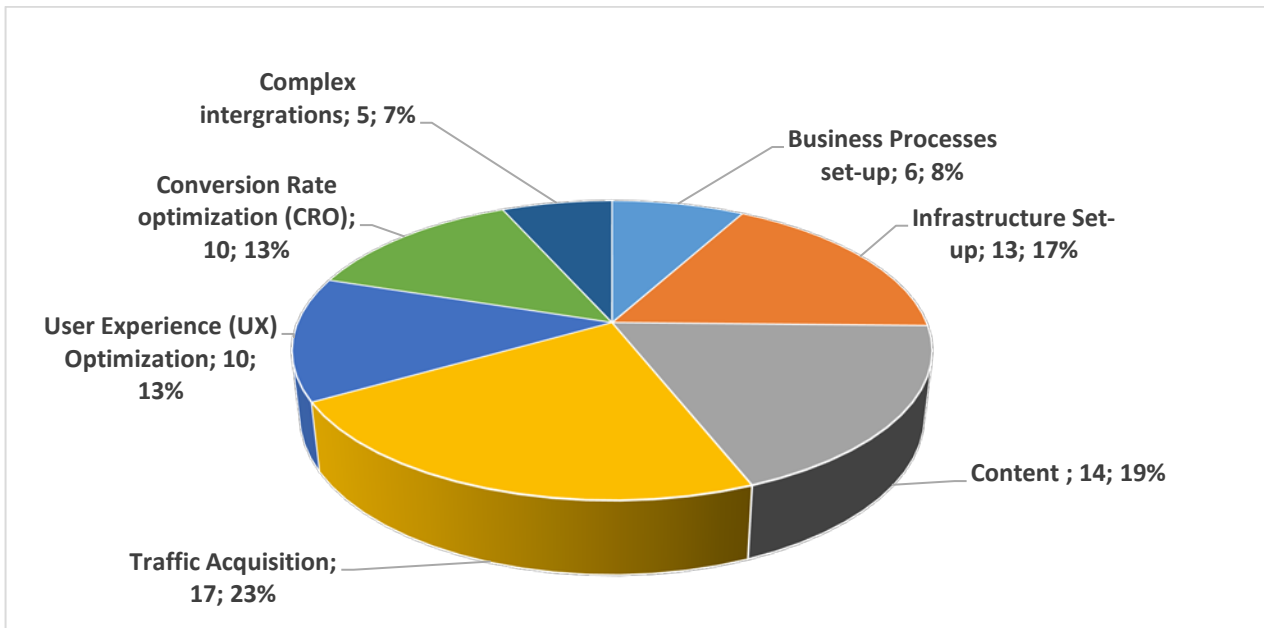
The dependency between the two charts suggests a strategic prioritization of time allocation that does not directly correlate with the number of interventions. For instance, while Traffic Acquisition interventions were numerous, they required less time per intervention, which could indicate either a streamlined approach to this activity or a lesser complexity compared to CRO and UX Optimization, which, despite having the same number of interventions as Traffic Acquisition, consumed substantially more time. This suggests that CRO and UX Optimization interventions were more time-intensive, likely due to their complexity or the level of customization required for each brand.

The charts provide insights concerning the efficiency of different intervention types, the complexity of tasks, and the strategic focus of the mentorship program. Additionally, it provides insights into where Moldovan brands may face the greatest challenges when scaling up for new markets and how mentorship programs can effectively allocate resources to address these challenges.

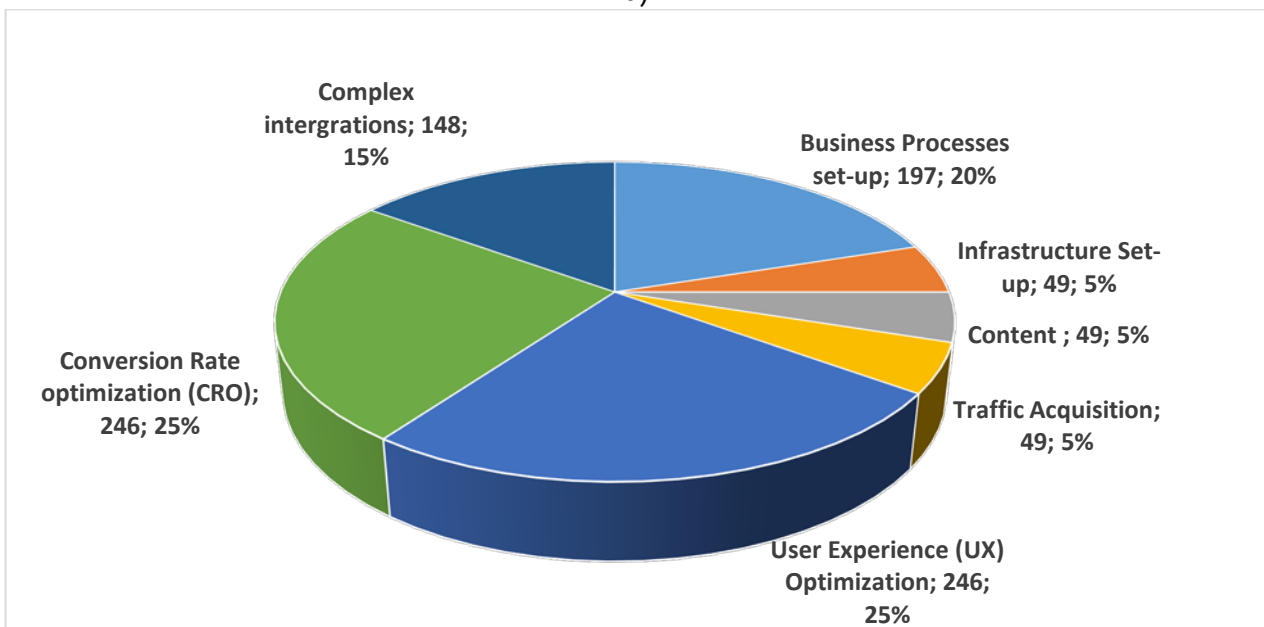
#### **Efficiency of Intervention Types**

The first chart (intervention type by number) shows that 'Content' and 'Traffic Acquisition' are the most frequent interventions, suggesting these are initial focus areas for

e-commerce entities. However, when comparing with the second chart (intervention by allocated time), we see that while 'Content' and 'Traffic Acquisition' make up a significant proportion of interventions, they account for a smaller share of the time invested, possibly indicating that these tasks, while numerous, may be less time-consuming or complex.



a)



b)

**Figure 3.** Ecommerce Mentorship Program: consultancy usage by participating firms: a) Use of consultancy by intervention type (number of interventions); b) Use of consultancy by time (number of hours).

Source: compiled by author, based on project reports [9].

Conversely, 'Conversion Rate Optimization' (CRO) and 'User Experience' (UX) Optimization, despite each constituting 13% of interventions, take up 25% of the time each. This suggests that these interventions are more complex and time-intensive, requiring a greater depth of work per intervention.

### **Complexity of Tasks**

The substantial allocation of time to CRO and UX Optimization indicates that these areas are likely the most complex and critical for e-commerce success. They are essential for converting traffic into sales and providing a seamless user experience, which is vital for retaining customers and encouraging repeat business.

The fact that 'Complex integrations' also have a significant time allocation despite fewer interventions underscores their complexity and the specialized knowledge required to execute these tasks.

### **Strategic Focus of the Mentorship Program**

The mentorship program appears strategically focused on both the front-end (content and traffic) and the back-end (CRO and UX) aspects of e-commerce, ensuring a balanced approach to building a robust online presence and optimizing for conversions. There is also a strategic emphasis on 'Business Processes set-up', which is crucial for establishing scalable and repeatable processes that can support growth into new markets, i.e. in our case Romania and global sales.

### **Challenges in Scaling Up**

Moldovan brands may face significant challenges in optimizing conversion rates and user experience, as evidenced by the time invested in these areas. These are critical for success in e-commerce and require ongoing attention and specialized skills. Therefore, external consultancy is advised for firms.

The data suggests that while generating content and acquiring traffic are foundational, the greater challenge lies in effectively utilizing that traffic to generate sales and ensuring customer satisfaction through a well thought and seamless user experience.

### **Resource Allocation by Mentorship Programs**

Effective mentorship programs must balance the number of interventions with the complexity and strategic importance of each task. This means prioritizing certain areas even if they require more time and resources, as the impact on e-commerce success can be significantly higher.

The data may inform mentorship programs to not only consider the quantity of interventions but also to allocate resources based on the potential impact on the brand's growth and the complexity of tasks, ensuring that more complex but critical areas receive the attention they require.

In conclusion, the charts reveal insights into the prioritization and allocation of consultancy resources. For Moldovan brands expanding into new markets, the focus should not only be on the quantity of interventions but also on the quality and depth of engagement in areas that drive conversion and customer satisfaction. Mentorship programs can play a pivotal role by strategically allocating resources to build capacities in these critical areas.

## **3.2. Case Study: Gramatchi Design SRL - Reaching New Markets Through Etsy**

Below is a case study of one of the successful graduates of the E-commerce support program, which has successfully transitioned from a state of low digital maturity and lacking an online presence to reaching international markets through Etsy [4].

**Background:** Andrei Gramatschii and Marcela Mastac, founders of Gramatchi Design SRL, operate two distinct product lines: Gugugaga, specializing in children's toys, and

Greica, producing cat accessories. Seeking to expand internationally through e-commerce, the couple approached FTA after attending an e-commerce workshop [4].

**Challenges:** Gramatchi Design SRL encountered several challenges when considering Etsy as a marketplace for their creative products. At the time, Etsy had temporarily halted the acceptance of Moldovan companies and had closed certain payment options. Additionally, Moldovan entrepreneurs lacked familiarity with operating on this platform [4].

**Solutions:** Gramatchi Design SRL was assisted via the Ecommerce Mentorship Program to address these challenges systematically. The Program engaged mentor Vadim Chiorescu, an accomplished Moldovan entrepreneur with an Etsy shop ranking in the top 0.1% globally, who advised them to focus on the Greica product line due to its niche category, revenue potential, and scalability. Gramatchi was also assisted with connections with a network of mentors to navigate logistical and legal hurdles unique to Moldova. Investments were made in creating high quality product listing content [4].

**Results:** Gramatchi Design SRL is now officially listed on Etsy (<https://www.etsy.com/shop/greica>) with over 50 admirers, 18 sales, and 15 positive reviews. This success allowed the company to open a second shop for Gugugaga Toys. They have achieved Etsy's Star Seller badge and expanded their sales to four new markets [4].

**Impact:** Gramatchi Design SRL's success story demonstrates how strategic mentorship, assistance in overcoming logistical and regulatory challenges, and investment in content creation can empower Moldovan microentrepreneurs to thrive in the e-commerce landscape. FTA's e-commerce program remains committed to identifying and collaborating with beneficiaries like Gramatchi to enhance Moldova's e-commerce presence, boost sales, and access new markets [4].

The case study of Gramatchi Design SRL exemplifies the transformative impact of targeted mentorship and consultancy support, enabling a small independent Moldovan product designer to overcome digital and logistical barriers, successfully launching on Etsy and expanding into international markets, thereby illustrating a scalable model for microentrepreneurs aiming for global outreach.

#### 4. Conclusion

E-commerce has revolutionized the global fashion industry, seeing unprecedented growth in the last decade, particularly during the pandemic with increase in online purchases in the USA and Europe. The Moldovan fashion industry is experiencing a significant transformation, shifting from traditional 'Cut & Make' services to a focus on design and branding. This transition is marked by an increase in local companies producing under their own brands. However, these emerging brands face challenges like intense competition, limited marketing capabilities, and restricted access to prime retail locations in Chisinau.

To thrive, these brands are exploring EU market exports and global reach through e-commerce. Moldova's online shopping expenditure is notably lower than neighbouring Romania's, emphasizing the disparity in e-commerce penetration and consumer spending patterns. The pandemic has been a catalyst for e-commerce adoption among local fashion firms and consumers. However, the transition to digital sales poses challenges, necessitating support programs for mentorship, consultancy, and co-funding of e-commerce development. These programs are crucial for firms at different maturity stages, focusing on

fundamental aspects initially and evolving to address advanced challenges like legal regulations and diversification of digital sales channels.

The Fashion Ecommerce Support Program, a collaborative initiative between APIUS, ZIPHOUSE, COR Creative Industries Association and development partners like USAID, Sweden, and the UK, aims to enhance fashion firms' online and offline presence. Implemented in multiple iterations from 2019 to 2023, the multidimensional program adapts to participant maturity levels and intervention types, categorized as GoOnline, Fashion Omnichannel, and Ecommerce Mentorship. These cater to various needs, from early-stage online presence to strategic cross-border growth. For Moldovan brands expanding into new markets, the emphasis on both intervention quality and quantity is crucial, with mentorship programs playing a pivotal role in building capacities in areas that drive conversion and customer satisfaction.

E-commerce has revolutionized the global fashion industry, particularly during the pandemic, with a notable surge in online purchases. This growth has prompted a strategic shift in the Moldovan fashion industry from traditional manufacturing to design and branding. The rise of e-commerce offers Moldovan brands, traditionally focused on 'Cut & Make' services, an opportunity to develop under their own labels, adding substantial value despite facing competitive and market challenges. The adoption of e-commerce has been critical for local firms during COVID-19, marking a significant shift towards digital sales. However, these firms face hurdles such as limited promotional resources and the need for digital market integration. Support programs play a crucial role in overcoming these barriers, offering mentorship and financial aid for e-commerce development. The Fashion Ecommerce Support Program, backed by APIUS, ZIPHOUSE, and international partners, aims to enhance Moldovan fashion firms' online and offline presence. The program's success depends on the quality of interventions and mentorship, focusing on areas that drive online conversion and customer satisfaction.

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## JEWELRY DESIGN: A PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL AND AESTHETIC CHANGES IN THE USSR AND EASTERN EUROPE IN THE 20-21st CENTURY

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**Abstract.** The study explores the significant impact of adornments in shaping clothing identity, highlighting contemporary jewelry as a distinct manifestation of individual taste in an ever-changing society. Analyzing social changes in the USSR, Ukraine, Bessarabia and Eastern Europe, as well as the disintegration of the USSR, the research reveals the interaction between communist aesthetics and traditionalism, generating innovations in jewelry design. Technological evolution has brought significant changes and the study emphasizes the importance of researching preferences and analyzing contemporary trends in understanding current design directions in jewelry today. The findings reveal that jewelry from the USSR and Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century reflects temporal changes and cultural diversity, marking a continuing transformation and diversity in the artistic expression of contemporary jewelry.

**Keywords:** *clothing adornments design, cultural identity, contemporary jewelry, jewelry evolution, current trends, innovations, social transformations.*

**Rezumat.** Studiul explorează impactul semnificativ al podoabelor în conturarea identității vestimentare, evidențind bijuteriile contemporane ca manifestări distincte ale gustului individual într-o societate în schimbare continuă. Analizând schimbările sociale din URSS, Ucraina, Basarabia și Europa de Est, precum și dezintegrarea URSS, cercetarea relevă interacțiunea dintre estetica comunistă și tradiționalism, generând inovații în designul bijuteriilor. Evoluția tehnologică a adus schimbări semnificative, iar studiul subliniază importanța cercetării preferințelor și și analizei tendințelor contemporane în înțelegerea direcțiilor actuale ale designului în bijuteriile prezentului. Concluziile dezvăluie că bijuteriile din URSS și Europa în secolul XX-XXI reflect schimbările temporale și diversitatea culturală, marcând o continuă transformare și diversitate în expresia artistică a bijuteriilor contemporane.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *designul podoabelor vestimentare, identitate culturală, podoabe contemporane, evoluțiile bijuteriilor, tendințe actuale, inovații, transformări sociale.*



## 1. Introduction

The adornments, which are the essential components of the costume, highlight its characteristics and their analysis focuses on the integration into the overall costume. Designing and making an adornment involves special attention to the design stage. In contemporary jewelry, design becomes a distinctive expression of individual identity and taste. In a constantly changing world, aesthetics and design in modern jewelry reflect the evolution of society, culture and technology in the 20th-21st century. In the context of the USSR, Ukraine, Bessarabia and Europe, the study focuses on the general principles of aesthetics and design. Major social changes, such as the collapse of the USSR and independence movements in Eastern Europe, influenced artistic expression in regional jewelry. The encounter between communist aesthetics and traditional influences generated innovations and unique reinterpretations in jewelry design.

Moreover, technological developments have also brought about significant changes in the creation and perception of jewelers. Industrial production increased efficiency, but also generated challenges related to authenticity and uniqueness. Designers have navigated between modern technology and respect for artisanal traditions to create jewelry that blends past and future.

Researching the preferences of future wearers of clothing adornments becomes vital in the creative process, and in the context of the cultural diversity of said regions, items must incorporate local sensibilities and appeal to global audiences. Thus, analyzing contemporary trends is crucial to understanding current design directions of contemporary adornments.

The given study aims to reveal the subtle connections between aesthetics, technology, culture and society in the evolution of jewelry in the USSR, Ukraine, Bessarabia, Russia and Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century. By investigating these aspects, the aim is not only to outline a history of jewelry design, but also to understand how it reflects the changes brought about by the passage of time and cultural diversity in a world in constant transformation.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The study adopts a complex methodology, focusing on careful analysis of the historical and cultural context of the USSR, Ukraine, Bessarabia, Russia and Eastern Europe regions. Primary sources include analysis of historical texts, fashion and jewelry archives, and interviews with jewelers and experts. Assessing the impact of major social changes, such as the collapse of the USSR and independence movements, is based on period documents. The process of interaction between communist aesthetics and traditional influences is investigated through the study of jewelry artwork and regional collections. The analysis of the innovations brought by technological advances is directed towards the literature specialized in jewelry and design, exploring the evolution of materials and techniques. To understand contemporary preferences and trends, market research, surveys and interviews are conducted with modern jewelry lovers.

Outlining the history of jewelry design involves a detailed analysis of the evolution of costume and jewelry during key periods, in collaboration with experts in arts and cultural history.

These methods reveal the fundamental connections between aesthetics, technology, culture and society, thus providing a detailed understanding of the progress of jewelry in the specified area during the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

By the end of the 19th century, a reform of the costume was necessary in order to adapt it to changes of living conditions. By adopting some elements from previous styles, a process of simplifying the forms of the female costume was initiated, which ended in the second decade of the 20th century [1, p. 414]. This evolution had a direct analogical impact on stylistic, conceptual and design changes in the field of clothing adornments.

The modern movement ended during World War I. In these years, non-figurative stylistic trends, influenced by the demands of painting and sculpture, such as cubism, futurism, the abstractionism of Piet Mondrian and the Bauhaus school, shaped the new forms of avant-garde jewelry.

In the first half of the 20th century, the development of jewelry art was mainly focused on Art Nouveau and Art Deco styles. During the Art Deco period, jewelry was distinguished by compositions based on the interaction of geometric shapes, preference was given to polished, smooth surfaces, precious metals or steel. Precious stones and diamonds served as a chromatic accent. Diamonds and corals could be combined in a piece of jewelry, regardless of the significant differences in value, the basic purpose being to satisfy the aesthetic requirements of non-figurative styles. During this period, there could be noted jewelry artists such as: Vivien Nilsson, Rene Robert, Raymond Templier, H. G. Murphy, Jean Fouquet, etc. Despite the conflicts and new artistic directions of that period, new styles and directions emerged. Changes in art began in the first decade of the 20th century, bringing new currents such as Fauvism and Cubism. In a tense environment and high creativity, a new type of art was born, with discoveries that later influenced all fields of creation including jewelry.

It was also during this period that Russian jewelers adopted Western European influences, creating their own version of Art Nouveau and reinterpreting early Art Deco. In 1918, the state monopoly on gold mining drastically changed the landscape, and in the 30s production was organized in industrial cooperatives [2, p. 114], focused on export and low costs for the Western European market. However, Western European stylistic influence was limited, and mass production was guided by pre-revolutionary traditions until the 50s [3, p. 112]. The political role of the state was essential in shaping jewelry style, and the art of Europe became the expression of an unofficial culture with international impact. After 1960, jewelry artists around the world sought uniqueness, and in Western Europe they created unconventional conceptual work from precious materials, while those in the USSR, restricted to non-precious materials, had creative freedom. The mentioned period was marked by creative pluralism and subjectivism in jewelry, highlighting that adornments are not limited only to the cultural significance or the social status of the owner [4, p.197]. These decorative items can emphasize and express the individuality of the owner, while also becoming means by which the creator conveys a significant message about his own perception of the world to the public. Under the influence of abstract expressionism, Western jewelry artists have actively adopted unconventional materials and techniques - aluminium, acrylic, galvanoplasty, anodizing. In the 70s, there was an active phase of reintegration of the art of Russian jewelry in the European context, evidenced by the participation in the International Exhibition of Jewelry and Jewelry Art in Jablonec, Czechoslovakia [5].

In the 60s, acrylic captivated Western European jewelers for its ease of processing. Acrylic resin, flexible in modeling and cutting, allows transparency similar to glass, offering

the possibility of coloring in various shades or obtaining an opaque effect. During the 70s, Klaus Buri, who was a German, created promising technocratic compositions from multi-layered and intensely colored acrylic resin. Bakker Gijs and Emmy van Leersum from the Netherlands explored the application of photographic images to plastic using acrylic. For Russian artists, acrylic presented an opportunity in the creation of extensive adornments, not only rich in chromatic and light effects, but also built on the principle of open plastic compositions.

Neoconstructivism began its formation in the second half of the 60s, being marked by a similar strategic approach, but with notable differences in the methods of application. These differences underline the specific features of this current. Friedrich Becker is recognized as a pioneer of neoconstructivism, starting in 1965, creating kinetic jewelry characterized by pure geometric shapes and rigid metallic glow, predominantly in white gold. In the late 60s, artist-jewellers Bakker Gijs and Emmy van Leersum from the Netherlands made an innovative contribution to Western European neo-constructivism, focusing on its application to the human body. At the same time, Russian artist-jewelers were faced with the lack of adequate material and technical infrastructure for kinetic experiments. In their kinetic jewelry creations, they highlighted the concept of plastic interconnection between the jewelry form and the human body. Where for Becker was needed an articulated mechanism, for the Russians Kuznetsov F. and Goncharov F. just the human body was enough, along with its kinetic properties and potential. In the 1980s, Kuznetsov experimented with completely flat shapes of brooches, using only traditional techniques. Thus, he created kinetic jewelry that synthesized the experience of op-art, kinetic-art and neo-constructivism [6, p. 117].

The defining characteristics of the composition in jewelry and costume adornment of the component countries of the USSR in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries are influenced by a number of factors, including historical context, social and cultural changes, and developments in jewelry design and production, Table 1.

*Table 1*

**The design of the adornments of the former USSR, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Cultural representation	Jewelry often reflects elements specific to the culture and regional traditions of the countries of the former USSR, through the use of local symbols or motifs inspired by traditional art, which can be considered a defining characteristic of the composition.
Use of specific materials	Jewelry can be part of the tradition of using materials specific to the area (precious metals, semi-precious stones or motifs inspired by local history and culture).
Ideological and political influences	During the Soviet period, jewelry was influenced by communist ideology [7, 8], often having propagandistic purposes. After the breakup of the USSR, there was a shift towards expressing individualism and diversity in design.
Adoption of modern technologies	With the transition to the 21st century, jewelers began to adopt modern technologies [9, p.130-149] and innovative approaches in the design and production of jewelry (the use of 3D programs and advanced manufacturing technologies) [10, p.41-44].

Continuation Table 1

Innovations in design	Jewelers in the respective region are exploring more and more shapes, textures and colors, wanting to create distinct artistic expressions and innovative compositions, which is reflected in the diversity of contemporary styles and jewelry [11].
Global influences	Globalization has brought increased diversity in jewelry design in post-Soviet countries. Designers had access to international influences and integrated modern and contemporary elements into their creations.
Eclecticism and individualism	Contemporary jewelry is characterized by eclecticism and individualism, with designers experimenting with various styles and techniques to reflect the personality and spirit of the time in their creations.
Innovation and raw material	Designers have brought a significant change in the selection of raw materials, moving from the traditional use of materials and precious stones to the integration of unconventional materials, including recycled ones or innovative combinations, to give uniqueness to their pieces.

Here, during this transitional period, Soviet jewelry was gradually seen as relics of an earlier historical period starting in 1991. The transformations of the post-Soviet period led to the disposal and extensive export of this jewelry [12]. This action coincided with the emigration of a portion of the population, who perceived them as a universal tool for protecting personal savings in the context of economic uncertainty.

In the composition of adornments from Ukraine and Bessarabia in the period of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, there are both common and differential landmarks that reflect the ethno-cultural affiliation, traditions, history and cultural influences of these distinct regions, Table 2.

Table 2

**Similarities and discrepancies between Ukrainian and Bessarabian adornments of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries**

<b>CRITERIA OF SIMILARITY</b> Traditional elements	Both cultures often retain their traditional characteristics in the composition of adornments, using complex hand embroidery and detailed stitching, including floral [13], geometric motifs and folkloric symbols with deep cultural meanings, such as protection [14, p.54-57].
Use of local symbols	Traditional Ukrainian and Bessarabian adornments and jewelry integrate symbols specific to the protected region [14, p.59], thus reflecting the cultural identity and history of the community [15, p.78-81]. These symbols include solar, floral and geometric motifs, highlighting the close connection with nature, fertility and agricultural traditions, Figures 1 and 2.
Natural materials	In Ukraine and Bessarabia, adornments traditionally use natural materials: semi-precious stones, silver, wood, leather, wool, silk, emphasizing the connection with traditions and the environment [16, p.66, 10-21].

## Continuation Table 2

<b>CRITERIA OF DIFFERENCE</b> Distinct cultural influences	Bessarabian adornments are influenced by ethnic and cultural diversity, including elements specific to local minorities such as Ukrainians, Gagauz, Russians, Bulgarians, etc., Figure 3. Instead, Ukrainian jewelry can be influenced by ethnicities such as Russians, Belarusians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Tatars and Germans.
Region specific styles	Various regions of Ukraine and Bessarabia have their distinctive styles in adornment design. For example, traditional jewelry from the Hitsul area of Ukraine features pendants decorated in complex shapes, such as the Hutsul cross, and coins depicting animals and plants, earrings include inlaid details. In Bessarabia, adornments were characterized by large, decorated pendants, inspired by Balkan and Eastern cultural traditions [17].
Different historical influences	The adornments reflect the historical changes distinctly in the two regions. In Bessarabia, significant ethnic diversity has influenced the adornments in a specific way, while in Ukraine, the history marked by periods of foreign domination and events such as the Soviet period is reflected in certain motifs and styles.
Modernization and contemporary influences	Ukrainian adornments reflect greater regional diversity and contemporary influences from neighboring countries, [18] while Bessarabian adornments retain more conservative traditions and motifs. Both countries highlight a modernization of jewelry design, incorporating contemporary influences, in the context of social and economic changes during the 20 <sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century.



**Figure 1.** Ducats. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Museum "Kobzary" T.G. Shevchenko, Ukraine, Cherkasy.



**Figure 2.** Men's earrings (traditional), 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century. From the private collection, Moldova.



**Figure 3.** Bulgarian and Gagauz copper necklaces. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century. NMENH.

Therefore, the adornments of Ukraine and Bessarabia in the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries embody a subtle balance between tradition and change, presenting common elements that emphasize cultural identity and significant differences that reflect historical details, the distinct ancient and regional influences of each culture.

These complex features highlight the transformations and remarkable diversity of the composition of jewelry and clothing adornments of the post-Soviet countries, representing a rich amalgam of cultural influences and traditions. In a broader context, after the Second World War, jewelry, especially manufactured jewelry, kept the Art Deco features of the 1930s, being unacceptable for a significant part of society, and the need for original and daring concepts was accentuated with lifestyle changes and new artistic trends. For the creation of adornments, there were used: Lucite - plastic derived from acrylic resin in various colors and finishes including Confetti Lucite, the latter being the most popular, often featured elements such as shiny stones, small flowers, shells integrated in transparent plastic, sometimes the bracelets had adornments, cut into its interior and bakelite – plastic in vogue in the 40s and sometimes in the 50s, noted for its uniform color and its gloss being semi-transparent. This contributed to the creation of a bright aesthetic, matching the pastel shades of the 50s.

The gap between the world of jewelry and developments in society became apparent after the outstanding success of the designers at the 1954 London World's Fair, Diamonds International Awards—DIA, De Beers Diamonds became a catalyst for innovation in diamond jewelry design [19, 20 p .5, 20]. The participants, jewelry artists, broke the stereotypes and brought new concepts to the jewelry exhibitions organized in Western Europe and America during the 1950s-1960s, making items based on the projects of outstanding painters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Pablo Picasso, Alberto Giacometti, Gio Pomodoro, Alexander Calder. Jewellers' experiments, marked by creative freedom and the encouragement of innovation, marked the period, with significant progress in the art of jewelry in the 1960s.

A new direction, known as "high art", or "maestro style" was definitively outlined during this period, promoted among jewelry creators by: Salvador Dali, Charles Rayn, Georges Braque, Yves Tanguy, Man Ray, Max Ernst, etc. This movement brought together avant-garde artists, who transformed jewelry into a work of art, able to coexist with "high art" creations, in exhibitions and museums, thus continuing the tradition started by the modernists. In the 60s, jewelry became the subject of a creative revolution, jewelry artists abandoned the traditional vision, creating "self-sufficient" work in exhibitions and museums. This revolution highlighted creative freedom, non-conformist exploration of materials and an extensive stylistic diversity, from traditional art deco and neo-baroque influences to modernism and new material aesthetics.

But for the mass consumer, textured gold jewelry in shades of pink and yellow, combined with rubies and warm-toned stones, dominated during that period, preferences for mounted pieces. Diversified earrings, from models with pendant designs with pendants, clips, studs were decorated with precious stones, and towards the end of the decade, women chose longer earrings with complex designs and varied colors. Jewelry fashion trends included floral necklaces, bracelets and patterned brooches, while in the 50s, gold chain necklaces and bracelets were all the rage, giving off a bohemian look. Colored jewelry has been valued for decades, and fine stones, such as Aurora Borealis, have been sophisticated alternatives in the absence of sparkles or crystals for evening events. At the same time, fashion houses have developed their own collections, democratizing access to

jewelry originally intended only for the wealthy. With the emergence of plastic beads, the further democratization of jewelry became apparent. The trend towards cocktail jewelry has brought impressive rings such as ballerina, bombe, wired, bypass, made of various materials, reflecting light in various shapes. During the mentioned period, jewelers transcended the usual boundaries of creation, showing their freedom and boldness in the selection of materials, expressive means and plastic and compositional solutions, design. Experimenting with innovative ways of setting and presenting precious stones, they brought about significant changes in the handling of gold, surpassing Art Deco trends. Precious metals became equal partners with diamonds and other precious stones, contributing to the formation of the artistic image and generating developments in the modeling of articles and the diversification of decorative techniques of metals.

In the 80s, some jewelry integrated surrealist concept and in the 90s, some colored jewelry works, such as those created by Peter Chang, revived the colorful magic of Fauvism reflected the dynamic conceptions of the founders of futurism. It is significant that, in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, jewelers gave their works a philosophical meaning, drawing inspiration from the ideas of conceptual art. Bruno Martinazzi, conveyed a sensation and tension in the modern world through his jewelry, marked by the concepts of pop art and classical mythology. In the context of this radical transformation, there was a need to structure the general characteristics of the composition of jewelry and clothing adornments in Europe at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Table 3.

Table 3

**Design in European jewelry from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Europe**

Cultural diversity	The vast variety of European cultures is reflected in its jewelry by integrating traditional elements and motifs specific to each culture. Adornments inspired by Nordic folklore, Mediterranean influences (Greek, Roman, Spanish, ancient art...), Eastern European influences, exploring ethnic and tribal designs (African, Asian, etc.).
Innovation and experimentation	European designers openly approach innovation and experimentation in composition, integrating unconventional materials, innovative techniques [21, p.7-9], exploring dimensions (MirrAR) [22, p.41-44]. and textures to create unique expressions.
Minimalist and contemporary style	In some areas, there is a preference for minimalist and contemporary design in jewelry, highlighting simple lines and clean unconventional shapes and concepts inspired by modern art.
Regional influences	Jewelry can be influenced by the specific traditions and history of each European region, adding distinctive elements to the composition.
Focus on sustainability	Jewelers from the respective region are exploring more and more shapes, textures and colors, wanting to create distinct artistic expressions and innovative compositions, which are reflected in the diversity of contemporary styles and jewelry.

In the second half of the 20th century, technological advances shaped "high-tech" design in jewelry, generating an increased fascination for minimalist shapes and innovative

techniques. However, the few jeweler-artists have managed to combine tradition with innovation, adapting their creations to contemporary lifestyles. They achieved creative autonomy alongside painters and sculptors, leaving a legacy of success in jewelry art for the new millennium.

Italian jewelry, recognized globally for its outstanding artistic and technical level, reflects the spirit of free imagination, incorporating classical traditions and rich folklore into their works. The composition and decoration of the images reflect a brilliant perception of life, along with the impeccable architecture of the forms. Contemporary jewelers from different regions explore various creations influenced by plastic solutions and innovative décor, drawing inspiration from world folklore and retro historical perspectives. Interpretations of ethnographic, archaeological and historical motifs vary, successfully integrating classical motifs, art deco and historical styles in the context of constructive discoveries and current ecological directions. French designers stand out for simplicity and elegance in their creations, with clear and graceful finishes and shapes.

Swiss jewelers are recognized for the richness of precious stones, approaching polychromy and paying special attention to manual finishing. German jewelry production stands out through innovation and cutting-edge technology, with process automation and the use of modern equipment, but also through high-quality manual finishing in small series and original design, characterized by pure and rigorous forms. Spanish jewelry keeps its orientation towards national traditions, standing out through diverse design, considerable volumes and the richness of color and decor.

This diversity in approaches and techniques in the jewelry industry in Europe has also been influenced by the sampling of global trends in recent fashion, which are oriented towards luxury, femininity and elegance, inspired by the aesthetics of the 50s and 60s. This global influence is especially noticeable in the famous creations of the Harry Winston company [23, p.162, 167], a leader in the jewelry industry, associated with the world of billionaires and movie stars [22]. Harry Winston's significant impact in the processing of diamonds of considerable size has marked the jewelry industry during the last decades. These examples are an illustration of the diversity and complexity of thematic compositions in European jewelry at the end of the 20th century, reflecting a significant evolution according to the historical and cultural context specific to each component country or region. The differences between European jewelry and clothing adornments and those of the component countries of the USSR are manifested in various aspects, such as:

- Ideological influences. Jewelry from the component countries of the USSR may reflect ideological and propagandistic influences, while in Europe, design may be much more free and more diverse due to the different historical context.

- Use of materials. During the Soviet period, access to certain materials and technologies may be limited, influencing the composition of jewelry. In Europe, designers probably had a greater variety of options.

- Craft traditions. Jewelry from the USSR may have had a more pronounced tradition of using traditional crafts, while European jewelry would have focused on exploring a diverse range of techniques and approaches.

- Socio-cultural changes. After the disintegration of the USSR, jewelry from this area had the opportunity to experience a phase of cultural and artistic transformation, possibly reflected in the composition of the new creations.



- Creative freedom. European designers enjoyed a great deal of creative freedom, while jewelers in the USSR likely faced constraints imposed by communist ideology and the regime's authoritarianism.

It is important to understand that these features and differences may vary by country and region in Europe or former USSR countries.

In the first decades of the 21st century, contemporary jewelers explore a wide diversity in the style and design of their works, being influenced both by the search for innovative plastic and decorative solutions, as well as by the inspiration from the elements of world folk art and the retro reinterpretation of history. The diversity of interpretation of archaeological, historical and ethnographic motifs reflects the variability of perspectives of contemporaries, who, spread in various corners of the globe, approach these motifs either through realistic repetition or through free variations of artistic and technical themes of the past. Modern works appear, inspired by the art of vanished cultures, in which classical motifs, Art Deco, the art of ancient Greece, the Renaissance and the Byzantine-Russian style remain significant in the imaginative structure. These influences coexist harmoniously with the constructive innovations and the pursuits of the promoters of the ecological direction.

#### 4. Conclusions

The study emphasizes the importance of defining costume through adornments and recognizes contemporary jewelry as distinctive manifestations of identity in a society of change. Significant social changes and the intersection of communist aesthetics with traditions led to remarkable innovations. Technological advances have brought about significant transformations, and researching preferences and analyzing contemporary trends are essential to understanding current design directions in jewelry today. The evolution of the 20th century and the transition of the 21st century bring increased diversity and continuous transformation of jewelry, reflecting temporal changes and cultural diversity.

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## NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING: TRANSFORMING LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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**Abstract.** This article explores the transformative impact of new technologies on foreign language learning and its implications for language education. With the rise of globalization, proficiency in multiple languages has become increasingly valuable. The advent of online language learning platforms, virtual reality and augmented reality technologies, mobile applications, and language exchange communities has revolutionized language education. These technologies offer learners convenient access to resources, personalized instruction, immersive experiences, and opportunities for real-world practice. However, challenges such as the digital divide and the need for human interaction in language learning must be addressed. Looking to the future, the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning holds great potential for further advancements in language education, fostering a world where language barriers are effortlessly overcome.

**Key words:** *technology, language learning, proficiency, benefits, applications.*

**Rezumat.** Articol explorează impactul transformator al noilor tehnologii asupra învățării limbilor străine și implicațiile acestui impact în educația lingvistică. Odată cu extinderea globalizării, cunoașterea mai multor limbi străine devine din ce în ce mai apreciată și necesară. Apariția platformelor online de învățare a limbilor străine, a tehnologiilor de realitate virtuală și de realitate amplificată, a aplicațiilor mobile și a comunităților de schimb lingvistic a revoluționat educația lingvistică. Aceste tehnologii oferă studenților acces mai ușor și extrem de rapid la diverse resurse, instruire personalizată, experiențe imersive și oportunități de practică în lumea reală. Cu toate acestea, este necesar să se abordeze și anumite provocări precum decalajul digital și necesitatea interacțiunii umane în învățarea limbilor străine. Privind spre viitor, integrarea inteligenței artificiale și a învățării automate are un mare potențial pentru noi progrese în educația lingvistică, favorizând o lume în care barierele lingvistice sunt depășite fără efort.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *tehnologie, învățarea limbilor străine, competență, beneficii, aplicații.*

## 1. Introduction

In our increasingly interconnected and globalized world, the ability to communicate effectively in foreign languages has become essential. As societies become more diverse and interconnected, proficiency in multiple languages opens doors to new opportunities and enriches personal and professional experiences. With the rapid advancement of technology, foreign language learning has undergone a significant transformation, revolutionizing traditional teaching methods and empowering learners in unprecedented ways. This article explores the impact of new technologies on foreign language learning and their role in transforming language education.

Traditionally, language learning was confined to classrooms, textbooks, and audio tapes. However, the emergence of new technologies has revolutionized the way languages are taught and learned. These technologies offer learners a wide range of interactive and engaging tools, personalized learning experiences, and opportunities for authentic language practice [1]. As a result, learners can now access language learning resources anytime, anywhere, and at their own pace.

Online language learning platforms have emerged as a powerful tool in language education. Websites and applications like Duolingo, Babbel, and Rosetta Stone provide learners with interactive lessons, gamified exercises, and personalized feedback. These platforms often utilize artificial intelligence algorithms to adapt to learners' needs, track their progress, and provide targeted instruction. Learners can engage with various language learning activities, such as vocabulary building, grammar practice, and listening comprehension, all through the convenience of their digital devices [2].

Moreover, the integration of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies has transformed language learning into immersive and experiential experiences. VR headsets transport learners to virtual environments where they can interact with native speakers, explore cultural landmarks, and engage in realistic conversations. AR applications overlay digital information, such as translations or subtitles, onto the physical world, enabling learners to practice language skills in real-world contexts. These technologies enhance learners' engagement, retention, and overall language acquisition.

The ubiquity of smartphones and mobile applications has further revolutionized language learning. Mobile language learning applications offer a wide range of features, including vocabulary flashcards, pronunciation guides, grammar exercises, and access to audio and video content. Learners can conveniently practice language skills on-the-go, leveraging the multimedia capabilities of their smartphones. Additionally, language translation apps and voice recognition software facilitate communication and language use in real-life situations, overcoming language barriers and fostering language proficiency.

New technologies have also given rise to online language communities and tandem learning opportunities. Language exchange platforms like Tandem, HelloTalk, and iTalki connect learners with native speakers of their target language for conversation practice. Learners can engage in authentic conversations, receive feedback, and learn about different cultures. These virtual language exchanges provide a dynamic and supportive environment for language learning, promoting peer-to-peer learning and intercultural communication.

While new technologies have transformed foreign language learning, challenges remain. Disparities in access to technology and reliable internet connectivity create a digital divide, limiting equal opportunities for language learners [3]. Furthermore, the need for human interaction, guidance, and cultural immersion in language education should not be

overlooked. Striking a balance between technology and human instruction is crucial for effective language learning.

Looking ahead, the future of language education lies in the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning. Artificial intelligence-powered chatbots and virtual language tutors have the potential to provide personalized feedback, adaptive instruction, and intelligent language assessment. Advancements in natural language processing and voice recognition will further enhance language learning tools, making them more accurate and responsive to learners' needs.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

Our pedagogical experience was the main basis for writing this article, mostly. Additionally, our work at a Technical University made an indispensable contribution. Thus, following the latest technological trends in the teaching-learning process is imperative and is a necessary for us due to this imposition.

Accepting the importance of classical material and methods used in writing the article is inevitable if we are to refer to them. Those sources and methods utilized by us should be confirmed and valued greatly.

Therefore, the methods utilized in shaping the very work were as listed:

- The most important and spread method in any scientific writing is unquestionably the literature review. We conducted a comprehensive review of existing literature and research on the impact of new technologies on foreign language learning. This includes academic articles, books, reports, and other relevant sources.
- Data Collection was the next step in organizing the article. We tried to gather the newest data from language learning platforms, VR/AR technologies, mobile applications, and language exchange platforms. That involved analyzing users' feedback, conducting surveys, and using existing research data [4].
- The Case Study for us was, if we can put it that way, the easiest compartment, due to the fact that we work at the Technical University and we monitor and use those new trends that appear in this particular field. Consequently, we examined specific language learning platforms, VR/AR applications, and mobile language learning apps to assess their effectiveness in improving language proficiency and user experience. That involved collecting data from user experiences, conducting interviews, or analyzing user performance data.
- There was done a deep and thorough Comparative Analysis. We compared the effectiveness of different new technologies in language learning, such as online platforms versus traditional classroom instruction, VR/AR versus traditional learning materials, or mobile language learning apps versus traditional language learning resources.
- Another step was the Expert Interviews. We conducted interviews with colleagues from our University, the Department of Foreign Languages, who are language educators and could be considered experts in language learning technologies, also our students, who are experienced in using new technologies for language learning. Also, we discussed the ethical implications of using new technologies in language learning, such as privacy concerns, data security, and access to technology for disadvantaged learners. All these constituents provided insights into the advantages, challenges, and future directions of incorporating new technologies in language education.

### 3. Online Language Learning Platforms

Online language learning platforms play a pivotal role in the transformation of language education through the integration of new technologies. These platforms provide learners with convenient access to a wide range of resources, interactive lessons, and language exchange opportunities [5]. By leveraging technology, they enhance the learning experience and offer personalized instruction tailored to individual learners' needs.

Online language learning platforms have revolutionized foreign language learning, providing learners with accessible, flexible, and personalized language education experiences. These platforms harness the power of new technologies to create engaging and interactive learning environments. The best examples of Online Language Learning Platforms that deserve to be mentioned are: *Duolingo*, the service that uses an engaging game-like structure and offers 23 languages through almost a hundred different courses. Next platform is *Busuu* that allows users to interact with native speakers. *Busuu* currently offers 12 languages to be explored and experienced. Another valuable platform is *Memrise*. This online British platform is based on evidence that people learn faster with mnemonic flashcards. It also allows learners to practice human-like conversations, which *Memrise* believe can help learners to overcome the "confidence gap" in language acquisition. *Memrise* offers user-generated content on a wide range of subjects and has courses in 16 languages. One of the original Online Language Learning Platform is *Babbel*. It has ranked as the world Number 1 innovator in education. *Babbel* offers 14 languages and courses designed to improve the vocabulary and grammar skills. Its method is based on tested strategies, new research, and real-world dialogues [6]. The list is limitless. Each online platform has its own benefits, its attractive part for the "proper client" and offers personalized learning experiences, adaptive exercises, and gamified approaches to engage learners effectively. Moreover, these platforms often incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms, providing instant feedback and progress tracking, further enhancing the learning experience. But then again, definitely, all of them have those common key aspects of online language learning platforms in the context of foreign language learning that could be ranked as follows:

- **Accessibility and Convenience:** Online language learning platforms break down geographical barriers, allowing learners from around the world to access language courses and resources at any time and from anywhere with an internet connection. Learners have the flexibility to study at their own pace and fit language learning into their busy schedules.
- **Comprehensive Language Resources:** These platforms offer a wide range of resources, including interactive lessons, vocabulary exercises, grammar explanations, audio and video materials, and practice quizzes. Learners can access a wealth of content that covers various language skills, from reading and writing to listening and speaking.
- **Adaptive and Personalized Learning:** Online language learning platforms often employ adaptive learning technologies that use data and algorithms to tailor the learning experience to individual learners. They assess learners' strengths, weaknesses, and progress, and adjust the content and exercises accordingly, providing personalized instruction and targeted practice [7].
- **Gamification and Interactivity:** Many platforms incorporate gamified elements and interactive features to make language learning enjoyable and engaging [8]. They use

game-like structures, rewards, and challenges to motivate learners and enhance their learning experience. Interactive exercises, quizzes, and real-life simulations promote active learning and practical application of language skills.

- **Multimedia and Authentic Content:** Online platforms utilize multimedia resources, such as audio recordings, videos, and interactive visuals, to expose learners to authentic language use and cultural context. This helps learners develop their listening comprehension, pronunciation, and cultural awareness.
- **Social Learning and Language Exchange:** Some platforms incorporate social learning components, enabling learners to connect with peers, join language communities, and engage in language exchange activities. Learners can interact with native speakers or fellow learners, practice conversation skills, receive feedback, and gain cultural insights.
- **Progress Tracking and Assessment:** Online language learning platforms often provide tools for learners to track their progress, set goals, and assess their language proficiency. They offer self-assessment tests, quizzes, and performance metrics to measure learners' knowledge and progress over time.
- **Mobile Applications:** Many online language learning platforms offer mobile applications, allowing learners to continue their language learning on smartphones and tablets. Mobile apps provide on-the-go access to lessons, practice exercises, and language resources, making language learning more convenient and accessible.

Online language learning platforms have transformed the way foreign languages are taught and learned, making language education more accessible, engaging, and learner-centric. Their incorporation of new technologies offers learners unprecedented opportunities for language acquisition, personalized instruction, and cultural immersion [9]. As these platforms continue to evolve and innovate, they are likely to play an increasingly prominent role in foreign language learning worldwide.

### **3.1. Online Language Communities and Tandem Learning**

Online language communities and tandem learning platforms have emerged as valuable resources for foreign language learners, complementing traditional language learning methods. These platforms provide opportunities for language practice, cultural exchange, and interaction with native speakers and fellow learners from around the world. Some key aspects of online language communities and tandem learning are:

- **Language Practice:** Online language communities and tandem learning platforms offer a space for learners to practice their target language in a supportive and immersive environment. Learners can engage in conversations, exchange messages, and participate in language-related activities to improve their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills [10].
- **Cultural Exchange:** These platforms facilitate cultural exchange between learners and native speakers. Through conversations and interactions, learners gain insights into different cultures, customs, and perspectives, enhancing their understanding of the target language and its cultural context.
- **Language Exchange Partners:** Online language communities connect learners with native speakers who are seeking to learn their native language. This creates an opportunity for mutual language exchange, where learners can practice their target language with native speakers while assisting them in learning their own language.

This reciprocal arrangement fosters a supportive learning environment and encourages intercultural connections.

- **Authentic Communication:** Interacting with native speakers through online language communities allows learners to engage in authentic communication. They can practice real-life conversations, learn idiomatic expressions, and gain confidence in using the language in natural contexts.
- **Feedback and Corrections:** Learners can receive feedback and corrections on their language use from native speakers and more advanced learners within the online community. This feedback helps learners improve their language accuracy, pronunciation, and fluency.[11]
- **Flexible Learning:** Online language communities and tandem learning platforms offer flexibility in terms of time and location. Learners can connect with language partners from different time zones, allowing them to practice their target language at their convenience. This flexibility accommodates learners' varying schedules and facilitates regular language practice.
- **Virtual Language Exchanges:** In addition to one-on-one language exchanges, some platforms facilitate group language exchanges or virtual language meetups. These events provide opportunities for learners to practice their language skills with multiple participants and engage in group discussions or activities.
- **Supportive Community:** Online language communities often foster a sense of community and support among learners. Participants can share resources, ask questions, seek advice, and celebrate their language learning milestones together. This sense of community encourages motivation, accountability, and continuous learning.

Online language communities and tandem learning platforms supplement formal language instruction by providing learners with real-world language practice, cultural immersion, and supportive connections with native speakers. These platforms enable learners to actively engage in language learning beyond the confines of a classroom, enhancing their language proficiency, confidence, and intercultural competence.

New technologies have fostered the growth of online language communities, connecting learners from different parts of the world. Websites and platforms dedicated to language exchange, such as Tandem, HelloTalk, and iTalki, enable learners to connect with native speakers of their target language for conversation practice. These virtual language exchanges promote cultural exchange, authentic language use, and peer-to-peer learning, providing a dynamic and supportive learning environment.

### **3.2. Mobile Applications and Language Learning Tools**

The ubiquity of smartphones has led to the proliferation of language learning applications tailored for mobile devices. These apps offer a wide range of features, including vocabulary flashcards, pronunciation guides, grammar exercises, and language practice through audio and video content [12]. Furthermore, language learning tools like language translation apps and voice recognition software facilitate communication in real-world situations, enabling learners to overcome language barriers effortlessly. Virtual Assistants like Siri, Alexa and Google virtual assistants - all implement voice recognition software to interact with users. [13]. The best Translation Apps for Language Learners in 2023 are considered Google Translate - best generally and globally; DeepL Translate - best



for Accuracy; Microsoft Translator - finest for Business; iTranslate – in the top for Extra Features; SayHi - best for Live Conversations; Language Translator - greatest for Messaging.

**Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR)** technologies have brought about immersive language learning experiences. VR headsets allow learners to virtually immerse themselves in foreign language environments, where they can interact with native speakers, explore cultural landmarks, and practice real-life conversations. AR applications, on the other hand, enhance language learning by overlaying digital information, such as translations or subtitles, onto the physical world. These technologies create a sense of presence and make language acquisition more engaging and memorable [14].

Let us try to explain how do these technologies work in Language learning: Imagine learning Spanish while strolling through a virtual Barcelona marketplace, or ordering coffee in French at a Parisian Cafe from your living room. VR and AR are revolutionizing language learning by creating immersive experiences that transport you to the heart of the target language.

VR plunges you into simulated environments, like bustling foreign streets or historical landmarks. You can interact with virtual characters, practice conversations, and navigate situations you might encounter in real life.

AR overlays digital elements onto your real world, like translating signs on the fly or placing virtual flashcards on your furniture. This gamifies learning and makes it more applicable to everyday life.

It is quite a good idea to include here some of the benefits of VR/AR language learning.

One great benefit is the increased engagement and motivation - VR/AR makes learning fun and interactive, boosting your desire to practice. Improved speaking and listening skills are also very important and could be treated as benefits. Immersive environments encourage you to use the language actively, not just passively absorb it. Enhanced cultural understanding is another constituent. VR/AR lets you experience the target culture firsthand, building deeper connections with the language.

While VR/AR offer exciting possibilities, they are still evolving. Costs and technical limitations can be barriers. However, as technology advances, VR/AR are poised to become powerful tools for democratizing language learning and making it accessible and engaging for everyone [15].

### **3.3. Challenges and Future Perspectives**

While new technologies offer numerous advantages for foreign language learning, there are challenges that need to be addressed. The digital divide, access to reliable internet connectivity, and technological infrastructure disparities pose barriers to equal opportunities for language learners [16]. Additionally, the need for human interaction and personalized guidance remains essential in language education, and striking the right balance between technology and human instruction is crucial.

Looking ahead, the future of language learning lies in the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning. AI-powered chatbots and virtual language tutors have the potential to provide personalized feedback, adaptive instruction, and intelligent language assessment [14-17]. Furthermore, advancements in natural language processing and voice recognition will continue to enhance language learning tools, making them more accurate and responsive.

#### 4. Conclusions

The transformative impact of new technologies on foreign language learning has been nothing short of revolutionary, reshaping the very fabric of language education. Gone are the rigid confines of traditional classrooms, replaced by a dynamic and interactive landscape where learners are empowered to chart their own course. This shift is undeniable, driven by a wave of innovation that has democratized access, personalized experiences, and ignited engagement in ways unimaginable just a few decades ago.

Online language platforms have shattered geographical barriers, offering a smorgasbord of resources and instruction reachable from any corner of the globe. Learners can now tailor their learning journeys, choosing from diverse courses, interactive exercises, and immersive simulations. Adaptive learning algorithms, powered by advancements in natural language processing and voice recognition, further refine this experience, catering to individual needs and optimizing the learning path for maximum efficiency and progress. Mobile applications have transformed learning into bite-sized, on-the-go experiences, seamlessly integrating language practice into everyday life. Virtual reality technologies, meanwhile, transport learners to the heart of foreign cultures, fostering deeper cultural understanding and authentic communication practice.

This democratization extends beyond access. Language exchange communities built on digital platforms connect learners with native speakers worldwide, fostering real-time conversations and cultural immersion. Online forums and collaborative learning platforms provide invaluable peer support and feedback, creating a vibrant and supportive learning ecosystem. These technologies empower learners to take ownership of their language journey, fostering autonomy, motivation, and a sense of community that transcends geographical borders.

However, challenges remain. The digital divide presents a hurdle for some, highlighting the need for equitable access to technology and broadband infrastructure. Additionally, the crucial role of human interaction in language learning must not be overlooked. While technology offers unparalleled tools and resources, the warmth, nuance, and cultural context often best conveyed by human interaction remain irreplaceable.

Looking ahead, the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning holds immense potential. AI-powered tutors and personalized learning assistants can offer real-time feedback, diagnose learning gaps, and adapt instruction to individual needs with unprecedented precision. This, coupled with the continued development of immersive virtual and augmented reality experiences, paints a picture of a future where language learning is not just accessible and engaging, but truly transformative.

Summing up what was described we could mention once more that the transformative impact of new technologies on foreign language learning is a story still unfolding. From democratizing access and personalizing experiences to fostering immersive cultural understanding, these advancements have propelled us into a new era of language education. As we embrace the potential of AI and remain mindful of the human element, we pave the way for a future where language barriers crumble and the world speaks in a chorus of shared understanding. The journey has just begun, and the possibilities are as boundless as the languages themselves.

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## ASSESSING NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS IN SAFEGUARDING CITIZENS, UTILITIES, AND INFRASTRUCTURE FROM TERRORIST ATTACKS

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**Abstract.** Vulnerable places are usually the targets of terrorist attacks everywhere in the world. The scenario is quite the same in Nigeria. Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in Nigeria have attacked ordinary citizens and infrastructure like schools and hospitals. Especially crowded places are the main targets of the terrorists. To mitigate this security challenge, the Nigerian government factored in the protection of soft targets in its National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST). The second pillar of NACTEST, known as “to secure,” is in charge of this assignment. The NACTEST document was launched in 2014 by President Jonathan as a standing policy to combat terrorism in Nigeria. It is expected that this strategy needs to be evaluated since it has been in operation for more than half a decade. The focus of this paper is to examine the extent to which the Nigerian government has successively protected soft targets from terrorism attacks. The paper makes use of both primary and secondary data as sources of data gathering and content analysis for data analysis. The research makes use of the NACTEST document and bases its evaluation on the specified objectives of the NACTEST second pillar, “to secure.” It also adopts asymmetric theory as its theoretical framework. The paper discovered that the Nigerian government has, to a large extent, successively protected the vulnerable, like civilian citizens, utilities, and infrastructure. However, sporadic attacks by terrorists are equally a challenge that the government needs to handle seriously. The paper recommended, among others, that the government should provide needed resources, both human and material, for security and better performance.

**Key words:** *national counter-terrorism strategy, terrorism, vulnerabilities.*

**Rezumat.** Locurile vulnerabile sunt, de obicei, ținta atacurilor teroriste peste tot în lume. Scenariul este aproape același în Nigeria. Boko Haram și alte grupuri teroriste din Nigeria au atacat cetățenii de rând și infrastructura precum școli și spitale. Locurile deosebit de aglomerate sunt principalele ținte ale teroriștilor. Pentru a atenua această provocare de securitate, guvernul nigerian a luat în considerare protecția țăintelor slabe în Strategia națională de combatere a terorismului (NACTEST). Al doilea pilon al NACTEST, cunoscut sub

numele de „a securiza”, este responsabil de această misiune. Documentul NACTEST a fost lansat în 2014 de către președintele Jonathan ca o politică permanentă de combatere a terorismului în Nigeria. Este de așteptat, ca această strategie să fie evaluată, deoarece este în funcțiune de mai bine de jumătate de deceniu. Accentul acestei lucrări este de a examina măsura în care guvernul nigerian a protejat succesiv țintele slabe de atacurile teroriste. Lucrarea folosește atât informațiile primare, cât și cele secundare ca surse de colectare a datelor și analiză de conținut. Cercetarea se axează pe documentul NACTEST și evaluează obiectivele specificate ale celui de-al doilea pilon NACTEST, „a securiza”. Este adoptată teoria asimetrică drept cadru teoretic. S-a constatat că guvernul nigerian a protejat succesiv pe cei vulnerabili, cum ar fi cetățenii civili, utilitățile și infrastructura. Cu toate acestea, atacurile sporadice ale teroriștilor sunt la fel o provocare, pe care guvernul trebuie să o ia în considerare cu seriozitate. Lucrarea a recomandat ca guvernul să furnizeze resursele necesare, atât umane, cât și materiale, pentru siguranță și performanțe mai bune.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *strategie națională de combatere a terorismului, terorism, vulnerabilități.*

### 1. Introduction

In an effort to put terrorism under control in Nigeria, a standing strategy was put in place called National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST). This strategy was based on five pillars which stated as follows: ‘to forestall’, ‘to secure’, ‘to identify’, ‘to prepare’ and ‘to implement’. The aim of this paper is to assess the second pillar of NACTEST termed ‘to secure’. It is mentioned in Section IV of the document [1]. The concern of this pillar is to safeguard the citizens, utilities, and edifices by falling their susceptibility to outbreaks. The informing tenacities of this pillar are, to:

- a. put in place actions intended to consolidate security in Nigerian borders;
- b. present active means of safeguarding vital substructure;
- c. establish on job trainings for security forces;
- d. reduce the susceptibility of the transport system;
- e. increase security of the crowded places like religious centers [1].

In order to facilitate these, Nigerian government has designed four action plans mentioned in NACTEST. The first is to strengthen border security, thereby implying that the government is aware of how easily people and things enter and exit the nation through the poorly guarded borders, and that this porousness has contributed to the rise in illegal immigration, the illegal trafficking of pharmaceuticals and psychotropic drugs, the increase in the number of light and small arms smuggling, human trafficking, illegal international trades, and other trans-border offenses. To combat this, the government wishes to strengthen security at the borders "through intensification of patrols and by enhancing the effectiveness of the agencies through the establishment of satisfactory apparatus, creating collaborations, and encouraging stronger cooperation" [1].

Lessening the receptivity of the country to assaults on this critical facility is essential to both the citizens and Nigeria's corporate life. Necessary measures to be taken for this include gathering information, identifying weaknesses, and putting preventative measures in place. The third plan is building capacity for security forces, which will require "the placement of security personnel with the necessary tools and training to effectively counter the threat presented by terrorists". In this context, "it is imperative that counter-terrorist forces be readily available to act in concert with various security response assets in order to intervene and thwart terrorist attacks". Because of this, teams and other emergency

response resources must prepare and practice for potential outcomes [1]. The fourth action plan to realize the objectives of second, 'to secure' is to protect transportation systems and crowded places. The plan is to increase the degree of armed security at several important locations across the nation. In this paper, the following indices shall be used to measure the success rate of this strategic plan:

- a. a significant decrease in the number of illegal immigrants;
- b. a considerable reduction in proliferation of small arms and light weapons;
- c. a considerable reduction in proliferation of cross-border crimes;
- d. credible information sharing between security agencies operating along our common border;
- e. credible information sharing between neighboring countries' security agencies;
- f. the degree to which vital national infrastructure, such as airports and oil plants, is as little vulnerable as possible;
- g. a discernible improvement in the security agency personnel's capacity strengthening;
- h. a notable decline in the number of assaults on crowded areas, especially places of worship.

Thus, this work aims at assessing the efficacy of the second pillar of NACTEST as a standing policy of Nigeria as a country irrespective of the government in power. The research will further show the extent to which Nigeria's strategy against terrorism would be able to withstand the test of time. This paper adopts asymmetric theory which was propounded by Brantley Womack. After this introduction, the next segment of this paper deals with methodology while discussion of findings follows. The last aspect of the paper deals with conclusion and recommendations.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

This paper adopts both primary and secondary methods of data gathering. It sources primary data through adoption of interview. Stakeholders like military, residents of affected areas and scholars were contacted for firsthand information. Purposive method was used in picking the interviewees. Secondary data was also accessed from books, journal, documentaries, achieves, newspapers and internet sources. Both primary and secondary data were analyzed by adopting content analysis.

## **3. Theoretical Orientation**

This paper adopts asymmetric theory as mentioned above. The theory focuses on providing scientific explanation of why weaker nations or non-state actors are important in the matrix of interstate relations as well as how and why weaker nations win wars against tested and powerful states [2]. Asymmetric theory is used to explain interstate conflicts warfare and even ordinary contest between two unequal actors. The proponents of this theory are of opinion that power might not be determinant of success in the warfare. This is because, in some cases, a weak actor's strategy can make a stronger actor's power irrelevant. According to [3], "If strength in battle is synonymous with success, then weaker parties ought to be unable to defeat stronger adversaries, particularly in cases when the disparity in relative strength is substantial. However, historical evidence suggests otherwise: Sometimes, bad performers succeed".

According to Brantley Womack, initially asymmetric theory is predicated on the notion that a bilaterally asymmetric partnership entails more than just bringing wildly

disparate strengths and weaknesses to the bargaining table [2]. A disparity in perception results from the disparity in capability. Contrary to contemporary views of international relations about unequal connections between nations, overall asymmetry might result in stability and normality [4,5]. Thus, the term asymmetric means that two parts of something are not exactly the same, having no balance or symmetry, unevenly distributed and existing or occurring between two in-commensurate entities, especially to the detriment of one. So, in an asymmetrical situation, a portion of something does not have the same exact form as the other portion [5]. In strategic studies, symmetric implies an imbalance in power between two opponents in an armed conflict, especially one in which a weaker force uses unconventional means, such as guerilla or terrorist tactics.

Asymmetric theory is relevant to this research as Boko Haram is a terrorist non-state actor which is in war with Nigerian state and some other neighboring countries. It is a truism that Boko Haram military capacity is weaker in comparing to Nigeria's. However, Boko haram adopted guerrilla tactics and attacking vulnerable targets like schools, hospitals and other infrastructures. Since the motive of this paper is to assess the extent to which Nigeria has protected lives and properties of Nigerians from attacks of Boko Haram.

#### **4. Results and Discussion**

As explained above that second pillar of NACTEST is tagged "to secure". This section is evaluating the extent to which Nigerian government has achieved this goal of protecting and secure the lives and properties of Nigerians. Each objective is evaluated below:

##### **a. A significant decrease in the number of illegal immigrants, the spread of light and tiny weapons, as well as overseas offenses**

In assessing this objective, we can consider the report of [6] who said that The Immigration Regulation in 2017 and the Migrant e-Registration Guidelines in 2015 were recently released by the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS). The Act's Section 112(1) clause serves as another foundation for the legality of the Guidelines, which provides as follows: "To ensure that the provisions of this Act are fully implemented and that they are properly administered, the Minister may establish regulations as he sees fit." Furthermore, as stated in Regulation 22(1), "The Commission shall keep an Inventory of Immigrants" [6]. The guidelines were released to enlighten migrants on the prerequisites and registration process in support of the aforementioned rules. Anybody who is not a citizen of Nigeria is considered a migrant according to the Guidelines. Nevertheless, only immigrants who are eighteen years of age or older and want to remain in Nigeria for a duration longer than ninety days are eligible to register electronically, or e-register. The registration requirement does not apply to anyone under the age of eighteen, diplomats, or those staying in Nigeria for less than ninety days. This implies that anyone visiting Nigeria with a Tourist and Business Visa (TBV) or Temporary Work Permit (TWP) and staying for more than 90 days must register with the NIS, unless they are exempt [6].

Two steps make up the registration process: a web-based pre-registration or desktop registration at a migrant registration office, and a migrant registration office biometrics capture and document verification step two. Spouses of Nigerian nationals, dependents, students, self-employed individuals, and employed migrants are among the groups of migrants who must register. Migrants who successfully register will get an appreciation slip attesting to their adherence to the rules. The Guidelines also highlight the requirements of Sections 28 and 29 of the Regulation, which place a duty on property

owners to make sure that migrants who are accommodated - whether for money or not - accomplish the requirements of the Regulation. In addition, home owners have a duty to report to immigration authorities any immigrants who don't follow the rules. Last but not the least, Section 57(5) of the Act specifies the punishment for breaking the rules, which is three years in jail, a fine of N500,000 (five hundred-thousand-naira equivalent of 319.75 United States dollar), or both. The NIS set a deadline of six months for adherence to the Guidelines, which ended on December 31, 2019, after which misbehaving migrants faced penalties [6].

The aforementioned data indicates that the government is making some attempts to manage the immigration of foreign nationals in accordance with NACTEST goals. The fact that NIS is updating its immigration database is praiseworthy as it may help monitor the flow of undocumented immigrants into Nigeria [6]. Nevertheless, the NIS has to set up the proper structure and allow the e-registration process to run smoothly and professionally without interfering with NIS's daily activities. Similarly, initiatives should be made to identify undocumented immigrants who would not voluntarily choose to register.

Correspondingly, it is on record that after due examination of the mandate, objectives, and functions of the service, NIS was then restructured into eight directorates and seven units. Restructuring was also based on consideration of the new Immigration Regulations of 2017 and the growing difficulties the Service is facing as a result of an increase in transnational immigration offenses, as well as the need for control of entry and monitoring of migrants and transnational crimes. The restructuring then covers the areas mentioned below: Planning, research, and statistics; passports and other travel papers; investigation and compliance; border control; migration; human resources management; finance and accounting; visas and home [7]. The NIS's degree of dedication to stopping illegal immigration in particular and battling terrorism in general is demonstrated by Border Management. However, these efforts have yielded little or no result since the Nigeria Immigration Service itself decried its inability to man Nigerian borders (8). And because the present Nigerian minister of interior, Mr. Olubunmi Tunji Ojo, acknowledged the continuity of alien influx into Nigeria but promised to do what he could to combat it (9).

#### **b. A considerable reduction in proliferation of small arms and light weapons?**

In recognition of the danger of these small arms, Vanguard reported that at the time, there were about 350 million illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) in Nigeria, a situation that alarmed the UN. Seventy percent of the 500 million pieces of SALW that are thought to be in circulation in West Africa, according to the UN, originate from Nigeria. Ms. Olatokunbo Ige, Director of UNREC (the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa), presented these astounding figures [10].

Then Inspector-General of Police Solomon Arase advised those in possession of non-prohibited guns to get or renew their licenses as soon as possible before July 2016 in accordance with UN instructions and NACTECT objectives. He urged them to re-register and follow due process, as was written on the Nigerian Police web link. Another reason for taking this decision was that SALW has become an enormous source of threat to Nigeria's security [11]. Another report, but from the same source, says that, at one point, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Solomon Arase ordered anybody found in possession of an illegal firearm to turn it in or face being arrested and charged. Additionally, police requested that owners of non-prohibited guns renew their permits. This directive was made by the police spokesperson, Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Olabisi Kolawole [11].



The official annual report of 2019 on the website of the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) does not cover seizures of any small arms. The report only consists of seizures of rice, used tires, pharmaceuticals, vegetable oil, military accoutrements, second-hand clothing, furniture, children's toys, used bags and shoes, expired medicaments, used fridges, etc. [12]. One would suggest that since small arms were not included in the report, it shows that small arms smugglers were then yet to be intercepted. In other words, small arms smugglers were still avoiding detection and tracking by Nigerian Customs. However, the report of Charles (13) that customs intercepted arms and ammunition at Onni Port and the report of Adaku (14) that other arms were seized at Port Terminal and Multi Services Limited (PTML) and Tin Can Island Port in Lagos and Ogun State, respectively, shows an improvement in customs efforts to achieve this objective. One can then argue that efforts are ongoing to achieve this aspect of NACTEST. Though there is still a need for more concerted efforts.

### **c. Considerable reduction in proliferation of cross-border crimes**

According to the report of [15], as of December 2020, there had been a significant decrease in cross-border crime during the period under study. Prior to the closure of the border by President Buhari on August 20, 2019, smuggling was confirmed regular practice on Nigerian borders. These illegal activities on Nigerian borders were also confirmed to have contributed to a serious threat to Nigeria's national security and affected its economy [16]. Therefore, in line with NACTEST objectives, the Nigerian Federal Government ordered the immediate closure of some land borders. The effects of this border closure on Nigeria's security were reported to be noteworthy since there was a decrease in all smuggling activities and other cross-border crimes [15].

The committee charged with assessing border closures reported that policy has greatly impacted cross-border crime reduction [17]. And equally reported that the policy has worked and exhausted its life span. Then the committee recommended an instant review of the policy because it was becoming counterproductive. It says, "Nigeria's ability to bolster the personnel of pertinent government security agencies with state-of-the-art equipment (drones, surveillance cameras) was hampered by the border blockade. In the case of a coordinated border operation, it also had an impact on financing, training, and efficient entrance and departure point surveillance" [17]. The Committee further recommended appropriate border management and control measures to stop smuggling and other illicit operations that are carried out via unmanned, unauthorized channels. It underscored that "these steps would also prevent any misuse of the government's efforts to further its economic interests and national security" [17]. Based on the above discourse, we can affirm that this objective was achieved to some appreciative extent.

### **d. Credible information sharing between security agencies operating along our common border**

In assessing this objective, we considered the report of [18] who argued that Nigerian forces have been sharing intelligent information with one another. He mentioned intelligent information sharing as part of the cooperation and commitment of the Nigerian government in combating terrorism [18]. One of the key areas where intelligent information was shared was in fighting against terrorist financing. This was done by "monitoring, reporting, and sharing intelligence regarding the sponsorship of terror-related activities" [19]. In strengthening the culture of information sharing among Nigerian forces, the U.S.

government created or adapted various structures. Part of those structures is called the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID was a West Africa regional effort for the Common Vulnerability and Exposure (CVE) Unit, which was based in Accra. The state department's chief coordinator for Boko Haram oversaw an interagency cooperation system. Since its founding in 2015, USAID has made sure that agencies in Nigeria and around Africa are more aligned and share better information [20].

However, some other reports identified a lack of information sharing among the forces. Adegoke (a strategic study scholar) identifies the unwillingness of security agencies to share information with one another as a gap in NACTEST. He lamented that "the hostility between and among Nigeria's security services and their reluctance to share intelligence are two of the noted policy gaps. This has made it more difficult to fight the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast of the nation" [21]. Bodunde, Noah, and Goodluck (intelligence and security scholars) [22] corroborate the above assertions and even add that there is little or no cooperation among the security agencies fighting against Boko Haram in Nigeria. They [22] said further that rather than attaining the highest level of protection against all obstacles, the proliferation of security agencies encouraged a lack of collaboration, ego-boosting, nepotism, and exclusion among the many security groups. Instead of pooling intelligence to accomplish a shared goal, individual outfits choose to retain their knowledge to themselves in order to foster needless relevance and rivalry among other outfits. Therefore, as far as Bodunde, Noah, and Goodluck are concerned, there was no intelligent information sharing among Nigerian security agencies. They then strongly recommended it [22].

Okechukwu, Charles, Isah, and Ikechukwu (scholars of public administration) were also in consonance with the views of the above scholars (Bodunde, Noah, and Goodluck). They also identified a lack of cooperation among Nigerian security agencies. In their words, "Interagency cooperation is frequently seen as the answer to all of society's intricate issues. Nevertheless, there remains uncertainty regarding the nature, triggers, and factors that impact the outcome of interagency coordination in the current fight against terrorism". They then identify weak institutional capacity to mount collaboration as the reason why combating terrorism has not yielded the expected results [23].

Based on the above analysis, we are arguing here that this objective has not yet been achieved as expected. Though there is a claim that information was shared to some extent, reports of a lack of sharing are overwhelming. Therefore, there is a need to buckle up in this area.

#### **e. Credible information sharing between neighboring nations' securities**

In assessing this objective, we discovered that there is little cooperation and collaboration, as well as the sharing of intelligent information, among the four countries that are mostly affected by the terrorists. In line with NACTEST objectives, Nigeria spearheaded the formation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF), which consists of Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. Some of the positive aspects of this collaboration are that it made it possible for troops to gain knowledge from one another. Additionally, it strengthened the idea of international collaboration and activities and has decimated terrorism in many ways [24].

However, this cooperation and collaboration come with myriad challenges. One of these challenges is debates among officials from four different nations over the reality of Boko Haram. They are arguing on the question of whether terrorism is a regional menace or primarily a Nigerian problem [24]. This disagreement has not really helped. In fact, many

high rank military leaders and professional observers from Niger, Cameroon, and Chad assumed that their countries were just experiencing unintended consequences from an issue that primarily stemmed from Nigerian incompetence. In replying to this, the Nigerian government claimed that Boko Haram only gained ground because it had safe haven in neighboring countries. This led to complicity among the concerned states customs agents, security forces, and other officials. It has led to contrasting perceptions occasioned by finger-pointing, which equally weakened regional harmony and the aptitude of its response [24].

Though all affected states were fighting their common enemy together, in reality, each state was pursuing and protecting its own national interests. For instance, Nigeria has been fighting a dreadful terrorist organization that occupies a sizable portion of the northeastern region of the nation.

On the other hand, Cameroon has mostly faced a threat from outside its borders, even though at times this has required fending off well-prepared and armed raids on its border garrisons [25]. Chad has concentrated on defending supply lines through Cameroon and recurrent battles on the lake.

Additionally, Niger has largely focused on border containment operations and has occasionally carried out major counter-insurgency operations inside its own borders or in Nigeria [25].

Because commanders from various nations desired diverse goals, from limited containment operations in another country's territory to prolonged counter-insurgency in their own, these divergent aims hindered the multilateral response [25]. If this is the order of the day, how do we expect efficient information sharing among these countries?

Still, on the sharing of intelligent information, it was very difficult to assess it in the MNJTF operation. One can ask, "Is the operation embedded with information sharing or was it jointly planned? The answer was negative. This is because it is on record that Chad at one time engaged in unilateral and offensive operations, sometimes around 2020 [26]. It was also discovered that Chadian President Idris Déby was impatient alongside the other colleagues. This may demonstrate the ongoing challenges nations have had while collaborating [27]. In an interview conducted by International Crisis Group, a force commander lamented not enjoying supervision and power over each of the participating forces.

The commander also bemoaned being overworked due to the MNJTF's overflowing decision-making procedure, which leaves him in charge of day-to-day operations. He equally complained about strategic concerns and communication with governments in Lake Chad as well. In addition, the coordinator lamented that the participating nations, such as Nigeria, gave him limited chance for maneuver and shared a small element of the planning with him [27]. According to another source, operational plans have seldom been disclosed with the MNJTF by national governments and military forces. This made it more difficult to coordinate plans and safeguard civilians. Intelligence sharing between MNJTF components remained inadequate even with the establishment of a regional intelligence fusion unit manned by Western and regional officers and supported by the United States, France, and the United Kingdom (UK) [25].

From the above analysis, we can argue that there was collaboration, but it was hindered by states' inconsistent commitments to the mission, insufficient funds and fragmented planning. This objective was partially achieved, but more efforts are needed to do so as to achieve a desired result.

**f. Extent to which the fragility of vital national infrastructure**

Robert's report [28] provides us with the necessary information to assess this objective. He explained the extent to which Nigerian security forces had manned vulnerable places like airports, schools, hospitals, and prisons, to mention but a few. Robert said, Following the Dapchi kidnappings, president Buhari issued a directive bolstering school security. However, the military does not have enough personnel to defend every school in the northeast, according to Defense Headquarters Spokesperson Brigadier General John Agim. This is mostly because the military is being used in practically all of the 36 states of the nation for internal security and law enforcement duties [28].

The above quotation shows that the president Buhari wanted to achieve this objective, but he failed to take into consideration the necessary things needed to accomplish this goal. According to the report, there were insufficient security personnel to secure vulnerable infrastructure. In another source, corroborating the above fact, it was reported that the number of federal police officers is insufficient as well. One reason for this scarcity of police officers is because more over 150000 of the 371000 official police personnel are assigned to serve as bodyguards for politicians, high-ranking officials, and other Very Important Personalities (VIPs) in Abuja and state capitals throughout the nation [28-30]. In the three northeastern states, police chiefs sent around 2000 more officers to schools throughout that period. However, these men could only cover some 300 of the over 5000 public primary and secondary schools. Other Nigerian security agencies, like the Civil Defence Corps, also made some efforts by deploying 500 workers to Borno State schools. Unfortunately, these men could only cover seven local governments out of the 27 local governments in the state. Apparently, one can easily feel their numerical incapacity to repel any attack from the terrorists [28-30].

Still, in assessing NACTEST's objective of protecting some vulnerable targets, it is a known fact that the oil sector and facilities are among the targets of terrorists. Oil has been discovered in Maiduguri, very close to where terrorist attacks are rampant. According to John, an armed caravan of oil workers was ambushed by Boko Haram while they were looking for the location of the aforementioned oil in Maiduguri. After the attacks, many people were killed and others were kidnapped. The victims were between twenty-seven and forty, which included troops and participants in the Civilian Joint Task Force [31]. Since such attacks were carried out in the area, there have been no other attempts to explore oil in the region. Deductively, vulnerable places are yet to be protected, and the implication is that this objective is yet to be achieved.

**g. A quantifiable improvement in security agency personnel's capacity strengthening**

According to Jane, the majority of the nearly 100,000-strong forces were fighting Boko Haram and its affiliates in the surrounding area as part of the continuing operation Lafiya Dole. He also gave statistics on Nigerian police who were on duty combating terrorism: 400,000. However, the majority of these forces lacked the required training and/or technical skills [32]. It was equally reported that despite the government's efforts and determination to develop these forces through collaborative efforts among themselves, no meaningful results have been achieved at the operational level. Instead, some of the agencies involved in border security, cross-border crime, and CT have been accused of corruption, human rights violations, and a lack of professionalism [32].

Another index to assess this objective is to look at government financial commitment. The World Bank reports that the Nigerian government's commitment to capacity building for security personnel was low at the beginning of NACTEST. It was discovered that annual military allocations from the national budget have always been on the decline until 2017 [33]. It was only in 2018 that we started witnessing a little increment. The Table below further expresses this point.

Table 1

Annual Military Allocation				
S/N	Facts	Years	Amount Allocated	Comments
1.	Nigeria military spending/defense budget	2015	<b>\$2.07B</b>	
2.	Nigeria military spending/defense budget	2016	<b>\$1.72B</b>	<b>Declined</b>
3.	Nigeria military spending/defense budget	2017	<b>\$1.62B</b>	<b>Declined</b>
4.	Nigeria military spending/defense budget	2018	<b>\$2.04B</b>	<b>Increased</b>
5.	Nigeria military spending/defense budget	2019	<b>\$1.86B</b> ,	<b>decreased</b>
6.	Nigeria military spending/defense budget	2020	<b>\$2.57B</b>	<b>Increased</b>
7.	Nigeria military spending/defense budget	2021	<b>\$4.47B</b>	<b>Increased</b>

Source: a Table prepared by the researcher; information was sourced from Macrotrends [33].

The figure below also collaborated our argument.

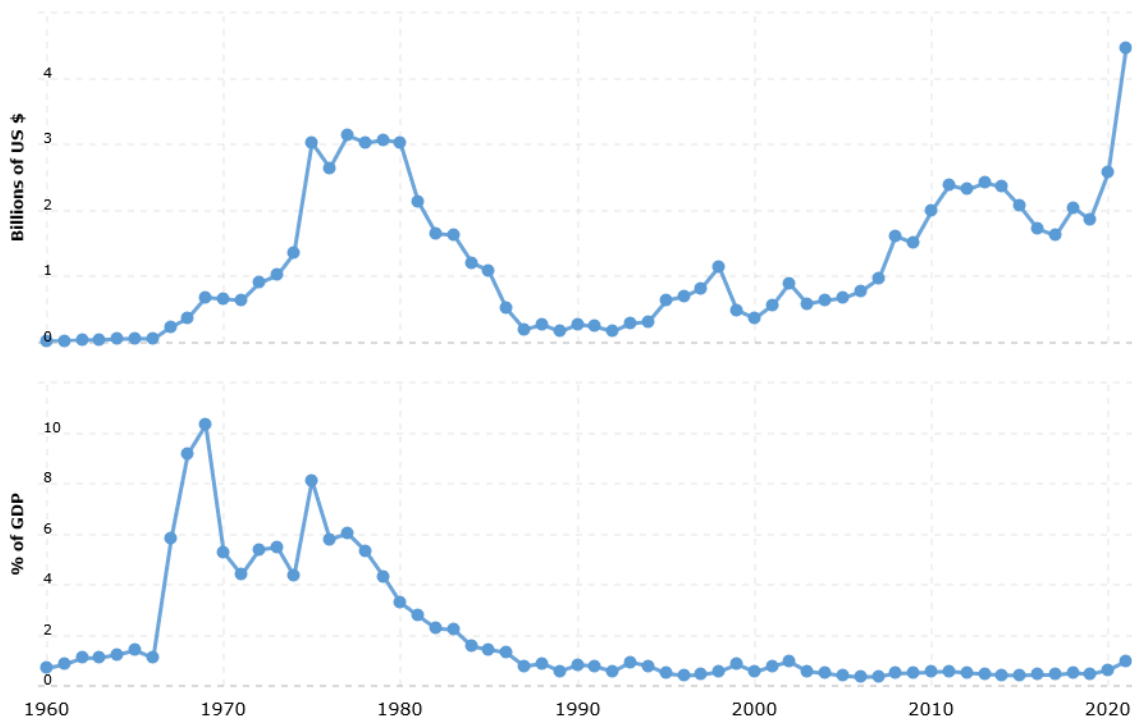


Figure 1. Annual Military Allocation Graph.

Source: Macrotrends Nigeria Military Spending [33].

Still assessing the increase in capacity building of Nigerian forces, the Federal Government was reported to have allocated the entire price of N1.78 trillion to the security division in 2020 [34]. This is a welcome idea since it is a minimal increment from the N1.76 trillion that was allocated in 2019. The 2020 military allocation was shared among military sectors. For instance, N900 billion was allocated to the Defense Ministry, N410.5 billion to Police Matters, and N75 billion to Operation Lafia Dole and other Armed Forces activities. Others were shared between the Ministry of Internal Affairs (N253.4 billion) and the Office of the National Security Adviser (N144.3 billion). At the time, the whole budget for security was around 16.8% of the N10.59 trillion overall budget [34]. The 2021 budget (\$4.47 billion) also showed government commitments to military finance since it also increased more than that of 2020, which was \$2.57 billion. Conclusively, we can argue that this objective was pursued to a reasonable extent, while more is still needed to be done, especially in the areas of physical training and intelligence.

#### **h. A notable decline in the quantity of assaults against congested areas, especially places of worship**

From both the literature and interviews conducted, it was affirmed that there was a reduction in attacks on crowded places, including worship centers, during the period under study. However, there were still occasional attacks in some quarters, especially in rural areas. Rt. Hon. Abdulkarim Lawan, the Speaker of the Borno State House of Assembly, disputed certain statements made by the former Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Gen. Gabriel Olonisakin, and the Minister of Information, Lai Mohammed, claiming that Boko Haram had been driven out of all 27 local government areas in the state. Lawan refuted these assertions, asserting that the Boko Haram sect still maintains complete authority over the Guzamala Local Government Area, his hometown [15]. Additionally, he stated that there is no civic life in Guzamala and that there is no military presence in the council headquarters or the areas that surround it that are not under the control of armed Boko Haram terrorists [15]. Lawan expressed regret during the Guzamala Concerned Stakeholders' Forum in Maiduguri. He reported that people from his community had been at camps for refugees and other communities that accept them for a number of years. He said, despite his persistent calls for the troops to be stationed in Guzamala so that the displaced people might benefit from Governor Babagana Zulum's efforts towards rehabilitation and resettlement. However, all these efforts were futile as Guzamala and Abadam are still under Boko Haram's control as Governor Zulum lamented on January, 2022 (Sahara Reporter, 2022) [35].

Similarly, occasional attacks on schools and mosques are still there despite the government's efforts, even in Maiduguri [36-39]. The report of John and Asch also corroborates the above assertion. They equally added that there had been a change in the patterns of attacks on worship centers. The change was at a particular worship center that was under attack [40]. For instance, churches were more attacked than mosques between 2011 and 2014, while mosques were more attacked than churches between 2015 and 2018. This shows that there is little achievement in this area. Thus, much is still expected to be done.

### **8. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Nigeria as one of the countries facing terrorist menace has come up with a standing strategy to combat terrorism. The strategy is formulated and documented in a book called

National Counter terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) and was enacted in April 2014. We assumed that the effectiveness of this counter-terrorism (CT) could commence in 2015. Therefore, post-NACTEST is considered in this paper to kick off in 2015. Thus, this paper deemed it fit to evaluate the performance of Nigerian government in countering terrorism. This focus of this paper is to assess the second pillar of the strategy. It has been discovered that Nigerian government to a large extent followed this strategy to the letter. Especially in the area of safeguarding the lives of citizens, infrastructures and utilities. In achieving this goal, it is discovered that government made efforts to control movement of foreigners in Nigeria borders. Different measures were also put in place to document data about citizens and foreigners through e-registration. Movement of SALW was also controlled in an attempt to safeguard lives and infrastructures from terrorist attacks.

Similarly, it was discovered that there was information shearing between military and other para military forces involved in fight against terrorism. Even among the three arms of military: soldiers, navy and air force, there were information sharing. Likewise, information was shared among military, customs and immigration officers. Of importance to note is that contiguous countries to Nigeria equally shared intelligent information with Nigeria. Consequently, the numbers and gravity of attacks of Boko Haram reduced drastically. Unlike before the adoption of NACTEST when Boko Haram attacked UN secretariats, schools, markets among other at will, this scenario has changed. Thus, one can conclude that NACTEST's second pillar which is "to secure" has been achieved to a large extent. However, sporadic attacks of Boko Haram to villages, farms and farmers, and kidnaping for ransom shows that government needs to be more decisive in combatting terrorism in Nigeria.

The paper, therefore, recommends that government should put in more human and natural resources as security men used to complain about lack of adequate resources to protect the vulnerable. Moreso, the government should increase its political will to end this menace. This is important because development could one come only when there is peace and security. Corruption must also be tackled since it also has contribution in perpetuating terrorism in Nigeria. International communities could also assist Nigeria with more sophisticated equipment to man vulnerable targets of the terrorists. Finally, Nigerians has to cooperate with government rather than the terrorist. It is quite important for the citizens to give intelligent information to the security instead of being informants of the terrorists.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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## THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE FORMATION OF SOCIOCULTURAL VALUES

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**Abstract.** The work presents an analysis of cultural concepts, heritage and values, their significance is also mentioned in the process of training young people in university institutions. The paper mentions the functions and aspects that emphasize the role of sociocultural values in the development of the personality of young people. Culture has a great influence on how we are aware of the community we are part of and the value system formed during development. Sociocultural values through cultural and social affiliation, reflect references such as the history and qualities of artistic heritage or association with remarkable personalities. Within the university education process, the emphasis is on contributing to their knowledge, protection and promotion. Therefore, the university education process has a considerable impact on the valorization of cultural heritage and the formation of sociocultural values of young people, which will serve as a means of adaptation and integration in the current period.

**Key words:** *creativity, culture, sociocultural values, university education.*

**Rezumat.** Lucrarea prezintă o analiză a conceptelor de cultură, patrimoniu și valori, semnificația cărora este primordială în procesul de formare a tinerilor în instituțiile universitare. Sunt analizate aspectele care subliniază rolul valorilor socioculturale în dezvoltarea personalității tinerilor. Cultura are o influență deosebită asupra modului de a fi conștienți de comunitatea din care facem parte și de sistemul de valori format în timpul dezvoltării. Valorile socioculturale, prin afiliere culturală și socială, reflectă referințe precum istoria și calitățile patrimoniului artistic sau asocierea cu personalități marcante. În cadrul procesului de învățământ universitar se pune accent pe contribuția la cunoașterea, protecția și promovarea acestora. Prin urmare, procesul de învățământ în universitate are un impact considerabil asupra valorificării moștenirii culturale și formării valorilor socioculturale ale tinerilor, care vor servi ca mijloc de adaptare și integrare în perioada actuală.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *creativitate, cultură, valori socioculturale, educație universitară.*

## 1. Introduction

Studies on cultural heritage and its promotion can be found in several educational systems in European countries, where a number of theories have been formulated. Recently, education about heritage went through several stages of changes that contributed to the development of a cultural society. Knowledge of the notions of heritage is necessary and relevant today, because educating young people about heritage means informing and making them aware of their involvement in the long-lasting cultural process. This fact will benefit young people from university institutions by increasing the positive parameters of the personality, by the effect of their cultural baggage, by correct attitudes towards the national culture. These can be achieved through the following activities: knowledge of heritage through extracurricular activities; promoting heritage at various scientific and cultural events. The concept of heritage [1], once introduced in the educational process, changes conceptions and attitudes, but at the same time leads to the increase of the intellectual level of the personality and triggers a deep interest in social identity, nation and country [2].

Cultural heritage presents the ways of life developed by a group of people with common interests, which they transmit from generation to generation, and includes: customs, practices, objects, artistic expressions and values [3].

In the Republic of Moldova, together with the cultural changes, the Government Decision on the approval of the Culture Development Strategy "Culture 2020" and the Action Plan regarding its implementation was also adopted, no. 271 of 04.09.2014 [4]. The basic principles of the "Culture 2020" strategy are the following [5]: 1) protecting and capitalizing on the country's cultural heritage, which is a national priority; 2) citizens' access to the country's cultural values; 3) the production of cultural goods and services for the economic growth of the country; 4) promoting culture as a determining factor in the field of education and training of the country's citizens. This decision refers to the need to develop the cultural sector, which "becomes a key factor in the development of human capital" [5].

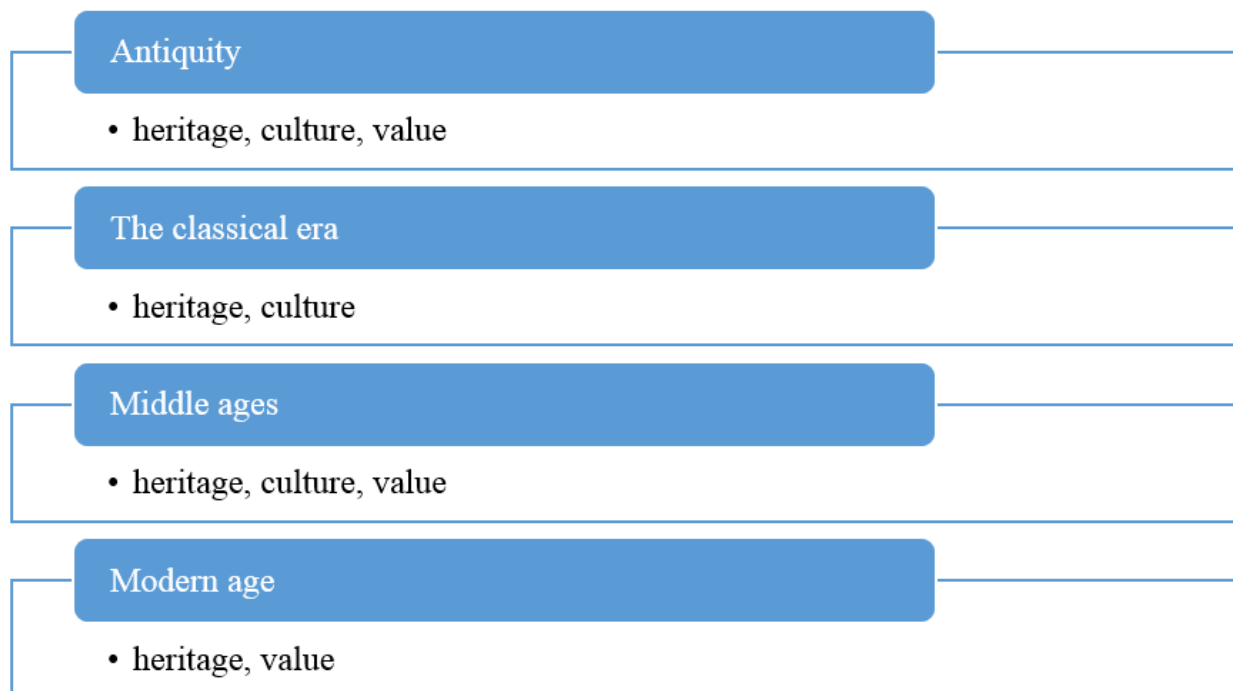
The differences between past and present are more often accentuated in adolescence. Young people with a desire to assert themselves as personalities are prone to deny everything old and easily accept everything new. In this context, the knowledge and valorization of cultural heritage, the need to have a system of sociocultural values is very important. The objective of the research was to define the basic concepts: heritage, culture and values, as well as to identify the sociocultural values that were the basis of the personality formation of young specialists.

## 2. Basic concepts

The study of the interference of concepts in the evoked epistemological construction is presented from a historical point of view, the concepts being interpreted at the level of definitions extracted from prominent authors, Figure 1.

The definition of the concept "Heritage" is rather vague and different, resulting from the fact that it is a rather specific term representing a certain type of heritage. Among the first sources where heritage is mentioned is in the work "Tables XII", says the author Novitskiy I. B., the work is the first material source of Ancient Roman law in which the concept of "heritage", from a structural point of view, has two roots: that of pater, denoting the master of the family (pater familias), and men, denoting preservation. According to the

patriarchal organization of the primitive Roman family, the pater, the lord, the oldest living man, is the only holder of rights and obligations, and all others living under the same roof are subject to his power [6, p. 275].



**Figure 1.** Genesis of the concepts of heritage, culture and value.

Moreover, patrimony also represents "all the rights and obligations of persons susceptible to a pecuniary value". In Justinian's time, patrimony was designated by the word *substantia* or *facultates*, which evokes only the active side of the succession, a fact that makes the French professor Jean-Philippe Lévy claim: "it is not explicitly said that patrimony does not have a passive side ; concretely, the Romanians argued that the patrimony includes an asset from which the liability has been subtracted, starting, therefore, from the premise that the asset would have always been greater than the liability" [7, p. 286].

Author Halperin, J. L., mentions that the inheritance is actually the inheritance that represents "the transmission of a person's wealth to his descendants" [8, p. 19-20]. At the same time, the Kosovan author defines "cultural heritage" as a tool that materializes the cultural identity of a society, it is a way of promoting the values of a community from the outside. Therefore, it represents the socio-cultural and political-economic evolution that contributes to the diversification of culture. Also, cultural heritage represents a whole system that must be valued and preserved, it must be a constant, continuous and focused concern [9]. From the analysis of the Romanian legislation, the concept of heritage is described as follows: "from the totality of goods that represent a testimony and an expression of national values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions, regardless of their ownership regime" [10].

Following what has been presented, we can affirm that the concept of heritage cannot be reduced to a single general definition. Sociocultural approaches to heritage are focused on the diversity of aspects depending on the users of the heritage itself. There is no single and correct definition, because people are different, have different points of view, heritage is a component of culture and society as a whole.

Culture is a very complex social phenomenon, almost impossible to render in a strict definition. This explains the fact that all attempts to define culture according to a classical logical scheme have proven, if not impossible, certainly one-sided. However, we will mention some of the definitions of some authors.

The author Moldovan, M. defines culture as "the totality of material and spiritual values accumulated by mankind over time; the totality of material (tools, ceramics, ornaments, weapons, homes, settlements, etc.) and spiritual (artistic, magical) values. , religious and funerary) preserved values, through which the image of the human community from a certain era can be reconstructed; the totality of knowledge in various fields". At the same time, the author mentions that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) describes culture as "a series of distinctive characteristics of a society or social group in spiritual, material, intellectual or emotional terms" [11]. For his part, the author, Abraham Moles, in a pragmatic approach, considers culture "a source of everyone's brain, at every moment" [11]. Meanwhile, the author Benngadi R. mentions that culture "provides answers for all the actions of the individual on the problems of life; provides means of interaction with the environment; it brings peace to the individual and guides him in a set of religious, folkloric and traditional aspects, these being influenced by the environment" [12, p.150].

In the work, "Encyclopedia of humanist culture (religion, literature, philosophy)" culture is defined as "the system of values and norms" [13], the same approach is taken by the authors Konstantinov N.A.; Medinski E.N., and others, who claim that culture is "the system of common, unique values, beliefs, traditions and norms of behavior of a certain group of people; differentiating one group of people from another group; a value system owned by a collective" [14, p.112].

Another definition of culture is found in an American dictionary, where culture represents "a set of behavioral patterns, socially distributed, the characteristic reasonings for the community or population; the style of social and artistic experience that takes place in society or class" [15, p.321]. Therefore, culture combines "relationships (characterized by the commitment of organizations and people to trust each other to the extent that they can be active together) and values that substantially affect behaviors" [16]. Through the definition of the concept of culture as "the ensemble formed by systems of representations, normative systems, systems of expressions and systems of actions" [17, pp. 16-17], we can affirm that it actually means "the transmission from one generation to another, through teaching imitation, of knowledge, values and other factors that influence behavior" [18, p. 2].

From the previously mentioned regarding the definition of culture, it serves as a background for the presentation of the concept of value during social development. The concept of values is inseparably associated with heritage, culture, because the way society develops is always based on the choice of values that must be treated as an assumption of the decisions that man makes.

The ancient sophists define values (the Good, the Beautiful, the Truth) as qualities "in themselves", ideas that transcend the sensible world, forming together with other ideas an "intelligible world"; - value is not a quality of things and even less a quality "in itself", transcendent, but a positioning of human consciousness; "Man is the measure of all things" [19]. The author, Thomas Aquinas, defines the following values: the Good, the Beautiful, the Truth, the Sacred - entity opposed to nature as an artificial product; at the same time it is mentioned that the value is rather contrary to the divine will, it is the will enlightened by

intelligence, which rises to divinity as its own value [19]. It should be noted that in fact, value designates the totality of things that have meaning for man: a thing is recognized as value only when man personally relates to it. Things still unknown to man do not represent values [19].

The author Pâslaru presents the value as "a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive for an individual or characteristic for a group", it influences the selection of methods and means of action [20]. But according to the author Voicu, the values "are not directly observable, they involve cognitive, evaluative and affective elements" are relative in time and determine the behaviors and attitudes of the social environment [21]. In the works of the author Antoci, D., it is mentioned that the values are "The fundamental psychic organization in order to establish the direction, to identify the effective paths to follow in certain circumstances, cognitively organized in points of view (beliefs) for the appropriation of facts. , ideas, phenomena, correlated with social requirements and with the ideals generated by them, which support the decisions made in various situations/problems, by forming a more appropriate, more appropriate attitude, which gives value to an object/actions expressed through behaviors " [22-24].

Therefore, value systems differ from one person to another and even between different nations. The value system is formed over time and always changes, being in fact redefined by culture, by their importance, being significant or less significant.

### **3. Methods**

From the evolution presented at the chronological level, synthesis is used as scientific research methods applied in the reflection of concepts. In the application of the means of scientific knowledge, the method of analysis of notions is used, evoking the legalities that govern the study of interferences of cultural heritage in sociocultural values.

### **4. Approaches to the concept of heritage, culture and value**

Author Wald believes that man becomes the only being capable of transforming fragments of nature into culture tools, sensations into notions, affections into values, intelligence into intellect [25, pp. 43-45].

Definitions of the notion of culture can be focused around several aspects:

- 1) axiological: culture presents a series of material and spiritual values accumulated during the historical development of mankind;
- 2) sociological: culture characterizes the stage of development of society, of man's creative capacities, defined in material and spiritual values;
- 3) anthropological: culture is a universal method of self-realization and creative self-expression of man;
- 4) semiotics: culture is social information, accumulated and preserved in society through various semiotic systems.

The formation and development of values is achieved through the educational process, culture being currently a priority in the training of young people.

Authors Smith and Schwartz [26, 27] list five important aspects of values:

1. These are ideas imbued with the senses.
2. They refer to desired ends (eg, equality) and ways to achieve those ends (equity, utility).
3. They go beyond certain specific actions and situations, such as submission, for example.

4. They serve as norms for selecting and evaluating the behaviors of people and situations.

5. They are ordered both at the societal level and at the individual level, depending on the importance of one over the other, forming value systems.

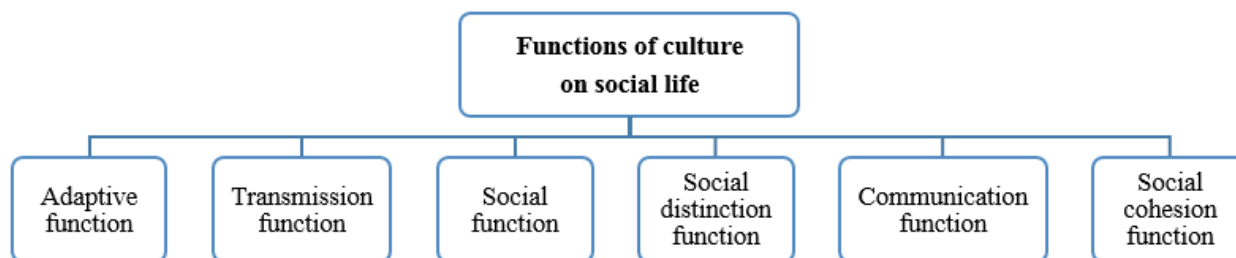
The most important concepts with which the value concept intersects are: attitude, norm, ideal, interest, need and personality traits.

#### 4. Results

Starting from the fact that the university environment must form integral personalities, through the assimilation of sociocultural values. As mentioned by Vințanu N.,, the University must be really functional, i.e. cooperate in the material development of society, simultaneously with cultural development [28]. Therefore, the university has a specific environment for the formation of student behavior, thus a greater collaboration between society, culture and the university is necessary.

In the diagram below, some functions of culture are presented in Figure 2, adapted from the work of the author E. Țărnă [29].

From the presented, we can affirm that the presence of the social in everyone's life also contributes significantly to the development of culture, which can be achieved in the following stages: of humanization and spiritual development.



**Figure 2.** The functions exercised by culture in social life: adapted after [29].

Following the analysis of several studies, the author proposes the following functions of culture that influence the social life of students in the educational process:

The function of communication is to convey information to students about the academic system, academic values and norms, evaluation criteria, etc.

The axiological function appreciates, values, outlines the limits of academic realities, contributes to the integration of the student in society.

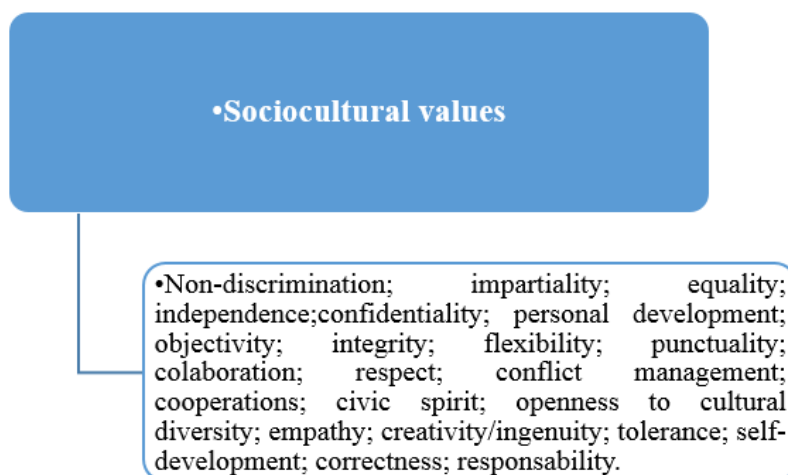
The identification function is conditioned, first of all, by the student's need to integrate as a social being to be part of a social group. Through this function, culture creates for people the feeling of belonging to a certain society, country, social group.

The integrative function - culture can contribute to the consolidation of people, the citizens of the country on the basis of common interests, a unique social foundation, a system of common values. This function allows effective integration in the economic, social and spiritual sphere.

The function of socialization - through which the student acquires means that allow him to realize his interests in the social and cultural sphere, by combining new ideas with previous experience.

Cognitive function - is the function of knowledge of cultural reality, phenomena and processes of social life. To ensure historical continuity, for the accumulation and transmission of experience from one generation to another.

The educational function - it is manifested by the fact that culture contributes to the intellectual development of the students' personality, to the formation of their interest in society and to the elaboration of some directives for sociocultural life, to the assimilation of sociocultural forms and values, Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** The scheme of sociocultural values.

(Source: developed by the author).

After a more detailed analysis of some scientific works, we present an analysis in which it is mentioned that culture is represented by a system of values, structured in five constitutive moments:

- The moment of knowledge.
- The axiological moment.
- The creative moment.
- The praxeological (action) moment.
- The communicative moment.

As sociocultural values with an impact on personality formation are the following: openness to cultural otherness, respect, civic spirit, responsibility, self-efficacy, tolerance, flexibility and adaptability, cooperation, conflict management.

In what follows, Table 1 presents a synthesis of the cultural values present in European countries and the Republic of Moldova, Table 1.

Table 1

**Summary of presentation of cultural values in comparison European countries and the Republic of Moldova adapted after [30]**

Cultural values Europe	Cultural values Republic of Moldova
Performance, equality through professionalism.	Improvisations: creativity, risk, ambiguity; Let it go as it is;
Flexibility, creativity and innovation, dynamism.	Limited planning; Non-compliance with deadlines.
Customer services.	Bureaucratic and politicized hierarchy.
Loyalty, openness, trust and cooperation.	Lack of trust and openness.
Planning and synchronization.	Short-term orientation.
Individualism, self-discipline and self-control.	Inward orientation.



From the data presented in Table 1, a significant difference can be observed between the values promoted by European countries and those of the Republic of Moldova. This demonstrates once again that the formation and development of sociocultural values within educational institutions is a current direction.

## 5. Conclusions

The purpose of the study was actually to highlight how important sociocultural values are in the formation of students in the academic environment. Values are considered the core of culture, being part of all the elements that participate in the formation of the students' personality.

In order for the university environment to be able to form personalities, it is necessary to: offer students the opportunity to develop in a cultural environment; the institution has a strategy oriented towards the cultural and social environment; to provide the opportunity to engage and develop multiculturally.

Culture is everything that is produced, socially adopted and shared by the members of a society. Culture is a system of symbols, ideas, values, beliefs, norms and significant rules of behavior, acquired and socially transmitted from generation to generation, through which people organize their lives and activity. Culture is a way of spiritual mastery of reality based on the identification of values, which represent an integral system of stable ideas of human activity (behavior), transmitted from one generation to another, through their socialization.

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## PHYSICAL SELF-ESTEEM OF ALBINOS IN KINSHASA AND ITS EXPLANATORY FACTORS

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**Abstract.** The aim of this research was to assess the physical self-esteem of albinos in the Democratic Republic of Congo (more specifically, those living in the city-province of Kinshasa), and to identify the most explanatory factors. With this in mind, a physical self-esteem inventory was applied to 70 albinos living in Kinshasa, members of the Mwimba Texas Association. Following the administration of this inventory, it was found that the albinos surveyed had positive physical self-esteem. This positive self-esteem manifested itself in a positive perception of: (1) overall self, (2) physical value, (3) physical appearance and (4) strength. The study of explanatory determinants made it possible to target two factors that influenced all the dimensions of the self-esteem of the subjects surveyed (support of entourage and perception of albinos by entourage).

**Keywords:** *physical self-esteem, Albinos, explanatory factors, physical appearance, Kinshasa.*

**Rezumat.** Scopul acestei cercetări a fost de a evalua autorespectul fizic a albiștilor din Republica Democrată Congo (mai precis, cei care locuiesc în orașul-provincia Kinshasa) și de a identifica cei mai explicativi factori. Având în vedere acest lucru, a fost aplicat un sondaj al autorespectului fizic pentru 70 de albiși care trăiesc în Kinshasa, membri ai Asociației Mwimba Texas. În urma acestui sondaj s-a constatat, că albiștii chestionați aveau un autorespect fizic pozitiv. Această autorespect s-a manifestat printr-o percepție pozitivă a: (1) autopercepția generală, (2) valoarea fizică, (3) aspectul fizic și (4) forța. Studiul determinantilor explicativi a făcut posibilă vizarea a doi factori care au influențat toate dimensiunile autorespectului fizic al subiecților chestionați : sprijinirea anturajului și percepția albiștilor de către anturaj.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *autorespect fizic , albiși, factori explicativi, aspect fizic, Kinshasa.*

### 1. Introduction

En Afrique, les albinos font partie des personnes les plus marginalisées et les plus stigmatisés. Leur situation est beaucoup plus compliquée et alarmante à cause de la

couleur de leur peau qui fait d'eux des individus ayant des pouvoirs magiques ou spirituels. Ainsi, ils sont privés de leurs droits humains et sociaux, ils sont même contraints à être à l'écart de la communauté. Cet isolement est causé par l'apparence physique de leur peau. Ainsi, les albinos affichent leur spécificité, surtout quand ils habitent dans une même communauté avec les mélanodermes [1]. Outre le stigmate que représente le corps des albinos, qui cause leur éloignement de la société, il y a aussi plusieurs croyances, représentations et mythes traditionnels sur la spécificité des albinos [2]. Dans ce contexte, la mémoire collective africaine considère l'albinos comme un esprit. Il n'est pas un être ordinaire mais plutôt un esprit avec plusieurs forces mystiques.

Au Sénégal, il y a une croyance selon laquelle le fait de coucher avec une albinos permettrait de guérir du SIDA. Plusieurs femmes albinos sont, dans cette logique, victimes des viols à répétition. Cette croyance est également présente au Zimbabwe. Pour les Zimbabwéens, avoir des rapports sexuels avec un albinos contribuerait à la guérison de plusieurs maladies (le diabète, les cancers, le SIDA, l'hypertension artérielle...) [2]. En République Centrafricaine (RCA), la naissance d'un albinos pourrait être la conséquence d'un rapport sexuel avec des esprits de l'eau [3]. Dans cette même logique, il y a une croyance selon laquelle l'utilisation par les pêcheurs des poils des personnes albinos permettrait de pêcher plusieurs poissons dans le lac Victoria. Au Burundi, le sexe des albinos est très sacré car il permettrait d'avoir la puissance politique et la fortune. C'est pourquoi, à la veille des opérations électorales, on enregistre plusieurs cas d'agressions ou de mutilations des albinos [2]. A côté de tous ces mythes, il y a un autre lié au caractère contagieux des albinos. En effet, dans les pays de l'Afrique noire, on pense que le simple fait de voir un albinos pourrait pousser une femme enceinte, à avoir un enfant albinos. C'est pourquoi, certaines personnes évitent tout contact avec les albinos [2]. En République Démocratique du Congo (RDC), on a surpris certaines personnes, après la salutation avec un albinos, tirer le cheveu de ce dernier. Cet acte est considéré comme une stratégie pour éviter d'être contaminé par un albinos [4].

Tous ces mythes sont sans fondement car en réalité l'albinisme est une maladie liée à la génétique, marquée par un manque de mélanine de la peau, des cheveux et des yeux. Bien que non-fondés, ces mythes ont une grande influence sur le vécu psychologique des albinos dans la société africaine. Bien que certains albinos ne soient pas affectés par ces mythes, ce qui leur permet d'évoluer normalement à côté de tout le monde, la majorité en souffre énormément et cela se manifeste par de sérieux problèmes d'intégration sociale (familiale, scolaire, communautaire).

Ainsi, on peut conclure avec Ngub'usim [5] que même si tout le monde considère la personne albinos comme un être ordinaire et identique aux autres sur le plan mental, intellectuel et social, son acceptation et son intégration sociale posent problème. Dans cette même optique, Ngudie [6] affirme que les albinos congolais éprouvent de nombreuses difficultés pour s'insérer dans la société. Ils sont rejetés par leur entourage et se trouvent même contraints de mendier afin d'avoir quelque chose à manger. Tout ce rejet social n'est pas sans conséquence sur leur personnalité. Les études citées par plusieurs chercheurs [4,7] ont démontré que les albinos sont marqués par une forte saturation des traits de personnalité à dominance négative tels que l'auto dévalorisation, le sentiment d'infériorité, le sentiment d'insécurité et les frustrations. Ainsi, ils ont tendance à se sous-estimer comparativement aux personnes mélanodermes, ils se considèrent comme inférieurs et lors des épreuves sociométriques, ils ont tendance à porter leurs choix sur leurs camarades

albinos. Chelala [1] va plus loin en affirmant que les albinos vivent une situation de stigmatisé. Ils sont doublement stigmatisés à cause de la coloration de leur peau et de leur faible acuité visuelle. Ces deux stigmates sont à l'origine d'une mauvaise appréciation immédiate, par les membres de l'entourage à la suite de caractères «esthétiquement désagréables».

Dans ses relations sociales, la personne atteinte d'albinisme fait face à une perception sociale généralement négative, elle reçoit divers sentiments et commentaires dans son processus d'intégration dans la société, elle est obligée à réagir face à ces comportements de la communauté [1,7]. Ainsi, en grandissant, elle pourrait développer une image de soi négative associée à une faible confiance en soi. Par ailleurs, en partant de mécanismes psychologiques de compensation et de surcompensation, certains albinos peuvent (au contraire) dans une certaine mesure, développer une forte estime de soi (image de soi positive) [8]. Chelala [1] affirme à ce sujet que la tolérance de soi entraîne chez la personne vivant avec albinisme restaurée des conduites de surcompensation des stress et frustrations vécus. Dans le souci de restaurer l'image que les mélanodermes ont de lui, elle est appelée à multiplier ses efforts, dans tous les domaines de sa vie, de façon à surprendre sa communauté.

Ainsi, il nous a semblé opportun d'évaluer l'estime de soi physique des albinos de la Ville de Kinshasa, afin d'identifier les conclusions des études antérieures qui s'appliquent dans le contexte particulier de la Ville de Kinshasa. En plus, nous cherchons à répertorier les déterminants qui contribuent de façon exceptionnelle au développement de l'estime de soi physique de ces albinos. Cette évaluation de l'estime de soi des albinos s'avère pertinente pour la simple raison que les études traitant du soi physique des personnes atteintes d'albinisme en République Démocratique du Congo sont très rares alors que de telles études devraient être menées de façon régulière afin de contribuer à l'élimination des préjugés et stéréotypes à l'égard de ces albinos. D'ailleurs, l'estime de soi est considérée par plusieurs auteurs comme un des facteurs essentiels du processus d'adaptation sociale, avec un impact important sur la santé mentale et physique [9].

De toutes les dimensions de l'estime de soi, la présente étude cible le soi physique car offre des informations sur la valeur qu'un individu accorde à son aspect physique sous l'angle esthétique et actif (pratique) [10]. En plus, contribue au développement et à l'organisation de l'estime globale de soi [11,12]. Dans ce contexte, une image positive du schéma corporel facilite le bien-être intégral des sujets [13-15] et les interactions avec les autres [16]. Ainsi, les albinos ayant des problèmes de couleur de peau, il est intéressant d'évaluer leur estime de soi physique car elle renseigne indirectement sur leur acceptation de soi et leur adaptabilité interne et externe. Pour ce faire, nous avons jugé important de travailler avec les albinos de la fondation Mwimba Texas. Ce choix a été motivé par le besoin de pouvoir croiser en un temps record plusieurs albinos en lieu et place de faire des passages porte à porte dans quelques districts (quartiers) de la ville-province de Kinshasa pour les identifier.

Cette étude se base sur les deux hypothèses ci-après: (1) les albinos de Kinshasa auraient globalement une faible estime de soi physique, attribuable à leur situation de marginalisation et d'étiquetage; (2) il existerait une variabilité de l'estime de soi physique de ces albinos en fonction des facteurs sociodémographiques (tranche d'âge, sexe, niveau d'études, confession religieuse, parent albinos, soutien de l'entourage, perception de l'entourage et milieu de résidence).

## **2. Méthodologie**

### **2.1. Cadre Physique**

L'étude a été réalisée dans la ville-province de Kinshasa (et plus précisément à la fondation Mwimba Texas). La Fondation Mwimba Texas est une Organisation Non Gouvernementale (O.N.G), chargée de l'accompagnement intégral des sujets albinos. Elle est située au numéro 26 de l'avenue Mayulu, quartier Matadi mayo, dans la commune de Mont Ngafula. Les albinos membres de cette association proviennent de différentes communes de la Ville de Kinshasa.

### **2.2. Participants à l'étude**

Les albinos de la Ville de Kinshasa, membres de la fondation Mwimba Texas constituent le groupe ciblé par notre étude. Dans ce groupe, nous avons tiré 70 sujets. Le choix de ces albinos de l'échantillon était motivé par leur disponibilité (et/ou leur accessibilité). Ce groupe de sujets varie selon les facteurs sociodémographiques suivants: l'âge, le sexe, le niveau d'études, la confession religieuse, le parent albinos, le soutien de l'entourage, la perception de l'entourage et le milieu de résidence. S'agissant de la tranche d'âge, notre échantillon est constitué de 12 sujets âgés de 10-15 ans, 22 âgés de 15-19 ans, 18 âgés de 20-24 ans et, enfin, de 18 âgés d'au moins 25 ans. Les albinos de sexe féminin sont majoritaires (37 sujets) comparativement à ceux de sexe masculin (33 sujets). S'agissant du niveau de scolarisation, on retrouve 13 analphabètes, 10 ayant un certificat de fin d'études primaires, 10 sont encore au niveau de secondaire général, 23 ayant un diplôme d'état (diplôme équivalent au baccalauréat français), 11 gradués (Bac+3) et 3 licenciés (Bac+5). Au niveau de la spiritualité, l'échantillon est constitué de 20 pratiquants catholiques, 2 protestants, 3 musulmans et 45 membres des églises de réveil.

En ce qui concerne l'hérédité de l'albinisme, 31 sujets ont des parents albinos contre 39 sujets n'ayant aucun parent albinos. Le milieu de résidence indique que 23 sujets résident au district de Mont-Amba, 17 à la Funa, 26 à la Tshangu et 4 à la Lukunga. La situation au niveau du soutien de l'entourage indique 43 sujets bénéficient du soutien de leur entourage contre 27 qui n'en bénéficient pas. Dans cette même optique, 43 sujets sont bien perçus par leur entourage contre 27 qui sont mal-perçus.

### **2.3. Instrument de récolte des données**

L'enquête s'est servie de l'inventaire d'estime de soi physique, version adaptée par Ninot, Delignières et Fortes [17], comme technique de récolte des données. Ninot, Delignières et Fortes [17] ont traduit en français et adapté l'échelle multidimensionnelle de soi physique de Fox et Corbin [10]. L'échelle, ainsi traduite, est constituée de 25 items regroupés en six 6 échelles: (1) estime globale de soi (EG); (2) valeur physique perçue (VPP); (3) endurance (E); (4) compétence sportive (CS); (5) apparence physique (AP) et (6) force (F). Les réponses sont cotées sur un continuum en 6 degrés d'adhésion allant de pas du tout d'accord à tout à fait d'accord. L'inventaire utilisé dans la présente étude émane de l'adaptation d'Enguta, Mayala et Belanta [18] qui a consisté à l'itération de deux sous-échelles dont les items avaient une faible consistance interne (compétence sportive et endurance).

Ces auteurs ont ainsi gardé quatre sous-échelles se rapportant à l'estime de soi globale, à la valeur physique, à l'apparence physique et à la force. La structure de l'échelle est constituée de 16 items en raison de 4 pour le soi global, 5 pour la valeur physique perçue, 4 pour l'apparence physique et 3 pour la force. Chaque item de l'échelle est évalué

en quatre points: (1) Désaccord Total (DT), (2) Désaccord (D), (3) Accord (A) et (4) Accord Total (AT). Le test de consistance interne de cette version réduite de l'inventaire a démontré sa bonne fidélité (EG-0,75; VPP-0,78; AP-0,74; F-0,79 et échelle dans son ensemble 0,81). Pour dégager les notes des sujets à chaque sous-échelle de l'inventaire, nous avons sommé les différents scores aux questions de la sous-échelle concernée. Ces scores ont été divisés par le nombre d'items afin de dégager des notes moyennes par sous-échelle. Ces notes peuvent être interprétées comme suit: (1) 1-1,4: estime de soi très faible; (2) 1,5- 2,4: estime de soi faible; (3) 2,5-3,4: estime de soi forte et (4) 3,5-4: estime de soi très forte.

### 3. Résultats de l'étude

#### 3.1. Résultats globaux

Les notes des albinos aux différentes sous-échelles de l'inventaire de soi physique sont présentées dans le tableau suivant.

Tableau 1

Estime de soi physique des albinos (N=70)				
Notes Ind. Stat.	EG	VPP	AP	F
Moyenne	2,71	2,85	2,64	2,83
Médiane	3,00	3,00	2,75	3,00
Mode	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,00
Ecart-type	0,47	0,52	0,48	0,52
Variance	0,22	0,27	0,24	0,27

**Légende:** EG-Estime de soi globale ; VPP-Valeur physique perçue, AP-apparence physique, F-Force.

A la lumière du Tableau n° 1, on constate que les scores moyens des albinos aux différentes sous-échelles du soi physique (EG, VPP, AP et F) sont de 2,71; 2,85; 2,64 et 2,83. Ces scores moyens se situent tous dans l'espace de 2,5-3,4. Cet intervalle traduit une estime de soi forte des albinos, quelle que soient les dimensions du soi physique. Pour l'estime de soi globale, les résultats signifient que les sujets de l'étude ont une bonne opinion d'eux-mêmes. Ils se considèrent généralement comme étant des personnes valeureuses et donc capables de contribuer à la résolution de certains problèmes sociaux. Ainsi, ils ne regrettent pas ce qu'ils font, ils sont fiers d'eux-mêmes et ne cherchent pas à changer leur nature.

S'agissant de la valeur physique perçue, on se rend compte que les albinos sont globalement satisfaits de leurs capacités physiques. Ils estiment ne pas avoir des choses en eux qu'ils veulent changer. Dans cette même optique, ils sont physiquement contents de qu'ils peuvent faire. Ils ont ainsi une forte confiance de leur valeur physique et sont fiers de leurs possibilités physiques. Au niveau de l'apparence physique, il apparaît que les albinos aiment leur apparence physique et estiment avoir un corps agréable à regarder. Ils approuvent recevoir des compliments de la part de leur entourage relatifs à leur beauté corporelle et se sentent bien dans leurs corps. Enfin, à propos de la force, les albinos s'estiment plus forts que les autres personnes, ils pensent être bons dans une épreuve de force et affirment être prêts à proposer leurs services dans des situations demandant de la force. L'identification des albinos ayant une forte estime de soi physique a permis de les dichotomiser dans les différentes sous-échelles de l'inventaire. Les résultats s'y rapportant indiquent que 51 albinos (73%) ont une forte estime de soi globale contre 19 sujets (27%) qui ont une estime de soi globale faible. Au niveau de la valeur physique, 14 albinos (20%)

ont une image négative de leur valeur physique contre 56 sujets (80%) qui ont une perception positive de leur valeur physique. En ce qui concerne l'apparence physique, 47 albinos (67%) ont une bonne image de leur apparence physique contre 23 sujets (33%) qui ont une perception négative. Enfin, au niveau de la force, 17 albinos (24%) ont une mauvaise image de leur force contre 53 sujets (76%) qui ont une perception positive.

### **3.2. Effet des variables sur l'estime de soi des albinos**

Le but de cette analyse est de spécifier la nature de l'impact des facteurs sociodémographiques de l'étude (l'âge, le sexe, le niveau d'études, la confession religieuse, le parent albinos, le soutien de l'entourage, la perception de l'entourage et le milieu de résidence) sur l'estime de soi physique des albinos. Il est recommandé, en matière d'analyse différentielle, d'étudier la normalité des distributions des résultats concernées [19]. Nous avons étudié cette normalité en recourant au test de Kolmogorov-Smirnov. Les différentes sous-échelles de l'estime de soi physique ne sont pas normales (estime de soi globale:  $p \llcorner 0,00 \llcorner < 0,05$ ; valeur physique perçue:  $p \llcorner 0,00 \llcorner < 0,05$ ; apparence physique:  $p \llcorner 0,00 \llcorner < 0,05$  et force:  $p \llcorner 0,00 \llcorner < 0,05$ ). Cette absence de normalité exige le recours aux tests non-paramétriques. Il s'agit précisément des tests U de Mann-Whitney et H de Kruskal Wallis [20]. Le U de Mann-Whitney nous a permis d'étudier l'influence des variables sexe, parent albinos, soutien et perception de l'entourage sur les scores des albinos aux différentes sous-échelles du soi physique. Pour étudier l'impact des facteurs âge, niveau d'études, milieu de résidence et confession religieuse sur les scores aux sous-échelles du soi physique, nous avons recouru au test H de Kruskal Wallis.

#### **3.2.1. Effet du sexe sur les scores du soi physique**

L'analyse statistique confirme la différence significative entre les notes moyennes du soi global, de la valeur physique et de la force selon le sexe des sujets (estime de soi globale: hommes 2,81, femmes 2,59,  $p \llcorner 0,02 \llcorner < 0,05$ ; valeur physique perçue: hommes 3,04, femmes 2,65,  $p \llcorner 0,002 \llcorner < 0,05$ ; force: hommes 2,95, femmes 2,69,  $p \llcorner 0,04 \llcorner < 0,05$ ). De manière concrète, les sujets de sexe masculin ont une perception plus positive de leur valeur globale, de leur valeur physique et de leur force comparativement à ceux de sexe féminin. La variable sexe n'a pas impacté l'apparence physique ( $p \llcorner 0,25 \llcorner > 0,05$ ).

#### **3.2.2. Effet de la variable parent albinos sur les scores du soi physique**

Les résultats statistiques attestent la différence significative des notes moyennes des sujets à la sous-échelle du soi global en fonction de la variable parent albinos (sujets ayant des parents albinos: 2,85; sujets n'ayant pas de parents albinos: 2,60;  $p \llcorner 0,02 \llcorner < 0,05$ ). En d'autres termes, les sujets ayant des parents albinos ont une estime de soi globale plus positive que les autres albinos. Cette variable n'a pourtant pas influencé la valeur physique perçue ( $p \llcorner 0,63 \llcorner > 0,05$ ), l'apparence physique ( $p \llcorner 0,14 \llcorner > 0,05$ ) et la force ( $p \llcorner 0,60 \llcorner > 0,05$ ).

#### **3.2.3. Effet de la variable soutien de l'entourage sur les scores du soi physique**

Les résultats statistiques montrent que les albinos bénéficiant d'un soutien de l'entourage ont une forte estime d'eux-mêmes comparativement à ceux qui n'en bénéficient pas, et cela, dans ses différentes dimensions (estime de soi globale:  $p \llcorner 0,001 \llcorner < 0,05$ ; valeur physique perçue:  $p \llcorner 0,00 \llcorner < 0,05$ ; apparence physique:  $p \llcorner 0,002 \llcorner < 0,05$ ; force:  $p \llcorner 0,00 \llcorner < 0,05$ ).



### 3.2.4. Effet de la variable perception de l'entourage sur les scores du soi physique

Des résultats statistiques, il ressort que les sujets perçus positivement par leur entourage ont une forte estime d'eux-mêmes comparativement aux autres sujets, et cela, dans ses différentes dimensions (estime de soi globale:  $p \llcorner 0,007 \llcorner < 0,05$ ; valeur physique perçue:  $p \llcorner 0,006 \llcorner < 0,05$ ; apparence physique:  $p \llcorner 0,003 \llcorner < 0,05$ ; force:  $p \llcorner 0,03 \llcorner < 0,05$ ).

### 3.2.5. Effet de la variable tranche d'âge sur les scores du soi physique

Les analyses statistiques indiquent que la tranche d'âge n'a affecté que la force des albinos ( $p \llcorner 0,003 \llcorner < 0,05$ ). Les analyses post-hoc attestent que les sujets albinos âgés d'au moins 25 ans ont une perception plus positive de leur force comparativement aux sujets moins âgés.

### 3.2.6. Effet de la variable niveau d'études sur les scores du soi physique

Des résultats statistiques, il ressort que le niveau d'études n'a affecté que deux sous-échelles du soi physique (valeur physique perçue:  $p \llcorner 0,003 \llcorner < 0,05$  et force:  $p \llcorner 0,004 \llcorner < 0,05$ ). Les analyses post-hoc démontrent que les sujets licenciés ont une perception plus positive de leur valeur physique et de leur force comparativement aux autres sujets.

### 3.2.7. Effet de la variable confession religieuse sur les scores du soi physique

Les analyses statistiques révèlent que la variable confession religieuse n'a pas influencé les notes d'estime de soi physique des albinos (estime de soi globale:  $p \llcorner 0,73 \llcorner > 0,05$ ; valeur physique perçue:  $p \llcorner 0,84 \llcorner > 0,05$ ; apparence physique:  $p \llcorner 0,49 \llcorner > 0,05$  et force:  $p \llcorner 0,71 \llcorner > 0,05$ ).

### 3.2.8. Effet de la variable milieu de résidence sur les scores du soi physique

Des analyses statistiques, on constate que la variable milieu de résidence n'a pas affecté les notes d'estime de soi physique des sujets de l'étude (estime de soi globale:  $p \llcorner 0,31 \llcorner > 0,05$ ; valeur physique perçue:  $p \llcorner 0,55 \llcorner > 0,05$ ; apparence physique:  $p \llcorner 0,60 \llcorner > 0,05$  et force:  $p \llcorner 0,80 \llcorner > 0,05$ ).

## 4. Discussion des résultats

Les résultats liés au soi physique des albinos indiquent qu'ils ont une estime de soi physique positive (forte), et cela, dans ses quatre sous-échelles (estime de soi globale valeur physique perçue, apparence physique et force). Ces résultats signifient que les albinos ont réussi à normaliser leur situation d'albinos en adoptant des comportements adaptés pour s'intégrer dans la société. Ainsi, on peut admettre que la scolarisation des albinos est l'un des facteurs explicatifs de cette estime de soi physique positive. D'ailleurs, Chelala [1] affirme que la connaissance scientifique sur l'albinisme acquise à l'école permet à la personne atteinte d'albinisme de connaître le facteur génétique de la coloration de sa peau donc, le caractère faux et subjectif des stéréotypes et préjugés véhiculés par sa communauté. Elle éprouve, par conséquent, un sentiment de déresponsabilisation et déculpabilisation.

La forte estime de soi physique des albinos peut s'expliquer aussi par leur appartenance ou leur affiliation à la fondation Mwimba Texas. A ce sujet, Chelala [1] affirme que l'association est un endroit idéal qui permet aux personnes atteintes d'albinisme d'éprouver des sensations communes, de partager les expériences, les opinions et de développer une idéologie, facilitant le changement d'attitudes de la communauté à travers des réussites scolaires ou professionnelles. Ainsi, elle sort l'individu de l'isolement,

de la condition d'ignorant et le reconforte, tout en impactant son estime de soi. On peut imputer la forte estime de soi des albinos non seulement aux activités sensibilisatrices des associations mais aussi à l'effet de la religiosité. En effet, dans la plupart de religions en RDC, la volonté divine est considérée comme un facteur de l'étiologie de l'albinisme.

Il sied de signaler que la perception positive de l'apparence physique des albinos de l'étude peut être attribuée à leur bonne hygiène corporelle et à l'utilisation des lotions appropriées pour leur peau. En effet, les albinos membres de la Fondation Mwimba Texas bénéficient des dons des produits hygiéniques qui leur permettent d'avoir une peau lisse et bien entretenue. Ils ont même des lunettes adaptées à leur situation pour faciliter leur vision. Dans ce contexte, il est tout à fait normal qu'ils aient une perception positive de leur apparence physique. Cette perception positive est dû en grande partie au regard de la société. A ce sujet, les albinos membres de la Fondation, du fait de leur hygiène corporelle, sont bien perçus et soutenus par leur entourage. Il y a même des femmes albinos qui se sont mariées avec des sujets mélanodermes. De tels exemples ne peuvent que renforcer l'estime de soi physique des personnes atteintes d'albinisme.

S'agissant de la force physique, il sied de signaler que les personnes atteintes d'albinos s'estiment fortes et en mesure de résoudre n'importe quel problème qui exige de la force physique. L'exemple du feu Catcheur Texas Mwimba qui a réussi durant toute sa carrière à battre des catcheurs mélanodermes constitue une expérience vicariante qui ne peut que renforcer la perception de leur force physique. Ces différents résultats nous poussent à infirmer notre première hypothèse de l'étude.

L'analyse des déterminants sociodémographiques a montré que seuls deux facteurs sur les huit de l'étude (confession religieuse et milieu de résidence) n'ont pas influencé l'estime de soi des albinos. La non-influence de la confession religieuse va de pair avec la conclusion d'Estrada-Hernandez [7] où l'impact des églises sur la désresponsabilisation et la valorisation de l'image de soi de l'albinos n'a pas été attesté. Le manque d'influence du milieu de résidence sur l'estime de soi des albinos s'oppose à la théorie du déterminisme environnemental où le milieu de vie est cité comme l'un des déterminants de l'estime de soi des sujets.

Les variables perception et soutien de l'entourage ont influencé toutes les dimensions de l'estime de soi des albinos. Ces résultats vont de pair avec la théorie de « soi-miroir » (looking-glass self) de Cooley. Pour Cooley [9], l'autrui est un miroir sociétal dans lequel l'homme s'observe et dans lequel il découvre les attitudes sur lui-même. Pour cet auteur, l'homme est ce que la communauté (groupe d'hommes) pense de son aspect physique, de sa personnalité, de ses actes et de ses compétences [18]. Ainsi, lorsque nous sommes bien perçus et soutenus par les autres, nous avons tendance à avoir une image de soi très positive.

La variable sexe a influencé trois de quatre sous-échelles du soi physique (soi global, valeur physique perçue et force). Ces résultats reconfortent les conclusions des études de Plancherel et Bolognini [21] indiquant que les filles ont tendance à sous-évaluer leurs compétences au moment où les garçons les surestiment. Ces mêmes résultats remettent en question ceux d'Enguta, Mayala et Belanta [18] où aucune différence n'a été observée entre l'estime de soi des filles et celle des garçons.

La variable parent albinos n'a influencé que l'estime de soi globale des albinos. Ces résultats peuvent s'expliquer par le fait que lorsqu'un parent est albinos, le problème d'acceptation et de la valorisation de l'enfant albinos ne se pose pas de la même manière

que lorsque les deux parents sont mélanodermes. En effet, les parents albinos ayant fait face à plusieurs stigmatisations et discriminations dotent leurs enfants des stratégies pour ne pas sombrer dans la dépression à la suite de l'étiquetage de l'entourage. Ainsi, ces parents valorisent leur enfant en insistant sur le fait qu'il est un être normal comme tous les autres.

La variable tranche d'âge n'a affecté que la force physique des albinos. Ces résultats vont de pair avec les conclusions de plusieurs études [18,22,23] où il a été constaté que l'estime de soi varie considérablement selon l'âge des sujets. Ainsi, la théorie de L'Ecuyer [24] sur le développement de l'estime de soi ne s'applique que dans le contexte de la force physique des sujets de l'étude. La variable niveau d'études n'a affecté que la valeur physique perçue et la force des albinos. Ces résultats vont de pair avec le constat selon lequel plus on avance en niveau d'études plus la perception de soi devient de plus en plus positive. Ces résultats démontrent clairement que l'école est un facteur de protection pour renforcer la résilience des albinos face aux frustrations quotidiennes. Ces différents résultats nous poussent à confirmer partiellement notre deuxième hypothèse relative à l'effet des facteurs sociodémographiques sur l'estime de soi des albinos de Kinshasa.

## 5. Conclusions

Le but de cette recherche était d'évaluer l'estime de soi physique des albinos vivant dans la Ville de Kinshasa. Nous avons appliqué, dans cette optique, l'inventaire de soi physique à un échantillon de 70 albinos de la Ville de Kinshasa membres de la fondation Mwimba Texas. Les résultats de l'étude attestent que ces albinos ont une forte estime de soi, et cela dans ses différentes sous-échelles. Au niveau de l'analyse différentielle, il a été constaté que le soutien des albinos par leur entourage et leur perception positive par la société contribuent à renforcer leur image de soi. A côté de ces deux facteurs, la scolarisation et l'appartenance à une association affectent aussi positivement l'estime de soi des albinos.

En nous basant sur ces résultats, nous suggérons aux organisations qui se chargent de la prise en charge des albinos, d'organiser des campagnes de sensibilisation à l'intention des communautés sur le bien-fondé de leur soutien et de leur perception positive des albinos sur leur intégration sociale. Ces deux facteurs sont des facteurs de protection sur lesquels il faut agir pour amener les albinos à développer un réel sentiment de bien-être dans la société.

**Conflits d'intérêt:** Il n'y a aucun conflit d'intérêt

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## SOCIAL SUPPORT EXPERIENCES AMONG YEMENI REFUGEE WOMEN IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA: A DESCRIPTIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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**Abstract.** Social support from informal support sources plays a pivotal role in smoothing the adaptation process of refugees in their host countries. This study's main objective was to examine the social support experiences of Yemeni refugee women in Addis Ababa. The study employed a qualitative, descriptive phenomenological design. Thirteen Yemeni refugee women were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. Using purposive sampling, study participants were selected. The study's findings indicated that refugee women received various types of social support from family, friends, and independent sponsors, including instrumental support, emotional support, and informational support. For refugee women, strengthening their existing informal social networks is crucial since these networks provide them with informational, emotional, and instrumental support.

**Key words:** *Social support, informal support source, Yemeni refugee women, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.*

**Rezumat.** Sprijinul social din surse informale joacă un rol esențial în aplanarea procesului de adaptare al refugiaților în țările lor gazdă. Obiectivul principal al acestui studiu a fost să examineze experiențele de sprijin social al femeilor refugiate yemenite din Addis Abeba. Studiul a folosit un design fenomenologic calitativ, descriptiv. Treisprezece femei refugiate yemenite au fost intervievate folosind un ghid de interviu semi-structurat. Prin eșantionare intenționată au fost selectați participanții la studiu. Concluziile studiului au indicat, că femeile refugiate au primit diverse tipuri de sprijin social din partea familiei, prietenilor și a sponsorilor independenți, inclusiv sprijin instrumental, suport emoțional și suport informațional. Pentru femeile refugiate, consolidarea rețelelor lor sociale informale existente este crucială, deoarece aceste rețele le oferă sprijin informațional, emoțional și instrumental.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Sprijin social, sursă de sprijin informal, femei refugiate yemenite, Addis Abeba, Etiopia.*

### 1. Introduction

Over one hundred eight million individuals had been forced to flee from their homes by the end of 2022 as a result of intimidation, violence, or violations of their human rights,

and of these individuals, 35.3 million were refugees [1]. Low- and middle-income countries hosted 76% of all refugees [1]. Most refugees (70%) of them are living in exile in neighboring countries [1]. With over 900,000 refugees and asylum seekers hosted in Ethiopia, that ranks third among African nations [2]. Over 74,000 urban refugees reside in Addis Ababa, the country's capital [3]. More than 2400 Yemeni refugees, the second-largest urban refugee group, were living in Addis Ababa [3].

Refugee women face several challenges in their host countries, including limited access to resources, challenges relating to their mental health, economic hardship, and problems integrating into the new community in which they are residing [4]. Refugee women experience higher levels of insecurity than refugee men do in their host countries [5]. Refugee women face more integration challenges than refugee men, especially poor health and lower educational attainment [6]. Studies indicated that social support has a protective function for refugees' well-being [7-11]. Social support is "an interpersonal transaction involving one or more of the following: emotional concern (liking, love, empathy), instrumental aid (goods or services), information (about the environment), or appraisal (information relevant to self-evaluation)" [12, p.39]. Social support can be provided by informal networks of friends, families, and ethnic communities, as well as by formal networks such as those provided by health-care and social work practitioners [13]. This study emphasized receiving support from informal support sources.

Specifically, studies indicated that social support from informal support sources plays a pivotal role in smoothing the adaptation process of refugees in their host countries [9,14,15]. For example, a qualitative study conducted among refugee women in Australia revealed that the instrumental and emotional support refugee women received from their peers in the group helped them to cope with various adversities [16]. In addition, a study conducted among Syrian refugees in Canada revealed that family and friends support helped refugees' access employment and housing [17]. Furthermore, a qualitative study among Syrian refugees in Canada revealed that family members play a large role in providing information about Canada's health system to newly arrived refugees [18].

Despite the significance of informal support sources in refugees' positive well-being outcomes, the previous studies have not illuminated the contextual social support experiences among refugee women in Ethiopia. Most prior studies concentrated on forced migrants from the global south who obtained refugee status in developed countries [19-22]. The studies were conducted in resettlement countries' contexts. Thus, the studies did not consider the contextual social support experiences of refugee women residing in Ethiopia. The lack of such studies in Ethiopia highlights the need for a context-sensitive understanding of the issue. Hence, this study examines the social support experiences of Yemeni refugee women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

## **2. Methods**

A qualitative research design was employed. A qualitative research design is preferred because it is important, particularly when working with marginalized groups such as refugees [23]. Specifically, descriptive phenomenology was chosen. Descriptive phenomenology is a suitable research approach to examine common experiences of problems in life [24, 25]. The study area was Addis Ababa. According to Abnet et al. [26], Addis Ababa serves as the diplomatic hub of Africa and is the capital of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa, located in the country's center, is home to a diverse population from all walks of life [27].

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), a humanitarian organization that assists refugees, helped identify participants in the study. The phone numbers of Yemeni refugee community representatives from JRS were found. These representatives of the Yemeni refugee community assisted in the recruitment of all participants. Refugee women who fit the study's eligibility criteria were invited to participate once the objective of the study was made clear to them. To identify participants, purposeful sampling was used. Thirteen participants in total participated in the study. The criteria for inclusion were being a Yemeni refugee woman, living in Addis Ababa, being at least eighteen years old, being willing to participate in the study, and being able to speak Arabic.

To find data on social support experiences, a semi-structured interview guide was used. The interview guide prompted participants to discuss their experiences. A semi-structured interview was chosen as it produces rich data. Since Arabic is the mother tongue of all participants, a semi-structured interview was conducted using that language. A female interviewer who was proficient in the participants' language and had experience conducting semi-structured interviews was recruited and conducted the interview.

A one-day training was given for the interviewer, covering topics such as the study's objectives, how to get to know participants and the study's ethical considerations. Every participant only had one interview. There was a one- to two-hour duration for each interview. Data was collected between July 5, 2022, and September 1, 2022. Data transcription and translation were done by the interviewer.

In keeping with the tradition of descriptive phenomenological research, the data analysis placed an enormous focus on understanding the essence of the research participants' experiences. Initially, reviewing the interview transcripts in their entirety was done to have a complete understanding of the participants' experiences. Then, the meaning units were coded. Next, the meaning units were changed into the third person. Analyzing the changed meaning units for the constituents present in each participant's experience was the last stage.

Participants who could read it were given a written information sheet by the interviewer before the semi-structured interview. For the respondents who couldn't read, the interviewer gave a verbal description of the information sheet's contents. Following a description of the study's objective and the information sheet, each respondent orally provided the interviewer with their informed consent to participate. Information was given to respondents that they could end the interview process at any time. The study's participants were informed that there was no risk or danger to them associated with participation in the study. Furthermore, to maintain confidentiality, participant names were not disclosed. Rather, a pseudonym was chosen.

### **3. Results**

In the subsequent section, the socio-demographic characteristics of participants and refugee women's informal support sources would be presented.

#### **3.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of participants**

Thirteen refugee women, ages thirty to sixty, participated in the study. The study participants had spent three and a half to 10 years residing in Addis Ababa. Of the study participants, two had been widowed, three had been married, four had divorced, and four were single. Eight of the participants were single mothers. Of the participants, four had finished secondary school, two had not completed secondary school, one was illiterate, and

one had completed primary school, and five had completed their higher degree in their home country.

### **3.2 Refugee women's informal support sources**

In the host countries, informal social support sources are essential to promoting the well-being of refugee women. The study's participants reported receiving some form of social support from family, friends, and independent sponsors. The next section will describe the type of social support that refugee women receive from informal support sources and their experiences with it.

#### **3.2.1 Instrumental support**

Some of the study participants disclosed that they obtained instrumental support, including material and financial support, from family, friends, and independent sponsors. Family was one of the main sources of instrumental support for refugee women. Refugee women mentioned parents, siblings, and children when they referred family. Some refugee women who had children received financial assistance from their children to help them deal with a shortage of income. For example, Cally's child was employed in one of the Yemeni restaurants in Addis Ababa. With her son's financial assistance, she attempted to deal with the financial challenges. She said, "My son is a waiter in one of the Yemeni restaurants. He helps me financially". However, due to a lack of a work permit and language barriers, Cally's son was unable to get employment in Ethiopian restaurants. In a similar vein, Nahir reported that she was primarily leading her life thanks to her daughter's financial assistance. With her daughter's financial support, she was able to manage her financial problems:

"My daughter used to work for a gas company in Yemen before the civil war. This company still pays some percentage of her salary, although she is in Addis Ababa. We are living on this money. So I'm dealing with my economic problems with my daughter's salary".

Moreover, Kalah sometimes asked her children for help when she encountered serious financial problems. She said that when her children had money, they gave it to her:

"My two children give me little money. They don't just look at me when I'm starving. Of course, life is also hard for them. Because they have children, they need to cover their children's expenses. They also live in a rental house, so they need to pay for it. They don't support me as much as I need, but they do help me a little bit. They support me somewhat, though not enough".

Family members who lived in developed countries occasionally provided financial help to refugee women. Remittance from sibling was a financial source for Halima. Halima got financial assistance from her brother, who lived in Norway. She would face extreme economic hardship in Addis Ababa if her brother didn't support her:

"After my brother went to Norway, he helped me by sending money. After he went to Norway, I was relatively good financially. Since he knows the life here, he is still supporting me. He had already faced many challenges here, so he knew everything. He understands my problems. If he had not gone to Norway, I would live a worse life than the one I am living now".

Refugee women who had little children faced challenges while trying to engage in income-earning activities as no one would take care of their children. During this time, for



refugee women like Afina, remittances from family members living abroad were the main financial source of support. Afina described:

"My husband's father lives in Saudi Arabia and sends us money every month. We mainly live with this money. The money given by UNHCR is not enough for rent and food. If my husband's family did not support us, we would suffer a lot in this country. However, the money we got from abroad helped our life a lot".

Another source of instrumental support for refugee women was friends from an ethnic-like refugee community. Since most of their fellow refugees suffered economic hardships, refugee women usually did not get material or financial support from them. However, their friends helped refugee women during difficult times, such as health problems and losing loved ones. For example, Marya reported that she received financial support from her friends when she lost her sister. Among the respondents, only Emani received financial and material support from her Ethiopian national friend. Emani described:

"I went to Merkato, and my bag and my phone were robbed by robbers. Then I met a stranger. He paid us two months' rent and bought us mattresses, blankets, and even a charcoal burner. This is the man who has stood by and encouraged me and my child until this day. He supported me financially".

Emani overcame some challenges that required money, thanks to her friend's material and financial support. She experienced a sense of belonging to the local community as a result of the support. However, the assistance had a detrimental effect on her well-being. She worried about when she would give back the assistance she had been given. She described:

"I have an Ethiopian friend who supports me, and sometimes I don't feel good when he offers me money because I feel like the money he has given me thus far is a lot. When he always supports me, I feel awful. Why do I disturb the same individual every time? So far, this person has given me huge assistance. Why then do I ask him for more assistance? Sometimes, I ask God to give me something so that I can please him. I frequently say when is the day that I work and delight my friend who always helps me? My mind is racing with the idea of when I'll be able to pay this man back for his support. When should I buy a gift for his child and take it home? When should I buy something to make him happy? I can't achieve this now because I don't have a job".

The other source of instrumental support for refugee women was independent sponsors (wealthy Yemenis). Respondents frequently stated that they received financial and material support from wealthy Yemenis who worked and resided in Addis Ababa. These wealthy Yemenis weren't refugees. As per respondents, most wealthy Yemenis married Ethiopian women and worked with the business licenses of their spouses. The wealthy Yemenis were born and raised either in Yemen or Ethiopia.

Most of the time, refugee women receive financial and material support from independent sponsors during the holiday. There is a notion called zakat that occurs during Ramadan. Each Muslim who fulfills the requirements for zakat has a religious duty to donate a certain amount of their wealth each year to the needy and the impoverished. Refugee women looked to wealthy Yemenis during Ramadan for support. Then, wealthy Yemenis provided them with material and monetary support (Zakat). Support came in the form of cash, sheep, flour, rice, oil, sugar, and other items. All of the participants expressed gratitude for the support they had received from wealthy Yemenis during the holiday. Marya

said "in our country, we celebrated Ramadan by buying many things. But in this country, we are not able to do this. So we can celebrate the holiday with the support of these rich people. In a similar vein, Cally stated, "May Allah give them all the things they need. We also live with the help of these rich people. During Ramadan, they give us money, grain, or oil." Furthermore, Afina described:

"Wealthy Yemenis have given me a gift of sheep during Ramadan. The community leaders wrote on our WhatsApp group that there is a rich man who would give a sheep for Eid. Then, we phoned the rich person, registered our names, and were able to take the sheep. During Ramadan, another rich man gave me 1.000 birr. When such support was available, the community leaders notify us via WhatsApp. The community leaders give us the phone numbers of the investors. We call the given phone number and receive our support".

According to respondents, they used to receive wealthy Yemenis' support through the Yemeni embassy in Addis Ababa. Independent sponsors provided assistance items to the embassy, which then distributed them to refugees. However, following COVID-19, wealthy Yemenis stopped providing refugees through the Yemeni embassy in favor of Yemeni community representatives.

Refugee women also received financial support from independent sponsors when they faced severe medical problems. Wealthy Yemenis helped refugee women obtain appropriate medical treatment. Badia illustrated:

"The good thing here is that we have Yemeni businessmen. When we face big challenges, we go to them for support. The businessmen here in Ethiopia help Yemenis, who are suffering a lot. For example, a female refugee needed heart surgery. The doctor at Zewditu Hospital said that she needed immediate surgery and informed her that she should get heart surgery in one of the private hospitals. She was moved to Korea Hospital, which is a private hospital, and the hospital asked her to pay about 200,000 Birr for the treatment. One of humanitarian organizations said to wait for us for two days; otherwise, they couldn't do anything else. If this woman delayed for one day, she would die. So we went to the Yemeni rich people. These rich people helped her in terms of finances, and the woman got the necessary medical treatment at the private hospital".

Additionally, according to respondents, wealthy Yemenis supported them at times. For instance, Abia described that a wealthy Yemeni rented five of them a space in a bazaar during Ramadan. She then sold cosmetics in a bazaar. She also mentioned that Yemeni wealthy individuals paid her children's private school tuition for some years.

Refugee women were generally appreciative of the material and financial support they got from family, friends, and independent sponsors. Their financial pressure was lessened, and their financial situation was somewhat stabilized by the support. However, they complain that it was insufficient and inconsistent.

### **3.2.2 Emotional support**

Some respondents described that they received emotional support from family and friends. The family was one of the sources from which refugee women occasionally found emotional support. Fatim, Leila, Marya, Cally, Kalah, and Halima were among the respondents who received emotional support from their family members. Family members who live in Addis Ababa, including parents, grandparents, siblings, and children, provided

them with emotional support. In addition, family members who remained in Yemen provided emotional support to refugee women. The emotional support included encouragement, sympathy, listening, caring, and sharing feelings.

It was crucial for refugee women, who faced many adversaries in Addis Ababa, to receive emotional support from their closest family members. Refugee women overcame challenges related to adaptation with the emotional support of their family members. For instance, Fatim's family provided her with emotional support when she was having difficulty adapting. She overcame numerous challenges in her adaptation with the emotional support of her family. The family was still her primary source of emotional support. She described that "I get emotional support from my family. My family is my main source of emotional support. When I feel tired or in pain, my family members say, it's ok, one day everything will be alright".

Friends were also another source of emotional support for some refugee women at times. Friends comforted, cared for, and encouraged refugee women during their difficult times. Respondents stated that while friends from Ethiopian nationals and other refugee communities provided them with emotional support, friends from their community provided it most of the time. Their friends' emotional support improved their well-being. For example, Iman considered the emotional support she received from her friends to be valuable and incomparable to any financial assistance. She stated "It's not just because someone gives you money; it's because they encourage you. Emotional support is a great support above all else." Marya went through a tough period when her sister became ill and finally died. She appreciated her friends' moral support at the time. She described:

"When my sister was sick, my friends gave me strength by giving me emotional support. When my sister died, it was my friends who consoled me. I am very happy with the emotional support my friends have given me because they were with me when I was sad. They used to tell me that this thing would pass, don't worry. This is a big support for me".

Similarly, Fatm reported that she received care and comfort from her friends. She described that "most of my friends are refugees like me. I'm not expecting cash assistance from them. They give me moral support, and I'm satisfied with the support they give me because it helps me ease my stress." Furthermore, Emani acknowledged the value of the emotional support her friends gave her when she was having trouble adjusting. She thought that there was someone closer to her, thanks to the emotional support:

"It's good to have someone around. If you have someone around you, you will talk to that person and discuss different issues. My Yemeni friends here told me not to worry, and that we will go to Yemen when the civil war is settled. My friends also told me that tomorrow is another day. I have been leading my life so far with the moral support of sincere friends. I am very happy. It gives me the sense that there is someone nearer to me. Support is not just money and material. Money can be lost. If someone encourages you and gives you emotional support that is also good support".

Spending time with friends gave Leila joy, as she got emotional support from them. She indicated "When I'm with my friends, I forget about my life for a while. Spending time with them gives me joy or a mental break. They encourage and support me morally". Moreover, Halima told her friends about the challenges she faced, and they acknowledged

that they shared her challenges. She understood from this that she was not the only one dealing with challenges with adaptation. She described:

"It is important because I see someone like me. I see someone who has the same kind of challenges as me. I feel that I'm not alone. The emotional support and talking about the challenges we faced helped me. When I faced challenges, I spoke to my friends, and they told me that they had also faced the challenges I faced. So it is very important".

### **3.2.3 Informational support**

For some refugee women, the main sources of informational support were friends and family. Family and friends provided informational support to refugee women regarding a range of issues. Learning about the support services offered by refugee-serving humanitarian organizations was one of them. In the early phases of their arrival, friends from the ethnically similar refugee population were crucial in providing information to refugee women about where to go and how to receive social support from humanitarian organizations. For instance, Kalah stated that "the information I get from my friends is helpful. Based on the information I got from my friends, I went to humanitarian organizations to get some support. The information I get from my friends helps me". In a similar vein, at the beginning, Emani was unaware of the support that was offered by humanitarian organizations. After some time spent in Addis Ababa, her friend told her about some support available from humanitarian organizations:

"A friend who came from Yemen told me the information. We had a group of friends when we came from Yemen, and then after a while, we all split up. At some point, this friend called and told me about the existence of some support from JRS. Then I went to JRS and received the hygiene materials and job training".

In addition, some refugee women received information about available support at humanitarian organizations from family members who came to Addis Ababa earlier. For example, Halima's brother, who traveled to Addis Ababa before she did, gave her information on some types of support offered by humanitarian organizations:

"My brother was in Ethiopia before he left this country for Norway. So I didn't face challenges in knowing the organizations working with refugees. He already informed me about the support that humanitarian organizations were providing. I had information about their support".

Furthermore, before Fatim arrived in this country, her mother and sister had already arrived. They provided her with all the information regarding the support that was available at humanitarian organizations:

"When I arrived in Addis, my mom and sister were already there. I came after them. Then they welcomed me. My sister had information. So I got all the necessary information about the available social support at humanitarian organizations from my sister".

Learning about jobs that were accessible was the other issue. Some refugee women got information about formal-sector jobs from friends of a similar ethnic background. For example, when Cally first arrived, she was unable to find employment in the formal sector. She was unaware of where to look for work. As Cally continued to live in the city, she made friends who provided her with information on jobs in the formal economy. She left her job later because she was not paid the same as Ethiopian nationals for the same work that she did.

#### **4. Discussion**

The study's findings indicated that refugee women received various types of social support from family, friends, and independent sponsors. Among these, instrumental support was one of them. Refugee women received instrumental support from their family members. Many refugees rely heavily on their families to help them make sense of and organize their experiences (28). In my study, refugee women received instrumental support, specifically financial support, from their family members, such as children, siblings, and parents. The financial support that the refugee women got from family members occasionally covered some of their expenses. Some refugee women received financial support from abroad, while others received it from families who were in Addis Ababa. Some refugee women were primarily dependent on family members for material and financial support. This suggested that refugee women had limited alternatives to earn money or that they did not receive enough support from other sources. Studies have shown that family members' instrumental support is essential to refugees' adjustment processes [14-15]. For instance, a study conducted among Hmong, Syrian, and Somali refugees in the United States indicated that the financial and educational support from family members helped them settle into their host country [15]. The material and financial support somewhat alleviated the economic hardships faced by refugee women. However, refugee women reported that their family members provided insufficient and inconsistent financial assistance. According to Hynie and colleagues [14], the existence of family did not ensure that immigrant and refugee women would obtain the help they needed.

Refugee women also received financial and material support from friends. Most refugee women received instrumental support from ethnic-like friends. This indicated that the social interaction between refugee women and other refugee communities, as well as the local community, was minimal. As their ethnic-like friends were not economically strong, refugee women were able to rely on them for assistance when they suffered from severe health problems or lost loved ones. This suggested that the Yemeni community had a supportive culture in times of difficulty. Consistent with the findings of my study, earlier studies revealed that friends are the primary source of instrumental support for refugees [9, 14,16,29]. Moreover, refugee women received financial and material support from independent sponsors, particularly during holidays and at the time of facing serious health problems. Refugee women expressed gratitude to friends, family, and independent sponsors for their instrumental support. However, the amount of support received from these sources was insufficient.

The study's findings also revealed that refugee women received emotional support from informal support sources. The emotional support included encouragement, sympathy, listening, caring, and sharing feelings, which helped refugee women overcome some adaptation challenges. Refugee women sometimes received emotional support from the members of their closest families who lived in Addis Ababa. Refugee women also received emotional support from left-behind family members in Yemen. This suggested that refugee women found emotional support from a transnational source. For refugees, transnational sources of moral and emotional support are crucial [30]. In line with this study, multiple studies [14,15,19-22,31-33] indicated that family members' emotional support are crucial in promoting refugees' well-being in their host countries.

Refugee women also received emotional support from friends at times. Most of the time, refugee women receive emotional support from friends in the same ethnic group.

Refugee women felt more connected to someone because of the emotional support they received from their friends. It also made it easier to handle different adaptation challenges. In a similar vein, prior studies revealed that friends are those who provide refugees with emotional support during adaptation time in their host countries [14,16,21,29,34]. A qualitative study conducted among refugee women in Australia revealed that the emotional support refugee women received from their peers in the group enabled them to deal with a variety of challenges [16].

The study's findings also showed that family members and friends who share a similar ethnic background provided refugee women with informational support for a variety of issues, including the available social support programs at refugee-serving humanitarian organizations and jobs in the formal sector. This indicated that friends and family filled the void in the humanitarian organization's outreach to refugees regarding publicizing their support programs. In a similar vein, a study conducted among Syrian refugees in Canada revealed that family and friends informational support helped refugees access employment and housing [17]. Particularly, prior studies indicated that family is the source of informational support for refugees in their destination countries [14,15,18]. For example, a qualitative study conducted among Syrian refugees in Canada revealed that families are valuable resources for information regarding the Canadian healthcare system for refugees [18]. Moreover, previous studies indicated that friends became the major source of information for new arrivals [14,34]. For example, a qualitative study conducted among immigrants and refugees in Canada revealed that new arrivals ask refugees who spent longer periods in Canada for information on a variety of issues [35].

In general, refugee women received informational, emotional, and instrumental support from informal social support sources. For longer-lasting social and economic integration, social networks must diversify and grow, even though friends and family are still vital sources of support [36]. Furthermore, informal social support sources filled in the blanks that refugee-serving humanitarian organizations' programs do not provide. However, the lack of social relationships and the limited number of family and friends made it difficult for refugee women to get adequate support from informal social support sources in Addis Ababa.

## **5. Conclusion**

Refugee women received various types of social support from informal support sources like family, friends, and independent sponsors, which helped them adjust to the new environment. For refugee women, strengthening their existing informal social networks is crucial since these networks provide them with informational, emotional, and instrumental support. Refugee-serving humanitarian organizations like UNHCR, JRS, and EOC-DICAC need to create a socialization (cultural exchange) program that unites refugee women, other refugee communities, and the local community. This will allow for the exchange of support and opportunities for social interaction. Refugee women expressed gratitude for the instrumental support they got from informal support sources, but the amount of this support was inadequate. In the short term, the government and refugee-serving humanitarian organizations must work together to provide refugee women with sufficient support that meets their specific needs. In addition, they need to help refugee women obtain jobs in the long run. It is also the responsibility of concerned bodies to educate the local community about ways in which they can support refugee women. Family

members and friends provided refugee women information about the support programs offered by refugee-serving humanitarian organizations. However, humanitarian organizations must advertise their support in the mother tongue of refugee women. Humanitarian organizations also need to cooperate with Yemeni community leaders to use their networks to tell refugee women about available support programs.

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## MALARIA, POVERTY AND CHILD HEALTH IN NIGERIA: ANY NEXUS?

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**Abstract.** Infant mortality rates remain high in many African countries, despite global lowering trends. These high rates are alarming, therefore, this study attempt to examine the effect of malaria and poverty on infant mortality a proxy for child health in Nigeria using a data for the period 1990-2021. Auto-regressive distributed lag model (ARDL) was used as the estimation technique. The study's findings showed that both in the short and long run, poverty rate has a negative non-significant effect on infant mortality while malaria has a positive and significant effect on infant mortality. Government expenditure on health both in the short run and long run is positive and nonsignificant on child health. The current values of primary school enrolment (PSE) and number of physician (NOP) have a negative (-0.014 and -0.0002) non-significant effect on infant mortality in the short, and also negative (-0.501 and -1.654) but significant in the long run. The study recommends that policies that will improve child health and promote poverty reduction should be put in place and well implemented in Nigeria. Also, the government should take measures that will eradicate malaria in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *malaria, poverty, child health, infant mortality, ARDL.*

**Rezumat.** Ratele mortalității infantile rămân ridicate în multe țări africane, în ciuda tendințelor globale de scădere. Studiul încearcă să examineze efectul malariei și a sărăciei asupra mortalității infantile, un proxy pentru sănătatea copiilor în Nigeria, folosind date pentru perioada 1990-2021. Drept tehnică de estimare a fost utilizat modelul de întârziere distribuită auto-regresiv (ARDL). Concluziile studiului au arătat că atât pe termen scurt, cât și pe termen lung, rata sărăciei are un efect negativ nesemnificativ asupra mortalității infantile, în timp ce malarie are un efect pozitiv și semnificativ. Cheltuielile guvernamentale pentru sănătate, atât pe termen scurt, cât și pe termen lung, sunt pozitive, dar nesemnificative pentru sănătatea copilului. Valorile actuale ale înscrierii în școala primară (PSE) și ale numărului de medici (NOP) au un efect negativ (-0,014 și -0,0002) nesemnificativ asupra mortalității infantile pe termen scurt, dar negativ (-0,501 și -1,654) și semnificativ pe termen lung. Studiul recomandă, ca politicile care vor îmbunătăți sănătatea

copiilor și vor promova reducerea sărăciei să fie puse în aplicare și bine implementate în Nigeria. De asemenea, guvernul ar trebui să ia măsuri pentru eradicarea malariei în Nigeria.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *malarie, sărăcie, sănătatea copilului, mortalitatea infantilă, ARDL.*

## 1. Introduction

Well-being and wealth are key drivers of any economy to bring about positive change. It is a known fact that developing economies like Nigeria is characterized with different diseases both communicable and non-communicable, malaria inclusive. Malaria poses a great threat to the development of any nation, including Nigeria. The prevalence of malaria is extremely high in Nigeria, given the weather condition of Tropical rain forest. Malaria is not only a national concern, but it is also a global concern. No wonder that Target 3.3 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to fight malaria [1]. The target aims to eradicate malaria in at least 35 countries and cut death rates by at least 90 % by 2030 [2]. Malaria has to be taken seriously because the economic burden is very high and more importantly, it results in elevated rates of morbidity and mortality in both children and expectant mothers. Malaria goes as far as reducing the immune system of people [3, 4]. Malaria is a disease that is caused by protozoan parasite of the plasmodium genus which is usually spread by the female mosquito called anopheles. This type of mosquito usually attacks the red blood cells. According to [5], malaria is preventable and curable even though it is very deadly. Malaria in human is caused by five different parasite species, of which Plasmodium falciparum and Plasmodium vivax are the two most harmful. Even though both national and international, governmental and nongovernmental organisations have rolled out policies and programmes to curb the prevalence of this disease, it has not given an expected and desired result. Some of these programmes include distribution of mosquito-treated nets, and awareness about keeping the environment clean to prevent the breeding of mosquitoes. Most times malaria affects the poor because poor people usually live in an environment that breeds mosquitoes. Failure to eradicate malaria in most developing countries is because of poverty and places where malaria prospers, the people in such places also have the least prosperity [6]. Poverty can encourage the spread of malaria, yet malaria can also create poverty by hindering a nation's ability to prosper economically. The two case scenarios can happen having a case of two-way causality.

Africa's Sub-Saharan region is most burdened of the incidence of malaria [7]. There are about 300 million to 500 million cases across the globe annually, more than 1 million deaths recorded, most of these deaths occurred among under-five children. Also, 96% of most of the mortality cases occur in sub-Saharan Africa. The two leading causes of childhood fatalities are anemia and cerebral malaria. Poverty and malaria have a number of intricate relationships. According to [8], Nigeria's growth has been adversely impacted by malaria by roughly 3.8 %. Aside from the detrimental impact on economic growth, the incidence of malaria can discourage foreign trade and investment even at the national level. As a result, the economic burden of malaria is higher in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria inclusive. Sub-Saharan Africa continues to remain the region with the highest rate of mortality for children under five despite the fact that globally, a reduction in child mortality has occurred. Nigeria and India alone accounted for about a third of mortality cases of under five children in 2019 [9].

In Nigeria, malaria is a critical public health concern. This is because families are kept in a cycle of illness and financial hardship by the condition and the expense of

treatment. Even though, using mosquito net coated with insecticides has increased to about 61%, yet the prevalence of malaria is still high in the country [10]. The level of poverty is also high in Nigeria many people are faced with little or on financial opportunities, the level of unemployment is high making many people not to have a regular income [11]. A person is considered to be below the poverty line in Nigeria if the person is having less than 213 US Dollars in a year at least to feed, this is according to the Nigerian National Standards. There are about 40.1% of Nigerians that are living in poverty [12]. Furthermore, [13] stated that more than 50% of people living in Nigeria live below poverty line. Similarly, child poverty is very high in Nigeria. It has been stated that one of the dreadful outcomes of high level of poverty in the Nigeria is the child poverty. According to the 2011 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), over 70.31% of Nigerian children live in overall child poverty, and about 23.22% of children live in extreme poverty [14].

Although, across the globe, there is an appreciable decrease in the deaths of under-five, yet sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the area with the highest global under-five death rates, with one out of many children dying before turning five. More importantly, Nigeria topped the list of under-five mortality in 2019 with about 858 deaths per thousand [9]. Malaria and malnutrition have been part of diseases that cause these child deaths. In fact, European Alliance Against Malaria, (2007) stated that in Nigeria the primary cause of mortality for children is malaria. Nigeria cannot afford to continue to record high child mortality because better health for children would allow them to live longer, in order to get educated and eventually earn income in the future this would likely contribute to the productivity of a country. Hence, good health has both direct and indirect impact on an economy [13].

Even though a link has been found between poverty and malaria [6], its yet unknown how strong of a correlation this is and in what direction. Most of the existing studies have captured the links at the individual or household level but the wider societal level has not been fully captured. It is also important to raise these questions to put this study in the right perspective; is there any relationship among malaria, poverty and child mortality in Nigeria? If there are, what type of association exists among them? Have malaria and poverty contributed to the high child mortality in Nigeria? If yes, what is the magnitude? Therefore, this study aims to investigate the level of association among malaria, poverty and child mortality. With the intention of looking into the effects of both malaria and poverty on child health in Nigeria from 1990 to 2021.

The impact of poverty and other economic factors on the treatment of malaria among residents of Zamfara State, Northwestern Nigeria, was studied by [4]. They discovered through semi-structured interviews that the high rate of malaria in that state was a result of poverty. The impoverished are unable to pay for their own malaria treatment. Similarly, using the cost of illness approach with the Harmonized National Living Survey (HNLSS) [13]. They examined how the monetary expenditure among households affect the treatment of malaria in Southern Nigeria. Their study revealed that the economic burden in the treatment of malaria is high in the Southern states of Nigeria. Malaria has been explained to be the disease of the poor. Studies have emphasized the two-way causality between poverty and malaria, especially in the area of micro study. This is in the sense that poverty could make people sick such that they are unable to afford the necessary medical care when they are sick. On the other hand, sickness fosters poverty. That is, when people are sick, they cannot go to work which leads to loss of income and hence, poverty.

According to [15], malaria is endemic in Nigeria and they also examined the possibility of two-way causality between presumptive malaria and household poverty level in rural areas of Southwest Nigeria. They used the multi-stage sampling technique and structured questionnaires on about 395 respondents from 35 villages. They employed the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) model and two-stage probit least square method to analyse the data and they found a two-way causality between poverty and malaria.

The willingness to pay method was used by [3] to analyze the malaria load. They employed linear regression analysis and a structured questionnaire with roughly 1600 responses. Their findings demonstrated a high degree of public readiness to pay for the treatment of malaria. They discovered that poverty and health are closely related, and that a large portion of the population bears a heavy financial burden due to malaria. In the similar vein, a study by [16] estimated the cost of malaria to rural households in Western Ethiopia's Oromia Regional State's Chewaka District. The research was a cross-sectional study conducted in a community. With a sample size of about 765 households, using the multivariate logistic regression analysis, they found that there is high economic burden in that district in Western Ethiopia. Most households spend more than 5% of their yearly revenue due to malaria. Furthermore, a study by [17] also examined the links between households' poverty level and malaria in Uganda. They looked into the association between the socioeconomic standing, its determinants and malaria among children in rural area Nagongera, Uganda. Information on socioeconomic position was collected for about 318 children from 100 households, who were followed up for 36 months. The age bracket of the selected children was between 6 months and 10 years of living. Investigating the causal pathways through mediation analysis, they found out that the children from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds had an average of twice the odds of contracting malaria indicating that socioeconomic factors influence malaria transmission in Uganda. Similarly, [18] reviewed several previous studies between 2020 and 2022 that examined the socioeconomic pathways between poverty and malaria. Their study suggested in sub-Saharan Africa, the housing, food security and the use of antimalaria drugs are mediations in the link between poverty and malaria.

In another vein, using secondary data in Nigeria, [19] investigated the burden of malaria economically on labour productivity. This study covered the period of 31 years from 1987 to 2017. A long-term correlation between malaria and labor productivity was discovered using Engel-Granger Cointegration Test. Their ECM results showed that malaria impacted negatively on labour productivity in Nigeria. Using the Vector Error Correction Model for 37 years to examine the influence of health shock on the poverty level in Nigeria, [20] they found out that health shocks induce poverty in Nigeria. Also with a balanced panel of 100 countries that are endemic with malaria from 1985 to 2001, [21] focused on the two-way causality between malaria and economic well-being. They used the OLS, Two Stage Least Squares and Three Stage Least Squares Method to analyse the data. Their result indicated that malaria had a negative and significant effect on income per capita. They stated that high economic growth leads to reduction in malaria, but that economic development cannot be brought about by reduction in malaria alone. In a more recent study, using a multivariable logistic regression to find malaria correlates in a facility-based cross-sectional study with 585 children under five who visited public health facilities in the northwest Ethiopian Wogera district, [22] investigated the prevalence of malaria in children under five years old and its contributing factors. They discovered that there was a high

frequency of malaria in the study population and that malaria of course is one of the major causes of worsened health of children.

Furthermore, studies also abound on the influence of poverty on child health. For instance, [23] in their study on how poverty affects a child's development and health, found that in a number of dimensions, there is evidence that poverty has a detrimental impact on children's development and health. A similar study by [24] also examine the effects of poverty on children's health in Canada, both now and in the future. They discovered that children who grow up in low-income households or areas typically have poorer health outcomes. Furthermore, poverty affects children's health not just when they are young but also throughout their lives. Another study by [25] on poverty and child health in the UK discovered that child poverty is currently at high levels in the UK, thus Children's potential and development are limited by the poor health associated with child poverty, which results in poor health and life chances as adults. Using National Centre for Health Statistics (NCHS) birth-infant death files from the 2013 timeframe cohort to evaluate the relationship among Poverty, urban-rural classification and infant mortality in United State, [26] concluded that `infant mortality was still linked to high poverty and extremely rural counties, regardless of the specific sociodemographic, health, and obstetric characteristics of each mother.

From the above, it can be gathered that most studies on malaria have focused on households hence, making use of micro study. The few macro studies have not really linked the malaria, poverty and child deaths together especially in Nigeria. Therefore, this study sets to bridge this gap in the literature.

## 2. Materials and Methods

To examine the effect of malaria and poverty on child health in Nigeria, this paper is guided by the model specified by [27]. The model is specified as:

$$IMR = f(POV, MAL, PSE, GEXH, NOP), \quad (1)$$

In a simple linear equation and log form, model "Eq. (1)" becomes:

$$\ln IMR = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \ln POV + \alpha_2 \ln MAL + \alpha_3 \ln PSE + \alpha_4 \ln GEXH + \alpha_5 \ln NOP + \nu, \quad (2)$$

where: IMR is infant mortality a proxy for child health; POV is poverty rate; MAL is incidence of malaria; PSE is primary school enrolment; GEXH is Government Expenditure on Health; NOP is Number of physician;  $\nu$  is the error term,  $\alpha_0$  is the intercept, and  $\alpha_1, \alpha_2 \dots \alpha_5$  represent the parameter estimates. The apriori expectation is expressed mathematically as  $\alpha_1 > 0, \alpha_2 > 0, \alpha_3 < 0, \alpha_4 < 0, \text{ and } \alpha_5 < 0$ .

This study employed the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model to determine how malaria and poverty affect child health. This model is fundamentally important because it enables us to investigate both short- and long-term relationships simultaneously using the same framework, irrespective of "whether all variables are I(1), I(0), or a combination of I(1) and I(0) variables," i.e., in the same sequence. The error correction version of autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) is specified in "Eq. (3)" A variant of the error-correction model (ECM) can explain the long-run relationship among the variables [28]. This clarifies the relationship between changes in the infant mortality proxy for child health and any changes caused by changes in other dependent variables, as well as the disequilibrium and divergence in the previous period. The ARDL model is derived as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta IMR_t = & \beta_0 + \sum_{j=1}^n \partial_j \Delta POV_{t-1} + \sum_{j=1}^p \alpha_j \Delta MAL_{t-1} + \sum_{j=1}^p \varphi_j \Delta PSE_{t-1} + \\ & \sum_{j=1}^p \Phi_j \Delta GEXH_{t-1} + \sum_{j=1}^p \theta_j \Delta NOP_{t-1} + \beta_1 POV_{t-1} + \beta_2 MAL_{t-1} + \beta_3 PSE_{t-1} + \\ & \beta_4 GEXH_{t-1} + \beta_5 NOP_{t-1} + \tau ECT_{t-1} + \mu_t \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

In "Eq. (3)"  $\beta_{1-5}$  represent the convergence of short-run dynamic coefficients to long-run equilibrium while  $\tau$  is the error correction model and speed of adjustment parameter derived from the predicted equilibrium relationship. The aforementioned ECM could be considered as including both short-term transient effects and long-term consequences.

### Definitions and Measurement of variables

Based on the literature, the measurements of the different variables of the model for the study are described briefly and stated as follows.

#### Infant Mortality rate proxy for Child health

The number of deaths of children under five years old, expressed per 1,000 live births, is known as the infant mortality rate. A *proxy for child health* [25, 26]. The World Development Indicator (WDI) was the source of this data.

#### Poverty

In line with the [29] definition, which defines poverty as "the inability to attain a minimal standard of living." Using fundamental consumption needs as a benchmark, this definition calculates poverty. It has also been maintained that per capita household spending is a more constant indicator of poverty than per capita income [30, 31]. This data was obtained from the World Development Indicator (WDI).

#### Incidence of Malaria

Following [32] and [33] on their findings which indicate that the degree to which victims have been made immobile or unable to carry out their regular productive activities needs to be reflected in an acceptable measure. Therefore, the number of reported cases of malaria per 1,000 people (Incidence of malaria (per 1,000 population at risk) serves as the study's malaria index. Because it is predicted to be order-preserving, this should serve as a good proxy for the severity of malaria attacks, including cases that go unreported. The data on incidence of malaria was obtained from WDI and National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

Furthermore, **Primary school enrollment** is the gross enrollment ratio, calculated as the proportion of all enrolled individuals, aged or not, to the age group population that formally corresponds to the shown degree of education. And **Government expenditure on health** as a proportion of total government spending - This metric shows the %age of total government spending that goes toward general health care. It illustrates the proportion of public health spending to the overall value of operations in the public sector. While **No of Physicians** is the number of physicians, including generalists and specialists, in medical professions per 1,000 people. Data on these variables are also sourced from WDI.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Gaining a sense of the data set is crucial in order to understand the information in the sample before conducting any regression analysis. Descriptive statistics therefore enables a researcher to have a glimpse of the data used in the study thereby gaining a more precise idea of the distribution of the variables employed. However, the result of the descriptive statistics is presented in Table 1. Table 4.1 shows that the average value of

Infant mortality rate (IMR) between 1990 and 2021 is 159.45, with a maximum of 209.3 and a minimum of 110.8. In addition, the average value of the poverty (POV) in Nigeria during the study period is about 65.20, ranging from 35.78 to 86.92. Concerning Incidence of malaria (MAL), the study revealed that the average value is 342.5, and it varies between the range of 294.1 and 415.7. However, on Primary school Enrolment (PSE), the table shows that this ranges from 78.66 to 102.1 (minimum and maximum respectively) with an average value of 90.78.

Also, government expenditure on health (GEXH) average value is 1673.3, with a maximum value of 5185.3 and a minimum of 9.51 and the mean value of No of physician (NOP) is 0.313, ranging from 0.18 to 0.315.

Table 1

	Descriptive Statistics					
	IMR	POV	MAL	PSE	GEXH	NOP
<b>Mean</b>	159.4563	65.2039	342.5345	90.78721	1673.333	0.313031
<b>Median</b>	152.6500	66.20931	310.6279	90.38740	1277.875	0.315000
<b>Maximum</b>	209.3000	86.91956	415.7665	102.1081	5185.320	0.451000
<b>Minimum</b>	110.8000	35.78851	294.1107	78.66348	8.518700	0.185000
<b>Std. Dev.</b>	34.18290	13.79981	50.01407	6.584192	1530.854	0.082909
<b>Skewness</b>	0.204051	-0.326837	0.458113	-0.000881	0.886885	-0.076505
<b>Kurtosis</b>	1.521882	2.223549	1.359676	1.995830	2.619225	1.614250
<b>Jarque-Berra</b>	3.135176	1.373554	4.706847	1.344480	4.388330	2.591620
<b>Prob.</b>	0.208548	0.503195	0.095043	0.510564	0.111452	0.273676
<b>Obs</b>	32	32	32	32	32	32

Source: Author's Computation, 2024.

**Note:** IMR - Infant mortality rate; POV – poverty; MAL- Incidence of malaria; PSE- Primary school Enrolment; GEXH- government expenditure on health; NOP- No of physician.

Furthermore, the series appears to be widely scattered from the mean values as captured by the values of their standard deviations in Table 1 except for GEXH which somewhat clustered around its mean value. The skewness shows how spread the data is from their means. It measures the asymmetry of the series distribution around the mean. The statistics in table 4.1 reveal that variables IMR, MAL and GEXH are positively skewed, implying that these distributions have long right tails while POV, PSE and NOP skewed negatively depicting a long left tail. In addition, the kurtosis measures the series distribution's flatness or peakness (height). Distributions with kurtosis values of less than three are said to be platykurtic while values greater than three are said to be leptokurtic. Hence, all the variables (IMR, POV, MAL, PSE, GEXH and NOP) are platykurtic with 1.52, 2.223, 1.359, 1.995, 2.619 and 1.614 respectively, indicating that the distributions are flat relative to normal.

Lastly, the Jarque-Bera (JB) statistic measures whether the series is normally distributed or not. All variables have p-values larger than 0.05. With regard to all the variables, the null hypothesis of a normal distribution at 5% was thus approved.

### 3.1 Correlation Test

Correlation matrix is needed to observe the degree of association between a model's explanatory variables and dependent variable(s). Table 2 presents the correlation matrix between the dependent and explanatory variables of the model used in the study.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix						
	IMR	POV	MAL	PSE	GEXH	NOP
IMR	1.000000					
POV	-0.538990	1.000000				
MAL	0.019149	0.001335	1.000000			
PSE	-0.006618	-0.145578	0.512148	1.000000		
GEXH	-0.478935	0.635243	0.402535	0.014412	1.000000	
NOP	-0.634150	0.466159	0.036749	-0.152910	0.621311	1.000000

Source: Authors Computation, 2024.

**Note:** IMR - Infant mortality rate; POV – poverty; MAL- Incidence of malaria; PSE- Primary school Enrolment; GEXH- government expenditure on health; NOP- No of physician.

Table 2 specifically indicated the strength of the correlation between the dependent variable (IMR) and independent variables (POV, MAL, PSE, GEXH and NOP). The results demonstrates that there is no multi-collinearity in the variables because the values are less than 0.8. Specifically, the correlation matrix's coefficients fall between 0.001 to 0.63. Hence, according to the findings, the variable's correlation coefficients are moderate and allow for coexistence in the same model.

### 3.2 Stationarity Test (Unit Root Test)

It became necessary to ascertain the stationarity or non-stationarity of the variables using augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) unit root tests. By comparing the ADF test statistics with the critical values in Table 3, it was discovered that most of the variables were non-stationary at levels (IMR, POV, MAL, GEXH and NOP). However, it became stationary at first, differencing I(1) except for PSE which is stationary at level I(0). Having demonstrated that all variables were stationary at levels and at first difference, we applied the Johansen and bounds test for cointegration analysis in the model.

Table 3

Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) Unit Root Test					
Variable	Level ADF	Level 5%	1 <sup>st</sup> Diff	1 <sup>st</sup> Diff @ 5%	Decision
IMR	-0.289137	-2.967767	-3.029754*	-2.967767	I(1)
POV	-2.816156	-2.960411	-6.984395*	-2.963972	I(1)
MAL	-1.156492	-2.960411	-4.620562*	-2.953972	I(1)
PSE	-3.549460*	-2.967767	-4.342530	-2.976263	I(0)
GEXH	-2.134425	-2.986225	-3.670429*	-2.991878	I(1)
NOP	-1.323258	-2.960411	-4.197282*	-2.963972	I(1)

Source: Authors Computation, 2024.

**Note:** \* 5% significance level. All variables are in log form except NOP

### 3.3 Cointegration Test

Consequently, a cointegration test is conducted in order to determine the variables' long-term relationship. The Johansen and ARDL bound Cointegration results are however presented in Tables 4 and 5 below.



Table 4

<b>Result of Unrestricted Co-integration Rate Test (Trace)</b>				
<i>Hypothesized No of CEs</i>	<i>Eigen value</i>	<i>Trace statistic</i>	<i>0.005 critical value</i>	<i>Prob **</i>
None *	0.909562	152.9063	83.9371	0.0000
At most 1	0.700694	80.81352	60.06141	0.0004
At most 2	0.521791	44.62485	40.17493	0.0167
At most 3	0.337386	22.49361	24.27596	0.0825
At most 4	0.266867	10.14671	12.32090	0.1126
At most 5	0.027412	0.833846	4.129906	0.4167

**Note:** Trace test indicates 3 co-integrating equation(s) at the 0.05 level \*denotes rejection of the hypothesis at the 0.05 level. \*\*Mackinnon-Haug-Michelis (1999) p-values.

From Table 4, the null hypothesis of no cointegration among the variable is rejected as the trace test indicates 3 co-integrating equation at 5% significance level. Thus, there is cointegration among the variables. This suggests that the variables in Nigeria have long-term relationships with one another.

Also corroborating the Johansen cointegration results above, arising from the estimated bounds F-statistics results presented in Table 5, we conclude that the three key variables (i.e. Infant mortality, poverty and incidence of malaria, co-move in the long run and have long run relationships. The F-statistics (7.0096) exceed the critical values of both lower and upper bounds at all levels. Hence, it is implied that there is a long-term co-integration relationship among the variables in this model thus the null hypothesis of no co-integration is rejected.

Table 5

#### ARDL Bounds Test for co-integration Relationship

<b>Model</b>	<b>Computed F-Statistic</b>	
<b>F-Statistic</b>	7.0096	
<b>Bounds Level</b>	I(0)	I(1)
<b>10 %</b>	2.26	3.35
<b>5 %</b>	2.62	3.79
<b>2.5 %</b>	2.96	4.18
<b>1 %</b>	3.41	4.68

Source: Author's Computation, 2024.

#### 3.4 Auto Regressive Distributed Lag Model (ARDL)

Table 6 contains both the short run and long run ARDL estimates of poverty rate (POV), incidence of malaria (MAL), government expenditure on health (GEXH), primary school enrolment (PSE) and number of physician (NOP) on infant mortality (IMR) proxy for child health in Nigeria.

Table 6 provides information about the regression estimate that captures the long and short run analysis. It indicates that the explanatory variables jointly explain approximately 99% of the variations in infant mortality in Nigeria, with the F-statistics (60301.26; P=0.000)

being highly significant at all levels. This confirms the model's applicability, and the Durbin Watson statistics of 2.2292 show that there is no serial auto-correlation in the short- and long-term estimates. Additionally, the short run regression estimate demonstrates that the ECM's coefficient of the error-term satisfies its basic criteria of less than 1, negative and statistically significant. Going by the p-value of 0.0036 which is significant at 5% level, demonstrates the rapidity of change (speed of adjustment) from the short to the long term. i.e. if there exists any disequilibrium in the system, it takes just 2 % to adjust back from the short run to the long run.

In addition to the above, the ARDL result revealed that poverty rate (POV) has a negative non-significant effect on infant mortality (IMR) a proxy for child health both in the short and long run in Nigeria. This implies that a rise in poverty level may worsen the health of an infant thus resulting in poor health outcome for the child as children's health generally suffers when they are raised in low-income households or communities, thus an increase in the chances of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI) in Nigeria. This finding is in line with [23-26]. It was also observed that the coefficients of malaria (MAL) have a positive and significant effect on infant mortality both in the short and long run. Meaning that a rise in incidence of malaria would result in higher death rate in infancy. Thus, Malaria contributes to increased worsened health of children. This also corroborates the submission of [22] and Roser [34].

Also, it was further revealed that the coefficient of government expenditure on health both in the short run and long run is positive and nonsignificant on child health in Nigeria. This implies that child health outcome is unaffected both in the short run and long run even in the face of the perceived increased in government expenditure on health. Implying that with increased government expenditure on health, child health neither deteriorate nor improve. The reason for the non-significant result in the short and long run may be as a result of high rate of corruption which makes government expenditure on health ineffective. This finding runs contrary to the findings of [35] and [36].

Table 6

**Estimated Short and long run coefficients using ARDL approach  
(Dependent Variable *lnIMR*)**

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
<b>SHORT-RUN</b>				
LNPOV	-0.002656	0.004101	-0.647607	0.5270
LNMAL	0.010710	0.002106	2.307207	0.0252*
LNMAL(-1)	0.002231	0.007752	0.287737	0.7775
LNMAL(-2)	0.015769	0.005752	2.741600	0.0151*
LNPSE	-0.014036	0.006844	-2.050875	0.0582
LNPSE(-1)	0.012893	0.005912	1.865306	0.0818*
LNPSE(-2)	-0.009726	0.005441	-1.787498	0.0941*
LNGEXH	0.000255	0.000344	0.739456	0.4710
LNGEXH(-1)	0.001465	0.000984	1.488723	0.1573
LNGEXH(-2)	-0.001285	0.001176	-1.093069	0.2916
NOP	-0.000270	0.016321	-0.016542	0.9870
NOP(-1)	-0.039078	0.017721	-2.205186	0.0435*
CointEq(-1)	-0.024026	0.006984	-3.440173	0.0036
R-Square	0.999982			
Adjusted R-Square	0.999966			
D-WATSON	2.229289			

Continuation Table 6

		LONG-RUN		
LNPOV	-0.121133	0.170697	-0.709640	0.4875
LNMAL	1.199657	0.275406	4.355957	0.0004*
LNPSE	-0.501848	0.225608	-2.224426	0.0400*
LNGEXH	0.011741	0.011167	1.051418	0.3078
NOP	-1.654220	0.368985	-4.483160	0.0003*
C	1.460561	2.037389	0.716879	0.4832

Source: Authors Computation, 2024.

Note: \* 5 % and 10 % significance level respectively.

Furthermore, the current values of primary school enrolment (PSE) and number of physician (NOP) has a negative (-0.014 and -0.0002) non-significant effect on infant mortality in the short, and also negative (-0.501 and -1.654) but significant in the long run. This implies that 1 % increase in primary school enrolment and number of physicians will reduce the infant mortality by 1.4 % and 0.02% and also 5.1% and 16.5% in the short and long run respectively. Implying that an increase in level of education and number of physician results in a decline in infant mortality in Nigeria. These findings suggest that a well-educated spouse can make thoughtful decisions to improve the health of their newborn and children.

#### 4. Conclusion

Compared to the rest of the globe, the African continent has greater rates of infant mortality. This study attempts to explore the effect of malaria and poverty on child health in Nigeria using data for the period 1990–2021. This is the first macro study of its kind that uses advanced econometric techniques to examine the effect of poverty and malaria on child health in Nigeria. The results revealed the existence of long-run co-integrating relationship among poverty rate (POV), incidence of malaria (MAL), government expenditure on health (GEXH), primary school enrolment (PSE) and number of physician (NOP) on infant mortality (IMR) proxy for child health in Nigeria. The study revealed that children's health typically deteriorates when they are raised in low-income households or communities thus rising levels of poverty may exacerbate an infant's health and lead to a poorer outcome for the child. The study further showed that an increase in malarial incidence would translate into a greater infant mortality rate as malaria has a positive and significant effect on infant mortality. Also, government expenditure on health neither improves nor worsens child's health as the coefficient shows a positive and nonsignificant effect on child's health. The study further revealed that an increase in level of education and number of physician results in a decline in infant mortality in Nigeria.

This study thus recommends the implementation of laws and policies that strengthen efforts to reduce poverty and promote children's health, like the child right act. Focus on measures that consider the needs of the parent should also be investigated and improved upon, especially improved literacy level and alleviation of poverty. Significant efforts should also be made by the government and development partners to completely eradicate mosquito-borne malaria in Nigeria.

**Conflict of interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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## THE USE OF PHILOSOPHY IN ETHIOPIA: CULTIVATING IDENTITY FORMATION AND EMANCIPATORY IMPULSE

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**Abstract.** Through a discussion of the historical trajectory within which modern philosophy in Ethiopia developed, the article situates the discussions of the spirit of cultural coexistence, the reflections on modernity, the process of state building, religion and modernity and the validity of indigenous traditions as the objects of analysis upon which social philosophizing in Ethiopia could take place within. Through such a discussion, it will be shown that the social function of philosophy in Ethiopia needs to be situated in the two-fold task of identity formation and the emergence of an emancipatory impulse. Concrete strategies for realizing such a function in terms of the development of curriculums, the cultivation of an interdisciplinary engagement between philosophy and other disciplines, community engagement, knowledge dissemination and the need to engage in an ethical and political reflection are identified.

**Keywords:** *Philosophy, identity, emancipation, Ethiopia, social function, education.*

**Rezumat.** Printr-o discuție asupra traiectoriei istorice în cadrul căreia s-a dezvoltat filosofia modernă în Etiopia, articolul situează discuțiile despre spiritul coexistenței culturale, reflecțiile asupra modernității, procesul de construire a statului, religie, modernitate și validitatea tradițiilor indigene ca obiecte de analiză, pe baza cărora s-ar putea manifesta filosofia socială în Etiopia. Printr-o astfel de discuție se evidențiază, că funcția socială a filosofiei în Etiopia trebuie să includă dubla sarcină a formării identității și a apariției unui impuls emancipator. Sunt identificate strategii concrete pentru realizarea unei astfel de funcții în ceea ce privește dezvoltarea curriculum-urilor, cultivarea unui angajament interdisciplinar între filozofie și alte discipline, implicarea comunității, diseminarea cunoștințelor și nevoia de a se angaja într-o reflecție etică și politică.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *filosofie, identitate, emancipare, Etiopia, funcție socială, educație.*

### 1. Introduction

In a nation like Ethiopia that is defined by a long history of literacy, rich cultural contact and ethnic and linguistic diversity, there is a search for a meaning that is able to confer a sense of a commonly shared sense of identity on the lives of individuals [1, p. 4]. Historically, religions and the complex interactions that have been established among

individual Ethiopians that are coming from different backgrounds led into the development of a moral fabric and a sense of a common destiny. Currently, the Ethiopian state is characterized by ethnic tensions and conflicts and the lack of a narrative that is able to serve as guiding glue that is able to provide a meaning beyond particular divisions [2, p. 41]. The source of such a crisis have been identified as being situated in the process of state formation and the subsequent system of ethnic federalism that was introduced as a way of addressing question of ethnic difference but ended up in the emergence of a polarized discourse that destroyed any sense of a common future [3, p. 297]. Such a crisis of normativity that is currently being experienced in the Ethiopian context calls for an intellectual intervention and among other things such an intervention, could be developed in terms of the possible social function that philosophy can play within the Ethiopian soil.

The attempt to delve into an exploration into the possible role that philosophy in Ethiopia could play within the society is situated within a world of diverging conceptions of the good. As a nation that is characterized by diversity, one witnesses the existence of rich cultural traditions within the Ethiopian context [4, p. 17]. Such diversity has served as a normative challenge as there is a quest to develop a normative foundation that is able to serve as a commonly shared sense of identity. Such a quest is also involved in the identification of the parameters through which the interactions among different forms of identities could be developed within and the need to affirm the limits of the processes of cultural translation and understanding [5, p. 155]. There is a need to explore what possible social functions of philosophy can play in a society where there is a diversity of worldviews and a state building process that is being plagued by the question of ethnic identity.

The possible investigation into the social function that can be played by philosophy in Ethiopia is taking place within a contested intellectual terrain that has the aim of determining whether or not philosophy exists in Ethiopia and if so, then what possible role can it play in the life of the community. Those like Claude Sumner argued that Ethiopian philosophy is made up of three main traditions and that all of them have a huge role in the life of the community [6, p. 41]. In the eyes of Sumner, Ethiopian philosophy which is made up of a written philosophy, oral traditions and foreign wisdom plays a crucial role in addressing the predicaments that are being faced by the community [7, p. 433]. Such an effort mainly concentrated on demonstrating the ways in which philosophical wisdom can be used in order to resolve moral dilemmas and questions that are of a normative and a political nature. Supporting such a function of philosophy in Ethiopia, it has been argued that “we can extract important lessons for enlightenment from classical written and oral philosophy of Ethiopia” [8, p. 4]. Without directly delving into the classical sources of Ethiopian philosophy, attempts have been made by those like Andreas Eshete, Messay Kebede and MaimireMennasemay who argued that philosophy plays a crucial social function in terms of diagnosing the nature of modernity and identity, by analyzing the anomalies of Ethiopia’s system of ethnic federalism and through a critical exposition of the failure to introduce a normative foundation that can serve as a foundation of social, moral and political philosophizing within the Ethiopian context [9, p. 5].

In a nation like Ethiopia that is plagued by ethnic conflicts, lack of democracy and good governance and the absence of a normative foundation that is able to bestow a common purpose in the lives of individual citizens, there is a need to ponder the possible role that can be played by philosophy. The study of the social functions of philosophy in Ethiopia need to be grounded within the context of the problems in the crisis of legitimacy

and the fragmentation of identity that is being witnessed within the Ethiopian context [10, p. 2019]. The very idea of being an Ethiopian and the common goals that Ethiopians should strive for are being contested within the current context as a result of a politics of ethnicity that led into the raising of ethnic differentness into the level of irreconcilable ontological differences [11, p. 125]. Such an exercise needs to primarily concentrate on the areas of identity formation and the cultivation of a form of subjectivity that is able to strive for emancipation.

The philosophical exploration into the nature of identity formation in Ethiopia is an important task that allows us to identify the parameters within which conceptions of subjectivity are developed. It is also useful in terms of the development of a rational framework within which a collectively shared sense of identity could be developed within. Such an intellectual exercise is of a greater importance as it contributes to the emergence of “an Ethiopian political theory rooted in Ethiopian history” [12, p. 2]. The philosophical engagement with the question of the development of an emancipatory impulse in return is important since it leads into the critique of oppressive regimes and the identification of the ways in which the blueprint for a new society could be instituted upon. Such a process is also important as it to contribute to the process of freeing “African self-representations from Eurocentrism” [13, p. 107]. Such social philosophizing also helps us to identify the foundational assumptions that are found behind social, moral and political practice within the Ethiopian context and helps us to identify “the established metaphysics underlying the national unity” [14, p. 87]. It is a crucial step that needs to be taken in the attempt to build a new society that is founded on equity and social justice.

The article starts out by discussing the historical development of modern philosophy in Ethiopia. This section identifies the different approaches to assigning a social function to philosophy within the Ethiopian context. This is followed by a discussion of the need to situate social philosophizing within the Ethiopian soil. It is shown that philosophy in Ethiopia needs to be situated within a contested intellectual terrain defined by a spirit of cultural coexistence, a failed project of modernity, a complex process of state building and ethnic federalism, the need to understand the complex relations between religion and modernity and the attempt to unearth the value of indigenous knowledge. Such a discussion is followed by the section discussing the two-fold function of philosophy in Ethiopia in terms of the process of identity formation and the emergence of an emancipatory impulse. The last section identifies concrete proposals that need to be implemented to realize the social function of philosophy in Ethiopia.

## **2. Historical Development of Modern Philosophy in Ethiopia**

The introduction of modern philosophy in Ethiopia is situated within the context of the relations that were established between Ethiopians and Europeans in the world of cultural contact and missionary discourse. Claude Sumner in particular situated the emergence of modern philosophy in Ethiopia in the hatatas of Zera yaeqob and Welda Heywat which are philosophical treatise that emerged in response to religious disputes in modern Ethiopia [15, p. 135]. Such an argument that is developed by Sumner was criticized by those like Anais Wion who argued that the hatatas are not produced by Ethiopians and that they situated as part of an Italian missionary discourse [16, p. 2]. Leaving aside the debate on when and where did modern philosophy in Ethiopian originated, one can still affirm that the opening of a philosophy department in author's institute played a huge role



in the popularization of philosophy in the Ethiopian context. Under such an institutional context, different social functions were assigned to philosophy and such functions mirror the ideological visions of successive Ethiopian regimes.

During the time of the imperial regime, philosophy in Ethiopia was developed under the idea of striving for a universal knowledge and it was mainly dictated by liberal ideals. Philosophy was given the task of familiarizing students with universal principles although such an exercise was concentrated in academic circles and it was far removed from the daily lives of the people. Education was introduced during such a period under a western model of modernization that had the aim of learning from the latest achievements of the western world [17, p. 270]. Such a focus on universality was replaced by the attempt to assign an ideological social function to philosophy with the coming to power of the Derg regime after the downfall of the imperial regime [18, p. 263]. The Derg specifically assigned an ideological function to philosophy and philosophy was being used as a way of inculcating the principles of Marxism-Leninism. As part of such an ideologically oriented conception of philosophy under the Derg, books that deal with Marxism-Leninism were translated and a new curriculum that concentrated on a socialist political economy was introduced. Even during such a period, those like Sumner tried to engage in a comparative philosophical exercise that has the goal of unearthing the different sources of Ethiopian philosophy.

In terms of delineating the social function of philosophy in Ethiopia, after the downfall of the Derg and the coming to power of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a new curriculum that was mainly dictated by continental philosophy was introduced. Just like the previous regimes, the new rule also assigned a specific social function for philosophy. Philosophy in such a context was seen as a way of realizing societal progress and development. In a period that was dominated by the theme of development, attempts were being made to show how philosophy can contribute to the realization of development. Among other things, interpretations of the ideas of EgualeGebreyohannes and the hatatas were made having the aim of showing the role that is played by philosophy in realizing social progress through education and inculcating the idea of cultural coexistence [19, p. 105]. Under such an intellectual climate there was a relatively larger space that was given for a public engagement with philosophy and works by Messay Kebede, Andreas Eshete and MaimireMennasemay emerged trying to explain the nature of modernity and Ethiopia's contemporary predicaments from the perspective of a philosophy that is situated within the continental tradition.

In looking at the development modern philosophy in Ethiopia under different periods, one can argue that it has not been able to play a social function that contributes to societal progress because of a number of reasons. First of all, during different historical periods, attempts were made by the state to assign an ideological function to philosophy and as a result of this; no profound philosophical discourse that is able to develop a conception of rational practice that is able to reflect on the foundations of society emerged. During the time of the imperial regime, the social roles of any discipline including philosophy was seen in terms of the realization of western modernization that is expressed in the introduction of an instrumental form of modernization [20, p. 95], while the Derg in return, had the goal of using philosophy as a way of spreading Marxism-Leninism. Such an act of assigning an ideological function to philosophy also persisted during the EPRDF regime where the theme of development dominated the social role of philosophy in

Ethiopia. Modern philosophy in Ethiopia as such did not develop within a vibrant intellectual environment where different ideas were being freely contested and on the contrary, it was developed under the tutelage of a repressive political environment that stood against the freedom of speech. In its experimentation with different ideologically assigned motifs, philosophy has not been able so far to play a profound social function in the life of the community in the Ethiopian context.

Separating philosophy from ideological visions that are dictated by state ideology, there is a need to identify a new social function for philosophy in Ethiopia. The agendas that are discussed by philosophers need to be separated from the attempt to develop an ideological justification of the Ethiopian state [21, p. 117]. Besides freeing philosophy from the claws of state ideology, there is a need to introduce a conception of an Ethiopian philosophy that is not trapped within the pitfalls of cultural revivalism, intellectual sophism and a politicized debate on decolonization and African philosophy. Based on works of Sumner who has carried out an extensive research into the existence of classical written Ethiopian philosophy, attempts have been made to set the Ethiopian past as the foundation of all philosophical inquiry [22, p. 47]. Still, such an attempt is not able to overcome the problems of authorship and is trapped within nostalgia for the past.

Equally attempts are being made to reduce philosophy into a commodity that is being sold to the masses as a quick fix. Still, such sophism does not have the capacity of introducing a socially grounded philosophical practice within the Ethiopian context. Moreover, Ethiopian philosophy should not be trapped inside a debate on the existence of African philosophy and the usage of philosophy as a way of refuting the colonial paradigm as this only culminates in performative contradiction. What is needed is a two-folded conception of Ethiopian philosophy that takes the contradictions that arise within the process of modern Ethiopian state building as its material for reflection and sets identify formation and the development of an emancipatory impulse as the two major areas of occupation that emerge in the attempt to assign a social function for philosophy in Ethiopia.

### **3. Situating Social Philosophizing in Ethiopia**

In the attempt to identify the social function of philosophy in Ethiopia, there is a need to identify the object of analysis that can serve as a material for reflection. The different attempts that have been made so far in order to situate philosophical practice within the Ethiopian soil have mainly taken the form of trying to demonstrate the existence of a unique philosophical tradition within the Ethiopian context [23, p. 280]. This led into the development of comparative exercises that are by motivated by the need to identify the similarities that are found between Ethiopian and western conceptions of philosophy [24, p. 3]. The limitation of such an effort is found on the fact that it does not have the ability of laying the foundations for a philosophical analysis that is rooted within the life of the people. Taking this into consideration, there is a need to introduce a conception of Ethiopian philosophy that is grounded within the contradictions and the predicaments that are being faced by Ethiopians at the current stage. The study of the social functions of philosophy in Ethiopia needs to be grounded on a proper historical consciousness and the identification of the parameters within which the contemporary political landscape is founded on. Thus, to develop a socially engaged conception of philosophy in Ethiopia, there are five main areas that serve as a point of reflection.

The first area that serves as a material for reflection in the attempt to identify the social functions of philosophy in the Ethiopian context deals with the philosophical investigation of cultural coexistence. Ethiopia is a nation that is defined by the fact of cultural diversity and this has served as a major challenge behind the process of state building and the fabric of the relations that are being established among individual citizens [25, p. 53]. Through the development of a philosophical engagement with the nature of cultural diversity and the limits of mutual understanding, one can use philosophy as a way of understanding the ways within which relations of mutual dialogue could be developed among different cultures. Such a philosophical exercise could be grounded on the concepts of centrism, dialogue and polylogue that are taken from intercultural philosophy [26, p. 46]. So far the celebration of cultural differences was being utilized for ideological functions and there is a need to introduce a philosophical analysis of cultural relations in reference to the limits of a political system that is grounded on ethnic identities.

The second area that also provides a material for reflection in the attempt to determine the social functions of philosophy within the Ethiopian context deals an analysis of the issue of modernity. The nature of modernity within the Ethiopian context so far has been associated with the attempt to learn from the scientific and the technological advances of the western world [27, p.111]. The discourse so far been dominated by the attempt to emulate western values as a foundation of social progress [28, p. 93]. As a result of this, there is a lack of an intellectual deliberation on the issue of modernity that emerged in response to the problems that Ethiopians faced as a society and is grounded on conceptions of subjectivity that are situated in the Ethiopian soil. Through the development of a philosophical analysis of the concept of modernity, one can actually develop a discourse that is attentive enough towards indigenous traditions. Such an exercise is also important in terms of freeing Ethiopians from a dependence on western modernity and delineating a unique path towards social progress.

The third issue that invites a philosophical reflection in the Ethiopian context deals with the process of state building and the limits of the system of ethnic federalism that has been introduced as a way of addressing the quest for recognition. The process of state formation in modern Ethiopia has served as a site of contestation and led into the emergence of a discourse on political modernization that is being led by the pan-Ethiopian camp on one hand and the ethno-nationalist camp on the other hand [29, p. 610]. The centre of contention among such camps is the debate on the processes that gave birth to the modern Ethiopian state and the nature of the political system that is needed in order to address the quest for recognition. Currently, the nation is experimenting with a system of ethnic federalism although this system is criticized for multiplying differences and causing ethnic conflicts and displacements [30, p. 115]. The discussion of the process of state building and ethnic federalism has implications for the discussion of interethnic relations, political representation and social cohesion. Looking at such an importance, there is a need to engage in the development of a socially embedded practice of philosophy in Ethiopia that is able to make sense of the limits of the system of ethnic federalism and the anomalies of the process of state building.

Fourthly, a reflection on the relationship that is found between religion and modernity serves as an object of analysis in the attempt to identify the social functions of philosophy in Ethiopia. Historically, relations among the members of different religions in Ethiopia were characterized by relations of peace and conflict and this has led into the

emergence of a moral fabric that is able to bestow a sense of a common identity on the lives of individual citizens [31, p. 484]. This has been radically altered at the current stage as one sees the politicization of religion [32, p. 255]. Furthermore, one of the things that are lacking in the Ethiopian context is a discussion of the role that has been played by religion in the process of modernization. there is a need to engage in an analysis that has the aim of understanding the relationship between the religions and the public spheres and identify the role that has been played by the greatest religions in the modernization of the society as seen in different areas like the process of state building and the development of ethical norms and values.

Fifthly, a possible reflection on the nature and the value of indigenous knowledge and local traditions can also serve as an object of philosophical reflection in the attempt to develop a conception of a socially situated form of philosophizing within the Ethiopian context. Although, there is a consensus that there are rich indigenous knowledge traditions within the Ethiopian context, still such a stock of knowledge has not been integrated into the process of societal modernization [33, p. 3]. Furthermore, the indigenous knowledge systems are being studied by a framework that is being dictated by Eurocentric categories and thus led into the relegation of indigenous knowledge into the lower status tradition [34, p. 89]. Taking this into consideration, there is a need to develop an examination of the local knowledge systems with an aim of determining their value in the current context. This can also be carried out in a form of a reflection on the nature of cultural heritage and the challenge that is being presented by western modernity on indigenous knowledge systems. As such, the five main areas of cultural coexistence, modernity, state building and ethnic federalism, religion and modernity and indigenous knowledge can serve as an object of analysis that a socially conscious conception of philosophy could be developed within.

#### **4. The Two-Folded Conception of Philosophy in Ethiopia**

After identifying the objects of analysis that philosophical practice in Ethiopia could be developed within, there is a need to identify the utility of such an exercise by delving into the fabric of daily human relations. In the contemporary stage, there are two main social functions that philosophy could fulfil within the Ethiopian context. Such areas of engagement are of a greater importance in the attempt to develop a historically rooted conception of Ethiopian philosophy that also has the potential of addressing the predicaments that the society is dealing with. Such functions of philosophy in Ethiopia need to be identified as identity formation and the development of an emancipatory impulse. Such functions of philosophy represent crucial areas of engagement because of three main reasons.

First of all, developing a socially situated Ethiopian philosophy that deals with identity formation and the cultivation of the emancipatory desire is important as it helps us address the challenges that are currently being faced by the Ethiopian nation. In a nation that is characterized by ethnic conflicts, the lack of a democratic culture and economic development [35, p. 85], philosophy needs to play a constructive role and such a role can be situated in terms of the development of a commonly shared sense of identity. It also plays a role in the construction of a conception of subjectivity or human existence that strives for freedom and liberty. Secondly, such social functions allow us to liberate philosophy from ideological functions that are directly being imposed by the government. Philosophy in Ethiopia needs to be cultivated as a reflexive social practice that is able to serve a social

function and for this to be realized, it needs to be freed from ideological visions of the status quo. Thirdly and most importantly, dealing with the issues of identity formation and the cultivation of an emancipatory impulse allow us to develop a diagnosis of society's problems and also the envisioning of a new society that is being situated at the end goal of an emancipatory practice that is being developed by Ethiopians who are resisting oppressive structures. So, what are the components of identity formation and emancipatory impulse that are developed under the two-fold conception of Ethiopian philosophy?

The first aspect of the two-fold function of philosophy in Ethiopia deals with the nature of identity formation. Ethiopia is a nation that is defined by the existence of diversity and a rich cultural heritage [36, p. 1]. Still such linguistic and ethnic diversity did not lead into the realization of societal progress and inclusiveness. On the contrary, it is leading into ethnic conflicts that are causing the fragmentation of the state [37, p. 13]. In such a context, philosophy can play a constructive role in the Ethiopian soil by developing a rational engagement with the question of identity. This is an important step in the development of a commonly shared conception of identity. It allows us to develop a philosophical examination of the sources of the conflicts among different groups and develop a new conception of identity that is able to go beyond ethnic, religious and linguistic divisions. Philosophy plays a huge role in such a context since it gives us a platform through which we are able to reflect on the sources of ethnic conflicts in the Ethiopian context.

Philosophy can reflect on the nature and the pitfalls of ethnic politics in the Ethiopian context by examining the historical, the normative and the social aspects of identities, the factors that are leading into the conflict and the ways in which a shared sense of identity could be developed within. It also allows us to identify the existence of a commonly shared sense of identity and also the limits of cultural understanding and translation. It also allows us to identify the shared structural patterns among different groups that is being expressed in the form of a surplus history [38, p. 17]. In terms of understanding the essence of identity formation, philosophy also plays the role of developing a public sphere that serves as a ground through which ideas are being debated among different forms of identities. By the understanding of the ways in which identities are being historically constricted, philosophy can help us to develop a new culture of tolerance and accommodation among different forms of identities that can serve as a foundation of a spirit of forgiveness and societal reconciliation [39, p. 120]. Societal reconciliation can serve as the end result of the philosophical examination of the nature of identity, human values and power relations within the Ethiopian context.

The second aspect of the social function of philosophy within the Ethiopian soil deals with the development of an emancipatory impulse. Such an attempt could be situated as part and parcel of the African quest for emancipation and the quest to develop a historically rooted philosophical practice that can allow us to reflect on the African sense of selfhood and also aids in the realization of the goals of decolonization [40, p. 45]. The question of emancipation and the quest to emancipate the people should occupy a central importance in the minds of Ethiopians. So far, Ethiopians have been ideologically manipulated and oppressed by different regimes that violated the basic rights of the people [41, p. 53]. Ethiopians lived under successive oppressive systems that deprive the people of their basic liberties and democratic rights in the name of modernizing the nation and meeting the goals of development [42, p. 23]. One thing that is lacking here is an Ethiopian form of subjectivity that is able to serve as a foundation of an emancipatory practice. Taking

this into consideration, there is a need to participate in the creation of an Ethiopian form of subjectivity that is able to question the status quo and simultaneously envision the dawn of a new societal order. Through the liberation of the individual from repressive regimes and from the power of conventional authority, philosophy can have a greater contribution in Ethiopia by serving as a foundation of the development of an emancipated form of subjectivity.

The role that is played by philosophy in Ethiopia in the realization of an emancipatory impulse can be seen in the development of the attitude of critical thinking [43, p. 74]. Philosophy can contribute to the creation of an emancipated Ethiopian subject by allowing for the critical examination of existing powers relations and the identification of the bounds within which human relations are being constituted within. Hand in hand with this, the development of the emancipatory impulse can be seen in the development of a new vision of a new society that is grounded on the relations of equality. Thus, philosophy can help us develop a reflection that is able to diagnose the problems of the society and also posit a vision of a new society that is founded on relations of equality.

The focus on identity formation and the development of an emancipatory impulse shows us that a socially grounded practice of philosophy that is founded on the analysis of societal predicaments could emerge within the Ethiopian context. Such an exercise is important in terms of developing a conception of cultural coexistence and the emergence of a discourse on modernity that is grounded on local realities. It is also of a greater importance in terms of addressing the anomalies of the process of state formation and the limitations of the system of ethnic federalism that Ethiopians are experimenting with [44, p. 150]. Additionally, it can also invite a renewed discussion of the relationships that are found between religion and modernity and the ways in which one is able to revitalize indigenous knowledge systems. In order to realize such a function of philosophy in Ethiopia within the life of the community, there are concrete steps that need to be taken.

### **5. Concrete Proposals for Implementing Philosophy's Use in Ethiopia**

In order to practically realize the social function of philosophy in Ethiopia in terms of identity formation and the development of an emancipatory impulse, there are different concrete steps that need to be taken. Such steps that are related to the introduction of a curriculum that can host critical thinking and reasoning skills, the development of an interdisciplinary approach that can lead into constructive relations between philosophy and other disciplines, the participation of the community in the realization of philosophical ideals, the dissemination of knowledge and the introduction of a normative and a political reflection, can help us realize the social function of philosophy in the Ethiopian context.

One of the most important issues that need to be taken into consideration in order to realize the identity formation and the emancipatory impulse cultivation roles of philosophy in Ethiopia is the need to introduce a curriculum within the Ethiopian system of education that has the capacity of cultivating the nature of critical thinking and reasoning skills. Currently, there is the course critical thinking that is being given to all freshman students at a university level but in order to realize the full potential of philosophy in the society, there is a need to introduce philosophy at the different levels of education. Such a process contributes in the process of democratization and the creation of a citizenry that are able to critically reflect on societal predicaments [45, p. 587].

Philosophy so far has not played a greater role within the Ethiopian society since it was perceived as a discipline that is abstract and one that is far removed from the daily experiences of the people. In order to overcome such a short sighted conception of philosophy, there is a need to introduce a curriculum that is founded on the development of critical thinking and analytic skills. Furthermore, within such a curriculum, there is a need to familiarize learners about the existence of different local and foreign philosophical traditions. Furthermore, the introduction of philosophy across curriculums could be used in order to develop a reflection on the impact of colonialism on the state and to understand the multifaceted impacts of the processes of globalization on Ethiopia. As part of such a process, there is a need to introduce texts that are well balanced towards different knowledge systems. Methodologically, there is a need to use a Socratic dialogue as stimulating learners in order to develop their thinking abilities [46, p. 233]. Curriculum development as such plays a huge role in the creation of citizens that rationally reflect on their lives.

Another main concrete step that needs to be taken in order to realize the social functions of philosophy in Ethiopia in the areas of identity formation and emancipatory impulse is the introduction of a renewed relationship between philosophy and other disciplines. For this to be realized there is a need to develop an interdisciplinary approach. In order to analyze complex social problems, philosophers need to collaborate with practitioners from other disciplines [47, p. 375]. Philosophy within the Ethiopian context has so far developed in separation from other disciplines. As a result of this, studies and analysis of the contemporary problems of the Ethiopian society that have the power of approaching the issues that is being examined from different perspectives have not been introduced. Taking this into consideration, there is a need to develop a need to develop a holistic analysis of contemporary Ethiopia's predicaments through the usage of tools of analysis that are borrowed from philosophy and other areas of investigation.

Alongside the introduction of philosophy in Ethiopia across curriculums and the introduction an interdisciplinary framework, other concrete steps that need to be taken include the engagement of the community, the dissemination of philosophical knowledge into the community and the development of a normative and a political analysis into the predicaments that are being faced by the society. In terms of the realization of community engagement, there is a need to develop a philosophy that is not just confined to the academic community. The attempt to introduce philosophy to the community in Ethiopia so far has been limited since the discussions that were being discussed within the academia were far removed from the problems that were being faced by the members of the community. Taking this into consideration, there is a need to make sure that philosophical ideas are being presented in a manner that is appealing to the daily lives of the people.

Philosophical knowledge also needs to be disseminated to the masses so that it can have a profound impact on the lives of the people. Philosophical works need to be written in different languages and through the usage of modes of expression that are easily accessible to the people. Furthermore, the works of philosophy need to be disseminated through the usage of different mediums like the usage of digital platforms. Most importantly, philosophy needs to play a more prominent role in the public sphere and it needs to be situated within the lives of the people [48, p. 53]. Another major step that needs to be taken is the development of a normative and a political reflection on the issues of the day. Philosophy could make a greater contribution through the discussion of the

ethical problems and the moral dilemmas that are being faced within the society. It needs to have an impact on the development of public policies and the contestation of different conceptions of the good. It should also make a contribution in the attempt to make sense of the nature of the power dynamics as well as the development of a moral fabric that is able to confer a sense of belongingness on the members of the community. Such steps dealing with the revitalization of the role that is played by philosophy in the academic setting and the world of knowledge production, as well as through the lives of the members of the community can help us realize the social functions of philosophy in Ethiopia.

## 6. Conclusion

The paper situated the social function of philosophy in Ethiopia in terms of the nature of identity formation and the development of a new emancipatory impulse. Such a two-folded social function of philosophy in Ethiopia arose out of the analysis of the complex processes that gave birth to modern Ethiopian society and are currently haunting the Ethiopian state. The attempt to assign a social function for philosophy in Ethiopia is grounded on a context where there is a lack of a normative foundation that is able to serve as a source of meaning and social coordination. In such a context, philosophy could play a huge role in terms of identifying the factors that are leading into the contestation of identities and also in terms of the positing of a new shared sense of identity among individual Ethiopians that are coming from different backgrounds. The development of an emancipatory impulse was in return situated in terms of the need to resist oppressive regimes and the exposing of the asymmetrical power relations that are found within the community.

In the attempt to realize the two-folded function of philosophy in Ethiopia, there are many concrete steps that need to be taken. Such steps are ways of making sure that the discussion of the social role of philosophy in Ethiopia is not just being carried out at the theoretical level and that it is being implemented within the fabric of daily human relations. To such an extent, there is a need to introduce philosophy across curriculums and develop an analysis that is able to foster relations of learning between philosophy and other subject matters. Furthermore, there is a need to realize the participation of the community, disseminate philosophical knowledge through different mediums and engage in the analysis of ethical and political issues. In the end, for philosophy to play a positive role in Ethiopian society, there is a need to situate the analysis in the context of the problems that are being faced by the society and the ways in which very meaning of an Ethiopian identity is being contested. Philosophy allows us to provide an alternative social imaginary that can overcome contemporary Ethiopia's polarizing political space.

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## ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCE OF SOME EU MEMBER STATES OR IN THE PROGRESS OF ACCESSION TO THE EU – ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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**Abstract.** The process of joining the European Union (EU) represents a complex and significant undertaking for the candidate countries, and the experience of this process can be influenced by a variety of socioeconomic, political and institutional factors. In the context of the Republic of Moldova, which has shown an increased interest in joining the EU, there is an opportunity to learn from the experience of other EU member states that have gone through the accession process in the past. These countries, which have already become EU members, or are candidate states, “have navigated” through similar stages of negotiation, implementation of reforms and adjustment to the standards and requirements of the European community. Their experiences provide a valuable source of information and perspectives for the Republic of Moldova in its own accession process. By analyzing the research and the problems encountered in the EU accession process in other member states, this article aims to identify learned lessons, anticipated challenges and the effective strategies that could be applied in the specific context of the Republic of Moldova.

**Key words:** *accession, experience, reforms, member states, strategies, member state.*

**Rezumat.** Procesul de aderare la Uniunea Europeană (UE) reprezintă un angajament complex și semnificativ pentru țările candidate, iar experiența acestui proces poate fi influențată de o varietate de factori socio-economici, politici și instituționali. În contextul Republicii Moldova, care a manifestat un interes crescut pentru aderarea la UE, există oportunitatea de a trage învățăminte din experiența altor state membre ale UE care au trecut prin procesul de aderare în trecut. Aceste țări, care au devenit deja membre ale UE, sau sunt state candidate, au „navigat” prin etape similare de negociere, implementare a reformelor și ajustare la standardele și cerințele comunității europene. Experiențele lor oferă o sursă valoroasă de informații și perspective pentru Republica Moldova în propriul său parcurs de aderare. Prin analiza cercetărilor și a problemelor întâlnite în procesul de aderare la UE în alte state membre, acest articol își propune să identifice lecții învățate, provocări anticipate și strategii eficiente care ar putea fi aplicate în contextul specific al Republicii Moldova.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *aderare, experiență, reforme, state membre, strategii, stat membru.*

## 1. Introducere

Procesul de integrare europeană în regiunea Balcanilor de Vest și a Europei Centrale a fost un subiect de interes crescut în ultimele decenii, deoarece statele din această zonă și-au exprimat dorința de a deveni membre ale Uniunii Europene. Pentru a se alinia standardelor și valorilor europene, aceste state au implementat reforme extinse în diverse domenii, inclusiv legislația electorală, sistemul judiciar, combaterea corupției și a crimei organizate, precum și îmbunătățirea condițiilor de detenție [1].

Cu toate acestea, procesul de integrare europeană nu a fost lipsit de provocări și obstacole, iar unele state au înregistrat progrese mai lente decât altele. Este important să înțelegem lecțiile învățate din experiența acestor state în ceea ce privește procesul lor de aderare la UE, deoarece acestea pot oferi ghidare și insight-uri valoroase pentru alte țări care urmăresc același obiectiv, cum ar fi Republica Moldova. Prin analiza strategiilor, politicilor și rezultatelor acestor state, putem identifica aspecte cheie și bune practici care ar putea fi aplicate în mod eficient în contextul moldovean, contribuind astfel la avansarea procesului său de integrare europeană.

## 2. Materiale și Metode

Pentru realizarea acestui studiu, s-a efectuat o analiză exhaustivă a literaturii de specialitate disponibile în texte relevante referitoare la procesul de integrare europeană a țărilor din regiunea Balcanilor de Vest, inclusiv Muntenegru, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia și Herțegovina și Slovenia, Croația, printre altele. Această analiză a avut ca obiectiv principal extragerea de concluzii și recomandări relevante pentru Republica Moldova în contextul aderării sale la Uniunea Europeană.

Metodele utilizate în cadrul acestui studiu au inclus cercetarea documentară intensivă, interpretarea atentă a datelor existente și analiza critică a surselor relevante. Utilizarea software-ului a constat în principal în instrumente standard de procesare de text, cum ar fi Microsoft Word și Excel, pentru organizarea și sintetizarea informațiilor colectate. Aceste metode au permis o abordare riguroasă și sistematică în evaluarea progreselor și provocărilor întâlnite de către statele analizate în cadrul procesului lor de integrare europeană.

## 3. Rezultate și Discuții

Dacă să facem o retrospectivă a situației de aderarea la UE, de la ultimul stat membru din 2013 până în prezent, putem constata că, în iulie 2013, s-a înregistrat un moment semnificativ pentru Uniunea Europeană, odată cu aderarea Croației, care a devenit cel de-al 28-lea stat membru la acea perioadă. Dar situația s-a schimbat, dat fiind faptul că Regatul Unit a decis să iasă din componența UE la 31 ianuarie 2020. Din 2013 și până în prezent, nicio altă țară nu s-a alăturat Uniunii Europene, dar în ultimii ani, s-au inițiat nai multe discuții și negocieri privind aderarea cu diverse țări, precum Turcia, Muntenegru și Serbia. De asemenea, Albania și Macedonia de Nord au început să exploreze posibilitatea de a deveni membri UE, începând cu luna iulie a anului 2022. La sfârșitul anului 2022, Bosnia și Herțegovina a fost recunoscută ca țară candidată, în timp ce Kosovo și-a exprimat dorința de a adera la UE. Mai recent, în iunie 2022, Ucraina și Moldova au primit statutul de țări candidat la aderare, iar la 8 noiembrie 2023, Comisia Europeană a recomandat Consiliului să înceapă negocierile de aderare cu Ucraina și Moldova.

Analiza procesului de extindere a Uniunii Europene către statele din Balcanii de Vest și alte țări candidate precum Ucraina și Republica Moldova dezvăluie un angajament ferm al

UE față de extinderea sa în regiunea Europei Centrale, de Est și a Balcanilor. Această extindere este percepută ca un demers strategic pentru consolidarea stabilității, promovarea democrației și a valorilor europene în aceste state, precum și pentru consolidarea securității în regiunea înconjurătoare.

În timp ce procesul de extindere a UE a fost unul de succes în trecut, aderarea unor state din Balcanii de Vest este abordată cu o atenție deosebită, dată fiind istoria recentă a conflictelor și instabilității din regiune. Aderarea acestor state este percepută ca un pas crucial pentru întărirea păcii și stabilității în Balcani și pentru consolidarea democrației și a statului de drept în aceste țări.

Uniunea Europeană recunoaște importanța abordării individuale pentru fiecare stat în parte, având în vedere specificul și provocările cu care se confruntă fiecare. Totodată, UE promovează dialogul și cooperarea regională în vederea soluționării problemelor comune și promovării unui proces de integrare europeană sustenabil și inclusiv.

Prin intermediul procesului de aderare, Uniunea Europeană oferă asistență și sprijin financiar pentru reformele structurale și instituționale necesare în vederea alinierii cu standardele și valorile europene. Aderarea la UE oferă, de asemenea, perspective economice și sociale semnificative pentru statele candidate, prin accesul la piața internă și la fondurile europene destinate dezvoltării regionale și modernizării infrastructurii.

Procesul de extindere a Uniunii Europene către statele din Balcanii de Vest și Europei Centrale reflectă angajamentul continuu al UE față de promovarea păcii, stabilității și progresului în Europa și în regiunea balcanică. Aderarea acestor state la UE reprezintă nu doar un pas către integrarea europeană, ci și un semn al angajamentului lor față de valorile și principiile europene [2, p. 96].

Așa cum s-a exprimat autorul Morari C, în cercetarea "Western Balkan Countries on the Road of European Integration: Tezults and Tendencies", Republica Moldova și statele din Balcanii de Vest au experimentat probleme similare după obținerea independenței și în timpul procesului de integrare în Uniunea Europeană. Pe dimensiunea externă, Uniunea Europeană a desfășurat acțiuni pentru a susține opțiunea europeană a acestor state și pentru a asigura stabilitatea și dezvoltarea regiunii prin implementarea unor reforme. În acest sens, în anul 1999 a fost inițiat Pactul de Stabilitate pentru Europa de Sud-Est, cu scopul de a sprijini statele în eforturile lor de a promova pacea, democrația, respectarea drepturilor omului și prosperitatea economică, în vederea stabilizării întregii regiuni.

Totuși, există și diferențe notabile, în special în planul politic. Republica Moldova a ezitat să-și exprime în mod public intențiile de aderare la Uniunea Europeană pentru o perioadă considerabilă, în timp ce curentele politice legate de unionism au fost mai evidente, sugerând posibilitatea unei uniri cu România, ceea ce ar fi presupus recunoașterea eforturilor sale de aderare la UE.

În multe privințe, negocierile cu statele din Balcanii de Vest sunt considerate similare cu cele avute cu statele din Europa Centrală și de Est care au aderat la UE în anii 2004 și 2007, având în vedere istoria lor comună. Această asemănare se referă în primul rând la structura instituțională a negocierilor și la poziția Uniunii Europene în domeniile cheie. Cu toate acestea, există și diferențe semnificative care trebuie luate în considerare [3, p. 576].

Istoria Balcanilor de Vest, împreună cu Republica Moldova, prezintă un context complex și interconectat, deoarece, similar cu Moldova, politicile externe ale statelor din această regiune au oscilat între orientări europene și influențe pro-ruse. Această fluctuație a

avut ca rezultat o stagnare în procesul de integrare europeană al Republicii Moldova, care a durat ani de zile.

Așa cum susține Mayhew A, în cercetarea “Enlargement of the EU: an Analysis of the Negotiations for Countries of the Western Balkans”, se anticipă că acquis-ul comunitar ar putea suferi modificări semnificative înainte ca ultima țară din regiune să adere la Uniunea Europeană. Aceste modificări pot implica atât adoptarea unor noi reguli, cât și simplificarea sau eliminarea unor reguli existente pentru a facilita procesul de aderare. De asemenea, este posibil să fie necesare amendamente la tratatele UE pentru a reflecta schimbările instituționale esențiale. În plus, condiționalitatea pentru aderare ar putea să devină mai strictă în urma lecțiilor învățate din extinderile anterioare [4, p. 12].

În fine, este important să luăm în considerare condițiile economice și sociale specifice ale țărilor candidate, similar cu ceea ce s-a întâmplat în timpul celei de-a cincea extinderi a UE, când diferențele între statele candidate nu au afectat implementarea acquis-ului comunitar.

În analiza procesului de integrare europeană a statelor din Balcanii de Vest și a Europei Centrale, este esențial să examinăm atât dimensiunile externe, cât și cele interne, pentru fiecare stat în parte, în loc să le privim ca pe un întreg.

**Slovenia** (stat membru UE) a devenit parte a Uniunii Europene încă din 2004, evidențiind avansul său politic și economic în comparație cu alte state din regiune. Transformarea rapidă către o economie de piață eficientă a Sloveniei a fost un exemplu notabil în procesul de integrare europeană, facilitată de legăturile economice strânse stabilite cu comunitatea europeană încă din anii 1970. Aceste legături precoce au favorizat tranziția țării către Vest după obținerea independenței și au stimulat dezvoltarea relațiilor economice cu UE.

În cadrul procesului său de integrare europeană, Slovenia a evidențiat un nivel înalt de transparență, făcând publice procesele de negociere și implicând activ parlamentul și societatea civilă în pregătirea negocierilor. Acest aspect constituie un exemplu semnificativ pentru Republica Moldova, care poate adopta practicile de transparență și participare activă în procesele de integrare europeană. Chiar la o întâlnire dintre ministrul interimar al afacerilor externe și integrării europene al Republicii Moldova, Aureliu Ciocoi, și omologul său sloven, Anže Logar, la Reuniunea ministerială a Coaliției Globale anti-ISIS, dl Ciocoi a evidențiat sprijinul continuu al Sloveniei în dialogul RM-UE și a manifestat interesul pentru împărtășirea experienței slovene în procesul de integrare europeană, ceea ce demonstrează că Slovenia este un exemplu demn de urmat. Iar după ce Republica Moldova a obținut statutul de țară candidată pentru aderare la Uniunea Europeană, la data de 23 iunie 2022, Slovenia a fost primul stat cu care au demarat consultările în domeniul integrării și afacerilor europene.

Totodată, Republica Moldova poate învăța din provocările întâmpinate de Slovenia în coordonarea afacerilor europene. Acestea includ *lipsa de cadre pregătite în studii europene* (prin identificarea și abordarea acestei probleme, Republica Moldova ar putea să își consolideze resursele umane și să-și dezvolte experiența în domeniul afacerilor europene, facilitând astfel integrarea și participarea activă în procesele europene), *necunoașterea limbilor străine* (dezvoltarea competențelor lingvistice ar permite Republicii Moldova să comunice eficient și să colaboreze cu partenerii europeni, consolidând astfel poziția sa în cadrul UE și promovând interesele naționale), *lipsa unei culturi administrative moderne* (prin adoptarea unor practici administrative transparente, eficiente și orientate spre rezultate),

Republica Moldova ar putea îmbunătăți capacitatea sa de guvernare și să se alinieze mai bine la standardele și valorile europene prin adoptarea unor politici care să promoveze transparența, eficiența și responsabilitatea în administrația publică [5, p.25]. Astfel, investițiile în educație, cultură și schimburi interculturale ar putea contribui la asimilarea și promovarea valorilor europene în societatea moldovenească.

Prin consolidarea resurselor umane și dezvoltarea competențelor lingvistice, Republica Moldova ar putea să-și întărească capacitățile în negocierea și implementarea politicilor europene, facilitând astfel procesul său de integrare europeană. Îmbunătățirea guvernării și promovarea culturii europene ar consolida apartenența Moldovei la comunitatea europeană și ar crea o bază solidă pentru progresul său pe calea reformelor și modernizării.

Astfel, Republica Moldova ar putea beneficia de lecțiile învățate din dificultățile întâmpinate de Slovenia în procesul său de coordonare a afacerilor europene, adoptând măsuri adecvate pentru a aborda și depăși aceste provocări și pentru a-și consolida parcursul european, iar Slovenia să demonstreze poziția sa de promotor al extinderii UE, precum și a deschiderii de a împărtăși cu omologii moldoveni experiența relevantă acumulată în procesul de aderare a Sloveniei la Uniunea Europeană, aspecte asigurate de delegații Ministerului Afacerilor Externe al Republicii Slovenia la 9 decembrie 2022 într-o întâlnire online cu reprezentanții Ministerului Afacerilor Externe și Integrării Europene al Republicii Moldova [6]. Mai mult ca atât, în noiembrie 2023 Slovenia stabilește că Raportul Comisiei Europene deja demonstrează cât de bine se pregătește R. Moldova pentru a începe negocierile de aderare [7].

**Croația** (stat membru UE) a devenit cel mai recent stat membru al Uniunii Europene în 2013, iar acest proces a implicat o serie de etape complexe și eforturi considerabile. Cererea de aderare a Croației la UE a fost depusă în 2003, iar negocierile pentru aderare au avut loc între 2005 și 2011. Cu toate acestea, procesul de pregătire internă a Croației a început mult înainte de a depune oficial cererea de aderare.

Analizând parcursul Croației către aderarea la UE, putem identifica mai multe aspecte importante. În primul rând, au existat dificultăți semnificative în îndeplinirea cerințelor Uniunii Europene, în special în ceea ce privește corupția, sistemul judiciar, afacerile interne și sectorul agricol. Aceste dificultăți au reprezentat obstacole importante în procesul de negociere și au necesitat eforturi considerabile pentru a fi depășite.

Un alt aspect relevant este legat de cooperarea Croației cu Tribunalul Penal Internațional pentru Fosta Republică Federativă Iugoslavia (TPIY). În ciuda avizelor favorabile ale Comisiei Europene, negocierile de aderare au fost amânate până în 2005 din cauza lipsei de cooperare suficiente a Croației cu TPIY. Pentru a soluționa această problemă, Croația a creat un comitet special care a elaborat un Plan de Acțiuni pentru îndeplinirea cerințelor TPIY, ceea ce a permis inițierea negocierilor de aderare în acel an [8, p. 138].

În ceea ce privește pregătirea pentru negocierile de aderare, Croația a luat mai multe măsuri importante. S-au stabilit structuri dedicate negocierilor, inclusiv numirea președintelui de negocieri și a șefului delegației naționale, precum și formarea grupurilor de negociere pentru cele 35 de capitole ale acquis-ului comunitar. Totodată, în 2005, Ministerul Integrării Europene a fost unit cu Ministerul de Afaceri Externe al Croației, consolidând astfel eforturile de coordonare a procesului de integrare europeană [9, p. 57].

Pe lângă aceste aspecte practice, Croația a primit și recomandări importante pentru a-și îmbunătăți procesul de integrare europeană. Una dintre aceste recomandări a fost să nu

trateze integrarea europeană drept un obiectiv exclusiv al politicii externe, ci să acorde mai mult control legislativ și transparență în proces prin implicarea parlamentului și a societății civile [10, p. 50].

Parcursul Croației către aderarea la Uniunea Europeană a fost un proces complex, care a necesitat eforturi considerabile și reforme semnificative în diferite domenii. Aderarea la UE a reprezentat un obiectiv strategic pentru Croația și a implicat o transformare profundă a societății și a instituțiilor sale.

Dejan Jović, profesor la Universitatea din Zagreb, analizează parcursul de integrare europeană al Croației și evidențiază câteva factori cheie care au contribuit la succesul acesteia în acest proces. Unul dintre aceste motive îl constituie evitarea sancțiunilor internaționale în anii '90, spre deosebire de vecina lor, Serbia. Acest lucru a conferit Croației un avantaj în timpul negocierilor de aderare la Uniunea Europeană, evitându-i astfel posibilele obstacole generate de sancțiuni. Mai mult decât atât, integrarea Croației în UE a furnizat un argument puternic pentru susținerea extinderii în Balcanii de Vest, contrabalansând astfel posibilele critici privind acest proces. În plus, Croația a știut să-și definească identitatea europeană în mod distinct, distanțându-se de țări precum Turcia, și a valorificat aspectul religios (fiind ultima țară catolică care nu era parte a UE) pentru a consolida sprijinul în cadrul comunității europene. Susținerea Vaticanului și relațiile strânse cu Austria au consolidat poziția Croației în eforturile sale de integrare europeană. Aceste aspecte evidențiază abordarea strategică și diversificată a Croației în cadrul procesului de aderare la UE.

În contextul eforturilor de combatere a corupției, ca recomandare Croației, Republica Moldova ar putea adopta și implementa o serie de practici eficiente observate în Croația. Un exemplu relevant este crearea unui organism specializat în combaterea corupției și a crimei organizate, similar cu Oficiul pentru Combaterea Corupției și a Crimei Organizate (USKOK) din Croația. Potrivit lui H. Butković și V. Samardžija [11], USKOK este considerat un model de bună practică datorită rezultatelor semnificative obținute înainte de aderarea Croației la Uniunea Europeană. Acest organism a reușit să efectueze arestarea unor înalți oficiali din mediul politic croat, inclusiv fostul prim-ministru și foști miniștri, demonstrând o voință politică puternică în lupta împotriva corupției.

Analizând această practică, putem identifica mai multe aspecte relevante. În primul rând, fondarea unui astfel de organism specializat indică o recunoaștere a gravității problemei corupției și a nevoii de acțiune hotărâtă pentru combaterea ei. De asemenea, eficiența USKOK în efectuarea arestărilor și în aducerea în fața justiției a unor înalți oficiali croați demonstrează că o astfel de instituție poate să funcționeze cu succes în combaterea corupției și a crimei organizate. Într-o perspectivă mai largă, adoptarea unei astfel de practici ar putea contribui la consolidarea statului de drept și la îmbunătățirea integrității instituțiilor publice în Republica Moldova. De asemenea, ar putea consolida încrederea cetățenilor în sistemul judiciar și în capacitatea statului de a combate corupția la nivel înalt.

Cu toate acestea, implementarea unei astfel de practici ar necesita nu doar voință politică, ci și resurse adecvate și sprijin din partea comunității internaționale. Este important ca Republica Moldova să urmeze exemplul Croației în elaborarea legislației și a structurilor necesare pentru combaterea corupției, adaptându-le la specificul său național și la nevoile sale actuale în domeniul luptei împotriva corupției.

În lumina experienței croate în combaterea corupției, se evidențiază câteva aspecte importante care pot servi drept repere și pentru autoritățile moldovenești [12, p. 6]:



1) *Inițierea politicilor de combatere a corupției încă de la începutul procesului de integrare europeană este crucială, având în vedere condiționalitățile impuse de Uniunea Europeană în acest domeniu.* Experiența croată evidențiază importanța demarării politicilor de combatere a corupției încă de la începutul procesului de integrare europeană. Aceasta se datorează faptului că corupția reprezintă unul dintre principalele aspecte asupra cărora Uniunea Europeană exercită condiționalități, iar abordarea acesteia de la început ar putea consolida procesul de integrare și ar putea servi drept exemplu pentru autoritățile moldovenești.

2) *Voința politică fermă și independența instituțiilor anticorupție sunt fundamentale în lupta împotriva corupției.* Legea și voința politică sunt aspecte esențiale în lupta împotriva corupției. Experiența croată arată că este necesară o determinare politică fermă pentru realizarea acestui obiectiv, iar independența instituțiilor anticorupție este crucială pentru eficacitatea măsurilor luate în combaterea corupției.

3) *Combaterea corupției este un proces de durată și necesită implementarea continuă a măsurilor preventive.* Experiența croată subliniază faptul că lupta împotriva corupției este un proces complex și de durată. Astfel, este esențial ca măsurile preventive să fie implementate și ajustate în mod constant, întrucât corupția poate fi persistentă și adaptabilă. Republica Moldova ar trebui să aibă în vedere acest aspect și să investească resurse adecvate în dezvoltarea și implementarea unor politici și strategii sustenabile de combatere a corupției.

Pe toată perioada, Croația oferă sprijin RM în procesul său de integrare europeană, fiind dispusă să împărtășească din experiența sa în acest domeniu. Astfel, în 2023 peste 100 de funcționari din instituțiile de stat din țara noastră au participat la instruirii organizate de Croația în diferite sectoare - instruirii în domeniul comunicațiilor, de fortificare a capacităților, instruirii pe marginea anumitor politici sectoriale și totul ține de reformele care au fost inițiate de Republica Moldova în parcursul său spre aderarea la Uniunea Europeană [13]. Aceste instruirii reprezintă o dovadă concretă a cooperării între cele două țări și a sprijinului acordat de Croația RM în parcursul său european. Prin aceste activități, Croația nu numai că oferă asistență practică în diverse domenii, ci și contribuie la consolidarea legăturilor bilaterale și la promovarea valorilor europene în Republica Moldova.

Totuși, analizând procesul de integrare europeană al Croației, se observă că accentul era pus pe aderarea rapidă, iar unii cercetători occidentali consideră că acest lucru a determinat o încetinire a procesului de tranziție. Astfel, este recomandabil ca Republica Moldova să adopte o abordare mai precaută și să urmeze principiul "de îndată ce suntem pregătiți" în ceea ce privește integrarea europeană. Aderarea la Uniunea Europeană ar trebui să fie văzută ca rezultatul unei perioade intense de reforme și autodisciplină, mai degrabă decât ca o soluție magică pentru problemele interne ale țării.

**Serbia** (*stat în proces de negocieri de aderare*) și-a depus cererea de aderare la UE în decembrie 2009, iar în martie 2012 a primit statutul de țară candidată. 21 ianuarie 2014 au început negocierile de aderare.

Primele două capitole, inclusiv cel referitor la normalizarea relațiilor cu Kosovo, au fost deschise în decembrie 2015. La 18 iulie 2016, cele două capitole cheie privind statul de drept, capitolele 23 și 24, au fost deschise. Până în prezent, din cele 35 de capitole de negociere, au fost deschise 22, dintre care două au fost închise provizoriu. Cele patru capitole din cadrul "Al patrulea cluster" - privind agenda verde și conectivitatea durabilă - au fost deschise în decembrie 2021, după o pauză de doi ani în care nu s-a deschis niciun

capitol. De atunci, nu au mai fost deschise capitole sau clustere noi. Integrarea viitoare a Serbiei în Uniunea Europeană, la fel ca și cea a Kosovo, rămâne strâns legată de dialogul dintre Serbia și Kosovo, facilitat de UE, care ar trebui să conducă la un acord global de normalizare a relațiilor lor, obligatoriu din punct de vedere legal. Serbia (la fel ca și Kosovo) nu a început încă să implementeze obligațiile ce decurg dintr-un acord revizuit la începutul anului 2023, menit să reanimeze dialogul [14].

În lumina cercetării asupra Serbiei în contextul integrării în Uniunea Europeană, se conturează câteva aspecte semnificative:

➤ Desfășurarea unui proces dificil de integrare europeană, marcat de provocări politice, în special în legătură cu problema Kosovo, reflectă complexitatea și sensibilitatea acestui proces pentru Serbia. Acest lucru subliniază importanța rezolvării conflictelor interne și a relațiilor externe pentru progresul european al țării [15]. Guvernul sârb a subliniat că negocierile de aderare la Uniunea Europeană nu ar trebui să fie condiționate de statutul regiunii Kosovo. Într-o declarație din septembrie 2012, comisarul UE pentru extindere, Ștefan Füle, a clarificat că UE nu va solicita ca Serbia să recunoască Republica Kosovo înainte de a fi admisă în organizație.

➤ Îmbunătățirea relațiilor cu Kosovo și capturarea unor figuri importante acuzate de crime de război au reprezentat realizări majore în cadrul procesului de integrare europeană a Serbiei. Aceste evoluții au contribuit la consolidarea poziției Serbiei în cadrul negocierilor de aderare și la obținerea statutului de stat candidat [16, p. 76].

➤ Consensul politic intern în privința aderării la UE și voința politică puternică sunt considerate catalizatori esențiali pentru modernizarea și dezvoltarea Serbiei. Recomandările privind elaborarea unui nou program de integrare europeană și adoptarea unui plan de acțiuni legislative arată necesitatea unei abordări coerente și concentrate pentru atingerea obiectivelor europene. În timpul vizitei în Belgrad a Înaltului Reprezentant pentru Afaceri Externe și Politică de Securitate al UE, Catherine Ashton, s-a evidențiat că Serbia este într-o poziție favorabilă pentru a deveni membru al UE până în 2025. S-a subliniat că obiectivul țării este să finalizeze reformele interne până în 2023 pentru a avansa în acest sens.

➤ Problemele teritoriale și conflictele interne reprezintă obstacole semnificative în calea integrării europene pentru Serbia. După aproape un deceniu de discuții mediate de Uniunea Europeană între Kosovo și Serbia, în 2023, cele două părți au convenit să pună în aplicare un acord pentru normalizarea relațiilor. Cu toate acestea, în ciuda progreselor înregistrate, mai există unele dezacorduri între cele două părți. Chiar dacă Serbia nu a semnat încă acordul, părțile au recunoscut că finalizarea discuțiilor reprezintă o recunoaștere de facto între Kosovo și Serbia. Acest Acord are ca obiectiv facilitarea liberei circulații între Kosovo și Serbia, recunoașterea reciprocă a documentelor de identitate și a pașapoartelor, precum și promovarea cooperării economice și a oportunităților de angajare. Acesta implică, de asemenea, angajamentul UE de a organiza o conferință a donatorilor pentru a susține investiții și asistență financiară pentru ambele țări. Cu toate acestea, UE a subliniat că este esențial ca ambele părți să își îndeplinească obligațiile asumate în cadrul acordului și avertizează că nerespectarea acestora ar putea avea consecințe negative asupra procesului lor de aderare la UE și asupra asistenței financiare primite [17]. Astfel de probleme teritoriale și conflicte interne le are și RM, iar gestionarea acestor probleme și normalizarea relațiilor cu vecinii sunt cruciale pentru avansarea procesului de integrare europeană.

Prin urmare, lecțiile învățate din experiența Serbiei (una din cele mai dificile cazuri de aderare) în integrarea europeană pot oferi repere importante pentru Republica Moldova, în abordarea provocărilor și priorităților în cadrul procesului de aderare la UE.

Situația din **Muntelegru** (*stat în proces de negocieri de aderare*) diferă de cea din Serbia. În 2008, noul stat a depus cererea de aderare la Uniunea Europeană și i s-a acordat statutul de stat candidat în 2010, iar în 2012 - s-au deschis negocierile de aderare. În mai 2023, Josep Borrell, înaltul reprezentant al Uniunii Europene pentru afaceri externe și politică de securitate, a anunțat că Muntenegru este țara candidată la statutul de membru al UE cea mai apropiată de aderare. Cu toate acestea, oficialul european a subliniat că Muntenegru ar trebui să continue reformele, cu accent pe consolidarea statului de drept.

De asemenea, Muntenegru a reușit cu succes să îndeplinească o serie de priorități stabilite de Uniunea Europeană deja în 2010, inclusiv în domenii precum *cadru legislativ pentru alegeri* (Muntelegru a efectuat reforme legislative pentru a asigura un proces electoral corect și transparent), *rolul legislativ și de control al parlamentului* (a fost consolidat rolul parlamentului în procesul legislativ și în supravegherea puterii executive), *reforma administrației publice* (au fost implementate reforme pentru a îmbunătăți eficiența și transparența administrației publice), *reforma judiciară* (au fost întreprinse măsuri pentru a îmbunătăți independența, eficacitatea și integritatea sistemului judiciar), *lupta împotriva corupției* (Muntelegru a luat măsuri concrete pentru a combate corupția la toate nivelurile), *a crimei organizate* (s-au întreprins acțiuni pentru a combate și descuraja activitățile infracționale ale grupurilor organizate) și *promovarea libertății mass-media și cooperarea cu societatea civilă* (s-au promovat libertatea de exprimare și s-a încurajat participarea societății civile în procesele decizionale), *implementarea cadrului anti-discriminare* (Muntelegru a luat măsuri pentru a preveni și a combate discriminarea pe criterii de rasă, etnie, religie, gen sau orientare sexuală), *remediarea situației deportaților* (au fost întreprinse acțiuni pentru a proteja drepturile și interesele persoanelor strămutate sau deportate). Prin îndeplinirea acestor priorități, Muntenegru a demonstrat angajamentul său față de valorile și standardele europene, ceea ce a condus la recunoașterea sa ca stat candidat și la inițierea negocierilor de aderare la Uniunea Europeană (Comisia Europeană, luând în considerare concluziile Consiliului din decembrie 2011, a stabilit că Muntenegru îndeplinește criteriile și a inițiat negocierile de aderare în 2012). În general, Muntenegru este perceput ca un lider regional în ceea ce privește integrarea europeană.

În cadrul noii strategii adoptate de Uniunea Europeană în procesul de aderare, se observa o abordare diferită, mai precis în ceea ce privește deschiderea capitolelor esențiale referitoare la statul de drept. Astfel, capitolul 23, care se axează pe reforma sistemului judiciar și drepturile fundamentale, și capitolul 24, care abordează justiția, libertatea și securitatea, au fost deschise încă din primele etape ale negocierilor, începând din decembrie 2013. Până în prezent, toate cele 33 de capitole de negociere au fost examinate, însă doar trei au fost închise provizoriu. Ultimul capitol esențial care rămâne deschis (cel referitor la politica în domeniul concurenței) a fost inițiat în iunie 2020 [14].

În lumina analizei asupra procesului de integrare europeană a Muntenegrului, se remarcă mai multe aspecte relevante:

➤ Prioritatea acordată integrării europene imediat după obținerea independenței a evidențiat angajamentul ferm al Muntenegrului față de acest obiectiv. Obținerea statutului de stat candidat a fost considerată o realizare semnificativă a diplomației Muntenegrului și a consolidat aspirațiile sale europene.

➤ Crearea Consiliului Național pentru Integrare Europeană a fost un pas important în procesul de pregătire pentru aderarea la UE. Cu toate acestea, funcționarea și eficacitatea acestui consiliu au fost criticate, subliniindu-se întâlnirile rare și lipsa recomandărilor concrete pentru promovarea integrării europene. Această experiență poate oferi lecții importante pentru alte state aspirante, inclusiv Republica Moldova, în ceea ce privește necesitatea unei coordonări mai eficiente și a unei implicate mai mari a societății civile în procesul de integrare europeană.

➤ Practica implicării sectorului civic în grupurile de lucru pentru negocierile cu UE reprezintă un aspect distinctiv al procesului de integrare europeană a Muntenegrului. Acest lucru a permis o colaborare mai strânsă între sectorul public și privat și a contribuit la obținerea unor rezultate mai bune în negocierile de aderare. Cu toate acestea, există încă loc pentru îmbunătățiri în ceea ce privește transparența și partajarea informațiilor din partea guvernului, aspecte care pot fi luate în considerare și de alte state aspirante, inclusiv Republica Moldova.

Muntenegru, sub conducerea președintelui Jakov Milatović, își conturează parcursul către aderarea la Uniunea Europeană, anticipând un posibil moment al integrării în jurul anului 2028. Într-un interviu pentru Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Milatović a subliniat că toate capitolele de negociere ar putea fi finalizate până la sfârșitul anului 2026, deschizând calea pentru ratificarea acordului de aderare în 2027 și aderarea efectivă în 2028. Prin implicarea în NATO și sprijinul constant pentru politicile UE, Muntenegru se afirmă ca un partener de încredere și avansat candidat la aderarea la UE. Milatović se bazează pe sprijinul primit din partea autorităților europene și subliniază importanța continuării reformelor interne, cu accent pe consolidarea sistemului judiciar, pentru a asigura progresul în procesul de aderare.

Continuarea reformelor interne, cu concentrare pe consolidarea sistemului judiciar (cap.23), este crucială pentru progresul Muntenegrului în procesul său de aderare la Uniunea Europeană din mai multe motive: *conformitatea cu standardele europene* (Uniunea Europeană pune mare accent pe statul de drept și independența sistemului judiciar în țările candidate. Prin consolidarea sistemului judiciar conform standardelor europene, Muntenegru își demonstrează angajamentul pentru respectarea valorilor și principiilor UE); *combaterea corupției și crimei organizate* (un sistem judiciar puternic și independent este vital în lupta împotriva corupției și crimei organizate, care reprezintă preocupări majore pentru Uniunea Europeană. O justiție eficientă și corectă este esențială pentru asigurarea conformității cu cerințele UE în aceste domenii; *creșterea încrederii investitorilor și a cetățenilor* (un sistem judiciar robust și transparent inspiră încredere atât investitorilor străini, cât și cetățenilor Muntenegrului. O justiție independentă și echitabilă sporește stabilitatea și predictibilitatea mediului de afaceri, stimulând investițiile și creșterea economică); *facilitarea cooperării judiciare internaționale* (odată cu aderarea la UE, Muntenegru va deveni parte a unui sistem judiciar european mai larg și va fi necesar să coopereze cu autoritățile judiciare ale altor state membre. Un sistem judiciar eficient și bine consolidat facilitează această cooperare și contribuie la combaterea criminalității transfrontaliere și a terorismului).

Prin urmare, investiția continuă în consolidarea sistemului judiciar este esențială pentru progresul Muntenegrului în procesul său de aderare la Uniunea Europeană și pentru construirea unei societăți juste, transparente și prospere.

Cu toate acestea, tulburările din țară, cât și instabilitatea politică stagnează acest proces mult așteptat de cetățenii țării, în ultimii ani.

Referindu-ne la cel mai recent stat care a devenit stat candidat pentru aderarea la Uniunea Europeană în 2014, **Albania**, observăm că negocierile privind Acordul de Stabilizare și Asocieră între Albania și Uniunea Europeană au fost inițiate în 2003 și finalizate în 2006, cu intrarea în vigoare a acordului în 2009. Cererea de aderare a fost depusă în 2009, însă rapoartele Uniunii Europene din anii precedenți au fost critice, remarcând situația dificilă dintre guvernare și opoziție și eșecul reformelor.

Prin urmare, în Opinia privind cererea de aderare a Albaniei din 2010, Comisia Europeană a subliniat necesitatea ca Albania să îndeplinească anumite criterii specifice unui stat membru și să satisfacă cele 12 priorități identificate în opinie înainte de lansarea negocierilor de aderare. Aceste priorități identificate reflectă aspectele fundamentale pentru construirea unei societăți democratice și pentru îndeplinirea standardelor și valorilor europene, și care acoperă domenii esențiale pentru o societate democratică, cum ar fi *instituirea unui dialog politic și a unui parlament funcțional* (sunt esențiale pentru buna funcționare a democrației și pentru reprezentarea corectă a voinței cetățenilor), *reforma Codului Electoral în conformitate cu recomandările OSCE-ODIHR* (este crucial ca procesul electoral să fie transparent, echitabil și să inspire încredere în rezultatele alegerilor). Reformele în acest domeniu sunt necesare pentru asigurarea unei democrații solide), *asigurarea independenței sistemului judiciar* (un sistem judiciar independent este pilonul unei societăți democratice și este esențial pentru asigurarea statului de drept, protecția drepturilor individuale și combaterea corupției), *obținerea de rezultate tangibile în combaterea crimei organizate* (combaterea eficientă a crimei organizate este vitală pentru securitatea și stabilitatea unei țări și pentru consolidarea încrederii cetățenilor în instituțiile statului), *respectarea drepturilor de proprietate și a drepturilor omului* (respectarea drepturilor de proprietate și a drepturilor omului este unul dintre pilonii democrației și este esențială pentru protejarea libertăților individuale și a justiției sociale), *îmbunătățirea condițiilor de detenție în secțiile de poliție și penitenciare* (respectarea drepturilor persoanelor private de libertate și asigurarea unor condiții umane și demne în instituțiile de detenție sunt esențiale pentru respectarea demnității umane și pentru reabilitarea infractorilor), *protecția grupurilor vulnerabile* (asigurarea protecției și incluziunii sociale a grupurilor vulnerabile, cum ar fi minoritățile etnice, femeile, copiii și persoanele cu dizabilități, este o expresie a solidarității și a respectului pentru diversitatea umană) [3, p. 580]. Aceste priorități indică că procesul de integrare europeană nu se referă doar la aspecte economice sau administrative, ci și la consolidarea valorilor democratice, a statului de drept și a drepturilor fundamentale ale omului în societate.

Analiza anterioară relevă mai multe aspecte importante în ceea ce privește parcursul Albaniei în procesul său de integrare europeană:

➤ Prioritățile stabilite de Albania în cadrul Planului Național pentru Integrare Europeană (2016-2020) reflectă angajamentul său ferm față de procesul de integrare europeană și eforturile sale de a se alinia la standardele și cerințele impuse de UE. Adoptarea acestui plan reprezintă un pas semnificativ în pregătirea Albaniei pentru statutul de stat candidat și pentru negocierile de aderare ulterioare.

➤ Implementarea reformelor prevăzute în Planul Național pentru Integrare Europeană este esențială pentru progresul Albaniei pe drumul către aderarea la UE. Acest cadru oferă o direcție clară și structurată pentru autoritățile albaneze în eforturile lor de a alinia legislația și practicile țării cu acquis-ul comunitar al UE.

➤ Condiționalitatea Uniunii Europene, prin perspectiva de a deveni stat membru, reprezintă o pârghe importantă pentru dezvoltarea continuă a Albaniei pe termen scurt și mediu. Aderarea la UE poate stimula reformele interne și poate consolida parcursul european al Albaniei, oferind astfel beneficii semnificative atât pentru țară, cât și pentru regiunea în ansamblu.

În iulie 2022, discuțiile de aderare începute de Uniunea Europeană cu Albania și Macedonia de Nord reprezintă un moment de referință în procesul de extindere al UE și marchează un pas semnificativ către integrarea acestor țări în familia europeană. Această mișcare este salutăată drept un „moment istoric” de către șefa executivă a blocului, Ursula von der Leyen, care a subliniat importanța și relevanța acestui progres pentru cetățenii albanezi și macedoneni [18]. Prin deschiderea discuțiilor de aderare, UE recunoaște eforturile și progresele remarcabile realizate de Albania și Macedonia de Nord în cadrul reformelor și alinierea la standardele europene. Acest lucru reflectă angajamentul UE de a sprijini și încuraja țările din Balcanii de Vest în parcursul lor european și de a consolida stabilitatea și prosperitatea în regiune. Ursula von der Leyen a evidențiat eforturile susținute ale celor două țări și sprijinul continuu acordat de Comisia Europeană, subliniind că acest succes este rezultatul muncii asidue și determinării acestora. Promisiunea de sprijin din partea UE sugerează că dialogul și colaborarea vor continua pentru a asigura progresul durabil al Albaniei și Macedoniei de Nord în procesul lor de aderare la Uniunea Europeană.

În martie 2023, Reuniunea Consiliului de Stabilizare și de Asociere UE-Albania a furnizat oportunitatea de a evalua progresele înregistrate de Albania în pregătirea pentru aderare și în cadrul Acordului de Stabilizare și de Asociere, precum și de a discuta modalități de consolidare a relațiilor dintre UE și Albania. UE a salutat orientarea strategică clară a Albaniei către UE și ambiția sa de a avansa în negocierile de aderare pe baza progreselor în reforme. Participanții au subliniat importanța continuării reformelor și a consolidării implementării acestora în beneficiul cetățenilor Albaniei. De asemenea, s-a evidențiat necesitatea alinierii continue a Albaniei la politica externă și de securitate comună a UE, în special în contextul conflictului din Ucraina și a măsurilor restrictive impuse Rusiei. UE a recunoscut eforturile Albaniei în domeniul statului de drept și a încurajat țara să intensifice lupta împotriva corupției și a criminalității organizate, precum și să adopte măsuri pentru protejarea minorităților, a libertății de exprimare și a presei libere. Totodată, s-a subliniat importanța continuării reformelor administrative și a consolidării capacității administrative a Albaniei pentru implementarea legislației UE [19].

Astfel, Albania își continuă eforturile de integrare europeană și adoptă măsuri concrete pentru a se alinia la standardele și valorile europene.

În concluzie, Republica Moldova poate învăța din experiența Albaniei că angajamentul ferm, reformele susținute și cooperarea strânsă cu UE și cu vecinii săi pot contribui semnificativ la avansarea sa în calea spre aderarea la Uniunea Europeană.

Un alt stat care își dorește aderarea la UE este **Bosnia și Herțegovina** (stat candidat). La 15 februarie 2016, Bosnia și Herțegovina și-a depus cererea de aderare la UE, în septembrie 2016, Consiliul a adoptat concluzii referitoare la cerere, cerând Comisiei să își exprime avizul. Ulterior, în mai 2019, Comisia a emis avizul său, stabilind 14 priorități-cheie pentru deschiderea negocierilor de aderare. În decembrie 2022, Bosnia și Herțegovina a primit statutul de țară candidată la UE, subliniindu-se necesitatea implementării reformelor specificate de Comisia Europeană pentru consolidarea statului de drept, combaterea corupției și gestionarea migrației. În iunie 2022, Consiliul European a cerut liderilor politici

din Bosnia și Herțegovina să finalizeze reformele constituționale și electorale în conformitate cu prioritățile stabilite. În decembrie 2023, Comisia Europeană a recomandat deschiderea negocierilor de aderare atunci când Bosnia și Herțegovina îndeplinește criteriile necesare. UE a exprimat disponibilitatea de a începe negocierile de aderare când țara va atinge aceste obiective și a solicitat Comisiei să prezinte progresele în martie 2024 [20].

Bosnia și Herțegovina se confruntă cu dificultăți semnificative în procesul său de integrare europeană, având cele mai modeste rezultate în realizarea dimensiunilor externe și interne. Câteva aspecte cheie includ:

➤ Evaluarea Comisiei Europene din anul 2000 a relevat necesitatea unor reforme ample în Bosnia și Herțegovina pentru a avansa pe calea integrării europene. Elaborarea unei foi de parcurs a subliniat importanța și complexitatea procesului de pregătire a țării pentru aderarea la UE.

➤ Semnarea Acordului de Stabilizare și Asociere (SAA) în 2008 a reprezentat un pas semnificativ în parcursul Bosniei și Herțegovina către integrarea europeană. Acest acord a devenit primul instrument de pre-aderare al țării și a deschis calea pentru cooperarea mai strânsă cu UE în diverse domenii [21, p. 17].

➤ Uniunea Europeană subliniază domeniile care necesită redresare în Bosnia și Herțegovina pentru a avansa în procesul de integrare europeană. Aceste domenii includ reformele instituționale, lupta împotriva corupției, consolidarea statului de drept și îmbunătățirea performanței economice și sociale.

Astfel, Bosnia și Herțegovina se confruntă cu provocări semnificative în procesul său de integrare europeană, iar succesul său depinde de capacitatea sa de a implementa reforme structurale și de a îndeplini cerințele și standardele impuse de Uniunea Europeană. Prin abordarea și soluționarea problemelor identificate de către UE, Bosnia și Herțegovina poate consolida perspectivele sale europene și poate avansa pe calea către aderarea la UE.

În același timp, majoritatea locuitorilor din Bosnia și Herțegovina percep Uniunea Europeană ca pe soluția la toate problemele cu care se confruntă țara. În Strategia Națională pentru Integrare în Uniunea Europeană, adoptată în 2005, Bosnia și Herțegovina își stabilește obiectivele de integrare europeană, subliniind necesitatea promovării reformelor pentru a avansa pe calea europeană. Strategia este valabilă până la momentul obținerii de către Bosnia și Herțegovina a statutului de membru al UE cu drepturi depline, fără a stabili termene limită, o lacună semnificativă. Această strategie a fost elaborată de către Direcția pentru Integrare Europeană a Bosniei și Herțegovinei, instituită de Consiliul de Miniștri în 2002, înlocuind Ministerul Integrării Europene înființat în 2000. Această direcție, ca instituție independentă, reprezintă principalul coordonator al procesului de integrare europeană al țării. Sub conducerea sa s-au elaborat și alte documente, cum ar fi Strategia de Comunicare, pentru informarea publicului despre integrarea în UE, și Ghidul de Armonizare a legislației naționale cu cea a UE. Cu toate acestea, schimbările în Bosnia și Herțegovina sunt lente. Potrivit cercetătorului B. Brljavac, perspectiva europeană nu pare să fie un factor motivant pentru soluționarea tensiunilor interetnice dintre politicieni. Deși integrarea europeană este declarată un obiectiv strategic al țării, puțini politicieni sunt dedicați realizării acestuia. În raportul său din 2012, Consiliul Uniunii Europene salută progresul din Bosnia și Herțegovina, inclusiv crearea Consiliului de Miniștri la nivel de stat, adoptarea legilor privind ajutorul de stat, adoptarea bugetului și obținerea unui consens privind proprietatea imobiliară și de stat. Totuși, Consiliul își exprimă îngrijorarea cu privire la neimplementarea acordurilor politice, problemele etnice și situația economică dificilă a țării [3, p. 580].

În raportul din 2014 al Comisiei Europene, se evidențiază stagnarea procesului de integrare europeană în Bosnia și Herțegovina, datorată în principal lipsei de voință politică a liderilor pentru a efectua reformele necesare. Această constatare subliniază o problemă persistentă în calea progresului țării către aderarea la Uniunea Europeană și necesită o abordare mai concentrată și coordonată din partea autorităților locale și a partenerilor europeni.

Recomandările din raportul Comisiei Europene evidențiază necesitatea unei mai mari implicări politice și a unui angajament mai ferm în implementarea reformelor. În Este crucial ca Bosnia și Herțegovina să demonstreze o voință politică reală și să facă pași concreți pentru a-și îndeplini angajamentele asumate în cadrul procesului de integrare europeană.

La 15 decembrie 2022, șefii de stat și de guvern din UE, reuniți în cadrul unui summit la Bruxelles, au oficializat acordarea statutului de țară candidată Bosniei și Herțegovina, marcând astfel începutul procesului de aderare pentru această țară balcanică. Această decizie vine în urma unui acord la care au ajuns miniștrii afacerilor europene și reflectă angajamentul UE față de extinderea sa în regiunea Balcanilor Occidentali. Țară, cu o populație de 3,5 milioane de locuitori, se confruntă cu diverse provocări, inclusiv secesionismul și instabilitatea politică și economică. Cu toate acestea, acordarea statutului de candidat reprezintă un pas important spre integrarea în UE și oferă oportunitatea pentru implementarea reformelor necesare în domenii precum statul de drept, combaterea corupției și a criminalității organizate, gestionarea migrației și respectarea drepturilor fundamentale. Recomandarea Comisiei Europene din octombrie a statelor membre de a acorda statutul de candidat Bosniei și Herțegovina subliniază importanța acestui proces și sprijinul UE pentru țările din regiune în eforturile lor de reformă și aliniere la standardele europene. Integrarea în UE ar putea aduce beneficii semnificative pentru Bosnia și Herțegovina, inclusiv dezvoltare economică, stabilitate politică și consolidarea democrației [22].

În final, succesul procesului de aderare europeană în Bosnia și Herțegovina depinde în mare măsură de colaborarea strânsă și de angajamentul comun al autorităților locale și al Uniunii Europene. Este esențial să se continue eforturile pentru depășirea obstacolelor și pentru promovarea progresului și a stabilității în această regiune importantă pentru viitorul Europei. Ca finalitatea celor cercetate supra putem să deducem următoarele: în iunie 2013, intrarea Croației în Uniunea Europeană a avut un impact semnificativ în regiunea balcană. Ca urmare a experienței acumulate din acest proces, Comisia Europeană a propus îmbunătățiri ale metodologiilor de negociere în cadrul "strategiei de extindere" din perioada 2011-2012, punând un accent deosebit pe aspectele legate de statul de drept. Astfel, capitolele de negociere referitoare la reforma sistemului judiciar și la drepturile fundamentale (capitolul 23) și la justiție, libertate și securitate (capitolul 24) sunt deschise în fazele incipiente ale tuturor discuțiilor viitoare și sunt printre ultimele închise. Această abordare a fost reiterată și consolidată în comunicarea Comisiei din 5 februarie 2020, cunoscută sub numele de "Consolidarea procesului de aderare - O perspectivă credibilă de aderare la UE pentru Balcanii de Vest", care a introdus o metodologie revizuită de extindere către Balcanii de Vest. Aceasta a fost inclusă ca parte integrantă a Planului Economic și de Investiții pentru Balcanii de Vest, publicat în cadrul pachetului de extindere al Comisiei pentru anul 2020. La 8 noiembrie 2023, Comisia a adoptat un nou plan de creștere pentru Balcanii de Vest, evaluat la 6 miliarde de euro, bazat pe patru piloni și acoperind perioada 2024-2027. Obiectivul acestui plan este de a oferi regiunii o parte din avantajele aderării la UE înainte de aderare, cu o condiționalitate ex-ante puternică pentru plăți [1].



În urma situației de război din Ucraina, dar și a deciziei, din iunie 2022 a Uniunii Europene referitoare la oferirea statutului de țări candidate Ucrainei și Moldovei, urgent au început discuții intense referitoare la accelerarea integrării în UE a țărilor candidate și potențiale din regiunea Balcanilor de Vest.

#### 4. Concluzii

Comparând negocierile cu statele din Balcanii de Vest cu cele avute cu statele din Europa Centrală și de Est, se evidențiază similitudini în structura instituțională a negocierilor și în poziția Uniunii Europene. Cu toate acestea, este important de subliniat că fiecare țară are propriile sale particularități și provocări unice, iar procesul de integrare trebuie să țină cont de aceste aspecte individuale pentru a asigura succesul și sustenabilitatea reformelor.

Analiza acestui proces de integrare europeană arată că, în ciuda eforturilor depuse, Balcanii de Vest și alte state europene, se confruntă cu provocări semnificative în calea aderării la UE. Reformele în domenii precum justiția, combaterea corupției și respectarea statului de drept sunt esențiale pentru progresul acestor state către integrarea europeană. În plus, procesul de aderare la UE necesită o voință politică puternică și angajament pe termen lung din partea liderilor și cetățenilor acestor state. Este important de subliniat că, în timp ce procesul de integrare europeană aduce beneficii semnificative, acesta implică și provocări și sacrificii. Statele candidate trebuie să fie pregătite să îndeplinească cerințele și standardele riguroase ale UE, iar acest lucru poate necesita reforme structurale și schimbări profunde în societate și în guvernare.

Astfel, procesul de integrare europeană în Balcanii de Vest este un drum complex și plin de obstacole, însă angajamentul continuu și eforturile persistente pot conduce la succesul final în realizarea acestui obiectiv.

Republica Moldova poate învăța din experiența altor țări și poate aplica aceleași principii și lecții în drumul său către aderarea la Uniunea Europeană, în vederea consolidării progresului și promovării valorilor europene în țară, printre care:

➤ *angajament ferm față de reforme* - este strategic ca Republica Moldova să demonstreze un angajament ferm și susținut față de reformele necesare pentru alinierea la standardele și valorile europene. Asta înseamnă să fie pregătită să abordeze chestiuni precum statul de drept, lupta împotriva corupției, independența instituțiilor și respectarea drepturilor omului.

➤ *combaterea corupției și reformele instituționale* - Republica Moldova se confruntă și ea cu provocări legate de corupție și de reforma instituțională. Implementarea unor măsuri eficiente împotriva corupției, reformarea sistemului judiciar și a instituțiilor democratice sunt esențiale pentru progresul său pe calea integrării europene.

➤ *consolidarea instituțiilor democratice* - Republica Moldova ar trebui să-și consolideze instituțiile democratice și să le facă mai transparente și mai responsabile în fața cetățenilor. Acest lucru implică garantarea independenței sistemului judiciar, asigurarea unei presei libere și pluraliste și creșterea participării civice în procesul decizional.

➤ *focus pe coeziune socială și incluziune* - problemele legate de diversitatea etnică, lingvistică și culturală pot fi gestionate mai eficient printr-o abordare care promovează coeziunea socială și incluziunea. Republica Moldova poate învăța din experiența țărilor UE în promovarea diversității și protejarea drepturilor minorităților.

➤ *determinarea politică* - pentru a avansa în procesul de aderare la UE, liderii politici ai Republicii Moldova trebuie să manifeste o determinare politică puternică și o voință reală

de a implementa reformele necesare. Angajamentul ferm în promovarea valorilor europene și în realizarea reformelor va fi crucial pentru succesul procesului de aderare.

➤ *implicarea societății civile* - societatea civilă din Republica Moldova joacă un rol solid în procesul de aderare la UE, prin monitorizarea și implicarea activă în implementarea reformelor. Consultarea și implicarea cetățenilor în procesul de aderare consolidează sprijinul pentru integrare și crește legitimitatea acestui proces. Este important, ca cetățenii Republicii Moldova să fie informați și să înțeleagă în detaliu implicațiile și beneficiile parcursului european al țării. Este necesar să avem o dezbatere publică extinsă și transparentă, în care să fie discutat fiecare pas al acestui drum european. Este esențial ca oamenii să fie implicați și să accepte acești pași, iar o modalitate democratică de a obține acest consens ar putea fi printr-un referendum. Slovenia oferă un exemplu relevant în acest sens, deoarece a decis să adere la Uniunea Europeană printr-un referendum. Totuși, este important de remarcat că deja 60% din moldoveni exprimă dorința de a se integra în Uniunea Europeană, un procent semnificativ având în vedere influența Rusiei în regiune. Acest lucru subliniază importanța unei implicații active a cetățenilor în luarea unei decizii atât de semnificative pentru viitorul țării.

➤ *monitorizarea și asistența internațională* - sprijinul și asistența internațională sunt esențiale pentru Republica Moldova în parcursul său european. Monitorizarea progresului și orientarea oferite de UE și alte organizații internaționale sunt importante pentru facilitarea reformelor și pentru asigurarea progresului pe calea aderării la UE.

➤ *identificarea soluțiilor pașnice și durabile a conflictului transnistrean* - având la bază respectarea suveranității și integrității teritoriale ale Republicii Moldova în cadrul frontierelor recunoscute la nivel internațional. Aceste principii sunt fundamentale pentru orice proces de negociere sau mediere a conflictului, deoarece protejează statalitatea și suveranitatea Republicii Moldova în contextul unei rezolvări durabile și sustenabile a problemei transnistrene. În plus, insistența asupra respectării acestor principii poate contribui la consolidarea încrederii între părți și la crearea unui cadru favorabil pentru dialog și cooperare pe termen lung.

În concluzie, Republica Moldova ar putea să își îmbunătățească perspectivele sale europene și să avanseze pe calea către integrarea europeană prin adoptarea și implementarea unor reforme sustenabile în concordanță cu valorile și standardele promovate de Uniunea Europeană.

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## REVIEW OF THE MONOGRAPH "PROCESSING DAIRY PRODUCTS PRINCIPLES RELATED TO THE OBJECTIVES OF BALANCED NUTRITION"

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**Abstract.** The monograph "*Processing dairy products principles related to the objectives of balanced nutrition*" was carried out within the postdoctoral Project 20.00208.1908.03 "*Processing dairy products principles related to the objectives of balanced nutrition and food safety*". The monograph is intended for specialists in the field of the food industry, master's and doctoral students of the Faculty of Food Technology. The work represents a broad synthesis regarding the utilization of sources rich in phytonutrients in order to develop innovative dairy products. The paper also addressed the issue of lactose intolerance and the development of low-lactose/lactose-free dairy products with improved sensory and rheological properties.

**Keywords:** *phytonutrients, polyphenolic extracts, plants, bioavailability, microencapsulated plant extracts, innovative dairy products, low-lactose yogurt, lactose-free yogurt.*

**Rezumat.** Monografia "*Principii de procesare a produselor lactate corelate obiectivelor de nutriție echilibrată*" a fost realizată în cadrul Proiectului de postdoctorat 20.00208.1908.03 "*Principii de procesare a produselor lactate corelate obiectivelor de nutriție echilibrată și de siguranță alimentară*". Monografia este destinată specialiștilor din domeniul industriei alimentare, studenților ciclului II master și ciclului III doctorat ale Facultății Tehnologie Alimentelor. Lucrarea reprezintă o sinteză amplă privind valorificarea surselor bogate în fitonutrienți în vederea elaborării produselor lactate inovative. În lucrare a fost abordată și problema intoleranței la lactoză și dezvoltarea produsele lactate cu conținut scăzut de lactoză/fără lactoză cu proprietăți senzoriale și reologice îmbunătățite.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *fitonutrienți, extracte polifenolice, plante aromatice, biodisponibilitate, extracte de plante microîncapsulate, produse lactate inovative, iaurt cu conținut redus de lactoză, iaurt delactozat.*

Îmbogățirea produselor lactate cu fructe, legume, plante și extracte derivate este o direcție promițătoare pentru elaborarea alimentelor cu caracteristici senzoriale atractive și cu valoare pro-sănătate extinsă. Plantele și fructele sunt compuse dintr-un grup bogat și

complex de fitonutrienți cu efecte bioactive importante la diferite niveluri. Printre care, compușii polifenolici au primit o atenție deosebită, datorită proprietăților lor antioxidante și antimicrobiene binecunoscute. Calitatea ingredientelor bogate în fitonutrienți este strâns dependentă de procesului de extracție și separare, care va afecta caracteristicile compușilor activi. Tehnica de încapsulare este un proces complex care include crearea unei bariere care acționează acoperind componentele bioactive inhibând apariția interacțiunilor chimice, protejând împotriva factorilor de mediu (adică, temperatură, pH, enzime și oxigen), și chiar permițând eliberarea progresivă a componentelor active în anumite condiții.

Monografia *"Principii de procesare a produselor lactate corelate obiectivelor de nutriție echilibrată"* este structurată în 5 capitole.

Primul capitol prezintă caracteristicile principalele grupe de fitonutrienți accentul fiind pus pe activitatea antioxidantă și antimicrobiană a fitonutrienților din alimente. Este evaluat conținutul total și individual de polifenoli, activitatea antioxidantă și antimicrobiană a extractelor polifenolice de cimbru, rozmarin și busuioc.

Capitolul doi dezvoltă pe larg modul prin care fitonutrienții sunt digerați în tractul gastrointestinal, absorbit, distribuit și metabolizat în țesuturile desemnate, precum și efectul matricei alimentare asupra bioaccesibilității fitonutrienților. Prezintă obținerea extractelor de plante microîncapsulate în alginat de sodiu și caracterizarea stabilității compușilor polifenolici în microcapsule prin analiza imaginilor SEM și spectrelor FT-IR.

Capitolul trei al monografiei prezintă un studiu amplu referitor la rolul produselor lactate într-un sistem alimentar durabil, beneficiile pentru sănătate ale consumului de produse lactate, microorganismele de alterare și patogene cu incidență în produse lactate și aplicațiile plantelor aromatice ca agenți antimicrobieni în conservarea produselor lactate.

În capitolul patru al monografiei sunt prezentate caracteristicile de calitate a produselor lactate inovative care exploatează potențialul funcțional al extractelor de plante, pomușoare și subproduse agroalimentare.

În capitolul cinci sunt prezentate rezultatele cercetării privind stabilitatea termică a lactozei, efectul pH-ului laptelui, efectul temperaturii, durata hidrolizei și cantității de enzime asupra gradului de hidroliză a lactozei și gradului de dulceață al laptelui. În urma cercetărilor au fost identificați parametrii optimi de hidroliză a lactozei și de obținerea iaurtului delactozat.

Lucrarea are un caracter multilateral și pluridisciplinar, însumând cunoștințe ample, care țin de chimia și microbiologia alimentelor, calitatea și siguranța alimentelor, biochimia și tehnologia produselor alimentare. În lucrare sunt utilizate surse bibliografice relevante, de dată recentă la subiectele abordate. Prin aplicarea unor metode instrumentale performante, precum spectroscopia în domeniul UV-Vis, analiza FT-IR, cromatografia lichidă de înaltă performanță, analiza SEM se aduce o lumină nouă asupra domeniului cercetării și inovației alimentare.

Prin urmare, monografia *"Principii de procesare a produselor lactate corelate obiectivelor de nutriție echilibrată"* reprezintă o lucrare științifică originală și răspunde provocărilor actuale cu care se confruntă sectorul industriei alimentare, inclusiv industria produselor lactate.

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