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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
POLITICAL SCIENCES SPECIALIZATION

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Revue des Sciences Politiques
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ORIGINAL PAPER

Digital Literacy: A Paramount Element in Modern Education

Lavinia Costinel Lăpădat¹⁾, Maria-Magdalena Lăpădat²⁾

Abstract :

Digital literacy has become an essential component of modern education, particularly in teaching English as a foreign language. As technology continues to evolve, the use of digital tools and resources in language learning has become increasingly popular, allowing for more engaging and interactive language instruction. Digital literacy encompasses a range of skills, including the ability to use digital tools effectively and efficiently, critically evaluate digital information, and communicate using digital technologies. Digital literacy enables students to acquire new language skills and to interact with authentic language resources, both of which are critical for language learning. Digital tools such as social media, online videos, and mobile apps can provide students with a wealth of authentic language input, allowing them to develop their listening and reading skills in real-world contexts. Additionally, digital resources can provide students with opportunities to practice their writing and speaking skills, such as through online discussion forums or video chats. In this paper, we will discuss the importance of digital literacy in teaching modern languages and examine research on this topic, as well as the impact of digital literacy on language learning outcomes.

Keywords: *digitalisation, modern tools, education, innovation.*

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1. Introduction

Digital literacy has moved from an optional enrichment to a defining competence of modern education. In language education in particular, the digital turn has altered what learners can access, what tasks they can attempt, and the kinds of identities they can perform while learning another language. As the abstract to this paper suggests, the power of digital technologies is not merely that they place a dictionary, a reader, or a video channel in the hands of learners. The transformation is epistemic and social. It changes how learners find information, how they evaluate it, how they compose with it, and with whom they interact while doing so. These are precisely the terrain of digital literacy.

This argument has a history. Early in the popularization of the term, Paul Gilster framed digital literacy as a special kind of mindset rather than a list of keystrokes or functions. In his succinct formulation, digital literacy is about “mastering ideas, not keystrokes” (Gilster, 1997, p. 1). That distinction remains instructive for contemporary educators. The proliferation of platforms and apps makes it unrealistic to train students on every possible interface. What is durable is the capacity to reason with digital texts, tools, and audiences.

In the context of EFL, recent research underscores this pivot from mere mechanics to living practices: “The information we deliver as teachers of a foreign language cannot and must not be restricted to traditional structures of grammar, vocabulary and so on. We need to stay connected to an entire apparatus of updated cultural and informational references” (Lăpădat & Lăpădat, 2020, p. 139). In the same vein, they argue that “a foreign language should be perceived more along the lines of a living organism, constantly expanding, constantly adapting” (Lăpădat & Lăpădat, 2020, p. 139), a framing that dovetails with the ethos of digital literacy.

To support this claim, the paper synthesizes conceptual treatments of digital literacy, reviews research on language learning outcomes associated with digital practices, and examines pragmatic considerations for integrating digital literacy into language curricula. Across these discussions, the paper weaves short, verifiable quotations from the scholarly record to keep the analysis anchored in the field’s own terms. The overall objective is not to promote technology for its own sake. It is to clarify how teaching for digital literacy enables learners to acquire language, to interact with authentic resources, and to communicate responsibly in networked environments.

At the same time, digital literacy is not an abstract slogan detached from classroom constraints. It is intimately bound up with access to devices and networks, institutional policy, teacher workload, and the daily rhythms of learners' lives. A student who commutes long distances may depend on a phone for micro learning moments, whereas another with a quiet home computer setup may prefer extended desktop sessions. A teacher in a low bandwidth setting might prioritize offline first workflows and lightweight formats. The concept therefore needs to be articulated in ways that travel across contexts while remaining teachable within real constraints.

2. Defining and scoping digital literacy

The literature offers complementary lenses on what digital literacy is and why it matters. A widely cited early articulation comes from Gilster’s attempt to separate concepts from commands. His emphasis on “mastering ideas” (1997, p. 1) points to dispositions and reasoning practices that travel across platforms. Building on this, Lankshear and Knobel describe digital literacies as “shorthand for the myriad social

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practices” that people enact with digital tools (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008, p. 5) and argue that the plural form is essential because literacies are enacted within communities, not isolated inside individuals. This shift from individual skill to social practice situates digital literacy firmly in the communicative and cultural life of classrooms. As noted, “Availability is now, virtually, an around the clock concept” (Lăpădat & Lăpădat, 2020, p. 140), a reminder that literacies must travel with learners across places, times, and devices.

Eshet Alkalai’s conceptual framework adds granularity to these practices by naming the kinds of skills learners deploy in digital settings. Digital literacy, he writes, “includes a large variety of complex cognitive, motor, sociological, and emotional skills, which users need in order to function effectively in digital environments” (Eshet Alkalai, 2004, p. 93). These strands often overlap in authentic classroom tasks and assessments meaningfully too.

A pragmatic articulation for teachers comes from Hockly’s concise account of literacies that matter in language classrooms. She highlights, among others, hypertext literacy, which “includes not just knowing when to ignore hyperlinks in the text so as not to lose the thread, but also knowing how many hyperlinks to include in one’s own text, in the interests of readability and credibility” (Hockly, 2012, p. 110). Here, micro decisions about attention and design are treated as teachable skills. That framing gives teachers a concrete foothold for lesson planning, since it translates an abstract capacity into observable behaviors.

If the conceptual accounts converge on practice, the technological ecology keeps shifting. Godwin Jones observes that mobile learning is familiar in concept yet newly energized by device capabilities and cultural uptake. “Mobile learning (often ‘m learning’) is in itself not new, but new devices with enhanced capabilities have dramatically increased the interest level, including among language educators” (Godwin Jones, 2011, p. 2). The remark is less a celebration of novelty than a reminder that the literacies remain valuable even when tools evolve. What learners need is not mastery of a brand name or a particular interface. They need transferrable strategies for searching, evaluating, organizing, producing, and participating.

An inclusive way to reconcile these perspectives is to see digital literacy as both a set of transferable competencies and a set of situated practices. Transferable competencies allow learners who change schools, tools, or platforms to reconstitute their routines without starting again from zero. Situated practices acknowledge that the same competency looks different in different places. Evaluating a source on a collaborative encyclopedia calls for different cues from evaluating a live stream, a comment thread, or a short video. The outcome is a flexible curriculum that can survive platform churn while honoring local contexts.

Another helpful distinction is between learning about technologies and learning with technologies. The former risks narrowing digital literacy to the mechanics of a specific program or device. The latter treats technologies as resources for inquiry, communication, collaboration, and creation. When courses take the second route, students do not merely learn to operate tools. They practice the critical and creative moves that travel across tools. They search, compare, and triangulate. They design and test the placement of hyperlinks. They attribute images correctly and compose captions that add rather than repeat meaning. They monitor tone when entering unfamiliar communities. These practices keep the focus on language and meaning.

In this view, digital literacy intersects with language awareness. The lexis of the web is full of stance markers, hedges, emojis, hashtags, and hyperlinks that do communicative work. The grammar of interaction varies by platform and community. Teachers can demystify these features by treating them as objects of analysis. That makes language classes a natural home for digital literacy, not an unnatural add on.

3. Digital literacy, authenticity, and outcomes in language learning

One of the most compelling reasons to foreground digital literacy in language education is the quality and authenticity of input and interaction it makes available. Online video, podcasts, streaming radio, fan communities, and social media feeds give learners immediate access to language as it is used by diverse communities. As Reinhardt summarizes in his state of the art review, social media can “afford the development of intercultural, sociopragmatic, and audience awareness” as well as particular literacies tied to genres and platforms (Reinhardt, 2019, p. 1). Such affordances complement long standing classroom routines by widening the range of voices and situations that students can encounter. From a proficiency perspective, “Fluency in speaking is often considered the ultimate goal in foreign language acquisition” (Lăpădat, Păunescu, & Lăpădat, 2024, p. 203), a goal that digital participation serves by widening both input and interaction.

When learners engage with authentic resources, digital literacy helps them calibrate credibility and purpose. Information literacy comes to the fore when students evaluate the reliability of a trending post, a user generated dictionary entry, or a news video subtitled by fans. Hypertext literacy supports sustained reading in the presence of links designed to distract or monetize attention. Socio emotional literacy becomes salient when learners inhabit comment threads and forums, where the conventions of humor, irony, and politeness may differ from classroom norms. Each of these literacies can be broken into teachable routines, such as lateral reading, source triangulation, and link purpose statements.

Beyond input, digital literacy expands possibilities for output and identity work. Because learners can publish and interact with an audience beyond the instructor, the stakes of clarity, evidence, and tone are higher and more authentic. Pegrum captures the lived experience of networked participation with the pithy formulation “I link, therefore I am,” a phrase that foregrounds the centrality of connection in contemporary meaning making (Pegrum, 2010, p. 1). In language classes, linking is not only technical. It is rhetorical and social. Students learn to connect their claims to sources, their posts to prior threads, and their projects to community needs.

Research on computer mediated intercultural exchange underscores these links between participation and development. Thorne, Black, and Sykes argue for attention to “uses of technology that extend into the interstitial spaces between instructed L2 contexts and entirely out of school non institutional realms of freely chosen digital engagement” (2009, p. 803). Their point is not that classrooms should mimic every vernacular practice, but that classroom activity can connect to vernacular ones in principled ways. When teachers design “bridging activities,” learners can analyze vernacular genres, participate under guidance, and then reflect on what they learned about language, culture, and themselves.

A recurrent concern amid this promise is whether digital tasks translate into measurable learning outcomes. Evidence suggests that platform choice and task design shape how efficiently learners work, but that the presence of digital tools per se is not a guarantee. Stockwell’s controlled comparisons of mobile and desktop vocabulary

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activities, for example, found that many learners favored desktop completion and often required more time on mobile devices for similar tasks (2010). The message for pedagogy is practical. Assignments should be matched to devices that suit them. Short, focused tasks fit phones better than long form writing, and voice based or image based tasks can capitalize on sensors rather than fight the keyboard.

Taken together, this research base indicates that digital literacy is not a decorative add on to language curricula. It is a prerequisite for participating in the contemporary communicative environments where language use, cultural reference, and identity are co constructed. In practical terms, that suggests instructional sequences in which students move from guided exploration of digital genres to analysis and then to production and participation. It also suggests assessment practices that value not only linguistic accuracy but also the literate moves that make digital communication effective and ethical.

The possibility of authentic participation brings with it meaningful accountability. When students know there is an audience for their work, they often revise for clarity, tone, and evidence more attentively. Audience awareness is not a given. It can be cultivated through cycles of noticing and feedback. Students can analyze how experienced participants on a platform manage face and stance, how they attribute sources, and how they use multimodal cues to signal humor or seriousness. Then they can try these moves, receive feedback from peers and the teacher, and revise.

Another benefit lies in the way digital genres can bridge school knowledge with everyday knowledge. A learner who writes a tutorial thread in the target language about a game mechanic must mobilize procedural language, sequence markers, and evaluative language. A learner who summarizes a local news story for a diaspora community must manage register and culturally sensitive framing. These enterprises go beyond drill. They require critical sourcing, careful design, and a theory of audience response, all of which are aspects of digital literacy.

Of course, there are hazards. Not all online discourse rewards patience, nuance, or accuracy. Exposure without guidance can produce cynicism rather than discernment. This is one reason to make critical evaluation explicit and routine. Short cycles of claim checking and lateral reading can be integrated into weekly coursework. In addition, classrooms can use platform features to protect novices. Private or unlisted channels, moderated forums, and pseudonymous accounts can provide authentic practice while minimizing risk. As students become more confident, they can move toward public participation with clear protocols for safety and support.

The research record on outcomes reflects this mix of promise and constraint. Studies of mobile learning have repeatedly shown that the micro nature of devices makes some tasks unwieldy, particularly those requiring extended text entry. That finding does not refute mobile learning. It delineates where mobile excels, such as spaced retrieval, audio or image capture, location aware scavenger hunts, and reflective voice notes. Similarly, work on telecollaboration emphasizes that partnership structure matters. Partners need common goals, clear timelines, and explicit norms for feedback. When these elements are present, intercultural dialogue can be productive even across differences in proficiency or institutional calendars.

Finally, the most persuasive outcome evidence may be longitudinal. When courses cultivate literacies across time, learners become more efficient at the invisible work of digital participation. They spend less time wandering down unproductive link paths. They develop checklists for credibility. They write with cohesion in multimodal formats. They manage tone in asynchronous threads. These kinds of gains are sometimes

hard to detect in one off experiments but are plain to teachers who build programs around sustained participation.

4. Platforms and practices that cultivate digital literacy in EFL

The integration of digital literacy in EFL classrooms is most effective when it is anchored in practices rather than in particular tools. This section sketches a set of activity patterns that align with the literature, each of which can be adapted to diverse contexts and proficiency levels. First, hypertext reading workshops translate Hockly's insight about attention into a concrete routine. Students receive two articles on the same topic, one with few links and one dense with links. They are asked to read each in a fixed time and to annotate the rhetorical function of links they choose to follow. A debrief then focuses on which links aided understanding, which distracted, and why. This routine demystifies the design of web texts and trains learners to make intentional choices about navigation and attention.

Second, information triage tasks develop critical evaluation. Using real time news aggregators or social platforms, students collect competing accounts of a single event. Working in groups, they establish criteria for credibility and bias, annotate claims with supporting evidence, and draft a short synthesis that links to sources. A reflective component asks students to explain why certain sources were considered more reliable and how the platform's algorithms may have shaped what they saw. This work connects directly to information literacy and to civic education.

Third, participatory genre projects leverage the social web's affordances. Following Reinhardt's review that documents gains in intercultural and audience awareness, classes can choose a vernacular genre to study and emulate, such as a how to thread on a community forum, a short review on a map service, or a micro video explaining a local custom (Reinhardt, 2019, p. 1). Students analyze mentor texts for stance, register, and multimodal conventions, then create contributions addressed to real audiences. Peer feedback foregrounds clarity, evidence, and tone.

Fourth, mobile micro learning sequences recognize both the potential and constraints of small devices noted in the research. In place of long reading or writing tasks on phones, teachers schedule brief, focused activities that harness affordances like voice input, geo tagging, camera capture, and spaced notifications. For example, learners might record a one minute micro reflection while walking to class, tag three public signs in English around town and gloss their meanings, or complete a spaced vocabulary review that sends prompts at intervals calibrated to retrieval.

Fifth, telecollaboration and online intercultural exchange create the conditions for what Thorne and colleagues call the interstitial spaces between instructed and vernacular contexts (2009, p. 803). Whether through institutional partnerships or participation in interest communities, students engage in dialogue, problem solving, and collaborative production with partners who bring different repertoires and expectations. The goal is not only fluency. It is comparative awareness of communicative norms and values.

Sixth, remix and redesign tasks position learners as creators. Drawing on Eshet Alkalai's reproduction literacy and on broader discussions of multimodality, learners assemble captioned image sequences, annotated screen recordings, or short explainers that combine text, audio, and visuals to teach a micro concept. Attention to citation and licensing is part of the brief. These tasks formalize what Lankshear and Knobel call the new ethos of participation and what Pegrum encapsulates with the centrality of networked linking.

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Across these patterns, what is being taught is not the eternal use of a particular platform. It is the portable set of literacies that enable learners to make sense, make choices, and make contributions in digital spaces. The practices are adaptable across tools and trends. They are also assessable. Rubrics can make explicit the criteria for effective link design, source triangulation, stance marking, register control, and ethical participation. Over time, learners internalize these criteria and bring them to new contexts.

Seventh, portfolio curation tasks capture growth. Over a term, students collect artifacts that demonstrate different facets of digital literacy, such as a link map that shows how they triangulated sources, an annotated screenshot documenting a design decision, and a short reflection on how they handled a misunderstanding in an online exchange. The portfolio becomes both a record of learning and a prompt for metacognitive discussion.

Eighth, analytics for learning can be introduced with care. Many platforms provide dashboards that show time on task, views, and interactions. When used ethically and transparently, these indicators can help students test hypotheses about what works. For example, a class might compare two versions of a post that differ only in link placement or captioning and discuss the patterns they observe. The point is not to chase clicks. It is to reason about communication effects in ways that connect to traditional rhetorical analysis.

Ninth, accessibility by design should be a standing requirement. Captioning, transcripts, alt text for images, readable color contrast, and navigable structure make materials more usable for everyone, including those with disabilities or using older devices. Including these steps in assignment rubrics sends a clear signal that ethical participation includes inclusive design. This stance aligns with the rights based framing of media and information literacy.

Tenth, community partnership projects situate digital participation in consequential work. Schools can collaborate with cultural institutions, local nonprofits, or municipal agencies on small language tasks such as translating signage, creating welcome resources, or documenting local histories. Students negotiate scopes, draft and revise with stakeholders, and release their work under appropriate licenses. Such projects render the social purpose of digital literacy vivid while offering authentic audiences.

5. Equity, ethics, and teacher development

Foregrounding digital literacy in language curricula also requires attention to systemic conditions. Without equitable access and inclusive design, digital initiatives can reinforce rather than reduce disparities. International policy work has emphasized this point for years. UNESCO's framework for media and information literacy, for instance, treats information access and critical engagement as rights as well as competencies and highlights the need for schools to provide supportive environments that develop these capacities across the curriculum (UNESCO, 2018).

Ethics is similarly central. If students are to enter public or semi public spaces online, they must learn to protect privacy, to seek consent when sharing others' work, and to recognize platform incentives that may not align with learning goals. Zourou's state of the art review cautions against a techno enthusiastic assumption that community and participation naturally emerge on social media. She notes that "the capacity and more importantly the simplicity and rapidity of networking that is the main feature of an SNS, is also common to all social media categories" (Zourou, 2012, para. 8). The implication is that teachers cannot assume strong ties or deep collaboration simply because a platform is social. Intentional design and moderation are required.

At the classroom level, disposition matters: “Motivation is one of the most important factors in foreign language teaching and learning” (Lăpădat & Lăpădat, 2023, p. 142), emphasising why the design moves discussed here must also cultivate interest and agency across varied contexts.

Teacher learning is the hinge on which many of these aspirations turn. No program can cultivate digital literacy without simultaneous investment in teachers’ own literacies and design capacities. Professional development that focuses on practical design moves, such as selecting mentor texts, setting up link annotation tasks, calibrating cognitive load in mobile activities, or facilitating safe telecollaboration, empowers teachers to integrate digital literacy without being captured by tools. Lankshear and Knobel’s social practice orientation helps here, because it invites teachers to see themselves as designers of literate practices rather than consumers of tools.

A final institutional consideration is assessment. If digital literacy is genuinely valued, then course and program assessments should reflect that value. This does not require abandoning familiar measures of language development. It requires complementing them with criteria that reward the curation of sources, the transparency of citation, the clarity of link structure, the appropriateness of register to a given platform, and the evidence of ethical participation in online exchanges. Over time, such assessment practices reinforce the message that digital literacy is part of what it means to communicate well.

Equity is also about the cognitive load that tools impose. Teachers can practice a principle of minimum viable novelty. When introducing a new genre or literacy focus, keep the platform familiar. When introducing a new platform, keep the literacy focus familiar. This helps ensure that learners are not overwhelmed by simultaneous novelty on multiple fronts. Scaffolded checklists, step by step exemplars, and peer mentoring can further distribute expertise across the class.

Another equity consideration is linguistic accessibility. For emergent bilinguals, some interface metaphors and system prompts can be opaque. Teachers can pre teach the vocabulary of settings menus, permissions, and privacy controls and can model what to do when a platform behaves unexpectedly. That modeling is itself a form of digital literacy, since much digital work involves troubleshooting controlled uncertainty.

Institutional leaders have roles to play as well. Procurement choices should weigh not only cost and features but also privacy policies, data portability, and interoperability. Policies should encourage teacher experimentation while setting guardrails that protect learners. Timetables need to leave room for planning and reflection, because thoughtful digital design often takes more time at the beginning and pays off later in learner autonomy.

Finally, a word about sustainability. Digital ecosystems change quickly. Programs should favor approaches that are durable across platform churn. Teaching with public standards, open formats, and exportable portfolios makes it more likely that students will be able to take their work with them. Avoiding single vendor lock in and cultivating cross platform habits supports resilience.

6. AI-Assisted Literacy: Transparency, personalisation, and human judgement

Artificial intelligence has entered the educational landscape as more than a novelty; it now shapes how literacy is taught, practiced, and understood. In the context of digital literacy, AI is not simply another tool to master but a force that redefines the ways

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learners encounter language, interact with texts, and participate in communities. AI-assisted literacy refers to this blend of human judgment and machine support, where technologies help learners draft, revise, and rehearse while teachers ensure that ideas and integrity remain central.

One of the clearest contributions of AI to literacy is its capacity for personalization. Whereas traditional instruction often struggles to address diverse needs, AI-driven platforms adapt in real time to a learner's pace, level, and recurring difficulties. Adaptive reading tutors, speech-to-text interfaces, or automated feedback systems give students immediate insight into their progress. For learners who face obstacles—whether reading disabilities, linguistic barriers, or uneven access to prior schooling—such tools offer scaffolds that make participation possible. This personalization does not replace the teacher; instead, it creates a differentiated learning environment in which the teacher can focus on higher-order feedback and more nuanced forms of support.

AI also enhances feedback cycles, which are critical to literacy growth. Instant suggestions about grammar, cohesion, or vocabulary allow students to see where revisions are needed, but the real value comes when learners reflect on those suggestions and decide how to act. By documenting the prompts they used, comparing alternative drafts, or annotating the changes they accepted and rejected, students demonstrate awareness of process. Such habits keep attention on ideas rather than keystrokes and ensure that technology remains a catalyst for judgment, not a substitute for it.

At the same time, AI-assisted literacy broadens the scope of authentic participation. Learners can prepare contributions for online discussions, forums, or collaborative projects with the aid of tools that anticipate reader questions or highlight clarity gaps. In this way, AI becomes part of the rehearsal space where students refine arguments, test explanations, and practice discourse moves before presenting them to real audiences. These rehearsals support fluency and confidence, yet the responsibility for choices, tone, stance, and evidence, still rests with the human writer or speaker.

Educators, too, benefit from the analytic capacities of AI systems. Automated feedback and aggregated data can reveal patterns across classes, highlighting which skills are secure and which require more attention. AI-assisted literacy represents a new frontier in education, one that expands personalization, accelerates feedback, and creates opportunities for authentic participation. Yet its true significance lies not in automation but in the way it amplifies human judgment, creativity, and responsibility. When embedded within the broader framework of digital literacy, AI becomes less a shortcut and more a studio light: illuminating possibilities, sharpening focus, and helping learners craft language with clarity and care.

7. Conclusion

Digital literacy is a paramount element of modern education because it is now inseparable from the environments in which people read, write, listen, speak, search, and collaborate. In language education, digital literacy brings learners into contact with authentic materials, communities, and practices, and it equips them to participate with judgment and creativity. The scholarly record corroborates this claim. Gilster's distinction reminds us to teach concepts and habits of inquiry rather than button sequences (1997, p. 1). Lankshear and Knobel's social practice orientation names the literacies that matter in context and describes them as "shorthand for the myriad social practices" that communities enact (2008, p. 5). Eshet Alkalai's framework lists the cognitive, motor, sociological, and emotional demands that digital participation places on learners (2004, p.

93). Hockly translates these ideas into classroom routines, including the teachable moves of hypertext literacy (2012, p. 110). Godwin Jones explains why mobility has changed the conversation not by inventing learning anew but by changing what is practical and common (2011, p. 2). Reinhardt documents how social media participation can develop intercultural, sociopragmatic, and audience awareness (2019, p. 1). Thorne and colleagues call attention to the spaces where instructed and vernacular practices meet and to the learning that can happen there (2009, p. 803). Together, these sources point to a coherent message. Digital literacy is central to contemporary language learning.

For practitioners, the implications are straightforward. Teach learners how to read with links, not around them. Design tasks in which sourcing, attribution, and curation are part of the learning objective. Leverage mobile devices for short, purposeful work that exploits their situated affordances. Build bridges between classroom genres and vernacular genres, and make audience central to production. Scaffold participation in intercultural exchanges with analysis and reflection. Above all, make the assessment system reward the literate moves that make digital communication credible and kind.

What distinguishes strong implementations of digital literacy is the way they tie small design moves to big educational purposes. The small move might be a teacher asking students to justify a hyperlink with a brief purpose note. The big purpose is cultivating readers who navigate non linear texts with intention. The small move might be a class standard to caption every video, no exceptions. The big purpose is building habits of accessibility and audience care. The small move might be a requirement that every claim be linked to at least one verifying source. The big purpose is developing a culture of evidence that supports thoughtful disagreement and collaboration.

The alignment between small moves and big purposes is also what allows programs to scale. New teachers can adopt a handful of routines and contribute to a shared culture of practice. Experienced teachers can enrich those routines with their own disciplinary and local knowledge. Each year they revisit familiar literacies in new contexts and with new responsibilities. That is how literacies become unremarkably normal, even while the platforms continue to shift.

Digital literacy is therefore not only a paramount element of modern education in the abstract. It is a daily craft. It is the thoughtful arrangement of tasks, tools, and conversations so that learners encounter authentic language, analyze it carefully, and use it responsibly to make things that matter. When programs do this work with care, they prepare students not just to pass a class but to participate in the public life of their communities with judgment and imagination. They leave school prepared to keep learning, to keep linking thoughtfully, and to keep contributing in communities where language, technology, and culture meet meaningfully.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

The damping theory of strategy science why organizations fail despite creating strategy and gaining competitive advantage

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Abstract:

Despite the great variety of theories of strategic management and competitive advantage, experts have supported this fundamental hypothesis that the only way for an organization to succeed and achieve excellent performance is to create a strategy and gain a competitive advantage. Researchers in the field of strategy have formed a definite and unbreakable link between the three components including creating a strategy, creating a competitive advantage and achieving superior performance, and this logic has spread among users of strategy science who are senior managers of organizations. But in recent years, different critical thoughts that have challenged the logic of strategy science and the relationship between the three components of strategy creation, gaining competitive advantage and superior performance have begun to form. The purpose of this research is to typify these critiques and to introduce the damping theory of strategy science through content analysis

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of related articles. In order to select sample for content analysis, the purposeful sampling method of related articles was used until theoretical adequacy was achieved. The findings of this article show that the science of strategy among the researchers of this field and its users is declining due to five types of criticism, including philosophical criticism, post-modern criticism, paradoxical criticism, historical criticism and the Icarus dilemma, and a kind of Pragmatism has replaced scientism. The results of this research create unique insights for strategy researchers and its users from practical, theoretical and methodological perspectives.

Keywords: *Damping of the strategy science, philosophical analysis, paradoxical analysis, post-modern analysis, historical analysis, Icarus dilemma*

Introduction

Experts in strategic management studies and competitive advantage theories have supported this basic hypothesis that organizations fail in the absence of creating a strategy and gaining a competitive advantage (Ateljević, Kulović, Đoković&Bavčić, 2023; Johnson, Whittington, Regnér, Angwin, & Scholes, 2020; Mintzberg, & Waters, 1985; Nayak, Bhattacharyya & Krishnamoorthy, 2023; Porter, 2008; Porter & Lee, 2015; Vinardi, 2023). Although completely different paradigms have been introduced in the field of competitive advantage (Ascher, Silva, Polowczyk&Damião da Silva, 2018), including resource-based perspective, industrial organization approach, transaction cost perspective, Entrepreneurship and behavioral approach (Ascher, Silva, Polowczyk&Damião da Silva, 2018) pointed out, but the commonality and main message of all these paradigms are considered clear and definite. The common denominator and the main message is that there is a logical, systematic, rational and ideal relationship between the three components of creating a strategy, creating a competitive advantage and finally achieving a superior performance (Ateljević, Kulović, Đoković&Bavčić, 2023; Johnson, Whittington, Regnér, Angwin, & Scholes, 2020; Mintzberg, & Waters, 1985; Nayak, Bhattacharyya & Krishnamoorthy, 2023; Porter, 2008; Porter & Lee, 2015; Vinardi, 2023; Ascher, Silva, Polowczyk&Damião da Silva, 2023. 2018; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, &Lampel, 2020; McGrath, 2023; Herold, Heller, Rozemeijer&Mahr, 2023). This relationship is considered so undeniable and certain that the biggest figures of strategy science, including Michael Porter (Porter, 2008; Porter & Lee, 2015), Henry Mintzberg (Mintzberg et al., 2020), Igor Ansoff (Ansoff & Sullivan, 1993), Richard Rumelt (Rumelt, 2022), JB Barney (Barney, 1996) and Jack Welch (Slater & Prichard, 1998) have emphasized it. For example, Michael Porter (Porter, 2008; Porter & Lee, 2015) has explained the role of industry structure and its profitability in creating strategy, creating competitive advantage, and ultimately, organization performance. Henry Mintzberg, despite introducing ten schools of strategy (Mintzberg et al., 2020) and supporting the logic of spontaneous strategies (Mintzberg, 1978), as well as likening strategy to five definitions including plan, strategy, pattern, position and vision but (Mintzberg, 1987) has supported the idea of creating a strategy for success (Mintzberg et al., 2020). J. Barney (Barney, 2001) considers the main source of competitive advantage to be valuable, rare, inimitable and usable organizational resources. Jack Welch also emphasized that an organization cannot succeed if it lacks competitive advantage (Slater & Prichard, 1998).

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Therefore, experts have focused on identifying what strategy is (Porter & Lee, 2015; Rumelt, 2020; Mintzberg et al., 2020; Davies, 2000) and the results of various surveys are also on the importance of creating a strategy to achieve superior performance. have emphasized For example, the McKinsey consulting group (Lovallo&Sibony, 2010) has claimed that 53% of the performance of organizations is related to the quality of strategy, and other survey findings have shown that more than 80% of CEOs focus on Creation and development of strategy is for the success of the organization (Eskandrinia, 2023). But in recent years, some experts have challenged the essence of strategy science, including Powell (Powell, 2001; Powell, 2002; Powell, 2003; Powell &Arregle, 2007; Powell &Puccinelli, 2012), Jarzabkowski (Jarzabkowski et al., 2022), Miller (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2021), Cunha (Cunha & Putnam, 2019; Cunha et al., 2017) and Eskandarinia (2023) pointed out . In addition to criticizing the science of strategy, these scholars have also questioned the undeniable rationale of the link between strategy creation, competitive advantage, and superior performance. In addition, research results have also shown that large companies with strategic and competitive advantage, such as Global Blue Chip (Grandy & Mills, 2004), I.T.T., IBM, P&G, Chrysler, Apple, General Motors, Caterpillar, Eastern Airlines (Miller, 1992), Airbus, Merck, Arthur Anderson (Powell &Arregle, 2007), Enron (Powell, 2004), Kingfisher (Sulphey, 2020), Nokia (Arbiansyah et al., 2023) and Kodak (Mirji et al., 2023) faced crisis, scandal, heavy losses and even bankruptcy. So, on the one hand, it seems that the logic of strategy science has faced a challenge and is not working, and on the other hand, apparently, the reason for success and failure of organizations cannot be attributed to competitive advantage.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to typology of the criticisms on the science of strategy and the logic of competitive advantage and also to introduce the theory of damping of strategy science with the help of the said typology through the method of content analysis of articles (Kuckartz&Rädiker, 2023). The findings of the present article are important because they open a distinct window towards the de-scientification of strategy and instead pay attention to the pragmatism of strategy to the researchers in the field of strategy. In addition to this, the research results are useful and valuable for the CEOs of organizations because they question the absolute science of strategy and inform CEOs about the practice of strategy, which is free from theories. In fact, instead of adding to the number and complexity of strategic management theories, this research intends to specify its incomplete scientific logic and provide more realistic assumptions about the reasons for the success and failure of organizations and their functional differences.

Research Background

In this section, a review of the types of criticisms raised about the science of strategy and the logic of competitive advantage has been done, and through this review, five types of critical currents including 1. Philosophical analysis, 2. Paradox analysis, 3. Icarus dilemma (Competency trap) and 4. Post-modern analysis and 5. genealogical analysis can be distinguished, which are explained below.

Philosophical critique of strategic management and competitive advantage is as follows:

A group of criticisms on the science of strategy with a philosophical approach, epistemology, epistemology and logic have challenged the science of strategy and competitive advantage. For example, Powell (Powell, 2001, 2002, 2003) challenged and concluded the rational logic of competitive advantage in separate researches with the help of Bayesian inference methods, pragmatic philosophy of science, critical analysis and

negative case study that creating a strategy and achieving a competitive advantage is neither a necessary condition nor a sufficient condition to explain the performance and success of companies. Rabetino et al. (2021) have also described four issues including strategy, organization environment, company and strategist as full of misunderstanding through philosophical analysis. These researchers explain that strategy researchers have four types of misunderstandings: first, they consider strategy as a definite formula and the only way to achieve success, second, they assume that the organization's environment can be analyzed and predicted. Thirdly, they think that the company's behaviors are completely rational and economic, and fourthly, they consider the organization's strategist to be a superhuman person with a brilliant intelligence and free from errors and emotions (Rabetino et al., 2021).

In another research (Eskandarinia, 2021) through qualitative iterative phronetic method, epistemology and ontology, the paradigms of resource-based perspective, industrial organization, transaction cost approach and entrepreneurial approach have been criticized and a theory called the theory of neo-strategy, which is based on neo-economic and behavioral assumptions, has been explained. Takagi and Takahashi (Takagi & Takahashi, 2023) criticized the nature and logic of strategy science with the help of conducting semi-structured interviews with company members in a research on the issue of rationality error in strategy theories. The results of this article showed that the members of the organization are not able to define the strategy of the organization and attribute the strategy only to the CEO of the organization. Chia and Holt (Chia & Holt, 2023) through the analysis of the content of the articles, the common logic of strategy science is the means-outcome logic, which assumes that strategic success is linked to intentionality, defining goals, formulating plans, and effective implementation questioned. One of the main assumptions in the science of strategy is the assumption of complete alertness of the decision makers, while these two researchers showed that the members of the organization only follow their habits rather than following conscious behaviors. Another common assumption in strategic management is planning to achieve goals, but improvisation happens in practice, and finally, all strategy theories assume that there is a consensus and the necessary will to formulate and implement the strategy. But usually such understanding and will is not seen in real organizations.

The paradox analysis in strategic management and competitive advantage is as follows:

Paradox means completely contradictory situations that companies face as a result of creating a strategy and creating a competitive advantage. In other words, paradox in strategic management literature means contradictory dilemma (Cunha et al., 2023). For example, Jarzabkowski and his colleagues (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013) found out the paradoxes of differentiation-integration, strategic goals-control, and maintaining the status quo-change through a longitudinal study of a telco company. The telco company was constantly faced with the dilemma of distinguishing its products and markets and facing the problem of integration and coordination of this distinction, or not to differentiate in order to avoid this problem. After setting strategic goals, the telco company faced the problem of permanent control of employees, which led to job stress, lack of motivation, and lack of delegation of authority, and finally faced the stability-change paradox. Cunha and colleagues (Cunha et al., 2017) realized through the case study of Tesla company and applying a critical and post-modern approach that setting strategic goals leads to three paradoxes. First, these goals are constantly becoming more idealistic and stricter, so their realization becomes practically impossible even for the best

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employees and teams. The second paradox was that the goals are set in the present for an unknown future, and this led to the stress of the employees, and finally, the third paradox was related to the increase of expectations and expectations from the employees. The more the employees achieved the goals, the more the expectations of the organization increased, and this led to a decrease in motivation among the employees.

In the most recent researches, paradoxes such as the ability-will paradox in strategic alliances through multiple case studies of companies (Guenther et al., 2023), the paradox of stability against using opportunities and entering unknown markets with the help of The metasynthesis method (Kocabasoglu-Hillmer et al., 2023), the strategic innovation paradox (Tsakalerou&Abilez, 2023) and the learning paradox have been mentioned as the source of competitive advantage (Cunha et al., 2023). The Icarus dilemma is as follows:

The Icarus dilemma or the competency trap is a topic that was first introduced by Miller (Miller, 1992). The Icarus dilemma shows how large companies through creating a strategy and gaining a competitive advantage due to reasons such as pride, inertia, extreme self-confidence, self-conceit, indifference, high risk-taking, excess and rapid growth, Financial scandals and neglect of technological developments and customer needs fail (Miller, 1992; Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2021; Jawahar et al., 2021). On the opposite point, there are small companies that not only lacked a competitive advantage, but also lacked a competitive edge, but achieved excellent performance due to opportunism, creativity, perseverance, high motivation, and persistence (Powell, 2017; Miller & Le). Breton-Miller, 2021).

For example, Kodak Company (Mirji et al., 2023) failed despite achieving a competitive advantage due to reasons such as the disparity of human resource measures and ignoring the process of technological change. Another example is related to the Nokia company (Arbiansyah et al., 2023), which followed a clear strategy of market and product development and had a competitive advantage, but due to ignoring opportunities, resistance to change and lack of the job security of the employees failed. Enron faced bankruptcy due to a financial scandal despite having a competitive advantage and creating a clear strategy (Powell, 2004). Three prominent companies with strategic advantage including Jeep, Fiat and Boeing also faced crisis and failure (Powell & Arregle, 2007). On the contrary, small companies such as Concha Toro (Powell, 2017), Amazon, Tencent and Airbnb have achieved excellent performance despite not creating a clear strategy, lack of competitive advantage and even lack of competition.

The post-modern analysis of strategic management and competitive advantage is as follows:

The post-modern approach in strategic management refers to multiple realities and relativity of concepts (Grandy & Mills, 2004; Cunha & Putnam, 2019). For example, one of the post-modern criticisms on the nature of strategy is that in the conventional literature of strategic management, it is assumed that the topics of competitive advantage, success and performance are absolute and definite, while such concepts are relative in practice and have different dimensions. In other words, when talking about the superior performance of a company, it is possible that the company's financial performance is better than its competitors, but from the perspective of market development or stock value growth, the company's performance is not favorable compared to the industry (Cunha et al., 2017; Cunha & Putnam, 2019; Cunha et al., 2023). Eskandarinia (2022) also showed through post-qualitative methods including deconstruction and de-simulacra that the common patterns of strategic management including strategic analysis and balanced

scorecard not only didn't help to improve the performance of a food production and distribution company, but have led to ambiguity, confusion, increased job stress, and decreased employee motivation. In a new research (Aliexieva et al., 2023) the concept of competitiveness has been criticized with the help of post-modern analysis and it has been explained that competitiveness is a dynamic concept, changing and having multiple meanings, so it is not It can be formulated with the help of economics and strategic management. The historical analysis of strategic management and competitive advantage is as follows:

A group of studies with the help of genealogy and examining the historical background of the theories of competitive advantage as well as the experts who invented these theories have shown that researchers with a background in mathematics or economics such as Igor Ansoff, Michael Porter, Penrose, Schumpeter, Wernerfelt, Mason and Bain (Arbi et al., 2017; Teece 2019; Keyhani 2023; Powell et al., 2010; Rumelt et al., 1991) introduced completely mathematical, economic and rational analyzes into the strategic management literature. that this has caused the science of strategy to distance itself from reality.

For example, Oliver Williamson was one of the founders of the transaction cost theory in the analysis of competitive advantage, Michael Porter, the founder of the industrial organization perspective in strategic management, has an economic academic background, and Edith Penrose, the founder of the resource-based perspective, was also an economist (Arbi et al. al., 2017). Teece (Teece, 2019) has also shown that most researchers of competitive advantage theories were influenced by people like Alfred Marshall, who is the father of economics. Others have followed the economic analysis of Coase, Williamson and Hart. Keyhani (2023) also pointed to the formation of the entrepreneurial paradigm in strategic management by Joseph Schumpeter, who was an economist, and explained that Porter's theories were also influenced by the economic theories of Caves (1984) and Bain (1968) and the resource-based perspective is rooted in the Chicago School of Economics. Powell and colleagues (Powell et al., 2010) have also examined the genealogy and historical background of the three main founders of the theories of competitive advantage, namely Michael Porter, Penrose and Schumpeter, and have shown that these economists based on the theories of their professors who They have also been mainly economists and have provided analyzes based on economics and complete competitiveness in strategic management.

Method

In order to fulfill the purpose of the research, which is the typology of criticisms on the science of strategy and also to introduce the theory of mitigation of strategy science, the method of content analysis (Kuckartz&Rädiker, 2023) has been used. In this method, after extracting the data from the second-hand sources, convergent data are combined with each other and the results and findings of the research are presented during two stages of coding. The main use of this content analysis method is summarizing data and categorizing them. Therefore, through the purposeful sampling method, a collection of English and Farsi articles that criticized the science of strategy, strategic management theories and competitive advantage were extracted, and the analysis and coding operations continued until saturation and theoretical adequacy.

In order to increase the validity of qualitative content analysis research, it is necessary to pay attention to 1. theoretical diversity of articles, 2. novelty of articles, 3. achieving theoretical saturation and 4. accurate coding of data (Kuckartz&Rädiker, 2023).

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Therefore, in order to comply with theoretical diversity, Persian and English articles of different experts have been cited, most of the references are related to the last five years, and the two-stage process of qualitative data coding has also been used.

Findings

The typology of criticisms on the science of strategy and the theories of competitive advantage are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 shows the articles used in the content analysis, the data extracted from these articles and the data numbering for use in Table 2. In Table 2, through two stages of data coding, the typology of criticisms and also the theory of strategy science are presented.

Table 1

Sources used in content analysis along with extracted data

References	Methodology and data analysis	The extracted data along with the data number
Grandy, G., & Mills (2004)	Post-modern analysis of the revelation of simulacra and hyperreality	... the reality of the science of strategy has been simplified over time.... strategic management, models and the concept of strategy have been faced with simulacra or hyperreality.... According to the theories of strategic management, the only way for the success of the organization Turning to strategy. These types of analyzes are completely idealistic and linear.... The literature of strategic management recommends that either you must have a strategy and win, or if you don't have a strategy, you are doomed to failure.... Richard Rumelt mentioned strategy is not a scientific issue that is recognized by pragmatism like medicine, but only pursues academic, teaching and theorizing goals. According to Knights and Morgan, there is a misconception that anyone who has a strategy is wise and intelligent, and anyone who does not have a strategy is definitely imprudent. It has become a matter of strategic management.... The definition of the mission statement in the group of global blue-chip companies not only did not lead to integrity and success, but also caused ambiguity, multiple

References	Methodology and data analysis	The extracted data along with the data number
		conceptions, confusion and challenges... (1)
Eskandarinia (2022)	Post-modern analysis of the deconstruction and de- simulacra	...strategic management theories have a holistic view of the component... they do not pay attention to the level of micro analysis of human and social activities that can affect the success and performance of the organization... the science of strategy has the paradox of macro analysis- It is wisdom... all the common approaches of strategic planning are based on predicting the future, but in the real world full of uncertainty and dynamics, instead of the future, one should pay attention to the present... The science of strategy is caught up in hyperreality and It has been pretended... it is necessary to turn to pragmatic approaches... (2)
Cai-Hillon (2012)	Post-modern analysis of Motorola company	The theories of strategic management are narratives that are quoted side by side, and over time, incomplete statements, idealistic narratives, unsaid and misunderstandings cause the formation of legends. Surreal stories about companies, the success of organizations, and the power of the founders of large companies. ...ideal and one-dimensional interpretations of words such as performance, success and competition have been formed, which are pseudo-real or mythical...strategy has become like Disney land... (3)
Balogun (2014)	Poststructural analysis	... due to the completely rational and economic nature of strategy science, unrealistic and fabricated beliefs about strategic leadership, the success of large companies, perfect strategic alliances and sustainable competitive advantage have been formed... these narratives are

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References	Methodology and data analysis	The extracted data along with the data number
		incomplete and unsaid There are many... (4)
Alieksieieva (2023)	A case study of universities in Ukraine	...in the real world, the basis of the success of organizations is not valuable, rare and inimitable resources, nor the structure of the industry has a great impact on performance... What actually causes success is not a competitive advantage, but the management of a set of It is activities that create value... (5)
Powell (2004)	Several case studies of companies that followed a specific strategy and had a competitive advantage but failed.	... IBM destroyed billions of dollars of its stock value due to the negligence and carelessness of its managers... Motel International Company, which was the largest toy manufacturer in America and It also had a competitive advantage, but it went bankrupt due to ignoring the market trend and customer needs. As a manufacturer called Bicycle, which had the largest market share in the mentioned industry, it lost its main market to its competitors. EPPM, the leader of the paper production market in Australia, lost its position due to neglecting technology and competitors...Wordcom and Enron companies, despite creating great strategies and gaining strategic advantage, suffered financial scandals and They were defeated... (6)
Jawahar (2021)	A case study of Yes Bank in India	Yes Bank is a big and international banking name in India... which was approved by all the consultants and praised in the media... Yes Bank had a great strategy that included the development of comprehensive banking services in the field of Investments, commercial banking, loans, facilities and financial consulting... Yes Bank also followed the strategy of branch development

References	Methodology and data analysis	The extracted data along with the data number
		and had a great competitive advantage... Finally, this bank got involved in the Icarus dilemma and due to its obligations Profiteering, giving heavy loans to bankrupt businessmen, poor financial management and failure to estimate the bank's risks were destroyed... (7)
Mirji (2023)	Historical study of Canon and Kodak companies	...Canon and Kodak were caught in the competency trap (Icarus dilemma)...Canon, despite extensive strategic planning, having a competitive advantage and valuable and scarce competitive resources, fell only because of the lack of motivation of employees, the loss of key forces and mismanagement. ... Kodak, which had a competitive advantage and was considered the market leader, failed because of doing useless activities without value, ignoring the technological trend and arrogance... (8)
Arbiansyah (2023)	Historical study of Nokia company	... despite having an innovative strategy in offering products and having a competitive advantage, Nokia became weak over time and failed... the reason for Nokia's failure had nothing to do with competitors and competitive advantage... in fact, Nokia's competitive strategy It was a defect, but inability to adapt to changes, resistance to change, neglect of opportunities and inertia caused failure... (9)
Miller (1992)	Case study and historical analysis of corporate failure	...strategies of innovation, market development, diversity and growth in many companies mentioned in this article, including IBM, ITT, P&G, Chrysler, Apple, General Motors, Caterpillar and Eastern Airlines have led to failure. And management in business control, pride, overconfidence, neglect,

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References	Methodology and data analysis	The extracted data along with the data number
		bureaucracy and perfectionism became extreme... (10)
Arregle (2007)	Critical analysis	<p>...Famous companies like Airbus, Merck and Arthur Andersen failed despite having a competitive advantage as a result of wrong analysis, arrogance and not using new opportunities...Theories of competitive advantage cannot explain be the drivers of companies' performance... there is no linear and significant relationship between achieving competitive advantage and financial performance, increasing revenue, increasing market share and stock value... companies with competitive advantage failed because of their competitive advantage According to Pfeffer and Sutton's (2006) research, a 300% difference in performance between the worst and the best companies was observed among 42 food manufacturing companies that used almost the same technologies and knowledge and were engaged in the same industry. Therefore, neither industry structure nor internal resources alone can explain the success and performance of companies... Companies like Jeep, Fiat and Boeing faced scandal, financial crisis and failure despite having a strategy and competitive advantage. ...organizations without competitive advantage and even with competitive disadvantage can achieve excellent performance as a result of managing valuable activities and avoiding errors... (11)</p>
Sulphey (2020)	A historical study of the reasons for the failure of	...KingFisher company, which had a competitive advantage and followed the strategy of growth and development, went bankrupt due to

References	Methodology and data analysis	The extracted data along with the data number
	Kingfisher Airlines	not paying attention to the change of competition and ignoring the needs of customers... (12)
Le Briton-Miller (2021)	Critical analysis	...companies that were initially very small, unknown, lacked resources, and had no competitive advantage, such as Amazon, Tencent, and Airbnb, only because of innovation, opportunism, determination, and striving for success. The accepted logic of competitive advantage, which says that strategic strengths lead to superior performance and weaknesses lead to poor performance, has been challenged because strategic strength can turn into pride, confidence Self-centeredness, neglect, indifference, extreme risk-taking and excess growth, and on the opposite point, the lack of competition causes more motivation, effort and creativity... (13)
Jarzabkowski (2004)	Conceptual paper	...Theories of strategic management and competitive advantage are completely economic and it is necessary to use social and sociological theories (such as Anthony Giddens' social structuring, Pierre Bourdieu's habitus and social action theory) to the main reality of the strategy should be determined... (14)
Guenther(2023)	A case study of small companies	...strategic alliances and strategic partnerships face the ability-willingness paradox...in the sense that companies do not have the desire for alliances and partnerships and instead want to dominate and control the other company. .. (15)
Tsakalerou&Abilez (2023)	A study of the industries of Kazakhstan	Companies and manufacturers in Kazakhstan have faced the Kazakhstan paradox... According to this paradox, continuous support for innovation has led to undesirable

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References	Methodology and data analysis	The extracted data along with the data number
		results... The main causes of this paradox are the huge costs of research and development, related violations. It has been due to the intellectual rights of inventions and the weakness of technical knowledge... (16)
Kocabasoglu(2023)	Review articles and critical analysis	...in the innovation theories of Schumpeter and other experts, the strategy of innovation and even rapid innovation has been supported...but this strategy leads to the paradox of change-stability... (17)
Cunha (2023)	Critical analysis	...the main sources of gaining competitive advantage, including organizational learning, innovation and change, have faced the challenge of paradox...among the most important paradoxes of strategy can be exploration-exploitation, change-stability Globalization-remaining local and self-confidence-humility pointed out... (18)
Cunha, Putnam (2019)	Critical analysis and review	...in the literature of strategic management and competitiveness, the word success has a paradox...strategic success leads to pride, extreme self-confidence and high risk-taking and ultimately failure...performance also has a paradox because the system Performance management practices lead to creating job stress and setting unattainable ambitious goals... (19)
Bidstrup& Hansen(2014)	A case study of a mining company in Denmark	...in the theories of strategic management, the analysis of the organization's environment has a paradox...environmental conditions are so dynamic, ambiguous and rapidly changing that strategic analyzes based on future research and forecasting are practically impossible... (20)
Eskandarinia (2023)	Iterative phronetic qualitative	Creating a strategy leads to the creation of a paradox... Creating a strategy leads to ignoring the strategic

References	Methodology and data analysis	The extracted data along with the data number
	method with data obtained from company survey	weaknesses, and creating the four paradoxes of strategy knowledge, effort-result, following the strategy-pursuing vital activities, and job stress. ... (21)
Powell (2001)	Logic, deduction, analogy, induction and Bayesian analysis	...the philosophy of strategy science is incomplete...the epistemology and ontology of strategic management and the theories of competitive advantage do not explain the reason for the success of organizations and the functional changes of companies...the existence of competitive advantage, the absence Competitive advantage and competitive disadvantage do not describe the difference in the performance of companies... (22)
Powell (2002)	Method of pragmatic philosophy of science, Bayesian analysis and negative case example	...the two common approaches in the theories of competitive advantage, i.e., the resource-based approach and the industrial organization approach, cannot provide a suitable justification for the performance of companies... (23)
Powell (2003)	negative case study, Pareto analysis and Gini correlation analysis in different industries	...creating strategy and using different strategic management models rarely leads to sustainable profitability, success and excellent performance... (24)
Takagi (2023)	Semi-structured interview and showing strategy contradictions	...the error of rationalism is evident in the theories of strategy and competitive advantage...all four paradigms of resource-oriented perspective, industrial organization, entrepreneurship and transaction cost are completely economic and rational-oriented... (25)
Chia, R., & Holt (2023)	Nietzsche's analysis (examination of prejudice in the	...strategic management has a bias and insistence on using the logic of means-results...which means that the use of models and tools will

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References	Methodology and data analysis	The extracted data along with the data number
	beliefs of strategy theories)	definitely lead to the achievement of results...but in the practice of strategy in connection with deliberate intention, It is not completely rational decisions, precise definition of goals, logical planning and effective implementation... but rather it is related to ignorance, following habits, improvisation and political will... (26)
Hadjimichael&Tsoukas(2023)	A case study of medical service companies	...the science of strategy and the theories of competitive advantage have incomplete logic, knowledge and existence... because they have neglected the two factors of improvisation and normative values in the process of decision-making and implementation of strategies... (27)
Herold (2023)	Review study	...Strategy science has neglected interdisciplinary theories... The epistemology and ontology of strategy science lacks the definitions of behavioral, political and sociological sciences and has become a one-dimensional and non-applied science. ... (28)
Arbi (2017)	Genealogy and historical analysis of competitive advantage theories	The origin and history of the science of strategy and the theory of competitive advantage can be attributed to Edith Penrose's resource-based approach, Porter's industry-oriented perspective, transaction cost economics, and Schumpeter's entrepreneurial approach... Historical research shows that The founders of these four approaches, as well as their professors, mainly had an academic and research background in economics... Therefore, it seems that the neo-economic, behavioral and political logic has been completely neglected... (29)
Teece (2019)	Investigating the historical	...the formation of a view based on resources and dynamic capabilities

References	Methodology and data analysis	The extracted data along with the data number
	progress of the theory of dynamic and resource-oriented capabilities in strategy	in strategic management is rooted in the economic theories of transaction cost and agency theory...these theories are the result of the rational view of economists such as Coase, Caves, Williamson and Hart have been...these analyzes never meet the real needs of organizations and describe the reason for the success of organizations...in terms of the historical course of this analysis process, it started with Ronald Coase's article in 1937 and then citing In this article, Williamson and Klein continued the economic analysis of competitive advantage, and Jensen and Meckling, under the influence of this literature, proposed agency theories, and neo-economic theories were marginalized in strategy... (30)
Keyhani (2023)	Historical review of the formation of entrepreneurial approach in strategic management	...the ideal and economic logic of an economist named Schumpeter led to the formation of the entrepreneurial perspective in strategic management...Michael Porter also presented his economic theories of strategic management under the influence of his economist professors such as Caves and Bain ...the founders of the source-oriented view were also the economists of the Chicago School and UCLA University economists...the creator of the source-oriented view, that is, Penrose was not only an economist, but he was also influenced by an economist named Schumpeter... (31)
Powell (2010)	Genealogy of the origin of competitive advantage	...the roots of competitive advantage literature can be analyzed through the studies of Porter's industrial organization perspective, Penrose's resource-based perspective and Schumpeter's evolutionary approach...Igor Ansoff, who is

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References	Methodology and data analysis	The extracted data along with the data number
		known as the father of strategy science, is a He was a mathematician and provided completely logical and rational analyzes about the performance and profitability of companies...Michael Porter and Edith Penrose were also basically influenced by prominent economists such as Caves, Bain and Williamson, who also carried out their studies. Based on the economic analysis, a mathematician named Bertrand and an economist named Edwards did... (32)
Rumelt (1991)	Historical analysis of strategic management	...Economists have had complete dominance over strategy theories...Bruce Henderson was mainly influenced by economics professors...Mason and Bain were two economists who developed strategy theories and were students of another economist named Caves... Porter's theories were formed under the influence of the economic logic of the Chicago school... (33)

Table 2
Coding process of extracted data

Data numbers according to Table 1	First stage coding	Second stage coding	Findings and results
1,2,3,4	Due to the rational and economic nature of the science of strategy, the theories of strategy and competition have been simplified over time, predictions of an unknown future, incomplete and exaggerated mythological narratives of successful companies and Their leaders, idealism, unsaid management	Post-modern critique of strategy science and competitive advantage theories	Damping theory of Strategy Science: Based on the theory of damping of strategy science, which emphasizes the degradation and weakening of the foundations and principles of strategy science through five different currents, more realistic assumptions can be made about the reasons for

Data numbers according to Table 1	First stage coding	Second stage coding	Findings and results
	about the success and failure of companies, surreal myth-making about the power of companies and their leaders and providing definitive, absolute and undeniable definitions about advantage. It has become competitive. In simpler words, the science of strategy has moved away from realism and has become similar to pretending (surrealism). Strategy science, unlike medical science, is not practical and resembles Disney land.		the success and failure of organizations. And also the reasons for achieving excellent performance. There is no significant relationship between creating a strategy and gaining a competitive advantage and finally achieving a premium performance. Competitive advantage is neither a necessary nor a necessary condition for strategic success. The main reason for the failure of the companies with a great strategy and competitive advantage that was mentioned in this research was the same strategy and competitive advantage, and on the other hand, companies without a competitive advantage or even with a competitive deficiency were able to achieve optimal performance.
5.6.7.8.9.10.11.13.13	The science of strategy and theories of competitive advantage has faced the Icarus dilemma. To put it more simply, companies fail due to creating a great strategy and gaining a competitive advantage, and on the opposite point, companies with a competitive deficiency achieve success. In the real world, the reason for the success and excellent performance of companies is not the valuable, rare and inimitable resources, nor the structure of the industry, but a set of activities leading to added value at the micro level lead to the performance of companies. For example, companies with strategy and competitive advantage due to reasons such as lack of motivation of employees, loss of key forces, pride and self-conceit, extreme self-confidence, idealism and extreme growth, ignoring	Icarus dilemma (Competency trap)	

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Data numbers according to Table 1	First stage coding	Second stage coding	Findings and results
	competitors and technology, inertia , resistance to change, bureaucracy and mistakes led to scandals, and on the contrary, small and little-known companies that lacked strategy and competitive advantage due to high motivation, flexibility, opportunism, effort and creativity Excellent performance was achieved.		
15,16,17,18,19,20,21	The science of strategy and the theories of competitive advantage are caught in the duality of paradox. Among the most important paradoxes of strategy are the ability-willingness paradox in strategic alliances, the paradox of change (innovation)-stability, the paradox of searching for markets and new opportunities-taking advantage of existing markets, and the paradox of globalization-locality. Persistence, self-confidence-humility, success-pride, knowledge of strategy, effort-result, analysis of the organization's environment, job stress and following the strategy-doing necessary activities.	Critique of strategy science from the perspective of paradoxology	
23, 22, 14, 25, 24, 28, 26, 27	From a philosophical point of view, strategic management and its theories are completely rational and economic. All four common paradigms in strategic management have economic backgrounds and completely rational analyses. Therefore, the philosophy of strategy science is completely one-	Philosophical criticism of strategy science and competitive advantage theories from the perspective of	

Data numbers according to Table 1	First stage coding	Second stage coding	Findings and results
	dimensional and incomplete in terms of epistemology, ontology, and logic because it has neglected the interdisciplinary philosophy of social, sociological, behavioral, and political sciences. Neither competitive advantage provides a suitable description for why organizations succeed, nor competitive deficiency can explain why organizations fail. Strategic management has a means-result bias and it is assumed that a deliberate intention leads to a rational decision and then the precise definition of goals and plans, and finally the strategy is implemented effectively. But in practice ignorance, following habits, improvisation and political will lead to behaviors and actions.	epistemology, ontology and logic	
30, 29 31, 32, 33	All four dominant paradigms in strategy science and competitive advantage theories are genealogically and historically rooted in economics and mathematics. For example, Igor Ansoff, who is called the father of strategic management science, was a mathematician who founded the rational logic of profit maximization in strategy. Edith Penrose, who was the founder of the resource-based view, was not only an economist herself, but she was also influenced by the economists of the Chicago School and UCLA, as well as Schumpeter.	Criticizing the science of strategy and its theories from the perspective of genealogy and investigating the historical roots of the emergence of this science	

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Data numbers according to Table 1	First stage coding	Second stage coding	Findings and results
	<p>Michael Porter, who himself has an academic background in economics, presented his theories under the influence of economists such as Mason and Bain, who were also students of an economist named Ronald Coase. Economists have played a dominant and dominant role in the production of strategy theories, so sociological, political, behavioral and neo-economic logics have been largely neglected.</p>		

Based on the findings of this research, which was obtained through the analysis of the content of the articles, the criticisms on the science of strategy and the theories of competitive advantage can be divided into five general categories: 1. Post-modern criticisms based on methods such as deconstruction, unsimulacra, post-structural analysis and revealing the pretense, 2. Criticisms related to the Icarus dilemma based on methodologies such as company case study, longitudinal study and critical analysis, 3. Philosophical criticisms that change the epistemology, ontology and logic of strategy science. The help of conceptual methods, logic, deduction, analogy and induction, Bayesian analysis, pragmatic philosophy of science, negative case analysis, Pareto analysis, Gini's correlational analysis, Nietzsche analysis and case study have been challenged. 4. Paradoxical criticisms with the help of the divided the qualitative, review, critical and case study methods and finally 5. genealogical criticisms that have criticized the formation of strategy science by examining the economic roots of it. Based on these five critical currents, the reason for the decline of strategy science can be justified. Not only is there no meaningful relationship between creating a strategy and gaining a competitive advantage with the organization's performance and success, but competitive advantage is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for achieving excellent performance.

Big and famous companies such as Enron, Nokia, Kodak and many other companies that are mentioned in this article are stuck in the Icarus dilemma, which is caused by creating a great strategy and achieving a competitive advantage. Peers have failed because achieving a competitive advantage has led to pride, overconfidence, misplaced growth and mergers, ignoring opportunities, indifference, and mistakes leading to scandal. On the other hand, such companies have suffered many paradoxical contradictions, such as the paradox of stability-change, globalization-remaining local, analysis of the unanalyzable environment, and result-effort, all of which are caused by the creation of strategy. On the contrary, companies like Amazon and Concha Toro do not have any competitive advantage or valuable, rare and inimitable resources due to reasons

such as opportunism, creativity, effort, effective management of value-added activities and high motivation. They have achieved excellent performance.

The rational-economic nature of strategy science has also plagued companies. Companies create strategies under the influence of theories of competitive advantage that have incomplete and idealistic logic and ignore micro-level activities that lead to the creation of added value and success. . Therefore, the evidence and findings of this article show that probably creating a strategy and gaining a competitive advantage due to reasons such as the organization being caught in the Icarus dilemma or the trap of competence, getting involved with the paradoxes resulting from strategic management and conducting analyzes All rationality and economics, derived from the theories of strategy science, have caused companies to distance themselves from pragmatism and leaders' indifference towards the main activities. As a result, such companies have faced crisis, bankruptcy and lack of success.

Discussion

In this article, through the introduction of the typology of five critical currents of strategy science and theories of competitive advantage, the damping theory of strategy science was explained. This theory is able to provide more realistic assumptions about why companies succeed and fail and why organizations differ in performance. The findings of this article show how well-known organizations through the creation of strategy and even gaining a competitive advantage for reasons such as pride, self-conceit, perfectionism, high risk-taking, scandal, and being caught in the paradoxes of the people. Strategy and conducting absolute rational analysis fail, and on the other hand, small companies lack a competitive advantage and even have a competitive deficiency through flexibility, agility in pursuing opportunities, creativity, effort and continuity to a superior performance. They get hands.

The findings of this article are not only useful and valuable for researchers in the field of strategy, but also for CEOs of companies, it contains different and unique insights about why organizations succeed and fail. The present article, which describes the causes of the failure of organizations despite creating a strategy and gaining a competitive advantage, is valuable from a theoretical point of view, and from a practical point of view, it is also valuable for strategists, organization analysts, and consultants.

By comparing the findings of this research with the results of the researches that were reviewed in the background section of the research, it is possible to find convergences and divergences. The commonality of the findings of this article with other articles that were reviewed in the background of the research is related to the criticism of strategy science and its theories. All these findings show that not only there is no significant relationship between competitive advantage and organizational performance, but it is also possible that creating a strategy and creating a competitive advantage can lead to failure. But the main difference between the findings of this article and the results of the aforementioned articles is that in this research, through the aggregation and integration of the findings of various researches, a comprehensive and comprehensive insight into the real causes of failure and success of companies with the help of Five types of philosophical criticism, paradoxology, the riddle of Icarus, postmodern analysis and genealogy were presented, which can open a new and innovative window towards practicality in strategic management and better performance of companies.

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Limitations:

This article also has limitations. The findings of this article have been obtained through the content analysis of the findings of other articles, and the generalization of the findings to the real conditions of businesses requires caution. Therefore, the external validity as well as the ecological validity of the research has limitations.

Suggestions:

In order to increase the external and ecological validity of the findings of this research, it is suggested to conduct a case study, multi-case study, and longitudinal study in different Iranian companies in order to determine the limitations and points that can be improved in this article. In addition, the use of narrative-research methods, semi-structured interview and survey can help to increase the external and ecological validity of the article. The results of this research also contain suggestions for senior managers and consultants of organizations. CEOs of organizations are advised to be careful when conducting strategic analysis because these analyzes are generally rational, idealistic and economic. At the same time, it is suggested that gaining a competitive advantage should not be considered equivalent to the success of the organization. When providing consulting services to organizations, strategy consultants should consider narratives that violate the theories of strategy and competitive advantage, including the Icarus dilemma and strategy paradoxes, and talk about it with managers because success And the performance of the organization is more related to the management of the necessary and vital activities of the organization than it is related to the strategy and competitive advantage.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

The impact of automated decisions on consumers. Legal and ethical challenges in the AI era

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Abstract:

As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to influence consumer engagement, models for automated decision-making are transforming the commercial landscape. Whether credit evaluation, individualized pricing, or anti-fraud measures, AI-augmented methodologies are yielding efficiencies along with presenting considerable legal and ethical complexities. This article delves into the intersection of AI and consumer law, analyzing the effects of automated decision-making on consumer rights, data privacy concerns, and fairness.

As artificial intelligence holds the potential to augment customer experiences, it also threatens algorithmic bias, opacity, and possible breaches of data protection regulations. Typically, customers may have limited possibilities for redress against algorithmic decisions made by non-transparent algorithms that provide them with limited choice, which challenges the conventional legal frameworks. Consequently, policymakers and regulators are therefore struggling with ways to promote accountability, avoid discrimination, and uphold consumer protection amidst this fast-developing environment.

This article addresses key legal issues, such as the applicability of current consumer protection legislation, the development of AI regulation, and business obligations in AI governance. It mentions recent case studies illustrating instances in which AI-generated decisions have harmed consumers, thereby underlining the necessity of regulatory disclosure and the ethical development of AI technologies. It further examines possible solutions, including explainable AI models, fairness testing, and more robust enforcement mechanisms for protecting consumer rights.

As artificial intelligence increases its presence in consumer markets, it is essential to make sure that computerized decision-making rests on legal as well as ethical foundations. The appropriate equilibrium between innovation and consumer protection will necessitate constant cooperation between governments, business firms, and attorneys to develop an even and equitable AI-driven economy.

Keywords: *Automated decision-making, consumer protection, AI regulation, consumer law, ethical AI.*

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1. Introduction

The proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) across economic and social sectors has profoundly reshaped the dynamics between businesses and consumers. As companies increasingly adopt algorithmic systems to inform and automate decisions, the traditional contours of consumer protection law are being tested in unprecedented ways. From credit scoring and loan approvals to personalized pricing and fraud detection, AI-driven technologies are no longer auxiliary tools but have become central instruments in how consumers are evaluated, classified, and targeted in the marketplace.

These automated decisions, often rendered through opaque algorithms with minimal human oversight, pose significant legal challenges. One of the most pressing concerns relates to the principle of transparency, a cornerstone of many legal systems aiming to safeguard individuals against arbitrary or discriminatory treatment. When consumers are subjected to algorithmic decisions, especially those with substantial effects such as, being denied credit or offered differential pricing they are frequently unaware of the criteria used or even that an automated process has taken place. This lack of transparency impedes their ability to seek redress or challenge decisions, conflicting with well-established procedural rights recognized under instruments such as the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), particularly Article 22, which grants individuals protection against decisions based solely on automated processing that produce legal or similarly significant effects.

Moreover, automated decision-making raises intricate questions of fairness and non-discrimination, principles embedded not only in data protection law but also in consumer protection frameworks. The use of AI systems trained on historical or biased data can lead to the reproduction (or even amplification) of societal inequalities, disadvantaging certain consumer groups based on race, gender, geography, or socioeconomic status. This contradicts the obligations of fairness and good faith in business-to-consumer transactions, reflected in regulations such as the EU's Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (2005/29/EC), which aims to shield consumers from deceptive and aggressive market behavior.

From a legal standpoint, these developments also complicate the attribution of responsibility. When harm results from an automated decision, identifying the liable actor becomes challenging. The algorithm may have been developed by one entity, deployed by another, and trained on data collected by a third. Traditional legal constructs, such as fault-based liability and consumer contract doctrines, are often ill-equipped to address this distributed responsibility and the technical opacity involved. This fragmentation undermines the efficacy of consumer remedies and erodes legal certainty, which are both essential components of a fair marketplace.

Furthermore, the deployment of AI in consumer contexts intersects with emerging regulatory landscapes that are still in flux. Legislative initiatives such as the EU Artificial Intelligence Act signal an attempt to classify and regulate AI systems according to their risk levels, with specific obligations for high-risk applications, including those affecting consumer rights. While promising, these proposals also highlight the limitations of existing laws and the urgent need for harmonization, enforcement mechanisms, and the development of standards that prioritize human oversight, explainability, and non-discrimination.

At the heart of the issue lies a legal paradox: while AI technologies have the potential to enhance efficiency, personalization, and access in consumer markets, they also

threaten to destabilize core legal protections that have long ensured the equitable treatment of individuals. The law, therefore, is confronted with a dual imperative, to facilitate innovation and economic growth, while upholding the rights and dignity of the consumer in an increasingly automated environment. This tension underscores the need for a renewed legal discourse capable of reconciling technological advancement with the foundational values of fairness, transparency, and accountability that underpin consumer law.

2. Legal implications of automated consumer decisions

As artificial intelligence becomes embedded in consumer markets, one of the central legal questions is whether existing consumer protection laws are capable of responding to the risks posed by algorithmic decision-making. Traditional consumer law has developed around the premise of human-led commercial practices, assuming identifiable decision-makers and observable conduct. AI disrupts these assumptions by introducing automated, data-driven systems that often operate without direct human intervention and whose internal logic is frequently inaccessible to both consumers and regulators.

In the European context, the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (2005/29/EC) provides a general framework designed to protect consumers against misleading and aggressive business practices. However, its application to algorithmically personalized practices, such as dynamic pricing or targeted advertising, remains ambiguous. While some scholars argue that algorithmic manipulation could fall under the prohibition of "misleading actions" or "omissions," enforcement challenges persist due to the technical opacity of AI systems and the difficulty of proving consumer detriment in individualized decision-making contexts (Calo, 2013; Helberger et al., 2020). This raises questions about the adequacy of general clauses in consumer law to effectively capture the subtleties of AI-driven harms.

A key principle in consumer law is transparency, the idea that consumers should be clearly informed about the nature of transactions and the basis for decisions affecting them. Yet algorithmic systems routinely violate this principle. Many AI applications are designed as "black boxes," meaning their inputs and decision-making processes are not easily understandable, even to their developers. This lack of explainability undermines consumers' ability to understand why a particular outcome (such as a higher insurance premium or a denied loan) has occurred, thereby frustrating their ability to make informed decisions or contest unfair outcomes (Wachter et al., 2017).

Closely tied to transparency is the principle of accountability, which requires identifying who is responsible when things go wrong. Traditional legal doctrines, such as liability for breach of contract or tort, depend on tracing causation and attributing responsibility. However, AI systems often operate autonomously and adaptively, complicating efforts to assign legal accountability. The diffusion of responsibility among AI developers, data providers, and service operators further obscures legal liability. Scholars such as Yeung (2018) and Ebers (2021) have emphasized that this "accountability gap" is a structural weakness in the current legal response to AI technologies.

Another pressing concern is the inadequacy of redress mechanisms for consumers adversely affected by automated decisions. Effective redress requires that consumers are aware of the decision, understand it, and have the ability to challenge or appeal it. In practice, most consumers lack both the technical literacy and the procedural avenues to dispute algorithmic outcomes. Automated decisions are often made in real-time, and

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platforms rarely offer meaningful explanations or accessible appeals processes. While legal frameworks in some jurisdictions include general rights to complain or seek compensation, these mechanisms tend to be underdeveloped or procedurally burdensome in the context of AI, creating a practical denial of justice for many affected individuals (Zarsky, 2016).

These deficiencies have prompted increasing debate about whether new regulatory instruments are needed to supplement or reform existing consumer protection regimes. Proposals for dedicated AI legislation, such as the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, reflect the growing consensus that conventional consumer law is not fully equipped to safeguard individuals against the systemic risks posed by automated decision-making. Without stronger requirements for transparency, human oversight, and accessible remedies, consumers will remain in a disadvantaged position, subject to decisions that may be efficient from a business perspective but fundamentally unfair from a legal and ethical standpoint.

The intersection of artificial intelligence with personal data processing renders data protection law central to the governance of automated decision-making. In Europe, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is the most advanced and comprehensive legal framework for data processing, offering robust individual rights and setting strict conditions for the use of personal data in algorithmic systems. However, the emergence of AI technologies has exposed significant tensions between the regulation's foundational principles and the technical realities of machine learning.

One of the most contentious provisions is Article 22 GDPR, which provides individuals with the right not to be subject to decisions based solely on automated processing, including profiling, that produce legal or similarly significant effects. This right embodies the broader data protection goals of human dignity, autonomy, and informational self-determination. Yet the practical reach of Article 22 has been subject to divergent interpretations in legal scholarship and regulatory guidance. Some argue that its scope is narrow, applying only when decisions are fully automated and have significant consequences, thus excluding many real-world scenarios where minimal human involvement exists (Wachter et al., 2017; Edwards & Veale, 2017).

Compounding the challenge is the ambiguous requirement of a "right to explanation." Although the GDPR emphasizes transparency and fairness (Articles 5, 13, 14), it stops short of mandating a detailed explanation of algorithmic logic in every case. As a result, individuals subjected to AI-driven decisions are often left without meaningful insight into how or why a decision was made. This undermines both the enforcement of data subject rights and the broader objective of promoting accountability, which is one of the GDPR's foundational principles (Article 5(2)). Scholars have consistently highlighted the difficulty of reconciling opaque machine learning models (particularly deep learning algorithms) with GDPR mandates for intelligibility and interpretability (Kaminski, 2021).

On the ground, compliance challenges are pervasive, particularly in sectors such as finance, insurance, and e-commerce where algorithmic profiling is prevalent. Organizations often lack adequate technical mechanisms to provide individualized explanations, assess algorithmic fairness, or ensure compliance-by-design with GDPR requirements. While Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) under Article 35 offer a tool for preemptively managing risk, their actual implementation in AI contexts remains uneven, and many regulators have noted deficiencies in how these assessments address bias, data quality, or automated logic.

Case law and enforcement actions further reveal the regulatory difficulties in addressing AI-driven harms. A notable example is the French CNIL's action against the government's use of the Parcoursup platform, where algorithmic opacity in university admissions raised concerns about the lack of transparency and insufficient human intervention. Similarly, the Dutch District Court in the SyRI case (2020) ruled against the use of an algorithmic system for detecting welfare fraud, finding it violated the right to privacy under the European Convention on Human Rights due to insufficient transparency and proportionality. These cases mark a judicial recognition that the procedural and substantive guarantees of data protection law must be preserved even in the face of efficiency-oriented technological deployments.

More recently, the European Data Protection Board (EDPB) and national supervisory authorities have issued guidelines addressing AI-specific risks, such as the EDPB's Guidelines on Automated Decision-Making and Profiling (2022). These emphasize the necessity of explainability, fairness, and the proactive assessment of risks throughout the AI lifecycle. However, scholars have noted that enforcement remains reactive and fragmented, with a reliance on individual complaints rather than systemic oversight (Mahieu et al., 2021). This reactive posture often leaves structural harms unaddressed and fails to incentivize meaningful organizational change.

The cumulative effect of these regulatory and judicial developments underscores a central tension: while the GDPR offers a powerful legal infrastructure to safeguard personal data, its mechanisms are not always well-suited to the specific features of modern AI systems. Questions remain as to how effectively regulators can enforce rights in a landscape where decision-making is increasingly distributed, probabilistic, and non-intuitive. As algorithmic decision-making proliferates, ensuring legal compliance will require not only more granular interpretations of existing norms but also the development of operational standards that can translate legal principles into practice, an effort currently underway in regulatory initiatives such as the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, which seeks to complement data protection law with AI-specific safeguards.

3. Ethical challenges

The ethical implications of automated decision-making in consumer markets reach far beyond legal compliance. While legislation such as the GDPR and consumer protection directives offer a baseline of individual rights, they do not fully address the deeper normative tensions introduced by algorithmic systems, particularly those related to fairness, bias, manipulation, and consumer autonomy. Ethical scrutiny, therefore, becomes essential for understanding the broader social impact of AI technologies and for guiding the responsible development of systems that increasingly shape everyday consumer experiences.

One of the most significant ethical challenges is algorithmic bias. Automated systems rely on data (both historical and real-time) to inform decisions. However, data is rarely neutral. It reflects societal inequalities, systemic exclusions, and past discriminatory practices. When this data is used to train algorithms, those biases can be inherited and embedded into the system's logic. In domains such as credit scoring, insurance pricing, or targeted advertising, these biases can disproportionately harm vulnerable or marginalized consumer groups, exacerbating existing inequalities under a veneer of objectivity. Scholars such as Barocas and Selbst (2016) have pointed out that algorithmic discrimination may occur even when sensitive characteristics like race or gender are not explicitly included, due to the proxy effect of correlated variables.

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Despite this, the use of AI in consumer decision-making also brings potential ethical benefits. Properly designed and monitored, algorithms can enhance efficiency, reduce human bias, and expand access to services. For example, in credit assessment, automated systems might evaluate applicants using alternative data sources, such as utility or rental payment histories, thereby offering credit opportunities to consumers traditionally excluded from formal financial systems. Such innovations can promote financial inclusion, reduce administrative costs, and enable faster service delivery. However, the ethical value of these benefits depends heavily on the conditions of deployment: without transparency, fairness testing, and human oversight, the same tools may also be used to entrench exclusion or manipulate behavior.

Fairness, a core ethical and legal principle, becomes particularly contentious in algorithmic contexts because it lacks a universally accepted definition. Some models operationalize fairness as equal treatment ensuring that individuals with similar attributes receive similar outcomes, while others emphasize group-based equity or the removal of disparate impact. These models can conflict in practice, and optimizing one form of fairness often compromises another (Binns, 2018). In commercial applications, where optimization objectives are often driven by profit or efficiency, fairness tends to be deprioritized unless external legal or reputational pressures intervene. Without deliberate design choices that prioritize equitable outcomes, algorithmic systems risk replicating the structural unfairness they promise to eliminate.

Beyond issues of bias and fairness lies the more subtle but no less significant concern of consumer autonomy. In traditional consumer protection theory, autonomy is safeguarded through principles such as informed consent, the right to withdraw, and protection from undue influence. Yet in algorithmically curated environments, the capacity of consumers to exercise genuine choice is increasingly undermined. Recommendation engines, behavioral targeting, and dynamic pricing strategies all operate on the basis of probabilistic predictions about consumer preferences, which can result in a form of digital paternalism. Instead of empowering consumers, algorithms may steer them toward pre-determined outcomes designed to maximize engagement or profit, effectively reducing individuals to behavioral data points.

This erosion of autonomy is ethically troubling because it undermines the notion of the rational, self-determining consumer. Studies have shown that consumers are often unaware of how they are being profiled, segmented, or nudged by AI systems (Susser, Roessler, & Nissenbaum, 2019). Even when disclosures are made, they are typically buried in dense privacy policies or framed in technical jargon that fails to support meaningful understanding or informed decision-making. As a result, the ethical ideal of consent becomes largely formalistic, devoid of substantive empowerment.

Moreover, the ethical architecture of many algorithmic systems lacks procedural justice, a principle concerned not only with outcomes but with the fairness and legitimacy of the processes through which decisions are made. Consumers subject to automated decisions are often denied meaningful participation in those processes. They have limited visibility into how algorithms work, few options for recourse, and virtually no role in how such systems are designed or governed. This raises profound ethical concerns about power asymmetries between large digital firms and individual consumers, an imbalance that is further exacerbated by data monopolies, proprietary algorithms, and weak accountability structures.

Despite these challenges, the ethical discourse on AI is not without constructive proposals. Many scholars and institutions advocate for "ethical-by-design" approaches,

which integrate ethical principles such as transparency, accountability, and fairness into the technical development lifecycle of AI systems. Tools such as algorithmic impact assessments, fairness auditing frameworks, and explainability metrics are being developed to operationalize these values. The IEEE's Ethically Aligned Design and the European Commission's Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI are two examples of initiatives aimed at embedding ethics into the AI ecosystem from the ground up. However, the effectiveness of these tools remains contingent on enforcement mechanisms and the willingness of firms to go beyond minimum legal compliance.

Ethical frameworks alone, however, are not sufficient. There is a risk that ethics becomes a rhetorical shield, invoked by companies to signal responsibility without committing to meaningful change. Critics have termed this phenomenon "ethics washing," warning that voluntary ethical codes can be used to preempt or delay regulatory oversight. To avoid this, ethical guidance must be accompanied by legally enforceable standards, robust institutional oversight, and genuine stakeholder engagement that includes not only technologists and ethicists, but also civil society actors, consumer advocates, and affected individuals.

In sum, while AI offers opportunities to enhance the consumer experience and correct certain human limitations, it simultaneously introduces profound ethical risks that demand more than technical fixes or abstract principles. Addressing algorithmic bias, protecting consumer autonomy, and promoting fairness will require a structural shift in how AI systems are designed, deployed, and governed. This means re-centering human dignity and justice in a domain currently dominated by efficiency and optimization logic. Only by doing so can the promise of AI be reconciled with the ethical foundations of a democratic and equitable consumer society.

4. Regulatory and business responses

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence into consumer markets has exposed not only the limitations of existing legal frameworks but also the institutional unpreparedness to address emerging risks. As the technological capacity of AI systems outpaces regulatory evolution, both public authorities and private actors are under mounting pressure to redefine governance models that ensure ethical compliance, legal accountability, and the safeguarding of fundamental consumer rights.

From a regulatory perspective, traditional consumer and data protection laws have proven insufficiently agile in the face of novel risks. This has prompted a wave of legal innovation, most notably within the European Union, where the proposed Artificial Intelligence Act (AIA) seeks to establish the first comprehensive framework for AI regulation. The AIA introduces a risk-based classification system, placing strict obligations on high-risk AI systems, including those used for credit scoring, biometric identification, and other consumer-relevant applications. These obligations include requirements for human oversight, transparency, data quality, and conformity assessments. Importantly, non-compliance with the AIA would result in significant administrative fines, modeled after the enforcement architecture of the GDPR.

However, as Spulbar (2025) emphasizes, even ambitious regulatory instruments such as the AIA face inherent structural and operational challenges. Among these is the difficulty of defining and assessing risk in dynamic technological environments, as well as the risk of regulatory lag in sectors characterized by rapid innovation. Spulbar points out that while the AIA provides a necessary legal architecture for digital markets, it must

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be complemented by sector-specific guidelines, institutional capacity-building, and international cooperation to avoid fragmentation and regulatory arbitrage. Furthermore, effective enforcement mechanisms and resource-equipped supervisory authorities are crucial for ensuring that legal safeguards move beyond aspirational language into tangible protections for consumers.

In parallel, national regulators have begun to issue sectoral guidance on AI governance, focusing on areas such as financial services, online platforms, and digital advertising. For instance, the UK's Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and Germany's Federal Cartel Office have published advisory frameworks emphasizing algorithmic transparency, fairness audits, and internal accountability mechanisms. These efforts mark a shift toward proactive regulatory supervision, moving beyond post hoc enforcement toward ex ante compliance strategies. However, such models remain uneven across jurisdictions and often lack binding authority, relying instead on soft law mechanisms, such as codes of conduct or best practice guidelines.

Against this backdrop, corporate actors play a decisive role in shaping the practical contours of AI governance. Major firms deploying AI systems are not only technological innovators but also de facto regulators, as their design choices effectively determine how legal and ethical principles are operationalized. This raises critical questions about corporate responsibility, particularly in an environment where algorithmic opacity and commercial secrecy are widespread.

In response, a growing number of companies have adopted AI ethics policies, created internal review boards, and implemented algorithmic impact assessments. Some have developed technical tools for fairness testing, explainability, and bias mitigation. However, these measures are often voluntary, unevenly applied, and lack external validation. There is also a risk of "ethics washing," whereby companies present a superficial commitment to responsible AI without changing their underlying incentive structures or decision-making processes.

Spulbar (2025) rightly identifies this accountability gap as one of the defining challenges of AI-driven markets. He argues that a sustainable legal framework must incentivize firms not only to innovate but to institutionalize ethical safeguards, including independent audits, stakeholder engagement, and transparent reporting. In this context, hybrid regulatory models (combining state oversight with private self-regulation under public scrutiny) are emerging as a viable approach. These models can harness the technical expertise of the private sector while ensuring that consumer protection, fairness, and non-discrimination remain non-negotiable standards.

A notable challenge in aligning regulatory and corporate responses is the lack of interoperable standards and shared metrics. While tools such as algorithmic audits, model cards, and fairness benchmarks exist, there is little consensus on their methodology or reliability. This fragmentation hinders comparability, accountability, and enforcement. International initiatives, such as the OECD's AI Principles or UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, offer a normative foundation, but they are non-binding and lack implementation mechanisms. Spulbar (2025) suggests that standardization at the EU and global level, accompanied by institutional cooperation and cross-border data governance, will be critical to creating a coherent AI market that respects both innovation and human rights.

5. Conclusion

As artificial intelligence continues to transform consumer markets, the traditional legal and ethical foundations of consumer protection face a profound reckoning. Automated decision-making, once a peripheral technological capability, now plays a central role in determining who gains access to credit, how prices are tailored, which products are recommended, and even how risks are assessed. While these developments offer operational efficiencies and commercial advantages, they also introduce new vulnerabilities that challenge long-standing legal norms and moral expectations.

A central conclusion emerging from this analysis is that existing consumer protection frameworks are under strain. Designed for human-centered transactions, these regimes often lack the conceptual and procedural tools to address the systemic opacity, complexity, and scale of algorithmic systems. Rights such as transparency, fairness, and redress (pillars of consumer protection) are increasingly difficult to enforce when decision-making processes are automated, non-intuitive, and shielded by proprietary designs. The very notion of informed consent, once a cornerstone of consumer autonomy, becomes tenuous in the context of predictive analytics and behavioral targeting.

Similarly, the GDPR, while robust in principle, encounters limitations in practice. Provisions such as Article 22 offer protections against fully automated decisions but are narrowly construed, and enforcement mechanisms often depend on individual initiative. The complexity of AI systems further complicates compliance, especially when explainability and accountability cannot be meaningfully achieved without specialized technical knowledge or institutional support. As demonstrated through case law and regulatory developments, the need for clearer, enforceable standards is no longer a theoretical concern but a practical necessity.

On the ethical front, algorithmic bias and the erosion of consumer autonomy stand out as pressing concerns. The potential for AI to replicate or intensify social inequalities through biased data or opaque logic is well-documented. Likewise, the commodification of consumer behavior, where users are continuously profiled, segmented, and steered, raises questions about manipulation and dignity. While ethical guidelines and design principles exist, they often lack enforceability and can be used strategically to resist stricter regulation, a practice increasingly critiqued as ethics washing.

Nevertheless, it would be reductive to frame AI exclusively as a threat. When carefully regulated and ethically designed, AI can support goals such as financial inclusion, access to services, and consumer empowerment. The challenge lies in ensuring that these benefits do not come at the cost of fundamental rights. This requires a recalibration of both regulatory ambition and corporate responsibility.

Emerging legal instruments like the EU Artificial Intelligence Act represent important steps toward this recalibration. By introducing risk-based classifications and technical obligations, such frameworks begin to adapt law to technological realities. However, as Spulbar (2025) rightly argues, legal frameworks must go beyond formal rule-making. They must be complemented by effective enforcement, sectoral specificity, cross-border cooperation, and the standardization of compliance practices. Regulatory innovation, in other words, must be matched by regulatory capacity.

Corporate actors, meanwhile, must internalize the ethical and legal consequences of the systems they deploy. Voluntary governance, though welcome, cannot substitute for binding obligations and external oversight. Firms that operationalize transparency, fairness, and human-centric design are not only more likely to comply with future regulations, they are also better positioned to earn consumer trust in an increasingly skeptical digital economy.

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Ultimately, the integration of AI into consumer decision-making marks a pivotal moment for the legal and ethical ordering of markets. The path forward cannot rely on fragmented or outdated doctrines, nor can it defer to technological determinism. Instead, it demands a new social contract, one that aligns innovation with justice, efficiency with accountability, and data-driven progress with human dignity. Only through coordinated efforts among lawmakers, regulators, businesses, and civil society can the promise of AI be reconciled with the rights and values of those it aims to serve.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Students' Needs and Expectations in ESP Classes: A Case Study

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Abstract:

In the context of our globalised world and people's constant search for high-qualified, well-paid jobs, English teaching and learning are nowadays, maybe more than ever, focused on reaching very specific goals. Based on the characteristics and requirements of the target situation, the English for Specific Purposes course is commonly designed according to students' needs, focusing on developing those skills which will enable them to successfully integrate in future communities of practice. The aim of the present study is to analyse learners' expectations when acquiring English as a foreign language, related to the requirements of their professional careers. The focus group consists of students at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, University of Craiova, Romania. The analysis is based on a survey among students in the first year of studies, and is meant to offer valuable guidance to a course design that meets the highlighted needs. As a method, we resort to a questionnaire that students received at the beginning of the academic year, followed by an interpretation of the data.

Key words: *ESP, needs analysis, productive skills, receptive skills, target situation*

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Introduction

The fall of communism in 1989 was a major turning point in the history of Eastern Europe. One of the first measures taken at the time was the opening of geographical borders with major consequences for Romania and its neighbouring countries. The freedom to travel enabled people to work and/or study abroad, and at the same time attracted foreign investors who were interested in Romania's economic potential. The country soon became part of the globalised world, and since then it has witnessed a great expansion of its economy, education, technology and international relations. All these developments have brought into focus the necessity of speaking English, as the accepted international language of global exchange in business, science, technology, research etc. (Kim, 2008: 5-6; Dudley-Evans & St John, 2012: 19; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 6). Researchers have pointed out that: "The general effect of all this development was to exert pressure on the language teaching profession to deliver the required goods." (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 7) Thus, there emerged English for Specific Purposes (ESP) which, unlike General English, is concerned with the language of specific professional communities, that is, "the language of a particular discipline as it is used" (Bocanegra-Valle, 2010:142).

The academic education system in Romania was quick to respond to those new requirements, and in the 1990s introduced in its curricula courses of ESP in order to cater for the needs of future professionals who use the language in particular work-related contexts. ESP has become "a major activity around the world today" (Robinson, 1991: 1) and Romanian universities are well anchored into this activity.

Given the paramount importance of learners' needs in designing ESP courses, this paper focuses on finding and examining learning needs and expectations based on a survey among students registered in the 1st year of studies at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, at the University of Craiova, Romania. It starts by mapping the territory of investigation, that is, by presenting a general theoretical overview of needs analysis with the aim of providing background knowledge on the topic. It then delves into an in-depth analysis of the questionnaire that was given to the students, and its findings, in order to clearly determine and subsequently interpret the specific needs and expectations of the target group. Finally, the conclusions are drawn on the data provided by the survey.

Needs analysis: a literature review

The famous quotation by Hutchinson and Waters – "Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 8) – which became the guiding principle of ESP, emphasises the role of learners' needs in establishing what to teach and how to teach in any ESP course. It is widely agreed that needs analysis is the starting point for designing syllabuses, courses, materials, as well as the most appropriate teaching methods (Higgins, 1966; Strevens, 1977; Coffey, 1984), being linked to "the core mission of preparing students to use English in their target contexts" (Hyon, 2018: 3).

Researchers have emphasised that the concept of needs is a fairly large umbrella (Jordan, 2012: 22; Robinson, 1991: 7), its definition being broadened with experience and practice. Therefore, in order to clarify some of its myriad interpretations, we shall look at the most prominent approaches to needs analysis, namely target-situation analysis,

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present-situation analysis and learning-centred approaches, that address different meanings or types of “needs”, as well as employ various other terms for “needs”.

Target-situation analysis

This type of analysis, devised by Munby in 1978, focuses on what students need to know at the end of a language course. Concerned with a communicative approach to syllabus design, he created a “Communication Needs Processor” which comprised a set of questions about key communication aspects, such as topics, participants, medium etc., in order to collect information of the target language needs. He provided lists of required micro-skills and micro-functions that can be used as checklists for the subsequent syllabus (Munby, 1978: 4). From this perspective, needs refer to learners' ability to understand and produce the linguistic features of the target situation, such as the ability to understand indirect speech.

Munby's work is considered fundamental in the development of ESP; yet, it was later criticised for showing “the ultimate sterility of a language-centred approach to needs analysis” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 54). Another criticism concerned “the language items chosen for practice” which were derived from social English, rather than the real language in use (Jordan, 2012: 24).

Present-situation analysis

This approach, designed by Richterich and Chancerel in 1977, focuses on establishing learners' present situation, that is, the level of their language proficiency at the beginning of the course, and compare it to the target situation. “The gap between what the learners' actual needs are and what should be taught to them” (Brindley, 1989: 56) is commonly referred to as “the training gap” which, once identified, informs future teaching and learning. Presenting this type of needs analysis, Jordan points out that the methods of collecting the data are questionnaires, surveys and interviews, and the information is provided by the students themselves, the teaching institution and the “user institution”, for instance the learners' future place of work (Jordan, 2012: 24). The final outcome is a picture of learners' strengths and weaknesses in terms of language skills and learning experiences.

Learning-centred approaches

The advocates of the learning-centred approach were Hutchinson and Waters (1987). They reconsidered target needs, sub-dividing them into *necessities*, *lacks* and *wants*. The necessities, also called “objective needs”, are determined by the target situation; they represent “what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 55). “Lacks” point to the gap between the target proficiency and the learners' existing proficiency. According to Jordan, “the necessities that the learner lacks can form the basis of the language syllabus: this is often referred to as *deficiency analysis*” (Jordan, 2012: 26).

The sub-division of “wants” brings into focus the subjective dimension of needs analysis. In spite of the objective indications of what the necessities and the lacks are, learners may have different views which “will conflict with the perception of other interested parties: course designers, sponsors, teachers” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 56). As it is often the case, such personal needs are “devalued”, as they are considered “wants or desires” (Berwick, 1989: 55), in other words, somehow “flimsy” or “whimsical”. Jo McDonough speaks of *wants*, *demands*, or *expectations*, all subjective factors related to

the individual learner which appear to cloud the goal-oriented profile of needs analysis. From this perspective, teachers may find that “their target specification seems to break down with a group of students who **want** to learn a variety of English [...], **demand** that their programme be set up in a particular way because they have certain expectations of the whole teaching-learning process that they bring with them, and they **estimate** their own strengths and weaknesses according to certain criteria” (McDonough, 1984: 35).

Considering that the ESP journey is not so much about the starting point (lacks) and the initial destination (targets), but about the route, Hutchinson and Waters argue for a *learning-centred approach* which emphasises “what the learner needs to do in order to study” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 54). It is a step forward in needs analysis, as it stresses the importance of finding the way to get learners from the starting point to the destination.

The Case Study

The purpose of the study

The purpose of the present study is to offer valuable insights into both teaching and designing a successful ESP course which meets participants’ needs and expectations. Its goal is to determine learners’ actual needs when it comes to the acquisition of English as a foreign language and its use in specific situations. The study was undertaken at the beginning of the academic year 2024-2025, so that the respondents’ answers become relevant to the design of the ESP course, in terms of topics, materials and teaching techniques.

Participants

The focus group of the present study consists of 1st year students, majoring in Business Administration and Electrical Engineering at the University of Craiova, Romania. From the total of 125 participants, 46 students study Business English, and 79 English for Engineering, all of them attending full-time programmes at the university.

Concerning the age of the respondents, 106 students are between 18 and 22 years old (84.8%), 8 students (6.4%) are aged 23 to 27, while 11 students (8.8%) are older than 27. The majority of students are attending university for the first time, while the others either follow a second academic specialisation, or already work for local or national companies, and need an academic degree to get promoted in their careers.

Description of the questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of ten structured and unstructured questions which target both the objective and subjective needs of learners. The beginning of the questionnaire gathers personal information of respondents: name, age, gender and field of study. The main part includes questions related to students’ background information, as well as their needs and expectations in terms of skills to improve, activities useful to their training, the importance of developing communication skills, preferred learning styles and topics they are mostly interested in. According to Herdnon, “instruction lacks personal relevance” (Herdnon, 1987:11) so, at the end of the questionnaire, respondents are asked to offer their perspective on how an ESP course should be designed so as to be better shaped on their expectations.

The majority of questions are closed-ended, offering limited response options, including multiple-choice, or rating scales questions for the teacher to be able to gather

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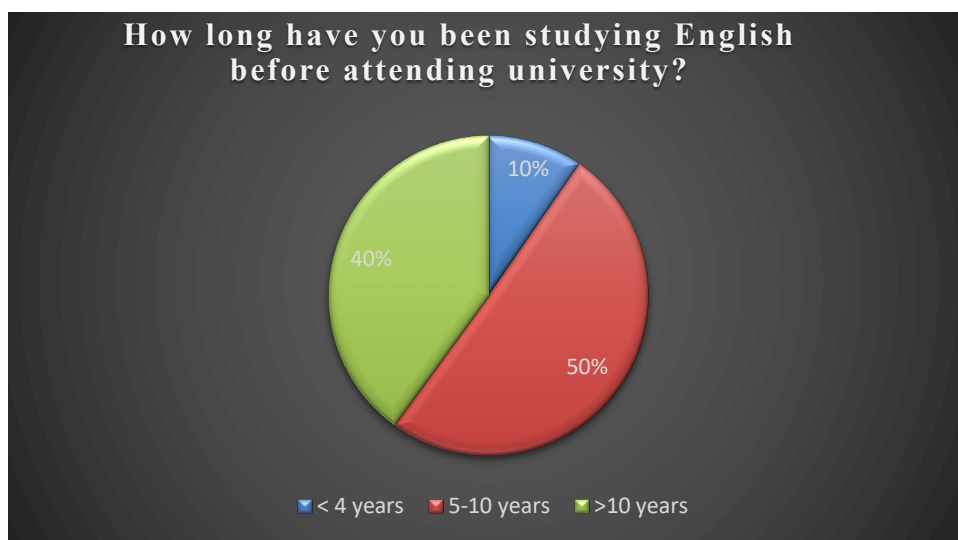
valuable quantitative data in a clear and easy way to interpret. Such questions are of help in pinpointing specific language skills or tasks that learners need or expect to improve while attending the course. Even if they lack the depth of open-ended questions, they represent an efficient and clear tool to guide curriculum development based on concrete learner needs.

The open-ended questions help teachers capture new ideas and insights which might not have been anticipated. They target real-life situations students face and help teachers identify unanticipated behaviours or needs.

Presentation of main results

The first item of the questionnaire refers to the length of time students previously learned the foreign language. Such question is relevant to the teacher since he/she might grasp an idea of how long the students have been familiar to the language, thus estimating their potential level of proficiency. From the total number of respondents, 63 students (50.4%) have been learning English between 5 and 10 years, followed by 50 students (40%) who have been studying it for more than 10 years and only 12 learners (9.6%) who attended English language classes for less than 4 years. Thus, it is expected that most students have a level of proficiency higher than pre-intermediate. The results are predictable to the common situation of the Romanian education system, where most pupils and students start learning English from the secondary school at the latest.

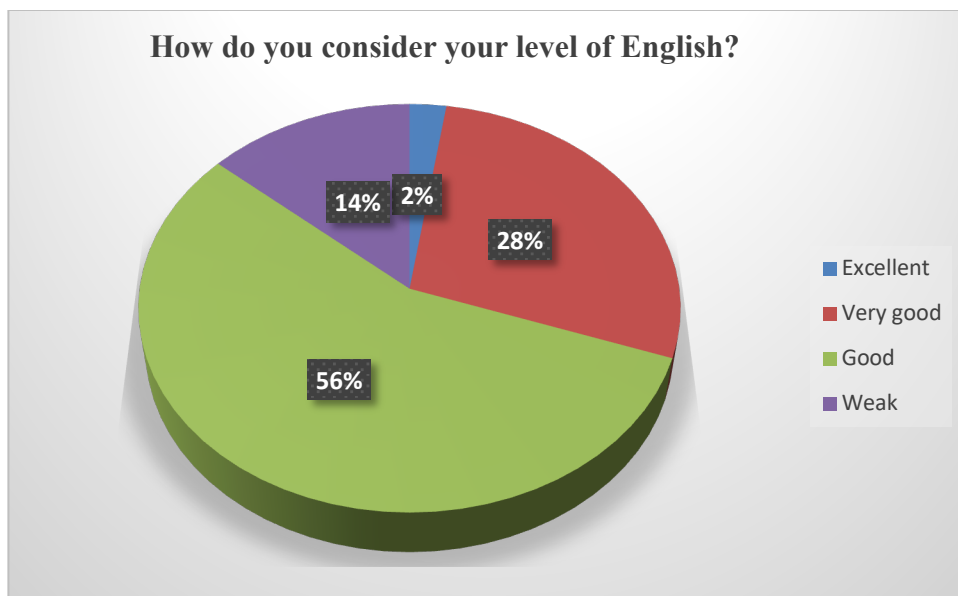
Figure 1. Percentage results for question 1



The second item asks respondents to self-assess their level of knowledge of the foreign language. By doing this, besides the awareness of their level of proficiency in English, students can set achievable goals and become encouraged to take control over their learning journey. It also helps teachers to foster a student-centred course, assign tasks related to learners' level, therefore, supporting differentiated learning. Figure 2 shows that 56% of respondents graded their level as good, 28% as very good, 13.6% as weak and a

minority of 2.4% as excellent. The majority of students tend to be unsure about their language abilities due to various factors, such as their desire to be perfectionists or the lack of a formal test result. Therefore, it is advisable for teachers to give students standardized level tests so that, together with the self-assessment, to have a clear picture of the situation.

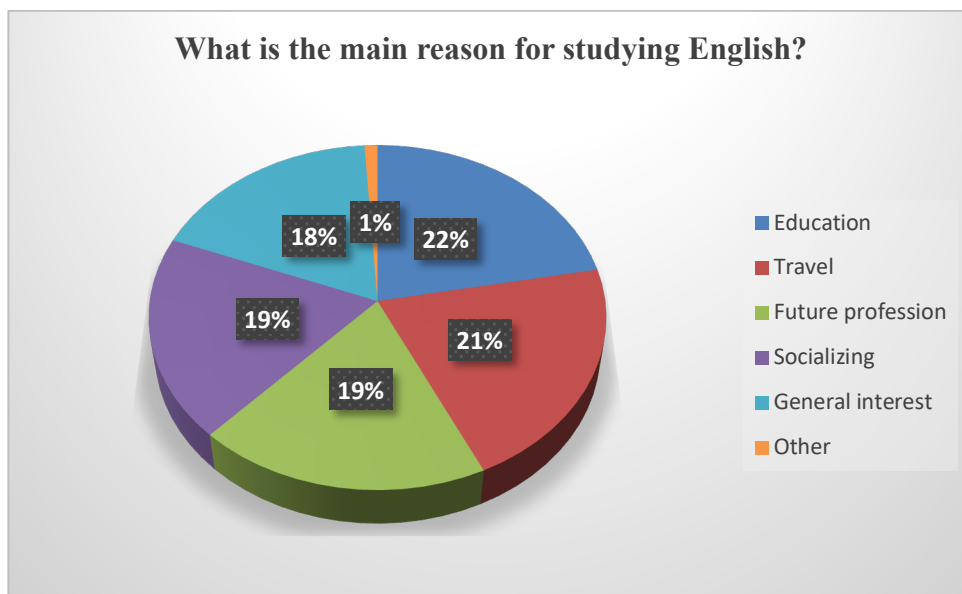
Figure 2. Percentage results for question 2



The third question refers to the main reason for studying English. Respondents are asked to choose from a series of possibilities, like learning English for educational purposes, out of general interest for the language, as a necessity in their future professions, for travelling reasons so that they can conduct conversations with people abroad, for socializing as well as to give other reasons besides those already stated. According to their answers, as presented in Figure 3 below, education is ranked first in their motives for learning the language with a percentage of approximately 22%, closely followed by travel (approximately 21%), future profession and socialising, each with 19%, and general interest 18%. Only 4 students (approximately 1%) stated other reasons, like being passionate about this particular language. As seen from the chart below, there is no prevailing reason in learners' desire to acquire the foreign language, their motivations being almost equally split, all being of importance in their quest to study the language.

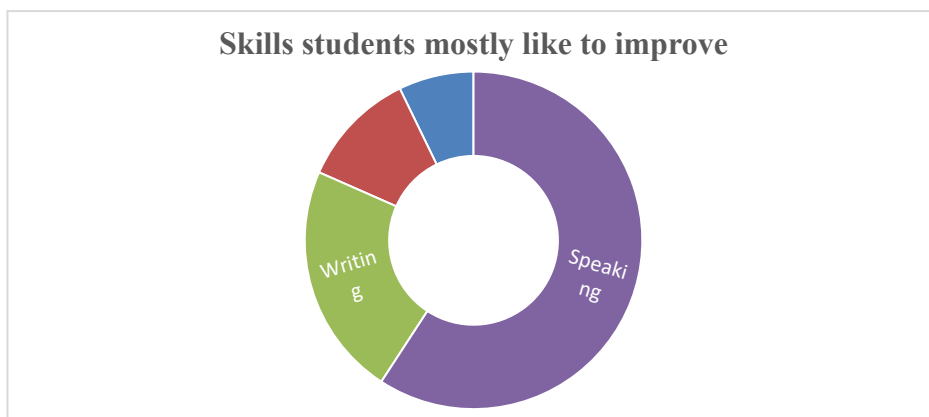
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Figure 3. Percentage results for question 3



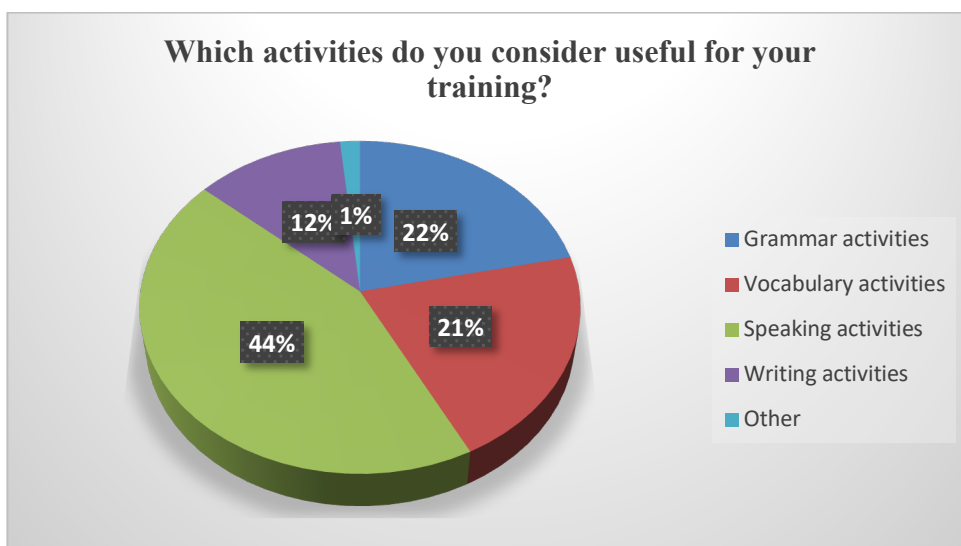
The next question targets the skills students are mostly interested to improve. The respondents are asked to rank both receptive and productive skills in the order they consider important to develop during the English course. Reading, writing, listening and speaking skills are to be numbered from 1 to 4, 1 representing the least and 4 the most important. As a result, 74 students (59.2%) are mostly interested in developing their speaking skills, 28 learners (22.4%) ranked the writing skills as the most important to develop, 14 respondents (11.2%) are drawn to developing their listening skills, while only 9 students (7.2%) are keen on improving reading skills. As it can be seen from Figure 4 below, speaking skills are perceived as being the most important to be improved probably because most learners understand the need for fluent communication nowadays; thus, the desire to become better so that they can function successfully in both their private and professional lives. According to Rao, “among the four key language skills, speaking is deemed to be the most important skill in learning a foreign or second language” (Rao, 2019:8). The fact that writing skills rank second on respondents’ areas to be improved is also explained by their awareness of the fact that, in their future professional lives, they will have to transmit their messages in writing such as in e-mails, reports, portfolios etc. Thus, it can be inferred from the answers that the focus should be on the productive skills due to learners’ need to actively and accurately generate language.

Figure 4. Results for question 4



Based on students' past experiences when it comes to the acquisition of English as a foreign language, question 5 refers to the course activities learners find useful for their training. It is a question relevant to the teacher in the sense of choosing the activities students consider of utter importance in the process of studying the language successfully. Students are asked to rank grammar, vocabulary, speaking and writing activities from 1 as being the least useful to 4 which is considered as being the most purposeful to their education. Thus, speaking activities are perceived as being the most useful, with a percentage of 44%, followed by grammar (21.6%) and vocabulary (20.8%) activities, while writing tasks are useful for only 12% of the respondents. A minority of 1.6% chooses other activities as important.

Figure 5. Percentage results for question 5

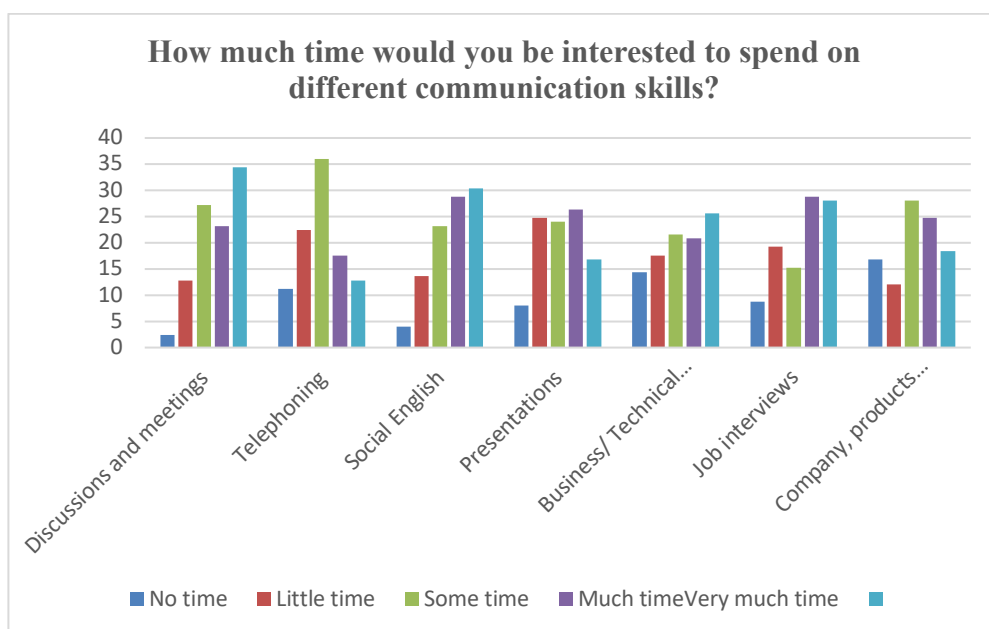


In the area of ESP, communication skills represent the core of language competence. Learners use English in specific contexts, such as business meetings or

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technical presentations, so they need to be able to express themselves clearly and adapt vocabulary, tone and register to the situation involved. Their future career promotions highly depend on their ability to participate in discussions, presentations or interviews in the foreign language. At the same time, they should be able to switch the register from formality to informality depending on the context. Question 6 in the questionnaire addresses the area of communication ability and how interested students are to improve specific skills in given contexts, such as discussions and meetings, telephoning someone in English, social interactions, formal presentations, business and technical reports, job interviews, or providing information about companies and their products.

Figure 6. Percentage results for question 6



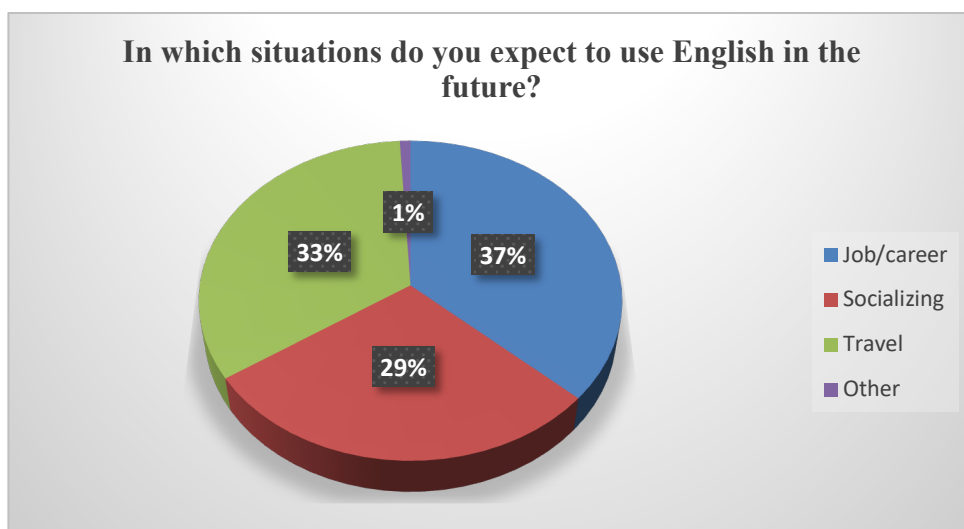
As it can be seen from the figure above, learners would spend a lot of time to improve their communication skills in discussions and meetings, social English, business and technical reports and job interviews. At the other end, they do not seem much interested in improving their skills when it comes to how to offer information on companies and products, or practising speaking on the phone in English.

The next question of the survey is especially important to the teacher in terms of the topics to be chosen throughout the academic year, topics which are of particular interest to students. By finding out their preferences, teachers can add or remove certain themes in their course design to meet the wants of learners. Question 7 addresses the issue, by asking respondents to choose from a pre-defined list the topics they would be interested in, even add their own themes if necessary. As for the learners studying Business English, management was ranked first in their preferences with approximately 54.35% of the whole, closely followed by sales and marketing (50% of the whole) and international trade (43.48% of the whole). Finance was ranked fourth (39.13% of a total of 100%), while recent business news seemed of lower importance to them, only 26.09%. Students also added the theme of accounting as interesting for them in a very low percentage. Students

studying engineering, ranked first the topic of new and future technology (68.35% out of a total of 100%), followed by current technology with a proportion of 54.43% of the whole and electrical circuits with 53.16% of the whole. The topic of information technology is also preferred in a percentage of 40.51% out of 100%. Of lower interest, there is the theme of materials and products, preferred by only 34.18% out of a total of 100%.

Question 8 refers to the expectations of students regarding the use of English language in the future. It covers contexts such as using the foreign language to socialise with various people, for their careers or for travelling purposes. At the same time, respondents can add further situations when they expect to use the knowledge of the language.

Figure 7. Percentage results for question 8



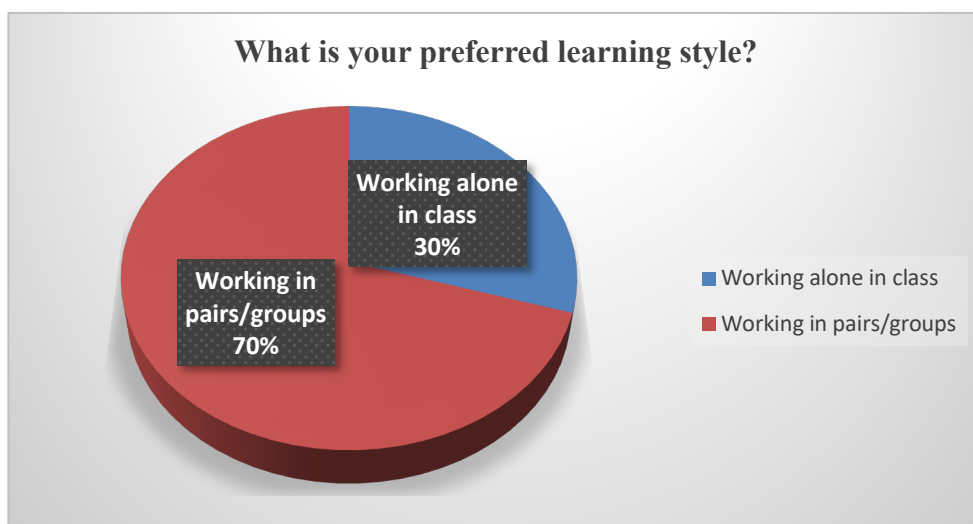
According to Figure 7 above, all contexts seem to meet respondents' expectations for the future. 37% of students predict the future use of English in their professions, 33% will use it for travelling purposes, and 29% expect to use the language in order to socialise. A lower percentage anticipates the use of English in other situations, such as for Erasmus exchange programmes at the university, a short-term plan.

Item 9 is an open-ended question which asks the respondents to enumerate sources of information they find useful in their field of interest. Students' answers help teachers become aware of the means students resort to when they need to find further information on a given subject, and which sources they usually find reliable. Most answers are connected to the World Wide Web, be it specific platforms, programmes or sites they regularly access to find out specific information, or as a further helpful tool in their education. Respondents mentioned Wikipedia and ChatGPT frequently, alongside social media as tools they resort to. At the same time, more traditional means were added, such as books, dictionaries and scientific articles. Some of them even mentioned mass media, particularly TV news and documentaries, which they find helpful in further adding knowledge to their field of interest.

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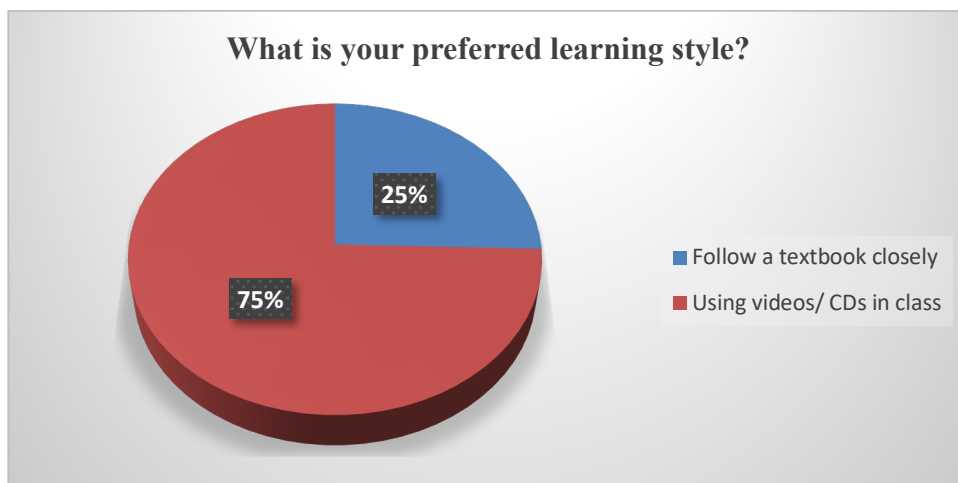
The goal of our respondents is to improve their English language knowledge in order to perform successfully in their future careers, business and engineering in this case. The goal of the teacher is to meet their expectations, to help them achieve goals, therefore tailoring courses to match their preferences. Being aware of the preferred learning style of students helps teachers choose appropriate tasks that suit different learning styles (visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic), so that students remain motivated and engaged throughout the classes. The entire learning process thus becomes more personalised and efficient. Question 10 investigates different learning styles and approaches which respondents find useful in better retaining terminology and communication protocols. Respondents are asked to tick the option which they find useful in three different situations: working alone in class versus working in pairs and groups, follow a textbook closely versus the use of videos and CDs in class, explanations in English versus explanations in the native language. As presented in Figure 8 below, a majority of 70% of students consider working in pairs or groups more useful than doing tasks alone in class (30%). The result highlights the need of active, collaborative learning, students feeling more comfortable working together and even helping their peers, transforming the process into a more enjoyable one. Pair and group activities generally encourage all students to be involved and not feel uncomfortable when making mistakes, or not knowing how to solve a particular task. It is a more relaxed means of learning which involves professional interactions as well as improvement of knowledge and fluency.

Figure 8. Percentage results for question 10, part 1



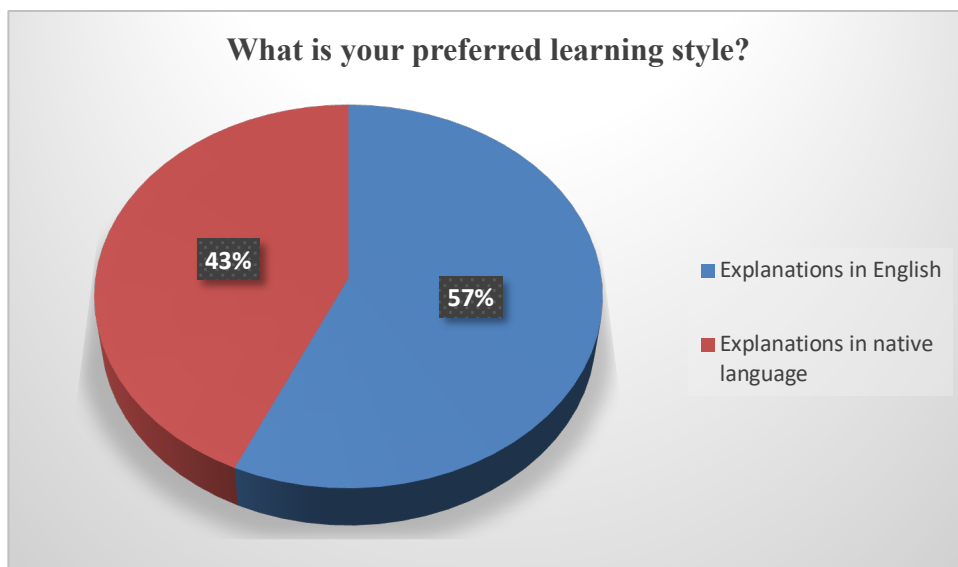
The majority of respondents (75%) prefer the use of multimedia to support the teaching and learning process versus the more traditional materials like textbooks (25%), as shown in Figure 9 below. This is not a surprising result since it has been known that visuals and sounds generally capture attention better than a text alone. In a world dominated by AI or video games, the use of such materials breaks the monotony of a traditional approach, making learning more relevant and practical.

Figure 9. Percentage results for question 10, part 2



The last part of question 10 discusses if learners prefer the explanations to be offered in English or in their native language. As presented in Figure 10 below, 57% of respondents prefer the explanations to be conducted in the foreign language, while 43% resort to the use of native language when it comes to clarifications. If we take into consideration the fact that the respondents are all students in the 1st year of their academic studies and they are at the beginning of their journey into somehow a new field for them, that of ESP, it seems natural for quite a lot of them to feel scared of the unknown, thus preferring the teacher to use their native language when needed.

Figure 10. Percentage results for question 10, part 3.



The study ends with an optional, open-answer question “Is there anything else you would like to share with your teacher to help him/her plan your course?” where students are encouraged to express their views on how a successful course should be

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tailored to meet their wants and keep them motivated. Besides the focus on specialised vocabulary, most students expect the use of interactive activities, games, videos, embedded in real-life situations. At the same time, students visualise a close relationship with the teacher, which is of importance not only in achieving academic success, but also in building confidence and self-esteem.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, a number of important facts could be found:

- According to the Romanian educational system, most students in the 1st year of their academic studies acquired English in schools for approximately ten years;
- The self-assessment level of the learners is equal to, or higher than pre-intermediate;
- There is no main reason for studying English, but a variety of motives of almost equal importance such as future careers, educational purposes, or socialising and travelling in their free time;
- Students mostly want to improve their productive skills due to the need to actively and accurately generate language;
- Speaking activities are highly important in the process of studying the language successfully;
- Students are mostly interested in improving vocabulary, tone and register for discussions and meetings, social English and job interviews;
- Of a variety of topics, students majoring in Business are mostly interested in topics such as management and marketing, while those studying engineering are drawn to themes like future and current technology;
- Students expect to use English in the future in a variety of contexts, such as careers, socialising and travelling;
- When they need further information on a specific subject, most learners nowadays resort to the use of the Internet, rather than the traditional approach of libraries or books;
- In terms of preferred learning styles, most students are in favour of interactive activities, working in pairs or groups, as well as being given explanations in the target language.

Any ESP course should be based on needs analysis which represents a crucial tool to tailor content, set proper learning objectives, choose materials, activities and tasks which meet students' wants, and last but not least, offers teachers the possibility to know their students' aspirations and desires.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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Students' Needs and Expectations in ESP Classes: A Case Study

Appendix

Needs Analysis Questionnaire

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Field of study:

1. How long have you been studying English before attending university?

.....

2. Do you consider your level of English as:

Excellent

Good

Very good

Weak

3. What is the main reason for studying English?

Education	Travel
General interest	Socializing
Future profession	Other:

4. Which skills would you mostly like to improve? (Number from 1 to 4; from 1 – the least to 4 – the most)

Reading	Writing
Listening	Speaking

5. Which activities do you consider useful for your training? (Rank from 1- the least to 4 – the most)

Grammar activities	
Vocabulary activities	
Speaking activities	
Writing activities	
Other:	

6. How much time would you be interested to spend on different communication skills? (Tick a number from 0 – no time; 1- little time; 2- some time; 3-much time to 4 – very much time)

	0	1	2	3	4
Discussions and meetings					
Telephoning					
Social English					
Presentations					
Business/ Technical reports					
Job interviews					
Company, products information					

7. Which topics are you interested in? Choose from the list below. You can add topics of your own at the end.

<i>Business Topics</i>		<i>Technical Topics</i>	
Management		Current technology	
Sales & Marketing		New/ Future technology	
Recent business news		Materials & products	
Finance		Electrical circuits	
International Trade		Information Technology	
Other:		Other:	

8. In which situations do you expect to use English in the future?

Job/ career	Travel
Socializing	Other:

9. Which sources of information do you find useful in your field of interest?

.....

10. What is your preferred learning style? Tick the option which suits you best in each situation.

Students’ Needs and Expectations in ESP Classes: A Case Study

1a	Working alone in class	
1b	Working in pairs or groups	
2a	Follow a textbook closely	
2b	Using videos/ CDs in class	
3a	With explanations in English	
3b	With explanations in native language	

Is there anything else you would like to share with your teacher to help him/her plan your course?

.....

.....

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.....

.....

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ORIGINAL PAPER

The Labyrinth of Technical English

Cristina Maria Andrei¹⁾

Abstract:

ESP is a complex matter to deal with for teachers as well as for students. It involves effort and commitment on both sides, a great deal of free time necessary for training, seriousness and more than anything else motivation; technical English is not just a long list of words to be learnt by heart or complicated set phrases, it is a mix of everyday English vocabulary and conversations that are commonly met in technical contexts. Acquiring the terms in the field of expertise is vital, but only used in appropriate authentic situations may help learners get the real meaning and may help them to handle them correctly. One key aspect is to master the ability to adapt the knowledge from the class to the related work field opportunities. Useful materials are hard to create since the English teacher has no connection to the technical field, thus a collaboration with other teachers is a positive aspect that should be taken into consideration. Students may also contribute with relevant information in the class generating a bond with the teacher and a friendly learning environment where everybody plays a role, brings a contribution and offers support. It may be perceived as a team work coordinated by a teacher in the role of the leader. However, recently, a lot of specialised books for teaching technical English have appeared on the market, facilitating the entire teaching process.

Keywords: *technical English, effort, motivation, teacher support*

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1.Designing a Course for ESP

Teaching ESP is hard work because it involves more than just basic English knowledge. Technical vocabulary is difficult to acquire and to be understood properly without being skilled in the field; thus, putting it into practice means creating a wide range of exercises that are intended to repeat and use specific terms until they become not only familiar to students but are inherently absorbed.

Searching for real contexts and adapting them to the level of each class, as well as coordinating all sorts of tasks based on the technical vocabulary present in them, needs effort, dedication and patience.

“As ESP professionals, we must be prepared to find out how language is used in real world situations and teach that language. (...) We must be ready to develop courses that teach authentic language from many different fields, based on accurate needs analysis and appropriate materials and methodologies. We must acknowledge the fact that much of the language that our students need will not be found in any course books or pre-packaged materials; therefore, we must be willing to prepare our own”. (Smoak, 2003:27)

The design of the course is complex and should be focused on the current needs of the students and their prospects of employment. Only this way a course can arouse the students’ interest and enhance their desire to study more and to become effective communicators. Moreover, it should be dynamic, students being actively involved in a wide range of activities either individually or in teams. The language teacher has an essential role, that of leading the entire learning process and encouraging students to attain their maximum potential.

“ESP focuses on when, where and why learners need the language either in study or workplace contexts. Decisions about what to teach, and sometimes how to teach (...) are informed by descriptions of how language is used in the particular contexts the learners will work or study in. There is thus a strong focus in ESP on language as “situated language use”. (Basturkmen, 2010:8)

Teaching materials may be sketchy, outdated or not designed for micro specializations. The teacher may somehow be forced to work on designing and “tailoring” the materials in order to provide students with real up-to-date case studies. Moreover, it should also be based on a correct and deep analysis of the students’ needs for their future professions. Specialized language is a “must” but what about speaking, listening, writing or reading skills? Which are the most used skills in their upcoming jobs? Which skill will be the most useful for them? Should the teacher focus on speaking? Presentations and meetings are mainly related to oral communication and may need more emphasis on the part of the teacher. Writing could be practised but the corrector may be used for checking any possible errors.

Lately, making up a language course for specific purposes has become a lower priority than other issues. Since English has widened its horizons, in terms of becoming an international language of communication, a lot of books specifically designed to teach ESP have come out on the market. There are some areas that haven’t been covered completely, especially in the case of micro specializations but work is still in progress and a wide range of materials are available for most major technical areas of expertise. Therefore, the effort of the teacher has somehow diminished, in the sense that the emphasis has switched from sketching a course to identifying the right materials, adding extra activities for developing and deepening the ones existing in the students’ books. However, in most cases, the teacher has to blend different styles of teaching as

well as different books to suit the necessities and interests of the students. Mixed level groups require an additional effort and synthesized materials to adjust to everyone's needs. Thus, basically, there are two possible approaches to teaching; one is keeping to the limits of a strict course that is handed in to the students in advance and from which the teacher never deviates; the students can see the structure and be mentally prepared for what follows; the other alternative is opting for a flexible style where the teacher can adapt some materials or make changes so that they fit the students' interests and activate their sense of engagement. No matter the type of teaching you choose, "fixed" or "flexible", the basic idea is that it should be a challenging one.

"To stimulate and motivate, materials need to be challenging yet achievable, to offer new ideas and information whilst being grounded in the learners' experience and knowledge; to encourage fun and creativity. The input must contain concepts and/or knowledge that are familiar but it must also offer something new, a reason to communicate, to get involved. The exploitation needs to match how the input would be used outside the learning situation and take account of language learning needs. The purpose and the connection to the learners' reality need to be clear".

(Dudley, 1998:172)

The materials are crucial in the case of students that are not surrounded by native English speakers and where the textbook and the interaction with the teacher are the main sources of input that can provide them with the real language. Materials should not be rigid; on the contrary, they should enhance the students' ability to think and use the knowledge acquired. If learned mechanically, the notions cannot be used effectively.

2. Has the interest in ESP increased? Are ESP courses more motivating than General English courses?

The interest in ESP courses has increased a lot due to the demand of technical workers on the labor market; thus, the necessity of having appropriate materials and approaches to teaching them, is obvious. ESP students have a precise target and, therefore, they are more channeled to involve in activities that support their objective: that of mastering the specific vocabulary related to their field of knowledge and to be able to put it into practice when necessary. ESP books are more complex because they include both general English and the specialized language. A technical student needs to have a general English language background in order to be able to communicate effectively. The aim of ESP courses is not to teach long lists of specific terms but to get students used to the terminology in real life situations so that they can place themselves in various contexts that could be part of their future jobs. Technical students tend to be more focused on achieving proficiency because they are highly motivated by the prospect of a job and they are more mature and concerned about the difficulty of getting a high level of the English language. Therefore, most ESP courses are designed to meet their needs and to support a gradual process of learning.

"Theoretical arguments can be made as to why ESP courses should be more effective than general ESL courses. It can be argued that because ESP courses cater to students' interests and needs, they are more likely to engender high levels of motivation. It can be assumed that students will be more interested in topics and texts related to their work or study areas. If students are more motivated, then learning is more likely to occur. It can also be argued that ESP courses are more efficient because they have more limited aims than general ESL courses. Because ESP courses are based on needs analysis, the learning objectives are more highly proscribed than would be the case in general ESL

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courses. Thus, it is not surprising that learning outcomes may be perceived more favorably.” (Basturkmen, 2010:11)

It is clear that technical students rely on specific terms that are commonly met in their daily work situations but basic English notions are inevitable. English for Specific Purposes and General English cannot be completely separated since technical processes and terms can be explained by using general English. Whereas technical students need general English, general English students don't need technical terms.

“Although ESP and general English differ on many points such as vocabulary and content, ESP students are usually adults who already have some acquaintance with English and are learning the language in order to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform job-related functions.” (Nalany, 2020:118)

Technical vocabulary may be rough and unattractive most of the time. Finding enjoyable activities to teach such vocabulary items is a challenge and making them even more appealing for the students seems like an impossible aim to get. Pronunciation may be difficult and the whole context may induce a feeling of anxiety. How can a teacher create a pleasant leaning environment and support technical vocabulary acquisition?

Lack of Restricted Subject Information

Perhaps one of the most frequent obstacles when teaching ESP is restricted knowledge of specialized notions (e.g. finance, informatics, engineering, s.o.) which may go both ways. Neither the teacher, nor the students may have solid understanding of the specific terms. Some notions are “met” in time, at the workplace and the students may not be familiarized with them during the academic year. For the teacher, a simple translation of such terms is not enough to grasp “the core essence” of them. This may generate a lack of confidence on both sides and may create “a gap” in communication.

3. Teacher's role in ESP

Students that study technical English are generally adults who are “constrained” by the job requirements or young people in search of a better perspective in their future career. Adults are not easy to deal with. They already have their personalities shaped and tend to be judgmental. Their expectations are high; they want to achieve immediate success and manifest strong commitment at the beginning. Being more aware of the implications a foreign language may have on their lives, they are willing to pay a huge amount of time and effort to obtain perceivable results. In time, the situation may change; some may see the experience a wonderful adventure on the realm of knowledge and will push their limits to attain success, others may find it too difficult to cope with, especially when the other responsibilities overwhelm them, and have the tendency to give up. Moreover, each person possesses a certain set of skills for acquiring foreign languages; some just find the process of learning languages effortless and interesting, while others may simply lose themselves in the grammar rules or may encounter difficulties when having to utter an oral speech or taking part in discussions with their peers on proposed topics. The teacher should be there for both sides but more supportive for those who feel discouraged.

“Every student has a different ability when learning a second language. Some grasp it easily and develop a sympathy to it, others struggle and have difficulties which could lead to being demotivated and lack of interest. This leads to the question what an English teacher can and has to do, in order to teach students successfully. Nowadays

teachers are supposed not only to educate, but also to create a suitable environment for students". (Keller, 2011:3)

There are a lot of tricks that a teacher could use to enhance the learning experience. They are flexible but together can create a positive environment for all the people in the class:

- *maintain your students' interest at a high level all the time; the worst "enemy" of the teacher is "boredom". It's a struggle nowadays to keep students interested during classes because the temptations are high and, in the case of adults, other factors such as tiredness from work or stress with daily lives influence their coordination and focus during lessons.

"Students get bored easily. They expect the teacher to plan her lessons so that learning becomes interesting, challenging and varied. They expect the teacher to teach in a way that is appropriate to the level being taught, and to the individuals in the class. They expect the teacher to adapt and supplement the course book being used and definitely not to rely on it as the sole resource. In short, they expect the teacher to know to teach effectively, and for the teacher to be stimulating. "

(Riddle, 2014:11)

- *provide lessons that keep the students' attention at a high level is beneficial; make them attractive by using plenty of visuals that can help them easily associate technical words to various sketches and drawings.

- *be flexible when it comes to their professional needs; for adults, learning a foreign language is a voluntary act in most cases which is somehow connected to certain aspects such as: job requirements, a strong desire to develop themselves, a hobby (for pleasure and fun), etc.

- *be there when they don't have enough confidence to perform tasks; many adults experience a sort of trauma when having to speak in a foreign language. Assessment is perceived with a higher level of maturity than children do, so it may be seen as a source of stress not as an indicator of progress.

- *don't let other students in the class say malicious remarks regarding their classmates or perform any other kind of "mockery" such as: laughing at their peers' mistakes or manifesting an arrogant attitude in the class; there is no room for making jokes on any possible attempt to use the language either in exercises or other types of conversations

- *remove any possible sign of nervousness; controlling personal emotions is a "must"; personal aspects should be left at the entrance of the class; once a teacher is in front of the class, all the eyes are directed towards him/her; a wrong attitude would generate hesitation, lack of understanding, fear of participating at activities and failure; sometimes it's complicated to do it; teachers are not always in the mood, but, starting teaching in a friendly environment is a plus and may remove the initial bad state or may ameliorate it.

- *show that you really love the teaching job; the enthusiasm will be stimulating for the students and will induce a pleasant feeling of fulfillment; they will want to "copy" you, to become just like you;

- *focus on major mistakes and avoid error correction at every single step; this approach will hinder any sign of courage to do certain tasks; shy students will definitely block themselves and will avoid tasks in the future

- *short breaks play a major role; funny elements during a speech help to release tension and create a serene learning environment

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*try to discover the personality of your students, to understand when they are not ready to do something, when they are frustrated, when they need to be left alone, when they have a strong desire to evolve, when they feel sick or simply not in the mood. A teacher is not a psychologist for sure, but identifying some aspects in the students' behavior may be useful for giving a different direction to the lesson.

According to Keller, the roles that an English teacher has to fulfill are numerous from controller to assessor and manager. He/she may be perceived as a resource, participant, investigator and role model.

4. Vocabulary in ESP classes

Teaching vocabulary in ESP implies teaching students the specific vocabulary they need to perform in their specific jobs. Basically, the structure of an English course in ESP classes contains a great deal of general English but specific technical terms are inserted either in short authentic texts or in exercises meant to familiarize students with them and to understand how to use them correctly and efficiently. For the teacher, the hardest part is to find enough time to prepare the lesson. Getting acquainted to technical terms involves using technical dictionaries, specialized books and even the collaboration of a teacher in the technical field. The texts which are extracted from technical books should not be too long or too complicated, otherwise, the learner may feel discouraged and may form an aversion towards English. Once this opinion is created, it is extremely difficult to change it when it comes to adults. They are less "flexible" than children, therefore, the teacher should carefully insert the right "amount" of specialized terms in texts surrounded by speech items that can help students work out their meaning; illustrations may be of great help for visual learners and may give useful for a proper acquisition. This is the "comprehension" stage which is followed by the "production" one which is aimed at putting into practice the information acquired along the way.

When teaching vocabulary for ESP "it is important to distinguish between vocabulary needed for comprehension and that needed for production. In comprehension, deducing the meaning of vocabulary from the context and from the structure of the actual word is the most important method of learning new vocabulary. For production purposes, storage and retrieval are significant. Various techniques have been suggested for storing vocabulary: the use of word association, (...) the use of visual images to help remember a word. (Dudley, 1998:83)

Actually, the ESP vocabulary is mainly formed of:

- Technical terms -specific to a related field of knowledge; for instance: in medicine (orthodontics; cardiovascular); mechanics (automotive; spark plugs); economics (trade; recession; GDP; inflation; tariffs); engineering (stress; velocity; amplifier; circuitry), in computer science (algorithm, bandwidth), etc. Technical terms are complex and they contribute to the development of an efficient communication in a certain specialized area of knowledge.
- Semi-technical words that are commonly met across various disciplines and that maintain or suffer a "change" of meaning; they could be quite tricky because they are used in general English and in specialized languages with a difference in meaning; sometimes they generate confusion and have to be used in contexts to be properly understood; for example: "resolution"(in general English "resolution" refers to a decision while in the IT field it refers to the clarity of an image; "reflect" refers to thinking deeply about something

as a general concept; in physics, “reflect” is used to designate the change of direction the light takes when touching a surface. Semi-technical terms are sometimes surrounded by an appropriate context but they can also be found in isolated language frames in a particular situation or field. Since they have a general meaning and a specific one, they need proper attention and a clear interpretation.

- General academic vocabulary can be found in texts that are used in different professions; they cross the boundaries of several disciplines and they cannot be attributed to just one of them. However, they are inserted in academic research papers and all kinds of reports, essays and other texts. The verb “assess” which refers to “evaluate”, “process”, “to require”, “consistent”, “concept”, “analysis”, “variable”, etc.

How could a teacher make such a list of technical terms attractive for the learners? Is there a magical trick? What are the steps to follow? How can they be remembered in time?

1. Give students a clear definition with no complicated language items; it has to be concise, plain, easy to read and remember. In the business field, GDP refers to “the total value of goods and services produced within a country’s borders”; in engineering “torque” is “a twisted force that tends to cause rotation”, in medicine, “etiology” is the cause of a disease or condition, etc.
2. Use comparisons or correlations to explain something that is unfamiliar to students by using a familiar situation or terms. In economics, “inflation” could be associated with a “balloon” filled with air, in engineering “torque” is like trying to open a bottle or a jar by twisting the lid, in informatics, “complier” is like a translating machine. API is like the menu of a restaurant, etc. Comparisons, correlations, analogies provide students with a better understanding of the terms and they can be retained faster and better.
3. Offer an adequate background situation. It is essential to outline why that specific term has a significance because students will pay more attention to it. In engineering, a torque matters because it is the fundamental force that makes an object to rotate; in economics, GDP matters because it indicates the level of a country’s economic health, in informatics, a complier matters because it translates programming languages, etc.
4. Generate diagrams or just find examples that are connected to reality. The teacher can generate a short explanation of a “torque” and offer examples of how this force influences the movement of an object.
5. Visual images are extraordinary tools for enhancing the acquisition of new vocabulary and most students identify themselves with this technique. Flow charts, semantic maps, mind maps, Venn diagrams and labelled diagrams give the teacher an interactive and appealing method to attract learners.
6. Interactive training through quizzes or matches, even case studies offer learners the chance to brush up on their vocabulary and assimilate it better.
7. Revise the terms at the end of the lesson. It is always an excellent opportunity to identify the terms that were not fixed appropriately.

The above-mentioned steps are just tips for organizing the teaching materials but flexibility remains the key factor. Learners may react more positively to some activities, therefore the teacher should be inclined to use them and also to spot those that are beneficial for the acquisition of the new vocabulary.

5. Attitude in Class

The attitude which the teacher adopts in class is essential for the general learning “climate” as well as the attitude of learners towards their peers and their teacher. ESP teachers generally have to deal with mixed-level classes and wide range of attitudes, since learners are adults. Adults are judgemental with the teacher, with their peers, even with their own abilities. A slight lack of confidence on the part of the teacher regarding the students’ capabilities or not adapting the materials to match their interests can hinder the entire teaching process and the lesson may end up in complete or partial failure. All preconceived assumptions should be removed and the teacher has to place much effort into bringing encouragement in class because learners are different: some are enthusiastic, willing to engage in all sorts of activities, others are apprehensive and need group activities to succumb their fears. With the right positive attitude, the teacher may handle everything successfully. He/she only has to believe in the students’ force to overcome any “psychological” misconceptions.

“When teachers believe in the students’ ability to achieve learning objectives, they can put more effort into bringing the right resources, giving them the necessary support, and thus, contributing to developing academic success. When teachers, by contrast, perceive segments in the classroom as less capable and interpret that supporting them is giving them tasks that challenge their intellectual capacity to a lesser degree, they can mark a gap between capable and incapable, preventing them from interacting as a team, hence reducing the learning possibilities. This is strongly related to the set of assumptions teachers have about teaching English to adults since they tend to believe adults have learning difficulties because of their age, among other factors. This, adult learners may feel uncomfortable and demotivated in class. (Mazandarani, 2024:195)

Students’ degree of achievement is the result of a handful of aspects but, perhaps, the most important one is the way they are perceived by their classmates. Laughing at mistakes, criticizing, ignoring, fostering negativity in class lead to an increased anxiety and reluctance to speak or participate at the proposed activities. The teacher should manage the class by reinforcing the learners in a constructive way, generating enjoyment and relaxation. A comfortable learning environment can remove any form of stress and make everything seem easier, nicer and appealing.

6. Conclusions

Teaching ESP is, undoubtedly, a complex process that implies unique challenges as a result of using specialized language, coping with adult learners and identifying the proper materials. Conceiving, selecting or finding the right teaching support, concentrating on the students’ specific needs and motivations, following the current trends of the job demands, finding ways of teaching difficult and, sometimes, unattractive vocabulary items and presenting all in an optimistic frame are just some of the major concerns that an ESP teacher has to handle. There is no direct or clear strategy to follow, no fixed rules or guidelines. Each and every group of students is different and the outcome is wonderful only if the effort is consensual and constant. In time, with practice and experience, the whole teaching process becomes less complicated and the ESP teacher may discover that, by teaching specialized language, the structure of the lessons changes continually. It's a profession where there is no time to get bored; you improve your knowledge at a fast pace every time you work on designing a course and you have numberless possibilities of putting the new vocabulary skills into practice. Indeed, the amount of work is tremendous but the results may be satisfactory or even great if both

parts: the teacher and the student are implicated. It's a team work, not an individual one. Common effort can produce an excellent outcome. There are a lot of other details to be discussed but this is a wide topic which needs further research.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

The role of macroprudential regulation in global financial stability

Dumitru Cinciulescu¹⁾

Abstract:

The global financial system has witnessed significant turbulence over the past decades, underscoring the critical need for robust regulatory frameworks to ensure financial stability. This article examines the role of macroprudential regulation in safeguarding global financial stability, focusing on its mechanisms, effectiveness, and challenges in a rapidly evolving financial landscape. Macroprudential regulation, which aims to mitigate systemic risks that could destabilize the entire financial system, has gained prominence since the 2008 financial crisis. By addressing interconnected risks across institutions, markets, and economies, it complements traditional microprudential approaches that focus on individual entities.

The study explores key macroprudential tools, such as capital buffers, countercyclical capital requirements, and liquidity regulations, and evaluates their impact on reducing systemic vulnerabilities. It highlights the importance of cross-border coordination in implementing these policies, as financial systems are increasingly interconnected, and risks often transcend national boundaries. It also discusses the challenges faced by regulators, including the difficulty of identifying systemic risks in real time, the potential for regulatory arbitrage, and the trade-offs between financial stability and economic growth.

Drawing on case studies from various jurisdictions, the research underscores the effectiveness of macroprudential policies in curbing excessive credit growth, asset bubbles, and leverage during economic booms, while enhancing resilience during downturns. However, it also emphasizes the need for continuous adaptation of regulatory frameworks to address emerging risks, such as those posed by digital currencies, climate change, and non-bank financial intermediaries.

Keywords: *macroprudential regulation, financial stability, systemic risk, cross-border coordination, regulatory frameworks.*

JEL Classification: G28, F36

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1. Introduction

The stability of the global financial system has emerged as one of the foremost policy concerns of the 21st century, particularly in light of recurrent episodes of systemic disruption that have underscored the vulnerabilities inherent in interconnected financial markets. The 2008 global financial crisis marked a watershed moment, revealing the profound limitations of prevailing regulatory paradigms that were predominantly microprudential in nature, those oriented toward the solvency and soundness of individual financial institutions. While these micro-level regulations remain necessary, they proved insufficient in addressing the broader, system-wide fragilities that can emerge from the complex web of interdependencies characterizing modern finance.

A foundational understanding of financial stability and institutional soundness necessitates engagement with the underlying principles of banking operations and governance. Spulbar (2008), in his seminal work on banking management, emphasizes the structural and functional interdependencies within the banking sector that, if left unchecked, can serve as amplifiers of systemic risk. His analysis remains relevant in the context of macroprudential regulation, as it highlights the importance of risk culture, internal controls, and capital adequacy within individual financial institutions, elements that collectively serve as micro-foundations for macro-level financial resilience. The architecture of prudential supervision, as argued in this text, must incorporate both operational and strategic dimensions of banking behavior to be truly effective in anticipating systemic vulnerabilities.

The intensification of cross-border capital flows, the proliferation of complex financial instruments, and the growth of systemically important financial institutions (SIFIs) have all contributed to a financial ecosystem where localized shocks can rapidly transmit across institutions, sectors, and national boundaries. These dynamics necessitate a regulatory approach that transcends firm-level supervision and instead focuses on the identification, monitoring, and mitigation of systemic risks. In this context, macroprudential regulation has gained considerable prominence as a strategic framework designed to safeguard financial stability at the systemic level.

Macroprudential regulation is distinguished by its objective to contain the build-up of systemic risk and to enhance the resilience of the financial system to adverse shocks. Unlike microprudential oversight, which is concerned with idiosyncratic risks and the stability of individual entities, macroprudential policy operates with a broader lens, addressing the amplification mechanisms that can lead to collective instability. These mechanisms include excessive credit growth, over-leverage, maturity mismatches, interconnectedness among institutions, and herding behavior in asset markets, all of which played a critical role in exacerbating the financial turmoil of the late 2000s.

The conceptual foundations of macroprudential regulation are deeply rooted in the recognition that financial markets are not inherently self-correcting and that systemic risk is an endogenous feature of financial capitalism. This recognition has compelled regulators and policymakers to adopt a more holistic view of financial supervision, one that explicitly accounts for the time dimension (i.e., the procyclicality of financial markets) and the cross-sectional dimension (i.e., the distribution of risk across institutions and sectors). The former dimension captures the tendency for credit booms to amplify economic cycles, often culminating in painful busts, while the latter emphasizes the interconnectedness that enables the transmission and magnification of shocks throughout the financial system.

The role of macroprudential regulation in global financial stability

Furthermore, the architecture of global finance has evolved significantly in recent decades, presenting novel challenges for regulatory oversight. The rapid digitalization of financial services, the rise of non-bank financial intermediaries, and the increasing relevance of climate-related financial risks all demand continuous innovation in regulatory thinking. These emerging risks do not merely complement traditional sources of instability but often interact with them in complex and unpredictable ways, thereby complicating efforts to maintain systemic resilience.

The interaction between macroprudential regulation and broader economic fundamentals, such as investment flows and fiscal sustainability, remains a critical domain of inquiry, particularly in emerging markets where procyclical vulnerabilities are amplified by institutional constraints. Moldovan et al., (2025) provide robust empirical evidence from Romania illustrating how investment dynamics and fiscal performance are tightly interlinked with real GDP trajectories. Their findings underscore that financial regulation cannot be conceptualized in isolation but must be situated within a broader macroeconomic policy matrix, where poorly coordinated fiscal policy can magnify systemic risks, while strategic investment can enhance financial stability by reinforcing economic buffers.

In this evolving context, macroprudential regulation is not merely a technocratic solution to a set of well-defined problems but a dynamic and adaptive policy domain that must continuously evolve in response to shifting financial realities. The implementation of macroprudential tools, such as countercyclical capital buffers, systemic risk surcharges, loan-to-value caps, and liquidity requirements, reflects an attempt to internalize systemic externalities and to align private risk-taking with public stability objectives. However, the effectiveness of these tools is contingent upon timely risk identification, coherent policy design, and international coordination, particularly given the globalized nature of contemporary finance.

At its core, macroprudential regulation embodies a paradigm shift in financial governance: one that seeks to preempt rather than merely react to crises, to regulate markets as complex adaptive systems, and to embed resilience into the fabric of financial intermediation. As such, its role in ensuring global financial stability is not only instrumental but foundational to the sustainability of economic development in an increasingly volatile world.

2. Core mechanisms and tools of macroprudential regulation

Systemic risk, a concept that remained largely peripheral in financial regulation prior to the 2008 crisis, has since become central to the discourse on financial stability. It denotes the risk of disruption to the financial system as a whole, arising from the correlated distress or failure of interconnected financial institutions or markets, which in turn can cause significant adverse effects on the broader economy. Unlike idiosyncratic risk, which can be diversified away or contained within individual entities, systemic risk is endogenous, non-linear, and prone to amplification through feedback loops, information asymmetries, and behavioral contagion.

The theoretical foundation for systemic risk is deeply rooted in network theory, endogenous cycles of leverage and liquidity, and the behavioral tendencies of market participants under stress. Haldane and May (2011), in their influential work on complexity in financial networks, argue that interconnectedness is a double-edged sword: while it can promote efficiency and risk-sharing under normal conditions, it can also facilitate rapid

contagion during periods of distress. The collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008 illustrated how the failure of a single institution, deeply embedded within a web of counterparty exposures, could catalyze a chain reaction that brought the global financial system to the brink of collapse.

Given the limitations of microprudential supervision, which primarily addresses the solvency of individual entities without accounting for their systemic relevance, macroprudential regulation emerged as a necessary complement. Its core objective is to identify and contain risks that threaten the stability of the financial system as a whole, particularly those that manifest through procyclical behaviors, excessive leverage, and misaligned incentives across institutions and markets. Borio (2003) was among the early proponents of the macroprudential perspective, emphasizing the importance of addressing the collective behavior of financial institutions and the aggregate build-up of risk over time.

The goals of macroprudential policy are twofold: first, to increase the resilience of the financial system to shocks by building buffers that can absorb losses during downturns; and second, to lean against the financial cycle by curbing the accumulation of systemic risk in boom periods. These goals are operationalized through both structural and time-varying instruments. Structural instruments aim to strengthen institutions deemed systemically important, while time-varying tools seek to moderate the cyclical fluctuations that contribute to instability. The macroprudential framework should also incorporate forward-looking assessments of emerging risks, particularly those stemming from technological innovation and environmental transitions.

Importantly, the identification of systemic risk requires the integration of both quantitative models and qualitative judgment. While early warning indicators, such as credit-to-GDP gaps, asset price misalignments, and leverage ratios, are useful, they are far from infallible. Moreover, as highlighted by Galati and Moessner (2013), the effectiveness of macroprudential policy is contingent upon institutional arrangements, data availability, and the coordination between monetary, fiscal, and regulatory authorities. There remains an ongoing debate regarding the optimal design of macroprudential governance structures and the delineation of responsibilities across agencies.

The operationalization of macroprudential regulation is materially anchored in a diverse set of policy instruments, designed to contain systemic risk by either enhancing the resilience of financial institutions or curbing the build-up of vulnerabilities across the financial system. These instruments are typically categorized along two axes: time-varying (or countercyclical) tools, which adjust according to fluctuations in financial cycles, and structural tools, which address persistent sources of systemic fragility embedded in the architecture of the financial sector. The calibration and deployment of these instruments are context-dependent, varying in intensity and scope across jurisdictions based on institutional capacity, economic structure, and the maturity of financial markets.

Among the most prominent time-varying macroprudential instruments is the countercyclical capital buffer (CCyB), which requires banks to build up additional capital during periods of excessive credit growth. The primary objective of the CCyB is to create a cushion that can be drawn down in times of stress, thereby sustaining credit flows when risk aversion spikes. Empirical evidence supports its efficacy: Behn, Mangiante, and Schanz (2020), in a study of European banks, found that the activation of CCyBs had a statistically significant dampening effect on credit supply growth and risk-taking behavior during expansions. The Basel III framework, which formally introduced the CCyB,

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mandates national authorities to assess systemic risk indicators, such as the credit-to-GDP gap, in determining buffer rates.

Capital surcharges for systemically important financial institutions (SIFIs) represent a structural measure aimed at addressing the moral hazard and externalities associated with institutions deemed “too big to fail.” These surcharges compel SIFIs to maintain higher loss-absorbing capacity, thereby reducing their probability of failure and the systemic consequences thereof. According to the Financial Stability Board (FSB, 2015), the implementation of these capital surcharges, along with enhanced resolution regimes, constitutes a cornerstone of the post-crisis macroprudential agenda.

Loan-to-value (LTV) and debt-to-income (DTI) caps are targeted tools aimed at the household sector, primarily used to temper housing market exuberance and mitigate the build-up of leverage among borrowers. These instruments are particularly effective in jurisdictions where real estate cycles have historically been a source of financial instability. Claessens, Ghosh, and Mihet (2013) demonstrate that the use of LTV and DTI ratios has a significant constraining effect on mortgage lending growth and house price inflation, thereby lowering systemic vulnerabilities associated with housing booms.

In parallel, liquidity-based instruments, such as the Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) and Net Stable Funding Ratio (NSFR), are designed to reduce maturity mismatches and ensure that banks maintain adequate buffers of high-quality liquid assets to withstand short-term funding shocks. These tools not only bolster institutional resilience but also help mitigate contagion risks during periods of market stress. The literature highlights their positive role in enhancing financial system robustness; for instance, King (2013) finds that the LCR, when implemented in concert with other macroprudential measures, significantly improves bank liquidity profiles and reduces systemic risk exposure.

Further, sectoral capital requirements, which adjust risk weights on exposures to specific sectors such as real estate or corporate lending, allow authorities to target overheating credit segments without imposing blanket constraints on the entire banking system. These measures have gained traction in emerging markets where sector-specific booms pose distinct macro-financial risks.

Despite their diverse nature, macroprudential instruments share a unifying characteristic: they aim to internalize the negative externalities that stem from excessive risk-taking and interconnectedness. Yet their effectiveness hinges on institutional credibility, data granularity, and the capacity for timely implementation. Moreover, as Haldane et al. (2017) argue, the dynamic interaction between instruments must be carefully managed to avoid unintended consequences and policy redundancy, a challenge that underscores the importance of macroprudential governance and empirical evaluation.

The effective deployment of macroprudential instruments lies not merely in their individual design or implementation but in the synergies created when these tools are employed as part of an integrated regulatory architecture. Financial systems are inherently complex, adaptive, and interlinked, exhibiting non-linear dynamics that cannot be adequately contained through isolated interventions. Hence, the coordinated application of macroprudential tools, spanning capital, liquidity, borrower-based, and structural dimensions, represents a necessary strategy for mitigating the systemic vulnerabilities that can emerge both over time and across institutions.

Systemic vulnerabilities typically evolve along two principal dimensions: the time dimension, characterized by the procyclical behavior of financial markets and institutions, and the cross-sectional dimension, which refers to the distribution and concentration of risk across the financial network. Macroprudential tools address these vulnerabilities by

influencing the incentives and constraints faced by financial actors, thereby shaping aggregate outcomes in ways that reduce the likelihood and severity of system-wide stress.

The interaction between countercyclical capital buffers and borrower-based measures such as loan-to-value (LTV) and debt-to-income (DTI) caps is illustrative of how macroprudential tools can be synchronized. During periods of excessive credit growth and rising asset prices, the combined imposition of capital buffers and LTV/DTI caps serves a dual purpose: it restricts credit supply on the lender side by raising capital requirements while simultaneously constraining credit demand by limiting household leverage. This interaction creates a reinforcing mechanism that curbs the feedback loop between credit expansion and asset inflation. As highlighted by Kuttner and Shim (2016), countries employing both supply- and demand-side tools in tandem observed more pronounced effects on credit growth containment and house price moderation compared to those relying on a single category of intervention.

Similarly, the effectiveness of liquidity standards such as the Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) and Net Stable Funding Ratio (NSFR) is enhanced when combined with capital adequacy requirements. While capital buffers absorb losses and bolster solvency, liquidity standards ensure short-term funding stability, thereby reducing the likelihood of fire sales and funding runs under stress. Farhi and Tirole (2012) emphasize that a multi-dimensional regulatory approach, one that simultaneously addresses solvency and liquidity, is critical in preventing the amplification of shocks through market-based channels.

Moreover, sectoral capital requirements, when aligned with macroprudential surveillance indicators, allow for the dynamic reallocation of regulatory constraints toward pockets of overheating or excess leverage. For instance, in jurisdictions where real estate or corporate credit is expanding unsustainably, sector-specific risk weights can be adjusted preemptively without distorting the broader credit supply. Bruno, Shim, and Shin (2017) demonstrate that this targeted approach, especially when accompanied by real-time monitoring of sectoral exposures, enhances the precision and effectiveness of macroprudential interventions.

The coordination of tools also plays a pivotal role in mitigating regulatory arbitrage—the tendency of financial actors to shift activities across borders or into lightly regulated sectors in response to tightened regulations. When macroprudential instruments are applied in a fragmented or inconsistent manner, their effectiveness can be undermined by such leakages. A comprehensive policy mix that integrates bank-based, market-based, and institutional measures reduces the scope for circumvention and reinforces the credibility of the regulatory stance.

However, while the joint application of tools offers considerable advantages, it also introduces potential policy interaction effects, including overlaps, redundancies, and unintended procyclical outcomes. For instance, excessive tightening through multiple instruments may unduly restrict credit availability, particularly in fragile economies. This necessitates careful calibration, ongoing impact assessment, and an institutional framework capable of resolving tensions between competing policy objectives. The IMF (2020) underscores the importance of "macroprudential policy frameworks" that incorporate formal coordination mechanisms, clear communication strategies, and macro-financial modeling capabilities to optimize the deployment of instruments across economic cycles.

3. Global integration and the role of cross-border coordination

In an era marked by unprecedented financial globalization, the effectiveness of macroprudential regulation is inherently contingent upon the degree of international coordination among regulatory authorities. As financial institutions expand their operations across borders and global capital markets become increasingly interdependent, systemic risks are no longer confined within national jurisdictions. Instead, they migrate, morph, and amplify through transnational linkages, rendering purely domestic macroprudential measures insufficient. This evolution has necessitated the emergence of a coordinated, multilayered regulatory framework capable of responding to cross-border contagion, regulatory arbitrage, and collective action failures.

The 2008 global financial crisis laid bare the inadequacy of fragmented regulatory oversight in a highly integrated financial system. The collapse of U.S.-based subprime mortgage markets cascaded across European and Asian banking sectors, illustrating how shocks in one jurisdiction can rapidly compromise the stability of distant yet interconnected systems. In response, international bodies such as the Financial Stability Board (FSB), the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) intensified efforts to harmonize macroprudential policies and establish platforms for supervisory cooperation. These institutions have since played a crucial role in disseminating best practices, setting global standards, and fostering mutual surveillance among national regulators.

Despite these advances, the practical implementation of cross-border coordination remains fraught with challenges. A fundamental problem lies in the asymmetry of national incentives. While global stability is a shared objective, the transmission channels of systemic risk—and the fiscal consequences of potential bailouts—often vary significantly across countries. As a result, there exists a latent tension between national sovereignty and collective prudence. This tension is particularly acute in the context of activating countercyclical capital buffers or imposing restrictions on capital flows, where the costs and benefits are not evenly distributed.

Empirical studies have shown that macroprudential policy spillovers are real and consequential. For example, Buch, Bussière, and Goldberg (2019) provide evidence that capital requirement adjustments in one country can influence lending behavior and risk-taking in neighboring jurisdictions through international banks with cross-border exposures. In the absence of harmonized implementation, these spillovers can create incentives for regulatory arbitrage, where financial activities migrate to less stringently regulated jurisdictions, undermining the policy effectiveness of more stringent regimes.

Table 1. Empirical Evidence on Cross-Border Spillovers of Macroprudential Policies

Study	Methodology	Key Finding
Buch et al. (2019)	Panel regression with bilateral bank data	Capital buffers in home countries affect foreign lending patterns significantly
Cerutti et al. (2017)	Cross-country analysis of 119 countries	Spillovers are more pronounced in countries with open capital accounts
Aiyar et al. (2014)	Bank-level analysis in the UK	Foreign branches can offset domestic tightening through increased credit supply

Houston et al. (2012)	Global bank survey data (101 countries)	Lending by global banks is influenced by home- and host-country regulatory gaps
Ongena et al. (2015)	Difference-in-differences on Swiss bank data	Foreign macroprudential tightening reduces cross-border lending in exposed sectors
Avdjiev et al. (2020)	BIS international banking statistics	Macroprudential policies affect the composition of cross-border bank flows

Source: Author's elaboration based on Buch et al. (2019), Cerutti et al. (2017), Aiyar et al. (2014), Houston et al. (2012), Ongena et al. (2015), and Avdjiev et al. (2020).

These findings underscore the importance of reciprocal supervisory arrangements and the need for comprehensive data-sharing mechanisms. In this respect, the European Union has made significant strides through the establishment of the European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB) and the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM), which allow for a more integrated supervisory approach within the Eurozone. However, outside the EU, institutional capacity and political will to engage in binding macroprudential coordination remain uneven. Multilateral surveillance tools, such as the IMF's Financial Sector Assessment Program (FSAP) and the FSB's peer review process, provide valuable platforms for dialogue and transparency, yet they fall short of enforcement capacity.

Moreover, the growing prominence of non-bank financial intermediaries and digital finance has introduced new dimensions to the coordination problem. These entities often operate across multiple regulatory domains, exploiting differences in national frameworks. The lack of international consensus on how to regulate fintech, stablecoins, and decentralized finance compounds the difficulty of establishing uniform macroprudential safeguards. As pointed out by Gabor and Vestergaard (2021), regulatory innovation at the national level often outpaces global standard-setting, resulting in a regulatory patchwork that leaves systemic blind spots.

A further complication arises from the interaction between macroprudential and monetary policy in a cross-border setting. Divergent monetary stances between major economies can weaken the transmission of macroprudential policies by affecting capital flows, exchange rates, and risk perceptions. For example, when the Federal Reserve adopts an accommodative stance, capital tends to flow into emerging markets, fueling credit booms that domestic macroprudential tools may struggle to contain. In this context, Rey (2015) argues that the global financial cycle imposes significant constraints on the monetary and macroprudential autonomy of smaller open economies, particularly when capital account liberalization is extensive.

Addressing these multidimensional challenges calls for a paradigm shift in global financial governance. One promising direction is the institutionalization of macroprudential reciprocity agreements, whereby countries agree ex-ante to apply equivalent measures to systemically important institutions operating across borders. This principle, already embedded in the Basel III framework for countercyclical capital buffers, could be expanded to other instruments. Another avenue involves developing early warning systems and systemic risk dashboards at the international level, drawing on high-frequency cross-border financial data to detect risk accumulation in real time.

4. Challenges and trade-offs in regulatory implementation

Despite the conceptual elegance and policy promise of macroprudential regulation, its practical implementation is fraught with a multitude of challenges and inherent trade-offs. These complexities stem from the dynamic nature of systemic risk, the limitations of forecasting tools, institutional constraints, and the evolving structure of the financial system. Moreover, macroprudential authorities must continuously navigate the fine line between preserving financial stability and supporting economic growth, all while ensuring that their measures remain politically and socially legitimate.

A foundational difficulty lies in the timely identification of systemic risk. Unlike credit or market risk, which can be quantified through firm-specific indicators, systemic risk is often latent, nonlinear, and influenced by behavioral, technological, and structural factors that are difficult to model *ex ante*. The information asymmetries between market participants and regulators exacerbate this uncertainty, often leading to delayed interventions or inappropriate policy calibration. Moreover, early warning indicators such as credit-to-GDP gaps or asset price inflation, though widely used, are notoriously imprecise and can generate false positives or lagging signals. As Borio (2014) argues, reliance on mechanical rule-based frameworks may underestimate the complexity of real-world financial cycles and the heterogeneous transmission of shocks across sectors and jurisdictions.

Another pressing challenge is regulatory arbitrage, a phenomenon where financial institutions exploit differences in regulatory regimes to shift activities to less regulated entities or jurisdictions. This is particularly problematic in the context of macroprudential policies that are not globally harmonized or coordinated, as previously noted in Chapter 3. The rise of non-bank financial intermediaries, often referred to as the "shadow banking" system, has amplified this risk. These entities are typically not subject to the same capital, liquidity, or risk management requirements as traditional banks, allowing them to engage in maturity and liquidity transformation with limited oversight. As macroprudential tools are tightened in the regulated sector, there is an increased propensity for credit and leverage to migrate toward these less visible corners of the financial system, thereby diluting the intended effect of regulatory intervention.

A further tension arises from the dual mandate of macroprudential policy: stabilizing the financial system while avoiding undue constraints on credit supply and economic growth. When macroprudential tools—such as countercyclical capital buffers or LTV caps—are aggressively activated, they may inadvertently suppress productive investment, especially in emerging economies where credit intermediation is crucial for development. This trade-off becomes particularly acute during periods of economic recovery, where restrictive measures may clash with expansionary monetary or fiscal policies. The literature underscores this dilemma; for instance, Claessens and Valencia (2013) point out that in some cases, the overextension of macroprudential controls can induce a self-reinforcing contractionary cycle, particularly when private sector confidence is fragile.

In addition, the governance structure of macroprudential policy frameworks remains a contested domain. In many jurisdictions, there is ambiguity regarding institutional responsibility, coordination mechanisms, and accountability. The presence of multiple authorities—central banks, financial supervisory agencies, ministries of finance—can lead to fragmented decision-making, institutional inertia, or even inter-agency conflict. This fragmentation is particularly dangerous when swift action is needed to contain emerging risks. The IMF (2020) has advocated for clear mandates, dedicated

macroprudential policy committees, and legal autonomy for systemic risk oversight bodies to address these governance shortcomings.

Technological innovation adds a new layer of complexity to this regulatory landscape. The advent of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and automated decision-making processes within the financial sector has introduced both opportunities and systemic threats. Algorithms capable of executing high-frequency trades, managing credit underwriting, or optimizing asset allocations may significantly increase efficiency and reduce costs. However, they also introduce opaque interdependencies and systemic feedback mechanisms that are difficult to monitor. The literature increasingly warns of the endogenous risks associated with algorithmic homogeneity and collective behavior under stress.

In this context, it is essential to integrate broader interdisciplinary insights into the macroprudential debate. As Mitrache et al. (2024) argue, the deployment of artificial intelligence within economic systems can act as a double-edged sword—on one hand catalyzing growth and innovation, but on the other amplifying structural vulnerabilities when not properly governed. Their findings suggest that macroprudential authorities should not merely adapt existing tools but rather engage with new methodologies, such as AI-driven systemic risk models and digital compliance frameworks, to match the pace of financial innovation. This argument is further reinforced by Spulbar et al. (2025), who emphasize that sustainable integration of human judgment and artificial intelligence is essential for fostering resilience within complex systems. They caution that overreliance on automated mechanisms may create a false sense of security, particularly if regulators themselves become dependent on algorithmic outputs that lack transparency or contextual nuance.

Finally, climate-related financial risks and environmental sustainability considerations are rapidly emerging as core components of the macroprudential agenda. The physical and transition risks associated with climate change pose long-term threats to financial stability, as they can undermine asset values, disrupt business models, and trigger systemic re-pricing events. However, integrating such risks into macroprudential frameworks is still in its infancy. Data gaps, modeling uncertainties, and definitional ambiguities complicate the development of forward-looking climate stress tests or green capital buffers. Policymakers must reconcile environmental objectives with traditional financial stability mandates, a task made more difficult by political pressures and competing interests.

The implementation of macroprudential regulation is not a static endeavor but a complex and adaptive process. It requires continuous learning, robust institutional frameworks, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the capacity to anticipate rather than merely respond to systemic threats. The core challenge lies in designing regulatory interventions that are both effective and proportionate, resilient yet flexible, and technocratic but grounded in a broader socio-economic context.

5. Conclusions

The role of macroprudential regulation in securing global financial stability constitutes not merely a policy toolset but a profound conceptual shift in the way economies confront systemic risk. As this research has demonstrated, financial systems are no longer governed solely by market discipline and individual institutional solvency, but by the dynamic interplay of interconnected behaviors, feedback loops, and latent structural imbalances. In this context, macroprudential regulation is not simply

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complementary to microprudential and monetary frameworks, it is foundational to the integrity and resilience of the financial architecture itself.

The complexity of the topic lies not only in its technical breadth, encompassing capital buffers, liquidity ratios, and cross-sector risk monitoring, but also in the deeply interwoven socio-economic, technological, and political dimensions that shape financial systems in the 21st century. Financial crises, both historical and potential, reveal that vulnerabilities emerge less from isolated weaknesses and more from the system's own structure and adaptive failures. Consequently, the macroprudential perspective must remain holistic, forward-looking, and inherently multidisciplinary.

One of the most pressing developments intensifying this complexity is the proliferation of artificial intelligence across the financial ecosystem. AI technologies have already begun to redefine the architecture of financial intermediation, from real-time credit scoring to autonomous portfolio management and algorithmic risk modeling. These innovations offer remarkable potential for increased efficiency, responsiveness, and predictive precision in both private sector finance and public regulatory functions. However, they also introduce novel sources of systemic fragility. The risks posed by algorithmic opacity, model homogeneity, data-driven herding, and the emergence of AI-driven market microstructures demand a regulatory response that is not only reactive but anticipatory.

In this regard, the implications of AI for macroprudential oversight are profound. On one hand, supervisory authorities can leverage AI for more granular surveillance, faster detection of abnormal patterns, and scenario-based stress testing that is far more adaptive than traditional econometric models. On the other, the very use of AI within financial firms may evolve faster than regulatory frameworks can adapt, creating an asymmetry of capacity that undermines oversight. As Spulbar (2025) cogently argues, legal frameworks designed for analogue markets are increasingly strained under the demands of a digitized financial order. His analysis highlights both the opportunities and the legal-structural gaps that AI introduces, especially in markets characterized by high-frequency, decentralized, and cross-jurisdictional activity. This is particularly salient for macroprudential authorities, whose mandate now includes safeguarding the system from endogenous technological shocks that are neither well-understood nor easily contained.

As such, the future of macroprudential regulation depends not only on improving technical instruments or institutional designs, but on fostering a systemic intelligence—a capacity to think across domains, foresee complex interactions, and govern adaptively under deep uncertainty. It is no longer sufficient to calibrate tools around past crises or static indicators; regulators must instead construct models that can interpret emerging forms of systemic risk in real time, especially those emanating from digital infrastructures, climate change, and geopolitical volatility.

Moreover, the internationalization of finance calls for a coherent, transnational regulatory philosophy, one that moves beyond voluntary coordination and embraces shared governance, data interoperability, and mutual legal recognition. In the absence of such alignment, macroprudential measures risk becoming fragmented, undercut by regulatory arbitrage, and insufficiently equipped to contain globally mobile risks.

Macroprudential regulation is not a policy option but a structural necessity in the global financial ecosystem. It must be embedded in a broader institutional culture that values precaution over short-term optimization, systemic resilience over individual solvency, and dynamic oversight over static rule-making. Only through such an integrated and adaptive framework can policymakers navigate the profound transformations

underway, and ensure that finance continues to serve the real economy, even in the face of accelerating technological change.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

The evolution of derivative markets in the post-crisis era

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Abstract:

The financial crisis of 2008 triggered a paradigm shift in derivative markets, leading to extensive regulatory reforms, structural changes, and evolving risk management practices. This paper examines the evolution of derivative markets in the post-crisis era, focusing on key developments in regulatory frameworks, market participants' behavior, and the role of financial innovation in enhancing market stability.

A primary area of analysis is the implementation of post-crisis regulatory measures, including the Dodd-Frank Act in the United States, the European Market Infrastructure Regulation (EMIR), and Basel III capital requirements. These regulations have reshaped the landscape of over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives by promoting central clearing, increasing transparency, and imposing stricter capital and collateral requirements. We assess the effectiveness of these measures in mitigating systemic risks and enhancing market resilience.

Furthermore, the paper explores the shift from bilateral trading to centrally cleared and exchange-traded derivatives, analyzing its impact on market liquidity, pricing efficiency, and counterparty risk. The role of financial technology (FinTech) and automation in improving trading efficiency, reducing operational risks, and fostering market access is also discussed.

Using case studies, we evaluate how derivative markets have adapted to regulatory changes while continuing to serve as essential tools for hedging, speculation, and risk management. Findings indicate that while reforms have reduced systemic vulnerabilities, challenges such as market fragmentation, increased compliance costs, and unintended liquidity constraints persist.

Keywords: *derivative markets, financial crisis, systemic risk, OTC derivatives, FinTech, market stability.*

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The evolution of derivative markets in the post-crisis era

1. Introduction

The global financial crisis that erupted in 2008 marked a turning point in modern economic history, shaking the foundations of international markets and exposing deep vulnerabilities within the financial system. Among the complex web of instruments and institutions that contributed to the crisis, derivative products occupied a particularly controversial and prominent role. While not the root cause, the proliferation of opaque, unregulated over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives (especially credit default swaps and structured credit products) amplified the transmission of risk across institutions and borders, revealing how intertwined and fragile the architecture of global finance had become. The magnitude of systemic exposure, combined with a lack of transparency and insufficient collateralization, allowed relatively isolated defaults to escalate into a global liquidity freeze.

Derivatives have long been essential tools in the financial ecosystem, serving as instruments for hedging, speculation, and risk transfer. Spulbar (2006) conceptualizes derivative financial instruments as contracts whose valuation is contingent upon the fluctuations of one or more underlying assets or reference variables, such as stock market indices, interest rates, exchange rates, or the market value of equities and fixed-income securities. Their ability to synthetically create exposures or hedge against volatility has made them indispensable to institutions ranging from multinational banks to commodity traders and institutional investors. However, the pre-crisis environment, characterized by exponential growth in the notional value of derivatives and weak oversight mechanisms, fostered a buildup of hidden leverage and interdependencies that many regulators and market participants failed to fully grasp. When major counterparties such as Lehman Brothers collapsed, the uncertainty surrounding derivatives exposures exacerbated the loss of trust that paralyzed markets.

In the aftermath of the crisis, regulators and policymakers around the world launched an ambitious agenda of financial reform aimed at reducing systemic risk and increasing market stability. Central to these efforts were measures specifically targeting derivative markets. Landmark regulatory frameworks such as the Dodd-Frank Act in the United States, the European Market Infrastructure Regulation (EMIR) in the European Union, and the Basel III global banking standards were introduced to strengthen oversight, enforce central clearing, enhance transparency, and impose stricter capital and collateral requirements on financial institutions engaging in derivatives trading. These reforms significantly altered the landscape of derivatives markets, transforming both the infrastructure of trading and the behavior of participants.

Yet the evolution of derivative markets in the post-crisis era cannot be fully understood through regulation alone. Market dynamics, technological innovation, and shifting strategic priorities among institutions have all played critical roles in reshaping how derivatives are designed, traded, and utilized. As trading platforms became increasingly digitized and sophisticated, the integration of financial technology (FinTech) began to redefine efficiency, risk management, and market access. New tools for automation, real-time analytics, and collateral optimization emerged, enabling more agile and transparent trading environments while also introducing novel challenges related to cybersecurity, algorithmic risk, and the resilience of market infrastructure.

Against this backdrop, a broader narrative has unfolded one that traces not just the regulatory tightening in response to crisis, but also the resilience and adaptability of a market that continues to fulfill vital economic functions despite undergoing structural upheaval. Derivative markets have demonstrated both vulnerability and vitality, revealing

how deeply financial innovation is intertwined with systemic risk and stability. The changes that followed 2008 reshaped the contours of risk transfer, redefined the boundaries of financial intermediation, and opened new debates on the future of regulation in an increasingly digitalized financial world.

This evolution offers rich insights not only into the technical transformation of markets but also into the shifting ethos of financial regulation, innovation, and global cooperation. The derivative market of today, while more regulated and transparent, must still navigate the complex terrain of fragmented jurisdictions, technological acceleration, and persistent questions about the unintended consequences of reform. As a critical node in the financial system, it continues to serve as both a mirror and a lever of the broader forces shaping modern finance.

2. Derivative markets before and after the crisis

The dramatic rupture caused by the global financial crisis of 2008 cannot be fully grasped without examining the structure and function of derivative markets before and after the event. These markets, which had experienced exponential growth in both volume and sophistication in the preceding decades, evolved in an environment marked by rapid financial innovation, light regulatory oversight, and increasing interconnectedness among global financial institutions. The contrast between the pre-crisis expansion and post-crisis reconstruction reveals the fundamental shifts in market philosophy, regulation, and risk management. Understanding this transformation requires a detailed look into how the system operated before the crisis, what vulnerabilities emerged, and how the regulatory and institutional landscape was reconfigured in its aftermath.

2.1 The derivatives market before the crisis

In the decades leading up to the 2008 financial crisis, derivative markets underwent a phase of remarkable expansion. Driven by liberalization, technological innovation, and increased demand for risk management instruments, these markets evolved from their relatively modest beginnings into complex, global networks of financial claims. By 2007, the notional value of outstanding OTC derivatives had surged to over \$600 trillion, dwarfing the size of global GDP and equity markets. Much of this growth occurred in the absence of comprehensive regulation, particularly in OTC markets where contracts were negotiated privately and outside the purview of centralized exchanges.

The opacity of OTC derivatives, especially credit default swaps (CDS), played a central role in amplifying systemic vulnerabilities. As argued by Stulz (2010), the rise of OTC derivatives created a parallel banking system, one in which risk was dispersed in a way that evaded traditional regulatory scrutiny. The lack of central clearing mechanisms and real-time trade reporting made it nearly impossible to track exposures across institutions. Counterparty risk, previously confined to isolated defaults, became a system-wide concern once major institutions like Lehman Brothers and AIG became entangled in a web of contingent liabilities.

The attractiveness of derivatives in this era was not merely speculative. They offered sophisticated tools for managing credit, interest rate, and currency risks. Structured finance products such as collateralized debt obligations (CDOs) were heralded as innovative solutions for distributing risk. However, the belief in diversification and risk-

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transfer efficiency often masked the reality of hidden leverage and poor asset quality. Gorton and Metrick (2012) describe how the securitization chain, closely tied to derivatives markets created an illusion of liquidity and safety that rapidly unraveled under stress.

The regulatory environment of the time reflected a deep trust in market discipline and self-regulation. In the U.S., instruments like CDS were explicitly excluded from regulation under the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000. The prevailing doctrine, reinforced by influential voices like Greenspan and Summers, favored innovation over intervention. This deregulatory stance was compounded by the difficulty regulators faced in understanding or overseeing the bespoke nature of OTC contracts, which lacked standardization and central visibility.

From a systemic perspective, the pre-crisis structure of the derivatives market can be seen as a highly interdependent, non-transparent network with limited shock absorption capacity. Brunnermeier and Pedersen (2009) highlight the phenomenon of liquidity spirals, wherein declining asset values and margin calls forced leveraged institutions to unwind positions, further depressing market values. In such an environment, derivatives not only failed to buffer shocks they transmitted and magnified them.

The picture that emerges from this pre-crisis era is one of innovation unmoored from robust risk management, supported by a regulatory philosophy that underestimated the potential for cascading failures. The derivatives market functioned efficiently during periods of stability but lacked the resilience to contain stress once confidence eroded. Its architecture, built on bilateral trust and complexity, proved fatally fragile when faced with systemic uncertainty.

2.2 The derivatives market after the crisis

The financial crisis of 2008 served as a global wake-up call, exposing systemic vulnerabilities that had accumulated over years of unchecked market expansion and regulatory leniency. In response, the post-crisis period ushered in a sweeping wave of reforms aimed at reengineering the architecture of derivative markets. This transformation was not merely cosmetic; it altered the very fabric of financial intermediation by redefining the rules of engagement, the institutions involved, and the underlying logic of risk management. The guiding imperative was clear: prevent a recurrence of the opacity and fragility that had made the crisis so devastating.

One of the most defining changes was the move toward central clearing. Previously, OTC derivatives were traded bilaterally, relying on the creditworthiness and risk assessment of counterparties. This model proved catastrophically flawed when systemic counterparties defaulted, triggering a contagion of uncertainty. Central Counterparties (CCPs) emerged as mandated intermediaries, especially for standardized derivatives, following the G20 Pittsburgh Summit in 2009. Their purpose was to absorb and mutualize counterparty risk while increasing visibility into positions and exposures across the market. Duffie and Zhu (2011) underscore the value of CCPs in mitigating default risk but caution against the concentration of risk within these clearinghouses themselves.

Regulatory frameworks such as the Dodd-Frank Act in the United States and the European Market Infrastructure Regulation (EMIR) in the European Union institutionalized this shift. These reforms mandated not only central clearing for standardized products but also comprehensive trade reporting, margin requirements for

uncleared derivatives, and higher capital reserves for derivative exposures. As Heller and Vause (2012) argue, while these rules enhanced transparency and stability, they also introduced operational complexities and increased collateral demands that strained market participants, particularly smaller institutions.

Simultaneously, international standards like Basel III imposed more stringent capital and liquidity requirements on banks, especially regarding their derivative exposures. These adjustments fundamentally altered how banks manage trading desks, calculate counterparty credit risk, and allocate capital across business lines. The goal was to internalize the costs of systemic risk by ensuring that institutions hold enough capital to absorb losses, thereby breaking the “too big to fail” feedback loop. The effectiveness of these regulatory layers continues to be a subject of academic scrutiny, with debates centered on their long-term impact on market liquidity and innovation.

In Eastern European contexts, including Romania, similar dynamics unfolded in parallel with global regulatory trends. Studies such as Spulbar and Ene (2024) provide an empirical perspective on how macroeconomic variables interact with financial market dynamics in the region. Their findings reveal that while Romania's financial system did not mirror the complexity of global hubs, the country experienced notable shifts in derivative usage, market transparency, and risk pricing following the crisis. These structural adaptations reflected both external regulatory pressure and domestic efforts to align with EU-wide standards.

The legacy of under-regulated markets in post-communist countries meant that reforms had to address not only technical compliance but also institutional capacity and investor confidence. In this context, comparative banking analyses such as those by Spulbăr and Nițoi (2012) illustrate the heterogeneous nature of regulatory absorption across jurisdictions. Their work points to structural inefficiencies and differences in supervisory regimes that complicate the implementation of uniform standards, particularly in smaller financial markets.

A broader perspective on the evolution of financial systems post-crisis is offered by Stanciu and Spulbăr (2024), who emphasize that while reforms have enhanced financial system robustness, they have also introduced new challenges. Chief among these are compliance burdens, regulatory fragmentation, and unintended consequences such as reduced market-making capacity and increased costs of hedging. These trade-offs highlight the tension between market safety and market efficiency, a core dilemma in modern financial regulation.

Academic literature has also focused on how market behavior has adjusted to these reforms. For example, Acharya and Richardson (2009) explore the disincentives created by pre-crisis capital structures and contrast them with more disciplined post-crisis frameworks. Meanwhile, Gregory (2014) analyze the impact of mandatory clearing on liquidity and find mixed results, particularly in less liquid instruments where clearing fees and collateral costs can outweigh the benefits of centralization.

What emerges from this period is a transformed derivative market, one that is more transparent, better capitalized, and less reliant on opaque bilateral agreements. However, the price of this transformation includes heightened operational complexity, collateral scarcity, and a growing reliance on central institutions whose own resilience has yet to be tested under conditions of extreme systemic stress. While the regulatory scaffolding has undoubtedly reduced tail-risk events, the overall ecosystem remains exposed to new vulnerabilities born of interconnectivity, digitalization, and geopolitical instability.

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The post-crisis reconstruction of derivative markets can thus be seen not as a final destination, but as an evolving process, a recalibration of market structure, regulatory philosophy, and technological integration that continues to unfold. In this new landscape, the challenge is not only to manage known risks, but to anticipate and adapt to those emerging from a financial system in constant flux.

3. Invariants and innovations: market function, FinTech, and digitalization

Despite the deep structural reforms and technological transformations that followed the 2008 financial crisis, the fundamental functions of derivative markets have shown remarkable continuity. Their role in hedging risk, facilitating price discovery, and enhancing market liquidity has endured across different regulatory regimes and market architectures. These core functions (often referred to as financial invariants) underscore the enduring economic rationale for derivatives, even in the face of volatility, uncertainty, and structural change.

In both pre- and post-crisis environments, derivatives have acted as crucial tools for managing exposure to interest rates, foreign exchange fluctuations, commodity price volatility, and credit risk. Their effectiveness in performing these functions lies in their flexibility, standardization in liquid markets, and customization in more complex OTC contexts. As Hull (2017) argues, while the instruments themselves have evolved, the foundational purpose of derivatives remains consistent: they offer market participants the means to transfer risk to those better equipped or more willing to bear it. This transference does not eliminate risk but redistributes it in ways that, when properly managed, can enhance systemic stability.

Even amid sweeping regulatory reforms, empirical studies have found that market participants have continued to rely on derivatives for hedging and speculation. According to Cecchetti, Gyntelberg, and Hollanders (2009), the economic necessity of derivatives as risk transfer mechanisms remained strong after the crisis, with market participants simply adjusting their strategies to align with new capital, margin, and transparency requirements. Thus, what changed was not the rationale for using derivatives but the infrastructure through which they were traded and managed.

However, the post-crisis environment also introduced a paradigm shift in how these invariants are executed. The integration of digital financial technologies, ranging from algorithmic trading systems to distributed ledger technologies (DLT), has significantly altered the operational landscape. New forms of financial instruments, particularly digital financial assets such as tokenized securities and crypto-derivatives, are increasingly woven into the broader derivatives ecosystem. These digital innovations not only offer new ways to express traditional financial exposures but also challenge the conventional boundaries of regulation and risk modeling.

Recent academic literature has begun to explore the implications of digital asset integration into portfolio and derivative management. Popescu and Spulbar (2025) present a rigorous analysis of how financial digital assets influence the modeling of financial risk, particularly in the context of diversified investment portfolios. Their study highlights that while digital assets introduce new forms of volatility, they also offer unique hedging opportunities when appropriately incorporated into structured financial products. The authors argue for enhanced risk models that reflect the hybrid nature of modern portfolios where traditional instruments coexist with blockchain-based assets under shared exposure frameworks.

This convergence of traditional and digital finance has important implications for derivatives. First, it expands the universe of underlying assets, enabling the creation of synthetic exposures to cryptocurrencies, tokenized commodities, and decentralized finance protocols. Second, it necessitates a rethinking of collateralization and settlement mechanisms. With smart contracts enabling real-time margin adjustments and decentralized clearing possibilities, the derivative market's operational foundation is undergoing a subtle but potentially revolutionary evolution.

Nonetheless, the adoption of digital technologies in derivatives is not without complications. As emphasized by Zetzsche, Buckley, and Arner (2020), regulatory fragmentation and uncertainty around digital asset classification pose significant challenges. Market infrastructure must evolve to ensure that innovations do not undermine the transparency and security gains achieved in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. Additionally, the increasing reliance on technology raises new operational risks cybersecurity threats, software vulnerabilities, and systemic dependencies on digital service providers that were largely absent from earlier regulatory frameworks.

Another key concern relates to the interoperability of regulatory regimes, particularly as digital asset derivatives are often traded across borders on platforms that escape national jurisdiction. This raises important questions about regulatory arbitrage, enforcement capability, and the integrity of global financial oversight. In a rapidly digitizing marketplace, the constancy of derivatives' economic purpose must be balanced against the fluidity of their technological execution and legal categorization.

The resilience of derivative market invariants through such a dynamic period reflects their deep entrenchment in financial logic. However, the arrival of digital finance especially in the form of blockchain-enabled instruments, has introduced an additional layer of complexity that future regulatory, technological, and theoretical frameworks must address. The preservation of these invariants amid digital transformation depends not only on the robustness of technological infrastructure but also on the clarity and coordination of global financial governance.

As derivative markets have evolved in the post-crisis era, automation and artificial intelligence (AI) have become increasingly embedded in the market's structural fabric. While the underlying purposes of derivatives (hedging, speculation, and risk transfer) have remained constant, the methods by which trades are executed, risks are assessed, and portfolios are managed have undergone a significant transformation. Automation and AI are no longer ancillary tools; they are central to the market's functioning, reshaping everything from pricing models and risk analytics to trade execution and regulatory compliance.

High-frequency trading (HFT) systems, algorithmic execution engines, and real-time data analytics have become standard components of modern derivative markets. These technologies enable traders to analyze massive datasets instantaneously, execute complex arbitrage strategies, and react to market signals in milliseconds. As Biais, Foucault, and Moinas (2015) note, algorithmic trading has contributed to increased market liquidity and pricing efficiency, especially in standardized derivatives. However, they also highlight the growing risks of market instability due to algorithmic interactions and feedback loops that can cause flash crashes or unexpected volatility bursts.

The rise of AI extends these capabilities by incorporating machine learning techniques for predictive modeling, adaptive strategy development, and behavioral pattern recognition. Financial institutions increasingly rely on AI for managing derivative portfolios, calibrating pricing models, and forecasting market movements with a level of

nuance that traditional statistical approaches struggle to achieve. According to Su et al. (2025), machine learning models have demonstrated superior performance in derivatives pricing, particularly for complex instruments with nonlinear payoff structures and high-dimensional input spaces.

Yet the deployment of AI in financial markets raises profound legal and ethical questions, particularly around accountability, transparency, and systemic risk. These concerns are explored in depth by Spulbar (2025), who analyzes the legal frameworks emerging around AI-driven financial markets. The study emphasizes that while AI offers efficiency gains and predictive precision, it also poses unique regulatory challenges. Traditional financial regulation assumes human agency and rational decision-making, but AI systems operate through probabilistic logic and data-driven inference, often in ways that are not easily interpretable or auditable.

One of the critical tensions in this space lies in the balance between innovation and oversight. The rapid deployment of AI systems in derivatives trading must be matched by regulatory frameworks capable of understanding and mitigating the new types of risk they introduce. As Spulbar and Mitache (2025) argue, the integration of AI into decision-making systems requires a rethinking of human-machine collaboration. Their analysis suggests that rather than seeking to displace human oversight, AI should be embedded within a governance architecture that preserves human judgment, ethical reasoning, and institutional accountability.

From a market infrastructure perspective, automation has also changed the architecture of trading venues and clearing systems. Smart contracts and blockchain-based settlement protocols are being tested as alternatives to traditional post-trade processes. These technologies promise faster, more transparent, and tamper-resistant mechanisms for confirming and settling derivative contracts. According to Gatteschi et al. (2018), the use of distributed ledger technology (DLT) in derivatives clearing could significantly reduce counterparty risk and reconciliation costs, though operational scalability and regulatory harmonization remain open challenges.

However, reliance on automated systems introduces new forms of operational and cyber risk. The interconnectedness of digital platforms creates pathways for disruption, whether from software glitches, malicious attacks, or systemic dependencies on single points of failure. In the context of derivatives markets, where precision and timing are paramount, such disruptions can lead to large-scale market dislocations. As emphasized by IOSCO (2021), effective oversight of automated trading systems must include robust stress-testing protocols, audit trails, and incident response strategies that account for both technical and behavioral variables.

The transformation of derivative markets through automation and AI is not merely technological it is institutional and conceptual. It challenges long-held assumptions about market behavior, regulatory design, and the role of human judgment. As financial systems grow more algorithmically intensive, the capacity to understand, guide, and regulate these systems will become a defining task for both policymakers and market participants. The future of derivatives trading will likely hinge not just on technological advancement, but on the ability to harmonize speed, complexity, and accountability in a coherent regulatory and ethical framework.

4. Case studies

The post-crisis transformation of derivative markets cannot be fully grasped without examining how these systemic changes materialized in practice. While regulatory reforms, technological innovations, and structural shifts provide the framework, the operational reality of market adaptation emerges most clearly through empirical case studies. These cases reflect how specific instruments, regions, and institutional actors navigated the new financial terrain shaped by reform mandates, liquidity constraints, and digitization.

Among the most telling examples is the evolution of interest rate swaps (IRS), which prior to the crisis were predominantly traded in bilateral OTC markets. Following the implementation of the Dodd-Frank Act and EMIR, these instruments were among the first to be subjected to mandatory central clearing. The result was a profound shift in trade execution and post-trade infrastructure. According to a study by Loon and Zhong (2014), the introduction of clearing requirements improved price transparency and narrowed bid-ask spreads in cleared interest rate swaps, indicating enhanced liquidity and reduced information asymmetry. However, this came at the cost of increased collateral demands, affecting the capital efficiency of smaller market participants.

Similarly, credit default swaps (CDS) (a central villain in the 2008 narrative) underwent considerable changes. Prior to the crisis, CDS markets were characterized by opacity and a lack of standardized documentation, leading to cascading uncertainty when major institutions like Lehman Brothers defaulted. Post-crisis, centralized clearing for index CDS became widespread, and trade reporting was instituted to enhance transparency. Yet empirical evidence remains mixed. As observed by Markit data and studies such as those by Fontana and Scheicher (2016), while transparency has improved, liquidity in certain CDS segments has thinned due to the exit of smaller dealers and rising compliance burdens. The centralization of risk in clearinghouses also remains a point of concern, particularly in stress scenarios where CCPs themselves could become transmission mechanisms rather than shock absorbers.

Another pertinent example involves commodity derivatives, particularly in energy and agricultural markets. The regulatory push toward central clearing and standardized contracts has not always aligned well with the hedging needs of commercial participants, many of whom rely on customized OTC derivatives. Haigh, Hranaiova, and Overdahl (2012) observe that while exchange-traded futures have seen increased volumes post-crisis, the reduced availability of customized hedging tools has exposed end-users to basis risk and decreased risk-management precision. The challenge here lies in balancing systemic safety with the functional diversity that real-economy actors require.

More recently, the emergence of crypto-derivatives (such as bitcoin futures and options) has introduced a novel asset class into the derivatives landscape, testing both regulatory regimes and risk modeling frameworks. Platforms like CME and Binance now offer standardized derivatives on highly volatile digital assets, raising questions about their role in portfolio diversification, systemic stability, and regulatory perimeter expansion. Corbet, Lucey, and Yarovaya (2019) analyze the behavior of crypto-derivatives and find that their volatility profiles differ substantially from traditional assets, necessitating alternative approaches to margining and risk assessment. The lack of globally harmonized regulation in this space compounds operational risks, particularly given the 24/7 nature of crypto markets and their high sensitivity to news events and social sentiment.

The case of emerging markets, particularly in Eastern Europe, offers further insight into how national financial systems have integrated post-crisis reforms. Romania serves as a valuable case study, with its gradual alignment to European standards under

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EMIR and Basel III, and the parallel development of local clearing infrastructure. As highlighted in the empirical work by Spulbar and Ene (2024), the Romanian financial market has seen increased derivative activity post-crisis, though challenges related to market depth, liquidity, and institutional capacity persist. Regulatory harmonization has improved systemic visibility, but the scale of the market still limits the extent to which global risk management tools can be applied locally with full effectiveness.

Case studies also reveal the unintended consequences of well-intentioned reforms. The compression of bank profitability due to higher capital requirements and stricter collateral rules has led some institutions to retreat from market-making functions in less liquid derivative segments. Duffie et al., (2011) points to a growing concern that liquidity, once assumed to be a natural byproduct of trading activity, is now more fragile and episodic. Market fragmentation has also become a critical issue, with global banks needing to navigate overlapping and sometimes conflicting regulatory obligations across jurisdictions.

Yet adaptation is not a one-way path of constraint. Many institutions have leveraged financial technology to overcome regulatory frictions. Smart order routing, collateral optimization algorithms, and real-time risk analytics have allowed major players to thrive even in this more constrained environment. Moreover, the integration of AI-driven systems into trade surveillance and compliance monitoring, as noted by Spulbar and Mitache (2025), suggests that technology may not only enable regulatory compliance but may actively enhance the resilience and efficiency of derivative markets in the long term.

Ultimately, these case studies underscore the complexity of financial reform and adaptation. They reveal that while systemic risk has been mitigated through greater standardization, clearing, and oversight, the market has had to sacrifice some flexibility, diversity, and spontaneity in return. These examples also suggest that adaptation is uneven, shaped by regional infrastructure, institutional capacity, and the balance between global rules and local realities.

The evolution of derivative markets is thus best understood not solely through macro-level analysis but through these detailed vignettes, which reveal how institutions, instruments, and infrastructures have interacted with a shifting regulatory, technological, and economic landscape. From IRS to crypto-options, from emerging markets to clearinghouses, these case studies provide a granular view of resilience, constraint, and innovation in the post-crisis world.

5. Conclusion

The evolution of derivative markets in the post-crisis era tells a story of transformation, resilience, and recalibration. What began as a response to the systemic failures of 2008 has unfolded into a redefinition of how global finance understands and manages risk. Regulatory reforms, once seen as corrective measures, have now become embedded in the market's structure, shaping the behavior of participants and the architecture of transactions. Central clearing, heightened transparency, and stricter capital requirements have reoriented the landscape, not without cost, but with a clear intent to foster stability and trust.

Yet the enduring functions of derivatives (risk transfer, hedging, speculation) have not disappeared. Instead, they have been reshaped, retooled, and in some cases digitized. Technological innovation, especially through automation and artificial intelligence, has opened new avenues for efficiency and insight, even as it introduces fresh

challenges and vulnerabilities. The convergence of digital assets, smart contracts, and real-time analytics has extended the boundaries of what a derivative can represent and how it can operate, blurring the lines between traditional finance and emerging ecosystems.

Case studies across asset classes and regions reveal that adaptation has not been uniform. Some instruments have thrived under new conditions, while others have diminished in liquidity or accessibility. Institutions have innovated, restructured, or withdrawn, depending on their ability to absorb regulatory change and technological disruption. Even as global markets align around shared principles, fragmentation, complexity, and regional disparities remain part of the equation.

Despite all this evolution, one constant has persisted: the human drive to manage uncertainty through structured financial instruments. In that sense, the story of derivatives is not only about reform or innovation, it is about the deep and evolving relationship between finance and the future. Markets continue to adapt because the world continues to change, and the tools we use to navigate risk must reflect that.

So as the financial system continues to digitize, and as new instruments emerge with unprecedented speed, we might ask ourselves: in a world where algorithms negotiate risk and value in milliseconds, who, or what, will shape the next crisis before it begins?

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Media Literacy in Primary Education: Teachers' Perspectives and Practices

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Abstract:

In modern society media literacy is increasingly important especially for primary school children. While informal education, such as parental influence, plays a role, formal education holds the main responsibility for systematically developing media competencies. Within this system, teachers not only deliver curriculum content but also actively shape students' media skills and assess their mastery.

This study explores how primary school teachers perceive students' media competencies and evaluate their own media literacy skills. It also examines their satisfaction with institutional support, additional training, and professional development, as well as the barriers they face in daily teaching. The research was conducted via an online survey distributed by email, with data analyzed descriptively.

Additionally, the paper reviews the theoretical background of media education, its development within primary education, and the importance of the cross-curricular topic "Use of Information and Communication Technology" in the national curriculum. Results show teachers' high awareness of media literacy's importance but also reveal challenges such as lack of resources, time, and professional development opportunities. The study concludes that successful media education requires ongoing support for teachers and the development of specific programs that enable students to critically engage with media content and participate actively in the media environment.

Keywords: *media literacy; primary education; teachers' perspectives; media competencies; curriculum implementation; professional development*

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Introduction

Digital environment shapes how children and young people perceive the world and access information. The constant presence of media in students' lives calls for teaching approaches that go beyond technical skills and encourage critical thinking. The role of teachers is shifting from traditional knowledge transmitters to guides who help students understand, analyze, and use media content responsibly. Given these changes in education, it is crucial to define what we mean by media literacy and why it is more important than ever.

Media literacy requires systematic education. It should not remain a superficial concept but include continuous teaching and learning. In schools, this means not only using technology in class but also teaching about media, asking critical questions about how media represent the world and shape meaning. It is also important to consider how students use media outside school. Although education policies often promote digital literacy, it is usually narrowly understood as technical skills for using devices and programs. In contrast, media education is broader and focused on developing critical thinking rather than simply protecting children from harmful content (Buckingham, 2019: 235).

The aim of this paper is to examine the opinions of primary school teachers regarding the importance of media education and its application in the school system. Special attention is given to their satisfaction with students' media knowledge, difficulties in integrating media content into teaching, self-assessment of their own media skills, and the need for further training and support.

Theory background

To properly explore these issues, it is important to outline the theoretical framework underpinning media pedagogy. According to Tolić (2009), media competencies are central to media pedagogy, with media literacy being a narrower concept within media education, which itself is part of the broader media upbringing. This distinction aids understanding media pedagogy's role in modern education. Voevoda (2021) defines media pedagogy as a branch focused on developing media literacy and preparing individuals, especially youth, for life in an information society by fostering critical thinking, understanding media influence, and developing communication skills adapted to technological changes.

Tolić (2009) highlights that media upbringing develops competencies across subjects, stressing critical thinking and action, recognizing media influence, distinguishing fiction from reality, understanding media functions, and acquiring communication skills vital for today's society. Key elements include interactive and self-critical media use and assessing their social role, contributing to social competence, cultural capital, and interdisciplinary knowledge. According to UNESCO's definition media education covers all forms of communication media, aiming to develop understanding of their operation and critical usage skills.

Moreover, the concept of literacy in the 21st century is closely linked to information literacy, the skills needed to navigate complex information environments. Media literacy focuses on mass media understanding and influence; information literacy covers all types of information regardless of transmission; digital literacy is a narrower skill set for handling digital information (Vrkić Dimić, 2014).

Forsman (2020) notes that since the 1960s, media literacy has been key to educating children for democratic participation, emphasizing responsibility, critical

thinking, creativity, expression, and thoughtful media use. This is achieved through compulsory education that integrates media as a subject (technology, history, theory) with pedagogical methods (production, analysis, critique). Thus, media literacy is the outcome of formal media education.

Taken together, these perspectives make clear that effective media education requires an ongoing, integrated approach within the formal school system, supported by well-prepared teachers and a curriculum that fosters critical engagement with media.

A historical overview of media literacy development helps understand its educational importance. Hobbs and Jensen (2009) trace media literacy back to 5th century BC rhetoric, which taught political skills through oratory and critical thinking. Early media literacy also linked to film as a learning tool for language and analysis. Critical questioning from ancient Greek education emphasized reflection and student experience, forming the basis of 20th-century media literacy. In the latter half of the 20th century, communication sciences shaped modern media literacy approaches, initially seen as protection against sensationalism and propaganda. During the 1970s, media literacy gained recognition for supporting civic participation and democratic rights, with teachers encouraging interactive methods on relevant topics. By the 1970s and 1980s, film and television became accepted educational media, and curricula integrated media literacy. New technologies allowed students to actively create media content, linking school and everyday life. By the late 20th century, media literacy faced challenges from digital culture and propaganda, evolving into a complex interplay of knowledge, identity, culture, and power vital to education and society.

Although media literacy has practical roots, modern authors emphasize the need for empirical studies on its effectiveness, especially in education.

Malović (2014) highlights growing interest in evaluating media competence development among children and adolescents, focusing on critical media analysis and behavior links. For example, exposure to media violence shows media literacy's role in youth education. Strict bans often increase forbidden content's appeal, especially among peers. Instead, clear explanations about undesirable content and behavior are necessary. School programs can reduce violent content consumption and acceptance of violence. Interventions should be age-appropriate and start early before peer influence and violent tendencies form. Media education includes curriculum integration, teacher training, educational activities, and use of resources.

Teachers' roles in modern education shift from information sources to guides supporting competence development. They become mentors inspiring and directing students with greater freedom and responsibility for learning outcomes. This requires new competencies, including linking theory and practice, recognizing individual needs, project management, and parent communication. Professional development is vital, including initial education, internships, and lifelong learning (Skupnjak, 2011).

Since 2019, Croatian schools introduced a curriculum for ICT use aimed at integrating digital technologies and developing students' digital skills. It is divided into two cycles: grades 1-2 focus on basic responsible ICT use and communication; grades 3-5 develop advanced digital skills including privacy protection and understanding technology's impact. ICT use encourages active, experiential learning, creativity, and independence. Teachers must continuously improve their digital competencies to integrate technology safely and effectively. Assessment includes formative and summative methods like digital portfolios and projects, promoting responsible and critical technology use (Odluka o donošenju kurikuluma za Međupredmetnu temu Uporaba informacijske i

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komunikacijske tehnologije za osnovne i srednje škole u Republici Hrvatskoj, 2019).

Draguzet (2022) studied integration of media and information literacy across compulsory subjects and interdisciplinary themes. Media literacy appears in most curricula, often linked to ICT use, but some subjects (like Physical Education) mention technology without clear media literacy outcomes. The interdisciplinary ICT theme includes many media literacy goals but requires teacher expertise and creative lesson planning. Teachers need training and support, as curricula allow flexible methods that can be challenging without guidance. Some subjects (Croatian language, Geography, Biology, Chemistry) emphasize media literacy clearly, while others (Music) lack concrete outcomes. Teacher development is essential to build students' skills in recognizing and critically analyzing information in a digital environment.

Research by Čižmar and Obrenović (2013) shows low media literacy knowledge among Croatian teachers and the public, highlighting the need for systematic media education. Schools rarely include media content, and teachers lack training. Students show weak critical media analysis skills. Ciboci and Osmančević (2015) found a gap between theoretical knowledge and practice among Croatian language teachers, with main barriers being lack of equipment, time, and expertise. They stress the need for teacher training and better materials. Public opinion research reveals differences: students want more digital skills, parents support early education, experts point to lacking resources and training. Ciboci's (2018) dissertation recommends interactive methods and stronger media literacy integration in curricula.

Ciboci, Gazdić-Alerić, and Kanižaj (2019) found school principals support media literacy but note challenges like lack of equipment, training, and unclear guidelines. They advocate educating parents and updating Croatian language content. A 2021 study in Velika Gorica showed strong teacher support for systematic media literacy education, mostly taught in homeroom and Croatian language classes, focusing on internet safety and fake news. Teachers use workshops and practical methods but call for improved curricula.

Ciboci Perša, Burić, and Bagić (2023) report that primary school teachers have good basic digital skills but struggle with advanced tasks like analyzing information. Most rarely create original media content except on social media. Older teachers show lower confidence in digital skills. Trixa and Kaspar (2024) studied pre-service teacher' perceived competence in teaching information literacy, finding they mostly use digital sources superficially and rarely verify information deeply. Differentiating fact from opinion, the key teaching skill, was present in few. Confidence in teaching relates to formal education and information awareness, while selective exposure lowers it. They recommend training in critical thinking, source evaluation, and cognitive bias awareness for better preparation.

This research highlights the importance of media literacy in education and the central role of teachers in its implementation. Despite growing awareness, challenges persist such as limited curricular support, uneven approaches, and insufficient teacher training. Mandarić (2012) notes that while digital media can boost motivation and independence, teachers must guide its responsible use. Their attitudes directly impact students' critical thinking, making it essential to understand how they perceive and apply media literacy in practice.

Methodology

The aim of the paper is to gain insight into the current attitudes and opinions of primary school teachers regarding media education in primary schools in the city of Zadar, Republic of Croatia. The respondents are primary school teachers (teaching the first four grades of elementary school) employed in public elementary schools in the city of Zadar, Republic of Croatia. They were selected as the target group due to their daily involvement in the educational process and their relevant experience related to the research topic. For this research, a Google Forms questionnaire was created to explore teachers' attitudes toward media education of lower-grade elementary school students in the city of Zadar. The questionnaire includes a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions covering key research areas: respondents' socio-demographic data, teachers' attitudes toward the importance of media education, self-assessment of their own competencies for implementing media education, obstacles and challenges in integrating media education into teaching, and the need for additional support or training. The questionnaire is anonymous and was distributed to teachers via email. Data collected from the closed-ended questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The responses to open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis.

Research results and discussion

The survey was conducted in September 2024 in elementary schools in the city of Zadar in Croatia. Questionnaires were distributed to all elementary schools in Zadar, and a total of 45 completed responses were received. The most represented age group was 40–49 years, comprising 35.56% of respondents. This was followed by the 50–59 age group with 22.22%, and the 30–39 age group with 20.00%. The 20–29 and 60+ age groups were equally represented, each accounting for 11.11% of respondents.

When asked to explain their understanding of the term 'media education,' respondents provided open-ended answers. A thematic analysis of these responses was conducted to identify key elements that reflect their interpretations of the term. The coded content was grouped into themes based on shared or similar characteristics. A total of 40 responses were included in the analysis, as they were deemed suitable for qualitative interpretation. Six thematic categories were identified: Access to Information and Data Sources, Critical Analysis and Evaluation of Media Content, Digital and Information Competence, Internet Safety and Responsible Behavior, Cultural and Historical Aspects of Media, and Forms of Media Expression. The responses show that, overall, the participants recognized relevant characteristics of media literacy. Respondents perceive media education as a multidimensional concept - a combination of technical skills, critical thinking, and an understanding of various forms and functions of media. Table 1 shows that teachers most commonly associate media education with critical thinking about media and recognizing their role and influence (22.5%), as well as with various forms of media expression (22.5%). They also recognize the importance of digital skills (20%) and access to information from various sources (17.5%). Less emphasis is placed on the cultural and historical aspects of media (17.5%) and on digital safety and responsible internet use (12.5%).

Table 1. Understanding of 'Media Literacy'

Category	(%)	Summary of Response	Example Response
Access to Information and Data Sources	17.5%	Includes the ability to search for, find, and use information from various sources such as the internet, print media, TV, and radio.	"Media education is gathering information from various sources such as the internet, television, radio, newspapers..."
Critical Analysis and Evaluation of Media Content	22.5%	Involves critical thinking, identifying misinformation, analyzing media messages, and understanding the impact of media.	"Introducing students to both the positive and negative aspects of media."
Digital and Information Competence	20.0%	Refers to technical knowledge and skills in using digital tools, applications, and platforms for information and communication.	"The ability and skill to use media."
Internet Safety and Responsible Behavior	12.5%	Includes awareness of personal data protection, online safety, and rules of behavior in the digital space.	"Types of media, usage, internet safety, responsible and safe behavior."
Cultural and Historical Aspects of Media	17.5%	Relates to understanding the history of media, the cultural role of various forms such as film, comics, and advertisements, and their evolution over time.	"Learning about the history and development of media and its impact on society, as well as developing media-related skills."
Forms of Media Expression	22.5%	Involves recognizing different types and formats of media (e.g., comic books, film, advertisement), their expressive means and communicative functions such as informing, entertaining, and educating.	"Key terms: newspaper, magazine, comic book, film, advertisement, internet, social media,..."

The following question focused on teachers' perception of their own media competence. As shown in Table 2, teachers generally rated their media competence quite highly. On a scale from 1 to 5, most dimensions received a score above 4. None of the dimensions were rated with the lowest score. A rating of 2 (poor) was given by only 2.22% of respondents, and only in the dimension of Integrity and Communication. The highest average scores were recorded in the dimensions of Tolerance (4.36), Creativity (4.33), and Openness (4.31). This may suggest that teachers feel particularly confident in areas related to interpersonal relationships, acceptance of diversity, and the ability to express

themselves through media. On the other hand, the lowest average score (3.80) was recorded in the Integrity dimension, which may reflect some uncertainty regarding ethical behavior or familiarity with rules of conduct in the digital environment. Additionally, the dimensions of Management (4.0) and Communication (4.11) received slightly lower scores compared to the others, which could indicate that some teachers feel they could improve in managing digital tools and media communication. Overall, teachers see themselves as competent in these areas but are aware that there is room for further development.

Table 2. Self-Assessment of Teachers' Media Competencies

Dimension	1(%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Average rating
Technical Dimension	0.0	0.0	20.00	53.33	26.67	4.06
Integrity	0.0	2.22	35.56	42.22	20.00	3.80
Tolerance	0.0	0.0	8.89	46.67	44.44	4.36
Creativity	0.0	0.0	11.11	44.44	44.44	4.33
Management	0.0	0.0	26.67	46.67	26.67	4.00
Communication	0.0	2.22	17.78	46.67	33.33	4.11
Openness	0.0	0.0	13.33	42.22	44.44	4.31

Description: 1 – Very Poor, 2 – Poor, 3 – Satisfactory, 4 – Good, 5 – Very Good

Adapted from Široki (2024) Stavovi učitelja o medijskom obrazovanju učenika razredne nastave u gradu Zadru, Diplomski rad, University of Zadar

When asked about barriers to integrating media education, respondents could select multiple options: lack of time, resources, school support, professional training, low student interest, or no barriers. The most frequently reported barrier was a lack of time (68.69%), indicating that teachers struggle to integrate media education into an already packed curriculum. Lack of resources and materials was noted by 51.11%, and insufficient professional training by 35.55%, highlighting the need for more teacher development. Lack of school support was reported by 13.33%, while no respondent reported low student interest. Two teachers reported no barriers.

Regarding support from the school's pedagogical service and administration, teachers rated it on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good). Most teachers (35.55%) rated support as satisfactory (3), while 53% gave good or very good ratings (4 or 5), showing general satisfaction. However, 11.11% gave low ratings (1 or 2), indicating some dissatisfaction and a need for stronger institutional involvement. Overall, while support exists, improvements are needed for better integration of media education.

The results show that 66.67% of teachers had participated in media literacy training, while 33.33% had no such experience. This indicates that media literacy is given a certain level of importance in teachers' professional development. However, a significant portion of teachers have not participated in training in this area. This finding may point to the need for additional investment in professional support and training programs in order to equip all teachers with the skills necessary for effective implementation of media education in the classroom. Teachers who have undergone training are likely to feel more confident and competent in integrating media education,

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while those without training may face difficulties in applying appropriate methods and approaches.

Respondents who had attended training evaluated its usefulness in everyday teaching on a scale from 1 to 5. Most rated it positively, with 47.1% giving a 4 and 11.8% a 5, indicating general satisfaction. However, some lower ratings suggest that improvements are still needed to enhance its practical relevance.

Respondents were also asked an open-ended question about the types of support or additional training they consider necessary for better integration of media education into teaching. Out of all responses received, **33 were deemed suitable for analysis**. Through thematic analysis, four main categories were identified: **Training and Professional Development, Tools and Digital Infrastructure, Teaching materials, and Other**. The majority of suggestions (54.55%) related to training and professional development. Respondents emphasized the need for continuous learning through seminars, small-group training sessions, workshops, and educational platforms. They also highlighted the value of practical examples, experience sharing among colleagues, and self-directed learning. A significant portion of responses (21.21%) focused on digital infrastructure and tools. Teachers pointed to the need for technical support, stable internet access, digital devices, and overall better equipment in classrooms. In terms of teaching materials (15.15%), respondents stressed the importance of having access to modern, relevant, and regularly updated resources. They also noted the need for easier sharing and exchange of educational content. The "Other" category (9.09%) included responses that could not be clearly or quantitatively assigned to the above categories. These included comments such as the importance of not overusing media in teaching and the need for clear, practical guidance.

When asked to assess the level of media literacy among their students, teachers responded using a scale from 1 (very poor), 2 (poor), 3 (satisfactory), 4 (good), to 5 (very good). The results were analyzed across five aspects: critical thinking, safe internet use, understanding of media messages, digital literacy, and the ability to distinguish between true and false information.

Table 3. Ratings for Different Aspects of Students' Media Literacy

Aspects	1	2	3	4	5	Average rating
Critical thinking	2.22	20.0	62.22	13.33	2.22	2.93
Safe internet use	6.67	28.89	42.22	17.78	4.44	2.84
Understanding of media messages	4.44	20.0	57.78	15.56	2.22	2.91
Digital literacy	2.22	15.56	51.11	24.44	6.67	3.18
Distinguishing between true and false information	13.33	35.56	37.78	11.11	2.22	2.53

Description: 1 – Very Poor, 2 – Poor, 3 – Satisfactory, 4 – Good, 5 – Very Good

Adapted from Široki (2024) Stavovi učitelja o medijskom obrazovanju učenika razredne nastave u gradu Zadru, Diplomski rad, University of Zada

Most respondents rated their students' critical thinking skills as satisfactory (62.22%), while 12 respondents (13.33%) gave a rating of very good. On the other hand,

22.22% of respondents assessed the level of critical thinking as poor or very poor. Regarding safe internet use, 42.22% of respondents rated their students with a grade of 3, while 17.78% gave a grade of 4. The highest grade (5) was given to 4.44% of students. More than a third of teachers (35.56%) rated their students' ability to use the internet safely as poor or very poor. When it comes to understanding media messages, more than half of the teachers (57.78%) rated their students with an average score (3), while 15.56% gave a score of 4. Only 2.22% of students were rated with the highest grade (5). On the other hand, 24.44% of respondents assessed the level of understanding as low (grades 1 or 2). In terms of digital literacy, more than half of the teachers (51.11%) gave their students an average score, while 24.44% awarded a grade of 4. The highest grade (5) was given to 6.67% of students. Conversely, 17.78% of respondents assessed their students' digital literacy as low (grades 1 or 2). Regarding the ability to distinguish true from false information, almost half of the respondents (48.89%) gave a poor or very poor rating. A little more than a third (37.78%) rated it as satisfactory. The ability to distinguish true from false information was rated with a 4 by 11.11% of respondents, and with a 5 by 2.22%.

Overall, the results show that most teachers believe their students possess a moderate level of media literacy across the assessed dimensions. However, the significant proportion of poor and very poor ratings, especially in the area of distinguishing true from false information, highlights the need for further training and support in developing these skills.

Most primary school teachers in Zadar rate media education practices as satisfactory, while clearly expressing a need for improvements. Twenty-four respondents (53.3%) consider the quality of teaching content satisfactory, 13 (28.9%) good, and five (11.1%) poor. The suitability of the content to students' needs is rated satisfactory by 20 respondents (44.4%), good by 13 (28.9%), and poor by seven (15.6%). Educational resource availability satisfies 24 teachers (53.3%), while 13 (28.9%) rate it as good, and four (8.9%) as very good. Conversely, four respondents (8.9%) consider the resources poor or very poor. Training and professional development are recognized as the weakest points, rated satisfactory by 18 teachers (40%) and poor by 13 (28.9%). Student engagement with media topics is mostly rated satisfactory by 25 respondents (55.6%) and very good by five (11.1%). Despite the generally satisfactory ratings, the results highlight the need for improvements in teaching content, educational resources, and especially teachers' professional development.

At the end of the survey, 18 respondents provided open-ended suggestions for improving media education in primary classrooms. Through thematic analysis of the responses, the suggestions were grouped into two main categories. The majority of responses (77.77%) fell under Education and Professional Development, encompassing teachers' proposals for training, workshops, lectures, and practical teaching examples. In relation to teaching materials and curriculum, respondents emphasized the introduction of subjects focused on media, society, and media education, along with the need for additional teaching resources and pedagogical support. The category of Digital Infrastructure and School Equipment comprised 22.23% of the suggestions, highlighting the need for improved technical equipment, computers, and digital tools in classrooms.

These findings suggest that teachers' proposals for improving media education are primarily oriented toward enhancing their own professional competencies. Additionally, they emphasized the need for media-oriented curriculum content and teaching resources, while technical infrastructure was recognized as important, though

less frequently mentioned compared to professional development needs.

Conclusion

Media literacy encompasses the skills and knowledge required to analyze, think critically about, and effectively use media content. In the digital age, where access to information is virtually unlimited, developing these competencies has become essential for active, responsible, and informed participation in society. Teachers play a key role in this process, as their approach, knowledge, and teaching methods shape students' attitudes and skills, guiding them toward an active and critical engagement with media. Despite the growing emphasis on the importance of media literacy, research and professional literature point to a number of challenges in its implementation within the education system. Teachers face unclear curricular guidelines, a lack of resources and opportunities for professional development, as well as differences in how the concept of media literacy is understood and approached. This gap between theoretical expectations and practical conditions complicates the consistent and systematic integration of media education into teaching. It is particularly important to invest continuously in teacher training and to ensure institutional support that will enable teachers to design and deliver high-quality instruction aimed at developing students' media competencies.

This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the attitudes and experiences of primary school teachers in Croatia regarding media literacy. The research focused on four key areas: teacher satisfaction with students' knowledge and interest, barriers to implementing media education, self-assessment of teachers' own competencies, and the need for additional support and training. The results show that teachers mostly assess their students' level of media literacy as moderate. They express satisfaction with students' interest and level of critical thinking, but also concern about low competence in certain areas. The most prominent barriers identified were lack of time, resources, and professional training. Teachers rated their technical competence highly, while self-assessments in areas such as creativity and openness were lower, indicating potential for further professional development. In addition, although most respondents had participated in training, the findings suggest a need for higher-quality and more accessible educational materials, as well as greater engagement within the school system.

Teachers define media education as a complex process that involves technical, ethical, and cultural aspects, emphasizing the importance of safety, ethics, and the development of critical thinking. Although there have been positive developments and growing awareness of the importance of this topic, the research findings confirm that successful integration of media education requires systematic support and investment in the professional development of teachers. The development of students' media competencies largely depends on the training and motivation of their teachers.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1. Understanding of 'Media Literacy'

Table 2. Self-Assessment of Teachers' Media Competencies

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Computational Methods to Social and Public Perceptions: Focus on Digital Governance, Sustainable Development and International Security

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Abstract:

Introduction: In the context of the dynamic digitization of the global space, the analysis of the public's perception becomes paramount for the understanding and relevance of public policies related to sustainable development and security management. In this context, the monitoring and analysis of the trends recorded in the social media space regarding the receptivity of some topics associated with the digital governance field represent valuable clues regarding future institutional policies, but also for citizen initiatives and environmental protection.

Methodology: This study engages a quantitative and qualitative analysis of five selected topics: “digital”, “digital governance”, “international policies”, “sustainable development”, “international security”. The data was collected on July 8, 2025 with the help of the Social Searcher (<https://www.social-searcher.com/>) platform in order to collect, analyze and interpret the developments and trends regarding online mentions on social networks during the monitored period. Two sets of keywords were set: the first set associated two keywords (“digital”, “digital governance”), the second set associated two keywords (“international policies” and “international security”) and the third set associated a keyword (“sustainable development”).

Results and discussions: The results certify the increase of interest in the field of the analyzed topics, in the context of the updating of public policies in the field with emphasis on the values in the field of digitalization and with significant variations of the topic “sustainable development”. These results reflect the need to consult citizens, but also the need for deepening and an increased interest in developing public policies. At the same time, the results of the analysis demonstrate a direct relationship with current political, social and/or cultural events that influence the public agenda.

Conclusions: The use of media monitoring is a valuable tool for indicating the trends of public reflection of the topics associated with a rule, but also a tool for evaluating public policies.

Keywords: *policies, digital governance, sustainable development, security, media monitoring*

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Computational Methods to Social and Public Perceptions: Focus on Digital Governance, Sustainable Development and International Security

Introduction

In the last decade, public policies on digital governance have engaged new directions of interaction of institutions and institutional bodies (Holzinger, Weippl, Tjoa, & Kieseberg, 2021; Stewart, 2022), as well as various trends in the way collective and individual feedback on government policies are collected. In this context, the two dimensions of analysis and monitoring of public perception focus on the adoption and implementation of policies and strategies in real time. In this regard, the literature highlights two areas of impact, sustainable development and security, as being primarily associated with digitization processes (Fontanel & Coulomb, 2000). Moreover, several recent studies primarily reflect the potential of sentiment analysis for assessing the impact of public policies for the two, but also for focusing and analyzing the real-time contextual dimensions of the contentious debates on (i) security and urban development (Rafiei, Ghaffari & Paknia, 2021); (ii) labor market policies and security (Beg, 2022); (iii) digital sustainability and transition (Rosário, & Dias, 2022; Sparviero & Ragnedda, 2021); (iv) security and climate change (Georgescu, Olimid, Olimid, & Gherghe, 2025); (v) security governance and biometric data (Olimid, Georgescu, Olimid, Georgescu, & Gherghe, 2025a); (vi) humanitarian assistance and international security (Olimid, Georgescu, Olimid, Georgescu & Gherghe, 2025b).

However, in this perspective, recent studies focus predominantly on quantitative approaches with a multi-category and interdisciplinary character. Thus, there is a need to update the research field of digital governance by extending the analysis to other contextual perspectives associated with online monitoring and semantic analysis in the online space (Li, Larimo & Leonidou, 2023).

The present study aims to develop an analysis on the evolution of trends in the social media space regarding the sentiment associated with the digital field, sustainable development and security. Thus, the two central objectives of the research aim to:

(1) identify the frequency of topics associated with the research field and the thematic distribution according to the specific metrics of the platform used for the analysis;

(2) the analysis of public sentiment and societal receptivity, in order to evaluate the efficiency of institutional communication and perception.

The research is structured on four main sections. The first section developed an introduction to the theme of the field of knowledge and reveals the main directions of analysis in the specialized literature.

The second section focuses on the research methodology and presents the research tools and methods used for online monitoring of the selected topics. The third section centers and analyzes the main results of the research, analyzing and evaluating the public perception and relevance of the data obtained. The last section presents the findings of the research and reflects future research directions.

Methodology

1. The online platform and technological structure used

The present research uses the Social Searcher platform (2025) (<https://www.social-searcher.com/>) and applied monitoring tools for computational analysis of online mentions and trends in real time as topic extraction and tracking and sentiment analysis:

- a) *Monitored period and frequency of online analysis*: The data were extracted and analyzed on July 8, 2025, using only one query per day for each analyzed term;
- b) *Language used for the analyzed online content*: English was used for the extraction of data and information;
- c) *Digital networks and platforms used for online content analysis*: Facebook, YouTube, Tumblr, Flickr, VK, Twitter (X), forums, blogs, websites, online press articles and studies, public posts, public comments, photo and video platforms.

2. Criteria for identifying and selecting keywords

The analysis centers five keywords as follows “digital”, “digital governance”, “international policies”, “sustainable development”, “international security”. The selection of keywords is based on a preliminary legal and documentary analysis of the strategies and policies, reports and studies launched in the field of digital governance, sustainable development and international security.

3. Tools used associated with the platform for data collection as follows:

a) for real-time search of online mentions: total mentions (Table 1); total users (Table 1); Sentiment Ratio (Table 1); sentiment analysis - positive/negative/neutral mentions (Table 1);

b) identification of online sources and platforms for online posts and distribution (Table 2);

c) the daily and hourly distribution of the mentions (Table 3 and Table 4);

Graph 1 and Graph 2 visualize the data extracted from Table 1 through charts based on the quantitative analysis.

The limits of the research refer to the fact that only posts, accounts and platforms with a public setting are used for monitoring, not private accounts, which limits the field of knowledge and analysis of the research.

For the contextual interpretation of the monitoring data, the sentiment analysis was performed autonomously and on the same day for all five words, which can have consequences on the frequency distribution depending on the day and time interval of the collected and processed content.

The tools used for monitoring focused on total mentions, total users, sentiment ratio, positive/negative/neutral mentions, the main sources (websites, platforms, forums, etc.), daily and hourly distribution of online mentions.

Moreover, the results of the analysis and the way of public reflection are both related to the publication and launch of important documents at the level of European and international governance such as: (European Commission, 2025a; European Commission, 2025b; United Nations, 2025a; United Nations, 2025b; United Nations General Assembly, 2025; OECD, 2025a; OECDb; OECD, 2025c).

Results and findings

The first part of the analysis reveals the results of the monitoring of the five selected topics and the variations extracted during the monitoring period. It can be observed in Table 1 a peak of 386 total mentions for the topic “digital”, 213 mentions for “digital governance”, 91 for “international policies”, and 281 for “international security”.

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An increased number of mentions are registered for the topic of “sustainable development” (318 mentions).

This reflects the growing public receptivity to several reports and studies of international and European organizations and institutions in the field at the beginning of July. On the second row of the Table, the results for the selection of total users are highlighted indicating a high volume of users for all five keywords with variations between 62 total users for “international policies” and 233 for the topic “digital” (Table 1).

Table 1. Results of Monitoring Digital Interaction and Sentiment Trends on Selected Topics

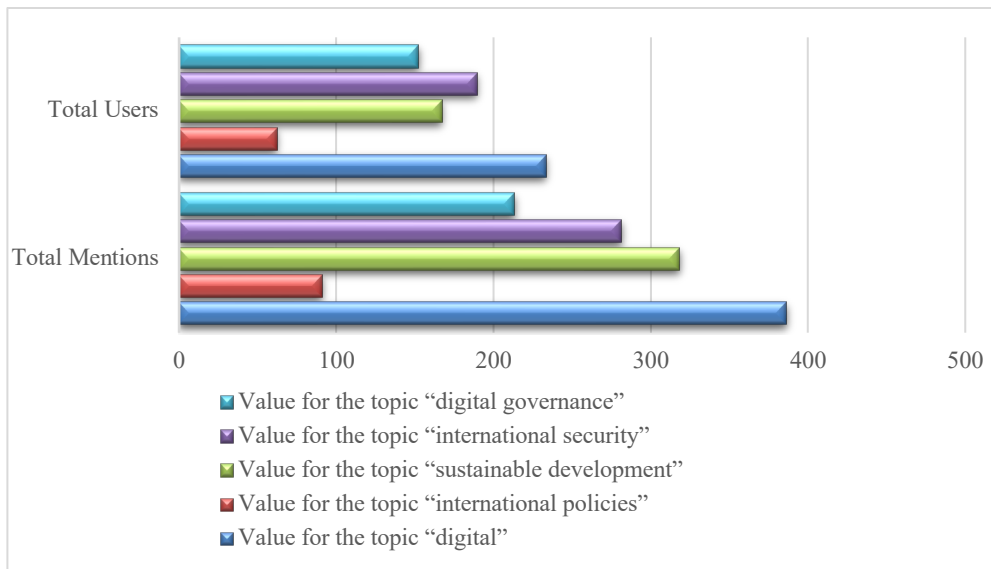
Category	Value for the topic “digital”	Value for the topic “digital governance”	Value for the topic “international policies”	Value for the topic “sustainable development”	Value for the topic “international security”
Total Mentions	386	213	91	318	281
Total Users	233	152	62	167	189
Sentiment Ratio (positive: negative)	4:1	4:1	7:3	9:1	3:2
Positive Mentions	81 (21% of total)	44 (21% of total)	29 (32% of total)	114 (36% of total)	27 (10% of total)
Negative Mentions	16 (4% of total)	9 (4% of total)	11 (12% of total)	8 (3% of total)	20 (7% of total)
Neutral Mentions	289 (75% of total)	160 (75% of total)	51 (56% of total)	196 (61% of total)	234 (83% of total)

Source: Authors’ own compilation based on data retrieved on July 8, 2025 from Social Searcher platform available at <https://www.social-searcher.com/>

The sentiment analysis highlights a positive:negative ratio of [4:1] for the topic “digital”, the same ratio of [4:1] for the topic “digital governance”, a ratio of [7:3] for the topic “international policies”, a ratio of [9:1] for the topic “sustainable development” and a ratio of [3:2] for the topic “international security” (Table 1).

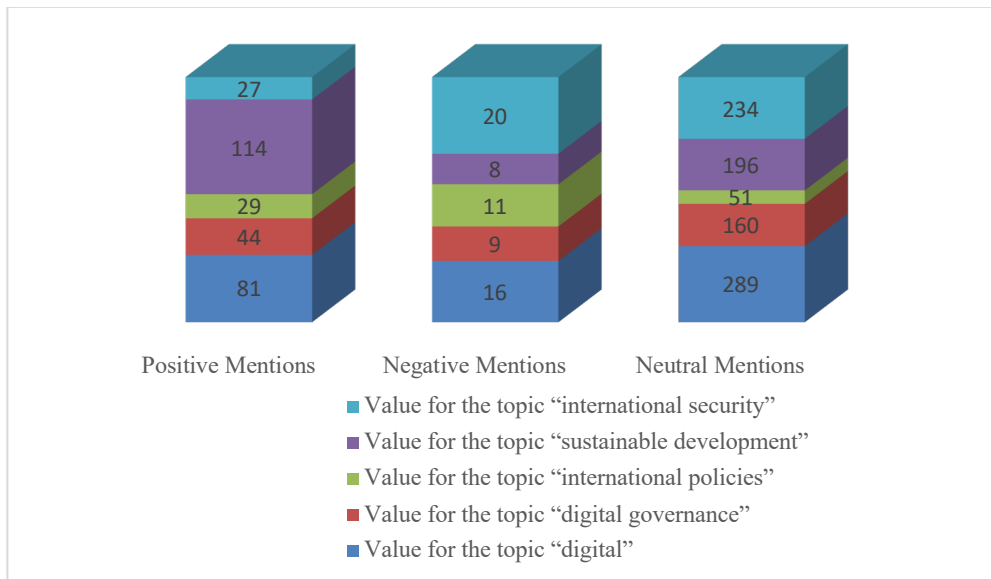
These reports reflect a predominantly positive receptivity of the five keywords during the monitored period (Table 1, Graph 1 and Graph 2). The graphic distribution of the results obtained as a result of the online monitoring reveals a predominance of the content generated for the topics “digital”, “sustainable development” and “sustainable development” (Graph 1).

Graph 1. Volume of Online Mentions and Digital Visibility



Source: Authors' own compilation based on data retrieved on July 8, 2025 from Social Searcher platform available at <https://www.social-searcher.com/>

Graph 2. Online Distribution of Mentions based on Sentiment Polarity



Source: Authors' own compilation based on data retrieved on July 8, 2025 from Social Searcher platform available at <https://www.social-searcher.com/>

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Table 2 identifies the platforms and web sources (Columns 2-6) where mentions of the five selected keywords appear most frequently. The sites presented in Table 2 will be presented chromatically differentiated according to their typology as follows:

- (a) official governmental, organisational and institutional sources (light blue backgrounds);
- (b) websites of academic institutions, scientific databases and academic journals (light orange);
- (c) websites of newspapers and information websites of a general nature or specialised on the field of politics (light yellow);
- (d) social media networks, online forums, social forums, video platforms, photo galleries (light green);
- (e) online educational sources and platforms (light grey);
- (f) platforms and services with commercial support, forms of insurance and digital banks, online shops (dark blue);
- (g) websites of non-governmental organizations (dark orange);
- (h) blogs and civil society initiatives (dark green).

During the period selected for the extraction and processing of data and information, it is observed that social platforms (reddit.com) and online collaborative encyclopedias (en.wikipedia.org) register increased values of occurrence frequencies, as well as polarized reactions for topics “digital governance” (86 mentions), “sustainable development” (2 mentions) and “international security” (2 mentions).

Also, the data and results in Table 2 highlight high frequencies of occurrences of the selected words on:

(a) the websites of the institutions as follows: unctad.org (22 mentions) for topic “sustainable development”; nsf.gov (1 mention) for topic “international policies”; sdgs.un.org (2 mentions) for topic “sustainable development”; international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu (1 mention) for topic “international policies”; state.gov (2 mentions) or topic “international security”; ustr.gov (1 mentions) for topic “international policies”;

(b) websites of academic institutions, scientific databases and academic journals. In this category, the most frequent occurrences are recorded for the topic “international security” (Column 6) as follows: direct.mit.edu (2 mentions); muse.jhu.edu (2 mentions); schar.gmu.edu (2 mentions) and jstor.org (1 mention);

(c) websites of newspapers and information websites of a general nature or specialised on the field of politics as follows: for topic “international policies”: thehill.com (4 mentions); for topic “sustainable development”: mercurynews.com (4 mentions); newsroom.gy (3 mentions) and haaretz.com (2 mentions);

(d) social media networks, online forums, social forums, video platforms, photo galleries as follows: for topic “digital governance”: flickr.com (100 mentions); reddit.com (86); m.vk.com (3) and for for topic “digital”: m.vk.com (12); youtube.com (4) and preview.redd.it (3);

(e) online educational sources and platforms as follows: for topic “digital”: freewebcart.com (6 mentions); support.n26.com (2 mentions) and ahrefs.com (2 mentions) and for topic “international policies”: instaforex.com (4 mentions) and aetnainternational.com (1 mention)

(g) websites of non-governmental organizations as follows: for topic “international policies” littleleague.org (1 mention);

(h) blogs and civil society initiatives as follows: for topic “digital” wuestenigel.com (6 mentions) and weskill.org (2 mentions); topic “digital governance”: hackernoon.com (3 mentions).

Table 2. Key Online Domains for Engagement on Selected Topics

No.	Domain and total mentions for topic “digital”	Domain and total mentions for topic “digital governance”	Domain and total mentions for topic “international policies”	Domain and total mentions for topic “sustainable development”	Domain and total mentions for topic “international security”
1.	forum-wodociagi.pl (15)	flickr.com (100)	thehill.com (4)	unctad.org (22)	bit.ly (3)
2.	m.vk.com (12)	reddit.com (86)	instaforex.com (4)	mercurynews.com (4)	direct.mit.edu (2)
3.	tmt.ph (7)	vk.com (44)	littleleague.org (1)	newsroom.gy (3)	en.wikipedia.org (2)
4.	freewebcart.com (6)	i.redd.it (10)	nsf.gov (1)	sdgs.un.org (2)	muse.jhu.edu (2)
5.	wuestenigel.com (6)	hackernoon.com (3)	international-partnerships.cc.europa.eu (1)	en.wikipedia.org (2)	state.gov (2)
6.	youtube.com (4)	m.vk.com (3)	ustr.gov (1)	iisd.org (2)	schar.gmu.edu (2)
7.	preview.redd.it (3)	digital.gov (2)	aetnainternational.com (1)	onlinelibrary.wiley.com (2)	jamesmdorsey.substack.com (2)
8.	support.n26.com (2)	undp.gov (2)	ohchr.org (1)	globalgoals.org (2)	haaretz.com (2)
9.	weskill.org (2)	opengovpartnership.org (2)	hks.harvard.edu (1)	dashboards.sdgindex.org (2)	preview.redd.it (2)
10.	ahrefs.com (2)	sciencedirect.com (2)	unesco.org (1)	unwomen.org (2)	jstor.org (1)

Source: Authors’ own compilation based on data retrieved on July 8, 2025 from Social Searcher platform available at <https://www.social-searcher.com/>

Table 3 presents the percentage distribution of occurrences by days of the week. According to the results shown in Table 3, the peaks of online activity are recorded on Tuesday and Wednesday of the week related to the monitoring.

Therefore, Tuesday and Wednesday (in the middle of the week) are the two days in which there is an increased activity and frequency of use of the five topics.

According to the data in Table 3, a sharp increase is observed on Wednesday for the “digital” (90%), the topic “international policies” (60%), the topic “sustainable development” (52%) and the topic “international security” (68%). Between Thursday and Sunday for the topics selected for analysis, Table 3 shows low values and informal mentions.

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Table 3. Weekday Distribution of User Online Posting Behavior

Day	Percentage for the topic “digital”	Percentage for the topic “digital governance”	Percentage for the topic “international policies”	Percentage for the topic “sustainable development”	Percentage for the topic “international security”
Monday	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%
Tuesday	10%	26%	37%	42%	5%
Wednesday	90%	59%	60%	52%	68%
Thursday	0%	4%	1%	2%	3%
Friday	0%	5%	1%	2%	9%
Saturday	0%	5%	0%	0%	12%
Sunday	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%

Source: Authors’ own compilation based on data retrieved on July 8, 2025 from Social Searcher platform available at <https://www.social-searcher.com/>

Table 4 presents the percentage distribution of occurrences on the time intervals of the day in which the monitoring and extraction of data for analysis took place. As the results extracted in Table 4 are presented, it is observed that the poorest time intervals are 00:00-10.00 and 14:00-24.00 for the topic “digital”; 02:00-10.00 for the topic “digital governance”; 20:00-24:00 for the topic “international policies”; 18:00-22:00 for the topic “sustainable development” and 00:00-14.00 for the topic “international security”.

Table 4. Hourly Distribution of User Online Posting Behavior

Day	Percentage for the topic “digital”	Percentage for the topic “digital governance”	Percentage for the topic “international policies”	Percentage for the topic “sustainable development”	Percentage for the topic “international security”
00:00-02:00	1%	9%	4%	18%	2%
02:00-04:00	1%	2%	3%	8%	1%
04:00-06:00	1%	1%	2%	11%	2%
06:00-08:00	4%	4%	4%	7%	3%
08:00-10:00	7%	5%	36%	2%	9%
10:00-12:00	82%	10%	5%	19%	3%
12:00-14:00	2%	5%	12%	0%	9%
14:00-16:00	1%	15%	14%	1%	11%
16:00-18:00	1%	15%	8%	10%	7%
18:00-20:00	0%	31%	10%	7%	40%
20:00-22:00	0%	2%	0%	4%	2%
22:00-24:00	0%	1%	0%	13%	10%

Source: Authors’ own compilation based on data retrieved on July 8, 2025 from Social Searcher platform available at <https://www.social-searcher.com/>

Table 5 and Table 6 show the Pearson correlation coefficients (r), coefficients of determination (R^2) and associated p -values for the five keywords selected for monitoring for both weekly distribution (Table 5) and hourly distribution (Table 6) analyses. The values recorded in both tables suggest days and periods of time in which one, two or more topics were discussed, debated and received in the public space, which leads to certain stronger or moderate correlations between two or more keywords and other contextual associations.

For a general interpretation of the data in the two tables, we estimate the following values of r (Pearson) (expresses the linear relationship between two variables in the tables) as follows: $r > 0.9$ = very strong correlation; $0.7 < r \leq 0.9$ = strong correlation; $0.5 < r \leq 0.7$ = moderate correlation, $r \approx 0$ = no correlation. For R^2 (expresses the proportion of the variation of one variable explained by another variable).

Thus, for Table 5, the following strongest correlations between topics are recorded: (i) “digital” - “digital governance” ($r = 0.9519$; $R^2 = 0.9061$; $p < 0.001$) which expresses a very strong and extremely significant correlation between the two topics and 90.6% of the variation is explained; (ii) “digital” - “international policies” ($r = 0.8858$; $R^2 = 0.7846$; $p < 0.01$) which expresses a strong correlation of the two terms compared, significant and 78.46% variation explained; (iii) “digital” - “sustainable development” ($r = 0.8075$; $R^2 = 0.652$; $p < 0.05$) which expresses a strong, significant correlation, 65% explanation; (iv) “digital” - “international security” ($r = 0.9796$; $R^2 = 0.9597$; $p < 0.001$) which expresses one of the strongest correlation recorded in Table 6, significant; (v) “digital governance” - “international policies” ($r = 0.9801$; $R^2 = 0.9607$; $p < 0.001$) which expresses the strongest and closest relationship expressed in Table 6, almost perfect.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Matrix – Weekly Distribution

	“digital”	“digital governance”	“international policies”	“sustainable development”	“international security”
“digital”	$r = 1$	$r = 0.9519$ $R^2 = 0.9061$ $p < 0.001$	$r = 0.8858$ $R^2 = 0.7846$ $p < 0.01$	$r = 0.8075$ $R^2 = 0.652$ $p < 0.05$	$r = 0.9796$ $R^2 = 0.9597$ $p < 0.001$
“digital governance”		$r = 1$	$r = 0.9801$ $R^2 = 0.9607$ $p < 0.001$	$r = 0.9424$ $R^2 = 0.888$ $p < 0.01$	$r = 0.9105$ $R^2 = 0.829$ $p < 0.01$
“international policies”			$r = 1$	$r = 0.9889$ $R^2 = 0.9779$ $p < 0.001$	$r = 0.8145$ $R^2 = 0.6634$ $p < 0.05$
“sustainable development”				$r = 1$	$r = 0.7227$ $R^2 = 0.5222$ $p = 0.0666$
“international security”					$r = 1$

For Table 6, the strongest correlations are recorded as follows: (i) “digital governance” - “international security” ($r = 0.8364$; $R^2 = 0.6995$; $p < 0.001$) which expresses a very strong correlation between the two terms and significant si (ii) “digital”

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- “sustainable development” ($r = 0.5119$; $R^2 = 0.262$; $p = 0.0889$) which reflects a moderate, insignificant correlation at the limit. Other correlations such as “international policies” - “sustainable development” $r = -0.504$; $R^2 = 0.254$; $p = 0.0948$ reflects a moderate, negative correlation.

Table 6. Pearson Correlation Matrix – Hourly Distribution

	“digital”	“digital governance”	“international policies”	“sustainable development”	“international security”
“digital”	$r = 1$	$r = 0.0402$ $R^2 = 0.0016$ $p = 0.9013$	$r = -0.0331$ $R^2 = 0.0011$ $p = 0.9186$	$r = 0.5119$ $R^2 = 0.262$ $p = 0.0889$	$r = -0.1698$ $R^2 = 0.0288$ $p = 0.5977$
digital governance		$r = 1$	$r = 0.1834$ $R^2 = 0.0337$ $p = 0.5682$	$r = -0.0224$ $R^2 = 0.0005$ $p = 0.9449$	$r = 0.8364$ $R^2 = 0.6995$ $p < 0.001$
international policies			$r = 1$	$r = -0.504$ $R^2 = 0.254$ $p = 0.0948$	$r = 0.2386$ $R^2 = 0.0569$ $p = 0.4551$
“sustainable development”				$r = 1$	$r = -0.2254$ $R^2 = 0.0508$ $p = 0.4811$
“international security”					$r = 1$

Conclusions

The conclusions of the digital monitoring analysis of the selected topics reveal first that the distribution of the frequency of occurrence of mentions was concentrated on weekdays (especially Tuesdays and Wednesdays). In this context, the weekend days and the beginning of the week recorded low frequencies of the appearance of the five tops. The first day and the last day of the week (Monday and Sunday) recorded the lowest values. Secondly, the distribution by hourly intervals showed that the morning interval of each day of the week (08:00-12:00) presents the highest values.

This perspective is explained by the daily peak of the morning work schedule. There are also time slots (18:00-20:00) for the topic “international security” in which there are increased values (40%), which demonstrates the involvement and public perception more focused outside working hours.

The conclusions regarding the sentiment analysis reflect a double approach on the majority of neutral mentions with values between 51 mentions and 289 mentions which demonstrate an objective, informative and analytical approach on the field of knowledge reflected by the topics selected for analysis and monitoring.

In this respect, the data reflected by the six tables and two graphs demonstrate that public publications should be concentrated for an online distribution related to working days (Tuesday and Wednesday), requiring an in-depth analysis of the public distribution for weekends and early weekdays. A second recommendation reflects the deepening of the analysis of positive posts and time fluctuations around dominant topics for the field of knowledge of digital governance, sustainable development and international security.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Local Elections: Still Second-Order or in the Service of National Aspirations? An Analysis of the 2024 Local Elections in Romania

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Abstract:

Local elections are considered second-order elections (SOE), being often regarded as less relevant than national elections. According to the SOE model, local elections garner less attention from the public and register lower turnout rates than parliamentary elections. Most of the literature on second-order elections focuses on European elections, with the main characteristics emerging from the analysis of this type of electoral contest: low turnout, anti-government votes, better electoral performance for smaller, newer or radical political parties, and more invalidated ballots than in first-order elections. Where local elections are concerned, are all these particularities observable as well? Or can we discern rather significant differences between various electoral contests that are seen as second order? When analyzing the 2024 elections in Romania, we argue that local elections can become first-order national elections, depending on whether certain variables are present, such as the period when they are organized in relation to other electoral contests or the overall popularity and support for the national government parties. As the Romanian case reveals, by using legislative interventions and exploiting a particular political context, local elections can serve as an important tool for the government parties which seek to further secure their positions and use these elections as an electoral vehicle for their national aspirations. This leads us to conclude that the SOE model cannot be considered the default approach to local elections, neither when it comes to electoral turnout, nor when trying to analyze political parties' performance compared to other types of elections. This is due to the fact that local elections hold immediate relevance to the voters, as opposed to the European ones, where voters are more politically disconnected and, as such, more disinclined to participate.

Keywords: *local elections, second-order elections, European elections, Romania, turnout, merged election.*

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Introduction

Local elections represent a fundamental component of democratic governance, offering citizens a direct opportunity to influence decisions that affect their daily lives. While often overshadowed by national contests, local elections have received increasing scholarly attention for their distinct political dynamics, their role in promoting accountability, and their contribution to democratic consolidation, participation and responsiveness (Dahl, 1998; Hajnal and Lewis, 2003; Denters and Rose, 2005). Depending on the period in which local elections are organized in an electoral cycle, relative to national elections, the former can act as a barometer for political attitudes that political parties can use to determine if the electoral behavior of the voters has remained constant or whether there are nascent trends indicative of a break between the electorate and the political establishment. In this article, we apply a second order election (SOE) framework to argue that even though local elections have an apparent minimal relevance – limited to localities or regions – and lower stakes, they hold an important position in the electoral experience of the voters that is more authentic than national elections (where voters often vote strategically, out of a sense of preservation) and more engaged than European elections (where neither the parties nor the majority of the citizens are driven by an European agenda).

This article examines the results from the local elections held in Romania in 2024 in order to discern if the electoral trends emerging on the local scene could carry over to the national stage in the context of a complex domestic and international environment. That the local, national, and international levels are profoundly interconnected is clearly reflected in the Romanian case since the aftermath of the pandemic and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine enabled certain political developments that would otherwise not have happened in the first place or would have been unlikely to last in an electoral setting. These developments refer to the fact that the traditional political parties – the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the National Liberal Party (PNL) that would normally occupy adversarial positions – formed a coalition government midpoint in the 2020-2024 cycle, that would oversee the organization of the four sets of elections held in 2024 – local, European, parliamentary, and presidential.

Our analysis shows that local elections acted as a conduit for the government parties' ill-fated attempt to secure their positions at the national level by making use of legislative interventions in a critical political context represented by the elections. In other words, local elections were transformed into an electoral vehicle for the government parties' national ambitions that hijacked their traditional second-order nature. While the cohabitation brought stability in the short term, it also carried the seeds of turmoil that would be reaped throughout the various electoral outcomes of 2024, ultimately culminating with the annulment of the first round of the presidential elections by the Constitutional Court in December 2024. The annulment arguably represents the biggest political crisis impacting the Romanian contemporary democratic system since it became a member of the European Union. Against this backdrop, we can assess if the trends from the local elections had first order implications, and if they confirm the established second order hypotheses: low turnout, protest votes, loss in support for government parties.

Literature Review

Understanding Local Elections in Comparative Perspective

One of the key challenges in the study of local elections lies in explaining patterns of voter turnout and voting behavior, which invariably differ from national elections. The main findings across democratic contexts are that turnout is significantly lower in local elections, seemingly confirming the perception that these elections are less engaging and, therefore, less consequential (Hajnal and Lewis, 2003). This electoral dynamic can be explained by the second-order election model developed by Reif and Schmitt (1980), which posits that voters treat non-national elections as opportunities for protest or abstention. In other words, voters display strategic voting behaviors while, at the same time, being less electorally engaged, and consequently, less vested in the outcomes of second order elections.

Empirical research challenges the universality of this model. For instance, in countries with strong local governments, visible local candidates, and policy-relevant elections, voters may engage more directly with local contests. Marien, Dassonneville, and Hooghe (2015) find that in Belgium, while national party identification plays a role, many voters cite candidate familiarity and local issues as decisive factors in their local electoral choices. Local political culture and institutional design also shape participation. For example, electoral systems based on proportional representation tend to lead to higher turnout and more diverse council representation than majoritarian systems, which often discourage minority and independent candidates (Norris, 2004). In post-communist democracies and developing countries, local elections provide insights into state-building, party system institutionalization, and clientelism. Studies in Central and Eastern Europe suggest that local elections can both reinforce and challenge national political trends. For instance, Kopecký (2006) finds that in some post-communist countries, local elections are highly nationalized, while in others, they exhibit strong localism with weak party links.

Another line of inquiry concerns territorial variation in electoral behavior. Regional cleavages, driven by economic inequality, identity politics, or decentralization, can also shape local political landscapes. Schakel and Jeffery (2013) caution that not all subnational elections follow the second-order model, but regional authority and identity can transform local contests into high-stakes arenas. At the same time, scholars emphasize the potential for local elections to revitalize participatory democracy, especially through mechanisms like participatory budgeting and deliberative assemblies, which link elections to sustained civic engagement (Sintomer, Herzberg, and Röcke, 2008). These innovations suggest that local elections, while sometimes dismissed as low-salience events, may in fact be sites of democratic renewal and experimentation.

Local Elections as Second-Order Elections

All elections other than national elections are generally considered second-order elections (SOE), being regarded as less relevant and, as such, garnering less attention from voters. Regional or local electoral contests that usually register lower turnout rates than national (parliamentary) elections, are also characterized by the fact that voting decisions are directly influenced by political issues from the national arena (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Schakel and Jeffery, 2013). Notably, in the case of regional elections, since the composition of regional political institutions is determined by national politics, regional government came to be considered as “second-order government” (Verdoes, 2025). However, on this topic, other scholars argue that the second-order nature of regional

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elections tends to decrease when the stakes of those elections are higher (Dandoy and Schakel, 2013; Schakel and Jeffery, 2013). This tendency also applies in the case of local elections, and it is what differentiates them from other similar contests, as is the case of European elections which are vested by European policymakers with first order supranational prerogatives.

Additionally, it is not only voters that are influenced by national issues in local elections, but political parties also use the electoral campaigns for local elections to emphasize national political themes (Norris, 1997; Gross et al., 2023) or to take advantage of the opposition against parties in national government (Cabeza et al., 2017). By supporting opposition or newly formed parties, voters try to obtain the implementation of their desired policies, and this strategy has more chances of success when local institutions have the necessary leverage to influence national political decisions (Golder et al., 2017: 95; Schakel and Verdoes, 2024).

Most of the literature on second-order elections is centered on European elections, from which emerged the analytical reference system for this type of electoral contest, with its main traits being low turnout, anti-government votes, better electoral performance for smaller, newer or radical political parties, and more invalidated ballots than in first-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Hix and Marsh, 2011). These effects tend to be different depending on the timing of local elections in relation to national ones and, although it was argued that the most significant influence can be observed midpoint in the electoral cycle, it is not always the case (Jeffery and Hough, 2003; Schakel and Romanova, 2023). The Romanian case further corroborates this observation.

The SOE model was designed by Reif and Schmitt (1980) after the first direct election for the European Parliament (EP), from 1979, which allowed the authors to draw a set of preliminary conclusions based on the electoral sample constituted from the nine states that were members of the European Communities at that time. Reif (1997) would further refine the SOE model with the subsequent electoral cycles and future enlargements waves of the European Union. The initial study found that European elections had lower turnout rates compared with national elections and attributed significant gains in the distribution of votes to opposition or to small and new political parties, while the parties in national government obtained lower vote shares. The underlying hypothesis behind these patterns states that because voters perceive that there is less at stake in second-order contests (as they do not influence the structure of the national government), they will feel more open to express dissatisfaction, vote more ideologically or “vote with the heart” in a SOE context (Heath et al., 1999).

Reif and Schmitt argued that the SOE model can be applied to other types of elections, like municipal elections, by-elections, and “various sorts of regional elections” (Reif and Schmitt 1980, 8). Based on their initial findings and proposals, more recent literature on SOE has focused on aspects like the impact of economic factors or the perceptions regarding the performance of the national government on voter behavior at regional levels (Schakel, 2015; Toubreau and Wagner, 2018; Cabeza 2018). In particular, research from countries with decentralized political systems or strong traditions of local governance suggests that local considerations play a more substantial role than the original SOE model would predict. In their work on regional elections in Europe, Schakel and Jeffery (2013) note that the extent to which elections are “second-order” depends in part on the institutional strength of subnational governments. In regions with significant policy autonomy or identity politics, such as Catalonia, Flanders, or Scotland, the typical SOE dynamics may not apply. Here, voters may treat regional or local elections as first-order

contests, particularly when issues of autonomy or local governance are salient. This suggests that local elections often involve a dual logic, in which national and local concerns coexist, interact, and influence one another. Supporting this more complex view, Dodeigne et al. (2022) argue that the relevance of local factors is particularly pronounced in smaller municipalities, where voters are more likely to know the candidates personally or to be directly affected by municipal policies. Their study revealed that the so-called “friends-and-neighbors” effect – voting for a candidate due to personal familiarity – remains a powerful force at the local level, thereby tempering the explanatory power of the SOE model.

While originally developed in the context of the EP elections, the SOE model has since been applied to local and regional elections, prompting a growing scholarly discussion about the degree to which local electoral behavior follows the same logic, which is why we opted to analyze the Romanian local elections from this perspective. The application of the SOE framework to local elections has produced a rich body of literature, albeit one marked by debates over the relative weight of national vs. local factors in shaping voter behavior.

Early comparative studies, such as those by Heath et al. (1999), found that local elections in Britain exhibited some of the classic SOE characteristics: voter turnout was significantly lower than in general elections, and government parties tended to underperform. These findings supported the idea that voters use local elections to send signals about their satisfaction with national politics, treating them in effect as a referendum on the central government rather than as contests over local governance. Subsequent empirical studies have introduced important clarifications and nuances to the SOE framework when applied to local elections.

The timing of local elections relative to the national electoral calendar has also been shown to affect their second-order nature. If held close to national elections, local contests may become more politicized, encouraging voters to use their outcomes as indicators of national party strength. Conversely, in mid-term or “off-cycle” elections, voters may be more inclined to focus on local matters (Hajnal and Lewis, 2003). This “electoral cycle” effect is frequently observed in U.S. local elections but also applies more broadly in comparative contexts.

Taken together, these studies suggest that while the SOE model offers a valuable starting point for analyzing local elections, it must be adapted to account for contextual variables such as political decentralization, municipal size, party system maturity, and candidate familiarity. The distinction between first- and second-order elections is thus best understood not as a binary, but as a spectrum influenced by institutional and political conditions. As Denters and Rose (2005) argue, local elections are not necessarily subordinate to national politics but may instead reflect distinct democratic logics shaped by the immediacy of local governance and citizen proximity to elected officials.

In sum, although many local elections exhibit characteristics consistent with the SOE framework – especially lower turnout and a tendency for government parties to lose support – these tendencies are neither uniform nor inevitable. National partisanship remains influential, but it is often mediated by local context, candidate effects, and institutional design.

Methodological Approach

This article analyzes the local elections organized in Romania in 2024, using a SOE framework of reference to assess whether they were purely second order contests or

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they crossed over into national significance, in pursuit of first order aspirations. In other words, based on the data from the electoral contests, we intend to determine if local elections remain in second-order logic or if there are indications that they can be considered, in fact, another type of first-order electoral competition. The variables considered when trying to see if a certain electoral contest falls into the first or second-order category are: the turnout rate; the perceived stakes of the election; the performance of the government parties vs. the newer, small or radical political parties; voting motives (punishing the government parties vs. casting a strategic vote); and the number of invalidated ballots.

Most research confirms that turnout in local elections is lower compared to first-order national elections and, in turn, that low turnout is considered an indicator of SOE which is directly linked to the perceived stakes of an electoral contest: the less important the election is perceived by voters, the lower the turnout. Additionally, parties in national government perform less well than opposition, small and new parties, even though due to their share of the votes, they are not necessarily surpassed by the latter. In this sense, another indicator of SOE is tied to the performance of these marginal political parties, based on differences in voting choices between different elections (even more so when different elections are held at the same time or in close proximity of each other). Finally, it is important to note that these effects tend to vary depending on the timing of the local elections in the national election cycle (although the strongest impact is not always observed during the mid-term, as Reif and Schmitt initially argued).

The 2024 elections were held in an electoral super-year for Romania, where all four types of elections were supposed to take place, allowing us to identify different electoral patterns and tendencies and contrast them against the SOE typology. An aspect that drew us to this methodological approach was that local elections were organized at the same time with the European ones, enabling us to clearly distinguish the differences between the two second order contests due to the way that political actors and citizens alike perceived the elections (Filimon and Ivănescu, 2025, Ivănescu and Filimon, 2024).

For the purpose of this analysis, we used official electoral data and results, retrieved and compiled from the Romanian Central Electoral Bureau (BEC). We argue that the SOE model cannot be considered the default approach to local elections, irrespective of whether we are focusing on the political parties' performance, voters' attitudes, or turnout. This is because local elections hold immediate relevance to the voters, as opposed to the European ones, where they are more politically disconnected, and where the SOE hypotheses can be tested and confirmed. In a previous study focusing on the 2024 European elections, we noted that: "During the 2024 electoral cycle, the chronic lack of themes about the EU was not an accident. In the case of the major parties, this was reflected in their eschewing of electoral debates and confrontations as well as in the absence of related projects highlighting the importance of European elections. Regarding this display of disinterest for European affairs, we can surmise that the responsibility is split between the politicians and the voters themselves" (Filimon and Ivănescu, 2025: 16). Furthermore, by merging the European with the local elections, the government parties further ensured that the former would retain their second order electoral shortfalls.

The Romanian Case: The Mainstream Holds, the Radical Right Emerges *Electoral Context*

In Romania, empirical studies show that while local elections do echo certain SOE patterns, there is also a distinct blend of local agency and systemic dynamics rooted in the country's post-communist transition and political culture. For Romanian cities, local election turnout was historically higher than for parliamentary elections until the mid-2000s. Since then, turnout has remained higher at the local level, but political reforms, specifically the shift from a two-round process to a single-round mayoral election, appear to have depressed voter engagement over time. This underscores a nuanced interpretation: while local elections retain relative importance, institutional design matters significantly for participation (Ivănescu, 2022a; Ivănescu, 2013). In addition to that, research has highlighted that Romanian voters often separate local and national preferences. Local elections reveal that voters may support a municipal candidate for personal, clientelist, or client-mediating reasons, even when their national vote favors a different party. This reflects a feature of Romanian politics, where local party networks and personality-based voting may predominate at the municipal level, while national elections rely on an ideological or identity-based logic (Ivănescu, 2015).

Concerning turnout trends, aggregate data suggest that participation in Romanian local elections has fluctuated. Turnout varied around 46-56% between 2012 and 2024, with local elections consistently outperforming parliamentary ones (e.g. 47% local vs. 32% national in 2020) (for an in-depth breakdown of the electoral data across the various types of elections held between 1990 and 2020, see Ivănescu, 2022b: 135). These differences reject the SOE expectation of comparative drop-off, suggesting that democratic disengagement is more acute in national contests, due to “the excessive fragmentation of the main ideological poles in a great number of small parties that [occupy] similar ideological spots on the Romanian political scene” (Ivănescu, 2018: 149), and most likely reflecting disillusionment with centralized political institutions.

Romanian local elections thus exemplify a contextualized SOE model: while voters do treat local polling as less salient than national ones, the salience gap is narrower when local institutions are strong or personal connections to candidates are high. As observed in a previous study, “it can be argued that it is not necessarily the SOE model which shows its limits in the Romanian case, but it is rather the loss of the Romanian electorate's trust in the political class that becomes the main limitation and prevents us from drawing more generalizing conclusions about the validity of the SOE framework of analysis” (Ivănescu, 2021: 164). It is precisely because of this very loss of trust that in 2024, the political upheaval manifested in an abrupt way ushering a wave of radical and extremist parties in the parliament and even priming a fringe candidate to win the presidential elections. While the radical right trend has entrenched itself in Western European politics to the point that in certain member states it has become mainstream (Ivănescu and Filimon, 2022; Filimon, 2025), in Romania, the extremist / radical right laid dormant for the better part of a decade.

Discussion

When considering the SOE variables, the results of the 2024 super-electoral year paint a hybrid picture, interspersing second order false-positives with first order aspirations (see Table 1 and Table 2). On February 21, 2024, following several months of negotiations, Romania's ruling coalition parties, PSD and PNL, reached an agreement to merge the local and European elections. Both elections were scheduled to take place on

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June 9. The coalition decided to field separate candidates for the local elections, but to submit a joint list for the EP elections. This decision appears to have been influenced by the results of an opinion poll conducted a week earlier, which showed that 53% of respondents supported the merger of the elections, while only 35% opposed it. Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu, who also served as the leader of PSD at that time, stated that the move aimed to boost voter turnout in the European elections by holding them alongside local elections, which traditionally generate higher public engagement from Romanian voters (Filimon and Ivănescu, 2025).

In terms of turnout, local elections (49.62%) scored lower than the EU (52.40%), parliamentary (52.50%) and the first round of the presidential elections (52.55%) by almost three percentage points. In our view, the drop is not significant enough in order to meet the SOE criteria for turnout. Even in aggregate, as reflected in the results recorded between 1990 and 2020, local elections do not fit in the SOE framework, as reflected in the higher turnout compared to national parliamentary elections (see: Ivănescu, 2022b: 135). While just below the 50% threshold, turnout was higher than in the previous two cycles of local elections. However, we can attribute the lower turnout to the national context, reflected in the decision to merge local and European elections. The merger was intended to help increase the turnout in the European elections since local elections usually arouse the most interest for the Romanian voters. In reality, the measure warped the participation and, in a reversal of expectations, turnout for European elections was higher than for the local ones to the degree that local elections were hindered by this decision.

We can posit that two reasons contributed to this outcome. First of all, there was the issue of access: according to Romanian electoral legislation, Romanian citizens can vote for the EP elections in any polling station, throughout the country or abroad (Romanian citizens living in the diaspora; those living in Romania, but somewhere else than their legal residence), but not for local elections, where they can only vote in Romania, in the locality where they reside, based on the information from their national identity card. We can also remark that another important category of voters who were unable to cast their votes for local elections (but could vote for the EP elections) were the thousands of students who were attending their summer university exam session and were away from their places of residence (Tufiş, 2024: 218). These aspects can explain the difference of about three percentage points in the turnout rate between the two elections.

Second of all, as we have argued in another analysis examining the 2024 European elections, another possible motivation for the decision to merge the elections could be strategic, with the government coalition seeking to limit the electoral gains of the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR), a radical-right party trending up with the voters in recent years (Ivănescu and Filimon, 2025). AUR's unexpected rise in Romanian politics began with the 2020 parliamentary elections, when it secured nearly 10% of the vote – surpassing established parties such as PMP, ALDE, and even the long-standing UDMR – despite earning less than 1% in the local elections held just months earlier. Approximately 30% of AUR's support came from the diaspora, where its nationalist and populist rhetoric resonated strongly. If the results from the 2020 parliamentary elections could be attributed to low turnout and discounted on account of party mobilization issues related to the pandemic, the results from the 2024 cycle demonstrated AUR's electoral bona fides and confirmed the party's staying power on the national political scene.

SOE Framework				
Elections	Low turnout	Anti-government votes		More invalidated ballots than in first-order elections
Local elections	49.62%	PSD PNL USR + PMP + FD AUR PSD + PNL* UDMR SOS Romania	34.74% 29.07% 6.28% 6.27% 5.83% 4.32% 0.97%	276.153 (3.05%)
European elections	52.40%	PSD + PNL AUR USR + PMP + FD UDMR SOS Romania POT	48.55% 14.92% 8.70% 6.47% 5.03% did not participate	488.551 (5.17%)
Parliamentary elections	52.50%	PSD AUR PNL USR SOS Romania POT UDMR	21.96% 18.01% 13.20% 12.40% 7.36% 6.46% 6.33%	172.178 (1.82%)
Presidential elections (first round)	52.55%	-	-	223.132 (2.35%)

*Marks results from localities where PSD and PNL supported the same candidate for mayor

Table 1 SOE framework in comparative perspective

(Source: BEC 2024: https://locale2024.bec.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/PV_P.pdf; https://europarlamentare2024.bec.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/PVCVAM_1.pdf; https://parlamentare2024.bec.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/RFCD_1.pdf; https://prezidentiale2024.bec.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/PV_RFT1.pdf)

The next set of variables focuses on anti-government votes and support for minor, new, or radical parties. In the local and European elections, the government parties registered comfortable majorities compared to their competitors, both independently as was the case in the local elections, and in the joint post-political venture pursued in the European elections. As Table 2 shows, in the local elections, PSD placed first, obtaining 34.74% of the votes, while PNL came second with 29.07% of the votes. When adding the percentages from the localities where PSD and PNL supported the same candidate for mayor (5.83%), the total amounts to 69.6% of the votes cast for candidates of the

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government parties. Once more, another SOE hypothesis is unconfirmed since minor parties, regardless of their political orientation, whether they campaigned alone or as part of coalitions, or despite their novelty on the political scene, scored below 10%, at best. The percentage breakdown speaks for itself: the coalition USR+PMP+FD registered 6.28%, the radical parties AUR and SOS Romania scored 6.27% and 0.97%, respectively. We exclude from the analysis UDMR, the party representing the Hungarian minority which obtained 4.32% of the votes, since turnout for this party is politically constant and regionally delimited.

Political parties	Local elections (June 9)	European elections (June 9)	Parliamentary elections (December 1)
Government parties	PSD = 34.74% PNL = 29.07% UDMR = 4.32%	PSD + PNL = 48.55% UDMR = 6.47%	PSD = 21.96% PNL = 13.20% UDMR = 6.33%
Opposition parties	USR + PMP + FD = 6.28% AUR = 6.27%	AUR = 14.92% USR + PMP + FD = 8.70%	AUR = 18.01% USR = 12.40%
New, small, radical parties	SOS Romania = 0.97% POT = 0.08%	SOS Romania = 5.03% POT – did not participate	SOS Romania = 7.36% POT = 6.46%

Table 2 Results recorded by marginal parties across three local, European, and parliamentary elections (Source: BEC 2024: https://locale2024.bec.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/PV_P.pdf; https://europarlamentare2024.bec.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/PVCVAM_1.pdf; https://parlamentare2024.bec.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/RFCD_1.pdf; https://prezidentiale2024.bec.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/PV_RFT1.pdf)

A similar scenario was replayed in the European elections, where the government parties running in the coalition formula won first place with 48.55%. Due to the coalition effect and the different format of the election, the runner-up, albeit a distant second, was AUR, obtaining 14.92% of the votes. The element of novelty was that a second fringe party – SOS Romania – also entered the EP, crossing the electoral threshold with 5.03%. Combined, the results amounted to nearly 20% of the votes cast in support of radical parties, arguably validating the SOE hypothesis in the case of European elections. Meanwhile, other minor parties – even those whose members had once been in government, such as USR or the new party REPER, underperformed or failed to enter the EP: USR as part of the USR+PMP+FD coalition scored 8.70%, while REPER, boasting the candidature of Dacian Cioloș, former prime-minister and leader of the RENEW group in the ninth European legislative, received only 3.74% of the votes.

Returning to the discussion about local elections, we argue that the SOE model does not apply in the Romanian case where anti-government votes are concerned. However, we can discern emerging electoral trends that would prove to have a destabilizing effect in both first order elections held in November 2024. While the ruling

parties maintained their electoral preeminence, despite local elections being organized at the tail end of a governmental cycle, the overall results were mixed: PSD seemingly swept the electoral contests, winning additional seats across all four types of local elections (mayors +315; local council councilors +2689; county council presidents +5; and county council councilors +188); meanwhile, PNL lost seats (mayors –100; local council councilors –2601; county council presidents –5; and county council councilors –53); lastly, AUR won seats in three out of the four elections (mayors +27; local council councilors +3430; and county council councilors +158). In comparison, in the 2020 local elections, AUR won only three mayorships and 79 seats for councilors in the local councils.

Unlike European elections, the results in the local contests represented an early warning that the mainstream parties should have been apprehensive of and not be dismissed on account of their limited impact or because of local or regional particularities. This aspect has to be correlated with the fact that the ruling coalition brought together electorates that would otherwise be in an adversarial dynamic and who were likely to be dissatisfied by the willingness of either party to work together, even going against their ideological particularities. Additionally, another first order implication of the local elections was that PSD and PNL sought to manage the outcomes locally, so that they would maximize their gains nationally, in an overestimation of their political prowess.

By acting in an un-electoral way and turning the elections into a simulacrum, the parties were severely sanctioned by voters during the parliamentary elections, when the anti-government votes were clearly discernable, and where along with AUR, two more radical / sovereignist parties (SOS-Romania and POT – Party of Young People) entered the parliament for the first time, passing the electoral threshold on their first attempt. In the case of SOS-Romania, the party improved its performance compared to the local and European elections (7.46% in the parliamentary elections vs. 5.03% in the EP elections and 0.97% in the local elections). As for POT, which did not participate in neither the local, nor the European elections, the parliamentary elections provided an ample setting for the party to announce its presence on the political scene. Arguably, the outcome of the first round of the presidential election and the fact that the parliamentary elections were held a week after this first round led to massive electoral mobilization for these radical, sovereignist parties.

Finally, in the case of the SOE hypothesis positing that there are more invalidated ballots in second order contests than in first-order elections (Table 1), the data shows that in the 2024 Romanian local elections, there were more spoiled votes (276.153) than in the parliamentary elections (172.178) and the presidential elections (223.132 in the first round), respectively. In analyzing the data, due to the particularities of the first round of the presidential election, in order to test the hypothesis, we look at the results from the local and the parliamentary elections, where we find a difference of over 100.000 invalidated ballots between the two (3.05% in local elections vs. 1.82% in the parliamentary elections). Compared to the presidential elections, the difference in this category of votes is further reduced, coming at under one per cent (53.021 votes – 0.7%). In terms of electoral behavior, these votes can be attributed to voters' dissatisfaction with local governance, specific leadership figures in the municipalities, or party performance in the respective regions. In light of this, we argue that the 1.23% difference in invalidated ballots between the two elections is too small and does not clearly place the local elections in a SOE context. Coupled with the high turnout, the invalidated ballots hypothesis cancels itself out.

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Another aspect that better highlights why the local elections do not meet the SOE condition results from the comparison with the European elections. In this sense, we observe that the invalidated votes in the European elections not only surpass all the other three elections, in line with the standard SOE pattern, but they total nearly half a million votes (488.551). In contrast to the local elections, the European elections are second order despite the high turnout, because, as we mentioned before, neither the political parties, nor the voters are vested in the outcome of these elections. The parties use them as an opportunity to campaign on themes of national interest which, in turn, limits the voters' electoral options with regard to the European Union, paving the way for chronic disengagement. It is because of these systemic issues, that even in a context supposed to foster participation in European election, where turnout was high, there were so many invalidated ballots recorded. The variation of two percentage points in spoiled votes between the local and European elections might not seem much at first glance, but when examined along with the other issues identified, makes the difference between a first order and a second order election.

Conclusions

Given how significant local elections are in the perception of the voters, our analysis of the results confirms that the local elections do not always function according to second order principles. In the case of the 2024 Romanian elections, none of the party gains and losses across the political and governmental spectrum can be dismissed under the SOE preconditions, since an electoral continuity was maintained from local to national contests. Furthermore, we would argue that voters acted in an authentic first order logic, sanctioning the government parties for a haphazard leadership that flew against typical electoral behaviors. In other words, the voters did not use the local election to diffuse their dissatisfaction, as tends to happen in a SOE framework.

The causes of the political crisis marking the end of 2024 are not entirely found in the local elections. There were signs: the attitude of the government parties towards the voters and the growth of AUR at the local level signaled that turbulences were ahead, though they did not indicate that something as severe as the annulment of the first round of the presidential elections would take place. Between June and November 2024, various subsequent actions, such as the inadequate electoral campaigns conducted by the parties or the uninspired candidate selection, coupled with a rising wave of political discontent, led to the coalescence of a sanction vote on which the radical right capitalized.

In the aftermath of the parliamentary elections, three radical parties entered the parliament, their combined scores amounting to 31.83% of the votes, in the context of a solid turnout (52.50%). The ruling parties retained modest majorities and, while they did not outright lose the election, from a political standpoint their electoral performance was underwhelming, signaling that they are vulnerable and liable to be sanctioned by the voters, not in SOE contests where the outcome carries little significance, but where it matters the most electorally: in parties' quest for political power.

Returning to the discussion about local elections, we can conclude that for the Romanian political parties, local elections are strategically important, especially since even in non-super-electoral conditions, they are held in the same year as parliamentary elections. Organized a couple of months before the latter, they offer significant insights into the parties' chances of gaining more votes at the national level. As the analysis of the Romanian case has showed, the SOE model cannot be considered the default approach to local elections, neither when it comes to electoral turnout, nor when trying to analyze the

parties' performance compared to other types of elections, because of particular conditions existing at the local level that enable the formation of strong attachments between voters and political parties.

Our analysis has shown why the 2024 local elections do not meet the criteria to be considered second order elections. While in isolation, the results tell a tale of local experiences in political representation, they need to be considered in the aggregate and looked at like pieces of a multilevel puzzle, where party actions, political decisions, and voter's attitudes are intertwined and interconnected. That local elections have less important stakes compared to national elections does not mean that they are *lesser* democratic instruments. On the contrary, in a complex political setting like the Romanian one, they highlighted the hubris of the government parties acting as if the electoral outcome was already predetermined. Afflicted by complacency and in the apparent absence of other viable political competitors, the ruling coalition was blindsighted in November 2024, when neither of the two parties' leaders were able to enter the second round of the presidential election, and when a third of the seats in the parliament were occupied by radical and fringe actors. This is why research of local elections is of critical importance for early diagnosing changes in electoral behavior, because, as the Romanian case so amply demonstrated, such changes could later trigger political upheavals on the national stage, plunging the country into a prolonged state of crisis.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Exploring investment mechanisms and long-term resilience in the face of climate change

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Abstract:

The increasing frequency and severity of climate change-related events pose significant risks to global economies, financial markets, and investment frameworks. This paper explores the mechanisms through which investment strategies can enhance long-term economic resilience in the face of climate change. By examining sustainable finance, impact investing, and climate risk assessment, we analyze how investors can mitigate risks while capitalizing on emerging opportunities in a low-carbon economy.

A critical aspect of this study is the role of financial markets in directing capital toward climate-resilient infrastructure and sustainable technologies. We assess the effectiveness of green bonds, carbon pricing mechanisms, and climate-aligned investment portfolios in fostering resilience. Additionally, we explore regulatory frameworks and international climate finance initiatives that incentivize long-term sustainability.

Furthermore, we highlight the growing influence of institutional investors, central banks, and government policies in shaping climate-aligned financial ecosystems. The integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria into mainstream investment decisions is found to play a crucial role in strengthening financial system stability.

Our research underscores the urgency for investors to transition toward proactive, climate-aware investment strategies. By leveraging innovative financial tools and regulatory support, market participants can enhance resilience while fostering economic growth in a rapidly changing climate landscape. The findings contribute to the discourse on sustainable finance and provide actionable insights for policymakers, investors, and financial institutions navigating the evolving climate challenge.

Keywords: *climate finance, ESG investing, sustainable finance, green bonds, climate risk, financial markets.*

JEL Classification: Q56, O16

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1. Introduction

The growing intensity and frequency of climate change-related events have transformed environmental risks from peripheral concerns into core financial and economic challenges. In recent years, these systemic risks have begun to shape investment landscapes and macroeconomic policy frameworks globally, with far-reaching implications for long-term economic stability, portfolio performance, and corporate strategy. Climate change, once regarded primarily as an environmental issue, is now fundamentally understood as a critical financial risk, requiring urgent, forward-looking responses across capital markets, regulatory frameworks, and institutional investment practices.

The concept of long-term resilience refers to the capacity of economic systems and financial structures to anticipate, absorb, and adapt to climate-related disruptions while maintaining functionality and fostering sustainable growth. This notion encompasses not only the physical infrastructure needed to withstand environmental shocks but also the adaptability of financial markets, corporate strategies, and public policies to transition toward low-carbon, sustainable futures. Similarly, investment mechanisms refer to the structured channels through which financial capital is allocated, ranging from green bonds and sustainability-linked loans to ESG-integrated portfolios and impact investing strategies, toward outcomes that align financial returns with positive environmental and social performance.

The academic and policy discourse around sustainable finance has grown significantly in recent years, highlighting a paradigmatic shift in how risk, return, and responsibility are conceptualized in modern investment theory. Notably, Cao et al. (2025) emphasize the intersection of green technologies and smart urban development, introducing a hybrid decision-making system for assessing sustainability in the context of digital twin innovations. This work exemplifies how integrated technological and financial models can reinforce climate-resilient infrastructure in the age of digital transformation. Similarly, Spulbar et al., (2024) explore the synergistic interplay between digitalization and ESG strategies, underlining the transformative potential of corporate behavior in driving regional sustainable development. These studies collectively underscore the critical nexus of innovation, governance, and capital flows in fostering adaptive and resilient economies.

The momentum behind sustainable and climate-aligned investment is also reflected in the evolving corporate finance literature. Spulbar et al., (2023) present a conceptual framework for understanding how strategic financial decision-making can catalyze sustainable business practices. They argue that financial structuring, beyond traditional profitability metrics, must now integrate environmental risk assessment and long-term sustainability into corporate governance models. These insights resonate with broader findings in the field that suggest financial decision-making is no longer isolated from planetary boundaries and social equity but must engage with them directly and transparently.

Beyond the corporate level, financial markets and regulatory institutions play a decisive role in accelerating the transition to resilient economic systems. The emergence of green bonds, climate-aligned portfolios, and ESG-driven investment products has introduced new mechanisms for channeling capital into sustainable initiatives. Simultaneously, central banks, such as the European Central Bank and the Bank of England, have begun incorporating climate stress testing and scenario analysis into their

financial stability assessments signaling a structural reorientation of monetary and prudential policy. Recent reports by the Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS) further support this trajectory, advocating for harmonized climate disclosure standards and the integration of transition risks into asset valuation models.

Despite these advances, challenges persist. The field still grapples with greenwashing risks, inconsistent ESG metrics, and fragmented regulatory landscapes, particularly across emerging markets and developing economies. Moreover, global climate finance flows remain insufficient to meet the mitigation and adaptation targets outlined in the Paris Agreement, necessitating enhanced cooperation between public and private actors. In this context, impact investing and blended finance are emerging as critical tools to bridge investment gaps while managing risk-adjusted returns in high-impact sectors such as renewable energy, climate-smart agriculture, and sustainable urbanization.

Against this backdrop, the present study explores how contemporary investment strategies and financial innovations can enhance long-term economic resilience in the face of climate change. By examining the interplay between policy, finance, and corporate behavior, this paper seeks to contribute to the expanding body of knowledge in sustainable finance, offering both a conceptual and applied lens on how capital allocation decisions can be optimized for climate resilience. The central research inquiry is twofold: (1) How can investment mechanisms serve as levers for systemic adaptation in an era of climatic uncertainty? and (2) What regulatory and market-based frameworks can support this transition while preserving financial stability and fostering inclusive growth?

In addressing these questions, the paper draws upon a growing multidisciplinary literature spanning economics, finance, environmental policy, and innovation studies. It aligns with current global efforts, such as the EU Sustainable Finance Action Plan, the UN Principles for Responsible Investment (UN PRI), and the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ), all of which aim to embed climate considerations at the heart of financial decision-making. The overarching objective is to advance a model of investment that is not only financially sound but also ecologically responsible and socially inclusive, recognizing that resilience is no longer a passive outcome, but an active, strategic imperative.

2. Climate change and economic vulnerability

Climate change is increasingly recognized not merely as an ecological challenge, but as a central driver of economic vulnerability across global, national, and corporate landscapes. Rising greenhouse gas concentrations and the resulting systemic shifts, such as extreme weather events, chronic temperature increases, and sea-level rise, have profound implications for investment risk, infrastructure durability, and the long-term stability of financial markets. Robert Pindyck (2021) framed climate change as an “uncertain outcome with irreversible investment consequences,” arguing that the economic stakes involved justify preemptive, risk-informed policy and capital allocation. This framing situates climate resilience not just within adaptation, but as a core feature of responsible economic planning.

At the macroeconomic level, climate-related shocks impose both direct financial losses, such as damaged assets and disrupted supply chains, and indirect effects, including diminished productivity, displaced populations, and lower labor force participation. Financial markets have become attuned to these realities through the development of climate stress-testing scenarios and transition-risk analytics. Yet, persistent barriers such

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as incomplete disclosure standards, greenwashing, and regulatory fragmentation continue to limit investor understanding of climate risks. Within emerging markets, additional constraints, political risk, limited access to climate finance, and infrastructure deficits exacerbate economic vulnerability, highlighting unequal capacities to adapt and recover.

Technological innovation, especially in renewable energy, smart infrastructure, and digitalization, is widely regarded as the cornerstone of climate resilience. Recent studies have emphasized that artificial intelligence (AI) is playing a pivotal yet complex role in accelerating the energy transition. In particular, Tian et al. (2024) employ a non-linear autoregressive distributed lag model to explore the asymmetric impact of AI deployment and climate policy uncertainty on renewable energy expansion in China. Their findings reveal that positive AI innovation's impact on renewables is distinct from its downturn effects, while climate policy uncertainty similarly exhibits asymmetric influences, suggesting that declines in regulatory clarity significantly dampen the adoption of renewables more than anticipated benefits catalyze it. Such nuance underscores the importance of understanding dynamic investor responses, conditional on technological optimism or pessimism, to effectively tailor policy interventions.

Empirical research by Zhao et al. (2024) confirms that, under certain regulatory regimes and grid structures, AI significantly accelerates the deployment of renewables, though its efficacy remains contingent upon supportive policy frameworks and infrastructure readiness. Taken together, these findings illustrate that climate resilience through technology is not automatic, it requires coherent policy signals and robust regulatory frameworks to unlock benefits.

This interplay between innovation and risk highlights a critical juncture: as energy systems become more digitalized, investment dynamics must account for both opportunity and exposure. Financial markets increasingly reflect this reality: green bond issuance surged to over US \$600 billion in 2024, even as scholars caution against inflated valuations fueled by inconsistent disclosure. Central banks and financial regulatory bodies are deploying climate-risk scenarios to assess institutional resilience to extreme weather and policy shocks, acknowledging that such risks are financially material.

In synthesis, climate-related economic vulnerability arises at the intersection of environmental stressors, market behaviors, technological innovation, and regulatory environments. AI's asymmetric influence on renewable energy adoption, especially when filtered through climate policy uncertainty, exemplifies the multilayered nature of these vulnerabilities. For investors and policymakers alike, this complexity demands strategic foresight not only in embracing AI and digital innovation, but also in designing durable policy frameworks that minimize downside risks and catalyze sustainable transformation.

3. Investment mechanisms for climate resilience

The transition to a climate-resilient global economy necessitates sophisticated investment mechanisms that not only compensate for environmental risks but also leverage sustainable opportunities to foster long-term economic stability. At the forefront of these are green bonds, carbon pricing systems, sustainable finance frameworks, impact investing, and blended finance, each playing a crucial role in mobilizing capital toward climate-resilient infrastructure and technologies.

Green bonds have emerged as a cornerstone of climate-aligned finance. Defined as fixed-income instruments earmarked for environmentally beneficial projects, they conform to the Green Bond Principles set by the International Capital Market Association. Evidence indicates that green bonds reduce issuers' cost of capital, bolster

investor confidence, and can closely align with carbon emission reductions . Notably, issuers of green bonds often possess higher ESG ratings and exhibit improved control over CO₂ emissions, signaling that these instruments serve both environmental and economic objectives.

However, effectiveness hinges on transparency and robust disclosure to avoid greenwashing. The OECD emphasizes the critical role of mandatory climate risk disclosure in scaling these instruments effectively, while BIS research suggests that stricter emission targets drive stronger green bond market growth and potentially real emissions reductions.

Carbon pricing mechanisms, including carbon taxes and cap-and-trade systems, complement green bonds by embedding the cost of emissions into market signals. Research confirms a clear channel: higher carbon prices shift the economics of energy-intensive sectors, prompting growing issuance of green bonds to fund decarbonization projects . An integrated approach combining carbon pricing with targeted green bond issuance thus enhances incentives for firms to invest in sustainable solutions.

A foundational theoretical perspective is provided by sustainable finance frameworks that describe how financial systems transmit change to the real economy. These mechanisms typically involve reducing the cost of capital for green investments, increasing liquidity for sustainable projects, and encouraging corporate behavior shifts toward sustainability.

Billio et al. (2024) developed a multi-tiered conceptual model that bridges corporate finance, capital markets, and societal ecosystems, highlighting the role of financial institutions in steering climate outcomes.

Impact investing extends beyond environmental risk mitigation to intentionally support projects with measurable social and environmental returns. With over US \$1 trillion in assets committed globally, its growth is significant, though still small relative to the capital needed to meet global challenges . Impact investments frequently target clean energy, sustainable agriculture, and basic services in emerging markets areas that are underserved by traditional capital markets. While debates around performance versus ESG persist, the distinct goal orientation of impact investing helps align capital allocation with both returns and development objectives.

Blended finance further expands the toolbox by combining concessional public or philanthropic funds with commercial capital. Designed to de-risk investments in emerging markets, blended finance channels private resources into large-scale sustainable initiatives aligned with SDGs and climate targets. This approach is increasingly emphasized by multilateral institutions and COP initiatives as a strategy to close finance gaps in vulnerable countries .

Lastly, transition finance represents a rapidly evolving approach targeting emissions-intensive sectors that cannot currently decarbonize immediately. This includes instruments like sustainability-linked bonds, which tie financing costs to issuers' performance on agreed climate metrics and feature contractual penalties for non-compliance. Transition plans requiring transparent decarbonization roadmaps, abiding by frameworks like the Triple A (Ambition, Action, Accountability), are gaining traction as they make financial flows contingent on credible climate transition progress

Collectively, these mechanisms operate within an ecosystem where policy certainty, regulatory oversight, and standardized disclosure frameworks (such as those promoted by UN-PRI, NGFS, and the EU) are essential to scale and effectiveness. Without robust governance, instruments like green bonds and sustainability-linked finance risk

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becoming symbolic tools lacking real-world impact. Conversely, when embedded in strong frameworks, these instruments can marshal capital at the scale and speed required to build climate-resilient economies.

4. Regulatory frameworks and institutional actors

The growing complexities of climate change and its cascading effects on financial stability have elevated the importance of robust regulatory frameworks and institutional oversight. These frameworks serve as the foundational architecture for integrating sustainability into the global financial system. As financial markets increasingly grapple with environmental and transition risks, the role of regulation is no longer peripheral but central to driving long-term climate resilience and aligning investment practices with ecological imperatives.

One of the most significant evolutions in recent years is the emergence of sustainability-oriented taxonomies. These are formal classification systems designed to define which economic activities can be considered environmentally sustainable. Such taxonomies aim to provide clarity and consistency, facilitating informed investment decisions while protecting against the proliferation of greenwashing. By establishing objective criteria, taxonomies enhance transparency, comparability, and the integrity of sustainable financial products. They also create a common language across market actors, regulators, and policymakers, ensuring that capital allocation is genuinely aligned with long-term environmental goals (European Commission (2020)).

Complementary to classification systems are disclosure regulations that require financial institutions and asset managers to communicate how sustainability risks are integrated into investment strategies. These frameworks demand that participants in the financial ecosystem identify, measure, and report the exposure of their portfolios to climate-related risks. This, in turn, enhances market discipline by equipping investors with the information necessary to reward sustainability and penalize risk-laden behavior. High-quality disclosure serves as the linchpin between regulatory guidance and market behavior.

Institutional actors such as central banks and financial supervisory authorities have taken increasingly proactive roles in embedding climate considerations into financial oversight. These bodies are responsible for ensuring that climate risks, both physical and transitional, are integrated into the macroprudential policy agenda. The use of climate stress testing, scenario analysis, and forward-looking risk assessments is becoming standard practice among major central banks. These tools enable regulators to identify vulnerabilities within the financial system under various climate futures, allowing preemptive policy responses.

The involvement of central banks in climate finance is not without controversy. Critics argue that monetary authorities must remain focused on core mandates such as price stability and financial soundness. Nevertheless, there is a growing consensus that climate change poses a material threat to the economy and the financial sector, justifying its inclusion within the prudential oversight function. Central banks are not necessarily tasked with leading the energy transition, but rather with ensuring that the financial system is resilient to the systemic risks it entails (Bank of England, 2024).

At the national level, public policy plays a complementary role in strengthening the regulatory environment. Governments can incentivize low-carbon investments through carbon pricing, green public procurement, fiscal incentives, and transition subsidies. Furthermore, by developing sovereign green bond frameworks and just transition mechanisms, states can direct capital flows toward sectors and communities most affected

by decarbonization efforts. These instruments reflect a recognition that the transition to a sustainable economy must also be equitable, socially inclusive, and regionally balanced.

In developing economies, the challenge is compounded by limited institutional capacity and structural barriers to investment. Regulatory innovation in these contexts requires international cooperation, technical assistance, and blended finance models that reduce risk for private investors while supporting sustainable infrastructure development. It is in this context that institutional banking and financial management expertise become essential for building climate-resilient financial architectures. As Spulbăr (2008) emphasized, the efficiency and credibility of banking management are central to maintaining trust and continuity in times of systemic transformation. This insight is particularly pertinent as financial systems are increasingly called upon to act not only as intermediaries of capital but also as catalysts of sustainable development.

Ultimately, regulatory frameworks and institutional actors must work in concert to shape a future-oriented, climate-aware financial system. This involves a delicate balance between promoting innovation, managing risk, and ensuring that the structural transformation toward sustainability is both feasible and resilient. The success of this transition depends on aligning regulatory incentives, harmonizing standards across jurisdictions, and reinforcing the institutional capacity of financial actors to respond to an evolving climate landscape.

5. Governance, policy, and the role of institutional actors

Institutional actors, such as pension funds, insurance companies, sovereign wealth funds, development banks, and multinational corporations, play a decisive role in shaping the global response to climate change through financial governance and capital allocation. These institutions are uniquely positioned to influence climate resilience due to their scale, long-term investment horizons, and regulatory connectivity. Their decisions about risk exposure, capital flow, and corporate engagement can either hasten systemic transformation or reinforce entrenched vulnerabilities (Kolasa et al., 2024).

Effective governance in the context of climate-aligned finance necessitates integrating financial returns with systemic resilience. Institutional investors have increasingly integrated Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria into their decision-making processes, driven not only by reputational concerns but also by evidence that climate risks are financially material. Kolasa et al. (2024) demonstrate how shareholder engagement, proxy voting, and active capital reallocation by institutional investors can drive corporate decarbonization strategies, embedding climate resilience within broader financial value chains.

Scenario analysis and climate risk modeling have become critical tools for institutional actors. Roncalli et al. (2020) propose the carbon-beta model, which enables portfolio managers to quantify exposure to carbon-intensive assets and adjust portfolios without significantly sacrificing returns. This quantitative approach (now increasingly integrated into regulatory reporting and climate stress testing) allows institutions to align their investment decisions with global climate goals while mitigating the risk of stranded assets.

A central pillar of climate-aligned capital deployment involves financial instruments such as green bonds, sustainability-linked bonds, and transition finance products. Alhamis (2025) observes that integrating sustainability criteria into investment portfolios enhances long-term risk-adjusted performance while signaling commitment to climate objectives. These tools allow investors to reward climate-aligned behavior,

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leveraging pricing mechanisms, liquidity access, and capital costs to shift corporate activity.

Institutional participation has also propelled the growth of impact investing. Roor and Maas (2024) note that what was once a niche form of investment has evolved into a mainstream asset class, capable of generating measurable environmental and social returns alongside financial performance. However, as they caution, the field still grapples with establishing robust, standardized impact measurement frameworks to ensure that stated goals align with actual outcomes.

Policy frameworks further constrain and guide institutional action. Regulatory regimes such as the EU Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR), the EU Taxonomy, and the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) standardize ESG reporting and climate risk disclosures. These regulations serve dual purposes: enhancing transparency and aligning financial flows with decarbonization pathways. Institutions are increasingly expected not only to comply but to actively shape climate-aligned financial ecosystem through their governance and investment behavior (UNEP FI, 2025).

The concept of fiduciary duty is undergoing a fundamental shift. Once narrowly defined as maximizing shareholder value, fiduciary responsibility now encompasses the obligation to manage climate risk and contribute to long-term system stability. UNEP FI (2025) emphasizes that institutional actors must operationalize sustainability through governance reforms, target setting, and industry collaboration, reflecting this broader interpretation of fiduciary duty.

Beyond portfolio management, institutional actors are engaging in carbon pricing dialogue, internal carbon accounting, and climate policy advocacy. Kenyon et al. (2022) introduce the “carbon equivalence principle,” which calls for embedding carbon flows into financial disclosures to internalize emissions externalities and drive sustainable design in project finance.

Finally, the alignment between public policy and private capital is critical for unlocking climate finance in emerging economies. Development banks and multilateral institutions leverage blended finance to de-risk sustainable infrastructure projects and attract private capital. Without such mechanisms, climate-aligned finance risks remaining concentrated in developed markets, exacerbating global inequities in resilience (Kolasa et al., 2024; Roor & Maas, 2024).

6. Conclusions

This study has examined the critical intersection of climate change, financial markets, and investment strategies, emphasizing the transformative potential of climate-aligned capital flows in enhancing long-term economic resilience. As the global climate crisis intensifies, so too does the imperative to realign financial systems with the objectives of sustainability, risk mitigation, and adaptive capacity. The integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria, along with innovations in green finance, has begun to reshape traditional investment paradigms, moving beyond short-term return maximization toward broader systemic stability.

Our analysis underscores that the economic consequences of climate change are no longer hypothetical. They manifest through rising costs from extreme weather events, disruptions to global value chains, declining asset values in high-emission sectors, and mounting risks to public and private infrastructure. Investment mechanisms such as green bonds, sustainability-linked loans, and blended finance have emerged as key tools for

managing these risks, enabling investors to reallocate capital toward climate-resilient sectors and technologies. The increasing depth and maturity of these financial instruments reflect a growing recognition of the need to integrate sustainability into the core of financial decision-making.

Equally important is the role of regulatory frameworks and policy innovation in supporting climate-aligned finance. Taxonomies, disclosure requirements, and scenario-based stress testing create the institutional infrastructure necessary to promote transparency, standardization, and investor confidence. Central banks and financial supervisors are now more actively embedding climate risk into regulatory oversight, acknowledging that unmanaged environmental risks can undermine financial system integrity. However, achieving effective regulatory alignment across jurisdictions remains a complex challenge, particularly for emerging and developing economies where institutional capacity may be limited.

The research has also shown that institutional actors are at the forefront of climate financial governance. Large asset managers, sovereign funds, and development banks are not only reallocating portfolios but also using their influence to advocate for systemic change through proxy voting, engagement strategies, and climate-risk modeling. These actors increasingly interpret fiduciary duty to include the responsibility to manage long-term sustainability risks, reflecting a paradigm shift in capital stewardship.

Moreover, the integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (particularly in renewable energy optimization and climate risk forecasting) has added another layer of strategic sophistication. Yet, as studies have pointed out, these technologies must be deployed with caution, given their own energy demands and dependence on supportive policy environments.

Perhaps the most urgent insight from this study is the narrowing window for action. Climate change is accelerating faster than many economic models had projected, and without decisive shifts in investment behavior, global economies risk locking in unsustainable development pathways. Aligning capital markets with the goals of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals is not simply a matter of ethics, it is a matter of financial prudence, strategic foresight, and global security.

The findings of this paper suggest a clear roadmap: investors, institutions, and policymakers must work in concert to deploy innovative financial tools, implement coherent regulations, and foster accountability. Only through this integrated approach can market actors truly mitigate risk while contributing to a more stable, inclusive, and resilient economic future. The transition to climate-aware investment is not an option, it is a strategic imperative for long-term sustainability and prosperity.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Media coverage of Croatian education during the World War II

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Abstract:

A historical review of Croatian education and schooling during the Second World War indicates the dynamics of the educational system under the influence of political and wartime difficulties. Education played a key role in society, but was sensitive to changes depending on political trends. The subject of research is education during the Second World War in Croatia. The research covers the observed period from 1943 to 1945 using the example of the Croatian daily, *Slobodna Dalmacija*. The unit of analysis is newspaper articles about education and schooling. The paper uses a descriptive method and a quantitative and qualitative method of content analysis. The goals of the paper are to analyze newspaper articles, headlines and photos about education in *Slobodna Dalmacija* from 1943 to 1945 through a quantitative content analysis, and to analyze newspaper articles about illiteracy as the main topic through a qualitative content analysis of the articles. The sample included the front pages of the mentioned newspapers, and 118 articles were analyzed in the observed period. Criteria that are important for the objectives of the research were singled out: journalistic genres, authors of articles, pages where articles are positioned, size of articles, graphic design of articles and topics of articles related to education and schooling. The results of the research showed that despite the various disasters and hardships that befell the citizens of Croatia at that time, education and schooling developed. Teachers, teachers and professors are shown as advocates of the progress of the education system.

Key words: *education, illiteracy, politics, local newspaper, World War II, Croatia.*

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Introduction

The research, which is based on the analysis of articles, looks at how newsrooms and journalists covered educational subjects based on the political climate and how this coverage affected how society saw the value of education. Even though politics had a significant impact on the educational system, the media helped to shape public opinion and either support or undermine particular educational ideals and concepts.

This analysis sheds crucial light on how the media shapes public perceptions of education and demonstrates how newspapers, as major media communication players, shaped public perceptions of educational concerns at a time of political upheaval and conflict.

The paper focuses on the years from 1943 to 1945 and examines schooling in Croatia during World War II. The way the media represented the educational policies of the time is examined through an analysis of articles about education and schooling that were published in the newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija*. The paper discusses Croatia's sociopolitical changes in addition to newspaper coverage, focusing on the role of national liberation organizations like State Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia and National Liberation Committee and their impact on politics and the educational system. Examining how political shifts affected schooling and how the media covered them is the goal.

In the era of media communication, conventional media were crucial in educating the public, influencing public opinion, and influencing societal views. Newspapers were the primary medium for disseminating information, but they also played a role in establishing social conventions and promoting political beliefs. In this paper, the examination of articles that appeared in newspapers like *Slobodna Dalmacija* between 1943 and 1945 sheds light on how newspapers influenced attitudes about education and more general societal change during that era.

Theoretical background

The political and social changes of the time were strongly linked to the many difficulties Croatian education suffered during World War II.

The period following World War II saw significant influence of the prevailing ideology on both the theory and practice of pedagogy in Croatia. (Radeka, Batinić, 2015:59)

Curricula were frequently modified in response to political pressures and regime leaders, and education inside the Independent State of Croatia became a tool for the dissemination of Ustasha ideology. Depending on who controlled a given region, teaching could alter. For instance, in regions ruled by Germany or Italy, the occupation policies had an impact on the educational system, leading to many disputes about educational access. (Žalac, 1988:62)

Schools were forced to close, educational institutions were destroyed, and the educational process was severely disrupted as a result of the conflict. Many children and young people experienced a high rate of illiteracy as a result of this circumstance, and their access to school was severely limited. (Munjiza, 2009:86)

The conflict also had long-term effects on Croatia's educational system because it severely undermined it by using educational resources for military objectives. These educational reforms had a lasting impact on Croatia's overall social structure since they

defined the post-war educational approach and worldview of the generations that grew up at that time.

The educational landscape of the Independent State of Croatia was shaped by three predominant influences: the Ustasha in inner Croatia, the Italian presence in Dalmatia, and the fascist ideology, alongside the Partisan movement's efforts in Dalmatia and Slavonia. It was based on building awareness of belonging to the Croatian people, but within a totalitarian political framework. Through the creation of the Ustasha Youth, an effort was made to educate young men for military needs and girls for the roles of mothers and educators, who would transmit Ustasha values to new generations. The authorities considered education to be crucial for social development. (Smiljanić, 2020:37)

The second educational culture was in the area of Dalmatia, under the influence of the Italian, or fascist, authorities. The school on the island of Molat, where "national educational content" was taught and the professors were imported from Italy, was the most extreme example of Italianization. The main center of opposition to the Italianization of education was Split. Because secondary school students were active in partisan movements and were able to gather without interference from the government, the Italian authorities permitted senior schools to operate while elementary schools remained open. (Smiljanić, 2020:38)

When the Partisans took control of the areas, they had previously occupied in 1943, partisan educational culture took over. They were the first to conduct a census of devoted educators, in which competency in reading, writing, and instructing the illiterate was sufficient and higher education was not valued. Instead of concentrating on the core principles of education, the Partisan authorities prioritized the propagation of communist, and later political, concepts. As a result, they disregarded education. More focus was placed on teacher training, which included several-month seminars that emphasized communist ideology and accurate assessment of World War II. (Smiljanić, 2020:39)

The interaction between professors and students has evolved over time, becoming more open and collaborative. This shift parallels larger trends in education and psychology. At the same time, it emphasizes the importance of teachers in developing culture and society. Together, these perspectives demonstrate how teachers' roles have expanded beyond the classroom.

School life as seen through the lens of the interaction between teachers and pupils (i.e., their mutual perspectives), emerges as an intriguing educational and psychological topic. The advancement of psychology and the reform-oriented pedagogical initiatives of that century surely contributed to a greater interest in one another: teachers in their students and students in their teachers. Despite complaints about "unruly" youth and the impenetrable authority of the "gentleman professor," this was the visible beginning of the democratization of that relationship. (Batinić, Miljković 2011:517)

The responsibility of teachers extends beyond the classroom. They are frequently overlooked as major drivers of cultural evolution and socioeconomic improvement. Their duty extends beyond only giving education. Now is the time for teachers to embrace their role as national educators. (Morović, 1945:3)

Unexpectedly, the number of schools increased quickly after the freedom. Local officials opened schools and promoted literacy even during the war. Despite the war, several communities made an effort to educate their citizens, and devoted educators received recognition for their work. Even if some teachers didn't meet expectations, overall development was greater than these problems. (Kursar, 1945:2)

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The conclusion of World War II signified a crucial juncture in Croatia's political and social framework, paving the way for substantial institutional transformations, particularly in education.

Croatia was completely liberated in May 1945. The People's Parliament of Croatia began operations in September 1945, succeeding the State Anti-Fascist Council for Croatian National Liberation. Among the newly formed ministries was the Ministry of Education. This ministry was in charge of monitoring auxiliary school-related tasks as well as organizing educational matters throughout Croatia. (Ogrizović, 1981: 266)

After World War II, as Croatia and the rest of Yugoslavia began to recover, education became a crucial aspect of the rebuilding process. One of the most difficult issues was combating illiteracy, which had been a problem both before and after the conflict.

Following the liberation of Croatia and Yugoslavia, adult education and public enlightenment continued. Illiteracy suppression was a crucial job both during and after the National Liberation War. Courses for the illiterate were established, with a considerable number of instructors, lecturers, and young people serving as course leaders. (Ogrizović, 1981: 284)

In 1945, the government made significant efforts to establish a solid educational system. It was an important aspect of rebuilding the country and planning for the future, especially as they considered the five-year plan and the goals of establishing a new socialist society.

If we summarize the national government's efforts in organizing education and training in 1945, we can conclude that it was a year of great commitment to lay a solid foundation for the further development of this area in the era of reconstruction and building a socialist community, as well as to make thorough preparations for the five-year plan for the country's upliftment, the development of education and training in Croatia. (Ogrizović, 1981: 287)

Methodology

The theoretical part of this thesis applies the descriptive method to present the socio-political context of Croatia during the Second World War. This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of the historical conditions that shaped educational policies and practices during the period. The research component employs the content analysis method, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The analysis focuses on newspaper articles concerning education published in *Slobodna Dalmacija* between 1943 and 1945.

The aim is to identify recurring themes and messages that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. The central subject of this thesis is education in Croatia during the Second World War, with a particular focus on the years 1943 to 1945. Through the example of the Croatian daily newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija*, the paper analyzes articles related to education and schooling. It also explores the broader state of education during the war and its transformations, emphasizing the role of the national liberation bodies ZAVNOH (State Anti-fascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia) and NOO (People's Liberation Committees).

The research is guided by two primary objectives. First, through quantitative

content analysis, the paper examines the frequency and distribution of articles, headlines, and photographs related to education. Second, using qualitative content analysis, it explores newspaper articles that address illiteracy as a central theme.

Based on these objectives, the following research questions have been identified: what is the proportion of articles on education within the overall research corpus; what proportion of these articles addresses the issue of citizen illiteracy; what proportion of articles establishes a link between politics and education; which journalistic genre is most prevalent in the overall corpus? These questions aim to determine the presence and prominence of educational topics in the wartime press, quantify the media's attention to the issue of illiteracy, and explore the intersection of political and educational discourse. Additionally, the research seeks to identify the dominant journalistic genre to better understand the prevailing reporting style and approach to educational themes during this historical period.

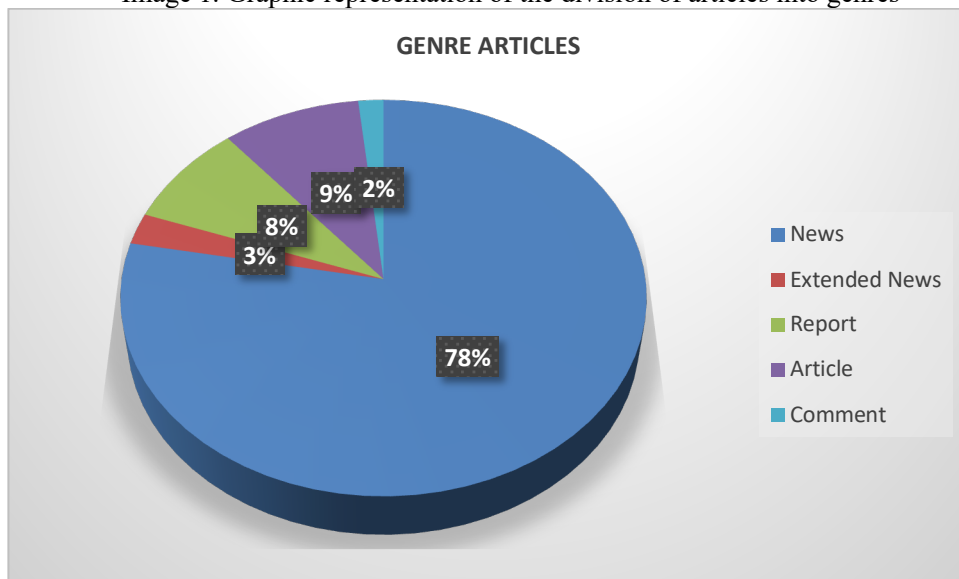
Result of research

Quantitative analysis

The quantitative method was used to examine 118 articles in total. The distribution by year makes it evident that the number of publications has increased with time: just one text was released in 1943, 18 in 1944, and 99 in 1945. This suggests that interest in educational themes increased in the years following World War II.

News is the most common journalistic genre in the texts under analysis. These are typically brief educational articles that cover useful subjects like the start of the school year, student enrollment, or other crucial information for parents and children. This demonstrates the useful purpose of newspapers at the time, which was to give the public essential and fundamental information, particularly during the post-war period of societal rehabilitation.

Image 1. Graphic representation of the division of articles into genres

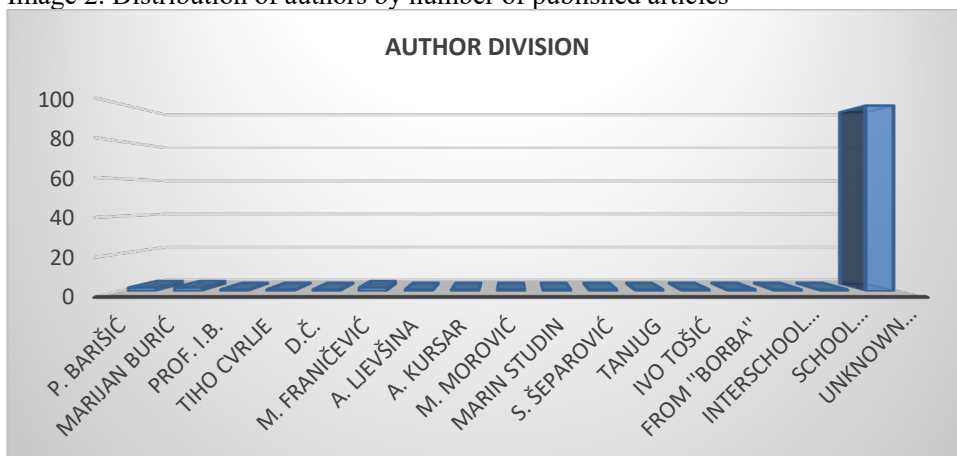


Source: According to: Čemeljić 2023

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Only 16 articles had authorship listed, and up to 102 items were left unsigned. This fact illustrates how, at the time, journalistic contributions were frequently not personalized, which was consistent with the collective approach to publication and the informational conventions of the day.

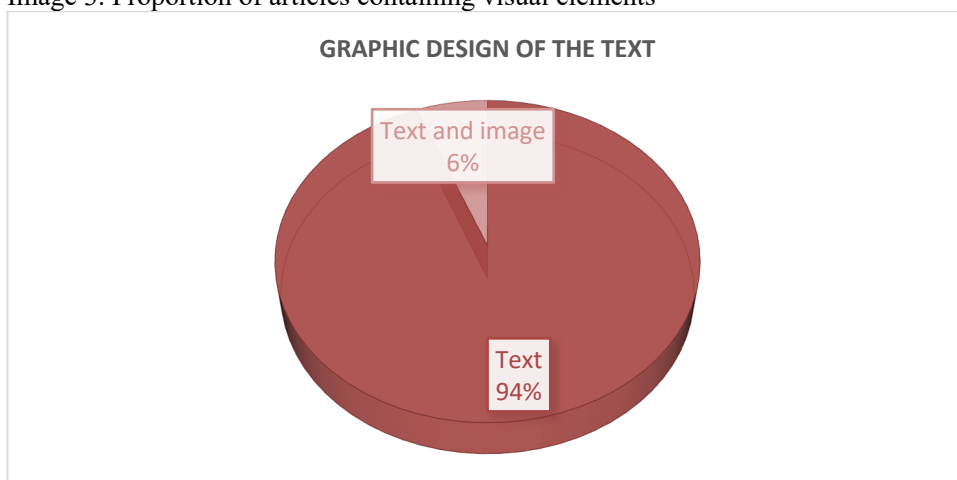
Image 2. Distribution of authors by number of published articles



Source: According to: Čemeljić 2023

Regarding visual aids, it is evident that only seven publications—or a very small portion of the entire sample—have photographic accompaniment. All of the photos had titles and were in black and white, indicating a minimal but current degree of graphic processing.

Image 3. Proportion of articles containing visual elements

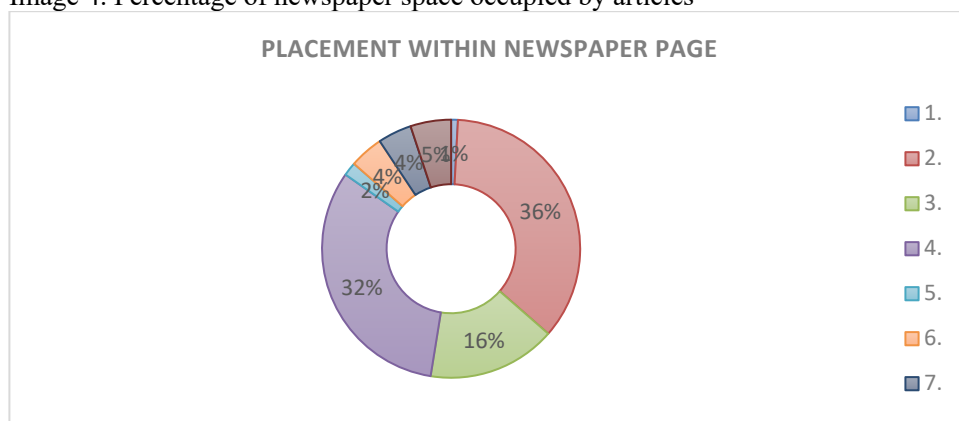


Source: According to: Čemeljić 2023

In the later and extended editions of the newspaper, the articles were more frequently found on the eighth page, but they were most frequently found on the second, third, and fourth pages. The size of printed editions has clearly increased from the original

two pages to four and finally eight pages, which is evidence of the growth of the media and the increased accessibility of content.

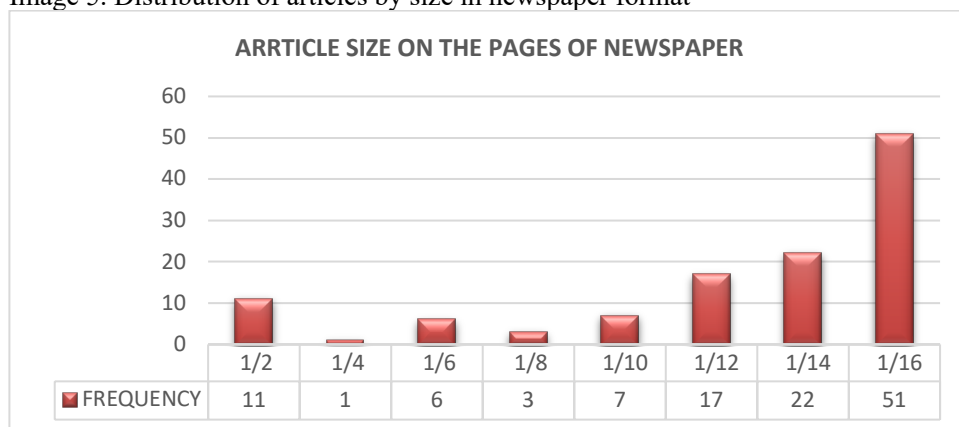
Image 4. Percentage of newspaper space occupied by articles



Source: According to: Čemeljić 2023

Records that take up 1/16 of a page are the most common in terms of article size, which is usual for notices and brief news. These abbreviations were most frequently found on newspaper back pages, particularly those that contained advertisements. It's noteworthy to note that 11 of the articles were lengthy enough to fill half of the page, but none of them took up the entire front page. This suggests that educational issues are not as well-represented in the newspaper's main body.

Image 5. Distribution of articles by size in newspaper format

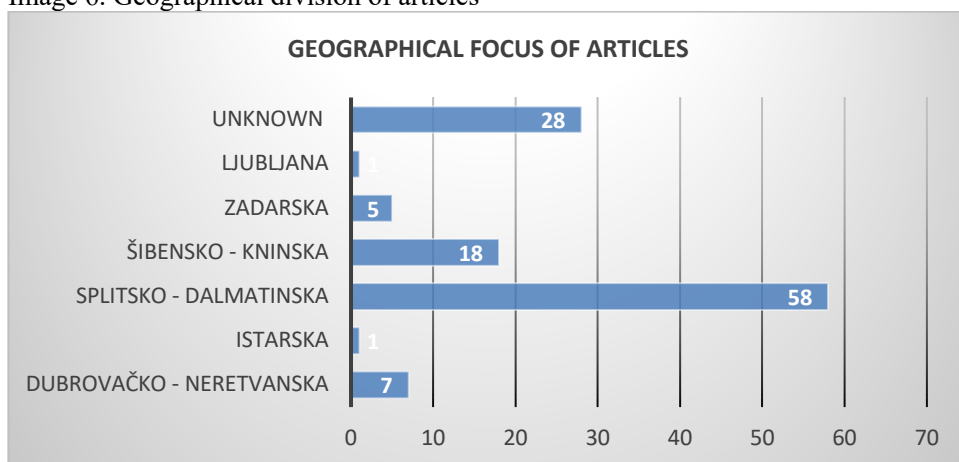


Source: According to: Čemeljić 2023

The paper also examined the geographical distribution of articles. The majority of publications focus on Split-Dalmatia County, whereas Istria County receives the least attention. In 28 articles, it was not obvious which area was being referred to, such as cities, counties, or comparable locations. After Split-Dalmatia, Šibenik-Knin County is most frequently cited. In addition to Croatian areas, *Slobodna Dalmacija* provides articles about Ljubljana, Slovenia, with a focus on the country's educational progress.

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Image 6. Geographical division of articles

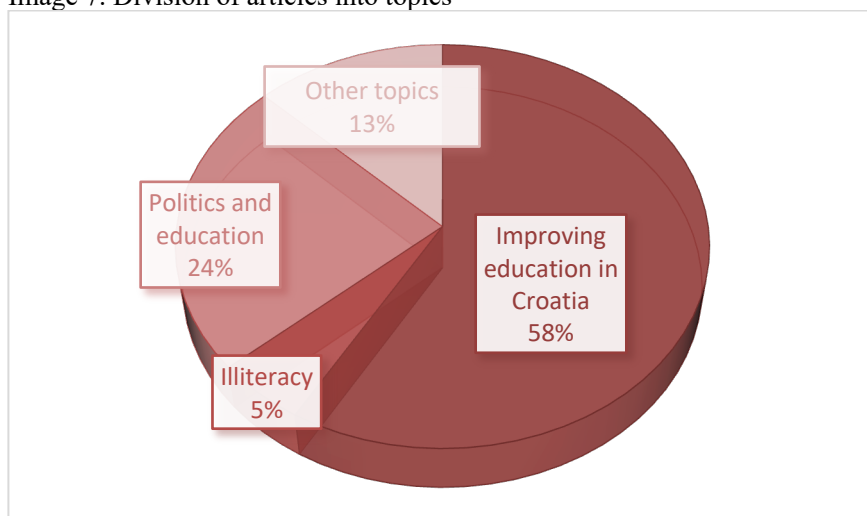


Source: According to: Čemeljić 2023

According to thematic analysis, the majority of the articles (58 total) addressed ways to improve education, including through reforms, investments in infrastructure, and system organization. Articles that link politics and education come next (24%), suggesting that the educational narrative contains social objectives and ideological statements. While the theme of illiteracy, despite its social significance, barely makes up 5% of the examined articles, 13% of the articles document the accomplishments of students and activities in liberated areas and courses.

The findings demonstrate that, during the investigated period, education was mostly covered by the press in the form of brief, educational news stories that lacked in-depth analysis or importance in the newspaper space. Nonetheless, there are discernible changes in the breadth and format of reporting, along with the growth of interest in post-war educational issues.

Image 7. Division of articles into topics



Source: According to: Čemeljić 2023

Qualitative analysis

The first 1943 article, *literacy course*, addresses the issue of illiteracy and attempts to address it through educational initiatives. The People's Liberation Committee of Split has announced that it will establish a literacy course for all people above the age of twelve. They encourage those who are interested to apply, particularly women, to allow their housekeeper to join. The course aims to address illiteracy. The topic was chosen because it demonstrates how citizens wanted solutions to the problem of illiteracy, which was prevalent in 1943, and how the People's Liberation Committee provided a real response by organizing a course. This opens the door to education for anyone who want it, albeit many may be unable to take advantage of it because of wartime conditions. The article is written in a formal language, emphasizing the Split National Liberation Committee's efforts to reduce illiteracy. It also acknowledges the potential barriers that citizens may have in receiving education. This decision is most likely motivated by a larger social need or practical considerations. The content is also a plea to the community to get involved and actively contribute to the resolution of an important social issue. It symbolizes the People's Liberation Committee's responsibility for promoting education as a method of good social transformation. The text's historical context stresses the urgency and importance of combating illiteracy. It combines information and social engagement to promote the Split National Liberation Committee as an organization that acts in the best interests of its residents. This article falls under the category of news. It is located on the second page of the issue, in the lower right corner, and takes up only about 1/16 of the page. The entire newspaper issue is barely two pages long, and the examined piece is not visibly identified or attributed to a specific author.

Article *About Our Education* emphasizes the link between education and the beliefs of the national liberation movement, emphasizing that every settlement should have its own school and that education is a requirement for all inhabitants. The text emphasizes State Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia decisions, which shaped the new school system. According to the report, some schools were closed during the wartime, while others in freed areas remained open. This definitely reveals a desire to organize the educational system in conformity with current political and ideological principles. Plans to rebuild wrecked school buildings and add new classrooms are also stated, indicating a desire to restore educational infrastructure and improve teaching material. The introduction of Russian and English as instruction languages, rather than German and Italian, may reflect a shift in political rules during this period. The text falls under the category of journalistic news. It was published in the 75th issue of *Slobodna Dalmacija*, which included eight pages. The article is on the third page and takes up a fifth of the area. Article is unsigned and does not include any visual elements such as images or illustrations.

The unknown author of the article *A People's University opened in Split* discusses the purpose and relevance of the newly established cultural and educational institution. The establishment of the university is a significant step forward in the process of extending education and boosting the cultural level of the population. The institution's inauguration was marked with a lecture given by a Unified National Liberation Front official, during which the assembled citizens learned more about the history of the People's Liberation Movement, the organization of the people's government, and contemporary political issues. Drago Gizdić, then-secretary of the Unified National Liberation Front of Croatia, gave the inaugural presentation on the People's Liberation Front. The article is written in news format and published in a four-page edition. The text is on the second page, taking

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about a quarter of the page. The author is not identified, and the article is not visually supported with images or illustrations. It was chosen for analysis because the establishment of the People's University represents an endeavor to extend education and raise citizens' political consciousness. The talk that opened the opening played an important role in bringing the political situation of the moment to the residents of Split.

Article *Schools and reading rooms are opening in Dalmatia* reports a large growth in the number of schools in the Vodice area, indicating a definite emphasis on extending educational options. Despite the severe conditions caused by war-damaged buildings, a solution is found in the usage of private residences, demonstrating a realistic and resourceful approach to issue solving. This demonstrates the willingness to continue education even in challenging conditions. Particular focus is placed on the work put into creating courses for illiterate elderly people. This indicated a desire to tailor education to all age groups and community requirements. The execution of special programs for literate and semi-literate persons, as well as initiatives to collect furniture and school supplies for devastated facilities, demonstrates a holistic approach to educational rebuilding and reinforcement. The article outlines conferences held in Supetar and Metković that provided organizational and advising support to instructors. The Dubrovnik gathering stresses professional development for teachers and aligning education with national liberation movement objectives. Article was published on the third page of *Slobodna Dalmacija*, occupies a fourth of the page, is not visually accompanied by an image, and lacks a signed author.

Article *Fighting Illiteracy* portrays illiteracy as a significant opponent that requires a collaborative effort from all Croatian citizens. It underlines the importance of national unity in fighting this prevalent problem. The use of the term "enemy" implies a shared responsibility for defeating it. Article employs statistical data to demonstrate the prevalence of illiteracy in cities such as Slunj, Karlovac, and the Kordun area, emphasizing the gravity of the situation. To address the issue, the Department of Public Education organizes a competition among various administrative units, ranging from districts to villages. This paradigm provides a structured and competitive platform for engaging local communities and institutions in problem solving. The article's conclusion urges all social institutions and organizations to focus on working together to combat illiteracy, not just for immediate benefits, but also to assure a better and happier existence after the conflict. This hopeful outlook for the future is consistent with the notion of societal progress through education. The piece, unlike the other texts, occupies a quarter of a page and is accompanied with a photograph of two girls writing at a school desk, with the description *Dalmatian girls learn to write* above the image.

Article *Teachers Pioneers of Rural Improvement* underlines the need of connecting villages and cities during post-liberation reconstruction. Although there were significant distinctions between rural and urban areas, they are steadily diminishing, and cooperation is becoming increasingly important. Teachers are seen as vital drivers of advancement, not just as pedagogues, but also as public educators participating in social development. They are meant to educate peasants about the economy, agriculture, animal husbandry, and other related topics. Practical teaching has been implemented in all teacher training schools, representing a novel approach not seen under prior authorities. Teachers' broader roles are highlighted, including caring for pupils, cooperating with families, and contributing to community growth. Morović emphasizes the importance of actively molding modern society and adapting to new difficulties. The article is a news item that

appears on the third page of a four-page issue of *Slobodna Dalmacija*, takes up one-eighth of a page, and does not include an image.

Article *In the fight against illiteracy* highlights the significance of combating illiteracy, presenting it as one of the most significant barriers to national education and economic progress. Illiteracy is compared to a poison that contaminates the social fabric, emphasizing its destructive potency. The slogan "Death to Illiteracy" is a well-known anti-fascist expression, implying that this is a fight of extreme importance and urgency. The author expresses his personal perspective on the issue, emphasizing that he sees assisting the illiterate as part of his professional and civic responsibilities within the context of public education. This strengthens the assumption that educational workers have an important role in addressing fundamental socioeconomic issues. The paper makes real ideas to speed the process of reducing illiteracy, ranging from reorganizing existing programs to creating new courses. Special consideration is also given to those who are economically disadvantaged, with the purchase of school materials and textbooks scheduled to allow them to access education without budgetary constraints. The text's message highlights that reading is within everyone's reach with minimal work and will, supporting inclusivity and individual empowerment. This strategy demonstrates how education may be used to promote social equality and progress.

Article *An elementary school for the Italian minority has opened in Zadar* describes the opening of a primary school for the Italian minority in Zadar, which coincides with the founding of a Croatian school in the same city. The presence of government representatives and parents of Italian students illustrates community-state collaboration and the national government's commitment to carrying out organization decisions. This also replies to, as previously noted, the deception spread by Italian reactionaries about minority persecution. The text validates the legitimacy of the government's education policies by emphasizing inclusiveness and equality. The concluding remark concerning the opening of a Croatian school on the same day highlights the importance of balance in educational policies. The item was published on the top page of newspaper, takes up 1/16 of the page, and is not accompanied by a photo.

Article *Elementary schools in Dalmatia in the first year of operation after liberation* by instructor A. Kursar, published on the second page of the newspaper issue, is a journalistic news item with no accompanying photograph, taking up 1/8 of the page. The article examines the improvement in educational success following Croatia's liberation, highlighting that practically all towns and villages had successfully eliminated illiteracy and established schools by the end of the war. The author begins the essay by recounting a tough wartime history characterized by hunger, poverty, and limited educational chances. Following the liberation, education experienced remarkable growth, demonstrating how much the new administration valued education and social advancement. Kursar recognizes teachers who have demonstrated great dedication and selflessness, portraying them as major drivers of advancement. An important theme in the text is the fraternity and solidarity of Croats and Serbs in Dalmatia, which was demonstrated via collaborative efforts on educational goals. Such cooperation represents a social shift toward regeneration and unity.

Conclusion

This paper provides a valuable insight into the role of the media in shaping public perceptions of education during World War II, using Croatia as a case study. Through a combined quantitative and qualitative content analysis, it has been established that the

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media, despite the limitations imposed by wartime conditions, actively participated in shaping social values and promoting education as a foundational factor for national development and postwar recovery.

The results of the quantitative content analysis revealed an increasing number of education-related articles toward the end of the war, indicating that education was gaining heightened social and political significance in the postwar period. Although most of the articles were unsigned and written in brief journalistic forms, their frequency and content demonstrate the media's commitment to informing the public, promoting literacy, and supporting efforts to rebuild the educational system. The most prominent themes were educational reforms, school organization, and infrastructural investments, while illiteracy—although a highly relevant social issue—was marginally represented within the overall corpus.

The qualitative analysis emphasized the strategic role of education in fulfilling political and ideological objectives during the researched period. Illiteracy was framed as a major barrier to national progress, requiring collective action for its eradication. Teachers were depicted as key agents of change, especially in their role in combating illiteracy. The analysis also highlighted the broader political context, including the activities of anti-fascist organizations such as ZAVNOH (State Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia) and NOO (People's Liberation Committees), which considered education a crucial element in the construction of a new socialist society.

The research confirms that media discourse on education served an important informational function during wartime. By analyzing educational topics within their historical context, this paper contributes to a better understanding of the complex interplay between media, politics, and education. It confirms that, although limited in space and content, wartime media discourse on education fulfilled key functions during a time of crisis—informational, mobilizational, and symbolic.

Ultimately, this paper underscores the importance of examining the historical dimensions of media coverage as a means of understanding broader social processes and emphasizes the lasting impact of media on educational discourse and public consciousness.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

The Meta-Phormal Universe of Sherban Epuré

Simber Atay¹⁾

Abstract:

Sherban Epuré (1940-2018) was a pioneering figure in cybernetic art and post-humanist art. Since the 1970s, he has participated in many international art festivals and won awards. His works are in the collections of museums such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, and the National Gallery in Bucharest.

In 1980, unable to withstand the conditions of the communist regime in Romania, Epuré relocated to New York, where he continued to generate his artworks. His experimental style emerges from the fusion of engineering, mathematics, and painting. As a computer-based artist, he has a poetic understanding of abstraction. His works fall into three categories, which he names using some language games: S-Bands, Meta-Phorms, and Protruded Sculptures.

In this study, Sherban Epuré's art and the contemporary significance of his works in terms of current cultural paradigms will be defined and discussed in the light of related texts: *Cybernetics* (1948) by Norbert Wiener; *Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture?* (1977) by Ihab Hassan; *An Artist's Journey in Art and Science: From Behind the Iron Curtain to Present-Day America* (2006) by Sherban Epuré.

Keywords: *Sherban Epuré, Intrinsic Art, cybernetic art, post-humanist art, S-Bands, Meta-Phorms.*

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Introduction

"He was the computer..."

Mihai Nadin for Sherban Epuré (2020, p.95).

Sherban Epuré (1940-2018) was a pioneering figure in cybernetic art and post-humanist art. Since the 1970s, he has participated in many international art festivals and won awards at the 7th and 8th Paris Biennale for Young Artists in 1971 and 1973, the 25th Edinburgh Festival, 1971, the 9th Sigma Festival in Bordeaux, France, 1973, the Fine Art Competition, Cyprus, (Award), 1973, and at The New Gallery in Bucharest, Romania, 1974, New York Digital Salon, SIGGRAPH and many other cybernetic art activities in 1980's and 1990's. His works are in the collections of museums such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, and the National Gallery in Bucharest. He is a distinguished figure in the History of Computer Art and Design along with Georges Charbonnier, Abraham Moles, Herbert Franke, Herve Huitric, Peter Kreiss, Kenneth Knowlton, Vera Molnar, Manfred Mohr, and Georg Nees.

Sherban Epuré studied at the Polytechnic Institute of Bucharest, in the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Telecommunications, from 1956 to 1961. He was expelled from the faculty for cliché political reasons related to communist totalitarianism. The problem is not only his supposed opposition to the communist regime, but also his free and independent personality and creative vision.

His friend Mihai Nadin (2020) who also studied at the Polytechnic Institute of Bucharest between 1955 and 1960, explains the situation as follows: "Our professor of cybernetics was Edmond Nicolau, a histrionic character, who probably envied us for taking the liberty of seeking refuge in aesthetic issues. One of his articles on art and cybernetics (1974) was illustrated with an image by Epuré. (Later, we found out, to our disappointment, that, like many others who we came to believe in, he was also on the payroll of the Secret Services.)" (p.94).

By the way, at that time, Epuré was working in the research laboratory of a semiconductor factory in Bucharest. However, in the face of increasing political repression, Epuré concentrated on painting to find a different existential environment. He said, "By 1961, art, with its superior possibilities of creative freedom, had taken over my life. While continuing to make a living in electronics, I began to invest most of my time and energy in painting and the study of art history, eventually combining natural aptitudes for both art and science." (Epuré, 2006: 403).

In 1964, with some of his friends, he joined an artist initiative called the "New Barbizon of Young Painting in Romania" and settled in Poiana Mărului, in the Carpathian Mountains. Epuré and the other members of New Barbizon, "There, they painted the village in a manner that qualifies, in retrospect, as aesthetic dissidence. Nothing idyllic, as the regime would have had it, but rather taking a subjective perspective, an aesthetic different from the official socialist realism" (Nadin, 2020: 94).

In 1967, he opened his first solo exhibition and was awarded a special mention by the Union of Fine Artists of Romania. As a painter, he created abstract landscapes and launched his understanding of art, which he defined this time as Mathematical Realism; accordingly: "The drawing is the outcome of the life record of the point navigating in space... The object is a pretext, a catalyst in expressing an idea." (Epuré, 1972:34-36 cited by Nadin, 2020:94).

The Meta-Phormal Universe of Sherban Epuré

Epuré is an engineer by professional formation and a painter. Consequently, his poetics are in a constant state of flux, arising from a dialectic between science and art, both in his conventional/analog expressions and in his later digital/algorithmic works. He explains this subject as follows: “Personally, I use a method that regards art as fulfillment for the eye, the heart and the mind, or sense, emotion and spirit (this applies to both analog and digital formats)” (Epuré, 2016:407).

However, Epuré's paintings from the Poiana Mărului period, which are typically classical in genre, such as landscapes or still life, represent an original style. Consequently, his artistic style, characterized by a post-impressionist orientation, with a tendency towards geometric analytic abstraction, finds an almost poetical expression in the depiction of nature and village landscapes. According to Nadin (2020) : “ In order to explain what happened, let me recall Mondrian, for whom painting landscapes was a step toward his abstractions” (p.94).

On the other hand, his still-life paintings are characterized by formal purity based on chromatic lyricism. Epuré's artistic style of this period is characterized by the utilization of pastel color tones in his paintings. But this application of transforming the color fields into pastel hues simultaneously generates chromatic vibrations on the surface.

Over time, Epuré's artistic style evolved towards a predominantly cybernetic art; at this juncture, it is necessary to reiterate one more time that cybernetic artists naturally draw inspiration from the spirit of the Renaissance's uomo universale, who possessed a simultaneous scientific and artistic vision. He explains this aesthetic transformation as follows: “In 1966 I entered a period of multidisciplinary studies in many areas apparently unrelated to art: information theory, cybernetics, structuralism, and constructivism as an unfolding mathematical game. I was fascinated by dynamic natural processes. Such processes convey information and involve actions, reactions, changes of state, and behaviors. In short, I had unwittingly stumbled upon cybernetics and felt compelled to make it the driving force of my creative process” (Epuré, 2006:404).

Consequently, within a relatively brief period, new works were realized within this new context, and Epuré transitioned definitely from Mathematical Realism to Intrinsic Art: “By the end of 1967, two directions had emerged; these remain the chief focus of my work to this day: the S-Band and the Meta-Phorm. Both types of work were shown in several venues between 1969 and 1978. At the Sigma 9 Contact II in Bordeaux, France (1973), I would have had an ideal opportunity to meet first hand some of the most influential artists and animators in the field of computer art, such as Georges Charbonnier, Abraham Moles, Herbert Franke, Herve Huitric, Peter Kreiss, Kenneth Knowlton, Vera Molnar, Manfred Mohr and Georg Nees... However, as on all other such occasions, I was denied a passport”. (Epuré, 2006:405).

By the way, The Artist explains Intrinsic Art in this way: “I was most interested in all-inclusive, nondogmatic and scientific approaches. The most rewarding answers came from the scientific coincidence between Vedic wisdom, astrophysics, quantum physics and synchronicity; how the universe writ small is but a local manifestation of the universe writ large; how invisible causes turn into visible effects: the universality, power and creativity of the mind. This is Intrinsic Art's area of interest. I have initiated three strands of works since 1969 as parts of Intrinsic Art: Meta-Phorms, S-Bands and Protruded Sculptures. The third reunites the first two in a shared format” (Epuré, 2016: 408).

In 1973, the art critic Jacques Lonchamp visited Epuré's studio in Bucharest while creating works for the Sigma 9 Festival in Bordeaux. Then Lonchamp suggests

contacting Leonardo magazine. However, this artistic/professional brief encounter also creates problems, as the Artist himself explains: “He was unaware that, in Romania, any contact whatsoever with the West, unless previously authorized and supervised by the Secret Service, was regarded with great suspicion. The regime was obsessed with cases of “foreign espionage” and “enemies of the people.” (Epuré, 2006:403).

In 1977, facing the growing oppression of the communist regime in Romania, he and his wife, Letiția Bucur, made the decisive choice to immigrate to the USA, and finally, in 1980, they arrived in New York. He began a new phase of his personal and artistic life.” Beginning in 1976, Romania slowly entered one of its darkest periods, a time in which terror, poverty and draconian restrictions obtained. Of course, my experiments ceased even to be tolerated, and I was completely marginalized. As an artist couple, my wife, Letizia Bucur, and I faced a dilemma: We had either to abandon art or attempt to safeguard our careers. In 1977, we decided to emigrate to the U.S.A.” (Epuré, 2006: 405). Thus began the Artist's Macintosh era.

Sherban Epuré's works have been recognized as a significant contribution to the field of computer art since the 1960s, and they also have the potential to clarify ongoing discussions about contemporary post-humanist art. In fact, at a relatively early date, as a pioneer, he defined creativity as an art/science collaboration in the context of human-machine coexistence

In this context, two of Epuré's essays, which we often cite in this text - sometimes by methodologically challenging the citation/quotation criteria - are particularly noteworthy. These texts can be regarded as a gateway to the cosmos of cybernetic existence: *An Artist's Journey in Art and Science: From behind the Iron Curtain to Present-Day America* (LEONARDO, Vol. 39, No. 5, pp. 402-409, 2006) and *Intrinsic Art A Cultural Capsule* (LEONARDO, Vol. 49, No. 5, pp. 406-411, 2016). This study would not have been possible without the quotations from Epuré. Eventually, the quotation technique is also a Walter Benjaminian mode of existence; for this reason, these quotations enabled our dialogue with Epuré.

Sherban Epuré, as a sophisticated representative of the rationalist mind, scientific enthusiasm, artistic creativity, and design mind, overcame all totalitarian pressures and grievances caused by the communist regime as a cyber-steersman; He preserved his artist identity under all circumstances, and became one of those Prometheuses who always defined new art in futuristic coordinates.

From an art historical perspective, Epuré is one of the pioneers of Cybernetic Art and a highly successful representative of the New Avant-Garde in the contemporary art environment. He is the inventor and developer of two original creative strategies, Mathematical Realism and Intrinsic Art. However, there are relatively few studies about him, and we hope that more comprehensive studies and research will be conducted about him in the future.

This study aims to draw attention, albeit modestly, to Sherban Epuré and his poetics and to emphasize the contemporary significance of his exceptional performance.

In this study, Epuré's *Intrinsic Art*, its components, and intertextual combinations were mapped and discussed using the descriptive method.

Intrinsic Art

Epuré launched *Intrinsic Art* in 1968, inspired by a book on mathematics by Martin Gardner and Romanian folk art to produce “something tangible” from “something invisible” (Epuré, 2016:407).

Intrinsic Art consists of three categories:

- S-Band,
- Meta-Phorms
- Protruded Sculptures.

S-Band

The S-Band means Sherban's Band (Nadine, 2020: 95). S-Band is shaped with parallelograms- twelve visual variables, nine colored stripes, and three random geometrical parameters-. Moreover, this work is represented in three alternative forms: hand-printed paper, computer-generated inkjet print, and sculpture.

They derive from interactivity between the artist and geometry and are principally suited to environmental aesthetics: wall art, paintings, indoor/outdoor installations, site-specific sculptures, design, animations, projections, etc. S-Bands are rooted in Romanian folk art, using some of its traditional modalities as inspiration for contemporary practice (Epuré, 2016: 408).

Beyond the production of intrinsic works of art, Epuré also addressed the problem of kitsch in a technophilic environment such as cybernetic art. Therefore, the formal repetitions in S-Band are not only reproductions, but variable formal multiplications: "The analogue S-Band is composed of two parts: a material component called the "carrier" that stands for hardware and incorporates the "software" and a "carried" visual message affixed to its sides. To avoid kitsch, the carried visuals must derive from the band's geometry" (p.409).

Meta-Phorms

The term "Meta-Phorm" is a neologism, a word game that combines the words "meta," "metaphor," and "form" in Duchampian style.

According to Epuré (2006): "A Meta-Phorm (meta + metaphor + form) is intended to be the visual appearance of an abstract creative proposition by setting geometrical forms into a game relationship that emulates a cybernetics model (a situation where various structures or systems are interconnected by input, output, and feedback events)" (p.406).

Etymologically, meta- means after, behind; among, between, changed, altered, higher, beyond, higher than, transcending, overarching, dealing with the most fundamental matters of...; Metaphor consists of the words meta "over" + pherein "to carry"; Form means morphe/outward appearance, semblance, image, likeness," from Old French forme, fourme, "physical form, appearance; pleasing looks, shape, image; way, manner, model, pattern, design; sort...(https://www.etymonline.com/)

It can be said that there is a dissociation and fusion between words in Epuré's wordplay, according to this formula - Meta-Phorm (meta + metaphor + form) - the metaphor decomposes on the one hand, approaches the meta and changes dimension, and on the other hand, approaches the form and condenses homophonically. Meta-Phorm is a meta-art form, but it is also a phenomenon of continuous regeneration.

Epuré generates images in a new dimension/meta-art environment; as an artist, his performance and each of his works are existential metaphors, and in this context, form turns into phorm, and reality and metaphor, which are equivalent to each other, finally become identical. "The point of the metaphor is that the impressed form is not partially but wholly present in all the impressions" (Gadamer, 2006: 504).

In this context, Marcel Duchamp is an artist who has esoteric research and fantasies, as well as multiple identities. Consequently, he has designated these identities by employing anagrams, word games, and homophony. “The three pseudonyms Duchamp chose for himself appeared in rapid succession: Rose Sélavy in 1920, Belle Haleine in 1921, and Marchand du Sel in 1922.” (Schwarz, n.d.:33).

If we map Arturo Schwarz's analysis of Rose Sélavy, focusing on the first identity:

Rose Sélavy/ Rose/ Rosa Mistica/ Philosopher's stone/ Rebis/ Adept in the closed garden of the Hesperides/Bride/The emblem of Venus.

Rose Sélavy/ Sélavy/ c'est la vie

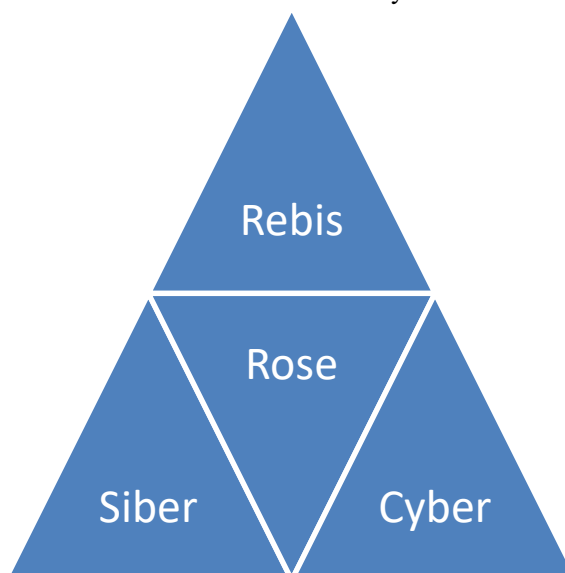
Rose Sélavy / Eros c'est la vie /Bride is life/ The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (1915–1923)

After Rose Sélavy became Rose Sélavy:

Rose/ (The Bride) is life (Eros) / Rr/ The creative and regenerative powers of the stone (Schwarz, n.d.:30)

At this point, let us create an anagraphic surprise and thus concretize the link that connects Duchamp to Epuré: Rose/Rebis/Siber/Cyber.

Table 1. From Duchamp to Epuré, Rebis=Cyber
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According to the artist's statement on his website (n.d.):“The aim of Meta-Phorms is to create a body of unforeseen images. To this end, a game relationship is established among geometric shapes. Any geometric form on a sheet of paper symbolizes an entity endowed with life, able to inspect, collect information and react to the environment. It is able to carry out a behavior and is ready to participate in a graphic game through behavior, combination or interaction. A point symbolizes the position in space of such entity. While it is in process, the shapes interact with each other through various emulations of a cybernetics model (a situation in which structures or systems are interconnected by input, output, and feedback events). In this context, behavioral capabilities are ascribed to the geometric elements (forms and shapes), which are more

complex than those of conventional geometry and are therefore identified as Meta-Points and Meta-Phorms”.

Protruded Sculptures

Protruded Sculptures are sometimes three-dimensional artefacts created using S-Band elements to exhibit as an installation or a public space sculpture.

Intertextual combinations of Sherban Epuré’s Intrinsic art

Sherban Epuré’s intrinsic art features numerous intertextual combinations, serving as both personal inspiration sources and theoretical foundations that aid in understanding his works.

Epuré and Kant

Sherban Epuré’s art is a Kantian sublime performance. As an artist with an electrical and electronics engineering background, he navigates rationally through mathematical immensity, and he achieves a poetic abstraction through rhythmic, variable, and sometimes colorful combinations of geometric elements. Because “Sublime is what even to be able to think proves that the mind has a power surpassing any standard of sense” (Kant, 1987: 106, “250”).

When we look at the history of Cybernetic Art, we see that artists explore digital technologies just as they did with photography, cinema, or video before this. New technology, new vision, new paradigm...”Yet enthusiasm is sublime aesthetically, because it is a straining of our forces by ideas that impart to the mind a momentum whose effects are mightier and more permanent than are those of an impulse produced by presentations of sense” (Kant, 1987: 132, “272”).

Epuré and Klee

On Epuré’s website (http://sherban-epure.com/Meta-Phorms-A/About_the_artist.html) under the heading “About the artist,” the following statement appears: “In 1978, after an in-depth reading of Paul Klee’s collected essays on art (*La Pensée Créatrice* and *Histoire Naturelle Infinie*), he came to regard Klee as his mentor. Klee’s cosmo-genetic vision represented a push toward the exploration of universal laws and pointed toward science as a creative tool” (n.a., n.d., Paragraph 7).

Paul Klee, as an avant-garde artist and member of the Bauhaus, was not only an exceptional representative of modern art but also a writer of contemporary art theory and pedagogy. As an artist and theorist, Klee created a continuously metamorphic composition of a chronotopia, starting always from purely basic design elements. Hence, in this individual and universal eternal design process, colors, lines, dots, and the other basic design elements became agents of transcendence.

According to Grohmann (1967), “The artist has knowledge of everything, and with Klee the link between the inner self and the outer world is more complete than with any of his contemporaries. He has been called the greatest realist of our time, and that describes him well, although his realism is concerned with the essence of things, rather than with their surface appearance. Group his themes together and they encompass the universe, not only the plenitude of things but the secrets of their birth and growth, the mystery of their innumerable sublunar and cosmic linkages” (p. 12).

Klee’s vision points the way not only for analog creativity but also for cybernetic art and design. “Art does not reproduce the visible but makes visible. The very nature of graphic art lures us to abstraction, readily and with reason. It gives the schematic fairy-

tale quality of the imaginary and expresses it with great precision. The purer the graphic work, that is, the more emphasis it puts on the basic formal elements, the less well-suited it will be to the realistic representation of visible things. Formal elements of graphic art are: points, and linear, plane, and spatial energies” (Klee, 1973:76).

Eventually, Klee's vision is also philosophically inspired and has a profound influence on some philosophers themselves. In this context, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1994): “There are indeed technical problems in art, and science may contribute toward their solution, but they are posed only as a function of aesthetic problems of composition that concern compounds of sensation and the plane to which they and their materials are necessarily linked” (p.196).

Therefore, the composition plane is the environment of the art dynamic; it is almost a metaverse, and Deleuze and Guattari give examples of Paul Klee's works titled “monument at the edge of the fertile country” and “monument in fertile country” to define the subject at this point: “In fact, universes, from one art to another as much as in one and the same art, may derive from one another, or enter into relations of capture and form constellations of universes, independently of any derivation, but also scattering themselves into nebulae or different stellar systems, in accordance with qualitative distances that are no longer those of space and time” (1994: 196).

Epuré and Wiener

Sherban Epuré is an artist of cybernetic art. He eventually works in a continuous, interactive position between the algorithmic systems' given possibilities for each user and his subjective design stages, recognizing randomness as a creative impetus between the input and output processes.

Cybernetics is one of the most powerful paradigms of the 21st century, just as it was in the 20th century. It features a constantly growing and changing system, from the creative potential of digital technologies to individuals' options and performances in parallel universes, encompassing random adventures and encounters.

Norbert Wiener developed Cybernetics from the work of Josiah Willard Gibbs (1839 – 1903), who combined statistics and physics: “The functional part of physics, in other words, cannot escape considering uncertainty and the contingency of events. It was the merit of Gibbs to show for the first time a clean-cut scientific method for taking this contingency into consideration” (Wiener, 1989: 8). Thus, the preface of Norbert Wiener's book, *The Human Use Of Human Beings/Cybernetics And Society*, first published in 1950, begins with the following expression: “THE IDEA OF A CONTINGENT UNIVERSE” (Wiener, 1989:7). Wiener strongly emphasizes Gibbs's role in the history of cybernetics: “Many men have had intuitions well ahead of their time; and this is not least true in mathematical physics. Gibbs' introduction of probability into physics occurred well before there was an adequate theory of the sort of probability he needed. But for all these gaps it is, I am convinced, Gibbs rather than Einstein or Heisenberg or Planck to whom we must attribute the first great revolution of twentieth century physics” (Wiener, 1989:10).

Vive La Révolution! Vive La Liberté!

Therefore, in the context of cybernetic culture and art, concepts such as contingency, probability, randomness, chance, surprise, and serendipity have become effective functions both literally and metaphorically, not only in the field of science but also in the field of art, particularly in experimental art, artistic performances, and improvisations. Epuré (2016) explains the basic logic of his Meta-Phorms as follows:

“The randomness accumulates at each executed step and is inherited by the next one. “Behaviors” (inputs/outputs) are developed by algorithms of one’s choosing. The algorithms execute themselves by automation in steps and layers. Most often, cybernetic mechanisms are emulated. Each incremental result must comply with the artist’s aesthetic expectation, message, philosophy, and emotional level” (p.408).

For avant-garde artists, randomness has been considered a creative strategy, paradoxically. Furthermore, for cybernetic artists representing the New Avant-garde, randomness is the core of creativity.

On the other hand, Wiener(1989) with this constatation: “No school has a monopoly on beauty. Beauty, like order, occurs in many places in this world” (p.134), criticizes academic art education, conventional art, and even avant-gardists, and defines a new category of artist: “I speak here with a feeling which is more intense as far as concerns the scientific artist than the conventional artist, because it is in science that I have first chosen to say something” (p. 135).

Epuré is this mentioned new artist, a scientific artist because he was one of the first artists to discover the aesthetic potential of digital technologies and generated many works using the experimental nature of algorithmic art.

In this context, Epuré (2001) wrote the following artist statement for the exhibition of his work titled PERSONA 2, part of the Meta-phorm series, at The Ninth New York Digital Salon: “Most of my work originates in one simple idea: to create forms as the outcome of a cybernetic interaction. If a structure (system) gets an input from another one, it reacts and moves to a new state, the output. If there is a feedback between the input and the output, they adjust each other and establish a certain level of stability in their interactions, as in real life situations. My concept is to establish these interactions and interplays between geometrical shapes. Most of the images I create are visual descriptions of these interplays. However, I take great care to encapsulate my painting experience in the aesthetics of the symbols I use”.

Cyber mind is a free mind; In this context, let's listen to Wiener (1989) once more: “One interesting change that has taken place is that in a probabilistic world we no longer deal with quantities and statements which concern a specific, real universe as a whole but ask instead questions which may find their answers in a large number of similar universes. Thus chance has been admitted, not merely as a mathematical tool for physics, but as part of its warp and weft” (p.11).

The cyber mind is also endowed with the capacity for historical and political criticism. According to the second law of thermodynamics, closed systems inevitably succumb to collapse due to the inherent increase in entropy (Wiener, 1982:25). In this context, when focusing on the totalitarian regimes and, in this case, particularly on communism, according to Heng-Fu Zou (2025), “The regime can appear stable for long periods while entropy accumulates slowly and invisibly. But once a threshold is passed, collapse accelerates nonlinearly. The model predicts that variables such as dissent, disorder, and economic fragility interact to create a runaway entropy effect. This means that conventional indicators of state strength—military control, media propaganda, or GDP—may obscure the system’s true condition. By the time entropy becomes observable, collapse is already imminent. This matches the empirical experience of 1989–1991, when most Western analysts failed to foresee the sudden collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union”(p.9).

Moreover Heng-Fu Zou (2025) proposed and developed a mathematical model describing systemic entropy based on the book Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy

(1956) by Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski : “We may now state the structural law of totalitarian collapse: Any regime that continuously increases ideological saturation, suppresses dissent, and centralizes coercion beyond its adaptive and energetic capacity will generate entropy faster than it can dissipate it. Once systemic entropy crosses a critical threshold, collapse is inevitable, nonlinear, and irreversible” (p.16).

However, Epuré and numerous other artists have been and continue to be victims of totalitarian regimes for generations. Despite the inherent entropy of the totalitarian communist system, he has defined cybernetic art in the intertwined worlds of art and mathematics, thus making exceptional contributions to the construction of new contemporary art.

Consequently, not only as a desire but also mathematically, politics always needs alternative poetics for regeneration.

Epuré and Flüsser

Epuré is a Flüsserian Homo Ludens figure. He plays in a hardware-software environment, using organized or random collections of geometric elements like points, lines, polygons, and curves, and sometimes with an avant-garde calligram approach, transforms all these entities into an original artistic image.

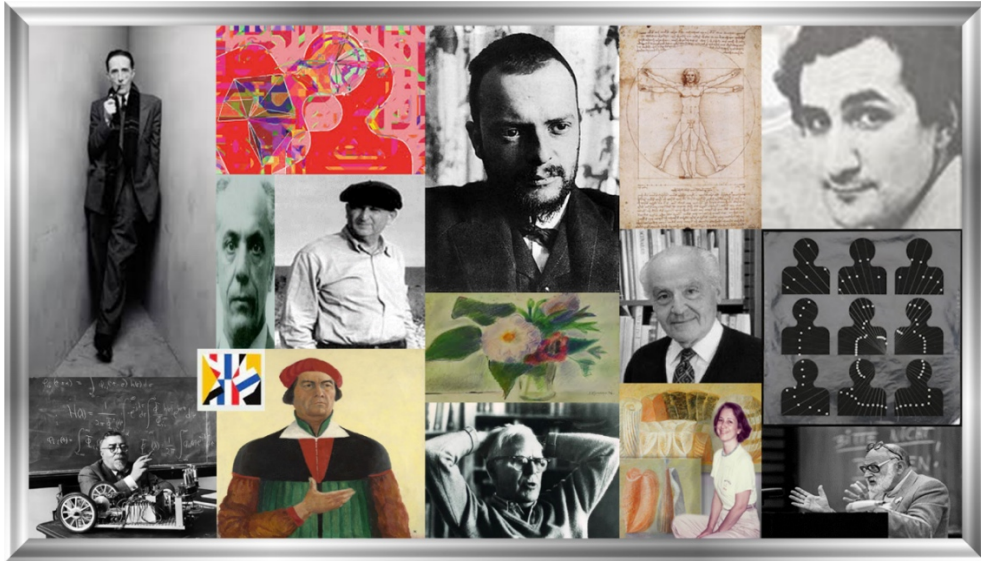
Epuré is a Flüsserian Homo Ludens figure. The artist's medium/apparatus/system is a hardware-software environment, with which he creates original artistic images. These images are composed of organized or random collections of geometric elements, including points, lines, polygons, and curves. In this point, the artist's approach is sometimes characterized by calligram, an avant-garde technique that involves new artistic expression using these entities.

In his book *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, first published in 1983, Vilém Flusser compares photographers to chess players: “Chess players too pursue new possibilities in the program of chess, new moves. Just as they play with chess-pieces, photographers play with the camera. The camera is not a tool but a plaything, and a photographer is not a worker but a player: not Homo faber but Homo ludens” (Flüsser, 2006:27).

Epuré, as a cybernetic artist/homo ludens, is a variation of Flüsser's photographer/homo ludens. This phenomenon is described by Nadin (2020) as follows: “In his mind, there are two players: the artist and the artwork. They exchange information such that each new visual rendition returns new insights to the artist. The final judge was an intuition-driven process. In this ascertainment, we become privy to the secret of his art: Automated mathematics is the source of a large number of variations. This allows the artist to investigate a large aesthetic space” (p.95).

Epuré has always been interested in the evolution of digital technology. He has explored the expressive potential of hardware and software. Initially, he used an Apple Macintosh. Then: “Of course I ventured into programming, especially Lingo and Action Script. However, weighing the time required for learning and becoming fluent in the codes against my expectations and the results obtained, I decided to stick with the method I had already developed, relying on code-memorized thinking, which had already proven to be conveniently fast and efficient, albeit highly personal” (Epuré, 2006:405).

Figure 1. A Family Portrait (Duchamp, Wiener, Nadin, Nicolau, Malevich, Klee, Gardner, Da Vinci, Hassan, Bucur, Epuré, Flüßer), 2025, © Mustafa Yusuf Sezer& Simber Atay



Epilogue

Sherban Epur  developed the Persona/Personae series within Meta-Phorms. In this context, the fundamental essence of "Persona, master" is that it is also a mathematical design. Epur  (2006) explains this work analytically: "Persona, master (Sigg06-C4). (  Sherban Epur ) (a) The constant frequency of a flux of stimuli is randomized in (c) by the frequency converter in (b). A generic human shape seen as a particular case of a general geometric domain in (f) results when a one-stimulus input system (d) interacts with a polygon (e). In (g) the random flux of stimuli in (c) interacts with the shape in (f) and produces the Persona in (h). Each of these interactions proceeds from specific algorithms" (p.407).

This statement is, in a way, the definition of Epuré's entire Intrinsic Art poetics. In addition, the "generic human shape" mentioned above is sometimes an element of a male-female composition in its dual and plural forms, but ultimately it is a post-gender phenomenon like a cyborg, and Intrinsic Art evolves from Cybernetic Art to Post-humanist Art. Epuré, with his scientific formation, avant-garde sensibility, and algorithmic art performance, has contributed to the global development and proliferation of digital art language in general. Moreover, he challenged totalitarianism as an artist; He is a Promethean hero. According to Kozak (2025): "In posthumanist thought, the Promethean act signifies humanity's transcendence of its own limits and its transformation on biological, cognitive, and technological levels. This act symbolizes the human endeavor to determine one's own fate and self-realization, the desire for knowledge, the aspiration to transform through technology, and, most importantly, the challenge to authority" (p.186).

The 21st century is the age of parameters defined by the suffixes post and meta: postmodernism, post-truth, post-humanism, meta-language, meta-philosophy, meta-art... Metamorphosis and transformation are ever faster and ever more intense. Okay? Then? What Is to Be Done?

But this time, the answer to this question will come not from Nikolay Chernyshevsky, but from Ihab Hassan. Focusing specifically on post humanism and drawing on Promethean symbolism, Hassan (1977) makes the following prediction: “The cosmos is performance, posthumanist culture is a performance in progress, and their symbolic nexus is Prometheus” (p.838).

Figure 2. Prometeo Glorioso Hommage to Sherban Epuré (Galleria Simberiana No. 21),
2025 © Simber Atay



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ORIGINAL PAPER

Endre Tót's Graphical Interventions in Public Space As Anti-Communist Subversion

Selma Kozak¹⁾

Abstract:

Endre Tót (1937) maintained his critical vision throughout both the communist and post-communist periods, using his works to challenge the totalitarian communist regime as a Central European and international artist. Due to the oppressive restrictions on artistic expression imposed by the socialist regime in Hungary, he was compelled to leave the country, relocating to West Germany in 1978.

Tót, renowned for his conceptual art practices developed in response to the totalitarian regimes, has constructed an ideological counter-language, particularly through his graphical interventions in public space. Humor played a significant role in his art, serving as a powerful critique against authoritarian systems and as an optimistic response to repression. His approach influenced many, including Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi, demonstrating how humor could be employed as a counter-language against communist regimes. In addition, Tót's works served as an artistic response to the oppressive censorship mechanisms of communist regime. Furthermore, his interventions, shaped by the graphic design aesthetics and text-based art he employed in his artistic practice, can be regarded not merely as a visual mode of expression but a subversive strategy against political authority. This study aims to examine how Tót constructed a distinct visual language in public space through typography, minimalism, and the use of text and language.

Through his interventions in public space, he transformed graphic design into an ideological tool. Thus, his approach to text as a graphic image enabled him to reshape text-based art into an experimental form within the urban landscape. This study will analyze Tót's aesthetic and typographic strategies in public space, examining how he intertwined graphic design language with political critique. Additionally, it will explore the role of his street actions in cultural transformation and investigate how his works evolved into a practice of resistance within conceptual and text-based art.

Keywords: *Endre Tót, public art, graphic design, text-based art, Dan Perjovschi*

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Introduction

“My Joys are a reflection of the dictatorial conditions of the 70s. With my absurd euphoria of joys I responded to the censorship, the closed world and the oppression that could be felt - although it worked with subtle tools and was almost invisible - in all areas of life.”

Endre Tót, 1993

In the second half of the 20th century, artists in Eastern Europe did more than produce aesthetic objects. They developed a language of artistic resistance against ideological oppression. Within this context, Hungarian artist Endre Tót emerged as a prominent figure by fusing conceptual art with graphic language, typography, and public interventions. In the face of the repressive policies of communist regimes, Tót's art became not only a form of creative expression but also a technique for coping with censorship and a method of artistic resistance. Beginning in the mid-1960s, he became one of the leading representatives of the Hungarian avant-garde conceptual art movement.

Tót's practice uses humor, irony, and text as tools of dissent, making individual existence visible while constructing a cultural, collective and aesthetic memory in public space. This paper aims to examine Endre Tót's graphic interventions in public space, focusing on works that include posters, text, typographic installations, and street-based actions. His artistic philosophy and artworks are analyzed separately under titles such as *Endre Tót: A Portrait, A Conceptual Wanderer: Displacement, Resistance, Identity, The Artistic Style of Endre Tót, Anti-Communist Discourse in Tót's Art*; his artistic practice is analyzed with different examples under subtitles such as *graphic interventions, public art, public performance*.

Importantly, Tót's artistic resistance was not confined to the communist period. His production continued after the fall of the regime, and in the post-communist era, he maintained the same critical stance, giving new meaning to his work in shifting political and social contexts. Thus, his artistic discourse represents a long-term struggle not only against communism but also against evolving forms of authoritarianism.

This study adopts a qualitative research method. Selected works of the artist are examined through a descriptive method and analytical approach, employing visual analysis, contextual interpretation, and discourse analysis. This methodological framework reveals the artist's critical engagement with urban space, public visibility, and systems of power, while also highlighting how graphic design can function as a potent political and expressive medium.

Endre Tót: A Portrait

As a leading voice of the Hungarian avant-garde, Endre Tót (b. 1937, Sümeg, Hungary) emerged as a key representative of international conceptualism and mail art practices. Endre Tót, one of the most original and defiant artists to have produced work

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under the repressive political atmosphere of Eastern Europe, developed an artistic practice that functioned both as a tool of individual and collective expression, and as a conceptual language that challenged the boundaries of political systems. Especially from the 1960s onward, he used art not merely as an aesthetic medium, but also as an ideological, political, and intellectual means of discourse.

Between 1959 and 1965, Endre Tót (b. 1937), who currently lives and works in Berlin, pursued his studies in mural painting at the University of Applied Arts in Budapest. Tót's early artistic production was marked by lyrical, calligraphic compositions that aligned with the aesthetics of Informal Art; however, by the late 1960s, his visual language began to shift under the influence of Pop Art. "After Tót stopped painting, he turned to experimental forms of art, especially using language, photography, and mail art as conceptual sedition. The public soon noticed the attitude of criticism inherent in Tót's gestures, László Beke remembered, adding, "a talented painter suddenly gives up painting and he is only glad if he can draw 000" (Tumbas, 2014:31).

On the other hand, by the mid-1960s, a powerful wave of conceptual art was sweeping from Europe to the United States, driven by artists such as Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Joseph Beuys, John Baldessari, and Lawrence Weiner, who redefined art as a vehicle for ideas rather than objects. These pioneers integrated linguistic structures into their visual practices, laying the groundwork for what would become known as text-based conceptual art (Kozak, 2022: 108-109). This radical shift emphasized language, process, and dematerialization, challenging traditional aesthetics and authorship. In Eastern Europe, including Hungary, these developments resonated deeply - offering artists like Endre Tót a subversive framework to critique authoritarian regimes through immaterial, idea-driven practices. Hence, in 1971, he abandoned traditional painting altogether and, under the influence of Conceptual Art, began incorporating telegrams, postcards, posters, graffiti, banners, actions, films, and artist's books into his practice - shifting his focus to the exploration of core artistic concepts.

Having begun his artistic career in Soviet-controlled Hungary, Tót's experience under the communist censorship regime - where the boundaries of artistic expression were heavily restricted - played a defining role in shaping his artistic identity. This formative context not only positioned him as a prominent figure in Eastern European art but also established him as a pioneering voice in the international art scene. His global vision and his emigration to West Germany in 1978 further strengthened his artistic identity and enabled him to engage in significant dialogues with the wider art world.

In the midst of a repressive totalitarian regime marked by ideological censorship and Soviet control, everyday life in postwar Hungary - like much of Eastern Europe - was shaped by fear, loss, and state violence.

"Endre Tót was twelve in 1949, and 21 in 1958 when such events resoundingly established Hungary as a police state. He remembers: "my family experienced the 'arrival' of the Russians twice, lost everything twice; once in 1945 when the Red army took control of Hungary and then in 1956, when the soviet tanks crushed the Hungarian revolution." For the child and young adult during these periods of violence, Tót felt that "it [was] like an eternity." Then, in 1961, Tót's "eternity" became an infinity when his father died of leukemia at the age of 60. "I think his early death may have been caused by the dictatorship," Tót laments" (Tumbas, 2014:31).

One of the major turning points in his life was his emigration to West Germany in 1978. This new geography expanded the artist's intellectual and aesthetic horizon and enabled him to build bridges between Eastern European artists and contemporary movements in the West.

One of the most distinctive features of Tót's art is the conceptual connections he established with his contemporaries. He developed a shared perspective with other Eastern European artists, particularly through a critical stance toward the system. Similarly, the Fluxus movement in the United States, John Cage's ideas on silence, and Joseph Kosuth's conceptual language also resonate within Tót's artistic approach. However, Tót reinterpreted all these influences through a unique Eastern European practice, successfully producing his own artistic voice. His's approach also influenced many, including Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi.

The artist maintained his critical stance throughout both the communist and post-communist eras, employing his art to challenge authoritarian rule. Due to the oppressive restrictions on artistic expression imposed by the socialist government in Hungary, Tót's work increasingly embodied a form of conceptual resistance - rooted in humour, text, and symbolic minimalism.

A Conceptual Wanderer: Displacement, Resistance, Identity

The artist, who produced works throughout his life in cities such as Budapest, Genoa, Geneva, Amsterdam, Cologne, Berlin, New York, Vienna, São Paulo, and various other European cities, stands as one of the witnesses who documented historical transitions through his art. As a figure who experienced both the Eastern and Western blocs, he reflects the cultural and political shifts of his time through his artistic practice.

Endre Tót's artistic journey is woven with a condition of forced nomadism, drifting from one geography to another, from one city to the next. This multilayered journey - stretching from Budapest to Genoa, from Amsterdam to Cologne, from Berlin to New York, Geneva, and São Paulo - is not merely a physical relocation between cities. Rather, it is a historical and artistic narrative of resistance shaped by political oppression, censorship, and the struggle for freedom of expression. In this context, Tót's figure can be read as a contemporary reference to the cultural memory of the Wandering Jew myth. Just as that legendary figure symbolizes a timeless exile marked by displacement, marginalization, and the impossibility of settlement, Tót becomes an artist who is constantly compelled to reconstruct his place, sense of belonging, and language in the face of totalitarian regimes' exclusionary structures. This dynamic reflects what Jan Assmann describes in his theory of cultural memory: "The first tool of every memory technique is spatialization. It is not a coincidence that space plays a central role in the 'culture of remembrance' and in the techniques used to reinforce social and cultural memory. In fact, an entire geography can serve as a vehicle for cultural memory" (Assmann, 2022:68). Yet his nomadism is not passive. It transforms into an active aesthetic resistance through conceptual interventions in public space, public art, performances, and typographic actions that challenge the boundaries of the system. In this sense, Tót's art does not merely carry images from one place to another -it traces the path of a thought that knows no geographic boundaries.

Endre Tót's artistic and personal journey is not merely one of geographic mobility, but also a form of conceptual nomadism. The displacements he experienced due to political oppression, censorship, and ideological constraints evolved into an intellectual entanglement that aligns with the notion of the "Nomadic Artist." This condition signifies

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not only a transition between cities or spaces but also a form of liberation that transcends aesthetic, linguistic, and political boundaries.

However, much like the figure of the Wandering Jew from legend, Tót's movement is not a punishment, but rather an existential necessity transformed into resistance through the independent memory he carries. Constantly in motion yet never fully belonging anywhere, this figure becomes, in Tót's conceptual art practice, both an individual and political strategy.

The Artistic Style of Endre Tót

Endre Tót's artistic practice emerges not only as a creative endeavour but as a deeply ideological and political stance. Transitioning from lyrical, informalist painting to conceptual art by the late 1960s, Tót's shift was catalyzed by the socio-political constraints of the Hungarian socialist regime. The heavy censorship of the 1970s prompted him to abandon traditional media altogether and embrace the typewriter as a tool for visual and textual experimentation. This shift signaled a move towards an autonomous artistic existence - one that challenged totalitarian regimes through acts of visual resistance. "Tót - who until then had been confined to Soviet-controlled Hungary - had access to the entire world, thanks to a simple, rapid artistic practice that flew under the censor's radar. In this way, he came into contact with Ecart and began a significant exchange of letters with John Armleder" (MAMCO, 2022:1).

In this period, Tót expanded his conceptual language across disciplines, blending graphic aesthetic, typography, and performative gestures in public spaces. His interventions, often minimalist in form and radical in message, established a universal, translatable language of dissent. Through posters, telegrams, banners, street actions, and artists' books, he questioned the systems of power that defined art, identity, and meaning.

Central to his oeuvre are three conceptual motifs: "Nothing/Zero", "Rain", and "Gladness." These are not merely visual or textual motifs, but conceptual frameworks that define his critique of totalitarian ideologies. Nothing/Zero - or what he termed "Zeronism" - became a radical embrace of absence, silence, and erasure. Through visualizations of zeros repeated endlessly, typewritten, or painted on banners, postcards, and even stamped onto official documents, Tót transformed the void into a form of quiet resistance. The zero here is not empty; it is full of meaning, tension, and refusal. His deliberate repetition of zeros should be recognized as a conceptual method - one that exposes and confronts the negativity and authority of institutionalized socialism in Eastern Europe. The recurring use of the character '0' generated a paradoxical, almost absurd, sense of joy. This approach can be interpreted as an ironic happiness that underscores the absence of the prosperity promised by the political ideology.

In his Rain works, Tót developed a visual language composed entirely of falling vertical marks, resembling rainfall. These marks - sometimes generated through repetitive typewriting, sometimes painted - evoke a metaphorical cleansing, a longing for freedom, or perhaps an infinite cycle of internal exile. Rain, in Tót's hands, becomes a poetic form of endurance under authoritarian rule.

His Gladness series, initiated with phrases "I am glad if..." or "I am glad if I can..." (1971) is steeped in humour and irony. A serious of work that consists of numerous sentences starting with these phrases. Perhaps, no artist has been as persistently and firmly 'glad' as Endre Tót, who filled his works with zeros or stamped them with the phrase, 'I am glad if I...' According to Tót, "Tót's so-called "Joys" or "Gladnesses" were

humorous parodies of the culture of optimism, articulated via a long-term series of actions and artworks” (Palais de Tokyo, 2025). These statements, often juxtaposed with mundane or absurd actions, foreground the limitations imposed on personal agency and expression in a regime where joy was monitored, sanctioned, and politicized. Here, gladness becomes a radical declaration - the assertion of inner freedom in the face of external repression.

Some notable instances of the iconic ‘I am glad if...’ phrase include:

***I AM GLAD IF I CAN HOLD THIS IN MY HAND.
I AM GLAD IF I CAN ADVERTISE ON POSTERS.
I AM GLAD IF I CAN STARE AT THE WALL.
I AM GLAD IF I WRITE IN THE CORNER.
I AM SO GLAD IF I CAN LOOK AT YOU.***

Tót is not merely a dissident artist; he is a conceptual thinker who turned visual language into a means of ideological negotiation. Humour, irony, and wordplay in his work do not serve as mere stylistic elements - they function as rhetorical devices that subvert the normative logic of political systems. Alongside concepts like humor and irony, Tót also employed minimalism, repetition, and emptiness. These concepts served as both a critical stance and a conceptual strategy against the pressures of the communist regimes. His “presence” as an artist becomes itself a political act - an autonomous, resistant, and persistent existence in defiance of authoritarian regimes.

One of the most compelling aspects of Tót’s conceptual art is his use of humour as a form of subversion. His ironic slogans - such as those beginning with “I am glad...” - employ a deliberately absurd tone to mock the forced optimism and artificial language of dictatorial regimes. Beneath the surface of cheerfulness lies a biting critique of state propaganda, censorship, and the suppression of individuality. Humour becomes a mask for survival, a coded language of dissent, and a conceptual strategy that transforms personal frustration into collective reflection. In this way, Tót’s humour is never merely comic; it is profoundly political.

Endre Tót’s approach also influenced many artists, including Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi, demonstrating how humour can serve as a counter-language and a tool of anti-communist resistance in the post-communist era. Perjovschi, following Tót’s conceptual approach to art and his textual actions, reflected his social critiques through ironic, humorous and absurd language in his work. According to Gott (2017:4), “So too is Perjovschi and other members of his generation who have been using their art to encourage debate about the direction Romanian culture and politics should be taking in the post-Communist era. His drawings are wonderfully witty, but there is no disguising the fact that his humour is brandished as a political weapon.”

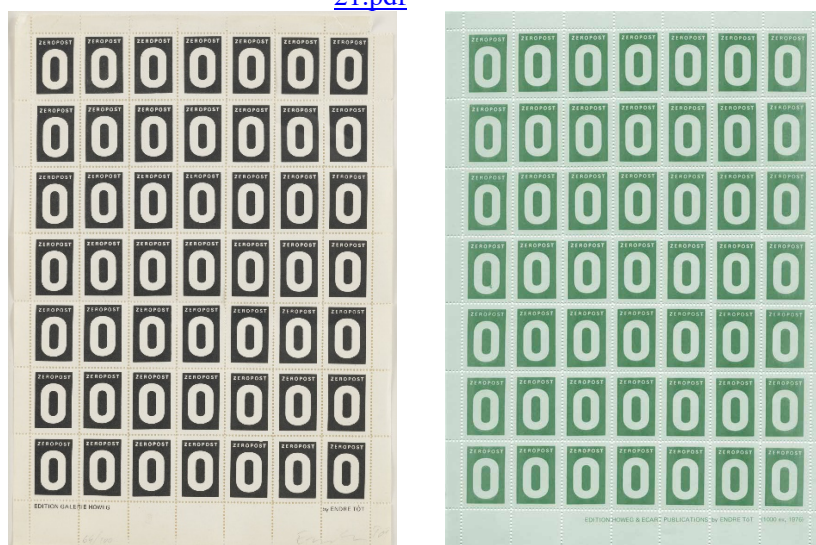
Thus, the interventions of both Tót and Perjovschi - spanning the communist and post-communist eras - became powerful tools to challenge the language and propaganda machinery of authoritarian regimes. By merging conceptual art, visual poetry, and graphic strategies, Tót constructs an intellectual and aesthetic terrain where meaning is destabilized, authority is questioned, and subjectivity reclaimed. His artistic style, therefore, should be understood not only within the lineage of conceptualism, but also as part of a broader cultural struggle for freedom of expression under oppressive systems.

Graphical Interventions: As is clear in Tót's works, the artist embraced graphic language together with his conceptual approach. Using posters, billboards, and printed materials, he exhibited these phrases in streets, exhibition venues, and public spaces. Through his text-based works and typographic strategies, he blurred the boundaries between art, design, and public space, shaping a distinctive visual aesthetic.

In works such as the Zero and Gladness series, Tót employs minimal yet potent typographic arrangements to evoke emotional complexity from a single concept: "Zero (0)." The repetition of this symbol - often enlarged, decontextualized, or humorously integrated into text-transforms absence into presence, and neutrality into intensity. By appropriating the visual tropes of printed matter - postcards, books, invitations, mail art, bureaucratic forms - he subverts institutional language and reclaims public communication as a poetic and critical space. His use of large stenciled zeros, prints, and typewritten repetitions operates not only as visual gestures but as political acts, subtly resisting authoritarian regimes in a loud visual grammar.

Figure 1. Endre Tót, Zeropost, 1974. https://www.salleprincipale.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/endre-tot_katalog_2018_12_18.pdf

Figure 2. Endre Tót, Zeropost Stamps (green), 1976, Ecart Archive. https://monoskop.org/images/2/2f/Endre_T%C3%B3t_Gladness_and_Rain_2021.pdf



"In the early 1970s when Tót for sick painting for more text-based works he adopted the zero as his emblem and he called this his zero tendency and in the late 60s early 70s there were many zeros there was the year zero, zero grupa the idea of a kind of a null that was simultaneously a new beginning for Tót I think it's interesting that he acknowledges right from the beginning that zero is not really zero and that nothing is never nothing and sort of alludes to zero's mathematical significance as an

absence but also as a kind of endless multiplier kind of a pointing towards endless numerical value” (Johnston, 2021).

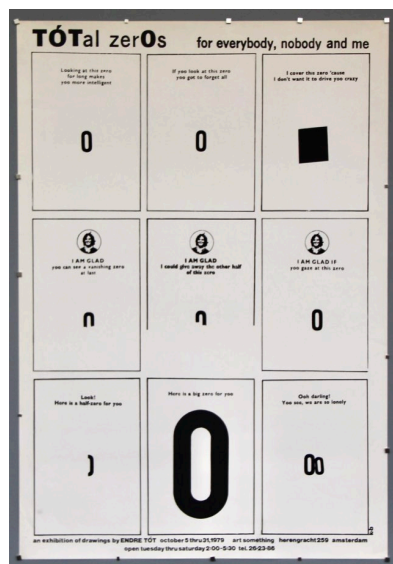
Figure 3. Endre Tot, Total Zeros for everybody, nobody and me, 1979.

<https://www.deappel.nl/en/archive/graphic-materials/15302-endre-tot-total-zeros>

Figure 4. Endre Tót, Look! Here's a giant zero for yoo! (offset printed postcard),

1974, f Ecart Archive, MAMCO Geneva.

https://monoskop.org/images/2/2f/Endre_T%C3%B3t_Gladness_and_Rain_2021.pdf



In Tót's works, graphic language is not merely an aesthetic choice but a deliberate vehicle for conceptual content. The clear and direct nature of typography becomes a tool for conveying layered messages. Elements specific to graphic design - such as typefaces, font sizes, spacing, and repetition - are consciously employed to establish a powerful and immediate communication with the viewer. In this sense, Tót creates an aesthetic that operates both visually and intellectually; he transforms everyday visual communication formats - posters, invitations, street texts - into artistic language, turning public space into an alternative exhibition site. His practice merges the formal clarity of graphic design with the conceptual depth of art, generating a hybrid visual language.

Figure 5. Endre Tót, Zero-Demo, Oxford 1991.

Figure 6. Endre Tót, Zero Demo, Berlin, 1980, 1996, Photo by Herta Paraschin.

https://monoskop.org/images/2/2f/Endre_T%C3%B3t_Gladness_and_Rain_2021.pdf



Technically, Tót's approach is marked by a minimalist, reproducible, and deliberately impersonal aesthetic. Working with typewriters, rubber stamps, Xerox machines, telegrams, and street posters, he employed tools associated with bureaucracy to undermine the very mechanisms of control and surveillance. In doing so, he redefined what constitutes an artwork, shifting the focus from object to idea, from studio to street, and from aesthetic contemplation to political critique.

Public Art: Public space is where revolutions and public actions begin; everything starts and ends there.

In Endre Tót's artistic practice, public space is not merely a physical setting but a battleground of ideas, ideologies, and individual expression. His public interventions transform urban spaces into platforms of poetic resistance and conceptual irony. Rooted in the tradition of the lone protestor, Tót often staged one-person actions - wearing posters around his neck or silently displaying banners in public squares. In cities like Berlin and Amsterdam, his Gladness series extended onto construction sites, building façades, benches, and billboards, turning the ordinary into a stage for conceptual disruption. Public space, often seen as the arena where authority exerts control or where revolutions ignite, becomes for Tót a canvas for autonomous expression. His actions - neither monumental nor invasive - echo the gestures of everyday life, yet are charged with layered political meaning. By merging conceptual art with ephemeral street interventions, Tót reclaims public space as a site for alternative narratives, challenging the visual and ideological codes imposed by totalitarian regimes.

Figure 7. Endre Tót, Gladness Series, I am always glad if I come to the end of a sentence, Berlin, 1979. <https://artpool.hu/Tot/3.html>



Tót's public actions often emerge as modest yet radical gestures - posters, banners, walks, or silent acts - that re-inscribe the political nature of visibility in public space. Especially in cities like Berlin, a site layered with histories of division, surveillance, and liberation, his works resonate with themes of uprising, transformation, and transnational memory. Public space, for Tót, is not neutral - it is historically charged, ideologically coded, and always in flux. By intervening in these spaces with minimalist, textual, and graffiti-inspired aesthetics, he reclaims the right to speak, to appear, and to exist against the silencing mechanisms of communist regimes. His art honors the street not as a place of spectacle but as a site of potential revolution - an open agora where private thought meets collective memory and poetic resistance.

Figure 8. Endre Tót, Gladness Series, outdoor texts Amsterdam, 1980-2021. https://www.mathiasguentner.com/en/kuenstler_in/endre-tot/arbeiten/4957/#image



The fall of the Berlin Wall was not only a political turning point, but also a powerful public action that marked the collapse of communism. In this context, Endre Tót's writing directly on the Berlin Wall becomes both a symbolic and physical intervention. By inscribing his voice onto the surface of a fallen regime, Tót transforms a historical monument into a space of personal and artistic expression. "In 1979, he wrote to the Berlin Wall: 'I would be happy if I could write something on the other side of the

Wall". The public action took place during his first visit to West Berlin as part of a DAAD scholarship. He chose subtle and humorous signs of resistance, using the power of words and texts and their ability to act as a switch in the minds of their readers" (Galerie Güntner, 2022:1).

Public Performance: Endre Tót's public performances blur the boundaries between individual expression and collective resistance. Often walking alone through urban spaces - carrying signs, posters, or flags - Tót transforms ordinary acts like walking or holding an object into powerful aesthetic and political gestures. He took performance art beyond traditional settings and into public space. Unlike traditional stage-based performance, his interventions unfold in the unpredictability of the urban environment, where everyday life and political reality intersect. These actions simultaneously operate on an individual and collective level, reclaiming urban space not only as a site of personal expression but also as a platform for dissent. In totalitarian regimes, the mere presence of a dissenting body in public becomes a subversive act. Tót's visibility - his willingness to be seen, read, and questioned - becomes a form of soft but persistent resistance. Through these performative acts, he critiques the ideological control of space and language, reminding viewers that public visibility is not neutral but deeply political.

Whether wandering the streets of Berlin, Amsterdam, or Budapest, he inserts his body into public space as both a message and a question. These solitary or group actions - such as wearing posters that declare "I am glad if I can draw a line" or waving a flag in the wind - evoke images of protest, celebration, and existential irony. His presence itself becomes a living artwork, challenging the function of public space under oppressive regimes while reclaiming it for free expression. By moving from city to city, square to square, he enacts a nomadic resistance - one where the artist's body, movement, and visibility are central tools of communication. In this way, Tót's public performances not only subvert authoritarian control over public visibility but also open space for poetic and political meaning to emerge within the everyday.

For instance, Tót's public performance practice is captured in the photograph where he walks through a busy city street wearing a placard that reads, "I am glad if this can hang on my neck." This simple yet profoundly ironic gesture transforms the everyday act of walking into a silent demonstration. The message, carried quite literally on his body, acts as both a declaration and a provocation - subverting the language of political slogans and propaganda through a tone of absurd, almost cheerful compliance. In totalitarian or post-totalitarian urban settings, where visual language and public space are often tools of authority and control, Tót reclaims the street as a platform for personal expression and dissent. His act, performed alone amidst crowds, underscores the power of the individual body in public space, turning anonymity into visibility and silence into critique. The absurdity of being "glad" to carry such a message exposes the performative nature of power and obedience, destabilizing their symbolic hold through minimal, poetic resistance.

Figure 9. Endre Tót Galadness Series, I am glad if this can hang on my neck, (with the help of the Ecart Performance Group), action on June 11 or 12, 1976, on the occasion of the exhibition TÓTaJOYS, Ecart Gallery, Geneva.



Another of his conceptual interventions - most notably the flag performance “I am glad if the Berlin wind blows my flag” - activates the urban landscape as a performative and symbolic field. Tót waved his flag in front of buildings at different locations in Berlin and captured these moments in photographs. In this act, the artist’s solitary figure standing in the wind with a flag evokes a powerful counter-image to authoritarian demonstrations of control and conformity. The flag, historically associated with conquest, victory, or national identity, is reframed here as a poetic signifier of freedom, democratic longing, and personal autonomy. The act subtly echoes iconic wartime photographs such as Joe Rosenthal’s “Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima” (1945) and Yevgeny Khaldei’s “Raising a Flag over the Reichstag” (1945), but reverses their militaristic symbolism by featuring a single figure performing a peaceful, artistic gesture in the city. Here, as an artist, Tót’s act represents the waving of the idea of a free and democratic regime; the flag is anonymous, yet it also evokes the image of an artistic victory.

Figure 10. Endre Tót, Gladness Series, I am glad if the Berlin wind blows my flag, West-Berlin 1979, photography: Herta Paraschin.

<https://mailartists.wordpress.com/2023/09/10/if-the-berlin-wind-blows-my-flag/>



Anti-Communist Discourse in Tót's Art

Endre Tót's artistic stance does not rely on direct confrontation or didactic slogans; rather, it functions through a conceptual dismantling of authoritarian narratives. In his work, dissent is not declared but performed - through text, repetition, minimalism, and humorous gladness. Under a communist regime that controlled not only speech but also emotion and expression, Tót's embrace of emptiness and exaggerated joy was, in itself, an act of ideological sabotage. "Tót's conceptual interventions into the political and cultural landscape of socialist Hungary were not meant for, and certainly had no place in, official museums, but instead functioned as ways to render tangible the artist's resistance to sequestration in the East and his insistence on not being forgotten or made to disappear. In order to assert his presence, Tót mailed postcards and telegrams all over the world; he stamped his body; he carried posters in demonstration; he existed" (Tumbas, 2014: 33-34).

Tót reframed absence as presence: the zero, the void, and the banal sentence became tools to unmask the absurdity of a system that stifled subjectivity. His discourse was not one of outrage but of displacement - he displaced language, symbols, and meaning from their official contexts and rendered them useless for propaganda. This subversion unfolded within the mechanisms of bureaucracy, media, and everyday visual culture - and most crucially, within public space, where totalitarian systems sought to assert their most pervasive control.

Moreover, his art can be read as a response to the psychological dimension of life under communism. Instead of presenting trauma or censorship in explicit form, he aestheticized alienation and normalized absurdity. The hyper-repetitive sentences such as "I am glad if..." perform a satire of the state's attempt to regulate affect and thought. In this sense, Tót did not only reject ideological content - he attacked the format and infrastructure of ideological communication itself. "Tót's conceptualism encountered the very clear discrepancy between ideology and political practice in a country where artists fought against conservative and limiting art regulations and where surveillance and incarceration were real threats" (Tumbas, 2014: 32).

His interventions across borders - from Hungary to Germany, the Netherlands to the England - illustrate a diasporic resistance, one that escapes national containment. By spreading his message across postcards, mail art, street walls, and exhibition spaces, he activated a decentralized network of meaning production that bypassed official institutions and censorship. His practice thus foreshadows many contemporary forms of artistic activism: elusive, poetic, mobile, and deeply situated in the everyday.

Tót's aesthetic resistance was not limited solely to the oppressive communist regime. His artistic production continued after the systemic transformations in Eastern Europe, preserving the same critical stance and gaining renewed significance within new contexts during the post-communist period. Observing how art functioned in the aftermath of revolution - how censorship was reshaped and how the individual's place in public space evolved - Tót constructed a critical memory of this transitional era through his works. Therefore, his practice represents a long-term discourse not only against communism but also against authoritarianism in its various forms. This continuous attitude makes Tót not only a significant figure of his own era but also an important voice in contemporary critical art.

Ultimately, Tót's anti-communist discourse does not resemble a manifesto - it is quiet, fragmented, and ironic. But in that fragmentation lies its radicality: he offers no new ideology, only the persistent refusal to conform. He does not replace one message

with another; he reclaims space for uncertainty, ambiguity, and the personal. That, perhaps, is the most enduring resistance of all.

Conclusion

Endre Tót, using conceptual strategies, merged language, text, and graphic tools such as typography and posters to create powerful visual interventions in public space. These actions transformed the urban environment into a site of critical engagement, where humor, irony, and visual minimalism disrupted the symbolic order of totalitarian regimes.

Rather than confronting authoritarianism through direct denunciation, Tót employed the absurd, the banal, and the poetic to destabilize the ideological language of communist propaganda. His text-based works and typographic interventions functioned as subtle yet persistent counter-languages - resistance tools operating within and against the bureaucratic and visual apparatus of control.

Importantly, this artistic resistance was not confined to the communist period. Following the collapse of the regime, Tót continued to intervene in urban space, reflecting on the evolving nature of censorship, authority, and visibility. His work in the post-communist era preserved a critical stance while adapting to new political realities, thereby constructing a living memory of resistance and transformation.

Ultimately, Tót's practice redefined the expressive and political potential of both graphic design and public performance. His interventions show how art - especially when it activates public space through language - can become a sustained form of ideological resistance and social reflection across historical thresholds.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Major Financial Scams that Shook Post-Independent India: An Investigative Study for the long term period 1950-2023

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Abstract:

The paper deals with 13 major banking and stock market scams that have shook Indian Financial landscape in 80 years since independence. The scam considered here starts with 1956 Mundhra scam to the recent Mahadev Betting App scam of 2023. With changing times the landscape of financial scam has changed and taken new forms as evident in Adani case as well as Mahadev case. Present values of scams are also calculated using average inflation value since independence. All the scams are of different magnitude and have affected differently with different levels. One common theme observed is poor corporate governance and management practices as the core reason for financial sector failures. There was a period in between when there were series of negligence on the part of NBFC leading to troubles as in the case of PNB, IL&FS, DHFL etc. One common scam theme observed in the case of stock markets since independence was circular trading. Some cases also include poor debt management leading to extreme results.

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JEL Classification: K42, G28, K22, D18, G38, D82, D91, C72

Introduction

India is a huge country with aspirations and has traveled for lots of years and almost 78 years since independence and had its ups and downs in the form of wars, financial downturns, fiscal-monetary reforms, and finally a journey to a liberalized economy and a global power in coming times. It was not a smooth journey at all and India had its fair share in both the limiting skies and deeper trenches in the economic domain. And the position we hold today is the result of huge learnings we have learned from our past mistakes and mismanagement.

We had scams in the very first decade of our independence and were unique in involving stocks and circular trading which changed the course of the Indian financial administration completely in the years 1992 and 2001 due to scams involving circular trading. The financial scams and crises we have survived are not only bank-based in nature but also involve sheer corporate governance issues and compliance challenges along with a huge impact on the economy at large. Each financial downturn tested our resilience as a common sentiment. Some of the scams included NBFCs as their focal point and the capital market in general was impacted tremendously. Instances of fraud in general have increased. (Rathinaraj & Chendroyaperumal, 2010) According to RBI, fraud means commission or omission of financial or accounting data in any transaction or books of accounts. (Jamuna et al., 2023) A security scam involves the manipulation of share prices, a monopoly in dealing with huge shares and using the money for other purposes including buying shares or debt servicing. (Narayanan, 2004) Corporate fraud is on the rise and detection and prevention become imperative, especially nowadays Government is an important party. (P. K. Gupta & Gupta, 2015)

Objectives of the Study

1. To find the key issues involved in the considered scams.
2. To investigate the amount involved.
3. To calculate the present value of the amount involved in the scams.

Scope of the Study

The paper is investigative and based on review hence, all the generalizations are based on the previous study that has been conducted before. The paper has considered only scams that are banking or stock market-based. For each scam, multiple articles have been considered to make generalizations. The timeline considered is from 1950-2024. It contains all the major scams from the earliest to the latest times.

Limitations of the Study

1. The qualitative nature of the study just attacks the surface and scope for deeper analysis is left.
2. The paper acts as a general overview on financial and banking scams in India and does not emphasize on the each aspect. But all the relevant points have been considered.
3. Aftermath and the reforms are not studied.

Methodology

The paper is qualitative and investigative, many relevant research articles are explored and referred to involving financial and banking scams post-independence to recent times. A total of 13 scams have been covered. The methodology followed is to

investigate the main problem in detail along with finding the amount involved and estimating its present value. The linkages on the context of how the scam has affected other macroeconomic variables are also considered but a lot of focus has not been given to the aftermath the scam.

For the convenience of calculation, the average of inflation from independence is considered and 7% is used to calculate the present value of the amount of scams. The value is not calculated based on any base year but the Y-O-Y (Year on Year) approach has been considered.

Literature Review and Analysis

Mahadev Betting App Scam

Mahadev App is a fantasy sport based on any type of sport. It is defined as an assemblage and competition of real players based on their statistical performance in real life but in a virtual sense and usually real money is involved for speculation purposes.(Dasgupta & Sen, 2024)These online games facilitate money laundering and other financial crimes involving criminal funds as well. Enforcement Directorate has been investigating the Mahadev App Scam involving funds worth INR 6000 Crore. (Chandola, 2024)

The App was an online gaming platform having exclusive members and chatgroups and often members were encouraged to take part in illegal betting. The main issue involved was the transfer of money through Hawala, charging INR 100 per 1 Lakh transaction. Due to this many celebrities were found involved and it was also claimed that a cash courier of INR 508 Crore was sent to the then CM Sri Bhupesh Baghel. The network of Mahadev Betting extends beyond India to countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, etc. and it has been estimated ED has frozen assets worth INR 417 Crore in addition to seizure of several hundred locations along with luxury cars, etc.(BS Web Team, 2023) According to ED, Mahadev Online Betting acted as an umbrella syndicate arranging online platforms and enrolling new users for illegal betting for the purpose of multi layered Benami Transactions.(PTI, 2024)

Adani Hindenburg Controversy

Adani Group is an Indian business conglomerate that operates in various sectors, including FMCG, Logistics, Ports, agribusiness, defense, and real estate. Recently a New York-based report known by the name of Hindenburg Report, has put the group under the microscope of regulators and investors leading to a huge valuation meltdown.(Kumar & Mishra, 2023)The report criticized the Adani Group ahead of its IPO and it was also the case that through the derivatives route, Hindenburg had short positions in Adani group. Hindenburg has been largely criticized in its methodology regarding such criticism against many companies and usually this has resulted in huge stock meltdown. Adani was alleged over Green concerns in Australian coal investments as a threat to Great Barrier Reef and other financial due diligences including diamond export business.(A. Singh, 2023)

A study conducted 10 days prior and 11 days post the release of the report reported that, Indian stock market is not strong in its semi-strong form and the news did not had immediate impact on the stock market but investors having first hand access to the report first gained abnormal profits before stocks started to collapse, signifying that first the investors took cue from the news and after understanding they responded. (Mallesha L. & Archana H. N., 2023)A study conducted concludes that the report had a significant impact on the stock prices but the effect was not homogenous across all the companies. Due to trust factor, stock prices of Public Sector Banks and Nifty 50 regained

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confidence in 3 days and 5 days respectively. The spillover experienced by the creditors of the Adani was not very significant except for LIC. In the case of competitors, only Tata experienced price appreciation.(Sapra et al., 2024) The effect was multiplied on the onus that the securities were already affected by the Russia-Ukraine war and the returns further declined after the report was made public.(Parthasarthy et al., 2024) The returns was affected from 28% to 86% in certain cases.

Karvy Stock Broking Scam

In the case of Karvy Stock broking it was identified that the Karvy has been using investor shares to raise money to fund its own operations along with diverting money to its sister concerns by pledging its clients' shares. KSBL transferred a net amount of INR 1096 Crores to its group company Karvy Realty. KSBL sold clients' shares in many cases, some cases were such that the account used were not functional or in some case there were no transactions since a year. According to the report there were 3 lakh active clients, and out of them, only 25000 are the ones who transacts on daily basis. In June 2019, SEBI had issued notification regarding the not pledging clients' shares to raise funds and the timeline to implement this was till 2019. KSBL failed to implement this and as it was not doing financially very well it continued such operations and this put not KSBL into regulatory radar but many financial institutions were identified and there assets got frozen to such an extent that lender banks had to approach Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) to unfreeze the securities and recover the lending amount. (KUMAR, 2020)

Total amount that was pledged unauthorized amounts to INR 2300 Crore and the wrong accounting information was provided. This resulted in lack of trust in Indian financial system as well as discontentment among stock brokers. (Lenka & Jena, 2024) The trading license of Karvy was suspended by SEBI and DP holdings were frozen and stockholders were unable to transfer their holdings.(Sharma, 2021)

Nirav Modi Scam

This refers to INR 11,000 Crore scam done by Diamond merchant Nirav Modi and two Punjab National Bank (PNB) Mumbai Branch officials. Letter of Understanding (LOU) were issued by PNB without registering to the core database of the bank. In order to make the LOU more credible the LOU was communicated through SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication), which was again not integrated to core ledger of the PNB. Result of this was PNB was rated to "watch" category by CRISIL, PNB stock prices dropped, there was increase in NPA (Non-performing Assets) of the bank. RBI credibility was too challenged as it was unable to detect discrepancy during its audits.(A. K. Singh & Gupta, 2018)The valuation of PNB reduced by almost 27% in a year.(Narang, 2019) This lead to a significant Public Banking Sector Reforms by then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley of almost INR 2.11 Trillion. (Khalique & Srivastava, 2024)

ABG Shipyard Scam

The scam involved INR 22892 Crore scam with fraudulent default in loan repayment in 27 banks including SBI by ABG Shipyard Corporation. The management of the corporation allegedly embezzled and misappropriated the fund. (G. Singh & Kaur, 2023)Inefficient auditors, faulty management, and unchecked promoters are the reason for the scam of this extent. (M. Gupta et al., 2023)

ABG Shipyard was doing very well operationally and had bagged many contracts including from the Indian navy and coast guards, it had also launched its IPO at INR 158 per share but after some time the financial position deteriorated and due to collusion of internal members and bank officials, funds were misappropriated and

resulted in criminal breach of trust for not using the loan for the purpose it was lent. On audit, it was found that ABG Singapore had subscribed preference shares from ABG Shipyard and had taken loan from it and had made foreign investments. It was noted that payment made to ABG Singapore was to divert bank funds and it was also noted that security deposit of ABG Singapore was used to buy properties. Due to this many contracts including the Indian Navy were terminated and it resulted in bad debt and ultimately NPA.(Pandey, 2022)

DHFL Scam

DHFL was a housing finance company with a net income of 1,171 crore in 2017-18. A financial scam was uncovered of INR 31,000 crore. Huge amount of money was loaned to shell companies and was reassociated to DHFL promoters via several associate and related companies. As the companies were shell in nature, hence was not backed by any asset to mortgage. On defaulting the payments no action was taken for recovery, again many shell companies almost 45 was divided into small companies and had same address and owner and directors. DHFL borrowed 96,000 crore worth loan from public sector banks and almost 31,000 crore was diverted to these shell companies in the form of loans. Soon DHFL defaulted its interest payments and its ratings were downgraded and further its stock price also dropped.

Soon DHFL came into RBI radar and senior board members were replaced, CBI inquiry took place and it was discovered that several fake PMAY subsidies were claimed by creating fake loan amounts. 2,60,000 fake loan amounts and loans of 14,000 crore were routed to fake book firms known by the name Bandra. Soon DHFL became insolvent. (Shobha & Kumari, 2021) Before crisis DHFL had AAA ratings and mutual funds heavily invest in NBFC stocks. This raises a prime question on the audit, rating and financial fragility in this particular context.(Manda & Rao, 2019)

Yes Bank Crisis

Yes Bank was one of the largest private banks having three promoters. The bank soon after its incorporation went public and had promising shareholding. The niche of Yes Bank was to provide easy loans to corporations who had trouble getting loans elsewhere at a higher interest rate. Soon the bank also ventured into the retail sector by offering higher interest to savings account up to 7% in comparison to 4% offered by peers when RBI removed the cap on the interest rate. Yes Bank under the leadership of Mr. Rana Kapoor expanded voraciously by expanding bank branches and the number of ATMs to a tremendous quantity. This put stress on the financial health of the YES Bank and later in 2015 when RBI performed Asset Quality Review (AQR) it was identified that the Bank had an NPA of INR 4950 Crore. Despite this Yes Bank added more retail buyers, almost 7 lakh in 2018-19 and with a growth rate of 35%. Some of the credits that Yes Bank advanced included Reliance Communications, Zee, Café Coffee Day to name a few, all later were in bad financial shape. On investigation the troubled amount was close to INR 26,000 Crore. The NPA problem became 4 times in a year and the valuation started degrading 40% in just one week. The Bank tried to raise money almost INR 5000 crore to 10,000 crore from foreign investors in form of debenture and bonds to boost investor sentiment but soon the bank reported its stressed assets to be around INR 10,000 crores. Later to bail out Yes Bank, RBI imposed a moratorium and initiated the board restructuring. The whole incident not only impacted the shareholders drastically but put restrictions on the liquidity of demand depositors of Yes Bank.(Akhtar et al., 2021)The debt of Yes Bank increased from INR 55,000 Crore to INR 2.1 Trillion from FY14 to 19.(Sarangal et al., 2023) The problem this case posed is reconstruction but at the cost

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of keeping the general interest of the public intact along with all moratoriums and revamping of board and bailout.(Malik, 2022)

IL&FS Crisis

A 2018 crisis of a major NBFC that failed to pay its interest and dues in the stipulated time created mayhem among creditors, mutual fund managers, Pension fund managers, and shareholders in general. This resulted in the downgrading of ratings to BB from AA+. This led shareholders to sell their shares and fund agencies with major NBFC investments into the dilemma. The sudden sale of shares changed prices, creating repayment pressure on fund companies, resulting in poor market sentiment and investment scenario. As of 2018, the corporation's debt was almost USD 13.6 Billion (INR 98000Crore), and about 35% of its debt was held by its two subsidiaries. This NBFC had 186 subsidiaries, most of which were jointly controlled by national and overseas entities. (Mehta et al., 2024) Its business included both financing and developing. One of its subsidiary arms was responsible for financing holding equities. IL&FS depended heavily on external borrowings, leading to a high debt ratio along with a rising trend in short-term borrowings in comparison to long-term borrowings for the past 3 years led to an asset-liability mismatch. Serious Fraud Investigation Officer (SFIO) in its findings has told the company that the top management and independent directors of IFIN (financing subsidiary), have formed a “Coterie” with the auditors. It was observed that IL&FS lent money to its subsidiaries for longer term and at highest interest rates, which they used to service their debts. (Kukreja et al., 2021)

NSE Co-Location Scam

NSE in 2009 allowed co-location services to its members at a nominal charge for high-frequency trading and keeping the server connected to the exchange's server more efficiently. However, it was reported that some preferential access was made available to certain brokers.(Mehta et al., 2024) Algorithmic trading is a way to execute orders in an automated manner.(Mohan et al., 2023) This led to an investigation by SEBI.(Manda & Khaliq, 2023) It was understood that the computer that logs in early and gets access first has early information on the prices, this gave them advantage to monopolize the information and later NSE-Broker nexus was formed which exploited this infrastructure and almost 21 major trading companies used to have earlier accesses. Later SEBI investigated and this high-profile scam was fixed.

Satyam Scam

Satyam was an IT company based in India and it inflated its books to make the books look attractive and appease the investors and shareholders. From the inflated books cheap loans were taken in USA and properties were bought by Mr. B. Ramlinga Rajuin Hyderabad. But in 2008, the property prices collapsed, exposing the financial positions of thee Satyam Computers. The manipulated accounting value was almost INR 7000 Crore. A group of 356 companies were found to be allegedly revolving Satyam's money. Even false employees and their compensation was created on books. The money was planned to acquire Matasya Enterprises bur instead acres of land were bought.(Bhasin, 2016)

2001 Ketan Parekh Scam

This case is the classic case of the Bank-Broker nexus which led to the failure of major cooperative banks along with Unit Trust of India (UTI) US-64 mutual fund. This was exposed when the pay order of Madhavpura Mercantile Co-operative Bank bounced

of worth INR 140 Crore.(Ghosh & Bagheri, 2006)It manipulated the small capital companies stock prices through circular trading among traders creating false demand and it is estimated to be a fraud of INR 40,000 Crore. (Varghese, 2022)

1992 Indian Stock Market Scam

This is famously known as Harshad Mehta scam and is estimated to be around INR 5000 Crore. This includes two components i.e. bank funds and bank receipts. In the case of bank funds he would get the money of bank in his personal account in promise for higher returns and pump that money in stock market to plunge the prices, ACC went from INR 200 to 9000 in 3 months. He used to keep some part of profit to himself and then return the rest profit to the bank.

Similarly, in the case of bank receipts, he would get the bank receipts without backed by any securities and use the amount from the buying bank to get money and invest in the market and after the profit, the two banks were settled. Most of the public banks lost around INR 1700 crore from the crash. This shook entire financial system of India. (Barua & Varma, 1993)

1956 Mundhra Scam

One of the first stock market or financial scams of Independent India by Haridas Mundhra (Calcutta-based stock speculator) through circular trading of almost INR 4 Crore. The major allegation is that premium amount of 55 Lakh policyholders of LIC amounting to almost INR 1.5 Crore was invested in 6 troubled companies above market prices. It was independent India's first major scandal.(Mukherjee, 2024)

Table 1 Present values of the past money

Year	Name of the Scam	Past Value (Values in Crores)	Present Value (Values in Crores)
2023	Mahadev Betting App Scam	6000.00	6869.40
2024	Adani Hindenburg Controversy	NA	NA
2019	Karvy Stock Broking Scam	2300.00	3451.68
2018	Nirav Modi Scam	11000.00	16508.03
2012	ABG Shipyard Scam	22892.00	55166.17
2019	DHFL Scam	31000.00	46522.64
2020	Yes Bank Crisis	5000.00	7012.76
2018	IL&FS Crisis	9900.00	15897.24
2015	NSE Co-Location Scam	50000.00	98357.57
2009	Satyam Scam	7000.00	20665.15
2001	2001 Ketan Parekh Scam	40000.00	202894.68
1992	1992 Indian Stock Market Scam	5000.00	23702.65
1956	Mundhra Scam	4.00	455.96

Source: Authors' tabulation

From the above table, it can be observed that there have been mainly 13 scams and huge amounts have been involved at their respective years of occurrence but their present value are also calculated considering yearly inflation of 7%.

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Conclusion

India is an aspirational country with huge economic potential and its diverse nature and tryst with destiny have led the State to the pinnacle as well as in introspecting phase at times but what remains constant is the growing sentiment of India and now India of huge demographic dividend. During 75-80 years since independence along with macroeconomic challenges, we have also experienced some banking and financial incidents that shook the financial landscape of our country. In this study we have considered 13 scams but it is not all the scams in the entirety. The first major scam considered is 1956 Mundhra scam, which was almost 4 crore then but in current context it would have been a 450 crore scam. Similar scam was of 1992, 5000 crore worth then but in current context 23,700 crore scam. When we look at Ketan Parekh Scam, it almost is worth 2 lakh Crore in present times. Satyam Scandal was a non-complex scam but a classic case of corporate misgovernance of 20,600 Crore in the present context. One of the most Hi-tech scams involving NSE is worth 98,000 core nowadays. IL & FS seems like a simple case but the amount of money is much higher than 9900 crore or 15,000 crore. Yes Bank put a dent of almost 7000 crore in current times. DHFL although a recent case but it was worth 31000 crore then and 46000 crore now. One of the less-noticed huge scams was ABG Shipyard with over 55000 crore in the current context. One of the most famous scams is the PNB-Nirav Modi scam., it was worth 16000 crore and then 11000 crore. Similar scam is Karvy, it went unnoticed but the company's scam value is of 3400 crore. Two new types of scams are Mahadev Betting app and Hindenburg Report, the discomfort that overall participants faced due to the Hindenburg Report cannot be imagined. In case of Adani Hindenburg, actual financial position is hard to calculate but in Mahadev Betting App, 7000 Crore was scammed in Hawala. With inflation, the value has increased tremendously, and in some cases, it is much more than lakhs of Crore, greater than the GDP of many countries. Further researchers could read and investigate the major scams in present context for more deeper understanding and may incorporate some quantitative analysis to substantiate the position. However, in this time research avenues involving AI and ML becomes imperative as well as it can pose hidden information from already existing information.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Investigating the Impact of e-Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction by Examining the Trends in Consumer Behavior towards Quick Commerce (Q-commerce)

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Abstract:

Purpose: The rapid growth of Quick Commerce or Q-commerce has underscored the need to understand the factors influencing customer satisfaction, particularly in the context of e-service quality. This study aims to investigate the impact of various e-service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction within the quick commerce sector. The primary objectives of the study are to assess how efficiency, reliability, privacy/security, responsiveness, and other e-service quality dimensions influence customer satisfaction and to offer actionable insights for improving service quality in Quick Commerce.

Methodology: A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a sample of 384 users selected through non-probability convenience sampling. Data were collected via an online structured questionnaire, which included sections on demographics, e-SERVQUAL dimensions, and customer satisfaction. The analysis was conducted using SPSS 26 and AMOS 23, with reliability assessed through Cronbach's alpha, and relationships between e-service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction were tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

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Findings: The findings reveal that system reliability, hygiene standards, and digital security are significant determinants of customer satisfaction in Quick Commerce. These dimensions are found to have a strong impact on customer trust, loyalty, and retention.

Originality: The study's innovation lies in its application of the SERVQUAL framework to the Quick Commerce context, an area that has not been extensively explored in existing literature. By providing a comprehensive analysis of e-service quality and its impact on customer satisfaction, this research offers valuable insights for industry practitioners aiming to enhance their operational strategies and gain a competitive edge in a growing digital market.

Keywords: *Customer Satisfaction, E-Servqual, Online Consumer Behavior, Quick Commerce, Instant Grocery Delivery Services.*

1. Introduction

In the modern world of business, there has been a tremendous amount of change from the recent technological transformation of consumer behavior. When we look at all of the sectors that have made meaningful changes over the past number of years, we cannot disregard the e-commerce sector and more specifically, the Quick Commerce. The quick commerce (Q-commerce) industry is rapidly growing, driven by increased internet penetration, shifting consumer preferences, and the lasting impact of COVID-19. The growth of the Quick Commerce market brings and generates challenges and opportunities for businesses in the marketplace. One prominent question worth exploring in more detail is in regards to the role of service quality in shaping customer satisfaction. There is a lack of research that investigates the e-service quality impact on customer satisfaction in the Quick Commerce sector, in light of the increasing significance of Quick Commerce. Although earlier research has looked at consumer behavior in e-commerce more broadly, only a few studies have looked at established frameworks such as SERVQUAL to assess and analyze service quality dimensions for Quick Commerce. This study will look at the core service quality dimensions that affect customer satisfaction in Quick Commerce.

This study focuses on identifying key drivers of customer satisfaction in the Quick Commerce ecosystem and explores how system reliability, hygiene, customer engagement, and digital security develop customer experiences that can lead to customer satisfaction in Quick Commerce contexts. This study aims to enhance the literature around e-service quality and to apply the SERVQUAL model to a specific e-service context in Quick Commerce. It offers new perspectives on consumer behavior in digital service contexts and Quick Commerce. This research has implications for industry practitioners that include suggestions for improving the quality dimension of consumer experiences to maximize consumer satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Service Quality in Quick Commerce

Quick Commerce, also known as express or last-mile delivery, has become an essential part of modern retail and e-commerce ecosystems. Quick commerce adopts five key business models—inventory, hyper-local, multi-vendor platform, multi-revenue channel, and omnichannel—each tailored to meet diverse customer demands and operational efficiencies. Central to the success of Q-commerce are dark stores (micro-

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warehouses) and advanced automation, including Order Management Systems (OMS) and Robotics as a Service (RaaS), which optimize supply chains for speed and accuracy. Many internationally recognized companies, such as Amazon Prime, Uber Eats, and DoorDash, have transformed logistics with rapid delivery options that offer everything from same-day to within-the-hour fulfillment. This transformation is supported by a growing consumer preference for immediacy, convenience, and reliability. In India, we can see evidence of quick commerce (q-commerce) through the advent of services like Blinkit, Zepto, and Swiggy Instamart that can deliver in 10 - 30 minutes within large urban areas. Ranjekar & Roy, (2023) observed the need for strategic infrastructure, such as smart racking systems and efficient fulfillment center layouts, to minimize delays and enhance productivity, emphasizing the transformative potential of Q-commerce in India, while also pointing to the challenges of sustainability, profitability, and technological adoption that the industry must address to sustain its growth.

E-service quality is defined as the extent to which an e-business website or platform allows consumers to effectively and efficiently shop, purchase, and deliver products and services. "As e-commerce continues to develop, with more organizations moving to online channels, understanding the aspects of service quality in the context of online-based services is crucial to understanding." (Zeithaml et al., 2002). E-service quality is more difficult to assess and manage because it blends both the process of virtual delivery and the outcome, making it more complex when compared to services provided in a face-to-face context. "E-service quality helps retain customers and affects customer satisfaction and loyalty in a virtual setting." (Santos, 2003).

Research on service quality in the area of quick delivery has been on the rise. The SERVQUAL model by Parasuraman et al., (1988) has provided a foundation for new researchers exploring service quality in delivery. The SERVQUAL model captures five dimensions of quality - tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Recent studies (Guru et al., 2023; Ma, 2024) observed delivery time, tracking accuracy, rider professionalism, and packaging are the perceived key determinants of service quality.

2.2 E-SERVQUAL: A Conceptual Framework

The e-SERVQUAL model was proposed by Zeithaml et al. (2002), modifying the SERVQUAL model to apply to online contexts, "that includes seven dimensions: efficiency, fulfillment, reliability, privacy/security, responsiveness, compensation, and contact" (Zeithaml et al., 2002). Each dimension of the e-SERVQUAL model represents a different element of service quality in a digital context. For instance, system usability (i.e., efficiency), accurate order delivery (i.e., fulfillment), dependability (i.e., reliability), secure transactions (i.e., privacy/security), timely support (i.e., responsiveness), fair practices (i.e., compensation), and human interaction (i.e., contact). Numerous studies have applied and confirmed the validity of the e-SERVQUAL model in several digital contexts, such as online retail (Lee & Lin, 2005), travel booking, and mobile commerce (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2003), yet further research is required to understand the consumer behavior in quick delivery contexts.

2.3 Determinants of Customer Satisfaction in Quick Commerce

Satisfaction is a psychological response to customer evaluations of service performance against their expectations. "Satisfaction is based on a variety of determinants in digital services that include the core service offered, the interface technology offered, and service recovery." (Oliver, 1999). Sureshchandar et al., (2002) submitted a multi-dimensional model of service satisfaction, which identified "five dimensions of

satisfaction, they are core service, human elements, systematization of service delivery, tangibles, and social responsibilities". "Determinants of customer satisfaction in Quick Commerce influenced by operational and technological aspects are ordering procedures, timeliness, and order discrepancy handling." (Khan, 2023).

2.4 Studies on Service Quality and Satisfaction in Quick Commerce

Luna Sanchez, (2024) observed that "consumer purchasing behavior is positively and directly affected by Technology Acceptance factors such as perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, mobile service quality, and interface and information quality factors". Kalantarzadeh Tezerjany, (2024) found that "novelty-seeking positively influences consumer satisfaction, with reliability and responsiveness having the strongest positive effects, while tangibility showed no significant impact on satisfaction in the context of OFD applications". Harter et al., (2025) discovered that "delivery delays led to greater interpurchase times and that late deliveries had a greater effect on repurchase behavior compared to early deliveries". Kurt & Kırcova, (2023) observed that "customer satisfaction and awareness of service quality influence how service experience affects repeat purchases and online word-of-mouth, with a stronger effect for consumers more aware of service quality". Ghosh et al., (2023) found that "improving app interface, grocery quality, delivery service, and customer service improve customer satisfaction and thus affect customer loyalty".

2.5 Research Gap

Although there has been research investigating consumer behavior with regard to e-commerce, there has been relatively few academic studies on the evolving domain of quick commerce, particularly in the Indian context. Most of the research has relied on conceptual models such as E-SERVQUAL to examine service quality and its potential impact on consumer behavior in traditional e-commerce. Quick commerce certainly represents a new frontier in terms of customer expectations and perception of service, as recent studies indicate the shift in online consumer behavior, with a much greater emphasis going forward on speed, reliability, and real-time response. However, there is still a consequential lack of empirical research that has examined how shifting perceptions of service quality may impact customer satisfaction within quick commerce. Moreover, it is important to understand the key determinants of consumer satisfaction in the new retail format. Therefore, further research is conducted to describe the specific service quality dimensions in quick commerce contexts that influence consumer satisfaction.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study combines the concepts of consumer behavior theory, the SERVQUAL Model (Parasuraman et al., 1988), and the Customer Satisfaction Model (Bitner, 1990). The SERVQUAL Model was designed to measure perceived service quality in digital environments. The authors developed a SERVQUAL Scale with seven dimensions: efficiency, privacy, responsiveness, fulfillment, reliability, compensation, and contact. The Customer Satisfaction model provides a framework that includes contributing factors to customer satisfaction in a service context. The model proposes five facets of satisfaction: core service, human interaction, systemization, tangibles, and social responsibility. These facets, defined in the context of digital environments, are functional website performance; user interface design; support features for personalization; aesthetics; and perceived brand values, and contribute to the user's experience.

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3. Research Methodology

This study utilizes a quantitative research design to examine the impact of e-service quality impacts customer satisfaction in the context of Quick Commerce in India. The population for this study consisted of participants who used Quick Commerce services through three major platforms in India: Zepto, Swiggy Instamart, and Blinkit. A sample size of 384 respondents was selected using the non-probability convenience sampling method. The data were collected by a self-administered online structured questionnaire from August 2024 until February 2025. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to test hypothesized relationships between the various dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction.

The structured questionnaire was administered in three sections. The first section collected demographic information from the respondents, including gender, age, education, occupation, income, and overall platform app usage frequency. The second section of the structured questionnaire includes the adapted e-SERVQUAL scale (Zeithaml et al., 2002) for this study to measure e-service quality in the Quick Commerce platforms. This scale comprises seven dimensions: efficiency - dealing with the usability, navigation, and design of the platform; fulfillment - measuring how well the platform delivers on its promises regarding product availability and timing; reliability - examining the reliability of features such as payment systems and search functions; privacy/security - assessing perceptions of safety concerning personal/financial information; responsiveness - about the speed and effectiveness of the platform's customer support and complaint handling; compensation - addressing the platform's return/refund processes; and contact - looking at the ability to access 'real-time' communication or live support. In the third section of the questionnaire, customer satisfaction was measured using a scale adapted from Bitner, (1990) and integrated into a new scale developed by Sureshchandar et al., (2002). The scale uses five dimensions indicating customer satisfaction: core service - in terms of quality and delivery of the food ordered; human factors - the interaction with delivery staff and customer support staff; systemization - the level of consistency and reliability of the operational processes of the platform; tangibles - the visual and functional elements of the app, including brand layout; and social responsibility.

The results of the reliability and validity analyses were strong and congruent with previous studies examining the e-SERVQUAL and customer satisfaction scales. Cronbach's alpha values for the constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating strong internal consistency for efficiency ($\alpha=0.88$), fulfillment ($\alpha=0.85$), reliability ($\alpha=0.87$), privacy/security ($\alpha=0.84$), responsiveness ($\alpha=0.86$), compensation ($\alpha=0.83$), and contact ($\alpha=0.81$). This also included the dimensions of customer satisfaction that use the customer satisfaction scale, which included core service ($\alpha=0.89$), human factors ($\alpha=0.87$), systemization ($\alpha=0.85$), tangibles ($\alpha=0.84$), and social responsibility ($\alpha=0.82$), confirming high reliability. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was also performed to confirm construct validity and provide support. All factor loadings were above 0.60. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was performed to confirm convergent validity, and the standard for all constructs was above 0.50. Discriminant validity was also confirmed as the square root of AVE exceeded the correlations between constructs.

4. Findings

The sample was composed of 56% males and 43% females, with most of the respondents being aged 21-35 years (62%), which indicates a technologically adept and convenience-oriented user group. 68% of respondents were graduates or postgraduates, and most respondents worked in the private sector (36%) or were students (28%). 47% of the respondents earn between ₹30,000-₹60,000. Over 54% of respondents use a delivery app at least three times a week, further highlighting an increasing reliance on delivery services. These profiles signify the consumer-driven demand for instant or immediate delivery, particularly from younger, urban, educated users who want speed, easy access, and a consistent level of service provision.

The study applied Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using AMOS to examine the relationship between eService Quality and Customer Satisfaction. The structural model of eService Quality and Customer Satisfaction exhibited a moderate positive relationship between the two latent variables with a standardized path coefficient of 0.45, suggesting that as eService Quality improves, Customer Satisfaction improves as well. Model fit indices demonstrated reasonable fit to the observed data. For instance, the chi-square statistic (CMIN) was 226.398 with 53 degrees of freedom and a probability value of <.001, indicating significant results. The CMIN/DF ratio was 4.272, suggesting a reasonable fit to the model. Other fit indices illustrated acceptable model fit: for example, the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) was 0.942, which indicates that the fit was acceptable, and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.943, which was also acceptable. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) was 0.927, which is also considered a good fit, and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) was 0.929, which is also an appropriate fit. The Relative Fit Index produced a value of 0.909, supporting a good model fit to the data. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximations (RMSEA) was 0.072, which is acceptable because it is less than or equal to the 0.08 threshold. These indices suggest that the proposed model fits the data reasonably well and is consistent with the hypothesized structure concerning eService Quality and Customer Satisfaction.

The model measuring eService Quality contained seven observed variables: Fulfillment (FLF), Efficiency (EFY), Reliability (REL), Privacy (PVY), Responsiveness (RSP), Communication (COM), and Convenience (CON). Reliability (0.77), Efficiency (0.76), and Fulfillment (0.63) possessed strong standardized loadings, indicating their meaningful representation of the underlying construct in terms of their variance. Privacy (0.63) and Convenience (0.59) possessed acceptable loadings as well, further supporting their relevance within the eService Quality dimension. Responsiveness (0.30) and Communication (0.29) had weak factor loadings, indicating they may not appropriately represent the construct and may require revisiting or modification in future studies.

The latent construct of Customer Satisfaction was measured using five indicators, which included: Courtesy (COR), Helpfulness (HE), System Availability (SYS), Tangibility (TAN), and Service Reliability (SR). The observed variables, Helpfulness (0.85), System Availability (0.85), and Tangibility (0.86) were found to have high factor loadings, showing a strong representation of Customer Satisfaction. Courtesy (0.81) also had a strong loading and can therefore be considered since it has a meaningful loading on Customer Satisfaction. However, Service Reliability (0.42) demonstrated a lower loading, representing a lesser association with the latent variable.

The model provides empirical evidence that eService Quality significantly influences Customer Satisfaction, with particular emphasis on dimensions such as Reliability, Efficiency, and Fulfillment. The results also highlight areas for improvement

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in the measurement model, particularly concerning the constructs of Responsiveness, Communication, and Service Reliability, which demonstrated relatively low factor loadings. These insights can inform both theoretical understanding and practical enhancements in e-service delivery frameworks.

5. Discussions

The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the relationship of e-service quality with customer satisfaction in the context of Quick Commerce in India. For this evaluation, a structural model was formed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using AMOS. The results indicated a positive relationship between eService Quality and Customer Satisfaction with a standardized path coefficient of 0.45. The results indicate that higher e-service quality positively correlates with higher customer satisfaction. This finding is supported by previous research. Zeithaml et al., (2002) and Santos (2003) also submitted that perceived quality in an electronic service environment is an important factor that determines customer satisfaction. The present results further substantiate this relationship in the context of India's growing Quick Commerce sector, ultimately bringing value to the relevance of service quality with the digital customer experience.

This study explored the relationships between the dimensions of e-SERVQUAL and customer satisfaction. In the measurement model, we included seven dimensions of eService Quality: Efficiency, Fulfillment, Reliability, Privacy/Security, Responsiveness, Compensation, and Contact. Of the seven dimensions, Reliability (0.77), Efficiency (0.76), and Fulfillment (0.63) had the strongest standardized loadings, indicating their most significant contribution to customer perceptions of e-service quality. These findings further align with prior findings from Collier & Bienstock, (2006) and Blut et al., (2015) which stated that reliability and efficiency are some of the strongest influences of online service quality. Privacy/Security (0.63) was also well recognized in a host of studies (Ribbink et al., 2004) that more or less agreed security and protection of data can be synonymous with a customer experience of trust and satisfaction related to digital transactions. These results are consistent with the findings of Holloway & Beatty, (2003) who found that in some technologically driven service environments, human interaction can be less effective due to the normalization of automation and the lack of direct human contact with service personnel. As quick commerce services utilize more apps and chatbots, there may be less emphasis on responsiveness and communication.

This study also examined the effects of the individual e-service quality dimensions on the respective dimensions of customer satisfaction: Core Service, Human Elements, Systematization, Tangibles, and Social Responsibility. Customer Satisfaction was conceptualized by the above five dimensions. The factor indicators, Tangibility (0.86), Helpfulness (0.85), and System Availability (0.85), provide the highest loadings and suggest that the supports of the service and product presentation, including packaging, tracking, or ease of use, are major influencers of satisfaction. This aligns with findings by Yoo & Donthu, (2001)), who found usability and reliability have perceived significance as core components of satisfaction with service encounters on the internet.

Implications of the Study

This study demonstrates several practical and theoretical implications for digital service providers and researchers who study e-service quality and customer satisfaction from the scope of Quick Commerce in India. On a practical level, the study indicates that

efficiency, reliability, and fulfillment (as dimensions of e-service quality) impacted customer satisfaction the most. As such, quick delivery providers should constitute the order processing process with the provision of timely and accurate quick deliveries; delivering something in time is imperative for service providers to maintain trust and loyalty with customers. Service providers should take steps to improve efficiencies, for example, optimizing logistics algorithms, improving warehouse management, a last-mile delivery system, etc. Similarly, the significant impact of the tangibles, system availability, and helpfulness (as customer satisfaction components) suggests that indeed, what we refer to as virtual services must consider the presentation of products and technical reliability (e.g., app uptime, real-time tracking). The impact of responsiveness, communication, and social responsibility was relatively weak; our findings suggest that respondents prefer speed and accuracy over social interaction in quick delivery service contexts. Findings can also inform firms' allocation of resources: firms can safely allocate customer service functions to automation while being efficient rather than relying on interactivity. Theoretically, we reaffirm that the e-SERVQUAL model can be applied to a digital retail context, especially in developing economies like India.

6. Conclusion

The study investigated the effect of e-service quality on customer satisfaction in the context of Quick Commerce in India using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between overall e-service quality and customer satisfaction, affirming the importance of service quality in constructing customer experiences in the digital delivery ecosystem. Efficiency, reliability, and fulfillment were the strongest predictors of satisfaction. Responsiveness, communication, and social responsibility had weaker effects.

The study also highlighted that elements such as system availability, helpfulness, and tangibles significantly contribute to perceived satisfaction, indicating that both operational performance and technical interface play critical roles in the digital service experience.

These insights contribute to the existing literature by validating the e-SERVQUAL model in a contemporary, fast-paced service context and by identifying dimension-specific effects on customer satisfaction in India's quick commerce sector. Practically, the study provides actionable recommendations for service providers to enhance specific aspects of their operations, with a particular focus on reliability, speed, and user-friendly technological interfaces. Despite the study being instrumental in building service quality perception research, it does have limitations. First, this study used the context of Quick Commerce in India, and therefore, the authors are concerned about whether these findings can be extrapolated to other digital service industries or geographical contexts. Second, the data were cross-sectional in design, so the research could not indicate a change in customers' perceptions. Third, as in the case of many studies, the study was limited by the reliability of self-reported data, which is inherently subject to response bias.

Future research can further investigate service quality perceptions in several ways by changing research designs to be longitudinal and exploring how service quality perceptions evolve, utilizing a larger sample beyond Quick Commerce to include other service industries and countries in a comparative context, and including qualitative methodologies that provide a deeper ontology of customer expectations.

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Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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APPENDICES

Tables

Table 1: Regression results

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Customer_Satisfaction	<---	EService_Quality	1.309	.225	5.813	***
COR	<---	CustomerSatisfaction	1.000			
HE	<---	CustomerSatisfaction	1.006	.042	24.122	***
SYS	<---	CustomerSatisfaction	.977	.040	24.315	***
TAN	<---	CustomerSatisfaction	1.079	.044	24.388	***
SR	<---	Customer_Satisfaction	.407	.039	10.398	***
CON	<---	EServiceQuality	1.000			
COM	<---	EServiceQuality	.962	.191	5.041	***
RSP	<---	EServiceQuality	2.144	.328	6.535	***
PVY	<---	EServiceQuality	2.584	.383	6.748	***
REL	<---	EServiceQuality	2.417	.358	6.742	***
EFY	<---	EServiceQuality	1.969	.304	6.487	***

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			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
FLF	<---	EServiceQuality	2.073	.318	6.525	***

			Estimate
Customer_Satisfaction	<---	EService_Quality	.453
COR	<---	Customer_Satisfaction	.806
HE	<---	CustomerSatisfaction	.849
SYS	<---	CustomerSatisfaction	.854
TAN	<---	CustomerSatisfaction	.856
SR	<---	CustomerSatisfaction	.418
CON	<---	EServiceQuality	.292
COM	<---	EServiceQuality	.302
RSP	<---	EServiceQuality	.632
PVY	<---	EServiceQuality	.767
REL	<---	EServiceQuality	.762
EFY	<---	EServiceQuality	.609
FLF	<---	EServiceQuality	.626

Table 2: Standardized Regression Weights

Table 3: Model Fit Indices

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
DefaultModel	25	226.398	53	.000	4.272
GFI	0.942				
CFI	0.943				
NFI	0.927				
TLI	0.929				
RFI	0.909				
RMSEA	0.072				

Figures:

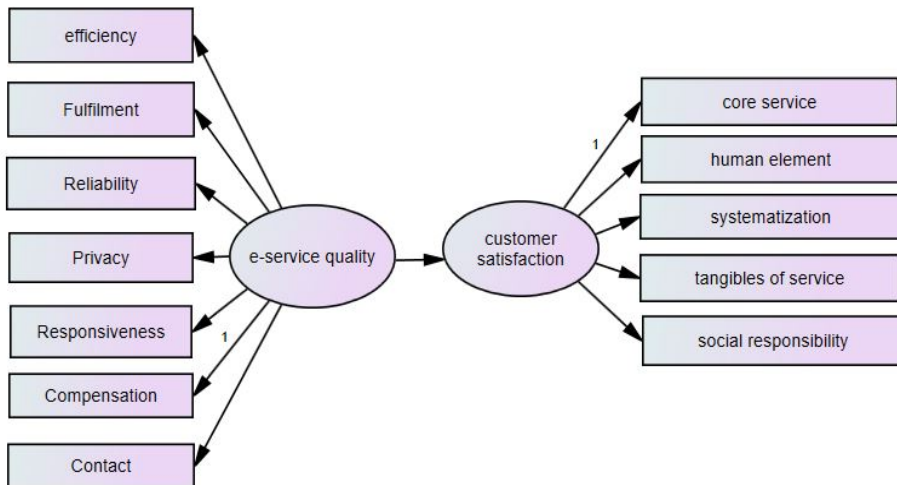


Figure no.1 Conceptual Framework

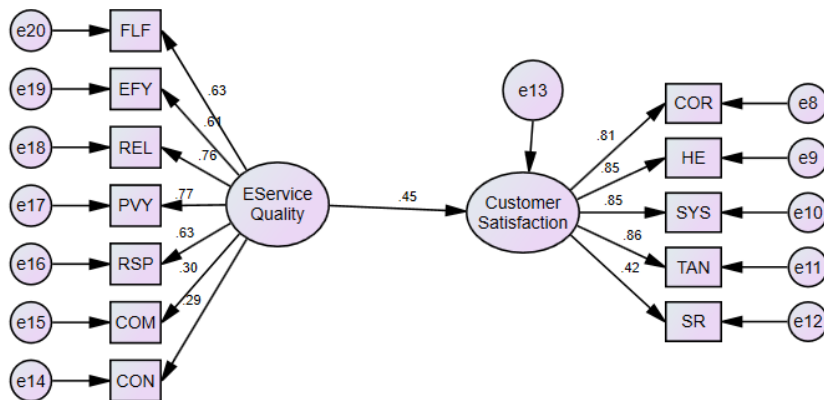


Figure no.2 Path Model

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ORIGINAL PAPER

The Language of Product Reviews in Digital Magazines. Case Study: “Best Laptop for Most People” in *PCMag*

Alina-Roxana Popa¹⁾

Abstract:

The article presents the language used in the February 2025 review of a laptop in *PCMag*, a digital computer magazine, which delivers reviews, previews and news of the latest products and services for IT professionals. The analysis follows the review of the “Best Laptop for Most People”, a subcategory under the section “The Best Laptops for 2025”, which evaluates a few of the latest products in the industry. In order to help different types of consumers to make choices according to their specific needs, the hardware analysts use a language which both informs and entertains, with the indirect outcome of products possibly being purchased by the manufacturers’ target public. The language includes specialized technical jargon and seeks to be professional, objective, concise and clear, with features of technical writing, as the review does not directly advertise this item; at the same time, as a magazine article, its language needs to draw readers in and keep them interested and engaged. Therefore, the text builds in informality features, such as a relaxed tone, colloquialisms preferred by young people, emotional terms, and structures that convey spontaneity and personal, friendly communication. The rhetorical patterns used to carry out the functions of this text are definition, classification, cause and effect, along with comparison and contrast. The paper outlines linguistic features producing these patterns, and also identifies the context that enables them to operate.

Keywords: *digital tech magazine, technical writing, product review, rhetorical patterns, marketing language*

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1. Introduction

The trend nowadays is for digital magazines to replace their print variants for several reasons. Firstly, the former are more easily accessible through mobile smart devices, capitalizing on people’s contentment to be spared the effort of purchasing it in physical format, although many may prefer the “feel” of the paper format. As two U.S. authors note in their study, “Gen Z will likely force future media into the realm of digital-only.” (Bonner & Roberts, 2017: 10)

Secondly, digital publications allow the readers’ engagement through social media platforms, a fact which provides editors with useful immediate feedback regarding the reception of content and guiding lines about what needs to be adjusted. Instant feedback is also achieved through online analytics, which bring data on readers’ engagement and behaviour, which input is most popular, how much time readers spend on each page, or when they leave it. Being thus informed, content decisions are more attuned to the public’s preferences and experience, while also exploiting and shaping their behaviour and tastes. In order to attract large numbers of viewers, which in turn earns revenue from exposure to online advertising, the public is more prone to being drawn in an online filter bubble, which perpetually and narcissistically caters for and mirrors the consumer’s own image and inclinations.

About the difference between *online magazines*, which merely offer a pdf version of the print material, or an electronic reality-like flipping through the pages, the main characteristic of *digital magazines* is interactivity: links, videos, effects, shopping cart etc. A digital magazine “is built to deliver an immersive, engaging and interactive reading experience. Content is created, managed or housed on a digital magazine platform [...], which gives an authentic reading experience by putting readers in control over how they consume content. Readers can view or listen to video or audio, easily navigate and digest content, while text, forms and images can link out to other content.” (Turtl, 2024)

PCMag, as a digital computer magazine providing reviews for emerging IT technology, is part of what Knotzer calls *recommender systems*. These are defined as “information systems that assist the user in making choices without sufficient personal experience of the alternatives. This is achieved by providing information about the relative merits of alternative courses of action.” (Knotzer, 2008: 6)

The magazine also features articles on computer developments, how-to articles and computer entertainment products. Thus, by covering a wide range of interests in the field of IT, this digital publication has the potential to attract a substantial number of people, which is in direct proportion to the revenue that it can generate. Admittedly, each page of the magazine includes a disclaimer header or footer stating as follows: “PCMag editors select and review products independently. If you buy through affiliate links, we may earn commissions, which help support our testing.” (PCMag, 2025) We note the use of the adverbial “independently”, the epistemic modal “may” and the conditional clause “If you buy...”, which support the idea that the information provided in product reviews is reliable, as it is not strictly conditional on direct material gains by its authors.

One section of the computer digital magazine PCMag is entitled “Best Products”, which under “Laptops” introduces “The Best Laptops for 2025”, this further including several categories: “Best Laptop for Most People”, “Best Workstation Laptop”, “Best Budget Laptop”, “Best Ultraportable Laptop”, “Best Business Laptop”, “Best Convertible 2-in-1 Laptop”, “Best Gaming Laptop”, etc., the variety in such enumeration of head nouns with strings of modifiers suggesting a thoroughness and complexity of the

provided information. This paper analyses “Best Laptop for Most People”, as a corpus sample of how language is used in order to review a product in a magazine of this profile. We note that the product chosen for each category constantly changes, the one being assessed here having last been updated on February 3, 2025 at the time the present academic paper was drawn.

2. Corpus analysis: progressing to the review

The layout of this digital magazine article is marked by interactive headings and subheads, mingled with bulleted lists, tables and captions. It favours the ease of navigation and processing of information in a succinct, selective manner, also stressing the most important aspects through typographical features. These include variation in print size (which, according to Sarah Thorne, is used “to absorb readers into” (Thorne, 2008: 292) a text); and also variation in colour: black fonts against a white background, which is typical for most writings, enhanced by some red subtitles and interactive pictograms, providing contrast and fluency of orientation.

Pictures support the text and give substance to the explanations by helping them acquire a concrete face, but they do not overwhelm the reader, as the focus of the review lies on the technical clarifications. As one author points out when discussing writing for technical products, photos, diagrams and illustrations should have a complete caption, which “helps to ensure the accuracy of model numbers or other product information.” (King, 1993: 177) In our case, we have a picture of the product being reviewed under the heading “Best Laptop for Most People”, which is captioned with the brand name and model identification data: “Asus Zenbook 14 OLED Touch (UM3406)”.

The review starts with the main headline, “The Best Laptops for 2025”, the disclaimer at the top of the page and the names of the technical writers, Brian Westover and Joe Osborne (2025, February 3). The temporal mentions in both the headline and under the names of the authors (“Updated February 3, 2025”) signal the relevance of the information, as IT products rapidly become obsolete in the context of massive and continuous developments in the industry. Moreover, the two hardware writers’ names are interactive, meaning that by clicking these, readers have access to their short biographies, which focus on data that demonstrate their expertise in the field.

There is also an introduction to the broader section of the magazine, “The Best Laptops for 2025”, in which we identify the rhetorical patterns of definition and enumeration: “The best laptop for you depends on what you do every day. Whether you want a simple budget PC, a productivity workhorse, or a screamer of a gaming notebook, our deep-dive guide has all the advice you need, plus our top product picks in every major laptop category.” (Westover & Osborne, 2025)

We then find an interactive subhead, “LOOK INSIDE PC LABS: HOW WE TEST”, a section which elaborates on the mission and working manner of those contributing to the magazine, also providing figures about the number of experts, the tradition of the publication and its level of productivity (“65 experts”, “43 years”, “41,500+ reviews”). This part also offers a summary of the mission statement: “Our team tests, rates, and reviews more than 1,500 products each year to help you make better buying decisions and get more from technology.” We note the rhetorical parallelism between the experts / magazine authors versus consumers / magazine readers, marked by: the direct address *we* versus *you* (the possessive adjective in “*our* team”, the personal pronoun *you*); the coordinate structure with evaluative verbs in the present simple (“our team *tests, rates and reviews*”); quantified effort from *our* part in the use of the numeral

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and time adverbial (*1,500 products each year*) versus improved experience on *your* / the readers’ part in the use of comparatives (“you make *better* buying decisions and get *more* from technology”).

Preceding the revision per se, there follows the mission statement, a 149-word text laying out general guiding principles and standards of the magazine team:

“Here at PCMag, we’ve tested thousands of laptops since our lab’s founding more than 40 years ago. Our analysts and editors have more than a collective century of experience telling the good laptops from the great ones. We test more than 100 models every year to determine the best laptop overall. We also rank winners in various subcategories, such as gaming laptops, work laptops, budget laptops, Chromebooks, and MacBooks. We test all models for CPU and graphics performance using rigorous, repeatable benchmark tests, and we evaluate design, usability, connectivity, and—most important!—value. Our current best laptop for most people is the Asus Zenbook 14 OLED Touch, a top-value ultraportable that lasts nearly 20 hours on a charge, but we have plenty more tested, vetted recommendations. Read on to see all our picks, compare their specs, and get down-to-earth buying advice for nailing down the best laptop for you.” (Westover & Osborne, 2025)

The main function of this section is conative, as it seeks to persuade the reader that it is worth engaging with the content and taking the review recommendations into account, as they are supported by a high degree of professionalism. As well as the introduction to this mission statement, the text capitalises on the dynamic of the *we* – *you* relation, where *we* is represented by *PCMag* as a brand and *you* being its readership as the target audience. Except the last sentence in this text, all the other sentences are built around the first person plural of the personal pronoun *we* or the possessive adjective *our*, outlining the profile of the brand as a reliable source of information for prospective purchasers on the laptop market: “Here at PCMag we’ve tested...”; “*our* lab’s founding more than 40 years ago...”; “*Our* analysts and editors...”; “*We* test...”; “*We* also rank...”; “*our* current best laptop...”; “*we* have...”. This sequence of declarative sentences ends with an imperative sentence, in which the focus shifts on *you*, in a rhetorical buildup to a call for action: “*Read on* to see all our picks, compare their specs, and get down-to-earth buying advice for nailing down the best laptop for *you*.” We can also identify a cause and effect rhetorical pattern, since the profile of the experts is presented, with their achievements and expertise, to justify the relevance of their evaluation, hence the reader’s engagement with the review content.

While not directly marketing the reviewed products, there is active marketing in the magazine’s attempt to build a relationship with its readers, a fact that can be identified in several strategies present in this piece of discourse, such as fostering trust and credibility, focusing on the public’s needs and desires, or using a conversational and engaging tone.

Firstly, it builds trust and credibility by showcasing its ongoing commitment to assessing laptops. This is achieved by providing quantitative arguments through the use of: the indefinite large quantity phrase *thousands of* (“we’ve tested thousands of laptops”); time clause with a numeral determiner plus noun and adverb, in a comparative of superiority structure (“since our lab’s founding *more than 40 years ago*”); noun with a string of predeterminers in a comparative of superiority structure (“more than a collective century of experience”); noun with numeral determiner in the comparative of superiority, followed by time adverbial (“more than 100 models every year”); the indefinite adjective of quantity *all* in determiner or predeterminer position (“We test all models [...]”; “Read

on to see all our picks [...]"); the indefinite adjective *plenty more* modifying a noun to indicate an unspecified, but large quantity or number ("we have plenty more tested, vetted recommendations"). Quantitative arguments are also brought through enumeration ("We also rank winners in various subcategories, such as *gaming laptops*, *work laptops*, *budget laptops*, *Chromebooks*, and *MacBooks*."), enumeration with emphasis ("we evaluate *design*, *usability*, *connectivity*, and—most important!—*value*"), or enumeration of infinitives in a coordinated structure ("Read on *to see* all our picks, *compare* their specs, and *get* down-to-earth buying advice.").

Also supporting the cause and effect rhetoric is the use of superlatives, meaning that readers should trust experts because they can discern the highest quality or degree in products: "Our analysts and editors have more than a collective century of experience telling the good laptops from *the great ones*."; "We test more than 100 models every year to determine *the best laptop overall*."; "*most important!—value*"; "*best laptop for most people*"; "*a top-value ultraportable*"; "*the best laptop for you*".

Finally, the proficiency argument is articulated through the careful interspersion of specialized technical vocabulary terms: "CPU and graphics performance"; "design, usability, connectivity"; "gaming laptops, work laptops, budget laptops, Chromebooks, and MacBooks", "ultraportable", etc.

Moreover, the demonstration of expertise by the PCMag brand while relating it to *you* puts focus on the target audience needs and desires, in the sense that, by identifying the features of various products that cater to specific users' needs, this means that "we understand *you*".

The feeling of "relationship" between the magazine and its readers is also conveyed by using a conversational and engaging tone, rather than a formal or authoritative stance, this creating a more personal tie. Thus, the imperative in "Read on [...]" creates connection through direct address, as well as the use of the personal pronoun in the second person "you" ("the best laptop for you"). Informality is also marked through punctuation such as dashes or the exclamation mark ("and—most important!—value") and through the use of colloquial vocabulary, which is preferred by young people and IT specialists, as it renders a dynamic, creative and relaxed mood: "top-value", "read on", "our picks", "specs", "nailing down", etc.

Following the mission statement, we have another subhead, reading "Our Top Tested Picks". This section offers an inventory of the revised products, which are assigned to different categories, "Best Laptop for Most People" being among them. There is also a subhead entitled "The Best Laptop Deals This Week", which lies above a list of links to various online retailers, each one with a price tag, this also contributing to the practicality aspect of the magazine features.

We note that headings in general in technical writing vary in the type of information they provide, one classification referring to:

- a) brief topic headings use short words or phrases
- b) statement headings use sentences or phrases and are more informational in nature
- c) question headings are useful when writing documents that explain how to do something" (Utah State University, College of Engineering, 2021)

In our corpus analysis, we mostly encounter brief topic subheadings ("The Best Laptops for 2025"), "OUR TOP TESTED PICKS", "Best Laptop for Most People", "Asus Zenbook 14 OLED Touch (UM3406)", "\$799.00 at Walmart", etc.), with some statement subheads ("Get it now"; "Learn more"; "LOOK INSIDE PC LABS: HOW WE

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TEST”, “Jump To Details”; “See It” etc.), a fact that contributes to the ease of navigation, orientation and processing of information. We mention that, following the review per se, there is also an interactive subhead, linking to a much more extensive technical analysis of the product, which will not make the object of the present discussion.

3. Corpus analysis: the product review per se

The text of the review as such also comprises several divisions, each being delimited by subheads or a change in the page layout, with drop-down lists, bulleted lists and variation in fonts: the category title and name of the product (“Best Laptop for Most People”, “Asus Zenbook 14 OLED Touch (UM3406)”); a general list of pros and cons (“Pros & Cons”); an introduction paragraph; the body of the review (“Why We Picked It”), with a different paragraph for each of the five main decision factors supporting the experts’ choice (“Design”, “Display”, “Performance”, “Battery life”, “Value for money”); a conclusion-type section, which identifies the target public for the product (“Who It’s For”); a succinct list of the product’s main technical specifications and configurations (“Specs & Configurations”), including interactive price tags linking to different websites that allow instant purchase.

This schematic structure of the review supports a rapid and general grasp of the product characteristics. If the main function of a section such as the previous mission statement, in its attempt to persuade readers to engage with and rely on the information provided in the review, is focused on the *conative* function, the dominant function of the review text is *informative*, as it offers a substantial number of technical details. The technical writers do not seek to sell the product, but to assess it and inform readers about their conclusions. We also note that there is a secondary, *conative* function of this text, in the sense that, its rhetoric being constructed around cause and effect, with the review presenting the technical reasons behind a certain product being chosen as “Best Laptop for Most People”, the readers may be persuaded to form an opinion, which will further guide them in purchasing a product or further research. Moreover, being a magazine article, the text also fulfils a *poetic* function, since its language needs to be interesting enough so as to entertain its readers and not leave the webpage altogether. Assuredly, the risk of the reader disengaging from the magazine content is more significant in an online environment, since there are alternatives at the click of a button. Therefore, the *informative* function must be served without making the public feel overwhelmed with details, or confused because of a lack of clarity; the *conative* function should be performed so that the readers should not feel pushed or deceived through a lack of disinterested objectivity or professional expertise; and the *poetic* function needs to be carried out by striking a fine balance between a style that is compelling enough to resonate with the ethos of a certain public and one that succeeds in being taken seriously despite its informality.

The brief bulleted list of pros and cons with which the review starts comprises noun phrases with modifiers or postmodifiers: “Peppy performance”, “High value”, “Long battery life”, “Lots of ports for its size”, “Just a 1200p display”, “No WWAN option or SD card slot”, “Face login only – no fingerprint reader”. The strings of modifiers in such noun phrases, which are also encountered along the rest of the review, while possibly seeming excessive, they contribute to the informative function of the text and its profession of objectivity and professionalism.

Regarding the main rhetorical patterns encountered in the review, there is *classification*, which can be used to organize a paragraph or section. There are lists of

items organized according to principles of classification, which help sorting products into categories, with the review identifying where the product fits in.

The *cause and effect* relation in the context of this technical text is mostly identified in various structures with superlative meaning. A conspicuous section of the review using this pattern is the introduction of the review, which summarizes the main reasons in favour of the chosen product:

“After testing dozens of laptops for this recommendation, we find the Asus Zenbook 14 OLED Touch to be the best laptop for most people. Appropriately for the best laptop overall, this Zenbook takes every factor we measure for and evaluate to a highly competitive level for its sub-\$1,000 price. It’s a powerful system wrapped in a tough, attractive, and portable frame, with a good OLED display and enough battery life to outlast most of its rivals. For all that, we’ve ranked the Asus Zenbook 14 OLED Touch as the best laptop value overall.” (Westover & Osborne, 2025)

We note the causal clause introduced by the conjunction *after* plus gerund, with the quantitative determiner *dozens of*, designating an indefinitely large number (“*After testing dozens of* laptops for this recommendation”), used to provide a measurable argument in favour of the chosen product; the latter is identified through a relative superlative followed by the preposition *for* plus the superlative quantifier *most*, denoting a certain context or qualification (“*the best laptop for most people*”). Other superlatives are the relative superlative “the best laptop overall”, or an absolute superlative combined with the preposition *for* denoting a lexical contrast with a limitative value (“a *highly* competitive level *for its sub-\$1,000 price*”). We also find lexical items with superlative or positive semantic value in a technical context: “It’s a *powerful* system wrapped in a *tough, attractive, and portable* frame, with a *good* OLED display and *enough* battery life to *outlast* most of its rivals.” The *cause and effect* pattern concludes the introduction with a causal clause introduced by the conjunction *for*, which was previously emphatically repeated several times in this short paragraph, and also with an emphatic repetition of the model name and a rephrasing of its ranking category: “*For all that*, we’ve ranked the Asus Zenbook 14 OLED Touch as *the best laptop value overall*.”

The *cause and effect* pattern can also be recognized in the body of the review: “The AMD chip’s integrated graphics also led in most visual tests, *making for* quite the all-rounder ultraportable laptop.” Here we have the phrasal verb “make for”, meaning “to cause a particular result or situation” (LDOCE Online, 2025), aligned with “all-rounder”, which extends its meaning from “someone with many different skills” (*idem*), to a product that is versatile. There are also lexical items denoting superlative technical performance and characteristics (“*impressive* performance and battery life”; “a *high-end ultraportable* laptop”; “this Zenbook led the pack with a *whopping* 19 hours and 56 minutes of lasting power”; “*thin* profile and *light weight*”; “will handle *plenty of* basic AI tasks *easily*”).

We note that the *cause and effect* pattern combines with the *comparison and contrast* rhetoric, which is apparent in the organization of the review text, signalling the body of the analysis with a statement subheading introduced by the adverb *why*, using a verb to draw a conclusion or observation: “Why We Picked It”; another statement subheading (“Who It’s For”), with its further subcategorizing subheads under the form of noun phrases with determiners (“General home users”; “Frequent travellers”; “AI early adopters”) supports the argument and lends clarity to the text structure.

The *comparison and contrast* pattern is also used to organize the text, in order to examine the similarities and differences between products. More specifically, the authors

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identify the common characteristics shared by several items and their distinguishing features, also explaining how products measure up against one another.

Among the means to achieve this pattern, we identify the following: a comparative structure meaning “relatively”, “more than the average”, which makes a less clear and narrow selection than a superlative, also making things seem less definite and more subtle (“at just 0.59 inch thick and 2.82 pounds, it’s one of *the thinner and lighter* ultraportable laptops”); *to outlast* or *to lead*, verbs expressing superiority, followed by the quantifier *most of* before nouns with determiners, or *most* as a quantitative adjective (“with [...] enough battery life *to outlast most of its rivals*”; “The Zenbook 14 OLED Touch *led* its competitors in *most of* our processing benchmarks”; “The AMD chip’s integrated graphics also *led* in *most* visual tests”); the phrase *enough... to* is also used to signify that a specific quantity is sufficient for a specific purpose, in our case justifying the choice of the product as superior; a contrastive clause introduced by the conjunction *while* with the comparative quantifier *more* as a noun determiner, paired with the informal verb “to wow” in the main clause (“*While* we would appreciate *more pixels* (the screen resolution is 1,920 by 1,200 pixels), the Zenbook’s OLED technology will wow you with its deep contrast and vibrant colours”); here, we also note the contrast between the epistemic modal “would” (“we *would* appreciate more pixels”), which expresses a less strong necessity than the degree of probability conveyed by the epistemic modal *will* (“The Zenbook’s technology *will* wow you”); the quantitative adverb *pretty* as an adjective modifier paired with the preposition *for*, suggesting a high degree of performance with a specific context or limitation (“In our tests, we found the display to display 100% of the sRGB and DCI-P3 color gamuts and shine at up to 364 nits – *pretty bright for* an OLED panel”); *appreciate* as a valiative verb, which recognizes the worth of the product, paired with the preposition *for* to identify a quality, or also to designate the limitation of a specific context (“We also *appreciate* the laptop’s MIL-STD 810H passing grade *for durability*, 1080p webcam, and broad port selection *for its size*.”); lexical items suggesting contrast with other brands (“That figure leads most Windows laptops and makes the Zenbook *competitive with* Apple’s MacBook Air models”; “the Zenbook 14 OLED Touch *is priced aggressively against* many rivals, including Apple’s ultraportable laptops”).

With respect to the clarity, simplicity and brevity of this technical piece of writing, the lack of the passive voice is conspicuous throughout the review, with only one recorded instance (“The Zenbook 14 OLED Touch *is priced* aggressively against many rivals”) in a 930-word corpus, a fact that also contributes to the informality of the register.

4. Conclusions

The present corpus analysis demonstrates how the functions of a digital tech magazine review are fulfilled, namely the function to inform, to entertain and to persuade. The *informative function* is carried out through the use of specialized technical jargon, often under the form of noun phrases with strings of modifiers. Numerical data and quantifiers also play a prominent role, in rhetorical patterns that include comparison and contrast, cause and effect, classification or definition. We note the use of comparative and superlative morphological structures, along with lexical items with superlative or positive connotations supporting a good – bad dichotomy. The attributes of clarity, brevity and conciseness, which are characteristics of technical writing in general, also transpire through the text layout, schematic structure and interactive nature of the digital content. Besides the informative function, these attributes also support the *poetic function*, as the

text is not swamped by unnecessary detail or a lack of coherence, instead bearing the mark of language informality, playfulness and novelty, which is preferred by the magazine target public. Finally, the *conative function* results from both the confluence of the other two functions and its own specific characteristics. The readership is persuaded to engage with the content as the informative function is served with professionalism and the context / content progressing to the text of the review as such supports practicality, the ease of navigation, processing of information, and builds a feeling of trust in the validity of information. Moreover, readers are encouraged to form a bond with the magazine brand by capitalising on the *we – you* dynamic and by identifying those features in the product that cater for the public's needs and desires, on a personal, conversational and engaging tone.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

From Governance Policy to Knowledge: Monitoring Social and Scientific Trends and Scholarly Discourse on Artificial Intelligence, Sustainable Development and Green Diplomacy

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Abstract:

Introduction: Artificial intelligence, sustainable development and green diplomacy represent central topics of government policies, engaging strategies and implementation directions but also research and academic debate. In the context of the growing interest in artificial intelligence policies associated with green development and transition, the way in which online platforms and databases index research results represents a valuable basis for the future policy agenda.

Objectives: This research aims to map the dynamics and evolution of thematic, conceptual and analytical connections in the field of artificial intelligence governance, sustainable development and green diplomacy, by identifying emerging topics in the field and highlighting the receptivity in the digital space

Methodology: For conducting the research, the data source is represented by the Dimensions.ai (2025) platform and eight keywords were used for data extraction as follows: “Clean Energy Transition”, “Hydrogen Economy”, “Digital Sustainability”, “Sustainable Finance Taxonomy”, “Sustainable Urban Development”, “AI for Environmental Protection”, “AI and the Green Economy” and “AI and Technological Sustainability”. The processing of data and results was carried out according to three criteria as follows: (1) number of publications per year; (2) number of publications by type and (3) number of publications by research category.

Results, discussions, conclusions: The results of the analysis highlight the volume of publications that focus on keywords according to the determined criteria, but also the

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most frequent publications according to the category of research. For data accuracy, the analysis period correlates data for the last ten years (2017-2026) (i.e. papers already accepted for publication in 2026). The research results also reveal the increase of public interest in the selected research field in recent years, with a focus on articles, book chapters and book formats. The growing trend in recent years suggests an increased receptivity of the eight keywords by identifying the most important research categories for each selected keyword.

Keywords: *scientific trends, scholarly discourse, artificial intelligence, sustainable development, green diplomacy,*

Introduction

In a period marked by academic analysis and debate on climate change and the impact of government policies, the research of topics such as sustainable development and green diplomacy (Spring & Cirella, 2021). becomes essential for reflecting the thematic interconnections and shaping the public agenda (Rahmat & Apriliani, 2023; Saaida, 2023).

From this perspective, the present research focuses on the receptivity of databases and indexing platforms on the global context of artificial intelligence and green governance in order to reveal the social and health determinants (Srinivas, Kolloju, Singh, Naveen, & Naresh, 2024; Tänzler, Ivleva & Hausotter, 2021; Tiwari, 2022), as well as the cultural and economic imperatives that condition and shape the policy framework and governance (Venkata Krishnan, 2024; Segovia-Hernández, Hernández, Cossío-Vargas, Juarez-García & Sánchez-Ramírez, 2025).

In this context, in the digital space, indexing research results allows highlighting emerging topics associated with the research field of artificial intelligence, sustainable development and green diplomacy focusing on innovative themes such as:

(a) climate diplomacy (Bremberg, & Michalski, 2024), geopolitical encounters (de las Heras, 2024) and quest for climate neutrality and environmental sustainability (Dyrhaug & Kurze, 2023; Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021);

(b) a forward-looking analysis of emerging human security directions (Olimid, Georgescu & Olimid, 2024), social implications and organizational development (Olimid, D. A. & Olimid, A. P., 2022);

(c) the European Union governance objectives on resilience, digitalisation and green policies (Olimid, A. P. & Olimid, D. A. 2022);

(d) impact on sustainability strategies and the circular economy (Khiati, Elalaoui, Laator, Majd, Mkik, Tanane, & Imadi, 2025; Parimita, Monoarfa, Rahmi, Wibowo & Ayatulloh, 2025).

Other recent studies focus on how the digital space provides the necessary tools for monitoring climate change policies, highlighting the role of social and political factors (Chukwuma, 2022), as well as the indicators of global governance (Fuentes, Cárdenas, Olivares, Rasmussen, Salazar, Urbina, ... & Lawler, 2023). A second theme focuses on the role of artificial intelligence and how artificial intelligence associates social responsibility, cooperation and collaboration mechanisms at the level of institutional governance (Caganova & Das, 2025; Gotsch, Martin, Eberling, Shirinzadeh, Kuhlmann, Petschow, & Pentzien, 2022; Wang, Sun & Li, 2025).

Methodology

The tools provided by the Dimensions.ai platform (2025) were used to carry out the research, which centralizes trends and analytical data relevant to the research ecosystem of sustainable development and green diplomacy focusing on:

(a) The quantitative methodology and bibliometric analysis from the perspective of the number of publications according to certain selection criteria associate a focused research of thematic and conceptual variations as well as of the relevant emerging directions in the analyzed period.

(b) The selection of topics was made taking into account their relevance and suitability for the objectives of the study.

(c) The results of the research are summarized for each topic according to the three selection criteria (year of publication, type of publication and research category) in the ten tables (from Table 1 to Table 10).

(d) the results are also accompanied by a graphical visualization (from Graph 1 to Graph 8) that presents the percentage of the research category identified for each topic in order to provide a clarification of the interpretation of the data obtained and rendered in tables.

The design of the research is comparative, and the tabular structure is designed on the presentation of the research data. The tools, the date of the research and the data collection procedures accompany each table and graphic. The interpretation of the data based on the extracted datasets accompanies each table/graph, reflecting the practical and theoretical implications for the field of public policing and institutional governance

The limits of research are primarily related to the period under analysis (2017-2026), the existence of variables related to the short time period of data collection, as well as the use of a single platform, namely Dimensions.ai (2025). These methodological and data limitations may influence the generalization of research results. However, the study provides valuable input on future research directions on resilient and participatory governance in the context of the increasing role of artificial intelligence.

Results and findings

The first table highlights the distributions of publications for all eight topics selected for analysis. The monitoring of the topics indicates a sustained upward trend in recent years regarding the research of the main directions of sustainable development and the implications of the use of artificial intelligence. Thus, the highest values are recorded starting with 2021 (Table 1). It is noted that the highest values are recorded for the topic “Sustainable Urban Development” (Column 6, Table 1) with values between 156,617 occurrences for 2025 and 257,919 for 2024.

The second topic that registers increased values is “Clean Energy Transition” which shows an accelerated dynamics for the years 2023 and 2024 (Column 2, Table 1). The lower values recorded for topics such as “Hydrogen Economy” (Columns 3, Table 1), and “Sustainable Finance Taxonomy” (Column 5, Table 1) suggest that the two topics represent areas that are in consolidation and that they concentrate an emerging interest of the academic community in the sector of digital solutions of green diplomacy.

Comparing the results obtained by the topics analyzed in the last three columns of Table 1, we notice that “AI for Environmental Protection”, “AI and the Green Economy” and “AI and Technological Sustainability” concentrates an important number of publications, and the upward trend constantly recorded since 2017 demonstrates a high potential for analysis and capitalization in the agenda of future research (Table 1).

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Table 1. Number of Publications per Year

Publication Year/ Number of publications	“Clean Energy Transition”	“Hydrogen Economy”	“Digital Sustainability”	“Sustainable Finance Taxonomy”	“Sustainable Urban Development”	“AI for Environmental Protection”	“AI and the Green Economy”	“AI and Technological Sustainability”
2026	569	179	274	46	275	449	273	248
2025	152.324	56525	122235	10462	181856	140471	76458	87063
2024	164008	63066	129845	13474	257919	84643	73949	89321
2023	146578	55877	118434	11081	226914	70558	49177	57437
2022	145372	38821	114604	11835	202994	54723	44817	35987
2021	108102	36646	85727	10391	156617	38767	40120	21414
2020	88005	28879	61299	8190	128482	41658	31882	19395
2019	78044	24640	50655	5890	108638	28107	22913	13895
2018	67693	21640	38501	3022	102437	41658	22299	13195
2017	63601	20086	32010	1797	90227	28107	15653	7944

Source: Authors’ own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

The results in Table 2 capitalize on the number of publications identified for each topic depending on the type of publication. On the first column are highlighted the publications (article, chapter, edited book, monograph, preprint, proceeding, seminar/report/policy documents). At the level of the typology of publications, it is observed that most contributions are positioned for all topics at the level of scientific articles, which confirms the symmetrical research interest for this type of publication. Increased values were also recorded at the level of the Edited book category (Row 4, Table 2) and Preprint (Row 6, Table 2).

Table 2. Number of Publications by Type

Publication Type/ Number of Publications	“Clean Energy Transition”	“Hydrogen Economy”	“Digital Sustainability”	“Sustainable Finance Taxonomy”	“Sustainable Urban Development”	“AI for Environmental Protection”	“AI and the Green Economy”	“AI and Technological Sustainability”
Article	1123943	427032	823391	34313	1434480	592106	255464	210149
Chapter	382029	84037	287791	1210	18264	126022	144145	120146
Edited Book	152419	45616	80240	53	1134	109446	95145	52556
Monograph	-	12210	47405	128	655	24100	18614	8056
Preprint	118636	18091	45146	17246	287899	46809	20253	19216
Proceeding	90002	13025	-	2608	75423	30701	18220	19268
Seminar / Report/ Policy Documents	42415	427032	3	9736	67364	28251	—	13726

Source: Authors’ own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Table 3 and Graph 1 show a concentration of publications in the field of Engineering for the topic “Clean Energy Transition” (574346 publications), followed by the field of Chemical Sciences (362911 publications) and Physical Sciences (232998).

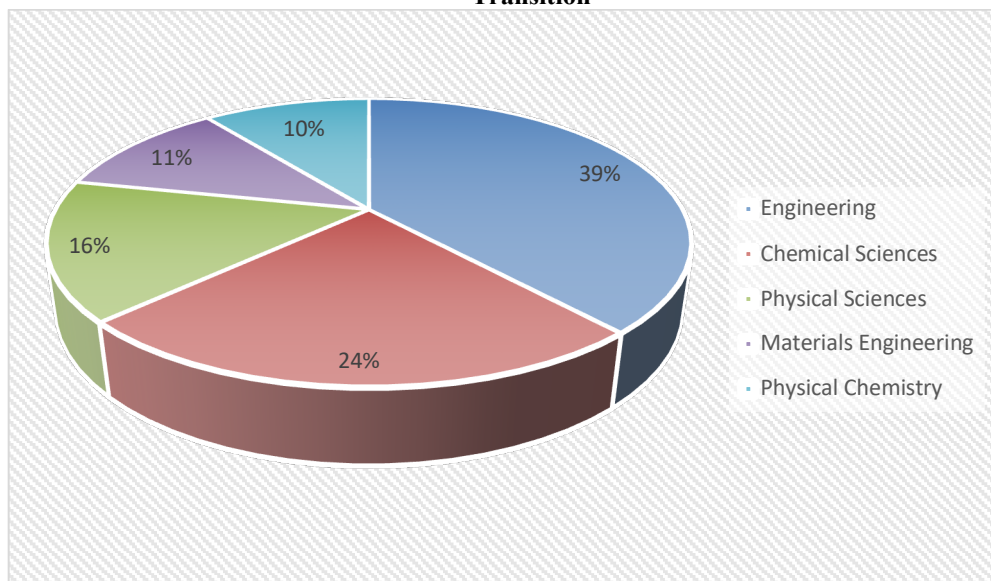
Table 3. Number of Publications by Research Category for “Clean Energy Transition”

<i>Research Category</i>	<i>Number of Publications for “Clean Energy Transition”</i>
<i>Engineering</i>	574346
<i>Chemical Sciences</i>	362911
<i>Physical Sciences</i>	232998
<i>Materials Engineering</i>	167191
<i>Physical Chemistry</i>	155666

Source: Authors’ own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Graph 1 shows a significant percentage increase for Engineering publications (39%), and for the other fields the percentage variations indicate a balanced percentage redistribution between 10% and 24% (Graph 1).

Graph 1. Visualization of publications by research category for “Clean Energy Transition”



Source: Authors’ own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Table 4 and Graph 2 show also a concentration of publications in the field of Engineering for the topic_“Hydrogen Economy” (251671 publications, followed by the field of Chemical Sciences (172734 publications) and Chemical Engineering (66026).

Table 4. Number of Publications by Research Category for “Hydrogen Economy”

<i>Research Category</i>	<i>Number of Publications for “Hydrogen Economy”</i>
<i>Engineering</i>	251671
<i>Chemical Sciences</i>	172734
<i>Chemical Engineering</i>	66026
<i>Biological Sciences</i>	61877
<i>Materials Engineering</i>	45617

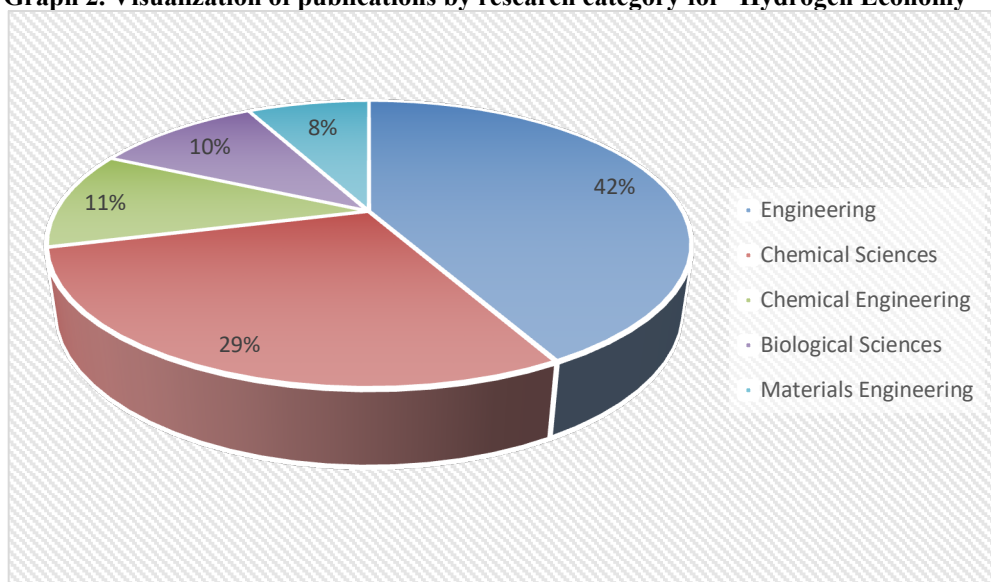
Source: Authors’ own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025

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from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Graph 2 confirms for the topic “Hydrogen Economy” the percentage distribution increased for the Engineering field (42%), while the other fields register percentage variations between 8% and 29%.

Graph 2. Visualization of publications by research category for “Hydrogen Economy”



Source: Authors’ own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Table 5 and Graph 3 identify the values recorded at the level of the domains identified for the topic “Digital Sustainability”. There is a significant concentration of contributions in the following areas: Information and Computing Sciences (230704 publicatii), Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services (224530), Human Society (136703) and Strategy, Management and Organisational Behaviour (98079).

Table 5. Number of Publications by Research Category for “Digital Sustainability”

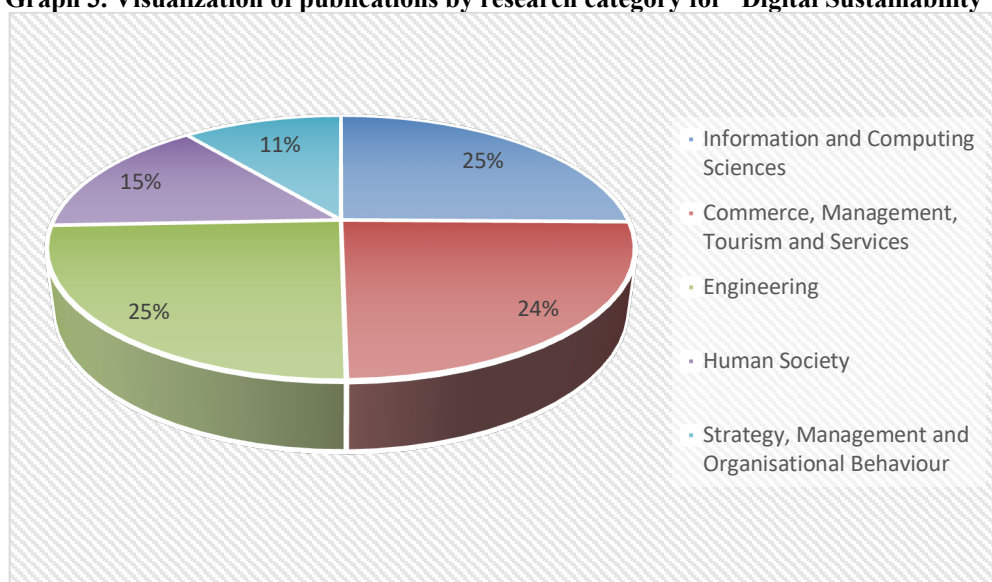
Research Category	Number of Publications for “Digital Sustainability”
Information and Computing Sciences	230704
Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services	224530
Engineering	224831
Human Society	136703
Strategy, Management and Organisational Behaviour	98079

Source: Authors’ own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Graph 3 associated with the topic “Digital Sustainability” confirms a balanced distribution of the percentage variations recorded for the first domains between 24% and

25% for the first three domains, namely: Information and Computing Sciences (25%), Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services (25%) and Engineering (24%).

Graph 3. Visualization of publications by research category for “Digital Sustainability”



Source: Authors' own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Table 6 and Graph 4 reveal the different distribution across domains for the topic “Sustainable Finance Taxonomy”. A significant concentration is noted for the fields of Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services (30,004 publications), Information and Computing Sciences (24,175), Strategy, Management and Organisational Behaviour (17,536), Human Society (18,271) and Economics (8,414).

Table 6. Number of Publications by Research Category for “Sustainable Finance Taxonomy”

<i>Research Category</i>	<i>Number of Publications for “Sustainable Finance Taxonomy”</i>
<i>Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services</i>	30004
<i>Information and Computing Sciences</i>	24175
<i>Human Society</i>	18271
<i>Strategy, Management and Organisational Behaviour</i>	17536
<i>Economics</i>	8414

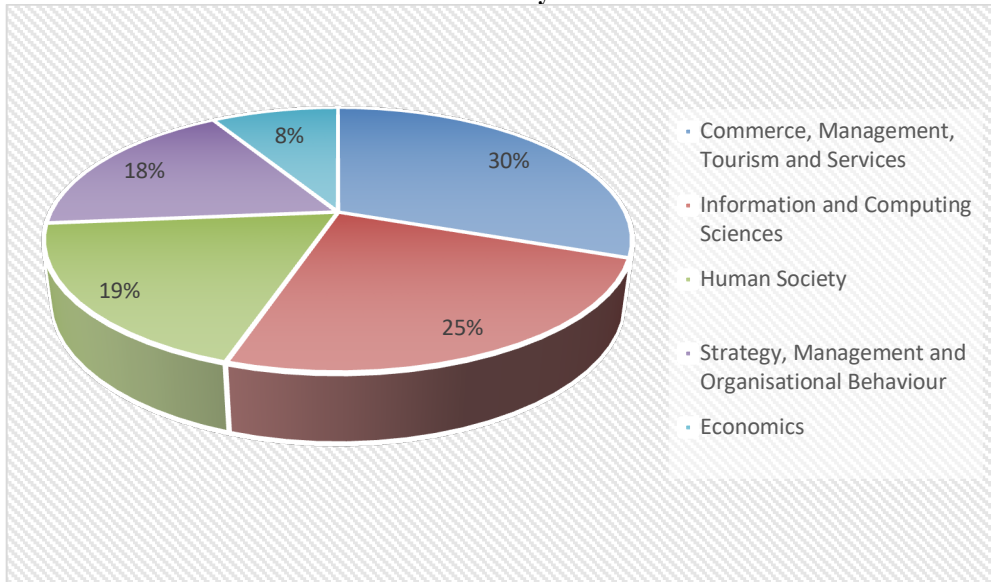
Source: Authors' own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

In Graph 4 it can be observed that the percentage variations of the priority areas of publication for the topic “Sustainable Finance Taxonomy” indicates a concentration in

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the field of Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services (30%), followed by Information and Computing Sciences (25%) and Human Society (19%).

Graph 4. Visualization of publications by research category for “Sustainable Finance Taxonomy”



Source: Authors' own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Table 7 and Graph 5 present a consolidation of scientific interest in the topic “Sustainable Urban Development” and emerging fields such as: Human Society (451443 publications), Engineering (331063), Environmental Sciences (278457). Taking into account the results highlighted in Table 7, the topic “Sustainable Urban Development” is experiencing an accelerated expansion, which demonstrates a prioritization of current trends in the field of green transition.

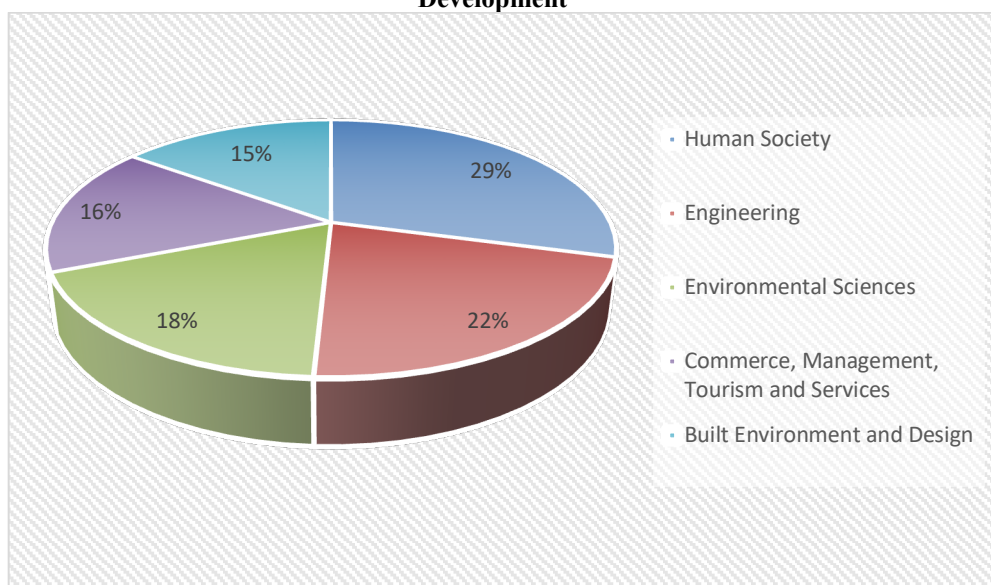
Table 7. Number of Publications by Research Category for “Sustainable Urban Development”

<i>Research Category</i>	<i>Number of Publications for “Sustainable Urban Development”</i>
<i>Human Society</i>	451443
<i>Engineering</i>	331063
<i>Environmental Sciences</i>	278457
<i>Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services</i>	252018
<i>Built Environment and Design</i>	227515

Source: Authors' own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

The percentage changes in Graph 5 indicate for the topic “Sustainable Urban Development” a relatively balanced distribution of the first fields as follows: Human Society (29%), Engineering (22%) and Environmental Sciences (18%).

Graph 5. Visualization of publications by research category for “Sustainable Urban Development”



Source: Authors' own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Table 8 and Graph 6 provide a synthetic picture of the current trends and areas recorded for the topic “AI for Environmental Protection”. The recorded values suggest the increased interest of the scientific community in the topic “AI for Environmental Protection” considering the following results obtained at the field level: Engineering (190479), Biomedical and Clinical Sciences (131470), Biological Sciences (124775), Information and Computing Sciences (115835), Environmental Sciences (83278).

Table 8. Number of Publications by Research Category for “AI for Environmental Protection”

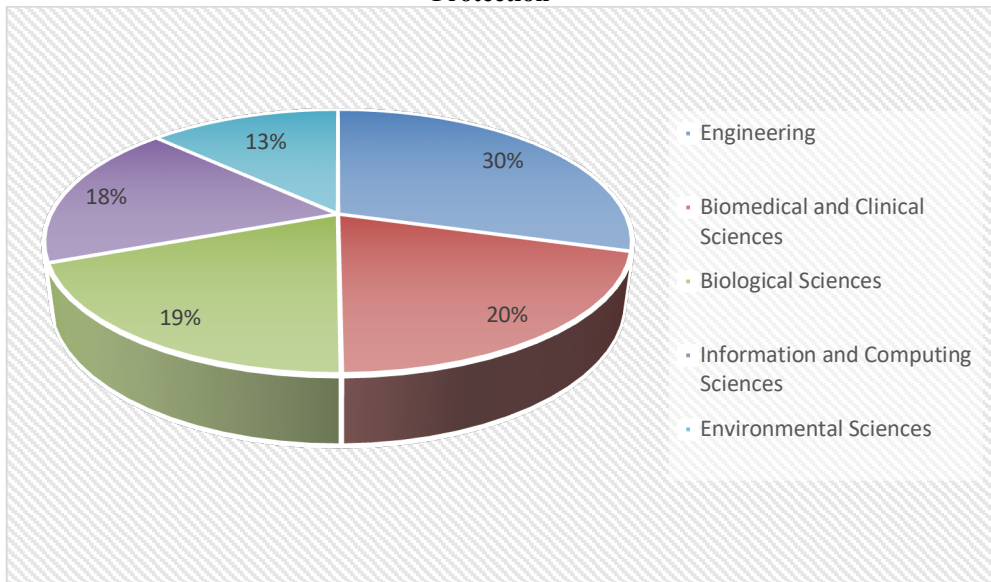
<i>Research Category</i>	<i>Number of Publications for “AI for Environmental Protection”</i>
<i>Engineering</i>	190479
<i>Biomedical and Clinical Sciences</i>	131470
<i>Biological Sciences</i>	124775
<i>Information and Computing Sciences</i>	115835
<i>Environmental Sciences</i>	83278

Source: Authors' own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Graph 6 assigns for the topic “AI for Environmental Protection” percentage variations between 30% (Engineering field), 20% (Biomedical and Clinical Sciences field), 19% (Biological Sciences), 18% (Information and Computing Sciences) and 13% (Environmental Sciences).

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Graph 6. Visualization of publications by research category for “AI for Environmental Protection”



Source: Authors' own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Table 9 and Graph 7 show a balanced ratio of the values recorded for the research category for the topic “AI for Environmental Protection”, the distribution of values being uniform, reflecting a correlation between the values recorded for each field as follows: Engineering (89672), Information and Computing Sciences (75307), Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services (65044), Human Society (49812).

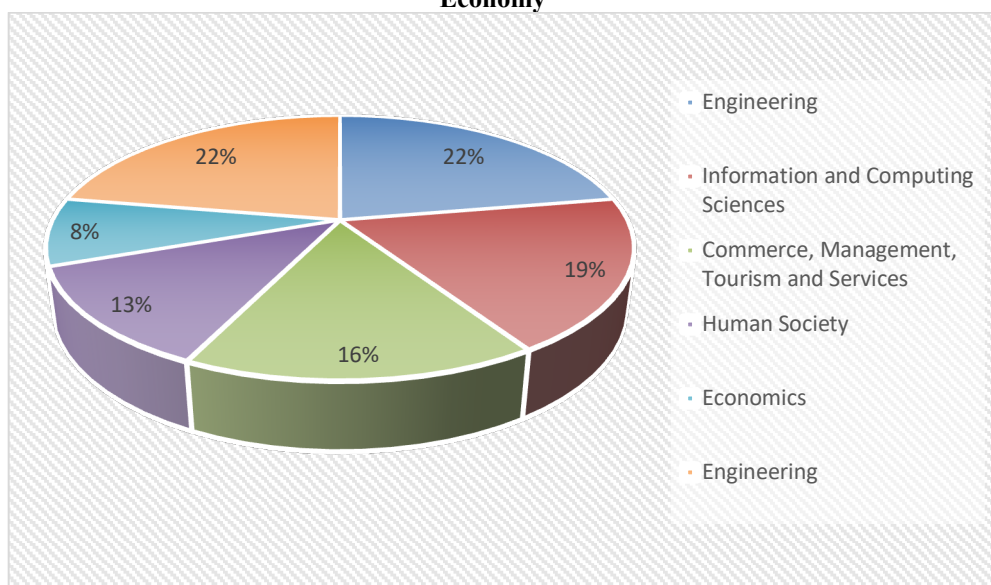
Table 9. Number of Publications by Research Category for “AI and the Green Economy”

<i>Research Category</i>	<i>Number of Publications for “AI for Environmental Protection”</i>
<i>Engineering</i>	89672
<i>Information and Computing Sciences</i>	75307
<i>Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services</i>	65044
<i>Human Society</i>	49812
<i>Economics</i>	33421
<i>Engineering</i>	89672

Source: Authors' own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Figure 7 shows a relatively balanced distribution of the top five domains for the topic “AI and the Green Economy” as follows: 22% (Engineering), 22% (Information and Computing Sciences), Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services (19%), Human Society (16%), Economics (13%).

Graph 7. Visualization of publications by research category for “AI and the Green Economy”



Source: Authors' own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Table 10 and Graph 8 show the significant contributions of the following fields: Information and Computing Sciences (87447 publications), Engineering (74193), Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services (70708). The values suggest a concentration of publications for the three areas mentioned above but also a uniform distribution of the topic “AI for Environmental Protection” in emerging areas such as Human Society (34772) and Strategy, Management and Organisational Behaviour (30512)

Table 10. Number of Publications by Research Category for “AI and Technological Sustainability”

<i>Research Category</i>	<i>Number of Publications for “AI for Environmental Protection”</i>
<i>Information and Computing Sciences</i>	87447
<i>Engineering</i>	74193
<i>Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services</i>	70708
<i>Human Society</i>	34772
<i>Strategy, Management and Organisational Behaviour</i>	30512

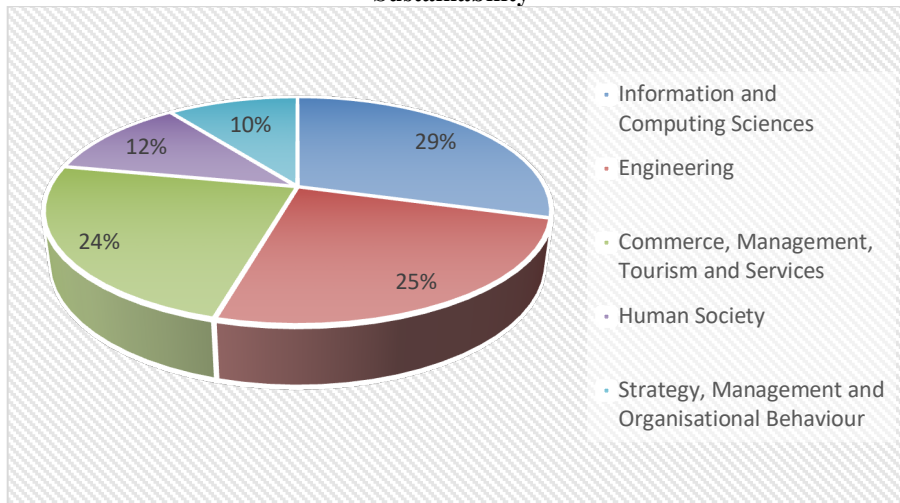
Source: Authors' own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Chart 8 reflects equal relative percentages for the first domains (Information and Computing Sciences – 29%, Engineering – 25% and Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services – 24%). The last two domains record percentage values between 10% and

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12% for the Human Society and Strategy, Management and Organisational Behaviour domains.

Graph 8. Visualization of publications by research category for “AI and Technological Sustainability”



Source: Authors' own compilation based on data retrieved on August 17, 2025 from Dimensions.ai platform available at <https://www.dimensions.ai/>

Conclusions

The results of the research highlight an upward trend in the number of publications focusing on topics such as artificial intelligence, sustainable diplomacy and green diplomacy, revealing emerging subfields of analysis and research. At the same time, related topics such as “AI for Environmental Protection”, “AI and the Green Economy” and “AI and Technological Sustainability” engage new directions and direct implications for government policies, suggesting both the scientific interest and the accelerated maturation and professionalization of the academic community, which has researched, evaluated, and analyzed how artificial intelligence has been used to assess the impact of digital governance at the societal and institutional levels.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

The defendant's “offensive” in civil proceedings. An interpretation of the *reus fit actor* rule

Daniel Ghiță¹⁾

Abstract:

What is characteristic of civil proceedings is the active behaviour of the claimant who initiates the lawsuit, establishes the limits within which the it takes place or causes it to be terminated. But, to the same extent, the defendant may make use of procedural means which give him the opportunity to get out of the defensive state or even to become a real claimant.

This analysis captures the usual procedural mechanisms by which the defendant asserts claims in the lawsuit, as well as a series of atypical procedural instruments, which give new values to the *reus fit actor* rule.

Keywords: *civil proceedings, defendant's defence, reus fit actor.*

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Introductory considerations

The claimant, who initiates the civil proceedings, seems to hold a dominant position, influencing the development of the lawsuit through procedural mechanisms conferred by law. Starting from the fact that the civil action is initiated by the claimant, a series of procedural provisions give the claimant, at least at an early stage of the civil proceedings, procedural prerogatives outlining the procedural framework from an objective and subjective perspective, and determines the jurisdiction of the court that is to decide the case or through which the procedural process may be terminated. Within certain legal limits, the claimant seems to be sovereign in the exercise of these prerogatives, since the possibility of court interference or opposition by the other participants in the proceedings is quite slight at this procedural stage. Likewise, as a general rule, there are procedural principles and rules intended to prevent the abuse of right in the form of the claimant's discretionary exercise of the prerogatives conferred by law.

The legal provisions intended to support the primary role of the claimant in initiating and shaping the civil proceedings are found in the Romanian Civil Procedure Code, both in the general part, in the matter of principles, civil action, participants in the civil proceedings and in the part devoted to the jurisdiction of courts, and in the special part, where the full role of the claimant is highlighted in the regulations devoted to the claim form and disposition acts.

The principle of availability, which governs civil proceedings, regulated under art. 9 of the Civil Procedure Code, gives the claimant, in his capacity as the holder of the subjective civil right brought before the court, the prerogative to start the action and to end it under certain conditions (Paul, 2023: 108-109). The phrases, accepted by legal doctrine, according to which the parties are "masters of the lawsuit" or "the lawsuit is the property of the parties" (Deleanu, 2013: 215), have, at least in an early stage of the lawsuit, a strong resonance with regard to the claimant. Thus, with the exceptions provided by law, when other persons or entities are entitled to initiate the civil action, the claimant is the one who begins the civil proceedings. This prerogative, generically recognised by the principle of availability, is implemented through the concrete mechanism of the claim form, regulated by art. 194 of the Civil Procedure Code, but also by the provisions of art. 192, in accordance with which, "for the defence of their legitimate rights and interests, any person may address the court system by notifying the competent court with a claim form, for the defence of their legitimate rights and interests". Once the claim is filed, through its elements, namely the parties, the subject matter and the cause, the procedural framework is determined from an objective and subjective perspective.

The concept of civil action, as defined by art. 29 of the Civil Procedure Code, is subsumed to the availability of the claimant, at least in its initial active component, consisting of the procedural means provided by law for the protection of the subjective right claimed. The references provided by the claim form, namely the nature and value of the claimant's demands, the capacity, domicile or residence of the defendant, determine an important extrinsic aspect of the civil action, namely the jurisdiction of the court that will decide on the dispute. In principle, the jurisdiction established in this way, if it complies with the legal provisions, verified and accepted by the court, cannot be modified by the requests of the defendant or other participants in the proceedings. The aspect is important in the economy of the lawsuit, since, if the defendant or third parties have their own claims in connection with the litigation initiated by the claimant, they can capitalize

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An interpretation of the reus fit actor rule**

on them in the process thus initiated, in which case the jurisdiction of the court notified by the claimant is extended to the respective claims or they can resort to a distinct procedural approach that will follow the specific rules of jurisdiction.

The claimant, as well as the defendant, may use procedural means by which the initial procedural framework established from a subjective perspective can be modified by involving third parties in the proceedings, so that the court decision can be enforced against them. From the point of view of the terms laid down by law, the claimant benefits from longer time limits compared to the defendant, within which he can formulate the request for the forced intervention of third parties, in the form of suing another person or the impleader. Pursuant to art. 68(2) and art. 73(2) of the Civil Procedure Code, such a request by the claimant may be made no later than the completion of the investigation of the case before the first instance court.

As regards the disposition acts, one of their important components is the claimant's right to waive the request, legally unconditional up to a certain procedural moment, respectively with certain pecuniary consequences or conditioned by the defendant's agreement if the withdrawal occurred above a certain procedural threshold (art. 406 of the Civil Procedure Code). At the same time, if he waives his very subjective right brought before the court, the claimant is sovereign in this approach, with no provision on any legal or temporal conditioning, or related to the agreement of the opposing party (art. 408 of the Civil Procedure Code). An important prerogative recognized to the claimant is the modification of the claim form before the first term at which he is legally summoned (art. 204 of the Civil Procedure Code). In this case, however, the court will order the postponement of the trial and the communication of the amended claim to the defendant, who will have the opportunity to file a defence or even a counterclaim.

This initial role of the claimant in the original configuration of the lawsuit can be compensated, counteracted or completed by the defendant, in turn an original part of the process, who, through his prerogatives and through the instruments recognized by law, can add objective or subjective elements to the initial procedural framework. Although the defendant's involvement in the proceedings is also caused by the claimant, once he becomes a party, the defendant has his own procedural means - requests, proper defences and procedural exceptions - through which he can counteract, complement or even annihilate the claimant's legal action.

In relation to the situations presented, in which the procedural position of the claimant clearly prevails, there are hypotheses in which the defendant, through the procedural means at his disposal, either completes the procedural framework set by the claimant, or cooperates in the exercise of certain procedural acts through which both parties exercise their procedural rights. Thus, the role of the defendant in the civil proceedings can be passive and defensive or active and offensive, as he may have a complementary position to the claimant, cooperating or agreeing when this is necessary in accordance with the legal provisions.

In this context, I have proposed a reinterpretation of the reus fit actor situation, when the defendant becomes an active party in the judicial procedure or even a genuine claimant. The phrase reus fit actor is usually viewed in the context of assigning the burden of proof - in excipiendo reus fit actor - designating situations in which the defendant, having his own claims against the claimant, acquires a position similar to that of the latter or the hypothesis in which the defendant raises a procedural exception as a means of defence (Ciobanu, Briciu, Dinu, 2023: 448). Beyond these hypotheses, the defendant,

coming out of the defensive, can have a major influence on the procedural framework initially set by the claimant, by using procedural mechanisms allowed by law, both in the first instance and in appeals for reformation, thus outlining new values of the *reus fit actor* rule.

The defendant's position in the first instance

Correlative to the claimant's position, the defendant's position in the first instance civil proceedings must be viewed in an integrated manner, in relation to the principle of availability, the civil action, the participation of third parties in the proceedings and the disposition acts, as well as the mechanisms regulated in the special part of the Civil Procedure Code dedicated to the first instance lawsuit.

After the claimant, pursuant to the provision contained in art. 9(2) of the Civil Procedure Code, according to which "the subject matter and limits of the trial are established by the requests and defences of the parties", it is also the defendant's turn to contribute to shaping the procedural framework (Zidaru, Pop, 2020: 42). Following the determination of the procedural framework by establishing the parties, the subject matter and the cause by the claimant, the defendant can set the limits of his defences and even reconfigure the procedural framework by attracting third parties to the lawsuit or he can influence the claimant's demands by way of a counterclaim.

The civil action, as regulated by art. 29 of the Civil Procedure Code, necessarily integrates the defence made by the defendant. Along with the procedural means provided by law for the protection of the subjective right requested by the claimant, the civil action also includes those intended to ensure the defence of the parties in the lawsuit (Leș, 2014: 254). The defence referred to in the legal text must be viewed in a broad sense, encompassing the defendant's claims, such as the defence, the counterclaim or the request to introduce third parties in the lawsuit, the actual defences and exceptional defences relied on by the defendant, the appeals that he could use, as well as other procedural instruments made available by law to ensure a fair trial.

As regards bringing third parties to court, the possibilities recognised by law for the defendant are even more than those available to the claimant. The defendant may formulate the two requests for forced intervention, namely the summons to court of other persons who could claim, by way of a separate request, the same rights as the claimant and the impleader; in addition, he is the only one that may use the request called the indication of the holder of the right. Specific to the request to summon other persons to court and the request to indicate the holder of the right is the fact that, as a result of them, the initial defendant may be removed from the trial. Thus, in the case of summoning other persons to court, pursuant to art. 71 of the Civil Procedure Code, if the defendant declares that he recognizes the claim and will execute it against the person whose right will be established through the court, he will be removed from the trial, and the trial will continue between the claimant and the third party summoned to court, who will dispute their right brought to court. Similarly, in the case of the identification of the holder of the right, pursuant to art. 77(3) of the Civil Procedure Code, if the third party indicated by the defendant as the holder of the right acknowledges his claims, and the claimant consents, the defendant will be removed from the trial, and the third party will take his place. These aspects represent an important change in the procedural framework, made following the defendant's actions.

The availability of the civil action is also reflected in what concerns the defendant. With the exception of the claimant's waiver of the right itself and the waiver

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of the action until the first term at which the parties are legally summoned, uncensorable by the defendant, all other disposition acts presuppose the defendant's initiative, agreement or participation. Thus, as provided for in art. 406(4) of the Civil Procedure Code, in the event that the claimant abandons the trial at the first term at which the parties are legally summoned or after this moment, the express or implied consent of the other party, respectively of the defendant, is required. The defendant may terminate the trial by recognising the claimant's demands (art. 436 of the Civil Procedure Code) or by concluding a transaction with the claimant (art. 438 of the Civil Procedure Code).

In the first instance trial, the defendant's position may be purely defensive, when, without proposing evidence in defence or having lost the right to propose evidence, he defends himself "by discussing in fact and in law the merits of the opposing party's claims and evidence" (art. 263 of the Civil Procedure Code). Even in this case, however, as the High Court of Cassation and Justice decided in an appeal in the interest of the law, the defendant may resume his active position from an evidentiary point of view before the appeal court. Thus, by decision no. 9 of March 30, 2020, published in the Official Gazette of Romania no. 548 of June 25, 2020, it was stated that "in the consistent interpretation and application of the provisions of art. 470, art. 478 paragraph (2) and art. 479 paragraph (2) of the Civil Procedure Code, in relation to art. 254 paragraphs (1) and (2) of the Civil Procedure Code, the notion of new evidence that can be proposed and approved in the appeal stage includes both the evidence proposed before the first instance court by the claim form or defence, as well as the evidence that was not proposed before the first instance court or was proposed late, and in respect of which the first instance court found the loss".

Another position of the defendant in the first instance may be that in which he formulates defences against the claimant's request for summons by means of a counterclaim. Thus, the defendant combats the claimant's request in fact and in law, proposing evidence or raising procedural exceptions meant to paralyze the claimant's action. In this hypothesis, too, although the defendant's role is still defensive, his attitude may be considered offensive if he invokes more aggressive defences, likely to influence the procedural framework with repercussions even in the appeal. This is the case of invoking by counterclaim the nullity of the act on which the claimant's request is based or of usucapion against an action for the claim of an immovable property, without requesting the annulment of the act, respectively the finding of the acquisition of the property right by usucapion, an aspect that would have required the formulation of a counterclaim. This type of defence may result in the rejection of the claimant's action, but without being found in a solution at the level of the operative part of the judgment, by which the first instance would rule on the annulment of the act or the acquisition of the property right by usucapion.

Finally, the defendant truly becomes a claimant by formulating his own claims against the original claimant, through a request formulated in the action initiated by the latter. The procedural means is the counterclaim, which can be formulated "if the defendant has, in connection with the claimant's request, claims deriving from the same legal relationship or closely related to it", as provided for in art. 209(1) of the Civil Procedure Code. By means of the counterclaim, the defendant leaves passivity, the defensive procedural attitude and the defences promoted by the response and formulates his own demands against the claimant. In this case, the defendant's claim has the character of a true civil action, which could be formulated by the defendant separately from the proceeding started by the claimant. As a matter of fact, etymologically, the term comes

from the Latin *reconventio* which means action - *conventio* - of the defendant - *reus* (Deleanu, 2013: 916).

Another important prerogative of the defendant, which places him in the position of a genuine claimant, is recognised by art. 209(2) of the Civil Procedure Code. Thus, if the claims made by the defendant through the counterclaim concern other persons than the claimant, they may be sued as defendants.

By formulating the claims incidentally in the action initiated by the claimant, the effect of prorogation of jurisdiction is also produced, which means that the court invested by the claimant becomes competent to resolve the counterclaim through which the defendant formulates his own claims against the claimant, even if this request fell within the jurisdiction of another court if it had been formulated separately. As noted in the literature, by formulating a counterclaim, the defendant does not simply seek to reject the claimant's request, but seeks to neutralize his claim, mitigate it or even oblige the claimant to pay (Boroi, Stancu, 2020: 445; Ciobanu, Briciu, Dinu, 2023: 399). In this sense, the definition given to the counterclaim by the French Civil Procedure Code is suggestive, as "the claim by which the original defendant seeks to obtain an advantage other than the simple rejection of his opponent's claims" (Deleanu, 2013: 917).

The qualification of the counterclaim as a genuine claim form and, implicitly, of the defendant as a true claimant also results from the fact that the counterclaim is, in principle, independent of the main request. Thus, it will be decided even if the claimant waives the lawsuit or the right, or when the claim form has been rejected as time-barred or cancelled.

The position of the defendant in the appeal

In the appeals for reformation, first and second appeals, the dominant position is apparently held by the party that filed the appeal, i.e. the appellant in the first or second appeal. To a large extent, this situation is natural, since filing the appeal is subject to the principle of availability, and the limits of the jurisdiction of the judicial review court are established by the party that filed the appeal. Whether they held the capacity of claimant or defendant, the appellants in the first or second appeal are the ones who present the grounds of illegality or groundlessness regarding the challenged judgment, being dissatisfied with the decision rendered.

The procedural framework in which the trial in the first or second appeal is conducted is determined by the application of procedural rules, so that, on the one hand, the verification of the validity and legality of the decision of the previous court is ensured, and on the other hand, the trial is not excessively resumed. In addition to the legal instruments available to the appellant in the first or second appeal, there are also mechanisms in the appeals that provide the premises for a more aggressive position of the respondent. In the latter case, it is interesting to analyse the position of the initial defendant, who won the case by rejecting the claimant's request to be summoned to court and who has the position of respondent in the first or second appeal filed by the claimant. Of course, all the possibilities of the respondent-defendant are subsumed by the specific rules regarding the limits within which the trial in the first or second appeal takes place and the regime of defences. At the same time, the invocation or reiteration of exceptions or nullities in the appeals is a problem that must be analysed both in terms of the provisions regulating the trial in the appeals, and of the invocation rules specific to each procedural means.

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First, by responding to the first appeal, the respondent may invoke a peremptory exception, such as the authority of *res judicata*, which may lead to the admission of the appeal and the rejection of the claim form. The claimant-appellant may thus get, in his own appeal, in a worse situation than that of the challenged decision, an aspect permitted by the legal provisions contained in art. 481 in conjunction with art. 432, thesis II of the Civil Procedure Code. It is also possible for the respondent-defendant, by responding to the first appeal, to invoke a cause of absolute nullity of the legal act on which the claimant bases his action or to reiterate defences, which tend to reject the appeal.

At the initiative of the respondent, the procedural framework in the appeal initially established by the appeal of the main appellant may be expanded. The *tantum devolutum quantum appellatum* rule does not limit the formulation of defences by the respondent through the response to the appeal, an aspect permitted by art. 478(2) of the Civil Procedure Code. Through the response to the appeal, reasons can be invoked to support the decision of the first instance court and additional evidence can be proposed compared to that in the first instance. In this way, the devolutive effect of the appeal extends to the defences of the respondent, whether these are defences of substantive or procedural law (Boroi, Stancu, 2020: 764).

In the counterclaim, the respondent can directly invoke defences or substantive nullities in the appeal, as, under certain conditions, absolute procedural exceptions of public order, which were not raised before the first instance court, can also be raised.

On the other hand, however, the invocation of an absolute, peremptory exception for the first time in the appeal, by the respondent, in the absence of a cross-appeal, raises the issue of the incidence of the principle of non *reformatio in pejus*. In this regard, in judicial practice it has been held that the judicial review court will be able to analyse public order exceptions, which can be raised at any time during the trial, but the consequences of their admission will be assessed in the light of the aforementioned principle. If the effect were to worsen the appellant's situation in his own appeal, the exception will be rejected on this basis (decision no. 4/2022 pronounced by the High Court of Cassation and Justice - Panel for appeals in the interest of the law, regarding the interpretation and application of the provisions of art. 430 paragraph (2) of the Civil Procedure Code, published in the Official Gazette of Romania no. 362 of April 12, 2022). Another solution would be to dismiss the appeal, without consequences for the first instance decision, if the respondent raises a peremptory exception in the claimant's appeal. Finally, the respondent-defendant may invoke in the appeal the absolute nullity of the legal act, as a substantive defence, in which case the application of the principle of non *reformatio in pejus* must also be assessed.

Secondly, the procedural framework in which the appeal is decided can be extended at the initiative of the respondent by filing the cross-appeal. The cross-appeal mechanism can worsen the situation of the main appellant, aiming to change the first instance judgment, as provided for in art. 472(1) of the Civil Procedure Code. This effect is produced by reiterating defences or exceptions that could not be brought to the appellate court's analysis only through the respondent's counterclaim, since they had been decided by the first instance court, and the express failure to challenge them would have determined the entry into the authority of *res judicata* for the respective party. In this way, compared to the limits initially set by the main appellant - claimant in the first instance, the cross-appeal creates the possibility of worsening his situation in his own appeal and extends the limits of the trial in the appeal. Moreover, as decided by the supreme court, the cross-appeal is limited to the subject matter of the main appeal, and may concern any

other solutions contained in the operative part of the challenged decision or in its motivation (decision no. 14/2020 of the HCCJ Panel for appeals in the interest of the law, published in the Official Gazette of Romania no. 875 of 25 September 2020).

In conclusion, in the light of the situations presented, without substituting for the claimant, one can imagine hypotheses in which the defendant leaves the defensive position and becomes an active actor in the civil proceedings, reshaping the procedural framework from an active or passive perspective, and puts the claimant in the position of reassessing the chances of the initiated legal action.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Reading Between the Lines: Enhancing Critical Thinking and Inferential Skills in Foreign Language Learning

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Abstract :

Cultivating robust reading skills is essential for enhancing fluency in the target language, but fluency is not merely the ability to decode words at speed. It is the capacity to construct meaning, interrogate a text's claims and silences, and infer what is meant but left unsaid. This paper advances a principled approach to foreign language (L2) reading that foregrounds inference and critical thinking as the very engines of comprehension. Drawing on cognitive models of understanding, empirical findings in L2 reading, and classroom-tested pedagogy, I argue for teaching that moves beyond comprehension-as-recall toward comprehension-as-construction. The discussion unfolds in five integrated sections: an introduction framing the stakes; a theoretical rationale for inferential reading in an additional language; a pedagogical approach that interweaves extensive exposure with transparent strategy work; an implementation and assessment section that illustrates how principles translate into practice; and a conclusion outlining implications for curriculum and teacher development. Throughout, I incorporate restrained, judicious quotation from the research literature and reference up to seven ResearchGate-accessible sources to anchor key claims.

Keywords: *reading skills, critical thinking, inferential skills, foreign language.*

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Introduction

Reading has long been treated as a multiplier skill in language education. A single well-chosen text can expose learners to hundreds of lexical items and a wide array of grammatical structures embedded in authentic discourse. Yet the promise of reading is only realized when learners go beyond extracting surface facts to assembling a coherent mental model of meaning. Many learners, particularly at intermediate levels, report that they can “get the gist” of an L2 text but still struggle to recognize tone, stance, implication, or the pragmatic pressure points where meaning actually resides. They miss the significance of a concessive pivot, the caution telegraphed by hedging, or an allusion that depends on cultural background. These are not minor slips; they are precisely the places where readers must read between the lines to construe what the text is doing. Against this backdrop of rising interpretive demands in L2 classrooms, Lăpădat and Lăpădat (2020) frame the challenge succinctly: “Teaching a foreign language has uncovered new challenges with the evolution of society and education as a whole.” (p.139)

At a cognitive level, comprehension is not the passive reception of information; it is an active, constrained construction. The construction and integration perspective captures this dual process: readers generate tentative interpretations using textual cues and background knowledge, then integrate these interpretations into a coherent whole by satisfying constraints of plausibility and fit. As Gernsbacher (1999, p. 568) succinctly put it in a review of Kintsch’s work, the model depicts readers “first constructing approximate mental representations, then integrating those mental representations into a coherent whole.” For L2 readers, this process is complicated by limited lexical access, unfamiliar genre conventions, and cultural distance, all of which increase the processing cost of building and testing inferences while moving through a text.

Two further realities are pivotal. First, lexical coverage exerts a strong influence on comprehension; when too many tokens are unknown, readers cannot easily test or revise inferences. Studies suggest that reliable comprehension becomes likely as coverage approaches the high nineties and fragile below the mid-nineties, a finding that foregrounds systematic vocabulary development alongside reading for meaning (Hsueh-Chao & Nation, 2000). Second, reading is always mediated by genre and culture. What counts as evidence, how certainty is signalled, and which rhetorical moves a reader should anticipate vary across communities and text types. Inferential reading, therefore, is also intercultural reading.

The question for pedagogy is simple to state and difficult to enact: how can we cultivate L2 readers who are both linguistically capable and intellectually discerning? I propose that the answer lies in reframing reading lessons as thinking lessons. Instruction must protect processing capacity for integration, make inferential moves visible, and cultivate dispositions of curiosity and fair-minded scepticism. This requires a synthesis of extensive reading to build fluency, intensive reading to model and practice strategic reasoning, and dialogic routines that distribute the work of interpretation across a community of learners. The following sections develop this argument in a continuous narrative, avoiding the scaffolding of sub-subsections in order to model the integrated character of expert reading itself.

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A Theoretical Rationale for Inferential Reading in the L2

A coherent approach to L2 reading must reconcile three perspectives: the cognitive architecture of comprehension, the discourse and pragmatic signals that structure texts, and the social practices through which reading becomes a tool for inquiry. The cognitive perspective begins with the recognition that efficient lower-level processes, orthographic, phonological, semantic, and syntactic, must operate rapidly and in coordination to free attention for higher-level integration (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022). When lexical access is laboured, syntactic parsing uncertain, or discourse markers unrecognized, the reader's ability to sustain a coherent situation model is compromised. This is not a call to "teach the code" in isolation; it is a reminder that robust inferential work presupposes sufficient fluency with the code to keep up with the text's unfolding logic.

Inference is the mechanism by which readers knit local propositions into global coherence. Even the simplest narrative requires bridging inferences to connect events and resolve reference. Expository and argumentative texts demand still more: readers must infer rhetorical moves, for example concession followed by refutation, detect stance through hedges and boosters, and evaluate the adequacy of evidence for a claim. Texts do not offer these relationships transparently; they hint, cue, and constrain. Cohesive devices, pronouns, lexical chains, ellipsis, signal continuities across sentences, while discourse markers, however, therefore, although, announce shifts in reasoning. Skilled readers marshal these clues alongside background knowledge to propose, test, and revise interpretations as they go, a practice that mirrors the construction and integration cycle.

Vocabulary knowledge participates in inference in two ways. First, breadth and depth of vocabulary increase the odds that local propositions can be apprehended with enough confidence to support hypothesis building. Second, morphological awareness gives readers leverage when confronted with unknown items. Even partial familiarity with affixes and roots can license a tentative meaning that is then checked against context. The empirical literature on lexical coverage lends the claim practical teeth: readers who know the vast majority of tokens in a text are better positioned to verify or falsify inferences as new sentences arrive (Hsueh-Chao & Nation, 2000). This does not mean that unknown words are fatal to comprehension; it means that the distribution and density of unknowns shape the reader's ability to test interpretations in real time.

Because inference is also cultural, genre and pragmatics figure centrally in any theoretical account. Genres are not mere containers; they are patterned social actions with conventional moves and expectations. A research abstract compresses a familiar sequence, gap, method, result, limitation, so an omitted limitation invites a critical question. A news feature's concession followed by a pivot signals the author's stance before the thesis is stated explicitly. Politeness strategies, evidential markers, and degrees of certainty socialize readers into a community's norms of argument. Teaching these cues as meaning-bearing signals, rather than as decorative add-ons, strengthens the bridge from form to interpretation. As Lăpădat and Lăpădat argue, "the connection between language structures and vectors of political ideology derives from the perception of language as a platform for communication and achievement of functional campaign objectives" (2022, p. 147). Grabe and Stoller (2013) argue that effective L2 reading instruction draws students' attention to text structure in ways that make "what good readers do" visible and transferable, an emphasis that aligns with the model advanced here.

Reading, finally, is a site of critical inquiry. The goal is not reflexive scepticism but fair-minded evaluation of claims and evidence. As Duke and Pearson (2002) observe,

strategy instruction is most powerful when it prompts readers to ask why an author framed an issue in a particular way and what evidence was offered or omitted. A reader who is sensitive to stance, who can tell when certainty is hedged, when authority is invoked, when counterevidence is acknowledged, possesses not only linguistic competence but also the beginnings of a civic habit of mind. This is a decisive reason to make inferential and critical work central rather than peripheral in the L2 curriculum.

A Pedagogical Approach: From Extensive Exposure to Transparent Strategy Work

If comprehension is constructed, pedagogy must make construction visible without reducing reading to a checklist of tricks. The approach advocated here interweaves extensive reading for volume and fluency, intensive reading for modelling and guided practice, and dialogic routines that distribute metacognitive control across learners. Each strand is necessary but not sufficient on its own, and together they create conditions under which inferential and critical reading can flourish. To translate that challenge into classroom practice, Lăpădat and Lăpădat (2020) caution that “the information we deliver as teachers of a foreign language cannot and must not be restricted to traditional structures of grammar, vocabulary and so on”. (p.139)

Extensive reading is the engine of growth. In such programs learners read large amounts of level-appropriate texts for pleasure and general information, choosing titles that interest them and moving quickly enough to sustain narrative and expository flow. The cumulative effect is an expansion of lexical coverage, greater familiarity with discourse patterns, and a steady accumulation of experiences in which inference succeeds. Renandya (2007) puts the case memorably, arguing that the collective evidence for extensive reading is so strong that it would be difficult to justify its absence from a language program. This does not make extensive reading a panacea. Programs thrive when choice is genuine rather than nominal, when accountability is light-touch, for example brief reflections, book chats, reading journals, and when teachers periodically surface insights from students’ reading, such as a connective that flipped an interpretation or an instance of hedging that altered a claim, so that implicit learning becomes explicit and transferrable.

Intensive reading complements extensive reading by slowing the process down and making invisible moves public. The goal is not exhaustive analysis of every sentence but judicious modelling of strategic reasoning at moments where readers are most likely to stumble. A brief think-aloud might show how a concessive “however” requires revising a running hypothesis; a guided discussion might trace reference chains across a paragraph to resolve ambiguity; a closing debrief might ask which textual clue actually tipped an inference from plausible to persuasive. Duke and Pearson’s (2002) synthesis remains a touchstone here: strategy instruction is most effective when strategies are taught explicitly, modelled in context, and then practiced in purposeful reading. They also warn against ritualization, reminding teachers that it is neither possible nor desirable to demand overt application of every strategy on every text. Selectivity and authenticity are the watchwords.

Dialogic routines distribute the work of inference and build metacognitive control. Reciprocal teaching is exemplary in this respect. In Palincsar and Brown’s (1984) formulation, the classroom conversation is organized around “summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting,” with roles rotating to ensure participation. For L2 learners, these roles scaffold essential habits: monitoring comprehension breakdowns, warranting

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claims with textual evidence, calibrating confidence, and revising interpretations in light of peers' readings. Dialogue also supports equity; the interpretive work is not monopolized by the most fluent reader, rather, it is shared, rehearsed, and increasingly internalized by all.

Vocabulary instruction is the bridge between exposure and strategy. Rather than isolating word lists from reading, a principled vocabulary strand targets high-utility academic word families and word-part knowledge that can unlock morphologically transparent items. In practice, this means teaching learners to propose a tentative meaning for an unfamiliar word from its parts, then to test that proposal against local context and the larger developing model of the text. Hsueh-Chao and Nation's (2000) findings on lexical coverage give urgency to this work; readers need enough tokens to be familiar that they can verify and refine inferences as they proceed, not merely guess and hope.

Reading to write creates accountability for inference. When learners must synthesize across texts to write a short critique, a policy memo, or a grounded comparison of viewpoints, they are obliged to turn their inferences into articulated claims supported by evidence and warrants. This is not simply an assessment device; it is how reading functions in the world. Academic and professional communities read in order to act, to decide, advise, design, or judge. Bringing those purposes into the classroom tightens the connection between inferential reading and the broader communicative competence we aim to cultivate.

Finally, instruction should acknowledge that much contemporary reading is multimodal and networked. Learners encounter arguments braided with charts, hyperlinks, and comment threads. They must learn to distinguish assertion from evidence in a graphic, to track author identity across linked pages, and to triangulate claims by consulting multiple sources. Grabe and Stoller (2013) urge teachers to connect strategy instruction to authentic genres; a short opinion piece paired with a data visualization can become a laboratory for testing interpretations and evaluating the warrants that underwrite them. These practices extend inferential reading into the practices of digital citizenship without sacrificing the language focus appropriate to an L2 course.

Implementation and Assessment in Practice

Translating principles into daily practice demands restraint as much as ambition. A flexible lesson cycle can provide structure without forcing teachers or students into a rigid sequence. One productive pattern begins before reading, when the teacher primes the situation model with a brief prompt, a relevant image, an anecdote, a sharp question, that activates background knowledge and invites initial hypotheses. In a unit on consumer contracts, for example, a dense limitation of liability clause can seed predictions about an upcoming feature article's stance. The key is to treat predictions as provisional commitments; learners return to them, testing and revising in light of textual evidence.

A first read should aim for orientation rather than detail. Learners read the text without stopping to look up everything that is unfamiliar, then write a one-sentence gist that captures what the text is trying to do. When students disagree about the gist or about where the author's central problem or question surfaces, the ensuing discussion shifts naturally to evidence. In this way, the class moves from impression to argument, with the text as arbiter. The shift prepares readers for closer work on coherence without devolving into sentence-by-sentence commentary.

The heart of the lesson is the guided reconstruction of coherence. The teacher selects moments in the text where meaning pivots, around a contrastive connective, an

unresolved pronoun, a leap from data to claim, and models how to trace the logic with just enough detail to make the inferential move visible. Students adopt a light annotation code that marks tentative inferences, uncertainties, and pivotal claims, not to produce a baroque marginalia but to externalize thinking briefly and then return to the flow of reading. Small-group discussion follows, with learners comparing interpretations, justifying them with textual clues, and refining them in light of peers' reasons. The meta-message is that expert readers keep multiple constraints in play and treat interpretations as revisable in the face of better evidence.

Critical evaluation enters as an extension of coherence work rather than a separate unit. Learners examine hedges and boosters, for example may, likely, certainly, to gauge the author's degree of commitment, attend to attributions, according to..., to assess the status of claims, and classify evidence types, anecdote, expert testimony, data, to judge sufficiency. A focused mini-lesson supplies the language needed to talk about stance, reporting verbs such as argues, concedes, cautions, evaluative adjectives such as plausible or tenuous, and modal verbs. The tone remains fair-minded. Students are encouraged to "steelman" a position before articulating a reasoned counter-reading. This combination of empathy and rigor tempers cynicism with intellectual humility.

Synthesis in writing provides closure and accountability. Short written tasks, a 150-word critique, a comparison of two sources, a micro-memo advising a hypothetical client, require learners to cite textual clues explicitly and to write their warrants, because..., into the line of argument. Over time, a brief reflective component, such as an inference journal entry, records where understanding changed and which cues mattered most. These reflections are not confessions of error but records of growth; evidence that readers are learning to monitor, test, and revise their thinking.

Assessment should reward the quality of reasoning as well as the accuracy of conclusions. Scenario-based tasks are well suited to this purpose, choosing between policy options, evaluating the fairness of contractual clauses, or recommending a course of action on the basis of two or three short texts. Transparent rubrics focus on three questions: Did the learner cite precise textual cues? Did they articulate plausible links to background knowledge? Did they test their interpretation against multiple parts of the text? Brief conferences and think-aloud checkpoints deliver feedback on moves rather than merely on answers, for instance "You noticed the concessive pivot but did not update your hypothesis; how would the argument look if you did?" In this way, assessment becomes a site for teaching thinking, not just measuring it.

Material selection and sequencing also matter. Teachers should balance challenge and accessibility; choose texts with enough novelty to force inference but enough familiarity to sustain success. Where lexical coverage is low, provide glosses, front-load background knowledge with a one-page schema sheet, or guide the reading more closely. Genres with clear move structures, news features, research abstracts, opinion pieces, are especially helpful for teaching anticipation and inference. Above all, select topics that matter to learners, so that critical questions feel urgent rather than perfunctory.

Because programs are constrained by time and examinations, a practical note on alignment is in order. When high-stakes assessments emphasize literal recall, teachers can still integrate inferential routines by framing them as tools for accuracy: noticing a concession may help eliminate distractor options, identifying hedges may prevent overinterpretation of a claim. The long-term aim, however, is to nudge assessment toward tasks that value reasoning, short syntheses, evidence checks, and argument maps

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calibrated to proficiency level. Departmental moderation using shared exemplars can build consensus about what counts as good inferential reading and how it is expressed in an L2.

Finally, implementation is sustainable when teachers possess a shared metalanguage for talking about texts and a repertoire of micro-routines they can drop into any lesson. Professional learning communities can dedicate time to designing ten-minute mini-lessons on discourse markers, reference chains, or hedge recognition; to calibrating expectations with annotated student work; and to expanding genre knowledge so that teachers can make the hidden curriculum of textual moves explicit. In this respect, the goal is not to produce a single perfect unit on inference but to normalize small, repeated invitations to read between the lines across the curriculum.

Conclusion

To teach students to read between the lines is to initiate them into a language for thought. It is to show that comprehension is built, not found; that inferences can be made explicit and tested; that stance can be recognized, evaluated, and adopted with care; and that the cultural codes of genre and pragmatics are part of meaning, not mere decoration. The approach developed here, anchored in the construction and integration tradition, informed by L2 reading research, and enacted through an interwoven set of classroom practices, aims to make these truths visible and practicable without fracturing instruction into a taxonomy of subskills.

The case for explicit strategy instruction is strong when strategies are taught selectively, modeled well, and embedded in real reading (Duke & Pearson, 2002). The case for dialogic routines such as reciprocal teaching is strong when roles scaffold metacognitive control and distribute interpretive labor (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). The case for volume through extensive reading is strong when learners read willingly at a level that sustains flow (Renandya, 2007). None of these strands alone suffices. Together, however, they can transform L2 reading from an exercise in extraction to a practice of inquiry, one that cultivates both proficiency and discernment. If we succeed, our students will not only read more in their additional language; they will think better with it and be better prepared to act in the world where texts are noisy, incomplete, and consequential.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

A SWOT Analysis of Specific Competences in Foreign Language Teaching

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Abstract :

Foreign language education requires an intricate balance of linguistic, cultural, pedagogical, and technological competencies. This paper employs a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to evaluate specific competencies necessary for effective foreign language teaching. Strengths include linguistic proficiency, intercultural competence, and communicative methodologies, whereas weaknesses consist of digital literacy gaps and difficulties in adapting to diverse learner needs. Technological advancements, interdisciplinary collaboration, and innovative teaching methodologies present significant opportunities. Conversely, resistance to change, rigid curricula, and disparities in teacher training pose considerable threats. Through this analysis, recommendations are formulated to optimize foreign language instruction and enhance teacher preparedness.

Keywords: *foreign language teaching, competencies, SWOT analysis, linguistic proficiency, intercultural competence, digital literacy.*

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1. Introduction

Foreign language education has acquired new relevance amid global migration, digital globalization, and increasingly multilingual societies. Foreign language teachers are now expected to fulfil roles far beyond language transmission. They are cultural mediators, digital facilitators, inclusive educators, and curriculum designers. This multifaceted expectation calls for a wide array of professional competences - linguistic mastery, intercultural competence, pedagogical agility, and digital fluency among them.

Yet, despite growing recognition of these needs, education systems often fall short in preparing or supporting teachers to develop and maintain such competences. Initial training remains uneven across regions, continuous professional development is inconsistently funded or implemented, and many teachers face systemic barriers such as rigid curricula or lack of technological infrastructure. The result is a persistent misalignment between what is pedagogically desirable and what is institutionally feasible.

This study examines the landscape through a qualitative SWOT analysis of competences for effective foreign language teaching. Competence development is treated not as a purely individual responsibility but as a function of internal teacher capacities and external system conditions. The analysis maps existing strengths and recurring weaknesses, highlights opportunities for innovation, and identifies threats that limit adoption of improved practice.

The paper has three aims: (1) to delineate the competences demanded by contemporary foreign language education, (2) to evaluate the ways institutional and policy contexts support or constrain their development, and (3) to propose recommendations for strengthening teacher preparation and ongoing professional support. These aims are addressed through three guiding questions: What are the core strengths and weaknesses in current teacher competences? Which contextual factors create opportunities or threats for competence development? How can policy and teacher education be realigned to sustain growth over time?

2. Literature Review

Effective foreign language teaching requires a convergence of multiple competencies that are cognitive, cultural, and technological in nature. These competencies extend beyond linguistic knowledge to encompass pedagogical dexterity, digital adaptability, and intercultural fluency. Over the past three decades, educational theorists and practitioners have sought to codify these professional capacities through competence frameworks, empirical studies, and pedagogical models.

2.1 Linguistic Proficiency as Foundational Competence

Linguistic competence remains the cornerstone of foreign language instruction. Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis posits that learners acquire language most effectively when exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current proficiency level. This input is typically mediated by the teacher, whose proficiency must exceed the highest levels expected of students. Swain (1985) complemented this view with the Output Hypothesis, asserting that producing language under teacher guidance is equally vital for internalizing structures. Together, these theories underscore the dual role of the teacher as both linguistic model and facilitator of meaningful language use.

Beyond grammatical correctness, Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence introduced a broader understanding of language use that

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includes sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic components. This model shifted focus from prescriptive language instruction to functional, interactive, and contextualized communication, setting the theoretical foundation for modern communicative methodologies.

2.2 Intercultural Competence in Language Education

Intercultural competence has gained prominence in response to globalization and the increasing cultural heterogeneity of language classrooms. Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence defines it as the ability to interact meaningfully across cultural boundaries, informed by attitudes of openness, knowledge of cultural practices, and critical cultural awareness. This model integrates both cognitive and affective domains, requiring teachers not only to possess cultural knowledge but also to create environments where multiple perspectives are valued and explored.

The importance of intercultural pedagogy is further highlighted by culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010), which frames student culture as a resource rather than a barrier. It challenges traditional Eurocentric teaching paradigms by advocating instructional strategies that affirm diverse identities, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and engagement in multilingual classrooms.

2.3 Pedagogical Methodologies and Instructional Strategies

Foreign language teaching methodologies have evolved significantly from grammar-translation approaches to communicative, task-based, and content-integrated paradigms. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged in the late 20th century as a response to the limitations of rote memorization and decontextualized grammar drills. CLT emphasizes interaction, negotiation of meaning, and learner autonomy (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Building on CLT, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) focuses on the use of authentic, goal-oriented tasks to promote communicative competence (Nunan, 2004). TBLT positions learners as active agents engaged in real-world language use, while the teacher acts as facilitator and assessor of language-in-use rather than rote knowledge.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), popularized in European contexts, offers a dual-focus model where subject matter and language objectives are addressed simultaneously (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). CLIL has demonstrated effectiveness in promoting both cognitive development and language acquisition, but requires specific teacher preparation and flexibility in curricular design.

2.4 Digital Competence in the Language Classroom

Technological fluency has transitioned from a supplemental asset to an essential teaching competence in the digital age. Warschauer and Healey (1998) were among the first to highlight the pedagogical potential of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), which facilitates access to authentic materials, interaction beyond the classroom, and individualized learning pathways.

With the proliferation of mobile and web-based applications, digital competence now includes familiarity with a broad ecosystem of tools, from virtual learning environments to AI-powered tutoring systems. Stockwell (2012) emphasizes the need for intentional integration of technology into pedagogical design, warning that superficial tool adoption without pedagogical alignment can undermine learning outcomes. However, teacher education programs often lag behind in equipping educators with the digital literacy required to implement these tools effectively and critically.

2.5 Adaptability and Inclusion in Diverse Classrooms

Language classrooms increasingly reflect diverse student profiles in terms of linguistic background, cognitive ability, and learning preferences. Differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2001) is a pedagogical response that involves tailoring content, process, and product based on student readiness, interest, and learning profile. While theoretically sound, its effective application requires a high degree of planning, classroom management, and access to varied resources, capacities that many teachers are not systematically trained to develop.

Moreover, inclusive education theories stress the need for equity-driven practices that accommodate learners with disabilities or marginalized linguistic backgrounds. González (2005) and others argue that foreign language instruction often marginalizes these learners unless deliberate strategies are in place to make curricula accessible, relevant, and culturally affirming.

2.6 The Role of Continuous Professional Development

Given the rapidly evolving demands of language teaching, continuous professional development (CPD) is essential. Richards and Farrell (2005) view CPD not merely as skill enhancement but as reflective engagement with practice. They propose models such as action research, peer observation, and mentoring as sustainable mechanisms for growth. However, systemic barriers such as workload, lack of funding, and institutional inertia frequently inhibit participation in meaningful CPD, particularly in under-resourced settings.

The literature offers a clear, multifaceted portrait of the competencies required for effective foreign language teaching. These include deep linguistic knowledge, intercultural awareness, flexible pedagogical skill, digital fluency, and the capacity to differentiate instruction. However, scholarly consensus also recognizes that the development and application of these competencies depend significantly on institutional support, training quality, and policy coherence. This study uses these theoretical underpinnings to frame a qualitative investigation of how such competences function or falter in practice.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design guided by the SWOT analytical framework to explore the specific competences required for effective foreign language teaching. Rather than collecting new primary data, the research relies on documentary analysis of existing literature, case study documentation, policy reports, and teacher development program evaluations. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of how competences are conceptualized, enacted, and challenged across diverse educational contexts.

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative approach was chosen for its ability to generate context-sensitive, interpretive insights into the complex, multifactorial nature of teacher competence. SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) serves as a guiding lens that structures emergent themes while retaining analytic flexibility. Although long associated with strategic planning, SWOT has gained traction in educational research for assessing institutional and professional capacity (Ghazinoory et al., 2011). Here it is applied to interrogate the internal capabilities and external pressures that shape the professional landscape of foreign language educators.

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3.2 Data Sources

The corpus comprises three interrelated strands of documentary evidence. First, peer-reviewed literature, both theoretical and empirical, on foreign language teaching competences, including work published in venues such as *Language Teaching*, *TESOL Quarterly*, and *System*. Second, programmatic and policy materials, notably European Commission Erasmus+ evaluations, national teacher-training frameworks (e.g., FNBE, 2016), and international benchmarking outputs such as the OECD's PISA reports. Third, documented case studies drawn from research publications and practitioner evaluations of specific initiatives (for example, implementations of Duolingo in Colombia and training models developed by South Korea's Teacher Training Institutes). Sources were purposively selected for their relevance to five competence domains synthesized from the literature review: linguistic proficiency, intercultural competence, pedagogical adaptability, digital literacy, and inclusive instruction.

3.3 Data Selection and Inclusion Criteria

Document selection followed purposive sampling. Texts were included when they explicitly addressed foreign language teacher competences or provided concrete case applications; were published between 2004 and 2024 to ensure contemporary relevance; represented diverse geopolitical and educational contexts across Europe, Asia, and Latin America; and offered sufficient qualitative detail to support thematic analysis. These parameters aimed to balance theoretical coherence with practical variability.

3.4 Analytical Procedure

Analysis unfolded in two phases. In Phase 1 (thematic coding), documents were reviewed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) model to identify recurrent concepts, phrasings, and patterned meanings. Codes were generated inductively and subsequently organized within the a priori SWOT domains: strengths (established competences and effective practices), weaknesses (internal limitations or skill gaps), opportunities (external drivers of innovation and growth), and threats (systemic, cultural, or structural constraints). Coding was conducted manually to preserve close engagement with the texts. Phase 2 (cross-case synthesis) integrated findings across contexts to surface consistencies, divergences, and contextual contingencies, moving beyond isolated cases to develop a cross-contextual account of how competences operate in real teaching environments.

3.5 Trustworthiness and Limitations

Credibility was supported through triangulation across source types and by testing interpretations against established competence frameworks, including the CEFR, ACTFL standards, and the European Profiling Grid. The study nonetheless faces limitations: it does not incorporate first-hand interviews or classroom observations; programs with documented success may be over-represented relative to unsuccessful or unpublished implementations; and the transferability of insights may be constrained by geographic and institutional particularities. Even with these constraints, the qualitative synthesis provides a strategic, evidence-informed overview of the competence landscape that is grounded in both theory and practice.

4. Findings

This section presents the findings of the qualitative SWOT analysis, drawing on documented case studies, policy evaluations, and institutional reports. Each component - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats - represents a thematic category based

on recurring evidence from the selected documents. Together, they reveal a nuanced picture of how foreign language teacher competences are supported, constrained, or transformed in diverse educational settings.

4.1 Strengths: Demonstrated Competences in Practice

Multiple international initiatives confirm that teachers participating in structured professional development and mobility programs demonstrate strong linguistic competence and increased intercultural awareness. The Erasmus+ program, for example, has enabled educators across the EU to engage in language immersion and cultural exchange, leading to enhanced classroom practices upon return (European Commission, 2021). Romanian teachers who participated in exchanges to Spain and Germany subsequently incorporated authentic materials and cross-cultural themes into their lessons, fostering more engaged and communicative classrooms.

Dervin and Gross (2020) document classroom-based evidence where teachers with prior intercultural training facilitated rich discussions on cultural norms and language use, enhancing students' empathy and global perspective. These findings align with widespread recognition that well-prepared teachers often act as cultural mediators, helping students navigate linguistic and societal nuances.

Case evidence also shows widespread teacher adoption of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) when institutional support is available. Schools in Finland, for example, have systematically implemented CLIL modules that integrate content and language objectives. Teachers in these settings reported greater learner autonomy, higher classroom engagement, and increased oral proficiency, particularly in multilingual classrooms (FNBE, 2016).

4.2 Weaknesses: Internal Limitations and Competence Gaps

Despite expanding access to digital tools, teacher readiness to integrate them pedagogically remains uneven. Large-scale European evidence shows many teachers still report a need for further training in ICT for teaching, beyond basic technical use. In the EU-wide 2nd Survey of Schools: ICT in Education and the Eurydice report on digital education, gaps persist in ICT use and teacher competences across systems and schools, underscoring that access alone does not translate into effective classroom practice (European Commission, 2019a; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019). Guidance from the UK likewise notes that technology adoption often lacks a clear pedagogical rationale and that professional development is essential if tools are to improve learning rather than remain add-ons (Department for Education, 2019; Education Endowment Foundation, 2019).

Country-level findings point in the same direction. In England (UK), TALIS 2018 reports that teachers identify advanced ICT skills as a priority professional development need, alongside support for teaching in multicultural/multilingual settings and for students with special educational needs (OECD, 2019a). In Portugal, teachers likewise report high professional development needs (especially for special educational needs), and participation in CPD is below the EU average; Romania shows similar patterns, with teachers reporting substantial need for PD in ICT for teaching and in individualised/differentiated instruction (OECD, 2019b; European Commission, 2019b; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021).

4.3 Opportunities: External Conditions Driving Innovation

Case studies from Latin America and Europe document substantial gains when technology is embedded purposefully in instruction. In Colombia, a public school initiative integrating Duolingo into the curriculum showed that students who used the app

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regularly made greater gains in vocabulary retention and sentence construction compared to peers in traditional classrooms (García Botero et al., 2019). The program's success was attributed not only to the app itself but to teacher facilitation, structured reflection activities, and integration into assessment.

Pilot programs using Virtual Reality (VR) platforms such as MondlyVR in Germany and the Netherlands enabled learners to simulate real-world interactions, such as ordering food or navigating transportation. Teachers reported increased learner confidence and spontaneous speech production, particularly among reluctant speakers (Reinders & Stockwell, 2017).

The potential for individualized learning pathways is one of the most promising affordances of technology-enhanced instruction. As Lăpădat and Lăpădat (2024) note, “E-learning offers the potential for individualization and personalized instruction to meet the needs of different learners, as well as the ability to provide more flexible and convenient access to education” (p. 107).

National education systems that permit curriculum flexibility offer fertile ground for pedagogical innovation. Finland’s National Core Curriculum allows for interdisciplinary planning and localized curriculum design. This structural openness has enabled language teachers to experiment with project-based learning, integrate global issues into lessons, and tailor assessments to communicative goals rather than rote recall (FNBE, 2016). Teachers in these systems reported greater professional agency and improved student outcomes, particularly in language fluency and intercultural engagement.

4.4 Threats: Systemic and Structural Barriers

Despite evidence supporting communicative and technology-enhanced methodologies, implementation often meets with resistance, especially in systems where traditional methods dominate. In a study by ACTFL (2019), language teachers in several U.S. school districts expressed scepticism toward task-based and digital approaches, citing concerns about classroom management, standardization, and test preparation. In many cases, adoption only occurred after targeted workshops demonstrated measurable improvements in learner outcomes.

High-stakes testing environments present another formidable barrier. Teachers working under prescriptive national curricula, particularly in East Asian and Middle Eastern contexts, report limited autonomy to adopt student-centred or differentiated approaches. Lessons are often structured around exam formats, and deviations are discouraged. Even teachers who possess the desired competences find themselves constrained by pacing guides, mandated textbooks, and externally imposed objectives.

Finally, disparities in training and resource availability across regions create significant competence gaps. In countries like South Korea, national-level teacher training institutes have standardized professional development and ensured high instructional quality. In contrast, many educators in rural or under-resourced schools across Latin America and parts of Europe report limited access to CPD opportunities, particularly in digital and inclusive pedagogy. These inequalities undermine system-wide improvement and reinforce existing educational divides.

To consolidate the thematic findings presented above, the following table summarizes the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified in relation to foreign language teacher competences. This visual overview captures the main areas of concern and potential leverage for policy and practice.

Table 1. Summary of SWOT Findings on Foreign Language Teacher Competences

SWOT Category	Key Themes Identified
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong linguistic proficiency • Intercultural awareness • Familiarity with communicative methodologies (e.g., CLT, TBLT, CLIL)
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps in digital pedagogy • Limited training in differentiated instruction • Inconsistent access to CPD and innovation tools
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of AI, VR, and mobile apps for language learning • Curriculum flexibility in some national contexts • Cross-disciplinary collaborations
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigid, test-driven curricula • Resistance to pedagogical change • Regional disparities in teacher training and resources

These findings, when viewed in aggregate, reveal not only the current state of language teaching competences but also the systemic forces that shape their development and application.

5. Discussion

The analysis reveals a complex interplay between teacher competence, institutional context, and systemic support. While many of the strengths identified in the literature, such as linguistic proficiency and intercultural sensitivity, are confirmed in practice, their sustained enactment depends heavily on policy alignment, infrastructure, and organizational culture. In this sense, competence is not solely a personal attribute but a dynamic process shaped by external conditions.

The finding that teachers often demonstrate strong linguistic and intercultural competences aligns with prior scholarship (Byram, 1997; Canale & Swain, 1980). However, the ability to mobilize these competences consistently across diverse classrooms appears conditional on external support structures. For instance, Erasmus+ participants returned with improved language fluency and cultural insight—but only schools that encouraged pedagogical flexibility saw these gains reflected in classroom practice. This suggests that institutional culture plays a mediating role between professional development and instructional innovation.

Such mediation is equally apparent in the uptake of communicative and content-integrated methodologies. Teachers trained in CLT or CLIL often expressed enthusiasm but faced implementation barriers due to standardized testing, prescriptive curricula, or resistance from colleagues. This echoes Reinders and Stockwell’s (2017) warning that competences, especially innovative ones, are unsustainable in unsupportive environments.

The realities of teaching in multicultural classrooms reinforce the need for intercultural competence to be treated as an essential, not peripheral, skill. As Lăpădat and Lăpădat (2020) observe, “teaching a foreign language to eclectic clusters of students

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has become a challenge not only from a didactic standpoint but from a communication point of view as well” (p. 139). Training programs must equip teachers not only with technical and methodological tools, but also with strategies to foster sustained learner motivation. As Lăpădat and Lăpădat (2023) emphasize, “motivation represents a central element in foreign language learning, as it can significantly influence students’ engagement, perseverance, and overall achievement in the language” (p. 143).

The prevalence of digital literacy gaps among teachers cannot be attributed solely to individual shortcomings. Rather, these deficits reflect systemic inconsistencies in teacher preparation and professional development. While programs such as the British Council’s DIP showed promising outcomes, they also revealed the absence of pre-service training in educational technology. Teachers were expected to integrate tools they had never been meaningfully trained to use. This disconnect points to a structural flaw: the assumption that technology integration is intuitive or transferable from personal to professional use.

A similar dynamic applies to differentiated instruction. Although the literature endorses it as essential in diverse classrooms (Tomlinson, 2001), the findings indicate that few teachers receive the tools, time, or training required to operationalize it. As such, competence gaps often mirror systemic design flaws more than individual resistance or neglect.

Emerging technologies, particularly AI and VR applications, present clear pedagogical opportunities. However, the findings caution against interpreting these tools as universally beneficial or automatically scalable. Programs that succeeded did so under specific conditions: supportive leadership, aligned assessment strategies, and teacher involvement in planning. This aligns with the literature’s warning that without pedagogical coherence, technology use may remain superficial or even counterproductive (Hubbard & Levy, 2006; Reinders & Stockwell, 2017).

Likewise, policy environments that offer curricular flexibility, such as Finland’s, appear to catalyze methodological innovation. This reinforces the idea that opportunities, while promising, require structural alignment to translate into meaningful instructional change.

Perhaps the most pressing theme across the findings is that systemic threats, rigid curricula, testing pressures, inequitable training access, undermine competence development even in highly motivated teachers. While CPD is universally promoted in policy discourse, its uneven availability and inconsistent quality remain critical barriers. In this regard, threats are not abstract constraints but structural manifestations of policy priorities. When systems prioritize standardization over experimentation, teachers’ capacity to innovate is actively curtailed.

Furthermore, the persistence of pedagogical conservatism, whether through institutional inertia or cultural resistance, complicates the integration of newer methodologies. These cultural factors must be addressed through long-term strategies that normalize reflective practice, experimentation, and collaborative inquiry among educators.

To conclude the discussion, the following key themes synthesize the interpretive insights drawn from the findings, emphasizing the systemic nature of teacher competence and the conditions necessary for its enactment.

- Competence is contingent: Even highly trained teachers struggle to apply their skills when structures are rigid or unsupportive.

- Systems produce gaps: Weaknesses in teacher capacity often reflect omissions in initial training or lack of continuing development.
- Opportunities require orchestration: Technological or methodological innovations are only effective when implementation is context-sensitive and strategically scaffolded.
- Threats are embedded: Systemic resistance to change is less about individual reluctance than about institutional design and policy orientation.

These themes suggest that advancing teacher competence requires not just better training, but systemic realignment that repositions teachers as active agents within a flexible, innovation-friendly ecosystem.

6. Conclusion

Using a SWOT lens, this study shows a consistent pattern in foreign-language teaching: strong linguistic and intercultural strengths coexist with gaps in digital pedagogy and inclusive practice, while innovation opportunities (AI, VR, CLIL/TBLT, curriculum flexibility) are often blunted by test-driven accountability and uneven access to meaningful CPD. The central implication is systemic: teacher competence is enacted, not merely possessed, so its expression depends on coherent alignment among preparation, professional development, curriculum and assessment, leadership, and infrastructure.

Accordingly, improvement strategies should move beyond deficit framings of individual teachers to a strengths-based, system-sensitive approach that (i) protects classroom autonomy for communicative and content-integrated methods, (ii) funds sustained, practice-embedded CPD in digital and inclusive pedagogy, and (iii) realigns assessment so that communicative outcomes, not only recall, are valued. Sustained learner motivation should be treated as a design principle across these reforms.

8. Limitations

This synthesis relies on documentary analysis; it lacks primary data (e.g., observations, interviews) and may over-represent successful cases reported in published evaluations. Cross-national differences limit the generalizability of some claims.

9. Future Research

Priorities include longitudinal classroom studies tracking competence enactment during reform, comparative analyses of national training and assessment frameworks, teacher-narrative work on autonomy and CPD, and equity-focused studies in under-resourced contexts.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Around the Revolution: A British report on the situation in Russia in the autumn of 1917

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Abstract:

Alfred Knox was born in Ulster in 1870. He joined the British army and served in India where he reached the rank of major general. In 1911 General Knox was appointed British military attaché to Russia. A fluent Russian speaker, he became a liaison officer with the Russian Imperial Army during World War I. Around the Bolshevik revolution of November 1917 he drew up a report in which he captures in detail the politico-military situation in the Russian Empire. The report contains very important data showing the precarious state of this collapsing country at the end of 1917. Chaos and anarchy encompassed a country that saw as the only way out of this situation the establishment of a bloody dictatorship that encompassed this country for a long time: 70 years.

Key word: *Alfred Knox; Alexander Kerensky, General Kornilov; Russian revolution.*

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I Introduction

Alfred Knox was born in Ulster in 1870. He joined the British army and served in India where he reached the rank of major general [Knox Alfred, (2024),:1]. In 1911 General Knox was appointed British military attaché to Russia. A fluent Russian speaker, he became a liaison officer with the Russian Imperial Army during World War I. [*Smele, Jonathan (2017) pp. 111–112*]. In 1911 General Knox was appointed British military attaché to Russia. A fluent Russian speaker, he became a liaison officer with the Russian Imperial Army during World War I. Knox reported back in London how the Russian people reacted to the outbreak of war: "Wives and mothers with children accompanied the reservists from point to point, postponing parting time and seeing cruel scenes, but the women cried in silence and were not hysterical. The men were generally serious and calm, but the groups cheered each other as they met on the streets. Knox worked closely with important political figures to keep Russia at war. It also included regular meetings with Mikhail Rodzianko: "If there was ever a Government that fully deserved a Revolution, it is the current one in Russia. If he escapes, it will only be because the members of the Duma are too patriotic to agitate in this time of crisis. I saw Rodzianko (chairman of the Duma) and talked about the avoidable suffering of the people and my amazement at their patience in conditions that would have led me very soon to break the windows. He just laughed and said I had a hot head. In addition to working closely with George Buchanan, the British ambassador to Russia, he also made several visits to the Eastern Front. After the overthrow of Tsar Nicholas II and the creation of a provisional government in Russia, Knox became convinced that the British should give full support to Alexander Kerensky: "There is only one man who can save the country and that is Kerensky, for this a The small half-Jewish lawyer still has the confidence of the Petrograd mob, who, being armed, are in control of the situation. The remaining members of the government may represent the people of Russia outside the Petrograd mafia, but, the Provisional Government, could not exist in Petrograd if it were not for Kerensky (Kerensky, Alexander, 2024 :1). "During the October Revolution in Russia, they observed the Bolsheviks taking the Winter Palace on October 25, 1917 (according to the Julian or old calendar, which corresponds to November 7, 1917 in the Gregorian calendar or new style). During the Russian Civil War, he was the head of the British mission (Britmis) and the head of the White Army advisers in Siberia under Admiral Kolchak. He barely intervened in combat operations because Kolchak was unwilling to listen to his advice and accept demands for a post-war Russian Constituent Assembly. In 1921 Knox published his Memoirs, *With the Russian Army: 1914-1917*. In this book, he also tells the story of the heroine Elsa Brändström (*Smele, Jonathan, 2017: 111–112*). In 1918, journalist Arthur Ransome was recruited as a spy by the British government. He had a close relationship with Leon Trotsky and Karl Radek. Much of his information came from Trotsky's secretary, Evgenia Shelepina.

Knox did not know this and considered Ransome's pro-Bolshevik articles in the Daily News and New York Times to be treacherous. He suggested that Ransome be "shot like a dog" (Ken Kalfus, 2024: 1). In the 1924 general election, he was elected Conservative Member of Parliament (MP) for Wycombe, defeating the incumbent Liberal MP Lady Terrington. He took his place during the 1929 general election and subsequent general elections, serving in the House of Commons until the 1945 general election. Knox remained a strong opponent of communism throughout his career and, following the Soviet invasion of Finland, campaigned for military support for the Finns. He died on

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March 9, 1964. On 1st November, 1917, Knox sent a telegram to London in which he described the situation in Russia round revolution from November 1917. The content of this telegram is presented below. He send a few notes on the general military situation. My last despatch (D 3 of the 10th August) spoke of certain dangers ahead. It was feared that the exorbitant demands of the workmen would cause a general strike or lock-out; that the peasants would not give up their grain in sufficient quantity to feed the town population and the armies ; that railway transport would break down owing to lack of engines and shortage of coal. The whole state fabric was crumbling away owing to the selfishness of the individual and the weakness of the Government. Everyone wanted enormous wages and none wanted to work or much less to risk his skin. There was only the one chance that Kerenski would listen to the pressing demands of Kornilov (Kornilov Lavr Georgiyevich, 2024: 1,) and would take steps to enforce discipline before it was too late. Kornilov is a hard-headed soldier of strong will and great courage, a tried patriot but no politician. He is the son of a non-commissioned officer of Cossacks and his mother was a Buriat woman. Kerenski is a petty lawyer from Saratov ; his father was a schoolmaster and his mother a Jewess. From the latter he probably gets his energy and his juggling political ability. Kerenski may be an honest Ally. We have no evidence of his personal dishonesty, but patriotic Russians constantly wonder whether he has been merely misled by his blind Utopianism, vanity, and ambition in allowing the country to come to its present condition. He impresses the people by his theatrical poses and his frothy eloquence. He must have realised that if he had worked loyally with Kornilov he might have found the force necessary to establish order and save the country.

It is understood that after the Moscow Conference Kerenski became at length convinced of the necessity for a strong Government. Upon his demand Kornilov moved four cavalry divisions that could be trusted towards Petrograd. If these divisions had reached the capital they might have done what they liked. The immediate entourage of both Kornilov and Kerenski, however, worked against their co-operation. The plot—such as it was—at the Stavka was engineered by Zavoiko, the Marshal of nobility of the Government of Podolya, who had made a fortune at Baku and was acting as Kornilov's orderly, and by Colonel Novoseltsev, the President of the Officers Club. Zavoiko, especially, constantly urged Kornilov to act.

Kerenski, on the other hand, was influenced by Nekrasov (Nekrasov Nikolai Vissarionovich, 2024:1), originally a professor from Tomsk, who, as a politician under the old regime, was more "right" than Rodzianko (Rodzianko, Mikhail Vladimirovich, 2024:1], but who has since the Revolution posed as an apostle of anarchy ; by Galpern, a pacifist Jewish lawyer who is constantly with him, and by Baranovski (Baranovski, Vladimir, 2024:1), an ambitious soldier, who, as Russians say, had a double influence, first as the brother of Kerenski's lawful wife and secondly as the cousin of his mistress.

The two men on whom Russia depended were divergent in character and aims. Kornilov was simple, honest and without personal ambition; with him his country came before everything. Kerenski was subtle, vain and ambitious, caring more for the revolution and for internationalism than for Russia. Only an irresponsible meddler was wanted to complete the quarrel. . This role was rilled by Lvov (Lvov, Georgy Evgenievici, 2024:1), who after a conversation with Kerenski, came to Kornilov on the 7th September, and proposed in Kerenski's name three alternatives for a new government. Kornilov agreed with the last, which proposed that he, Kerenski and Savinkov (Savinkov Boris Viktorovich, 2024: 1) should form a triumvirate. Lvov returned to Petrograd and saw Kerenski on the afternoon of the 5th. He then went into the town and, bursting with

his importance, gossiped. The Sovyet received information and at 6 p.m. sent a deputation, accompanied by Nekrasov, to visit Kerenski. Kerenski came to heel at once. He sent for Lvov and arrested him. Nekrasov drafted a telegram to Kornilov, calling on him to resign.

This telegram received by Kornilov on Sunday morning, the 9th, at length goaded him into action in opposition to the Government, but as he believed in the best interests of the country. Philonenko, then Commissary at General Headquarters, told me how he found the unfortunate Commander-in-Chief sitting in the garden at Mogilev with the telegram in his hand, and how he called upon him to explain it, for he could make nothing of it.

If Kerenski had been a bigger man he would have put off the deputation of the Sovyet and would have taken steps to clear up the situation, instead of jumping to conclusions. There seems grave suspicion that he welcomed the opportunity of removing a dangerous competitor. He telephoned to Kornilov to ask if Lvov spoke with his authority, first telling Kornilov that Lvov was sitting beside him. In his examination the other day he was asked why he had said that Lvov was there when he was not.

He replied that he considered it his duty in the "high interests of the State" to lay a trap for Kornilov to induce him to speak frankly. There was a good deal of comic opera afterwards. The Bolsheviks were terrified and some of them actually fled. Polovtsev, who had been dismissed from the Petrograd Command by Kerenski in July, was called for at 1 a.m. on Sunday, the 9th, by Kornilov's creatures, Tugan-Baranovskiy (Tugan-Baranovskyi Mykhailo Ivanovich, 2024:1) and Tumanov. He was led to Kerenski, who shook him warmly by the hand for five minutes, and then asked him to take command of the district once more.

Polovtsev declined, but they sat over tea till 6 a.m. Then Kerenski said: "I am more sorry than I can tell you that I cannot persuade you, but tell me—I have a map here—where would you place your guns if you were called on to defend Petrograd?" Polovtsev explained that he did not know the ground. He was amused, however, to observe that the future Commander-in-Chief had placed all his guns on the hill tops. Kornilov's cavalry was cut off from orders. Probably none of the officers realized the situation. If any of them did they acted like idiots. The advanced guard of the Caucasian Native Division detained a few versts west of Pavlovsk and sent a party of 40 men forward to select billets in Pavlovsk. The 40 came upon a battalion of the Paul Regiment, drawn up with machine guns to defend the revolution, and the battalion fled. The Caucasians wondered, but decided that they had stumbled on manoeuvres. They said: "These men seem to be learning how to fight, but they do not know how to commence." When the main body of the Paul Regiment was reached, one of its men called out to ask the cavalry where it was going. They said they were on their way to Petrograd to quell a Bolshevik rising. Then the Paul men said "We will go with you in that case; we thought you were coming to make a counter-revolution." All were delighted that there was no fighting to be done and they walked together, chatting like Bengali babus, to the headquarters of the Army of Defence, where Lieutenant Kuzmin, (Kuzmin-Korovaev Aglay (Aleksey) Dmitriyevich, 2024:1) who was badly flogged by Rennenkampf (Rennenkampf Paul von, 2024:1) in Krasnoyarsk in 1905, was found in a hothouse surrounded by telephones. Before there was time to explain the situation a wild man with long hair ran out and promised everyone an extra acres of land if he would fight for the Revolution.

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This was Chernov the Minister of Agriculture. As there did not seem any immediate danger of fighting for the Revolution, everyone agreed. The stupid business was, however, by no means comic opera for the officers. Their position was difficult before; it is impossible now. The guard cavalry have sent practically all their officers away. The officers of the Petropavlovsk at Helsingfors were called upon to sign a declaration condemning Kornilov as a traitor. Four of the junior officers had the courage to refuse and were arrested. They were sent ashore under a guard of 14 men, who, after using all their ammunition without killing them, finally kicked them brutally to death.

I had some account of the Viborg massacre from an old friend, who was lucky enough to escape with his wife after lying hidden in disguise for six days. The 26 senior officers of the garrison, including the commander of the XLII Corps, General Oranovski, who was Chief of the Staff to Jilinski on the North-West Front at the beginning of the war, General Vasiliev, the G.Q.M., and General Stepanov, the Commandant of the fortress were thrown into the river and shot as they swam. There was nothing against any of these men; they had not in any way declared themselves as sympathisers of Kornilov.

The Government of Kerenski has done nothing to punish any of these murderers. The Helsingfors Sovyet has refused even to enquire into the murder of the Petropavlovsk officers. The Viborg garrison has been sent to the Northern Front. On arrival there, it informed the Commander-in-Chief, General Clirimisov, that the strategical situation demanded its return to Finland. It then marched to the station, seized wagons and entrained. Luckily a member of the Front Committee got some cavalry and stopped the entrainment by threatening to open fire. General Cherimisov promised that the mutineers should remain in reserve (PRO Kew Gardens, CAB/24/34 Image Reference:0041, ff 206 =209)

II The industrial situation

Some people think that there may now be no general lock-out. Practically all factories work for the Government, and the Government has raised the prices paid to manufacturers, so as in some cases, almost to keep pace with the growing appetites of the men. Employers too, are willing to work at a loss in the hope that the present wave of madness may pass rather than close their works and risk their being burnt down. Still the Government prints more and more paper, and as the purchasing power of the rouble falls, the demands of the men increase. In the period, March to July, 568 works, employing 104,372 men were closed, but the number increased progressively each month, and is believed to have gone on increasing since.

The railways.—The percentage of sick engines has not increased as much as might have been expected. It was 24·2 in June and 25·2 in the first half of October. The Ministry of Ways gives the following table, in which the numerator shows the number of sick engines and the denominator the number of engines working in the last half of each month from June to September (O.S.) in 1916 and 1917 : -

June.	. July.	August..	September
1910 ..	3,311	3,475	3,448 -3,554
16,781	16,729	16,665	16,781
1917 ..	5,044	5,180	5,279 -5,417
15,839	15,302	15,544	16,079

The percentage of sick wagons reached its maximum in the latter half of June with 9 per cent. It has since steadily declined, and in the latter half of September (O.S.) it

was 7*6 as compared with 5'I in the corresponding period last year. The following figures show the fall in the output of Russian rolling stock :—

Month.	Engines.		Wagons.	
	1916.	1917.	1916.	1917.
January	54	45	929	226
February	42	31	743	77
March	45	25	776	104
April	49	21	881	269
May	48	34	818	210
June	70	45	1,005	118
July	47	33	930	110
August	52	31	1,108	59
September	39	30	?	?

There have been four orders of American rolling stock-
Engines. Wagons.

1. 398. All delivered. 13,160. All delivered.
2. 375. 98 delivered, and of these 3,500 uncovered. 562 received. 40 assembled. 5,000 covered. None delivered.
3. 500. None delivered. 10,000 covered. None delivered.
4. 1,500. None delivered. 30,000 covered. None delivered.

Old style.

(530)] A 2

Shortage of cord.—The railway breakdown will probably be caused by shortage of fuel. The greater part of the railway system of Russia is fed from the Donetz region, and complete anarchy reigns in the mines.

The number of miners has actually increased since 1916 :1916.—

Total miners, 239,697, of whom 47,582 prisoners of war.

1917.—Total miners, 274,000, of whom 66,000 prisoners of war. The output of coal has decreased :—

	1916.	1917.
July	144 million puds.*	119 million puds.
August ...	137 ...	55 „ „
September	149 „	... 50

The stock of coal on the railways on the 1st September, 1917, was only 22 million puds-less than half the stock on the same date in 1916. The quantity of coal loaded in the Donetz region *for railways* was, in September, 33 million puds, and the monthly expenditure of all lines is 43 millions. Thus the stock on the 14th October cannot have much exceeded 12 million puds, and in spite of the interests of all industry being sacrificed to the needs of the railways, it would seem that the system must soon come to a standstill. An effort is being made to replace coal by wood, but success is thought to be doubtful. Probably a single week's stoppage of the railway service will be sufficient to reduce the army and the town population to starvation.

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Shortage of foodstuffs.—The position as regards food is very threatening; the peasants influenced by agitators, who look upon the holding back of food from the front as the quickest way to stop the war, have not brought in their grain as they should.

It is said that some of it is being used for the illicit manufacture of spirits. Owing to the complete anarchy in the country, such grain as the peasants in the south have given up is often robbed on its way to the capital, in this manner 200,000 puds out of a consignment of 400,000 were looted on the Volga, and the soldiers sent from Petrograd to guard it fraternized with the peasants. If the public official statements of the Minister of Food are to be trusted, it is difficult to see how the supply of Petrograd is to be assured, and once there is a real shortage of bread, the worst disorders are to be feared.

There is grave danger of the men at the front, whether willing to fight or not, being forced to abandon their trenches owing to lack of food, warm clothing and boots. Some days ago it was publicly stated that there was only a single day's forage at the front. The Minister of War showed me a telegram from the Commissary of the Northern Front describing the lack of food in the 12th and 1st Armies as "catastrophical."

Clothing.—The men are said to have received warm drawers and vests, but only 33 per cent, of the padded waistcoats, which should all be issued by the 14th November and there is little chance of the deficiency being made up. The depot troops are well clothed, for they loot the stores provided for the front. Every day and all day in a street near the Jews' Market is held what is satirically called the "Equipment Exchange." There, two or three thousand soldiers openly sell Government boots and while others deal in such of the clothing of the "bourgeois" as they have been able to loot in the 400 or so burglaries of the previous night. Soldiers at the front are said to sell their boots to peasants to get money to gamble. I protested to the Minister of War that we have in the current year, at the risk of our sailors' lives, shipped to Russia over 3,000,000 pairs of boots, 4,000 tons of leather, and 14,000,000 yards of cloth, amply sufficient to equip every Russian who has a taste for fighting. Protests, however, are useless for there is no power to enforce order (PRO Kew Gardens, CAB/24/34 Image Reference:0041, ff 206 =209).

III Scheme of army reform

A scheme for the re-organization and reform of the army was agreed upon at the Stavka in the middle of October. The project is divided into seven chapters.

The army is to be reduced in strength by the dismissal of the older classes. The classes of 1895 and 1896 were dismissed on the 14th October and those of 1897 and 1898 went 10 days later. The class of 1899 will go on the 14th November. It is estimated that the elimination of these five classes reduces the strength of the army by 1,000,000 men, and the military staffs oppose further reduction. The Ministers of Finance, Trade and Food call for the dismissal of an additional 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 and the matter is under consideration.

The depot troops are to be reorganized. -Depot regiments will be reduced in strength and the permanent staff more carefully selected. "Draft companies and battalions will be raised in immediate connection with active units, and raw recruits will be sent to them direct.

The Opolchenie will be reduced as far as possible and its place will be taken in the interior by mounted and dismounted militia, to be raised from old officers and soldiers. The Cossacks are to be collected and grouped in divisions. Volunteer and national units are to be encouraged.

Volunteer units.—There are many Volunteer battalions scattered along the front, composed chiefly of men from line of communication units who express a willingness to fight. These battalions have fought well on several occasions, but they are invariably let down by other units. Committee in some cases do all they can to prevent them receiving boots and warm clothing, for they say they are only prolonging the war. General Verkhovski, Minister of War, wishes to group these battalions into larger units. This is already being done in the 5th Army.

There is an idea in the Ministry of War that it may be possible to territorialise the whole army gradually, forming by degrees the following national units :—

Esthonians and Letts ... 1 corps, containing 1 Esthonian and 2 Lett divisions.

Lithuanians 1 division.

Poles 2 or 3 corps.

Ukrainians 15 divisions.

Moldovans (Roumanians) 1 corps.

Tartars 2 corps.

Armenians 2 corps.

Georgians 1 corps.

The above is, however, only a vague idea without as yet Government sanction. There are many obstacles, chief of which is the unchecked activity of German propaganda, which plays on the petty selfishnesses and jealousies of the various nationalities. The Sovyets, too, who are directed by internationalist Jews that would be shot in any other country at war, do all they can to hinder any reform that has a chance of raising the efficiency of the army.

The remaining chapters of the project deal with discipline, commissaries and committees, the tactical preparation of the troops ("every soldier must work at least 7—8 hours a day"), training of depot troops, supply, increase in officers' pay. It is not worth considering their provisions in detail as they are unlikely to get beyond the stage of pious wishes. Meanwhile the Government has had the cowardice to give way to the clamour of the Sovyets and the death penalty has been virtually abolished.

Schools of Instruction.—Arrangements are being made for commencing work in three large central schools of military instruction on the 14th November at Cherepovets, 14 hours rail east of Petrograd.

There will be a three weeks' general course for young officers, and a six weeks'specialist course for officers and men in trench warfare. Each school will be divided into 11 sections, and on the conclusion of the course the 11 instructors will proceed with their 11 classes to establish schools in the subjects they have studied in the immediate neighbourhood of the front.

These schools will be allotted to fronts according to the number of divisions on each front:—

Northern front 41 divisions ... 2 schools.

Western front 36 „ ... 2 „

South-Western front 67 ... 3

Roumanian front... 54 „ ... 3 „

Caucasian front ... 12 ... 1 11

A third school will train one officer and three rank and file from each infantry and cavalry division for three weeks in grenade work. The personnel trained will go to the front to establish divisional grenade schools. The French are providing ten officers to

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assist in instruction and General Poole's section will give officers for trench mortar and bomb throwing work.

Commands at the Front.-The commands at the front are constantly being changed. The slightest attempt to enforce discipline is sufficient now to procure an officers removal.

Men.-The following figures were obtained from the Mobilization Department : -

Russian strength with colours on mobilization Reservists called up at once
...1,423,000

Reservists called up at once.....3,115,000

Opolchenie called up at once400,000

Classes—

On 14th October, 1914 ; Class of 1914 700,000

On 7th February, 1915 ; Class of 1915 700,000

On 28th May. 1915 ; Class of 1916 550,000

On 20th August, 1915 ; Class of 1917 ... 950,000

On 28th May, 1916 ; Class of 1918 700,000

On 16th February, 1917 ; Class of 1919 600,000

2nd Ban of Opolchenie, white ticket men,* &c. 6,012,000

Grand total from civil population to date ... , 15,150,000

There now remain as possible sources to replace wastage:—

1. The class of 1920 to be called out at the end of the year, 600,000.

2. Convalescent soldiers, say, 60,000 per month.

3. Deserters. Various estimates from 1,500,000 to 4,000,000.

4. A certain number of workmen who might be combed from industry.

5. Men gained by the reduction of the rear services. Of course, only 1 and 2 will yield anything.

Drafts have been sent to the front as follows :—

	1915.	1916.	1917 (till 15th
Infantry	3,094,250	2,336,000	1,692,589
Regular Cavalry—	34,333	24,278	52,239
Horses	38,953	23,961	16,434
Cossacks—	65,458	72,732	27,363
Horses	44,605	53,390	8,575
Artillery	70,000	80,000	76,000
Engineers	22,000	20,000	?
" Horses "	140,000	90,000	211,379

According to information given to the French at the Stavka there are now in the army areas... .. 1 5,925,606

In depot units in the interior 873,519

In Opolchenie in the interior 200,000

Lines of communication, convoys, &c 200,000

Killed, died of wounds, sickness or gas, missing and finally dismissed as unfit for further service, about... .. 1,290,000

f Detail:-

Front.	On Front.	Depot Troops.
Northern	825,371	147,625

Western..	844,531	212,415
South-western	1,464,644	375,711
Roumanian	1,258,097	251,163
Caucasus	366,152	179,902
	4,758,795	

Prisoners, about ' 2,900,000

Sick and wounded under temporary treatment 350,000

Dismissed the service in May, men over 43 350,000

Dismissed classes of 1895, 1896, 1897 and 1898 750,000

Total accounted for12 839,125

These figures were given officially, but they are Russian, and of course their accuracy cannot be guaranteed. The balance, 2,311,875, may be written down as deserters. [PRO Kew Gardens, CAB/24/34 Image Reference:0041, ff 206 =209,]

IV Munitions

Guns.—The following is an estimate of the guns in Russia :—

Calibre.	W. Frontier.	Caucasus.	-Reserve or
3-inch Arisaka or	8,261	657	1.606
4'5-inch, 4'8-inch	1,363	72	
4'2-inch, 60-prs.,	813	..	289
8-inch, 9-2-inch,		67	8
Various	734	..	89

(PRO Kew Gardens, CAB/24/34 Image Reference:0041, ff 206 =209)

- This is the estimate of the Artillery Department, but the Stavka states there are only 5,929—3-inch guns on the western frontier and 524 in the Caucasus. The total of other calibres it estimates at 2,030 on the western frontier and 181 in the Caucasus, with 1,277 " fortress guns " in addition on the western frontier.

Shell:-

Calibre.	Fronts <i>per</i> gun.	Total Interior.
3-inch	2,200	10 millions charged and 4
4-6-inch	2,200	110,000.
4-8-inch	2,800	256,000 and 70,000
4'2-inch	1,900	340,000 and 120,000
6-inch howitzers	2,200	836.000 and 199,000

The following are said to have been lost in the fire and explosions at Kazan :—

60—3-inch guns and 111,000 3-inch shell,

3,000,000 propellant charges.

350,000-90-mm. shell.

2,500 machine guns.

? 52,000,000 Lewis small arm ammunition.

Several hundred thousand 4'5-inch shell.

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At Riga 98 guns were lost, including 30—3-inch, and 5—4-8-inch howitzers, 14-6-inch (120-puds) and 23-6-inch (190-puds) guns.

Including the armament of Ust Dvinsk, all of which went, the Russians lost from 230 to 240 guns in all. [PRO Kew Gardens, CAB/24/34 Image Reference:0041, ff 206 =209,]

V PERSONEL

There have been as many changes in appointments at Petrograd as there have been at the front. Savinkov was succeeded as Minister of War by Verkhovski, whose position is now reported to be insecure.

Verderevsky (Verderevsky, D.N. (2024) 1) is only 31. He was a cadet at the Corps de Pages in 1903, when a Lancer regiment was billeted in the corps riding school during some civil disturbances.

Young Verkhovski went to the men and harangued them advising them not to fire on their fellow citizens if ordered to do so. He was naturally expelled from the corps. At a dinner the other night I heard someone ask him if he had not been expelled from the Corps de Pages on account of his radical opinions. He said: "Not exactly that, I sought the truth, and it was not wished that I should find it.

Still he has shown himself a good man in the field. He went to the far East as a volunteer, and was promoted 2nd Lieutenant for service in the field. He passed through the Military Academy and commenced the present war in the 3rd Finland Rifle Division, fighting at Lyck and Kozyuva. He was wounded and gained the St. George's Cross and the Golden Sword. After the Revolution he, of course, came to the front as "one who had suffered under the old regime." He was fairly successful as Commander-in-Chief at Moscow.

As Minister of War he has shown ability, but suffers from lack of experience as an administrator. He agrees with every representation made to him, but lacks moral courage to stand up to the Soviets. In fact he shows signs of out-Kerenskiing Kerenski as a slave of the Soviet. His aide-de-camp told an officer the other-day that he was playing to become Prime Minister. He has an absurd idea to which he constantly reverts in conversation that salvation will be found if we can teach the Russian soldier why he is fighting. He says we should offer the enemy such terms of peace as he is bound to refuse. I told him I could not imagine any terms of peace too degrading for the Russian soldier in his present mood to accept. He acknowledged that the army would not fight for Courland, but said that it would fight for a favourable commercial treaty. This I regard as complete nonsense, and every Russian I have repeated the conversation to agrees. Verkhovski's idea is, of course, to play up to the Soviets by getting us to publish our terms of peace. He is a boy playing at being cunning. There have been five commanders-in-chief of the Petrograd Military District in the last two months. The present man is Colonel Polkovnikov [Polkovnikov, Georgy Petrovich (2024),:1], a General Staff Officer and a Cossack. He is 31. He seems willing to do his best, but complains of the weakness of the Government. His Chief of Staff, Bagratuni (Zhilinsky, 2024), has been promoted Major-General at the age of -58. Bagratuni is an Armenian and is in close touch with the Turkistan Military District, where he served several years. He was lately offered the command there but refused. He tells me he gets frequent letters from Sarts and Kirgiz imploring him to do anything he can to rid them of the plague of Russian soldiers.

The troops in Finland were for six weeks after the Viborg massacre commanded "by a drunken dissolute Captain of the Fortress Artillery called Yelesarev, who was elected by the men. A General Nadejnin has now been found brave enough to take over

the appointment. It would seem impossible if Kerenski remains at the head of a Government which is at the beck and call of the Soviets that Russia should avoid an armistice for many weeks more. Russians whose opinions are entitled to every respect maintain that, though many men will desert from the trenches in winter, enough will remain to hold the line, but no one can remain if he is left without food, and the growing anarchy in the interior seems to threaten that.

German propaganda increases daily. Undoubted German agents are treated as high souled humanitarians. Hindenburg himself could probably live unmolested at Petrograd if he gave vent to occasional platitudes at the Soviet regarding the downtrodden proletariat and the brutal bourgeois.

A few foreign divisions might yet put matters right. Would no price tempt the Japanese ? Patriotic Russians would rather pay Japan than pay Germany. [PRO Kew Gardens, CAB/24/34 Image Reference:0041, ff 206 =209,]

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Legitimizing the „peaceful rise” of the People's Republic of China. A Conceptual Analysis of Official Chinese Discourses and Trends in Academic Publication

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Abstract:

This article explores the construction of legitimacy for China's global role through discourse. Through the analysis of 60 public speeches using word-frequency analysis and conceptual mapping, the article pinpoints the aspects that have served to create a pattern in which most salient ideas converge, translated into recurring concepts, towards a defensive and cooperative narrative, which frames China's rise as peaceful and normatively-based. The results inform dialogue on China's "peaceful rise" and demonstrate the potential of quantitative discourse analysis for research on policy analysis. Additionally, we can derive a dual discourse system that balances between external legitimation, as well as internal legitimation, so there is a melting point between official speeches and domestic academic publications which serve as the ideal embodiment for further depicting China's discursive governance. While the official discourses under scrutiny in this study tend to stress 'cooperative' and 'co-defensive' narratives including 'shared future' and 'common destiny,' data from CNKI on China's academic publishing indicates that these constructs have been increasingly institutionalized in domestic research agendas and point to the diffusion of official slogans in the academic sphere for the validation of their legitimacy. The results contribute to the analysis of discourse, legitimation and international policy communication, by providing a systematic and replicable way of analyzing political elite language. More generally, the research also serves to provide us with further insights into the power dynamics of discourse as a governance technology in world politics and how language is strategically wielded to mould perceptions, construct legitimacy and alter global policy landscapes.

Keywords: *discourse analysis, legitimation, policy narratives, discourse coalition*

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Introduction

China's ascension to global pre-eminence has been matched in recent years by a careful campaign to mold international perceptions of its rise. From the rhetoric of "peaceful development" and "win-win cooperation" to the more recent push for a "community of common destiny," Chinese official discourses have invariably tried to highlight China as a dependable and positive contributor to international affairs. They are, in other words, not only rhetorical flourish but key strategies of legitimation which serve the purpose of mitigating external anxiety about its rise at a systemic international level and cementing internal normalisation.

The literature on discourse and policy has shown how narratives legitimize politics (Hajer, 1995; Stone, 2012; van Leeuwen, 2007). Some of these studies focus on how the "peaceful rise" (Zheng, 2005), the soft power (Nye, 2004), and the national rejuvenation (Yan, 2014) are represented coming from the Chinese context constructing the identity of China in international relations. Recent analyses further highlight the concept of "community of common destiny" as a normative aspiration of global governance (Duan & Zhang, 2021).

However, in spite of this literature, there has been remarkably little systematic, text-based research into the discourse patterns in an extensive corpus of official speeches. Most of the research available is based on close reading of a relatively small number of pivotal speeches or theoretical extrapolations that have not yet addressed both how consistently some of the themes have been prevalent, and also how they relate hierarchically. Most studies, moreover, fail to link official rhetoric to the practice of Chinese academic publishing, which increasingly constitutes a site of legitimation in its own right.

The present article addresses these lacuna by posing the questions raised by how do Chinese officials discursively legitimize the concept of peaceful rise and to what extent are such narratives consecrated by academic publishing?

Methodology

To address this question, I used a word frequency analysis and concept mapping based on 60 official speeches delivered by Chinese leaders in the decade between 2013 and 2023, which was after correlated with an analysis of the Chinese publication trends, based on the CNKI database - the largest record database in China comprised of a wide range of content such as journals, dissertations, newspapers, conference papers, yearbooks and statistics, which helps us draw subject distribution charts and see which disciplines or clusters are covered or how publications evolved over time, thus correlating the publishing patterns on CNKI with official speeches, through which we can infer that Chinese academia acts as an echo chamber and it legitimates official discourse and turns it into a broader discursive coalition. This allows for an account of the academic institutionalization of these speeches.

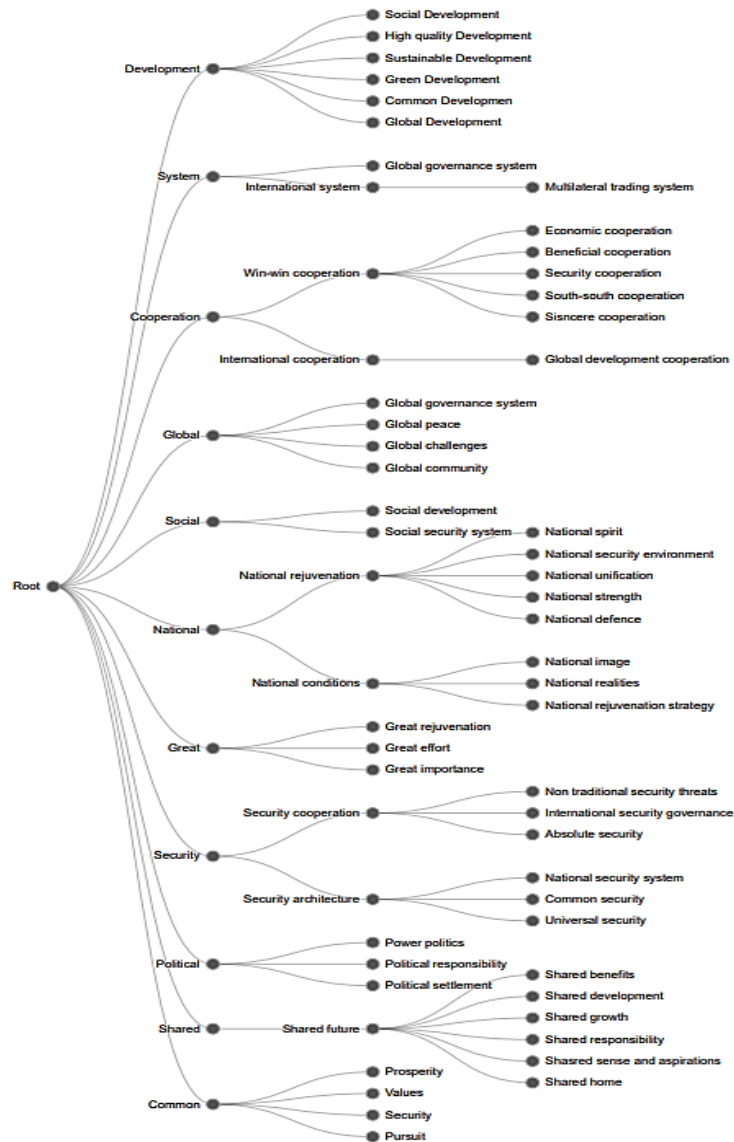
Literature review

From the distant past to the present day, the analysis of text and talk in policy and international relations has tended to underline the importance of narrative in authorizing and communitarianizing legitimated claims (Hajer, 1995; Stone, 2012). Discourse analysis focuses on the ways in which language does not simply reflect but also actively produces political realities as the symbolic resources for the justification, contestation and stabilization of policies (van Leeuwen, 2007; Schmidt, 2008). Within

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this tradition, scholars demonstrate the ways that policy narratives and discourse coalitions cohere patterns of thought that justify political action. In the Chinese context, this view has been especially productive in explaining the official rhetoric of “peaceful rise” (Zheng, 2005), the display of soft power (Nye, 2004; Callahan, 2010), and the more recent promotion of “a community of common destiny” (Yan, 2014; Duan & Zhang, 2021).

Table 1. Hierarchical representation of the main discursive themes identified



A limited number of studies have systematically analysed a larger set of speeches, using text-mining methods or compared official language trends with Chinese academic publishing trends. This article bridges the ongoing conversation into this gap and locates itself at the crossroads of discourse theory, Chinese foreign policy studies, and computational text analysis.

According to Marteen Hajer, discourse coalitions are groups of actors around a particular set of storylines—overarching tales or shared interpretations—that define how ecological problems are perceived and thus environmental policy is articulated. Such alliances are bound by collective meanings and practices in discourse, which lend social and moral significance to political struggles. It is through the mediation of these common stories, such coalitions work together to fix meanings and practices that affect policy making (Hajer, 1995: 2).

To use Hajer's notion 'storylines' for the clustering of Chinese official narratives such as 'shared future' and 'peaceful rise', these narratives can be considered part of a discourse coalition that has joint far reaching consequences for how China's role and identity are shaped in the world arena. What the narratives in this coalition have in common is that they contribute to a coherent view of and 'claim' of China's behaviours and aspirations, making the narratives legitimate and long-lived in the political dialogue. This model helps us to understand how particular narratives hang-together, sustained by the actors whom champion them and fix their meaning in the wider political landscape.

He also ties discourse to material forms of political action by arguing that political disputes are fundamentally disputes of interpretation, out of which shared narratives or "storylines" create understandings of ecological or political issues. These narratives held by discourse coalitions have implications for who is responsible for what and the roles people play in discourse and, hence, bring social and moral politics to political conflicts. Meanings, practices, alliances and arrangements that are not already given can be thought or voiced in discursive practices, thereby altering conceptions and inclinations: from meanings and conceptions and inclinations, new politics become possible. This framework suggests that the legitimacy of political action involves producing hegemonic discourses that fix meaning and practice against challenge.

Applying this to China's construction of peaceful rise, it is clear that by discourse, China is trying to construct their narration saying that their rise is a peaceful and that harmony was the way in which they will be achieving this goal. Through anchoring this story in Chinese and global discourse coalitions, this narrative is intended to help legitimize China's political behaviour and policies in relation to its rise, helping to manage international perceptions and to contain rivalries or conflict around a spectacular development. This is also consistent with Hajer's perspective that discourse is essential in framing the political legitimacy through common meanings and stories (Hajer, 1995: 3).

Theo van Leeuwen adopts a different approach and distinguishes four principal types of legitimization in discourse and communication, namely *authorization*, *moral evaluation*, *rationalization* (which are further subdivided into *instrumental rationality* and *theoretical rationality*) and *mythopoesis*.

Justification on authority basis, e.g. tradition, custom, law, persons with institutional power. It covers legitimacy of conformity where practices are justified as being done "because that's what most people do" or by explicit appeal to comparisons with what is regarded as acceptable behavior (Van Leeuwen, 2007: 2). Elsewhere, moral legitimization rather than mere subjection to authority is likely to rely on adjectives like "good," "healthy," "normal," or "useful" to imply concepts of "morality" that may be

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explicitly anchored in identifiable value discourses. addressing the goals, uses, and effects of social action (Van Leeuwen, 2007: 8). Rationalization is one form of legitimation by reference to the purposes, uses, and consequences of social actions, a form which van Leeuwen breaks down into two types: instrumental rationality (justifying practices in terms of their purposes and effects) and theoretical rationality (legitimizing by reference to a natural or scientific order) (van Leeuwen, 2007: 12).

Finally, mythopoesis is transmitted through narratives or tales whose consequences reward and punish right and wrong actions, respectively (van Leeuwen, 2007: 18).

Van Leeuwen's modes of legitimization can be correlated with the discursive strategies of *responsibility* and *common destiny* in Chinese official discourse because they are quintessentially represented by the moral evaluation. This dimension corresponds to *legitimation* with recourse to discourses of value, which is concomitant with responsibility and shared destiny as the moral and value-laden legitimation in the discourse. These devices function through invoking *communal values* and *moral imperatives*, not by appealing to authority or rational ends alone.

From the point of view of the most frequent concepts used in the official Chinese discourses that can be seen in **Table 1**, that best capture the rhetorical devices used in Chinese official discourse, we can see they represent broad thematic areas rather than specific rhetorical devices, the Chinese official discourses often using themes such as: ***national rejuvenation***, ***security cooperation***, ***shared development***, and ***global governance system*** as key rhetorical elements to legitimize policies and actions. Thus, from the conceptual map, categories like **national** (including national rejuvenation, national strength), **security** (security cooperation, national security system), **shared** (shared development, shared responsibility), **global** (global governance system, global community), and **development** (sustainable development, common development) best capture the thematic rhetorical devices used in Chinese official discourse.

Hajer connects discourse to legitimation of political action through highlighting how governing discourses mould political procedures and validate specific techniques or policies. Hegemonic Dominant Authority Discussing how discourses can change and become a 'hegemonic' as well as impact the involvement of experts and the political tactics adopted, and how rival hegemonic discourses dynamise by erecting fixed meanings and practices in order to solidify themselves from attack. This conceptualization helps in understanding how political actors deploy discourse, not only as justification, but as a means of managing public opinion and institutionalizing their programmatic agenda (Hajer, 1995: 4).

Applied to China's framing of its rise as peaceful, the 'peaceful development' discourse is an argumentation strategy. China applies this discourse to **combat external strategic distrust** against its increasing power and defense spending, to forge a favorable international environment for its economic rise. With notions such as 'new type of great power relations' defined by non-conflict, mutual respect and cooperation, China seeks to justify its rise as non-threatening and peace-loving and earn recognition by other world powers, including the US. This is in line with Hajer's conception of discourse as the legitimation which secures the legitimacy of political action and international relations as the movement of values and narratives.

Stone, on the other hand, refers to policy narratives as stories that construct and challenge policy problems by advancing accounts of how the world operates. These are stories, in fact, that have a beginning, a middle and an end, that involve change or redemption, and that contain heroes, villains and victims. And they have a strong hold on our imaginations and psyches because they provide the promise of a one-size-fits-all answer to difficult problems. In politics, stories are the primary vehicle for creating shared meaning by implicitly defining issues in terms that have emotional and symbolic valence for individuals (Stone, 2012: 164).

Though in the end, Stone's 'storytelling' can also be applied to China's rhetoric on 'peaceful rise' and the 'shared future'. Stone distinguishes between two general story lines that dominate policy politics: **stories of change** (which also involve stories of decline or stories about the upturn) and **stories of power** (which also include stories of helplessness or control). **"Peaceful rise"** of China is **part of a tale of rising**, and China shall play a strategic role in the choice that development is the most important for China to live a peaceful life, rather than unresolved struggles and conflicts. The "shared future" and "community of common destiny" narrative is in consistency with the story of regulation and sharing, mutual respect and win-win international relations. This is why it's useful as a framework for narration of China constructing its own, diplomatic narratives — and the perceptions and their ability to legitimate China's developmental path and global position — work on this particular account.

Storytelling structure by Stone can also be used to explain the Chinese discursive ideas in that it explains how the Chinese discursive ideas have been assembled to **form a logical coherent system narrative which affirms China's peaceful rise**. For instance, development is articulated in terms of peaceful, high-quality, sustainable, green development, focusing on advancement without disputes.

There are also allusions to global governance, to international system that China wants to interact with and gradually reform through win-win, fair and honest cooperation internationally to deal with common challenges is stressed as well.

In terms of term frequency, **global** is the most frequent and reflects global governance, peace, (challenges), community, and the positioning of China as a responsible global actor.

The word **social** emphasises social infrastructure and security social systems, such as homelessness, referring to the social policy impact of the form of supervision.

The term **national** focuses on national rejuvenation, strength, security and unity, being consistent with China's modernization objectives.

Security is not being treated only in the sense of traditional security issues, but also in terms of common security, universal security, security cooperation aiming at mitigating both traditional and non-traditional threats.

At the same time, **shared future** is another term that means shared interests, benefits, responsibilities and common aspirations with other countries in order to achieve win-win cooperation.

These **themes constitute a story** - as told through Stone's frame - in which China is an ascending power, dedicated to peaceful development, cooperation and shared global prosperity, not conflict. This is a narrative aimed at reducing external strategic suspicions and create a friendly atmosphere for the stable development of China and its integration into the international system.

Zheng Bijian first presented China's peaceful rise in Foreign Affairs as a new strategic path of modernization that suits her national conditions and conforms to the

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trend of history. He also emphasized that the rise of China would be peaceful. It was to be accomplished through capital, technology and resources acquired through peaceful means as distinct from war or invasion so much. In another vein, Zheng pointed out that China has taken economic globalization onto itself, opening its market and integrating its economy into the world economy as this peaceful process is proceeding. The author is also calling attention also to the fact that China does not want to be hegemonic but seeks a new international political and economic order accomplished in a step-by-step manner by means of democratization in international relations. The idea is to put an end to suspicions and fears about China's rise and promote an international environment of peace and stability helpful for its continued development (Zheng, 2005: 4).

Today, these ingredients still feature in political discourse coming out of China; but they evolve too. 'Peaceful rise' has been cast as 'peaceful development' to underline an ongoing commitment to nonviolence in growth.' Cooperation and mutual benefit remain just as important and is vigorously promoted through projects such as Belt and Road Initiative to bring economic integration together with neighbours for example SouthEastAsian states.

Discursive analysis

Chinese officials, particularly President Xi Jinping, adopt discursive strategies to create an impression of shared values and that China is projecting soft power. The idea, according to Xi's speeches delivered in world forums and communiqués, describes an intricate interlocking network of nations bound by dependence on one another. Through this thinking nations would join together for global cooperation and harmonious world management, based on the foundation of human being's shared destiny and united development goals. **Such language paints China as a responsible leader** for world public opinion and at peace with its neighbours, helping to take the edge off widespread concerns about the country's future due rival powers. On the other hand, by describing China's rise in terms of shared destiny and unity values, Chinese officials hope to raise their moral high ground on the world stage and heighten soft power as a result that is appealing to others.

In general Chinese vision Chinese leaders frequently borrow the phrase from Zheng Bijian, a political adviser to the then president, gave it currency in an article that title to this day adorns Beijing's most prominent Party school. Non-threatening China's development is cast into a formula such as this, The Chinese governments have not signed an instance of This narrative aims to dispel fears and suspicions about China's growing influence and military spending. It also presents China as a peacenik power that, seeks mutual respect, cooperation and win-win results in its relations with other countries including the United States. China emphasizes peaceful development and promotes non-conflict, win-win new kinds of great power relations in hope of creating an environment favorable for its economic advancement as well. This view corresponds with Joseph Nye's idea of soft power, which is the ability to attract others by appealing to them and making one's own cause look attractive. Thus, the 'peaceful rise' discourse at the same time helps China construct soft power for itself by portraying a positive image and winning international recognition as an emergent global power.

While the word frequency analysis and conceptual map highlight how Chinese officials deploy discursive strategies to legitimate the notion of a “peaceful rise,” these speeches do not exist in isolation. In China, academic publishing serves as an important arena where official narratives are echoed, elaborated, and normalized. **To examine**

whether the patterns identified in political speeches are also reinforced at the scholarly level, I analyzed data from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the country's largest academic database. This secondary analysis allows for a comparison between official discourse and academic publishing, illustrating how narratives of development, cooperation, security, and community of common destiny are institutionalized across both political and scholarly domains.

Discursive Convergence: Political Rhetoric and Scholarly Production

The results enhance understanding of discourse, legitimation, and international policy communication by providing a rigorous, replicable means of analyzing elite political language. Beyond its own premises, the research more generally draws attention to the function of discourse as a practice of governance in global politics and the strategic use of language in framing categories, constructing authority and impacting international policy making agendas. The hierarchical structure of discursive themes is shown in **Table 1**, applied to the corpus. The visualization (made with the qualitative research tool Nvivo) brings concepts together under higher thematic additions (themes like Development, Cooperation, Security,), showing the discursive building.

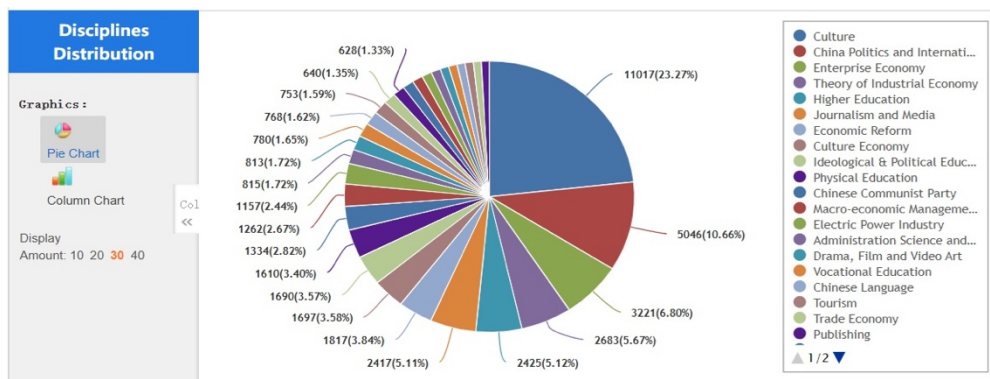
Also looking at the publication trends from CNKI, they demonstrate a dominance of domestic scholarship focusing on soft power (文化软实力), cultural confidence (文化自信), core socialist values, hard power vs. soft power debates, Xi Jinping thought, etc. What we can discern from this is that Chinese academia **reprints and magnifies official discursive priorities**, insinuating them into scholarly and policy discussion. While the state rhetoric highlights the notion of 'share future' and 'community of destiny', the CNKI data shows that scholars spend much of their effort exploring scholarly debates over 'cultural soft power', 'cultural confidence' and 'core socialist values', confirming a scholarly underpinning of state legitimate strategies.

If we take a look at **table 2**, most publications are from **culture (23%)**, politics & international relations (**10.6%**), and economics (**6-7%**). Smaller portions go to **education, journalism, ideology**, etc.

In terms of disciplinary distribution, where research on Chinese soft power and the related are concentrated is presented in Table 2 which indicated that the research is mainly in the fields related to culture and politics as well as there is a notable significance of the economic field. This corresponds to the discursive frames of **development, cooperation**, and **cultural legitimacy** found in official speeches, which indicates that political legitimation of China's peaceful rise is established not only politically but also academically in different pivotal knowledge domains.

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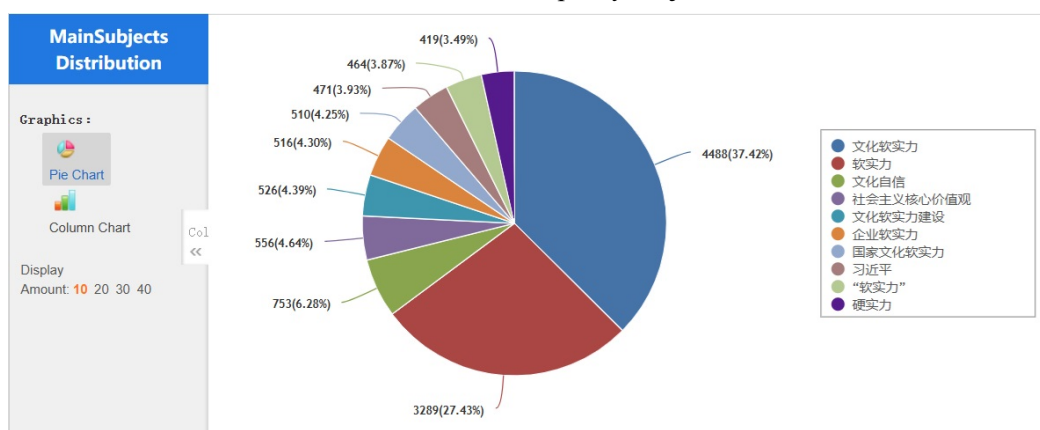
Table 2. Where discourse is located by disciplines²



If we examine the main subjects distribution data shown in Table 3, it is obviously that 文化软实力 (cultural soft power, 37%) and 软实力 (soft power, 27%) are the mainstream subjects, and its proportion have a large lead over other subjects such as 文化自信 (cultural confidence), 社会主义核心价值观 (socialist core values), and even 习近平 (Xi Jinping).

With regard to the subjects, the first category (cultural soft power and soft power in general) is rather dominant among Chinese academic publications, followed by the categories of cultural confidence and socialist core values. These images map onto the legitimating techniques in official discourse, which vacillate between responsibility, values, and shared destiny as the terms through which China's rise is secured as culturally anchored and normatively benign. The rise of 'Xi Jinping' as a keyphrase, moreover, shows how leadership discourse becomes institutionalized in the academy.

Table 3. Core concepts by subjects³



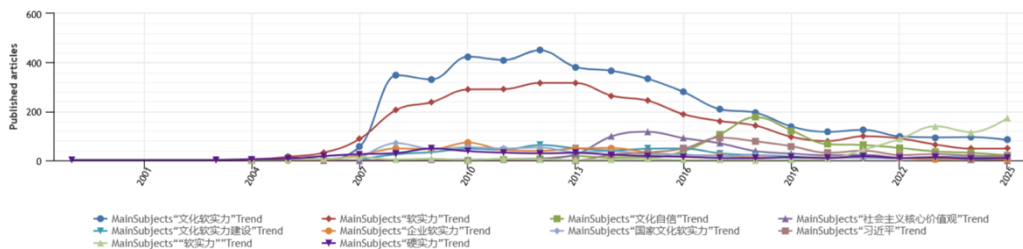
² Available at: <https://oversea.cnki.net/kvisual/article/center?language=EN>

³ Available at: <https://oversea.cnki.net/kvisual/article/center?language=EN>

In terms of trends over time, if we look at **Table 4** we can see that the publications on cultural soft power and soft power rise sharply after 2007, peak around 2012–2016, and then decline slightly.

Cultural confidence, values, and Xi Jinping rise in the later period (post-2016). Therefore, the publication results presented in Table 4 indicate a tendency of time in academic narratives. While scholarly discussions of soft power and cultural soft power were popular in the Hu Jintao era, their heyday is 2012–2016. From 2017 the emphasis changed to cultural confidence, values and direct references to Xi Jinping, mirroring the official explanation of the ‘community of common destiny’ and the concentration on national rejuvenation. This temporal coincidence indicates that academia follows the marching orders of the changing official narratives, and it contributes to **naturalizing China’s peaceful rise across institutional fields**. The aggregated CNKI data seem to indicate that Chinese academic publishing closely reflects the themes that the official discourse elevates to the podium. While the speeches emphasize development, cooperation, and a shared future, academic research tends to focus on culture as a soft power resource and on values and governance. This suggests a wider discourse coalition of political elites and academia within whose symbolic order China’s rise is legitimized, and whose knowledge production it is implicated in.

Table 3. Trends in when and how the emphasis shifted⁴



We can also identify an **outward** vs. **inward** contrast in **discourses**. One important result of this research is the difference between the populations to which 'official' discourse and academic publishing are directed. Chinese leaders' outward-facing speeches are mostly cooperative, defensive, and reassuring, featuring “peaceful rise,” “win-win cooperation” and China’s “global responsibilities.” These narratives are constructed to relieve international apprehension and portray China as a responsible player in global governance. On the contrary, the trends of CNKI academic publications show an internal tendency. Rather, the focus is on “soft power,” “cultural confidence” and the codification of “Xi Jinping Thought” — seemingly less matters of international reassurance than of domestic legitimation. Combined, this dualism indicates that **China’s discursive strategy is bifurcated along two interlinked planes: externally, for**

⁴ Available at: <https://oversea.cnki.net/kvisual/article/center?language=EN>

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proliferating goodwill towards its rise among the world community, and **internally**, for consolidating ideological coherence and legitimacy among China's own academic and political echelons.

What we have is a bifurcated discursive strategy. On the one hand, China's official speeches to the outside world stress cooperation, responsibility and assurance, which help to build an image of China as a peaceful and constructive power. Phraseology such as “peaceful rise,” and a “shared future for mankind” seeks to soothe international nerves and legitimate China's emerging global role in the eyes of foreign publics. Inward-facing academic publishing, however, exposes a different orientation, of valorizing the themes of “soft power,” “cultural confidence,” and the institutionalization of “Xi Jinping Thought.” Through these narratives, ideological legitimacy is generated and national identity is reinforced. Together, this double image is a way of showing that China's discursive legitimation performs a two-way work, inside and out: telling the world that it is benign to reassure that it is benign, and domestically just reminding itself of the continuing power and attraction of its political and cultural model.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this paper aimed to demonstrate that Chinese official discourse and academic publication function as two interlocking sites of legitimation. We identified an externally facing unity narrative of cooperation and reassurance organised around four themes, development, cooperation, security and shared future. In contrast, CNKI publication trends indicate an inward-looking orientation, featuring soft power, cultural confidence and Xi Jinping thought institutionalization. The findings are combined to suggest a two pronged legitimation strategy: externally to soothe international audiences around China's peaceful rise and internally to strengthen ideological commonality and cultural credibil

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Appendix 1. List of Chinese Official Discourses Analyzed

No.	Title	Date	Available at
1	<i>Full text of Xi Jinping's report at 19th CPC National Congress</i>	18/10/2017	
2	<i>Xi urges Inner Mongolia to pursue green development</i>	6/9/2023	https://english.news.cn/20230609/b7db4fe66d674641a2cf5745a99e26dc/c.html
3	<i>Xi stresses solidarity of Chinese at home and abroad for national rejuvenation</i>	31/07/2022	https://english.news.cn/20220731/aafd9b23b3804dbabf79d981b585d0a0/c.html
4	<i>Xi stresses forging strong sense of community for Chinese nation and promoting the high-quality development (...)</i>	29/10/2023	https://english.news.cn/20231029/cee1d7a28409444183d966887252bdd4/c.html
5	<i>Xi stresses building Beautiful China</i>	19/07/2023	https://english.news.cn/20230718/2d45eb1630564bd3a189eecd8e724451/c.html
6	<i>Xi speech at China-Central Asia Summit</i>	19/05/2023	https://english.news.cn/20230519/cc4d7aceacbb4465a71f3c27d728569b/c.html
7	<i>Xi sends congratulatory letter to first Forum on Building up China</i>	8/06/2023	https://english.news.cn/20230608/37660f1ef22b4b05a50478503f01e2a6/c.html
8	<i>Xi makes instructions on work of public communication, culture, 2023-10-09</i>	9/10/2023	https://english.news.cn/20231009/fb43dc9b5b4546f5a473964f422b5eae/c.html
9	<i>Xi Jinping's remarks at 13th BRICS Summit</i>	9/9/2021	http://en.cppcc.gov.cn/2021-09/10/c_659433.htm
10	<i>Xi Jinping writes foreword to the Revitalization Library</i>	27/09/2022	https://english.news.cn/20220927/aaa2709c58934dfaec3052cdb984ca77/c.html
11	<i>Xi Jinping speech 20th national congress</i>	23/10/2022	https://english.news.cn/20221023/6088cccfb67c4e938e91d53f2050f47c/c.html
12	<i>Xi Jinping replies to letter from Beijing Normal University students</i>	8/9/2022	https://english.news.cn/20220908/e81164eb7ef1408895aa288c4a4242d2/c.html
13	<i>Xi Jinping at the welcoming banquet of the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022</i>	5/2/2022	https://english.news.cn/20220205/93c534dec7064aadaa31f391ffb778cd/c.html
14	<i>Xi Jinping at the Virtual Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations Between China and Central Asian Countries</i>	25/01/2022	https://english.news.cn/20220125/3227dd74149e43bf89507f382e1451b4/c.html
15	<i>Xi hosts High-level Dialogue on Global Development</i>	24/06/2022	https://english.news.cn/20220624/b373551325e8468c976463eb9e33b9e7/c.html
16	<i>Xi Focus Xi addresses 3rd Paris Peace Forum</i>	12/11/2020	http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2020-11/13/c_563442.htm
17	<i>Xi calls on National Art Museum of China to develop itself into art venue that enjoys national</i>	23/05/2023	https://english.news.cn/20230523/318453de11604fff89e2d8712fb67673/c.html
18	<i>Xi calls on Communist Youth League to shoulder missions</i>	27/06/2023	https://english.news.cn/20230627/b09c99ae6bef463ab909610534c97810/c.html
19	<i>Xi calls for more innovations in Party theories</i>	2/7/2023	https://english.news.cn/20230702/d9a9f9f6255f4cc796480289d8190e87/c.html
20	<i>Xi calls for efforts to pursue harmony between humanity and nature on Environment Day 2022</i>	6/6/2022	https://english.news.cn/20220606/52fe8db52ac148e2978b0b881bb9d144/c.html
21	<i>Xi calls for efforts to build modern Chinese civilization</i>	3/6/2023	https://english.news.cn/20230603/197012efecbf4a34992b6df61a05310c/c.html

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22	<i>Xi calls for advancing study of Chinese civilization</i>	29/05/2022	https://english.news.cn/20220529/a6f4d37f3e90465e88922e611b6e3d4c/c.html
23	<i>Xi calls for accelerated efforts to build leading country in education</i>	30/05/2023	https://english.news.cn/20230530/fd324abc7d044e4aae0387990ac1ff1d/c.html
24	<i>Summit of the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity</i>	12/10/2021	https://english.news.cn/20211015/C99FC9846160000159DB7DF088B3DD60/c.html
25	<i>Statement by Chinese Ambassador ZHANG Yishan at the 58th</i>	31/10/2003	http://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/chinaandun/socialhr/interreligious
26	<i>Speech By President Xi Jinping At the United Nations Office at Geneva</i>	23/01/2017	http://iq.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zygx/201701/t20170123_2309166.htm
27	<i>Remarks by Xi Jinping at the APEC Informal Economic Leaders' Retreat</i>	16/07/2021	https://english.news.cn/20211015/C99FC9841C200001EC4D16E7A020106D/c.html
28	<i>Remarks by H.E. Xi Jinping summit on climate 2021</i>	22/04/2021	http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-04/22/c_139899289.htm
29	<i>Remarks by H.E. Xi Jinping global health summit 2021 mai</i>	21/05/2021	http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-05/21/c_139961512.htm
30	<i>Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the BRICS-Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogue</i>	24/08/2023	http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2023-08/25/c_931796.htm
31	<i>Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the 15th BRICS Summit</i>	23/08/2023	https://english.news.cn/20230823/54dbd48e5e4f40f7bc2f15a1a7a3ab59/c.html
32	<i>Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the 14th BRICS Summit</i>	23/06/2022	https://english.news.cn/20220623/d001e1a37c0f40a8acf0e77070b8c256/c.html
33	<i>President Xi voices confirmation in implementing Paris Agreement, improving global climate governance</i>	13/12/2020	https://english.news.cn/20211015/C99FC9854CC000014AC418004390E2B0/c.html
34	<i>President Xi Jinping addresses the General Debate of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly</i>	29/09/2015	http://il.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/gdxw/201509/t20150930_1876030.htm
35	<i>President of the People's Republic of China</i>	17/09/2021	http://jm.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw/202109/t20210917_10213883.htm
36	<i>Opening Ceremony of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation 2023</i>	18/10/2023	https://english.news.cn/20231018/7bfc16ac51d443c6a7a00ce25c972104/c.html
37	<i>new year address 2022 xi</i>	31/12/2021	https://english.news.cn/20211231/86de17bebbc1423e824f21fcf9e928be/c.html
38	<i>Keynote speech by President Xi Jinping at Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity Against COVID-19</i>	18/06/2020	https://english.news.cn/20211015/C99FC98542300001A39D1CD01A601198/c.html
39	<i>Keynote Speech by H</i>	3/9/2016	https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/topics_665678/2016zt/XJPCXBZCESGJTLDRD SYCFH
40	<i>Jointly Shoulder Responsibility of Our Times</i>	17/01/2017	https://america.cgtn.com/2017/01/17/full-text-of-xi-jinping-keynote-at-the-world-economic-forum
41	<i>Full Text Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping at Climate Ambition Summit</i>	12/12/2020	http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-12/12/c_139584803.htm
42	<i>Full Text Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping at 12th BRICS Summit</i>	17/11/2020	https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/202011/t20201117_678932.html
43	<i>Full text of Xi written speech at APEC CEO Summit</i>	18/11/2022	https://english.news.cn/20221118/51aa3b401dba4c72b1ccbb6896517250/c.html

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44	<i>Full text of Xiat Session I of G20 summit in Bali</i>	15/11/2022	https://english.news.cn/20221115/323e30b92da9488daaa4781d748d3754/c.html
45	<i>Full text of Xi Jinping's speech at Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics review and awards ceremony</i>	9/4/2022	https://english.news.cn/20220409/75923c661af74afcbcf67d6625b44877/c.html
46	<i>Full text of Xi Jinping speech at China-Arab States Summit</i>	10/12/2022	https://english.news.cn/20221210/9c4e2500c7da4a6b84f1b57bfb64ef9/c.html
47	<i>Full text of Xi Jinping Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity</i>	16/12/2022	https://english.news.cn/20221216/c67723a3dec44ca8936bc1614034c066/c.html
48	<i>Full text of Xi Jinping</i>	14/08/2022	https://english.news.cn/20220814/d94f3d1f0d4b4f65aff2553139de54a3/c.html
49	<i>Full text of Xi congratulatory letter to first Forum on Building up China's Cultural Strength</i>	8/6/2023	https://english.news.cn/20230608/da4a7bec1da44e85af268aaf1458fae9/c.html
50	<i>Full text of Chinese president's speech at BRICS Business Forum in South Africa 2018</i>	25/07/2018	http://english.scio.gov.cn/featured/xigovernance/2018-07/26/content_57825940.htm
51	<i>Full text of Chinese president's remarks at BRICS Brasilia Summit</i>	15/11/2019	https://english.news.cn/20211015/C99FC98534C00001EC4810A719D9D930/c.html
52	<i>Full text of Chinese President Xi's speech at 17th SCO summit</i>	9/6/2017	https://english.news.cn/20211015/C99FC98524E0000172D310801A495E30/c.html
53	<i>Full text of Chinese President Xi's address at APEC CEO Summit</i>	11/11/2017	https://english.news.cn/20211015/C99FC9852600000145FB1EC54DD81B67/c.html
54	<i>discourse 8th FOCAC ministerial conference Xi</i>	29/11/2021	https://www.mfa.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202111/t20211129_10458609.html
55	<i>congratulatory letter to forum on civilization and sinology</i>	4/7/2023	https://english.news.cn/20230704/69dfb928064b402aa3e44c1d93b38dae/c.html
56	<i>Concept Paper Global Security initiative</i>	21/02/2023	https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230221_11028348.html
57	<i>Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a keynote address at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High BRICS Summit</i>	15/03/2023	http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2023-03/16/content_85171478.htm
58		3/9/2017	http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-09/03/c_136580184.htm
59	<i>BRF(2023) Full text of Xi Jinping's keynote speech at 3rd Belt and Road Forum for Int'l Cooperation</i>	18/10/2023	https://english.news.cn/20231018/7bfc16ac51d443c6a7a00ce25c972104/c.html
60	<i>At the 23rd Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization xi</i>	4/7/2023	https://english.news.cn/20230704/c69c87e6ebcc4dfc8b20fe0c0880ea17/c.html

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Realism in international relations, from classicism to current affairs in the Putin- Trump era

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Abstract:

Within the study of international relations there are many ideologies analyzing the state foreign affairs, whether the theory is liberalism, Marxism, constructivism, or any of the others, realism in international relations is still one of the most dominant theories. Since World War II, realism has been considered the most dominant school of thought, and it remains an ever-present in twenty-first century politics. The theory of realism consists of several outlines: International politics is anarchic, sovereign states are main actors in international politics; states are acting under their own national interests; the state's primary goals are its own national security and survival and national power and capabilities are a key test. So, in times of war, states will speak and act as one with their own national interests in mind. Realists believe that conflict will always be a part of world events and international relations; as governments pursue their national interests, they will inevitably come into conflict with one another. This conflict will occasionally be played out in military terms, which raises the prospect of war. Realism often proves to be just as conditioned in practice as any other mode of cognition. In contemporary times, the realist school of thought comes into the limelight with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Offensive realists like John Mearsheimer blamed the west and its military arm NATO for the Russian actions. He blamed the US and its European allies for provoking the Kremlin by expanding the membership of NATO by incorporating members like Ukraine and Finland. He sympathizes with Russia's action to defend its national interest and sovereignty.

Keywords: *International relations, realism, diplomacy, balance of powers.*

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Realism in international relations, from classicism to current affairs in the Putin-Trump era

The recent tensions on the international scene provide us with yet another opportunity to relaunch the analysis of the relevance of the theory of realism. This theory, although it is the most popular school of thought in international relations, is also the oldest and, although it emphasizes the state as the main actor in international relations in the present world, dominated by civilization, communication and diplomacy. Let us recall that the perspective of realism states that, in achieving the national interest, the state must assert its position within an anarchic international system in order to establish and maintain its power.

In the context of actions aimed at ensuring peace and security, realism believes that conflict cannot be avoided due to the struggle for power between states or communities, and there is no higher authority and legal system that can regulate the state. Therefore, to prevent threats from other states, the state must increase its military capacity. Realists believe that a state should not depend on other states. This is based on the assumption that there are no permanent friends or enemies, and “if you want peace, prepare for war.” Therefore, military capacity is necessary as an absolute condition that a state must have to maintain its security.

An important component of realist theory is human nature. Realism assumes that the conflict world is influenced by the imperfection of people, who are born into a conflict situation. In this case, the behavior of a state in its interaction with other states is influenced by basic human characteristics, which is why realists tend to be pessimistic about the role of morality and good intentions in achieving world peace.

The end of the Cold War, namely the end of the military rivalry between the two world powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, opened up new hope for a better world. At the dawn of those new realities, it was hoped that countries would tend to prioritize cooperation and peace and focus on non-military issues. Levers appeared to expand all forms of economic, scientific, cultural, etc. cooperation.

But this period did not last long. We can now see a reversal in efforts to reduce nuclear weapons compared to the past 30 years. Currently, the number of nuclear warheads in the world is still very high, at around 12,500 warheads by early 2023, and over the past eight years, global military spending has increased significantly. This shows that there is a trend for countries to maintain and increase their armament capacity. Moreover, given the current conflict situation, there is the potential to further force countries to increase their military capacity in order to maintain their security.

Recently, conflicts between countries have become more common in various regions. States engage in conflicts to gain power by employing military force. In addition, some countries are currently trying to increase their military capacity to ensure that their countries are safe from threats from other countries. This behavior indicates that military issues are still important in interactions between states, and the competition of military power for power is still a concern for some large states. In this case, the predictions of the post-Cold War world are at odds with the current world situation.

For example, in the Middle East, the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Palestine, is a conflict that has involved massive military force, missiles and the development of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), a type of weapon operated by a satellite navigation system with video cameras and radio networks, which confirms that Hamas is making efforts to increase its military capacity in order to compete with Israel, one of the states with enormous military capacity (among the 20 countries with the best air power in the world, ranked 12th in the top of land powers, 50 countries with the best

maritime power and in the top 10 arms exporters in the world, holder of approximately 90 nuclear warheads).

In other regions, such as Africa, the same phenomenon is manifested, conflicts related to the struggle for power appear everywhere, indicating behaviors specific to the struggle for power. In recent years, cases of military coups in Africa have become more frequent, confirming the struggle for power coupled with increased spending on military forces and arms purchases.

Another case, in Europe, is the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The discourse that Ukraine's membership in NATO poses a threat to Russia's security is a factor in the conflict. Vladimir Putin has stated that "Russia is ready for war against NATO." Such narratives ultimately reinforce the realist principle "If you want peace, prepare for war."

The relevance of realism in this case must also be examined from the involvement of many actors, including NATO member states, in this conflict, where they demonstrate attitudes and actions according to which military power is still the main force. On the other hand, Russia is the state with the second most powerful army in the world, after the United States. Its military budget is also growing every year. Currently, we also observe a competition between the United States and China. Even if there has been no physical confrontation through military attacks, there are indications that both countries are trying to establish their military capacity. The development of China's army is part of an effort to counter or balance the United States and its allies.

The above cases are just a few of the many incidents that indicate that realism is still relevant in today's world. There is still much evidence that indicates that after the Cold War, instead of minimizing the development of weapons, countries have actually increasingly engaged in arms races. In addition to ensuring national security, measures to increase weapons are part of the state's efforts to gain power. Because it cannot be denied that a good military capability is a considerable bargaining position for a country in its interactions with other countries, in order to achieve other national interests (hegemony, economy, politics, geopolitics, etc.).

Many of these conflicts can be explained by analyzing realist theory, the predominant concept being "statism", which means that "the state is the preeminent actor, and all other actors in world politics are of lesser importance" (Dunne & Schmidt, 2008: 103). Realists believe that states have the highest authority in the international system, given the condition of anarchy, states are the ones who form international organizations, and, consequently, have an influence on their actions.

A relevant example in this regard is the actions of Russia, which, together with China, as permanent members of the Security Council, rejected three UN resolutions aimed at sanctioning the Syrian regime and ending the violence. As a result, these states had the necessary influence to block the United Nations support for foreign military intervention in Syria. The Russian political class attaches great importance to sovereignty and illustrates this point with statements such as: "The Kremlin tells the world that neither the UN nor any other body or group of countries has the right to decide who should or should not govern a sovereign state."

The realist claim that states are selfish can help to provide a deeper analysis of the reasons behind the above-mentioned decisions. In the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 on Libya (adopted in 2011), Russia abstained. Its neutral status in this conflict can be explained by its lack of interests in the North African country. As for Syria, the Eastern European state has several major interests, one of which is maintaining a high

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level of ammunition exports to the Syrian army, which would have weakened if the conflict had stopped (Rosenberg, 2012), therefore, it pursued its own enrichment to the detriment of humanitarian intervention, which coincides with the realist-Machiavellian principle of pursuing self-interest.

But not only economic reasons justify such a position, but also the need of man and implicitly of the states of power, called by Morgenthau as "animus dominandi". Moreover, analysts have assessed that Syria is the only country in the Middle East where Russia exercises a certain tangible influence.

As such, we can consider that what influences the behavior of states is the need to satisfy the need for power and influence, as realists believe.

On the other hand, we cannot limit ourselves to explaining Russia's actions only by its desire for power and greatness. For Russia, even global influence is relevant and it acts on the principle: "the enemy of my enemy is my friend". Russia's geostrategic interest in Syria, in the Middle East, for example, close to Iran, is determined by the complexity of the relations between Moscow and Tehran, the two having in common both economic cooperation and the attitude towards America and "a common fear of radical Sunni Islamist movements, such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban" (Katz, 2012).

Regarding the United States-Russia relationship, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it can be observed that the animosities of the Cold War still reign. Between 1947 and 1991, the international system was characterized by bipolarity; Russia and the United States of America had the status of superpowers and, as the realist John Mearsheimer (1990: 36) appreciated, due to the balance of power determined by the bipolar system, "the post-war era, the Cold War period, was much more peaceful".

Instead, the last decade has led to a multipolar global reality, shaken by several violent conflicts, which to some extent confirm Mearsheimer's theses about the effectiveness of bipolarity in maintaining discipline. Some authors believe that the current international system does not imply the concept of "superpower", given the power that China has acquired, and not only from an economic point of view, but also the power of the European Union which leaves its mark on the stability of international relations with regard to its member states. However, Russia seems to continue its opposition to the US in the potential pursuit of this title or, rather, of the restoration of its position as a great power, a phenomenon some authors call "empire nostalgia". As previous said, Russia is taking measures to maintain its influence over areas such as Syria and Iran, which risk undergoing changes in favor of the United States.

Russia's interest in the Iranian issue also stems from Iran's nuclear policy, a program begun in the 1950s, canceled after the Islamic revolution of 1979 and then resumed in the final part of the war against Iraq, a policy that can be considered in accordance with Machiavellian principles, which focus on prudence and foresight, arguing that a state should "reject any threat posed by its neighbors" (Jackson & Sørensen, 1999: 73). In fact, it is also the argument used by Putin when he considers the expansion of NATO's eastern border a direct threat, although the alliance has a defensive purpose.

Moreover, in all current conflicts around the world, we can observe the antagonism between the great powers, which position themselves in one way or another towards the participants, in relation to both the economic interests they have but also to maximize a state's chances of success and thus impose its position as an influential state, a relevant political power at the global level, by counterbalancing its opponent.

Currently, Iran's main regional adversary is Israel, which is widely believed to possess nuclear energy, although its nuclear capability is arguably the most secretive

weapons of mass destruction program in the world. Each of the two states cites maximizing security and civilian purposes as justification for nuclear proliferation, however, this explanation is strongly questioned by the rest of the world, including organizations such as the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency. Each state views its respective nuclear program as a threat to its existence, a behavior perfectly described by one of the most famous realist statesmen, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck: "The great problems of our time will not be solved by resolutions and majority votes, but by blood and iron."

Practically, extending the analysis from the Middle East to the entire globe, we can appreciate that the aspiration or reality of possessing nuclear weapons can be seen as a desire to impose one's authority and gain regional hegemony, as well as the need to be recognized as a key international actor. The interests of states are to use military capabilities (even nuclear ones) to guarantee their regional and international status, as well as self-sufficient security and stability. As Carr stated, "if your power is recognized, you can generally achieve your objectives without having to use it."

In a realist view of international relations, characterized by an anarchic world, it is expected that states that are capable of competing for hegemony will adopt a revisionist policy, seeking to modify the existing international order. According to realist theory, such revisionist behavior is not only inevitable, but also constitutes the foundation of the security strategy of many global powers. John Mearsheimer (2001), one of the most influential theorists of offensive realism, argues that this behavior is inevitable in an international system characterized by anarchy, where each state acts in its own interest and seeks to maximize its security, often through competitiveness and aggression. In this context, Russia's foreign policy since 2007 can be understood as a clear manifestation of a revisionist strategy, aimed at recovering Moscow's great power status, both regionally and on the global stage.

In the post-Cold War period, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia faced a geopolitical reality significantly different from that of the Soviet period. The world moved from a bipolar order, dominated by the USA and the USSR, to a unipolar one, in which the United States became the main global actor. This was also the moment when NATO, an organization created to counter Soviet influence in Europe, began an accelerated process of expansion towards the East. By the early 2000s, this process was already considered by Moscow as a major challenge to its national security and was interpreted as a policy of gradually removing Russia from its traditional geopolitical influence.

For many authors, the end of the cold war did not change the reality: big, powerful states continue to dominate, seize power, and small states tolerate this behavior. When you have a neighbor that is stronger than you, you invest more in defense to balance the danger, you turn to external balancing, alignment with other states, or you resort to what realist theorists call bandwagoning. The liberal theorists believed that the threat that Putin feels is that, if the Ukrainian model were to succeed - a former Soviet state that becomes a democratic state governed by the rule of law and follows the path of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, this would demonstrate the success of this model and would abolish all Russian conceptions on maintaining an autocracy and economic dependence on the Russian Federation (Călin, L. 2003: 118).

NATO expansion was seen by Russian authorities as a direct threat that could destabilize the regional balance of power. Russia has consistently contested the expansion,

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viewing it as an act of subtle aggression, and Russian officials have made numerous calls to halt the process. In 2004, when NATO accepted former Soviet bloc states such as Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, as well as other former Soviet republics, into its ranks, Moscow interpreted this as a violation of implicit agreements that were supposed to ensure stability in post-Cold War Europe.

Thucydides' classic statement, "The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must," remains a relevant explanatory principle for the behavior of states in an anarchic international system. This observation was first formulated in the context of the Peloponnesian War, but it is also applicable to the analysis of Russia's behavior in its relations with the West over the past two decades. In the case of Russia, this type of reasoning has materialized in a series of political and military actions aimed at consolidating a regional sphere of influence, especially in neighboring regions. These actions can be seen as a reaction to the fear that the expansion of Western influence threatens Russia's internal stability and external security.

As Mearsheimer (2001) has pointed out, "states act in their national interest, and this often involves a policy of confrontation and power maximization." In this context, Russia began to adopt a foreign policy increasingly oriented towards regaining its superpower status, and this process was accompanied by a series of provocative actions in the field of security and international relations.

To better understand Russia's foreign policy, we must also examine the internal factors that contributed to Russia's aggressive rise under Putin. After 1991, Russia went through a period of economic and political instability, during which Putin managed to consolidate control over the state and restore Russia's image as a great power. In this context, geopolitical expansion became a means of consolidating domestic authority. In addition, the success of military actions in Georgia and Ukraine strengthened Putin's position both domestically and internationally.

Russia has also used economic and political instruments to achieve its goals in Ukraine. For example, in the run-up to the Ukraine crisis, Moscow exerted economic pressure on Ukraine by concluding favorable trade agreements to limit its rapprochement with the European Union. When Ukraine refused to sign the association agreement with the EU, Russia was prepared to intervene militarily to prevent Ukraine's territorial integrity and to prevent the advance of Western influence in the region.

The conflict in Ukraine has been marked by Russia's mixed approach, combining conventional warfare with hybrid warfare techniques. In this regard, Russia has used a combination of direct (through military forces) and indirect (through support for separatist groups and cyber attacks) interventions to destabilize Ukraine. Thus, the annexation of Crimea and support for rebels in Donbas were just some of the manifestations of this type of conflict.

From a realistic perspective, the use of hybrid warfare can be seen as a way for Russia to test the limits of international responses and evaluate strategies to maximize gains and minimize risks. Russia has also tested NATO solidarity by provoking reactions from the Alliance on the military and economic fronts. Despite international sanctions, Russia has not only managed to maintain its influence in Ukraine, but has also consolidated its status as a regional great power vis-à-vis the West.

One of the most significant examples of this revisionist policy was the 2008 war in Georgia. Georgia, a former Soviet republic, began to make significant progress towards integration into Western international structures, including NATO. In this context, Russia reacted quickly and militarily, intervening in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South

Ossetia. This was not just a response to Georgia's actions, but a direct action to prevent NATO expansion in its vicinity and to strengthen its influence over a region that was considered part of Moscow's "sphere of influence".

In 2014, Russia launched another decisive action that had a significant global impact: the annexation of Crimea. This action was perceived by most Western countries as a serious violation of international law, and the response was prompt, with the imposition of drastic economic sanctions. The annexation of Crimea had not only a major geopolitical impact, but also a profound effect on international relations, consolidating Vladimir Putin with considerable domestic political capital, in the context of a Russia that still felt humiliated by the loss of its great power status after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Another significant moment in the analysis of Russia's revisionist behavior was the Ukraine Crisis, which occurred in late 2013 and early 2014. Ukraine, another former Soviet state, tried to regulate its foreign relations in a balanced manner, caught between Moscow's influence and the desire for integration into European structures. When former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich abandoned an association agreement with the European Union and chose to align with Russia, mass protests in Ukraine led to the overthrow of his regime. This change was seen by the Kremlin as a loss of important strategic influence, and Russia reacted with a combination of direct military intervention and support for pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.

This intervention was not only a reaction to internal events in Ukraine, but also a strategic action, aimed at protecting Russia's interest in maintaining a sphere of influence and preventing a possible NATO expansion into Ukraine. As Mearsheimer (2014) points out, NATO's expansionist policy in the East was a key factor determining Russia's revisionist behavior, and Ukraine's integration into Western structures was seen by the Kremlin as a direct threat.

As for Russia's position regarding the conflict in Ukraine, it is important to note the statement of the President of Russia about the state of the nation in front of the Federal Assembly, a speech that became famous because it refers to the "red lines" that must not be crossed. "As for the red lines, they are obvious. First of all, it is about our national interests, the interests of our external security, the interests of our internal security and not admitting any interference (...) in our elections or in other political processes. It is about the non-acceptance of an offensive discussion with our country, the non-acceptance of damage to the economic interests of our country". He warned the West that it would "regret" any provocation against Russian interests and said Moscow's response would be "swift and tough". (Călin L, 2003, p.116)

NATO expansion was perceived by Russia not only as a military threat, but also as a psychological threat, undermining Russia's great power status. After NATO absorbed the Central and Eastern European countries, Romania, and Poland, Russia felt increasingly marginalized, and Ukraine became a geopolitical battleground between Russia and the West. The "window of opportunity" policy was implemented by Putin as a way to counter this process, strengthening control over regions near Ukraine and, eventually, annexing Crimea.

Another important aspect of Russia's revisionist behavior has been the adoption of hybrid warfare and cyberwarfare strategies, through which Moscow has sought to exert influence without engaging in direct, large-scale conflict. Russia has used tactics of indirect intervention in Western states through cyberwarfare, information manipulation, and support for pro-Russian political groups in European countries and the United States.

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These “covert warfare” methods have been amplified by increasingly advanced technology and have become a defining feature of Russia’s security strategy. Russian interference in the 2016 United States elections and in electoral processes in the European Union has underscored this revisionist behavior, in which Moscow has sought to influence the policy decisions of Western states and destabilize liberal democracies. Russia’s involvement in conflicts in the Middle East, particularly in Syria, has also been a way to strengthen its international presence and test the limits of international responses to its aggressive foreign policy.

Thus, Russia’s foreign policy over the past twenty years has been perfectly aligned with the principles of offensive realism. Russia has actively sought to redefine its position in the international order through a combination of military actions, aggressive diplomatic strategies, and hybrid warfare tactics. Its actions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Crimea reflect Moscow’s desire to regain its status as a regional and global great power. In an increasingly unstable world characterized by intensified global competition for supremacy, Russia continues to test the international system, not only through overt actions, but also by constantly assessing the reactions of Western states.

NATO expansion and the Western policy of integrating the former Soviet republics into international structures are seen by Moscow as an existential threat, and Russia’s revisionist behavior can be understood as a direct response to these challenges. While the West continues to promote values such as democracy and human rights, Russia opts for a strategy based on power, security, and the protection of its strategic interests. In this sense, Russia’s foreign policy remains a major factor of instability in international relations and will continue to play a significant role in the geopolitical patterns of the future.

The United States and Europe responded with sanctions and condemnation, as well as the strengthening of NATO in Eastern Europe, but did little or nothing to defeat Russia. NATO is currently struggling, with the Trump administration questioning its very existence. There are also doubts that the United States under Trump would defend smaller countries, such as the Baltic states, in the event of a Russian invasion, invoking Article 5 of the NATO charter.

The Trump administration has provided ample evidence in favor of the US withdrawal from the Middle East. While he strongly supports Israel and maintains a friendship with Saudi Arabia, Trump condemns Iran and withdrew the US from the nuclear deal.

Russia achieved its objectives by occupying Crimea, violating NATO air and maritime space, compromising sovereignty in a number of areas, and achieving significant progress in the Middle East.

One of the main effects of the Ukrainian crisis was the polarization of international relations between Russia and the West, and in particular with the United States and the European Union. After the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the outbreak of war in eastern Ukraine, NATO responded with economic sanctions and a series of measures to strengthen the Alliance’s eastern flank. The Baltic states, Poland and Romania were among the first countries to call for a reinforcement of NATO’s military presence in the region, given their proximity to Russia and the perception of possible aggression. These measures to strengthen the eastern flank were criticized by Moscow, which considered these actions a form of direct provocation and a violation of previous agreements, which stated that NATO would not replace the Soviet Union in the region.

Moreover, the crisis in Ukraine highlighted the vulnerability of some political regimes in the former Soviet republics, and in this context, NATO had to adopt a strategy to protect the states in Eastern Europe, and increasing defense spending in these states became a priority.

The Ukraine crisis has had another important effect: strengthening relations between Russia and China. Although the two powers have had differences in the past, especially in their approach to the Central Asian region, Ukraine has become a point of convergence in the context of Western pressure on both states. Russia, isolated by the West due to economic sanctions, has sought a strategic partnership with China, which has a similar vision of a multipolar international system and the rejection of American hegemony. In this regard, Russia and China have strengthened economic relations, including by signing important agreements in the energy field (such as the Power of Siberia gas pipeline) and security cooperation.

The European Union has had a complex position on the Ukraine crisis. On the one hand, many EU members supported Ukraine's integration into European structures, such as the European Union and NATO. On the other hand, the EU was divided on whether to adopt tougher measures against Russia. Germany and France took a more balanced approach, supporting diplomatic dialogue and avoiding escalating the conflict. However, the economic sanctions imposed by the EU on Russia have had a significant impact on the Russian economy, but have also raised questions about the effectiveness of these measures in inducing a

With the decline of liberal internationalism, Russia is facing an emerging new world order. Uncertain about what the new world will look like, how it will function, and what other state responses will be, Russian foreign policy has begun a series of tests to determine what is developing. These tests have included conflict, diplomacy, subterfuge, provocation, economic measures, cyberattacks, and the use of other resources. Most significantly, the tests have involved moving troops into Ukraine, occupying Crimea, providing military and financial support to the Syrian leader, challenging NATO by air and sea, re-engaging in North Korea and Afghanistan, and questioning the legitimacy of Western elections. The creation of Syria as a client state was a major victory that allowed Russia to claim great power status, acquire naval and air bases in the Mediterranean, and gain a prominent position in the Middle East. It won because of the lack of response from both the United States and Western Europe. Sanctions have hurt the Russian economy, but they have failed to bring about behavioral changes. In fact, they have encouraged Putin to intensify these negative actions.

Despite the realist approach to the Ukrainian crisis, it is important to consider other theoretical perspectives, which bring valid arguments and contribute to a more complex understanding of the conflict.

A different approach would be the liberal perspective, which argues that conflicts can be prevented through economic and institutional integration of states. According to this theory, economic cooperation and political integration between states reduce the risks of conflict, since states that are economically interdependent are less likely to go to war with each other. In the case of Ukraine, some analysts suggest that if Ukraine had been better integrated into international economic structures, such as the European Union, conflict would have been less likely. However, this view underestimates the role of security in international relations and the complexity of the integration process.

In contrast, the constructivist perspective would emphasize national identities and conflicting perceptions between different state groups. Thus, the crisis in Ukraine could

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be seen not only as a competition for geopolitical influence, but also as a confrontation between two opposing national identities: a pro-Western one, represented by one part of Ukraine, and a pro-Russian one, represented by the other part of the country. From this point of view, the crisis can be seen more as a struggle to reconstruct a national identity in the face of external influence and internal fragmentation.

Another point of view would be that of resource geopolitics, which suggests that the reason why Russia and the West are confronting each other in Ukraine is related not only to military security, but also to access to vital economic resources. Ukraine is a country that plays a key role in the transit of natural gas from Russia to Europe, but also in ensuring the supply of grain, natural resources being a central element in international geopolitics. Therefore, control over Ukraine can be interpreted as a competition for control of economic resources, but also as an attempt to maintain influence over strategic regions.

In conclusion, it can be said that although it is difficult to determine which theoretical perspective most accurately explains the events taking place at the international level, realism makes a major contribution to understanding the current situation in international relations. Realism investigates the complex motives behind the actions of international actors, thus helping to understand the causes of conflicts and crucial decisions in world politics. Through the case studies presented, this essay has demonstrated that realist concepts such as state supremacy, self-interest, desire for power, balance of power, and security can be used effectively in the analysis of contemporary events. Overall, recent and ongoing events can be clearly understood if they are studied through the lens of this critical explanatory and practical approach.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Transactional Realism - recasting power as bargain. The diplomatic strategy of the United States in relation with the Russia-Ukraine war

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Abstract:

This paper highlights features of a possible transactional realism variant, a new mutation of the realism school of international relations, that deals foreign policy as sequences of explicit bargains, encapsulating characteristics such as pricing of commitment, conditional reciprocity, and performative sequencing of deal-making as a replacement option for stable strategies or institutionalized rules. By emphasizing the contractual logic of alliances and the interpretative nature of diplomacy, transactional realism allows a more adequate understanding of the act of governing in contemporary times. Built on recent scholarship on transactionalism, updated versions of realism and Trump-era foreign policy directions as main methodology, this article aims to test the approach on 2025 press-documented statements during the second term of U.S. President Donald Trump, on the topic of the Russia–Ukraine war. Drawing on a corpus of speeches, press releases, Oval Office remarks, leader-summit readouts and transcripts, I underlined these new signals of a broader transformation of global order and how they govern the way policymakers frame security guarantees, territorial concessions and alliance burden-sharing. Transactional practices deserve theorization, mainly through an attachment to realism, due to the fact that it explains the form, the content and the timing of policy. Although rich in theoretical propositions, this mutation may present a series of policy risks when we speak about a deals-based order, where market logics cannot be fully integrated into high politics.

Keywords: *transactional, realism, trump, international relations*

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Introduction

The general theory of realism has long provided the dominant mechanism for reflections on international politics, grounding the conduct of states on persistent conditions of anarchy, competition and the permanent seek for security. Throughout history, it showed that the classical emphasis on the tragic struggle for power is not sufficient to explain significant shifts in international relations (IR) and, in this regard, the structural approach was necessary to be integrated in order to adapt to the transformations of world politics. Paradigms evolve in response to empirical issues having their range expanded due to this continuous adapting spectrum. Neoclassical realism occurred as a later and necessary refinement, integrating domestic-level variables due to the fact that the systemic signal is often captured and shaped internally before releasing the external result (Rose, 1998; Ripsman, Taliaferro, & Lobell, 2016). Meanwhile, current developments of global political interests, mainly characterized by the United States's decline in terms of hegemony, the rise of populist leaders and the erosion of multilateral institutions, have highlighted a series of shortcomings of traditional realist models, due to a fertile ground where credibility is being constantly replaced by leverage. Moreover, the end of the bipolar system and the beginning of a uni-multipolar or multipolar system that we are currently witnessing marks also the issue of transactionalism that becomes dominant in contexts of hegemonic withdrawal (Flint, 2025). If we were to search for a scientific anchor when it comes to transactional realism, Chansok's (2025, August 8) illustration of transactional hegemony offers eloquent testimonies in both great-power diplomacy and regional disputes. With a high potential for contagion, leaders sensitive to the idea of Trumpism may act less as watchkeepers of strategic traditions and more as brokers of short-term returns, eroding the normative infrastructure upon which alliances depend. Most of them would be, thus, associated with perpetual short-term negotiations, the subordination of alliances to public conditions and a so-called theatrical staging of diplomacy.

The paper itself does not claim to be exhaustive, but rather to highlight some gaps in international relations theory that can be improved and constantly updated. From a scientific point of view this could lead to another dimension of foreign politics, born at the internal level of analysis, that is insufficiently captured nowadays by classical, structural or even neoclassical realism. Yet, as Sørensen, Møller, and Jackson (2021) reminds us, the history of realism is not one of static orthodoxy or monolithically designs. Thus, an explicitly transactional character of diplomacy could follow a new theoretical recalibration path in response to shifting empirical realities, as both a continuation and also a slight shift from previous realist paradigms. We can remark, nowadays, that the international relations world did not concentrate enough on the ongoing practice embedded in the performative dimensions of diplomacy. In this regard, transactional realism could capture a series of particularities on how this particular external practice is increasingly imitating market interactions and its logic of exchange, from bargains, conditional offers to staged leverage. Donald Trump's presidency, mainly in his second term in office, provides the most salient illustration of these dynamics, as noted in Foreign Policy, "Donald Trump is commonly described as transactional. At some level, however, all leaders are transactional. What defines the U.S. president-elect is his unabashed opportunism, often at the expense of values, alliances and even treaties" (Agrawal, 2025). Furthermore, a recent analysis in *L'ÉPOQUE USA* describes Trump's 2025 foreign policy as "a doctrine of hard leverage, strategic disengagement, and economic self-

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interest” (Kessler, 2025). We can easily observe that the transactional lens could not be dealt solely as an interpretive affair, but much more likely as a rich empirically observable shift in foreign policy behavior, extending this adaptive arc of realism throughout history by incorporating the diplomatic transaction itself as a potential causal mechanism. In this particular case, the deal itself becomes the strategy, although lack predictability, it is unstable and subject to constant renegotiations and further commitments.

This article proposes transactional realism as a theoretical innovation, although not mature enough to be considered a theory of foreign policy in its design but enough to be validated as a new variant for addressing the current gaps in international relations mainly associated with a superpower. While keeping the focus of realism and its foundational assumptions (centrality of states, omnipresent anarchy, primacy of power politics) this new mutation highlights the causal significance of transactional practices drawn from commercial sales, where performance-related liabilities are involved and the sum is regularly renegotiated. These features of transactional realism are bridging the realist thought with insights from transactionalism (Bashirov, 2019; Taim, 2024; Aldhuhoori, 2025) and discourse and practice theory (Hansen, 2006; Adler & Pouliot, 2011). Moreover, Sinkkonen (2018) argues that even in his first term, Donald Trump’s foreign policy cannot be understood within existing categories of realism or liberal institutionalism alone.

The Russia–Ukraine war that begun in 2022 and Trump’s public discourse and interventions from January to August 2025 provide an ideal empirical arena to test these claims, inside a broader tendency in global politics, not just an individual characteristic, but mainly a structural feature where scholars can study the practice of other states who end up imitating the issue of leverage and marketplace of bargains as power. It can be easily observed that a new concern for sovereignty was being coupled with a transactional impulse to monetize affairs. The peculiarities of the beginning of Trump’s second term, especially in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war and considerations regarding NATO, make the logic of transactionalism even more contrasting, where bargains become divisible, contingent and, in some points, revocable. Foreign policy, in this case, cannot be a discreet outcome of the structure, of the systemic imperatives, but much more likely an inside built-up based on iterative practice enacted in public.

A fruitful example is Aldhuhoori’s (2025) way to theorize the middle-power transactionalism, whereas states such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Ukraine pursue security via issue-specific bargains with a hegemon, in this case the United States. On the other hand, it can be acknowledged that Trump did destabilize the traditional categories of IR theory, complicating potential scientific efforts to further analyze his strategies in a balanced manner. The recognition of “amalgamation”, as Sinkkonen (2018) pointed out, does not necessary negate transactional realism, rather it provides starting points of what could be a surface-level diagnosis of hybridity, sacrificing, in some extent parsimony, in order to find mechanisms of integration that offer coherence. When we speak about the economic negotiation literature, building offers is a solid argument in this regard and as Fisher, Ury and Patton (2011) emphasize, successful negotiation is not based at all on a rigid consistency. Furthermore, as stated by Raiffa, Richardson and Metcalfe (2002) the roles of iterative moves, trial balloons and calculated ambiguity are determinant in a negotiation process and I can easily transpose these thoughts in terms of foreign affairs that test the counterpart’s flexibility and the possible range of additional outcomes. On the other hand, as Gavin (2025) and Happer (2025) underline, this form of transitioning inside

the international arena cannot be viewed as a benign instrument of adaptation, but rather a destabilizing force in contrast with norms, institutions and alliances.

The role of transactional realism which I set furthermore is to provide a general account of how bargaining, conditionality and public performance diplomacy are able to build a causal mechanism in this new hegemonic way of dealing with international politics.

Methodology

The methodology associated with this article starts from a clear delimitation and contextualization, an exploratory and political diagnosis approach, without claiming to exhaustively establish a theoretical construct of the caliber of classical realism, neorealism, or neoclassical realism. Instead, the objective is to sequence this new mutation on the international political scene by carefully examining the set of particularities of a diplomatic practice that is by no means negligible, dominant in the wake of a world superpower's behavior and to problematize this issue with a view on theoretical refinement. Thus, this approach, which we have called transactional realism, will be treated as an analytical filter and not as a prescriptive doctrine.

From the outset, the longitudinal discourse analysis will be limited to the period between the start of President Donald Trump's second term and August 2025, a month rich in international events such as the Alaska Summit on August 15 and the meeting of European leaders with President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on August 18. The aim is analytical and exploratory, without any claim to generalization. From the outset, focusing solely on one leader, even if he is the president of a global superpower with a decisive role in foreign policy, is not intended to establish universal laws, ideal types and even cemented concepts, but rather to treat transactional realism from a heuristic perspective. The analytical approach is oriented towards tracking the process and the way in which political discourse translates into actions in the international sphere. By focusing on the sequence of Trump's statements in relation to Zelensky, NATO allies and Vladimir Putin, the research aims to highlight how transactional logic coherently structures otherwise heterogeneous discursive elements.

The time frame established in this case is representative for the analysis itself: the day of Trump's second inauguration marks the moment when the presidential speech becomes a legitimate and effective political discourse, while the deadline, at the end of August, includes a series of important meetings for the logic of resolving the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, including a bilateral Trump-Putin summit, which is eloquent for the steps to be taken. At this stage, the dataset comprises in (i) speeches and primary executive decisions, recorded as such from primary sources but also transcribed by traditional media outlets, and (ii) secondary analyses and reports summarizing policies, decrypting foreign policy discourse, sequencing and contextual interpretation, analyzing all of their chronological content through the lens of the three arrangements that I propose to be defining for transactional realism: **pricing of commitment, conditional reciprocity, and performative sequencing**. The choice of secondary sources reflects an interest in methodological rigor and source reliability. This designation aims to prioritize publications with global coverage, recognized editorial standards, and consistent reporting with accurate data - *Reuters, Associated Press, The New York Times, CNN, Fox News, The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Washington Post, ABC News, CBS News, Foreign Policy and Foreign Affairs, Politico Europe and Politico U.S. (* media outlets)*.

From that period, we have selected only defining moments in American foreign policy and actions, which are not limited to a single month but have specific designations.

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Month / 2025	Primary source (i) – presented below Secondary source (ii) * previous mentioned media outlets	Approach
January	1. <i>The White House</i> (Jan 20): The Inaugural Address. https://www.whitehouse.gov/remarks/2025/01/the-inaugural-address/	The formulation of the strategy begins with a conditional formulation.
February	1. <i>C-SPAN</i> (Feb 28): Full Meeting between President Trump, VP Vance and Ukrainian President Zelensky in Oval Office https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pxbGjvcdyY	Personal diplomacy (Trump–Zelenskyy–Vance) reveals incipient conditionalities and positions of strength.
March	1. <i>Times News</i> (Mar 6): Remarks indicating NATO defense is contingent upon allies' payments. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJh-gHmViUA	NATO commitments become a subject of economic negotiation.
June	1. <i>NATO News Youtube channel</i> - NATO Secretary General with us US President Donald Trump (June 25) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHJGeyP3x20 2. <i>FOX 4 Dallas-Fort Worth</i> (June 25): FULL: Trump at NATO Summit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MeB3kdIpCA	The division of tasks between the US and the EU becomes official doctrine.
August	1. <i>CBS News Transcript</i> (Aug 15): Transcript of the press interaction between Trump and Putin following their Alaska summit (no media Q&A). https://www.cbsnews.com/news/transcript-of-what-putin-trump-said-in-alaska/ 2. <i>The White House Transcript</i> (Aug 18): President Trump participates in multilateral meeting with European leaders — emphasizing conditional support. https://www.whitehouse.gov/videos/president-trump-participates-in-a-multilateral-meeting-with-european-leaders/ 3. <i>The White House</i> (Aug 20): Recap of breakthroughs in Ukraine peace talks — articulates transactional framing “both sides give up something.” https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2025/08/president-trump-recaps-breakthroughs-in-ukraine-peace-talks/	The defining moment of transactional efforts, with high-visibility summits and theatrical diplomacy.

Figure 1 - Timeline of transactional mechanisms

According to *Figure 1*, this paper will focus on President Donald Trump's speeches and interactions that signal foreign policy in relation to the Russia-Ukraine dyadic relationship, the approach to NATO and Euro-Atlantic relations, with an emphasis on defining moments such as the inauguration of Trump's second term (January 2025),

the Oval Office discussion with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Vice President JD Vance (February 2025), NATO negotiations on defense spending (March & June 2025), and peace talks in Alaska and Washington with President Vladimir Putin and European leaders (August 2025). The current qualitative analysis will refer to process tracking principles (George & Bennett, 2005) as a defining tool designed to decode the causal mechanisms of foreign policy design. Limitations may include an excessive reliance on discourse and performance rather than deliberations and actions per se.

Pricing of commitment mechanism

The concept of **pricing of commitment** aims to identify the characteristics of a coherent mechanism which, beyond institutional rigidity, operates in a consistent manner as quid-pro-quo exchange, in an attempt to redefine state relations as measurable, revocable and redistributable commodities. As Flint (2025) pointed out in the issue of hegemonic retreat and taking into consideration the transactional modalities in U.S. diplomacy (Agrawal, 2025), the following discourse analysis could offer context for how pricing as a mechanism might function in practice. The inaugural speech on January 20, 2025, corresponding to the second term of US President Donald Trump, can be considered a moment of settling the foreign policy framework and redefining the status of the United States' commitments. Unlike previous inaugural speeches (Bush Jr., Obama, Biden), which promoted universal values or collective security, Trump's rhetoric raises the level of expectations from the first term and brings a dimension of commitments that are marketable under certain conditions and no longer embedded within the paradigm of collective provision.

Three statements particularly emerge as defining for this turnaround:

1. *"We will not allow ourselves to be taken advantage of any longer."* (White House, Jan. 20, 2025)
2. *"I will, very simply, put America first."* (ibid.)
3. *"Our nation's wealth and strength will no longer be given away freely."* (ibid.)

Adjusting a previous approach to the discourse act as established by Ole Wæver (1995), this results in a notion of pricing speech-act, due to its potential to reframe the puzzle of international commitment, from normative duty to conditional exchange. The expression *"not being exploited"* positions the US not anymore as a benefactor or a global policeman, but rather as a victim of its own provision of security on the international stage, shifting the tradition of a global leadership discourse to one of market transaction that needs fair compensation. The phrase *"Our nation's and power of our nation will no longer be given away for free"* introduces the rationale behind transactional realism, the one where obligations must be quantified. And since every discursive element of transactionalism must start from an ethos, the statement *"I will, very simply, put America first"* although populist in places, represents the cultural specificity of this theoretical variant, where national interests translate into a notion of costed obligation. Subsequently, the meeting in the Oval Office with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (C-Span transcript, February 28, 2025) opens up the vocabulary to notions of high-pressure sales techniques, where an assertion such as *"You don't have the cards right now with us. With us, you have the cards"* shows how hegemon-support is priced as leverage and Ukraine's *"cards"* only can be issued at Washington. The gambling metaphor *"You're playing with World War III"* emphasizes that the price of American support is inextricably linked to strategic concessions and without the American umbrella, the prospect of extensive war becomes very close. Pricing commitments and commercial profit prospects had been set

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during that meeting in order to facilitate an agreement that gives the US access to Ukraine's valuable rare minerals. The same logic extends to the North Atlantic Alliance, another key element in the positioning on the Russian-Ukrainian war, where Trump's warning, *"If you don't pay, we won't defend you"* (Times News transcript, March 6, 2025), clearly shows that NATO's collective security guarantees are no longer automatic benefits who draw their strength from the treaty, but a subscription-based service. Moreover, the statement *"You have to pay or you're out"* speaks volumes in this regard, with the pricing principle crystallizing into a lock-in mechanism. The highlight was, as expected, Anchorage, where the pricing of commitments mechanism also recognizes the principle of revocability: *"There is no deal until there's a deal"* (CBS transcript, August 15, 2025), a sign that commitments can be subject to delay and remain provisional until they are offset by equivalent concessions in such a way that the search for balance between supply and demand satisfies the rigors of transactional interest. In essence, the inaugural principle that America's resources are not *"given away for free"* is transposed into a geopolitical order organized around who pays, how much and when.

The meeting on August 18 between President Donald Trump and European leaders Emanuel Macron, Friedrich Merz, Keir Starmer, Giorgia Meloni and Alexander Stubb, President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenski, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen and the Secretary General of NATO, Mark Rutte, is the moment when transactional realism denotes a sharing of tasks. Trump explains this in a broader sense when he states: *"We will also consider this aspect at the negotiating table. That is, who will do what, essentially"* (The White house transcript, August 18, 2025). The costs of the commitments are formulated in such a way that the main issuer, the United States, does not bear a significant burden, but rather arbitrates the costs of the commitments from a position of dominance: *"European nations will bear a large part of the burden. We will help them and ensure a high level of security."* Membership in the negotiation format is essentially transformed into a transactional service contract.

In this sequential logic of Donald Trump's speeches and remarks, it is easy to see that pricing works procedurally, as a primary mechanism of credibility, from a normative license to operationalizations in positioning, interactions and negotiations stances on the subject of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Although US foreign policy, strictly in the logic of this international dossier, may seem improvised, the mechanism analyzed above gives it a coherence at least in the initial stage of the approach and also draws on constraints exerted on the actors involved. The novelty here, regarding the pricing mechanism, is not limited to the rhetorical leverage, part of the discursive analysis, but more on a structural recalibration of the security architecture, as can be seen from the current case study, from the establishment of NATO contributions, aid to Ukraine and even future security guarantees, all of which considered monetized commitments and subject to price reassessment.

Conditional reciprocity mechanism

Conditional reciprocity in transactional realism is mainly stated ex ante, subject to progressive entrenchment that raise thresholds in a continuous manner and obligations remain pending until they are met by the counterpart or the actors involved in a diplomatic process. It is a complementary mechanism to pricing of commitment, in which activation rules are established, illustrated or spoken, most often through ostentation and also through a set of eligibility criteria for the counterpart.

Since his inaugural address, President Donald Trump has announced that conditionality will be a cornerstone of relations with external actors and that the projection

of American power in support of partners will only be exercised under certain auspices - *"America's wealth and strength will no longer be given away freely. We will no longer subsidize others without return"* (White House, Jan. 20, 2025).

An empirical illustration of this notion can be also found, for example, in the meeting in the Oval Office on February 28, 2025, between US President Donald Trump, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and US Vice President JD Vance, when Trump reminds Zelenskyy: *"You're not in a position to dictate... You're not in a very good position"* (C-Span transcript, February 28, 2025), a behavioral marker that denotes only US validation in a Russian-Ukrainian power struggle. And perhaps the most contrasting aspect is the demand for gratitude, *"Have you ever said thank you? ... You have to be grateful"*, which underscores a semiotics that determines conditional reciprocity with all its avatars deriving from the recognition of America's status. The willingness of a state to verbalize its acknowledgment of debt can be considered, in this particular context, as part of the price of continued support.

In his March 6, 2025 statement on NATO, the White House leader gives reciprocity a set of contractual terms - *"Are you up to date or are you behind? ... If we were behind, would you defend us? ... No, I would [not defend you]."* (transcript NATO News Youtube channel, March 6, 2025). Translated into financial terms, collective defense is reduced to a logic of creditworthiness. Through constant borrowings from contractual and financial language, Trump's speech reaches its climax: *"As soon as I said that... the money started flowing"*, an empirical anchor for illustrating the causal mechanism rendered by reciprocal conditioning.

Moreover, The NATO summit on June 25 gives reciprocity the dimension of a comprehensive agreement (transcript FOX 4 Dallas-Fort Worth, June 25, 2025), after Donald Trump states that *"our allies have increased spending by \$700 billion"* a contractual consolidation and validation of the conditions set out above. Later afterwards Trump enshrines the norm, calling it *"the Hague Defense Commitment"* in order for the transactional aspect to take a written form, an integral part of NATO doctrine, transforming the criterion of reciprocity from a simple quantitative measure of an objective into a ceremonial qualitative assessment of results.

The Anchorage summit marks a new qualitative approach in the mechanism of conditional reciprocity, being a moment when the balance of power is narrowing, but also taking on a character of adversity between the US and Russia. It focuses on a game of trial and error in search of the moment when obligations are activated, due to the fact that Trump codifies the idea that commitments remain on hold until the counterpart is confirmed - *"We look forward to dealing- we're going to try and get this over with [...] would like to thank President Putin and his entire team, whose faces who I know, in many cases, otherwise, other than that, whose- whose faces I get to see all the time in the newspapers, you're very- you're almost as famous as the boss, but especially this one right over here"* (CBS transcript, Aug. 15, 2025). Anchorage becomes an illustration of temporality, a designation of reciprocity over time, where a superpower like the US, in dialogue with a regional power such as the Russian Federation, minimizes its exposure in order to maximize its bargaining power. Both powers aim to persuade Ukraine to take certain military and foreign policy actions and each has its own expectations that are subject to conditionality. Progress on the international dossier through the issuance of US commitments is explicitly linked to acceptable *"conditions"* but also to the US's assessment of adequacy, because, going further in Trump's speech, we see how the

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“correctness” of the conditions remains an American prerogative, which determines asymmetrical reciprocity and, until this green light is given, the process remains frozen.

At the August 18 meeting between President Trump, President Zelensky and European leaders, conditional reciprocity appears to determine eligibility, following the formula stated by the White House leader: “*We will call President Putin immediately after this meeting... we will try to work out a trilateral agreement afterwards.*” (The White house transcript, August 18, 2025). Although the main interest was that of the Europeans in attending such a meeting, reciprocity in this case implies an ex-ante condition, delimiting European interests in terms of security, but also supporting the Ukrainian point of view. In contrast, American commitments become fluid in this dynamic of conditional reciprocity and reciprocity in transactional realism follows a path of staggered eligibility. - “*After that meeting, if everything works out OK, I’ll meet and we’ll wrap it up*” (The White house, August 20, 2025). This reflects, once more, a new procedural parameter of diplomacy, where US involvement is provisional and delayed, being unlocked only by the guaranteed compliance of the parties.

Regarding transactional reciprocity, its qualitative precision shows that partner states, in the typology of current alliances, must not only contribute, but mostly demonstrate that resources are directed towards “*real capabilities*”, beyond the internal approvals required for such measures. In this sense, conditional reciprocity can be considered as a disciplinary mechanism that transforms alliance solidarity into a continuously and dynamically monitored exchange relationship, in which obligations are not necessarily consolidated in documents and can be revoked or negotiated at any time.

Performative sequencing mechanism

Performative sequencing can be defined in granular terms as a mechanism of transactional realism through which international positions and commitments come under the auspices of a commercial choreography, whereas each performance creates a set of links in a chain of causality and legitimization of power.

Donald Trump's inaugural speech is, once again, the main reference showing that all future US support will be conditional and phased. In practice, the inauguration authorizes the scenario and represents the first step in establishing the structure of future actions on the international stage. In his inaugural address, president Donald Trump had set the stage by announcing “*America’s wealth and strength will no longer be given away freely. We will no longer subsidize others without return*” (White House, Jan. 20, 2025), as a preview of a new diplomatic chain of actions.

The desire for solemnity in agreements, even before they are signed, becomes a sine qua non condition of Trump's foreign policy. Although the February 28 meeting with President Zelensky was tense, the issue of an agreement on rare earth minerals was a focal point of interest on which he wanted to invest symbolic capital, signaling that the final result must be preceded by a ceremonial moment of image capital. “*We will sign the agreement at the conference in the East Room shortly*” (C-Span transcript, February 28, 2025). Trump becomes a proponent of connecting actors through a staged scene, where appearance and the perception of power is synonymous to the currency of legitimacy

The White House remarks on March 6 regarding NATO, “*if you don't pay, we won't defend you... and because of this, they have paid hundreds of billions of dollars*” (Times News, March 6, 2025), are intended to denote that there is a causal narrative from public threat to compliance on the part of NATO partners, an illustration of a potential for repetition in the future in such a logic that places the US on a pedestal of performative

commands, commands that no longer take place behind closed doors, but in front of television cameras that mediate the message to the public.

Trump's tendency of projecting of an image as an orchestra-conductor is enshrined in the June 25 NATO statements, where he instructs state actors on the timeline and conditions for US support within the alliance, so that, in turn, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte can harmonize his positions in a performance of role distribution, where other actors are also co-opted into replicating the script and obliged to follow the scenario (the case of Spain) - *"They'll pay more money this way. You should tell them to go back and pay... join all of those countries that are paying 5%"* (NATO News Youtube channel, Jun. 25, 2025).

At Anchorage on August 15, the discursive sequences indicate that the spectacle can even surpass the notion of consolidated security, as the performative desire of concluding the agreement is not subordinate, at least rhetorically, to security — *"There were many, many points that we agreed on, most of them, I would say, a couple of big ones that we haven't quite gotten there, but we've made some headway. So there's no deal until there's a deal"* CBS transcript, Aug. 15, 2025). This reshuffling of positions on the international stage is a novelty, as it shifts diplomacy from an approach based on material negotiations to one based on staging acts, where legitimacy results from the appropriate sequence of performance with content being added later. This turns the negotiating table into a platform with a built-in timer and any deviation from the script is costly because it would disrupt the expected order.

Later, the structure of the August 18 meeting between the US president, the Ukrainian president, and European leaders NATO and the EU indicates a preference for linear drama, with American landmarks reflected in Volodymyr Zelensky's statements (in contrast to the discussions in February 2025) and a nuance from European leaders in which the order of actions becomes as binding as their content. The prevalence of deadline drama is a constant feature of Trump's speeches - *"In a week or two weeks, we're going to know whether... we're going to solve this"* (CBS transcript, Aug. 15, 2025). By introducing a limited time frame, placed inside the window of time dedicated to media coverage of the meeting, Trump sets a coercive diplomatic clock, forcing his interlocutors to fit into a compressed performance cycle, in which progress must be visible, otherwise the action is considered a failure. Performative sequencing attempts, at least through rhetoric, to make temporal order itself the binding force of a potential agreement.

In the recapitulation of August 20, the use of metaphors such as *"two to tango"* (a Trumpian leitmotif) or transactional expressions such as *"wrap it up"* (The White house, August 20, 2025) give the same direction to the performative sequential mechanism of a theatrical finale, where diplomacy is treated as a performance with a final scene and the president reserves for himself the role of finisher who has the ability to reach a clear and visible conclusion to a military conflict.

Unlike the other two mechanisms mentioned above, sequencing shows how the choreography of the acts themselves becomes causal and time intervals imposed by the leader's voice are intended to establish a suspense, an ultimatum, although they are often changing. The management of such stagings can have a causal substance in a complementary way with mechanisms such as pricing of commitment and conditional reciprocity. In the end, performative sequencing refers to a visible order of acts, which no longer manifest themselves behind closed doors, but in the boundless space of the media, with the aim of creating conformity by increasing the reputational costs of potential deviation.

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Conclusions

Beyond the unpredictable nature, both at the rhetorical level and in terms of the signals transmitted to partners, examining Donald Trump's foreign policy through the lens of this new mutation that we have called transactional realism, shows a series of changes of interest for the scientific community concerned with international relations.

The most important aspect that derives from the present article refers to the ontological status of obligations, the so-called pricing mechanism. We were used to underline specific guarantees enshrined in agreements and treaties or traditional policies, but instead, as the new American diplomatic approach shows, these concepts transform into saleable, negotiable goods, mostly with restricted access. They are released only if a set of conditions, publicly stated, was satisfied. This realist typology does not exclude the structural perspective, as well as aspects related to the perception of the leader, but all these aspects are circumscribed by market logic, in which the act of re-evaluating commitments itself becomes an affirmation of authority.

Conditional reciprocity, in turn, has demonstrated that such commitments have never been automatic, but conditioned by a demonstrable counter performance, a form of negotiation that does not simply encourage cooperation, but imposes it through the threat of revocability.

The most representative innovation, however, is the logic of performative sequencing that designates an advertising and dramaturgical order of diplomatic moments, in contrast to the rigor, cost-benefit ratio and identification of windows of opportunity in classic international relations procedures. The public statements of US President Donald Trump, in his second term, have transformed diplomacy into a staged process that includes symbolic places, tight yet not constant deadlines and final acts. Although the results are often not the expected ones, this reputational cost is an element worth taking into account when the foreign policy signal is born.

Strictly speaking and linking all this palette of concepts, the pricing of commitment is intended to redefine the nature of pledges as commodities, conditional reciprocity establishes the set of conditions on which access to commitments depends and performative sequencing has a more symbolic and organizing role. Of these, the price of commitment seems to exert the most profound structural influence and to have the most complex causal capacity, because it resets the baseline from which reciprocity and sequencing can operate.

Although I have stated from the beginning that this article does not aim to illustrate a new theoretical construct, but to focus on some features that can easily be attached to realism in international relations, this transactional form therefore indicates a new way of theorizing foreign affairs when it comes to a hegemonic power. Under the sign of transactional realism, the hegemon maintains its power by redefining commitments as commodities to be bought, conditions to be met and performances to be staged for a gradual release of the signal and the foreign policy measures. This configuration only completes a rich repertoire of meanings of states' behaviors in the international arena, highlighting how power in the current century can be exercised not only through material resources or institutional frameworks, but through the systematic management of commitment itself.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

The situation of people with disabilities in Europe: statistics, inclusion and living conditions

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Abstract: People with disabilities represent a significant segment of the European population, facing multidimensional challenges. This article provides a broad perspective on disability in Europe, examining data on its prevalence, financial conditions, housing, and access to public services. The first part of the article presents statistical information on the proportion of people with disabilities and their distribution by age and region. The second part focuses on their living conditions and social inclusion at the European level. Data indicate that individuals with disabilities are at a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion, encountering difficulties in accessing adequate housing, healthcare services, and education. Their quality of life is closely tied to the accessibility of information and public services, underscoring the need for more effective public policies to promote social inclusion and reduce disparities (World Health Organization, 2012).

Keywords: *people with disabilities, statistics, living conditions, inclusion, Europe*

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The situation of people with disabilities in Europe: statistics, inclusion and living conditions

Introduction

Disability represents a fundamental dimension of the human condition, as the process of ageing is often accompanied by the emergence of functional constraints, whether temporary or permanent. In this context, understanding disability both as a social phenomenon and as an individual experience becomes essential (World Health Organization, 2021), since the way it is defined influences public policies, educational practices, and community attitudes.

Conceptual framework of disability

The concept of disability must be approached as a complex notion that changes and evolves depending on the context. Most definitions in the specialized literature highlight the importance of social and physical barriers in the experience of disability, thus shaping what is known as the “social model” of disability. Therefore, the environment in which a person with disabilities lives exerts a strong influence on how disability is experienced and on its intensity.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – CRPD describes persons with disabilities as “those who have long-term impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”(Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2007).

Disability, as the World Health Organization notes, appears as a result of the interaction “between individuals with a health condition, with personal and environmental factors including negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social support” (World Health Organization, 2025).

Disability appears as a consequence of the relationship between the individual affected by a health problem and the contextual factors surrounding it. Therefore, it is an “umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions” (World Health Organization, 2021, p.221).

The significance of the concept of interaction between a person with an impairment and the social and attitudinal barriers that he or she may face is also underlined by the Disabled Peoples’ International- DPI (Disabled Peoples’ International, n.d.)

Disability, as the product of the interaction between a person with an impairment and the various social and attitudinal barriers they may encounter, is also reflected in the definition of the International Disability Alliance (n.d.).

The conceptual meaning of the term illustrates the need for an integrated approach that emphasizes all dimensions of disability and does not limit its understanding exclusively to a single one, such as the medical or the social.

In Romania, Law no. 448/2006 on the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities defines disability as the situation in which the social environment, not adapted to physical, sensory, mental or intellectual impairments, limits or prevents equal participation in community life, which justifies the adoption of special protection measures to support integration and social inclusion (Law no. 448/2006, art. 2).

Theoretical framework for understanding disability

The way disability has been understood and named has gone through significant changes up to the present. Initially, the term “handicap” was used to designate persons with various physical, sensory, or psychological limitations. However, as this word acquired negative connotations, being associated with the idea of disadvantage and difficulty, rights movements gradually promoted the use of the term “disability”. This is perceived as having a more positive nuance, as it emphasizes the person and their social integration rather than their limitations.

The origin of the term handicap is attributed to the English expression “hand in cap”, which designated a game in which various personal objects were disputed through drawing lots. (Monica Angela et al., 2013, pp. 7–9). In the 18th century (1754), the word handicap began to be applied to horse competitions, and the term “handicap race” was understood as a race in which the unequal chances of the horses were balanced by adding weights to the stronger ones. After 1883, the notion of handicap was extended beyond the field of sport, being used to designate the concept of balancing chances in various social and cultural domains .

Once the term handicap was adopted in the social and medical fields, it came to be perceived as a stigmatizing label, emphasizing the person’s deficiencies and limitations. For this reason, in specialized language it was gradually replaced by disability, considered more appropriate, as it proposes a neutral approach and places the person at the center, not their incapacities.

The semantic evolution of the term was consolidated by subsequent conceptual systematizations. In 1980, the World Health Organization introduced the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps -ICIDH, (World Health Organization, 1980), in which the term handicap appeared alongside impairment and disability, underlining the relationship between them .

Criticism regarding the overly medicalized nature of the ICIDH and the maintenance of the term handicap led to its abandonment in favor of the notion of disability, which also includes the dimension of social participation. As a result, in 2001, the World Health Organization launched the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), marking a paradigm shift: the term handicap was eliminated, and disability was redefined as the result of the interaction between health conditions and environmental and personal factors (World Health Organization, 2001).

In the field of disability studies, multiple models have been formulated to explain and understand the concept. In general, two perspectives are emphasized: the “medical model” and the “social model”.

From the perspective of the medical model, disability is framed as a strictly individual problem, arising from illnesses or accidents, and implies medical treatment. On the other hand, the “social model” views disability as the result of barriers imposed by society. Thus, it is the environment that disables, rather than the person’s physical impairments.

Although the social model is presented in opposition to the medical one, neither of the two perspectives is considered sufficient to fully describe disability.

Therefore, in the specialized literature, the bio-psychosocial model of disability is presented as a compromise between the two (World Health Organization, 2012). The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), developed by the

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World Health Organization (WHO), is used internationally as a standard for understanding and measuring health and disability, and presents disability as an “interaction between health conditions and contextual factors – environmental and personal factors” (World Health Organization, 2012, p. 5).

According to the ICF, it outlines the following characteristics of these factors:

<i>Environmental factors</i>	<i>Personal factors</i>
✓ External to the individual	✓ Internal to the individual
✓ Include the physical, social, and attitudinal environment of people	✓ Include individual characteristics that influence a person's life and health
✓ Classified in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)	✓ Not classified in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)
✓ Examples: -Attitudes (individual, social, institutional, family, social norms and values) -Services, systems, and policies (architectural characteristics, legal, social, political services, education, labor market, infrastructure) -Support and relationships (family, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, neighbors, community members, professionals from various fields) -Products and technology (for personal consumption, mobility and transport, communication, education, employment, culture, recreation and sport, religion and spirituality, public buildings, territorial development – land use planning) -Natural environment (geography, climate, flora, fauna, air quality, natural or man-made events)	✓ Examples: - Demographic data (age, gender, race, marital status) -Personal history (level of education, occupation, residence environment – urban or rural) -Lifestyle and habits (daily routine, physical activity, nutrition, substance use such as alcohol, tobacco) -Psychological and emotional resources (motivation, coping strategies, beliefs and values) -Personality traits -Socio-economic context (social roles, material situation, support network)

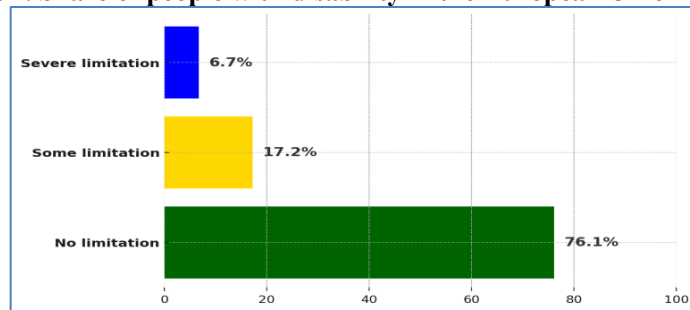
Source: REHADAT – ICF Guide, n.d.

Global and European prevalence of disability

At the global level, 16% of the world's population – approximately 1.3 billion people – live with a significant disability. (World Health Organization, 2023).

In 2024, at the European level, the total population was about 448 million inhabitants, of which approximately 370 million people of them (83%) were aged 16 or over (Eurostat, 2025b; Eurostat, 2025, August 7). According to Eurostat data, 23.9% of those aged 16 and over – that is, approximately 107.1 million people – had a disability in 2024. Among them, around 77.1 million (17.2%) reported moderate limitations, while about 30.0 million (6.7%) reported severe limitations (Eurostat, 2025b).

Chart 1. Share of people with disability in the European Union

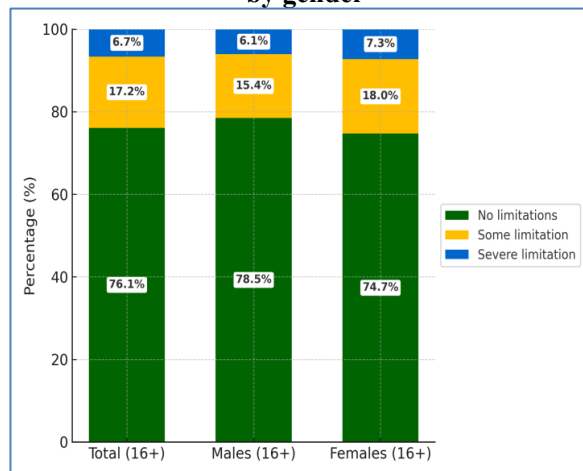


Source: (Eurostat, 2025b)

A gender gap can be observed in the prevalence of disability: women are more frequently affected by moderate and severe limitations compared to men, while the percentage of men without limitations is higher than that of women.

An explanatory factor is the fact that, on the one hand, women outnumber men: at the European level, in 2023 there were 229 million women and 219 million men (Eurostat, 2025a). In addition, life expectancy at birth is higher for women than for men – 84.0 years for women and 78.7 years for men (Eurostat, 2025c), which leads to a higher likelihood of impairments among women

**Chart 2. Share of people with disability in the European Union ,
by gender**



Source: Eurostat, 2025b

Disability is closely linked to the process of demographic ageing, and the likelihood of its occurrence increases with age. According to Eurostat data, half of individuals aged 65 to 74 report some form of limitation, while after the age of 85, approximately 75% experience disability, of which 30% report severe limitations. In the younger age group (16–24 years), only 7% report limitations, most of them minor.

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Tabel 1. Share of people with a disability, EU 2024

<i>Age group</i>	<i>No limitation (%)</i>	<i>Some limitation (%)</i>	<i>Severe limitation (%)</i>
16–24	93%	5%	2%
25–34	90%	7%	3%
35–44	86%	10%	4%
45–54	79%	15%	6%
55–64	65%	25%	10%
65–74	50%	35%	15%
75–84	35%	40%	25%
85+	25%	45%	30%
16+ total	76.1%	17.2%	6.7%

Source: Eurostat, 2025b

In 2024, the proportion of persons with disabilities who reported having a disability in the Member States of the European Union was high in Latvia (41%) and Finland (36%), while the lowest values were identified in North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia (percentages between 10–12%).

Table 2. Distribution by country of persons with disabilities in the European Union

<i>Country / Region</i>	<i>Percentage of persons with disabilities (approx.)</i>
EU (average)	~24%
Latvia	~41%
Finland	~36%
Norway	~33%
Slovakia, Netherlands, Estonia, Austria	~30–33%
Germany, France, Croatia, Belgium	~25–28%
Türkiye	~25%
Spain, Ireland, Romania, Greece	~18–22%
Italy, Malta, Bulgaria	~12–15%
North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia	~10–12%

Source: Eurostat, 2025b, p. 2

Thus, based on Eurostat data, it can be observed that South-Eastern countries such as Italy, Malta, Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania record lower levels, while Northern and Baltic countries such as Latvia, Finland, and Slovakia report the highest values.

Table 3. Distribution by country of persons with disabilities in the European Union

<i>Country / Region</i>	<i>Total disability (%)</i>	<i>Some limitation (%)</i>	<i>Severe limitation (%)</i>
EU (average)	23.9%	17.2%	6.7%
Latvia	41.2%	30.1%	11.1%
Finland	35.3%	29.0%	6.3%
Slovakia	32.0%	21.2%	10.8%
Romania	18.6%	15.4%	3.2%
Greece	18.3%	9.6%	8.7%
Italy	14.5%	10.2%	4.3%
Malta	14.2%	10.4%	3.8%

Bulgaria	12.7%	10.4%	2.2%
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Source: Eurostat, 2025b

Perspective on disability: living conditions and social inclusion at the European level

Social inclusion

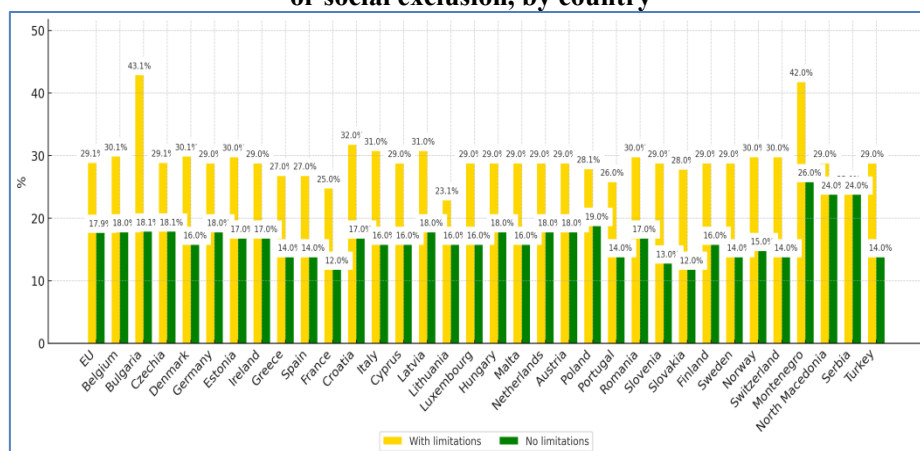
According to statistics, in the European Union in 2024, 28.8% of people with disabilities were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Eurostat, 2025d).

It is evident that people with disabilities face a considerably higher risk of poverty and social exclusion compared to those without limitations. At the top of the ranking of countries with the highest risk are Bulgaria (43.8%), Latvia (43.1%) and Romania (38.4%), while the countries with the lowest risk are the Netherlands (21.8%) and Finland (24.4%) (Eurostat, 2025d).

Notable differences are also observed among developed countries such as Germany, France and Sweden, where the gap between people with disabilities at risk of poverty or social exclusion and those without disabilities ranges between 12 and 17 percentage points (Eurostat, 2025d).

Below the European Union average of 28.8%, there are 10 countries out of the 31 analyzed: Czechia, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden.

Chart 3. Share of people with disabilities aged 16 years and over at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by country



Source: Eurostat, 2025d

The experience of disability is directly shaped by social and economic inequalities, such as the increased risk of poverty, limited access to employment, and exposure to material and social deprivation. These factors reduce the chances of people with disabilities to fully participate in social and economic life and heighten their vulnerability.

The table below shows that disability amplifies vulnerability: the at-risk-of-poverty rate is 20.7% among people with limitations, compared with 14.2% among those

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without limitations. It also has a strong impact on severe material and social deprivation, with the share of people with limitations (10.4%) being twice as high as that of people without limitations (4.7%).

People with disabilities under the age of 65 face significant barriers to entering the labor market, being more than three times as likely to live in households with very low work intensity.

Table 4. European Union average of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (aged 16 and over) and people under 65 with very low work intensity

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>With limitations (%)</i>	<i>No limitations (%)</i>
At risk of poverty or social exclusion	28.8%	17.9%
At risk of poverty rate	20.7%	14.2%
Severe material and social deprivation	10.4%	4.7%
Very low work intensity (people less 65 years)	18.4%	5.5%

Source: Eurostat, 2025d

Living

conditions

Housing conditions highlight significant differences in the experience of people with disabilities. At the level of the European Union, in 2024, two thirds (66.5%) of people aged 16 years and over with a disability lived in their own dwellings, while one third (33.5%) lived in rented accommodation.

Table 5. Percentage of people aged 16 years or over with disabilities who own a house

<i>Housing status</i>	<i>With limitations (some/severe)</i>	<i>No limitations</i>
Owner	66.5%	70.0%
Tenant	33.5%	30.0%

Over 90% of people with disabilities who are homeowners are found in Eastern European countries, where the tradition of owning a dwelling has been strongly influenced by political factors, both through the privatization of housing following the fall of the communist regime and through the perception of home ownership as a form of security(Eurostat, 2025e). By contrast, in Western and Northern Europe, higher rates of tenants with disabilities are observed, a situation supported by the availability of more diverse housing alternatives, a more developed market, and greater financial capacity.

Table 6. Countries with the highest shares of homeowners and tenants among people with disabilities

<i>Top 5 countries with the highest share of homeowners with disabilities</i>	<i>Homeowners (%)</i>	<i>Top 5 countries with the highest share of tenants with disabilities</i>	<i>Tenants (%)</i>
Romania	97.2	Switzerland (*)	55.0
Slovakia	96.2	Austria	50.3
Croatia	94.8	Germany	47.3

Hungary	93.8	Sweden	41.7
Lithuania (*)	90.2	Norway	23.3

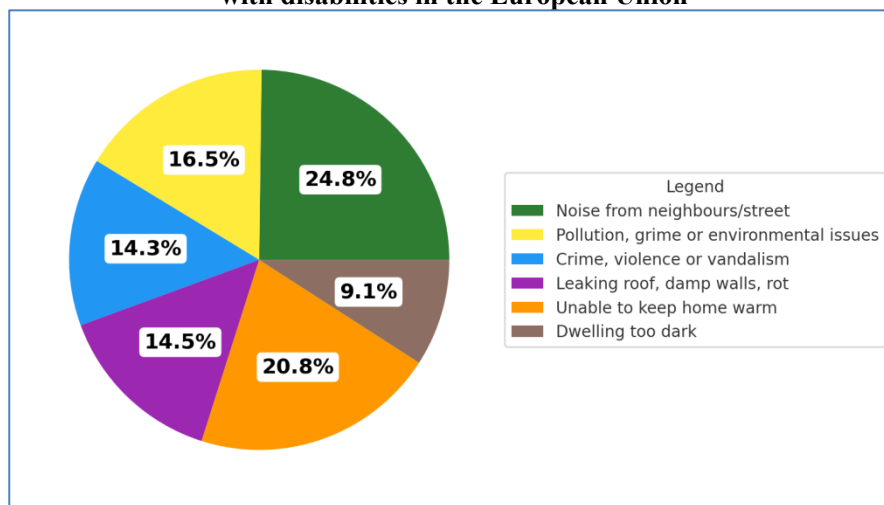
Source: Eurostat, 2025e

In 2024, the housing cost overburden rate for people with disabilities aged 16 years and over in the EU was 10.4% (Eurostat, 2025e). In 21 Member States covered by Eurostat, this rate was higher for people with disabilities compared to those without. The values varied considerably, ranging from 2.0% in Cyprus to 12.2% in Hungary and up to 33.0% in Greece (Eurostat, 2025e).

Across the European Union, 10.4% of people with disabilities spent at least 40% of their disposable income on housing, compared with 7.8% of those without disabilities. The widest gaps were observed in Sweden (7.5 pp), Denmark (6.6 pp) and Belgium (6.3 pp).

With regard to housing quality for people with disabilities, problems are reported both at the level of the residential area (pollution, dirt, noise, violence, vandalism, crime) and at the level of the dwelling itself (dampness or mould, cold, lack of natural light) (Eurostat, 2025e).

Chart 4. Housing quality problems among people with disabilities in the European Union



Source: Eurostat, 2025e

At the level of the European Union in 2024, the overcrowding rate was lower for people with disabilities (11.0%) compared to those without disabilities (16.1%) (Eurostat, 2025e). Romania recorded the largest gap, of 16.7 percentage points, between people without disabilities living in overcrowded dwellings (39.8%) and those with disabilities in the same conditions (23.1%). The only countries where the overcrowding rate was higher among people with disabilities than among those without were Sweden and Finland (Eurostat, 2025e).

The lowest overcrowding rates were observed in Malta (1.3%) and Cyprus (1.7%), while the highest were in Poland (30.1%) and Latvia (34.2%).

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Table 7. Overcrowding rate for people with a disability (aged 16 years or over) – Top European Union countries with the highest and lowest values

<i>Top 5 countries – highest overcrowding rates</i>	<i>Overcrowding rate (%)</i>	<i>Top 5 countries – lowest overcrowding rates</i>	<i>Overcrowding rate (%)</i>
Latvia	34.2%	Malta	1.3%
Poland	30.1%	Cyprus	1.7%
Romania	23.1%	Denmark	1.8%
Croatia	16.2%	Ireland	2.2%
Slovakia	14.8%	Netherlands	2.8%

Source: Eurostat, 2025e

For people aged 65 and over, the overcrowding rate was higher among those with disabilities (6.9%) compared to those without disabilities (5.4%). The largest difference was recorded in Latvia, where 27.0% of older people with disabilities lived in overcrowded conditions, compared with 18.2% of their peers without disabilities living in the same conditions (Eurostat, 2025e).

Conclusion

Studies show that persons with disabilities are exposed to an increased risk of poverty, social exclusion, and inequalities in various fields, placing them in a vulnerable position regarding access to resources and opportunities (World Health Organization, 2012). Improving their quality of life depends not only on economic support but also on access to healthcare services, education, the labour market, and housing adapted to individual needs.

The social integration of persons with disabilities remains a pressing challenge, conditioned by the recognition and removal of physical and social barriers. Beyond institutional policies, a change in mindset is also required, as their full participation in society involves reducing prejudice and fostering a culture of diversity and mutual respect (International Disability Alliance, n.d.; World Health Organization, 2025).

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<https://www.jdb.uzh.ch/id/eprint/21535/>

Royal Danish Library, Denmark

https://soeg.kb.dk/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma99123026492405763&context=L&vid=45KBDK_KGL:KGL&lang=en&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,1584-224x&offset=0

Swisscovery, Swiss Library Service Platform (SLSP) Switzerland

https://swisscovery.slsp.ch/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991170234587405501&context=L&vid=41SLSP_NETWORK:VU1_UNION&lang=de&search_scope=DN_and_CI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=41SLSP_NETWORK&query=any,contains,1584-224x&offset=0

Science On University Achievement Information System by University of Lodz, Poland

<https://son.uni.lodz.pl/.../ULbfee0e874c6a41c4a00d516e09.../>

Le réseau vaudois Renouveau Sciences et Patrimoines, Switzerland

https://renouvaud1.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991021158885602852&context=L&vid=41BCULAUSA_LIB:VU2&lang=fr&search_scope=SP_1libraries_and_CDI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,1584-224x&offset=0

Rebiun Catálogo de la Red de Bibliotecas Universitarias y Científicas, Spain

<https://rebiun.baratz.es/.../b2FpOmNlbGVicmF0aW9uOmVzLmJh...>

KOBV Kooperativer Bibliotheksverbund Berlin Brandenburg, Germany

<https://portal.kobv.de/simpleSearch.do?index=internal&plv=2&sortCrit=score&sortOrder=desc&hitsPerPage=&query=1584-224x&formsearch=%E2%9C%93#resultlistForm>

CEPOS NEW CALL FOR PAPERS 2026

Katalog der Teilbibliothek Diakonie, Gesundheit und Soziales der Hochschule
Hannover, Germany
<https://opac.tib.eu/DB=4.5/LNG=DU/SID=f438f44d-1/CMD...>

EP Library Catalogue – European Parliament Library Catalogue
https://europarl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991001117790704886&context=L&vid=32EPA_INST:32EPA_V1&lang=en&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=sub,exact,Europe%20de%20l%27Est%20--%20Politique%20et%20gouvernement,AND&mode=advanced&offset=0

Ghent University Library
<https://lib.ugent.be/en/catalog/ejn01:1000000000726583>

Universidad Carlos III de Madrid Research Portal
<https://researchportal.uc3m.es/display/rev184334>

J-Gate Social Science & Humanities Indexed Journal List
<https://www.kitsw.ac.in/Library/2022/JSSH%20Journal%20List.pdf>

<https://europub.co.uk/journals/revista-de-stiinte-politice-revue-des-sciences-politiques-J-11661>

Universiteits Bibliotheek Gent
<https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/ejn01:1000000000726583>

Publons
<https://publons.com/journal/540040/revista-de-stiinte-politice/>

Universidad Carlos III de Madrid
<https://researchportal.uc3m.es/display/rev184334>

Weill Cornell Medicine Qatar
https://primo.qatar-weill.cornell.edu/discovery/fulldisplay?vid=974WCMCIQ_INST:VU1&docid=alma991000575074006691&lang=en&context=L&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine

Reseau Mirabel
<https://reseau-mirabel.info/revue/3046/Revista-de-Stiinte-Politice>

Bond Library University
https://librarysearch.bond.edu.au/discovery/fulldisplay?vid=61BOND_INST%3ABOND&docid=alma9930197890502381&lang=en&context=SP

Ghent university library
<https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/ejn01:1000000000726583>

The Royal Library and Copenhagen University Library Service

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https://e-tidsskrifter.kb.dk/resolve?umlaut.locale=da&url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_ctx_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_tim=2020-04-11T21%3A23%3A41%2B02%3A00&ctx_id=&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rft.issn=1584-224X&rft.search_val=1584-224X&rft_val_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Ajournal&rfr_id=info%3Asid%2Fsfxit.com%3Acitation

Glasgow Caledonian University
https://discover.gcu.ac.uk/discovery/openurl?institution=44GLCU_INST&vid=44GLCU_INST:44GLCU_VU2&?u.ignore_date_coverage=true&rft.mms_id=991002471123103836

Open University Library Malaysia
<http://library.oum.edu.my/oumlib/content/catalog/778733>

Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, United States
<https://searchworks.stanford.edu/?q=469823489>

Cornell University Library, Ithaca, United States
https://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog?search_field=publisher+number%2Fother+identifier&q=469823489

University of Michigan Library,
<https://search.lib.umich.edu/catalog?&library=All+libraries&query=isbn%3A469823489>

Pepperdine Libraries, Malibu, United States
https://pepperdine.worldcat.org/search?qt=wc_org_pepperdine&q=no:469823489

University of Victoria Libraries , Victoria, Canada
<http://uvic.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?ho=t&fvf=ContentType,Journal%20Article,f&l=en&q=1584-224X>
 Academic Journals database
<http://journaldatabase.info/journal/issn1584-224X>

University of Zurich Database
<https://www.jdb.uzh.ch/id/eprint/21535/>

California Institute of Technology - Caltech Library
<https://www.library.caltech.edu/eds/detail?db=poh&an=98646324&isbn=1584224X>

Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin
http://kvk.bibliothek.kit.edu/view-
title/index.php?katalog=STABI_BERLIN&url=http%3A%2F%2Fstabikat.de%2FDB%3D
1%2FCHARSET%3DISO-8859-
1%2FIMPLAND%3DY%2FLNG%3DDU%2FSRT%3DYOP%2FTTL%3D1%2FSID%3
D8dda05f3-1%2FSET%3D1%2FSHW%3FFRST%3D1&signature=eBtSKEx2BuW-
HASPuSct39FB3vQpIm6cGAajCH-kz44&showCoverImg=1

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Union Catalogue of Belgian Libraries

http://kvk.bibliothek.kit.edu/view-title/index.php?katalog=VERBUND_BELGIEN&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.unicat.be%2FuniCat%3Ffunc%3Dsearch%26query%3Dsysid%3A7330250&signature=DxcVFWjMO1W4HpEAWW_ERyKR4oiGWXLGFinWk8fNU&showCoverImg=1

The National Library of Israel

http://merhav.nli.org.il/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=ULI&docid=NNL-Journals003477656&context=L&lang=en_US

Verbundkatalog GBV

http://kvk.bibliothek.kit.edu/view-
title/index.php?katalog=GBV&url=http%3A%2F%2Fgso.gbv.de%2FDB%3D2.1%2FCH
ARSET%3DUTF-
8%2FIMPLAND%3DY%2FLNG%3DDU%2FSRT%3DYOP%2FTTL%3D1%2FCOOK
IE%3DD2.1%2CE900d94f2-
d%2CIO%2CB9000%2B%2B%2B%2B%2B%2B%2CSY%2CA%2CH6-11%2C%2C16-
17%2C%2C21%2C%2C30%2C%2C50%2C%2C60-61%2C%2C73-
75%2C%2C77%2C%2C88-
90%2CNKVK%2BWEBZUGANG%2CR129.13.130.211%2CFN%2FSET%3D1%2FPP
NSET%3FPPN%3D590280090&signature=Omwa_NLtwvdaOmmyeo7SUOCEYuDRGt
oZqGXI-K-vTY1o&showCoverImg=1

COPAC, registered trademark of The University of Manchester

<https://copac.jisc.ac.uk/search?&isn=1584-224x>

ACPN Catalogo Italiano dei Periodici, Università di Bologna

<https://acnpsearch.unibo.it/journal/2601620>

Bibliothèque Nationale de Luxembourg

<https://a-z.lu/primo->

explore/fulldisplay?vid=BIBNET&docid=SFX_LOCAL1000000000726583&context=L

National Library of Sweden

<http://libris.kb.se/bib/11702473>

Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University

http://sfx.lib.byu.edu/sfxlcl3?url_ver=Z39.88-

2004&url ctx fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&ctx enc=info:ofi/enc:UTF-

8&ctx ver=Z39.88-

2004&rfr_id=info:sid/sfxit.com:azlist&sfx.ignore_date_threshold=1&rft.object_id=100000000726583&rft.object_portfolio_id=&svc.holdings=yes&svc.fulltext=yes

Catalogue of Hamburg Libraries

<https://beluga.sub.uni->

hamburg.de/vufind/Search/Results?submit=Suchen&library=GBV_ILN_22&lookfor=1584-224x

Edith Cowan Australia

CEPOS NEW CALL FOR PAPERS 2026

<https://ecu.on.worldcat.org/search?databaseList=&queryString=1584-224X>

University College Cork, Ireland

<https://ucc.summon.serialssolutions.com/?q=1584-224X#!/search?ho=t&jt=Revista%20de%20Stiinte%20Politice&l=en-UK&q=>

York University Library, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

<https://www.library.yorku.ca/find/Record/muler82857>

The University of Chicago, USA

https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/sfx_1000000000726583

The University of Kansas KUMC Libraries Catalogue

<http://voyagercatalog.kumc.edu/Search/Results?lookfor=1584-224X&type=AllFields>

Journal Seek

<http://journalseek.net/cgi-bin/journalseek/journalsearch.cgi?field=issn&query=1584-224X>

State Library New South Wales, Sidney, Australia,

<http://library.sl.nsw.gov.au/search~S1/?searchtype=i&searcharg=1584-224X&searchscope=1&SORT=D&extended=0&SUBMIT=Search&searchlimits=&searchorigarg=i1583-9583>

Electronic Journal Library

https://opac.giga-hamburg.de/ezb/detail.phtml?bibid=GIGA&colors=7&lang=en&flavour=classic&jour_id=111736

Open University Malaysia

<http://library.oum.edu.my/oumlib/content/catalog/778733>

Wayne State University Libraries

<http://elibrary.wayne.edu/record=4203588>

Kun Shan University Library

http://muse.lib.ksu.edu.tw:8080/1cate/?rft_val_fmt=publisher&pubid=ucvpress

Western Theological Seminar

https://col-westernsem.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991001225541104770&context=L&vid=01COL_WTS:WTS&lang=en&searchscope=MyInstandCI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,1584-224X&facet=rtype,include,journals&mode=Basic&offset=0

Swansea University Prifysgol Abertawe

http://whel-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=44WHELP

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[_SWA_VU1&reset_config=true#.VSU9SPmsVSk](#)

Vanderbilt Library

https://catalog.library.vanderbilt.edu/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991043322926803276&context=L&vid=01VAN_INST:vanui&lang=en&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,1584-224X&offset=0

Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozial

https://www.wzb.eu/en/literature-data/search-find/e-journals?page=searchres.phtml&bibid=WZB&lang=en&jq_type1=IS&jq_term1=1584-224X&jq_bool2=AND&jq_type2=KS&jq_term2=&jq_bool3=AND&jq_type3=PU&jq_term3=&offset=-1&hits_per_page=50&Notations%5B%5D=all&selected_colors%5B%5D=1&selected_colors%5B%5D=2

Radboud University Nijmegen

[https://zaandam.hosting.ru.nl/oamarket-acc/score?OpenAccess=&InstitutionalDiscounts=&Title=&Issn=1584-224&Publisher=Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB \(Electronic Journals Library\)http://rzblx1.uni-regensburg.de/ezeit/detail.phtml?bibid=AAAAA&colors=7&lang=de&jour_id=111736](https://zaandam.hosting.ru.nl/oamarket-acc/score?OpenAccess=&InstitutionalDiscounts=&Title=&Issn=1584-224&Publisher=Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB (Electronic Journals Library)http://rzblx1.uni-regensburg.de/ezeit/detail.phtml?bibid=AAAAA&colors=7&lang=de&jour_id=111736)

The University of Hong Kong Libraries

https://julac.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?query=any,contains,1584-224x&search_scope=My%20Institution&vid=HKU&facet=rtype,include,journals&mode=Basic&offset=0

Metropolitan University Prague, Czech Republic

<https://s-knihovna.mup.cz/katalog/eng/l.dll?h~=&DD=1&H1=&V1=o&P1=2&H2=&V2=o&P2=3&H3=&V3=z&P3=4&H4=1584-224x&V4=o&P4=33&H5=&V5=z&P5=25>

University of the West Library

<https://uwest.on.worldcat.org/search?queryString=1584-224x&clusterResults=off&stickyFacetsChecked=on#/oclc/875039367>

Elektronische Zeitschriften der Universität zu Köln

https://www.ub.uni-koeln.de/IPS?SERVICE=METASEARCH&SUBSERVICE=INITSEARCH&VIEW=USB:Simple&LOCATION=USB&SID=IPS3:2d1c5acebc65a3cdc057a9d6c64ce76e&SETCOOKIE=TRUE&COUNT=15&GWTIMEOUT=30&HIGHLIGHTING=on&HISTORY=SESSION&START=1&STREAMING=on&URLENCODING=TRUE&QUERY_aIAL=1584-224x&SERVICEGROUP1.SERVICE.SEARCH_EDS=on&SERVICEGROUP1.SERVICE.SEARCH_KUGJSON=on&SERVICEGROUP1.SERVICE.SEARCH_KUGUSWEB=on&SERVICEGROUP1.SERVICEGROUP.USB:Default=on

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EKP Pulications

https://ekp-invenio.physik.uni-karlsruhe.de/search?ln=en&sc=1&p=1584-224X&f=&action_search=Search&c=Experiments&c=Authorities

Valley City State University

https://odin-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?query=any,contains,1584-224X&tab=tab1&search_scope=ndv_everything&sortby=rank&vid=ndv&lang=en_US&mode=advanced&offset=0displayMode%3Dfull&displayField=all&pcAvailabilityMode=true

Impact Factor Poland

<http://impactfactor.pl/czasopisma/21722-revista-de-stiinte-politice-revue-des-sciences-politiques>

Universite Laval

http://sfx.bibl.ulaval.ca:9003/sfx_local?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_ctx_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&ctx_enc=info:ofi/enc:UTF-8&ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/sfxit.com:azlist&sfx.ignore_date_threshold=1&rft.object_id=100000000726583&rft.object_portfolio_id=&svc.fulltext=yes

Universität Passau

<https://infoguide.ub.uni-passau.de/InfoGuideClient.upasis/start.do?Query=10%3d%22BV035261002%22>

BSB Bayerische StaatBibliothek

<https://opacplus.bsb-muenchen.de/metaopac/search?View=default&oclcno=502495838>

Deutsches Museum

<https://opac.deutsches-museum.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Query=1035%3d%22BV035261002%22IN%5b2%5d&View=dm&Language=de>

Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt

[https://opac.ku.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Branch=3&Language=de&View=thi&Query=35=%22502495838%22+IN+\[2\]](https://opac.ku.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Branch=3&Language=de&View=thi&Query=35=%22502495838%22+IN+[2])

Hochschule Augsburg, Bibliothek

<https://infoguide.hs-augsburg.de/InfoGuideClient.fhasis/start.do?Query=10%3d%22BV035261002%22>

Hochschule Weihenstephan-Triesdorf, Zentralbibliothek

Freising, Germany

<https://ffwtp20.bib-bvb.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Query=1035%3d%22BV035261002%22IN%5b2%5d&View=ffw&Language=de>

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OTH- Ostbayerische Technische Hochschule Regensburg, Hochschulbibliothek
OTHBR, Regensburg, Germany
<https://www.regensburger-katalog.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Query=1035%3d%22BV035261002%22IN%5b2%5d&View=ubr&Language=de>

Staatliche Bibliothek Neuburg/Donau , SBND,
Neuburg/Donau, Germany
<https://opac.sbnd.de/InfoGuideClient.sndsis/start.do?Query=10%3d%22BV035261002%22>

Universitätsbibliothek Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Eichstätt, Germany
[https://opac.ku.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Branch=0&Language=de&View=uei&Query=35=%22502495838%22+IN+\[2\]](https://opac.ku.de/TouchPoint/start.do?Branch=0&Language=de&View=uei&Query=35=%22502495838%22+IN+[2])

Bibliothek der Humboldt-Universität Berlin, Universitätsbibliothek der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Berlin, Germany
https://hu-berlin.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?institution=HUB_UB&vid=hub_ub&search_scope=default_scope&tab=default_tab&query=issn,exact,1584-224X

Hochschulbibliothek Ansbach, Ansbach, Germany
<https://fanoz3.bib-bvb.de/InfoGuideClient.fansis/start.do?Query=10%3d%22BV035261002%22>

Bibliothek der Europa-Universität Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder)
Frankfurt/Oder, Germany
<https://opac.europa-uni.de/InfoGuideClient.euvsis/start.do?Query=10%3d%22BV035261002%22>

University of California Library Catalog
<https://catalog.library.ucla.edu/vwebv/search?searchCode1=GKEY&searchType=2&searchArg1=ucoclc469823489>

For more details about the past issues and international abstracting and indexing, please visit the journal website at the following address:
<http://cis01.central.ucv.ro/revistadestiintepolitice/acces.php>.

CONFERENCE INTERNATIONAL INDEXING OF THE PAST EDITIONS (2014-2025)

CEPOS Conference 2025

The **Fifteenth International Conference** After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 14-15 March 2025) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 14 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:
Indexation links:

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<https://academic.oup.com/jcs/article-abstract/67/1/csaf001/7997508?redirectedFrom=PDF>
<https://scholarlymeet.com/events/ca73318d-42a7-4b5e-bcca-635e0aa1c46b>
<https://conferences365.com/conferences-in-romania>
<https://conferencewiki.com/conference-listing/MzA4>
<https://www.conferencelists.org/event/cepos-15th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny/>
<https://www.sciencedz.net/en/conference/110381-cepos-15th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>
<https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=262202>
<https://conferencesdaily.com/cities/craiova>
<https://cepos.org/upcoming/>
<https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379144286_CENTER_OF_POST-COMMUNIST_POLITICAL_STUDIES_CEPoS_Book_of_abstracts_of_the_14th_International_Conference_After_Communist_East_and_West_under_Scrutiny_Craiova_Romania_15-16_March_2024
<https://conferencewiki.com/conference-detail/Cepos-15th-International-Conference-After-communism-East-and-West-under-scrutiny>
<https://www.conferencelists.org/romania/>
https://www.conferencesked.com/conference_details/10148/cepos-15th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny
<https://conffinder.com/pagesconference/ConferencesListing?country=Romania>

CEPOS Conference 2024

The **Fourteenth International Conference** After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 15-16 March 2024) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 11 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:
Indexation links:

CEEOL <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=1195305>
ProQuest, Part of Clarivate
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2863220849/CC02F21AE4DB44F1PQ/1?accountid=50247&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals>
Oxford Academic (Oxford University Press)
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/csad066>
Oxford Journal of Church and State-Oxford Academic (Oxford University Press) (Vol. 65, nr 4/2023) în secțiunea Calendar of Events JCS (publicare 28 Noiembrie 2023)
Conference Alerts
<https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=254313>
Science DZ
<https://www.sciencedz.net/.../100575-14th-international...>
10 Times
<https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under...>
The Free Library
<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/CEPOS+NEW+CALL+FOR+PAPERS...>
Conference 365
<https://conferences365.com/.../14th-international...>
World University Directory

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<https://worlduniversitydirectory.com/edu/event/...>

Conferences daily

<https://conferencesdaily.com/eventdetails.php?id=1625192>

Gale Cengage Learning USA <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA766112846...>

CEPOS Conference 2023

The **Thirteenth International Conference** After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, 17-18 March 2023) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 5 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

Oxford Church & State Journal:

<https://academic.oup.com/jcs/articleabstract/65/1/168/7044222?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

10 Times: <https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

Conferencesite.eu:

<https://index.conferencesites.eu/conference/57510/13th-international-conference-after-communism-eastand-west-under-scrutiny;>

Schoolandcollegelistings

:<https://www.schoolandcollegelistings.com/RO/Craiova/485957361454074/Center-of-Post-Communist-Political-Studies-CEPOS>

Conferencealerts : <https://conferencealerts.com/showevent?id=247851>

CEPOS Conference 2022

The **Twelfth International Conference** After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, 18-19 March 2022) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 6 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

<https://www.conferenceflare.com/events/category/social-sciences-and-humanities/art-history/>

Vinculation International Diciembre 2021 newsletter n 99

https://issuu.com/fundacionargentina5/docs/diciembre_2021_fundaci_n_argentina-ai_ok?fr=sZjg2NjE5NTg3OTY

<https://www.schoolandcollegelistings.com/RO/Craiova/485957361454074/Center-of-Post-Communist-Political-Studies-CEPOS>

<https://10times.com/company/cepos>

<https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

<https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=238529>

<https://www.sciencedz.net/conference/82995-cepos-international-conference-2022-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

CEPOS Conference 2021

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The Eleventh International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 19-20 March 2021) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 5 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

<https://academic.oup.com/jcs/advance-articleabstract/doi/10.1093/jcs/csaa064/5941887?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

<https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=229654>

<https://www.sciencedz.net/en/conference/72628-11thinternational-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-underscrutiny>

<https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-underscrutiny>

<https://worlduniversitydirectory.com/edu/event/?slib=11thinternational-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-underscrutiny-2>

CEPOS Conference 2020

The Tenth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (27-28 March 2020) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 7 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

Scichemistry

<http://scichemistry.org/ConferenceInfosByConferenceTopicId?conferenceTopicId=57>

Oxford Journals

<https://academic.oup.com/jcs/advance-articlepdf/doi/10.1093/jcs/csz078/30096829/csz078.pdf>

Conference alerts

<https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=215370>

<https://www.sciencedz.net/en/conference/57625-10thinternational-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-underscrutiny>

Intraders

<https://www.intraders.org>.

cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/www.intraders.org/news/romania/10th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-westunderscrutiny/amp/?amp_js_v=a2&_gsa=1&usqp=mq331AQCKAE%3D#ah=15737604302246&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&_tf=De%20pe%20%251%24s&share=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.intraders.org%2Fnews%2F10th-internationalconference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny%2F

10 times

<https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-underscrutiny>

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The conference alerts

<https://theconferencealerts.com/event/46428/10th-internationalconference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

Scirea

<https://www.scirea.org/ConferenceInfosByConferenceCountryId?conferenceCountryId=75>

CEPOS Conference 2019

The Ninth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 29-30 March 2019) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 6 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

Oxford Academic Journal of Church & State <https://academic.oup.com/jcs/article-abstract/60/4/784/5106417?redirectedFrom=PDF>

10 Times

<https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

Conference Alerts

<https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=205682>

Researchgate

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327905733_CEPOS_9TH_INTERNATIONAL_CONFERENCE_AFTER_COMMUNISM_EAST_AND_WEST_UNDER_SCRUTINY_2019?_iepl%5BviewId%5D=sjcOJrVCO8PTLapcfVciZQsb&_iepl%5Bcontexts%5D%5B0%5D=publicationCreationEOT&_iepl%5BtargetEntityId%5D=PB%3A327905733&_iepl%5BinteractionType%5D=publicationCTA

The Free Library

<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/9th+INTERNATIONAL+CONFERENCE+AFTER+COMMUNISM.+EAST+AND+WEST+UNDER...-a0542803701>

Science Dz.net

<https://www.sciencedz.net/conference/42812-9th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

CEPOS Conference 2018

The Eighth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 23-24 March 2018) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 15 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

Conference Alerts, <https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=186626>

Sciencesdz, <http://www.sciencedz.net/conference/29484-8th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

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ManuscriptLink,
<https://manuscriptlink.com/cfp/detail?cfpId=AYAXKVAR46277063&type=event>

Maspolitiques, <http://www.maspolitiques.com/ar/index.php/en/1154-8th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

Aconf, https://www.aconf.org/conf_112399.html

Call4paper, <https://call4paper.com/listByCity?type=event&city=3025&count=count>
Eventegg, <https://eventegg.com/cepos/>

10 times, <https://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>
Biblioteca de Sociologie, <http://bibliotecadesociologie.ro/cfp-cepos-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny-craiova-2018/>

Science Research Association <http://www.scirea.org/topiclisting?conferenceTopicId=5>
ResearcherBook <http://researcherbook.com/country/Romania>

Conference Search Net, <http://conferencesearch.net/en/29484-8th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

SchoolandCollegeListings,
<https://www.schoolandcollegelisting.com/RO/Craiova/485957361454074/Center-of-Post-Communist-Political-Studies-CEPOS>

Vepub conference, <http://www.vepub.com/conferences-view/8th-International-Conference-After-Communism.-East-and-West-under-Scrutiny/bC9aUE5rcHN0ZmpkYU9nTHJzUkRmdz09/>

Geopolitika Hungary, <http://www.geopolitika.hu/event/8th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny/>

CEPOS Conference 2017

The Seventh International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 24-25 March 2017) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 10 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

Ethic & International Affairs (Carnegie Council), Cambridge University Press-
<https://www.ethicsandinternationalaffairs.org/2016/upcoming-conferences-interest-2016-2017/>

ELSEVIER GLOBAL EVENTS

LIST <http://www.globaleventslist.elsevier.com/events/2017/03/7th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

CONFERENCE ALERTS-<http://www.conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=171792>

10TIMES.COM-<http://10times.com/after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

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Hiway Conference Discovery System-<http://www.hicds.cn/meeting/detail/45826124>
Geopolitika (Hungary)-<http://www.geopolitika.hu/event/7th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny/>

Academic.net-<http://www.academic.net/show-24-4103-1.html>

World University Directory-
<http://www.worlduniversitydirectory.com/conferencedetail.php?AgentID=2001769>

Science Research Association-
<http://www.scirea.org/conferenceinfo?conferenceId=35290>

Science Social Community-<https://www.science-community.org/ru/node/174892>

CEPOS Conference 2016

The Sixth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 8-9 April 2016) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in the following international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

ELSEVIER GLOBAL EVENTS-
<http://www.globaleventslist.elsevier.com/events/2016/04/6th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny/>
Oxford Journals – Oxford Journal of Church & State-
<http://jcs.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2016/02/06/jcs.csv121.extract>

Conference Alerts-<http://www.conferencealerts.com/country-listing?country=Romania>
Conferences-In - <http://conferences-in.com/conference/romania/2016/economics/6th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny/>

Socmag.net - <http://www.socmag.net/?p=1562>

African Journal of Political Sciences-
http://www.maspolitiques.com/mas/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=450:-securitee-&catid=2:2010-12-09-22-47-00&Itemid=4#.VjUI5PnhCUk

Researchgate-
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283151988_Call_for_Papers_6TH_International_Conference_After_Communist_East_and_West_under_Scrutiny_8-9_April_2016_Craiova_Romania

World Conference Alerts-
<http://www.worldconferencealerts.com/ConferenceDetail.php?EVENT=WLD1442>
Edu events-<http://eduevents.eu/listings/6th-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny/>

Esocsci.org-<http://www.esocsci.org.nz/events/list/>

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Sciencedz.net-<http://www.sciencedz.net/index.php?topic=events&page=53>
Science-community.org-<http://www.science-community.org/ru/node/164404/?did=070216>

CEPOS Conference 2015

The Fifth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny (Craiova, House of the University, 24-25 April 2015) was evaluated and accepted for indexing in 15 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases:

THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL OF CANADA, CANADA-
<http://natocouncil.ca/events/international-conferences/>

ELSEVIER GLOBAL EVENTS LIST-
<http://www.globaleventslist.elsevier.com/events/2015/04/fifth-international-conf>

GCONFERENCE.NET-
http://www.gconference.net/eng/conference_view.html?no=47485&catalog=1&cata=018&co_kind=&co_type=&pageno=1&conf_cata=01

CONFERENCE BIOXBIO-<http://conference.bioxbio.com/location/Romania>

10 TIMES-<http://10times.com/Romania>

CONFERENCE ALERTS-<http://www.conferencealerts.com/country-listing?country=Romania>

<http://www.iem.ro/orizont2020/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/lista-3-conferinte-internationale.pdf>
<http://sdil.ac.ir/index.aspx?pid=99&articleid=62893>

NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM-<http://www.nationalsymposium.com/communism.php>
SCIENCE DZ-<http://www.sciencedz.net/conference/6443-fifth-international-conference-after-communism-east-and-west-under-scrutiny>

ARCHIVE COM-http://archive-com.com/com/c/conferencealerts.com/2014-12-01_5014609_70/Rome_15th_International_Academic_Conference_The_IISES/

CONFERENCE WORLD-<http://conferencesworld.com/higher-education/>
KNOW A CONFERENCE KNOW A CONFERENCE-
<http://knowaconference.com/social-work/>

International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications (IJONTE)
Turkey <http://www.ijonte.org/?pnum=15&>

Journal of Research in Education and Teaching Turkey-
<http://www.jret.org/?pnum=13&pt=Kongre+ve+Sempozyum>
CEPOS CONFERENCE 2015 is part of a "consolidated list of all international and

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Canadian conferences taking place pertaining to international relations, politics, trade, energy and sustainable development". For more details see <http://natocouncil.ca/events/international-conferences/>

CEPOS Conference 2014

The Fourth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny, Craiova, 4-5 April 2014 was very well received by the national media and successfully indexed in more than 9 international databases, catalogues and NGO's databases such as: American Political Science Association, USA-<http://www.apsanet.org/conferences.cfm>

Journal of Church and State, Oxford-

<http://jcs.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2014/01/23/jcs.cst141.full.pdf+html>;

NATO Council of Canada (section events/ international conferences), Canada,

<http://atlantic-council.ca/events/international-conferences/>

International Society of Political Psychology, Columbus, USA-

http://www.ispp.org/uploads/attachments/April_2014.pdf

Academic Biographical Sketch, <http://academicprofile.org/SeminarConference.aspx>;

Conference alerts, <http://www.conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=121380>

Gesis Sowipor, Koln, Germany, <http://sowipor.gesis.org/>; Osteuropa-Netzwerk,

Universität Kassel, Germany, [http://its-vm508.its.uni-](http://its-vm508.its.uni-kassel.de/mediawiki/index.php/After_communism:_East_and_West_under_scrutiny:_Fourth_International_Conference)

[kassel.de/mediawiki/index.php/After_communism:_East_and_West_under_scrutiny:_Fourth_International_Conference](http://its-vm508.its.uni-kassel.de/mediawiki/index.php/After_communism:_East_and_West_under_scrutiny:_Fourth_International_Conference)

Ilustre Colegio Nacional de Doctores y Licenciados en Ciencias Politicas y Sociologia,

futuro Consejo Nacional de Colegios Profesionales, Madrid,

<http://colpolsocmadrid.org/agenda/>.



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References:

The references cited in the Article are listed at the end of the paper in alphabetical order of authors' names.

References of the same author are listed chronologically.

For books

Olimid, A. P. (2009a). *Viața politică și spirituală în România modernă. Un model românesc al relațiilor dintre Stat și Biserică*, Craiova: Aius Publishing.

Olimid, A. P. (2009b). *Politica românească după 1989*, Craiova: Aius Publishing.

For chapters in edited books

Goodin, R. E. (2011). The State of the Discipline, the Discipline of the State. In Goodin, R. E. (editor), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 19-39.

For journal Articles

Georgescu, C. M. (2013a). Qualitative Analysis on the Institutionalisation of the Ethics and Integrity Standard within the Romanian Public Administration. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, 37, 320-326.

Georgescu, C. M. (2013b). Patterns of Local Self-Government and Governance: A Comparative Analysis Regarding the Democratic Organization of Thirteen Central and Eastern European Administrations (I). *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Științe Politice*, 39, 49-58.

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