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FACTA UNIVERSITATIS

SERIES **PHILOSOPHY, SOCIOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY AND HISTORY**
Vol. 22, Nº 2, 2023

UNIVERSITY OF NIŠ

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Contents

Original Scientific Paper

TEACHING RADICAL SOCIAL WORK SKILLS: A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL POLICY, SOCIAL WORK AND COMMUNITY WORK

UDC 378:364-43-021.321

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Abstract. *The worlds of social work practice, community work and social policy analysis converge in the academic study of radical social work. As such, voices from each of these disciplines should be incorporated, jointly, in social work education about radical practice. This article explores the nature of radical social work, its importance in social work education and the partnership approach taken by one University to teaching social workers in training about radical social work practice. Over a two-year programme, students are equipped with sectoral and policy analysis skills, followed by skills for active engagement with the social justice and social change mission of social work.*

Key words: *Radical Social Work, partnership, social policy, community work, teaching.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The worlds of social work practice, community work, social policy analysis and other social science disciplines such as sociology or human geography converge in the academic study of radical social work. This aspect of social work practice can be understood as an over-arching approach that moves from the individual to the societal, focusing on ideas, concepts and practices that place an emphasis on the socio-economic-political context. Radical social work places an imperative on practitioners to critique and engage with the policy arena, entering the liminal space between social work practice, community work practice and social policy analysis. This article documents the partnership approach taken by one university to populating this space. The approach explicitly engages voices from three disciplines – social work practitioners, community work practitioners and social

policy analysts – within the liminal space, in a collaborative approach to teaching radical social work.

2. WHAT IS RADICAL SOCIAL WORK

Radical social work is concerned with the wider, structural issues in society – discrimination, inequality and poverty, for example – and argues that certain state instruments such as policies function as instruments of oppression that benefit the privileged groups (Mullally 2007). Building on sociological theory, a radical approach to social work therefore posits that neoliberalism and global capitalism strongly deepen inequality (Fraser et al. 2017). Many aspects of the way society is ordered reflect the interests of the powerful. The control of media, politics and education, and how social issues are conceived, influence everyday life and relationships. Radical social work sees fighting for social justice as an ethical imperative of social work. Manning (2003) advises that the ethical is also political and that social workers

> "…should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully" (Manning 2003).

While it is not easy to identify a single definition of radical social work (Reisch and Andrews 2001), most share the following themes: a structural analysis of personal problems; an analysis of the social control functions of social work and welfare; and an ongoing social critique, analysis of oppressive functions within and across society.

In focusing on injustice and inequality, radical social work prompts practitioners to examine not only what can be done at the macro level to address these imbalances, but also to seek to elucidate the root causes and establish a structural analysis of personal problems. This drive to discover and address the root causes of injustice and disadvantage are at the core of radical social work (de Maria 1992). In positing an analysis of the social control functions of social work and welfare, radical social work differs from other forms of "good" social work in that it first requires discovery of the "root causes" of inequalities. This must be followed by engaging in social action towards progressive social change, operationalising an ongoing social critique, an analysis of oppressive functions within and across society. Social work which is understood from a radical perspective acknowledges the political aspect of social work and is unapologetic about this. For some, social work should be viewed as a neutral profession (Pawar 2019; Whiting 2008), for others, particularly those in the radical tradition, social work is necessarily political (Ioakimidis 2016).

Radical social work largely focuses on the macro as opposed to micro – the community as opposed to the individual – but acknowledges the dialectic relationship between the two. For example, Bertha Capen Reynolds, a USA based radical social worker in the mid-1900s, did not differentiate between individual casework and community organising because in her view difficulties faced by people and communities were 'beyond the scope of any one method' (Joseph 1986, 122, in Belkin-Martinez and Fleck Henderson 2014, 18). A community-lens is therefore imperative for radical social work.

One of the challenges of the radical approach is translating it into everyday practice. Social work exists in an on-going tension whereby practitioners are demanded by the state to carry out an 'agent of control' function, but simultaneously, through their education

and training, are compelled to strive for social justice. By helping people, and the communities they work with, to see and understand how their problems were being created by a system that favours the rich and powerful, social workers sympathetic to the radical tradition are able to raise political awareness, which in itself helps to empower people and communities towards conscientization (Freire 1993). Rossiter (2001) encapsulates some of these concerns in her discussion critiquing whether social workers can actually assist victims of the (neoliberal) system, when social work is part of the very structure that defines that victimhood.

Is radical policy work for social workers an optional approach or one which every social worker should engage in?

> "Too often the claim is made that critical and radical social work is a luxury that is afforded to academics … but has no practice relevance … This was always a lazy claim … there are [and always have been] practitioners looking for [and using] critical and radical … practice" (Ferguson & Lavalette 2013).

The 'Global Definition of Social Work' adopted by the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) codifies the radical nature of the profession. For example, in its commitment to the development of 'critical consciousness', the creation of 'action strategies to support emancipatory practice' and the commitment to 'solidarity', working with those experiencing disadvantage to alleviate poverty and oppression. Indeed, for the IFSW the commitment of social work to radical practice is constructed as a core mandate and from this perspective, social work has a duty to promote social change, social development, and the empowerment and liberation of people. The commitment of the IFSW to radical perspectives therefore underlines the centrality of this approach to social work practice.

3. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TEACH RADICAL SOCIAL WORK?

It is important to teach radical social work in practitioner programmes because social work students entering practice need to work from a sound knowledge and social science theory base in order to be confident and develop as ethically sound practitioners. While most students in Ireland will come to social work training with the sociological underpinnings of radical social work, if students are not exposed to radical social work theory in college, then they will not necessarily become aware of it or incorporate it into their practice in the field. If students are drawn to radical or critical social work theory, either while on placement or through the taught part of their programmes, it is important that they are offered tangible ways of "doing" and "being" radical social workers in practice.

For a sizeable number of students entering social work programmes, the broader, collective aspects of social work serve as motivation for study. Some of these students may agree that social workers should act as 'change agents' for communities and society as well as individuals and families (IFSW 2012). This motivation is evident in a recent Irish study *The Push and Pull Factors of a Career in Social Work: What Drives Recruitment and Retention in Social Work* (Flanagan et al. 2021) where 91% and 86% of respondents in the study articulated that their personal commitment to social justice and social change respectively were motivating factors for studying social work (Flanagan et al. 2021, 177).

Through critical reflection of radical theories and analysing placement experience, social work educators can support students to not "...fall into the trap of hyper-individualising social

problems" (Fraser et al. 2017). Educating people based on values aligned with the principles and definition of social work is another important element of incorporating radical social work tradition in social work education.

> "Critical, radical and structural social workers appreciate that unemployment, poverty and homelessness are debilitating social problems in many people's lives (Lavalette, 2011; Mullaly, 2007; Morley et al., 2014)" in (Fraser et al 2017).

As such, social work educators should seek to impart knowledge that allows students to understand that a core aspect of social work is to work to change the political system to meet the needs of the people and not to change people to fit in with the political system.

Social work educators teaching radical approaches to social work should also ensure to instill hope in social work students that change comes from (re)claiming the radical social work identity (Fook 2002). Incorporating radical approaches in social work curricula highlights the notion that collaboration between social workers and service users is imperative (Beresford 2011). In encouraging discussion and analysis, social work educators can support students to heighten their awareness of structural and societal injustices and in doing so, increase the potential for action (Howe 2009). Not including radical social work theory in the education of social workers risks producing a social work workforce which accepts the entrenchment of the neoliberal status quo, of individualising public issues; a workforce that is unable to strive to create real systemic change and yields to the embedding of structural inequalities in society. This risks a

> "Professional social work (which) is taught as if it exists within a political vacuum, largely devoid of class analysis and is incapable of addressing issues of poverty and oppression…In this context, it is easy to ignore the need for social change" (Russell 2017).

As noted earlier, the challenge is to support students to apply radical approaches to everyday practice. Community Work may offer a way forward in the application of theory to practice. Indeed, there are interesting connections between radical social work perspectives and community work approaches. It is also interesting to note the similarities in the language of the IFSW definition and the Community Work Ireland (2016) definition of Community Work as

> "A developmental activity comprised of both a task and a process. The task is social change to achieve equality, social justice and human rights, and the process is the application of principles of participation, empowerment and collective decision making in a structured and co-ordinated way" (AIEB 2016, 5).

For the social work educator, community work, traditionally one of three methods of social work (along with social casework and social group work) offers approaches for integrating radical theory into action. The contribution of the Brazilian Educationalist and Community worker Paulo Freire and his ideas on 'praxis' and 'problem-posing education' (Freire 1972) represent key points of influence in classroom teaching of radical social work.

4. SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

In addressing the teaching of radical social work in the practitioner curriculum, it is important to consider the evolution of social work education in the Republic of Ireland. The establishment of social work education in this country can be traced back to 1912,

when a training course entitled *Civic and Social Work* first started in Alexandra College in Dublin. Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin followed in 1934 and 1936, respectively, with diplomas in Social Studies. In 1973 a form of social work education, more similar to contemporary practitioner education, was adopted and social work programmes were approved by the UK Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) despite the state being an independent republic. A quarter of a century later the National Social Work Qualifications Board was established, followed by the current statutory regulator CORU in 2005. CORU oversees not only the professional conduct of social workers in the Republic of Ireland, but also accredits and monitors social work teaching programmes. All social work teaching programmes must undergo a comprehensive review by CORU every five years and be approved in order to retain their accreditation and continue providing the programme.

Currently, six universities offer social work education in the Republic of Ireland; Maynooth University (MU), University College Dublin (UCD), University College Cork (UCC), University of Galway (UCG), Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and Atlantic Technological University (ATU), Sligo. A further two schools provide social work education in Northern Ireland, one in Queens University Belfast and one in the University of Ulster. However, while there is extensive cross-border collaboration with schools in the Republic of Ireland, these two schools are in a different political jurisdiction, the United Kingdom, and do not fall under the remit of CORU.

As with social work education across the world, most of the education is offered at the post-graduate level. All of the universities in the Republic of Ireland have two-year post-graduate Masters programmes, with TCD offering an undergraduate programme and UCC offering an undergraduate programme for mature students. All of the programmes are structured with approximately half of the teaching being classroom based in the university and the other half being practice based learning in social work agencies. On average, approximately 250 students graduate each year in the Republic of Ireland.

The Maynooth University professional social work programme, which was setup in 2019, is a two-year postgraduate, Master's degree. Forty students are taken into the programme each year and these students spend approximately ten months in the classroom, interspersed with two 14-week blocks of practice placement. Applicants to the programme are required to have a social science background and many successful students already have a degree in social science which incorporates social policy alongside a second subject such as sociology.

5. A Partnership between Social Policy, Social Work and Community Work

In devising the social work programme in Maynooth University, significant Freirean influences were brought to bear on the overall curriculum. For Freire, central to the definition of praxis (doing action) is a contentious cycle of reflection on how theory influences action and vice versa, defined as '*reflection and action on the world in order to transform it*' (Freire 1972: 52). This influence prompted the use of problem-posing methods that encourage students to critically reflect on the opportunities and challenges inherent in the task of applying, for example, radical ideas to practice. Freire's theory of 'codification' (1972) was identified as a practical way of engaging students, and indeed

educators, in problem-posing education. Simply, a 'code' is a representation of an actual situation that students have strong feelings about and can be exemplified as a picture, story, video, or poster. The purpose of the 'code' is for students to generate something that can be analysed at the levels of description, impact, root causes, and possibilities for change through action planning. In terms of an example, the 'Ethics Work' Framework of Banks (2016) supports the application of radical perspectives on ethics to practice (e.g. emancipatory values including social justice, and collective responsibility). The 'Ethics Work' framework contains various elements that start with situating or framing an ethical issue. Students are encouraged to consider how when taking up the social work role they can balance the rational and relational nature of practice. Students are also encouraged to frame practice as political, for example, when working with case studies they are invited to explore how a focus on human rights and social justice would change the more therapeutic elements of the case. The aim is not to repudiate therapeutic approaches, such as strengths-based models rather the purpose is for students to understand that personal issues often reflect political causes. To bring change both the personal and the political require intervention.

The teaching of social policy in social work training has traditionally been undertaken by colleagues from the related, and often co-departmental discipline of social policy. However, many social work students come to social work with an undergraduate degree in social policy or a social policy component in social care training. As such, students on postgraduate social work programmes, by and large already have a grounding in social policy. Therefore, the role of social policy within professional training can often be one of refamiliarization with the concepts, theories and practices of policy making and application of that theory to social work policy practice. Similarly, most social work students in Ireland come to social work with an undergraduate degree in sociology from which they can build their existing knowledge of the socio-economic-political context of social work. In recent months, a sociology component was introduced to the social work programme in this university; however, it is not yet explicitly linked to the teaching of radical social work.

In line with the programme ethos, a Freirean influenced problem-posing approach was sought to teaching social policy for social work which would integrate the practitioner voices from the policy arena. The first author of this paper, a social policy academic, tasked with social policy education on the professional social work programme, studied the information behaviour of social workers for her doctoral research and was acutely aware of the value of a social work voice in teaching social policy (Flanagan 2020). The second author, a social work practitioner, has engaged in policy work throughout her career and actively engages in promotion of policy practice to practitioners through her work with professional associations and unions. The third author, and Director of the social work programme, came to social work with a long background in community work and youth work. The interface of a policy academic with a research interest in social work practice, a social work practitioner with active participation in policy work, and a programme director with a background in community work became the genesis of a two-voice teaching strategy which maximises the individual disciplinary expertise, cross-disciplinary collaboration and Freirean problem-posing, modelling to students the relationship between these closely related disciplines.

5.1. Year 1, Sectoral Analysis and Policy Analysis

It has been pointed out that 'social work, radical or otherwise, is fundamentally linked to the time and to the place in which it occurs' (Vance 2017, 1). Furthermore, radical social work

brings the collectivist tradition and community development approaches to bear on social work practices (Ferguson and Woodward 2009, 132). However, inherent in radical social work, there are also risks to professional reputations when undertaking radical social work in isolation (Ferguson and Woodward 2009, 132), underlining the importance of strategic alliances to mitigate the potential risks (Ferguson and Woodward 2009: 132). In this context, an outward-looking approach, into the community in which practitioners work, is crucial. This philosophy of an outward-looking profession underpins the first strand of radical social work skills development at Maynooth University – that of sectoral analysis.

The social policy component of the Year 1 programme runs weekly for twelve weeks and involves didactic inputs which reintroduce students to social policy, outline the policy-making process and explore the various voices in policy making in Ireland. Alongside this teaching input, students work on a *Collaborative Sectoral Analysis Portfolio*. Each student is assigned a stakeholder organisation who have a voice in policy making. This can include relevant government departments, statutory agencies, non-government agencies, advocacy groups or professional organisations such as the *Irish Association of Social Workers*. Students research the organisation and write a short blog to share their findings with the class. Blogs are posted on the university's virtual learning environment (VLE) and are visible to all class members. In this way the acquired knowledge is shared among the class. In a second blog, students research and post about how their assigned organisation takes a voice in policy making. Some organisations or government departments will be in the formal role of policy maker, while others will contribute through government advisory roles, responding to calls for submissions on legislative development, and/or advocacy campaigns of various breadth and magnitudes. The main statutory agencies in Ireland which are of most relevance to social work include Tusla: Child and Family Agency and The Probation Service. In these agencies, policies become *de facto* national policies. The student blogs, which are short and succinct, support skills in sectoral analysis and identification of organisations that may be potential strategic partners in radical social work practice.

The second part of the module focuses on policy analysis with lectures on national-level policies of relevance to forthcoming social work placements. This can include, for example, the national child protection policy, or the joint working protocol between police and child protection workers, or an adult safeguarding policy. Building on research which shows that social workers like to acquire knowledge and information from fellow social workers (Flanagan 2020), each student is assigned a policy closely related to the organisation they researched. The students are instructed to prepare a five-minute video 'teaching' their peers about the policy, with the instructional guidelines that the videos are a peer-to-peer teaching and learning exercise. In other words, the content and presentation should be what they themselves would like to hear about a policy. The videos are limited to no more than 5-7 minutes and serve as an introduction and overview to a policy. The aim of the videos is to construct a collaborative portfolio of policy knowledge which students can access while on placement: a portfolio prepared by and for social work students. Despite the technical as well as academic challenge associated with developing these videos, students have produced a range of short, informative and educational materials which are housed and accessible to the class on the University's VLE.

5.2. Year 2, Skills for Active Engagement

While Year 1 skills development focuses on sectoral analysis and policy analysis, Year 2 addresses issues of active engagement in radical social policy with Freirean problem-posing exercises. This 12-hour module is delivered in a two-voice presentation with a social policy academic and a practitioner introducing the concepts of radical social work, justifications for policy work education, and then walking students through structures and strategies for influencing policy making and the problems or risks associated with them.

Students are introduced to the social justice and social change mission which inspires many practitioners to join the profession and motivates them to remain in practice. This component of the module draws heavily on data from a piece of participative research undertaken by the first cohort of social work students in Maynooth University (Flanagan et al. 2021). As mentioned earlier, the findings of the study on recruitment and retention in Irish social work point clearly to the primacy of the social justice and social change mission among Irish social workers. For many, the proximity of the research to the current students chimes with their own motivations for choosing to study social work.

This input on the social justice and social change mission of social work is tempered somewhat by an input on the risks associated with engaging in radical social work in isolation. The risks are presented in an ecological framework (Bonfenbrenner 1979) which maps risks at the individual level, the organisational level, the professional level, the national and societal levels.

Moving on from the ecology of risk, the module addresses the structures within which social work practitioners can safely engage in radical social work practice. Strategic alliances at local, national and international levels are again placed in an ecology of alliances, introducing students to the organisations through which they can collectively influence policy. Having undertaken a sectoral analysis in Year 1, students are well equipped to brainstorm potential strategic partners at a number of levels in the ecology.

A model for taking a voice in policy making, drawing on social policy studies, is complemented by a social work practitioner input on each phase in the process. The *Model For Active Engagement In Policy Making* (Flanagan & Cuskelly, in preparation) looks at five phases of active engagement in influencing policy work.

(1) developing a policy agenda
(2) developing a strategy for action
(3) presenting a policy position
(4) Persistence in pursuit of policy change
(5) Monitoring of policy evolution and implementation.

In each phase of the model, students are introduced to the steps, practices and procedures that they can employ to effectively and safely contribute to policy making. Again, employing the Freirean problem-posing approach each step is critiqued and discussed by the practitioner lecturer in order to embed the steps in social work practice.

Having taken a largely Irish-centric approach throughout the module, the assignment for the module is a structured, whole-class 'round-the-world' discussion about radical social work practices. The assignment uses Gall and Weiss-Gall's (2014) edited volume, *'Social Workers Affecting Social Policy: An International Perspective'* to navigate international and country-specific policy work practices. The book includes chapters on social workers policy work in Australia, England, Israel, Italy, Russia, Spain, Sweden, and the USA. Small groups of students are assigned a chapter from the book and, having read the chapter

outside class, are invited to discuss the chapter in their small groups identifying key practices which they would like to bring back to the whole-class discussion. Students are afforded relative freedom in what they choose to bring to the discussion, some choosing to focus on practices which we could adopt in Ireland, others choosing practices which we should avoid in Irish social work, and others again highlighting the barriers and risks experienced by fellow social workers in other jurisdictions.

Students are each invited to prepare 3-minute discussion points on a policy work aspect that they would like to share with the class. Students post a blog indicating their chosen theme for discussion and a structure for the discussion is mapped, either thematically or geographically. The map, overlaying a geographical map, is displayed on a screen so students know when to make their contribution. Each student presents their theme of interest and can link, compare and contrast to Ireland or other nations' practices in the presentations of their peers.

CONCLUSION

Maynooth University's ethos and history has evolved from, firstly, a community and youth work origin, to include social policy and most recently social work. The structure of the University is such that sociology and human geography are part of separate departments, although most social work students will have studied at least one or the other at the undergraduate level. Acknowledging and building on the social science underpinnings of undergraduate study, the applied social science disciplinary influences of community work, youth work, social policy and social work, which form the pillars of the Department were judiciously and purposively woven into the fabric of social work education within the University, embedding a Freirean problem-posing philosophy in policy work for radical social work. Radical social work places an imperative on practitioners to draw on their broad social science background to critique and engage with the socio-economic-political policy arena, entering the liminal space between the wider social sciences. This module is firmly situated in an applied framework where students bring their existing social sciences knowledge to bear on policy practice, using their knowledge of root causes and structural analysis of personal problems to critique and plan for effective policy practice. The key to the impact of this approach are the voices of practitioners and analysts in partnership, modelling the importance of strategic partnerships in radical social work practice.

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NASTAVA RADIKALNOG SOCIJALNOG RADA: PARTNERSTVO IZMEĐU SOCIJALNE POLITIKE, SOCIJALNOG RADA I RADA U ZAJEDNICI

Praksa socijalnog rada, rada u zajednici i analiza socijalne politike konvergiraju u akademskom proučavanju radikalnog socijalnog rada. Samim tim, informacije iz svake od ovih disciplina trebalo bi da budu uključene, istovremeno, u nastavu radikalnog socijalnog rada. Ovaj rad istražuje prirodu radikalnog socijalnog rada, njegovu važnost u nastavi, i partnerski pristup koji je jedan univerzitet odabrao u podučavanju socijalnih radnika u okviru prakse iz oblasti radikalnog socijalnog rada. Tokom dvogodišnjeg programa studenti stiču veštine sektorske i političke analize, uz veštine za aktivno angažovanje u ostvarivanju ciljeva socijalnog rada i socijalne pravde.

Ključne reči: *radikalni socijalni rad, saradnja, socijalna politika, rad u zajednici, nastava.*

SELF-ESTEEM AND BODY ESTEEM AS PREDICTORS OF QUALITY OF LIFE IN EMERGING ADULTS

UDC 159.923.31

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Abstract. *The main aim of this study was to determine whether the domains of quality of life can be predicted by the dimensions of body esteem (appearance, weight, attribution) and self-esteem (performance, social) in emerging adults. The Body Esteem Scale, The State Self-Esteem Scale and World Health Organization Quality of Life – Brief were applied. The sample consisted of 155 emerging adults - psychology students (133 females), aged 19 to 29 years (M=21.05, SD=2.05). The percentage of variance of the criterion variables (domains of quality of life) explained by predictor models ranges from 21.3 % for the environment to 58.6% for psychological health. The dimension of body esteem appearance is a statistically significant predictor of all domains of quality of life with positive β coefficients. Another significant predictor for domains of physical and psychological health is the dimension of self-esteem performance. In line with previous findings, the results of this study showed that the higher the self-esteem and the less the concern/dissatisfaction of individuals with their own body, the better the quality of life of these individuals.*

Key words: *quality of life, self-esteem, body esteem, emerging adults, students.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality of life is one of the concepts of positive psychology that has been attracting the attention of the scientific public for the past 50 years, especially in the fields of psychology, philosophy, sociology, and medicine (Bogdanović & Spasić Šnele 2018). According to The World Health Organization (WHO), quality of life can be defined as the individual's assessment of their position in life in the scope of culture and values, considering their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns (Nayir et al. 2016). It is associated with physical and mental health, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs, as well as the main characteristics of the environment in which the

individual lives. In the broadest sense, it can be said that quality of life is the subjective experience of one's own life determined by the objective circumstances in which a person lives, personality characteristics, and the specific life experience of each person (Vidanović et al. 2016). In the context of the aforementioned, it seems important to examine the quality of life of emerging adults and some of the personality characteristics that could play an important role in its preservation. This question is particularly significant considering the numerous challenges that people in this period face, since this is a time during which real-world adjustment sets the stage for lifelong well-being (Desjardins & Leadbeater 2017).

Emerging adulthood refers to the period of transition into adulthood i.e., it is a developmental phase between adolescence and adulthood focusing mainly on the ages of 18 to 29 (Arnett, 2000, 2007). This is a time when individuals tend to consider themselves too old to be adolescents, but not yet full-fledged adults (Reifman et al., 2007). Arnett et al. (2014) described five features of emerging adulthood: 1) the age of identity exploration – young people are deciding what kind of person to be, what kind of life to live, and what they want out of work, school, and love; 2) the age of instability – this is the most unstable period of life, whereby frequent changes in love relationships and work could be understood as a way of their identity exploration; 3) the age of self-focus – this is the time when people have the fewest daily social roles and obligations to others, so freed of the parent- and society-directed routine of school, young people try to decide what they want to do, where they want to go, and who they want to be with, before the constraints of marriage, children, and a career limit those choices; 4) the age of feeling in-between – many emerging adults say they are taking responsibility for themselves but still do not completely feel like adults, on the way to adulthood but not there yet; and 5) the age of possibilities – many emerging adults believe their future is bright, that they have a good chance of living well and better than their parents.

Enjoyment in their self-focused freedom from obligations and restraints, satisfaction in their progress toward self-sufficiency, and growing social cognitive maturity that enables them to understand themselves and others better than they did as adolescents have significant roles in improving the wellbeing and mental health of emerging adults (Arnett 2007). In line with that, numerous studies showed that for most, wellbeing improves during emerging adulthood (Galambos et al. 2006; Schulenberg & Zarrett 2006). However, some authors see this period as a period of elevated stress (Duffy et al. 2019; Halliburton et al. 2021), considering the many challenges emerging adults face and the various tasks grounded in identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between adolescence and adulthood, and seeing the future as full of possibilities (Arnett 2007). Identity issues are prominent in emerging adulthood and sorting through them can generate anxiety (Arnett 2007). Facing increasing responsibilities, along with the access to more opportunities, compared to when they were adolescents, can result in heightened stress, thus reducing positive mental health (well-being) and increasing the risk of psychopathology (Halliburton et al., 2021), impairing their quality of life.

Several authors (Felce & Perry 1995; Cummins 2000) share the opinion that in explaining quality of life, in addition to objective measures as indicators of reality, it is necessary to include an experiential, subjective assessment of objective factors as well as personal development. Bearing in mind the developmental changes characteristic of this developmental phase, as well as previous findings (Olenik-Shemesh et al. 2018), our attention was focused on examining the roles that self-esteem and body esteem could play in the quality of life of emerging adults in Serbia. According to the available literature, not many studies have been done on this topic in our environment, thus this field is mostly under-researched.

Self-esteem is one of the personality variables that previous research has shown to be significantly associated with quality of life (Lucas et al. 1996), primarily in individualistic societies (Diener et al. 1999), and it is considered as one of the main predictors of young adults' well-being (Olenik-Shemesh et al. 2018). Self-esteem is defined as a positive or negative attitude toward oneself, referred to as an individual's global self-worth, and as an appreciation of oneself (Rosenberg 1965) and indicates the degree to which a person believes himself/herself to be significant and valuable (Coopersmith 1967). People with high self-esteem are less sensitive to failure and criticism because they do not perceive them as a threat. Such people can withstand stress more easily due to a sense of control and optimism, as well as faith in their abilities. Self-esteem can be taken as the primary indicator of an individual's positive adjustment (Todorović et al. 2009). On the other hand, low self-esteem may serve as a risk factor for depression and a decrease in one's sense of well-being (Olenik-Shemesh et al. 2018). Because many of the identity questions of youth extend into the period of young adulthood (Neff & Pittman 2010), one can assume that self-esteem plays an important role in emerging adults' sense of well-being.

Another important concept related to the quality of life is the experience of body image. Body image can be understood as a cumulative set of ideas, fantasies, emotions, attitudes and meanings that are associated with individual parts of the body and the body as a whole (Martinec 2008). Cash (1994) distinguishes three domains of body-image – evaluation, affect, and investment. Body-image evaluation refers to satisfaction-dissatisfaction with body appearance, which results from the perceived discrepancy of the current body image in relation to internalized ideals of body appearance. Closely related to the domain of evaluation, but not identical to it, is the affective domain i.e., the domain of emotional experiences arising as a result of the assessment (evaluation) of the body. The third component (cognitive-behavioral investment) implies how important appearance is to a person and, accordingly, patterns of behavior dedicated to improving physical appearance. Body esteem refers to the affective dimension of body image, which is based on evaluating one's body or appearance. Body esteem is a part of body image, the appearance domain of self-esteem, and thus one of the aspects of body image most closely related to personal identity (Nelson et al. 2018). Three aspects of body esteem are distinguished - acceptance of appearance, weight, and attribution. The appearance domain refers to general feelings about one's own appearance, the weight domain refers to satisfaction with one's own weight, and the attribution domain reflects a person's beliefs about how other people evaluate their body (Mendelson et al. 2001). Although weight esteem is a part of appearance esteem, feelings about one's appearance may differ from feelings related particularly to one's weight (Nelson et al. 2018). When it comes to the period of emerging adulthood, body esteem is an important aspect mainly due to the high importance placed on romantic relationships among young adults (Nelson et al. 2018; Olenik-Shemesh et al. 2018).

Previous studies on emerging adults showed that sense of well-being is correlated with self-esteem and body esteem, indicating the importance of these variables for an individual's sense of well-being (Olenik-Shemesh et al. 2018). When it comes to body image, the results showed that a good body image proved to be a predictor that improves quality of life in all subdomains. Similar results were obtained in the study done by Mond et al. (2013). The most notable finding was that body dissatisfaction was associated with marked impairment in various aspects of quality of life in a substantial portion of the participants.

1.1. The present study

The main goal of this study was to examine whether the dimensions of self-esteem (social and performance) and body esteem (appearance, weight, and attribution) are statistically significant predictors of the quality of life of persons during emerging adulthood. Accordingly, it was hypothesized that the dimensions of self-esteem and body esteem will represent significant predictors of the aspects of quality of life (physical, psychological, social, and environmental) of emerging adults.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

The research sample consisted of 155 emerging adults, psychology students, aged 19 to 29 years (M=21.05, SD=2.05), of which 133 were female and 22 were male.

2.2. Measurement

2.2.1. The dependent variable

Quality of life is measured with the World Health Organization Quality of Life – Brief (WHOQOL, 1998). It contains 24 items to which the respondents give answers on a five-point scale, as well as two items concerning general subjective evaluation of quality of life. Quality of life is defined through four subscales/domains: 1) Physical (7 items) – activities, drug treatment, energy, mobility, presence of pain, quality of sleep, work capacity; 2) Psychological (6 items) – satisfaction with physical appearance, negative and positive emotions, self-confidence; 3) Social (3 items) – interpersonal relations, social support, sexual activity; 4) Environment (8 items) – financial resources, opportunities for recreation and leisure. The Cronbach α (1951) for the Physical subscale is at a satisfactory level (α = .808) after removing item number 3 ("How much does physical pain prevent you from doing what you want?") and item number 4 ("How much medical treatment do you need to function in your daily life?"), as well as for the Psychological subscale (α = .808) after removing item number 26 ("How often do you have negative feelings such as sadness, despair, anxiety, depression?"), and also for the Environment (α = .730). The Social subscale almost has satisfactory reliability of internal consistency (α = .611) on the tested sample after removing item 21 ("How satisfied are you with your sex life?"). All of the items listed above were dropped to improve internal consistency reliability to at least an acceptable level (Cronbach 1951).

2.2.2. Predictor variables

Self-esteem is defined through The State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES; Heatherton & Polivy 1991) – it contains 20 items that assess the respondents' self-esteem at a given time using a five-point scale. It measures three components of the state of self-esteem: Appearance (6 items), Social (7 items), and Performance (7 items). In this study, only the components of social adequacy and intellectual ability (Performance) will be used, given that the components of self-assessment of physical appearance are already included in the Body Esteem Scale (see below). Sample items include: "I feel confident about my abilities" (Performance); "I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or

failure" (Social). The reliability of internal consistency of all the subscales on the examined sample is good (Cronbach α is .849 for the Social and .832 for Performance subscales).

Body esteem is operationally defined with the Body Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults (BES; Mendelson et al., 1997). The instrument has three subscales: BE-Appearance (general feelings about appearance) – it consists of 10 items (α = .904), BE-Weight (weight satisfaction) – 8 items (α = .896), BE-Attribution (others' evaluations about one's body and appearance) – 5 items (α = .642). Sample items include: "I like what I look like in pictures" (BE-Appearance); "I am satisfied with my weight" (BE-Weight); "Other people consider me good looking" (BE-Attribution). Respondents state their degree of agreement with the statements using a five-point scale. Items that are not affirmative are reversed.

3. RESULTS

In order to test the proposed goals and hypothesis, a series of statistical procedures were performed. Firstly, descriptive statistics, then the correlation analysis between variables were performed, followed by several linear regression analyses.

Table 1 Descriptive indicators

Variable	Min	Max	M	SD	Sk	Ku	K-S[1]
1 Physical health	8.00	25.00	18.80	3.48	-0.567	0.590	1.39*
2 Psychological health	7.00	25.00	19.28	3.29	-0.890	1.498	1.82**
3 Social relations	4.00	10.00	8.06	1.33	-0.615	0.343	2.60**
4 Environment	11.00	39.00	27.94	4.32	-0.560	1.547	1.03
5 Performance	8.00	35.00	27.52	5.11	-0.958	1.021	1.35
6 Social	7.00	35.00	27.97	5.57	-1.110	1.249	1.64**
7 Appearance	1.00	39.00	26.75	7.28	-0.915	1.188	0.92
8 Weight	0.00	32.00	20.67	6.82	-0.573	0.142	1.02
9 Attribution	1.00	20.00	11.19	3.33	-0.211	0.392	1.11

Note: [1]Kolmogorov-Smirnof Z; **p<.01; *p<.05

The distribution of majority of tested variables is normal (Table 1) so parametric statistics was used for the remaining analysis.

Table 2 Pearson correlations between the dimensions of quality of life, dimensions of self-esteem, and body esteem

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Physical health	1								
2 Psychological health	.625**	1							
3 Social relations	.425**	.604**	1						
4 Environment	.603**	.507**	.455**	1					
5 Performance	.517**	.594**	.438**	.313**	1				
6 Social	.300**	.478**	.448**	.279**	.705**	1			
7 Appearance	.393**	.685**	.548**	.417**	.489**	.533**	1		
8 Weight	.271**	.452**	.389**	.276**	.353**	.327**	.736**	1	
9 Attribution	.180*	.341**	.272**	.133	.255**	.248**	.395**	.336**	1

Note: **p<.01; *p<.05

According to Table 2 it could be seen that physical health is positively correlated with performance, social self-esteem, and appearance body esteem (moderate correlations), as well with weight and attribution body esteem (weak correlations). Psychological health is positively correlated (moderate correlations) with performance and social self-esteem, as well as with all dimensions of body esteem (appearance, weight and attribution). Social relations are positively correlated with performance and social self-esteem, appearance, and weight body esteem (moderate correlations), as well as with attribution body esteem (weak correlation). Environment is positively correlated with performance self-esteem and appearance body esteem (moderate correlation), and correlations with social self-esteem and weight body esteem are positive and weak.

Table 3 Results of the linear regression: the dimensions of self-esteem and body esteem as predictors of the dimension physical health

Predictors	β	p	Tolerance	VIF	Model Summary
Performance	**.54**	**.00**	0.49	2.06	
Social	-.20	.05	0.46	2.17	$R = .567$, $R^2 = .322$,
Appearance	**.32**	**.01**	0.34	2.92	Adjusted $R^2 = .298$,
Weight	-.09	.41	0.43	2.33	$F_{(5, 140)} = 13.294$, $p = .000$,
Attribution	-.01	.85	0.83	1.21	

Statistically significant predictors of physical health are performance self-esteem and appearance body esteem, and the model explains 32.2% of the variance of the physical health aspect of quality of life (Table 3).

Table 4 Results of the linear regression: the dimensions of self-esteem and body esteem as predictors of the dimension psychological health

Predictors	β	p	Tolerance	VIF	Model Summary
Performance	**.38**	**.00**	0.50	2.02	
Social	-.07	.41	0.47	2.14	$R = .766$, $R^2 = .586$,
Appearance	**.60**	**.00**	0.35	2.86	Adjusted $R^2 = .571$,
Weight	-.12	.16	0.44	2.25	$F_{(5, 140)} = 39.655$, $p = .000$,
Attribution	.08	.16	0.85	1.17	

The prediction model explains 58.6% of the variance of psychological health, while statistically significant predictors of psychological health are performance self-esteem and appearance body esteem (Table 4).

Table 5 Results of the linear regression: the dimensions of self-esteem and body esteem as predictors of the dimension social relations

Predictors	β	p	Tolerance	VIF	Model Summary
Performance	.14	.14	0.48	2.08	
Social	.14	.17	0.45	2.22	$R = .604$, $R^2 = .365$,
Appearance	**.42**	**.00**	0.35	2.89	Adjusted $R^2 = .342$,
Weight	-.03	.77	0.44	2.26	$F_{(5, 143)} = 16.41$, $p = .000$,
Attribution	.04	.58	0.83	1.21	

The only statistically significant predictor of the social relations aspect of quality of life is appearance body esteem, and the prediction model explains 36.5% of its variance (Table 5).

Table 6 Results of the linear regression: the dimensions of self-esteem and body esteem as predictors of the dimension environment

Predictors	β	p	Tolerance	VIF	Model Summary
Performance	.14	.21	0.48	2.07	
Social	.01	.94	0.45	2.21	$R = .461, R^2 = .213,$
Appearance	**.45**	**.00**	0.34	2.93	Adjusted $R^2 = .185,$
Weight	-.08	.47	0.44	2.28	$F_{(5, 140)} = 7.576, p = .000,$
Attribution	-.07	.40	0.82	1.21	

The prediction model explains 21.3% of the variance of the environment aspect of quality of life, with physical appearance as the only statistically significant predictor (Table 6).

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Emerging adulthood is a period in which individuals experience many changes in their sense of well-being caused, among other things, by going through different lifestyles, worldviews, and psychological states (Olenik-Shemes et al. 2018). During this period of life individuals are expected to make many divergent choices related to their career, work, romantic relationships, and worldviews that could potentially affect the rest of their life (Arnett 2000). Therefore, although many emerging adults experience improvements in well-being, this period is also considered a period of increased stress (Arnett 2007; Duffy et al. 2019; Halliburton et al. 2021), possibly impairing emerging adults' quality of life. Given this, it seems important to better understand the factors correlated with quality of life in order to create more effective preventive strategies aimed at protecting and improving the mental health of emerging adults. The aim of this research was to examine whether quality of life of emerging adults could be predicted on the basis of self-esteem and body esteem.

Considering the results obtained, it could be said that self-esteem and body esteem are important factors in prediction of quality of life of emerging adults in Serbia. Furthermore, the regression analysis showed that there are certain differences in the predictive value of dimensions of self-esteem and body esteem. More precisely, it was shown that both the performance aspect of self-esteem and the appearance aspect of body esteem were significant predictors of psychological and physical health, while only appearance body esteem was a significant predictor of social relations and environment. Previous studies have also shown that self-esteem and body esteem are of great importance for mental health (Kermode & MacLean 2001; Olenik-Shemes et al. 2018).

As previously mentioned, many significant changes happen during emerging adulthood related to one's career and romantic relationships and it is of great importance for the quality of life and mental health of an individual and how he/she deals with them. People with high self-esteem bear stress more easily due to a sense of control and optimism, as well as due to faith in their abilities (Todorović et al. 2009), which is reflected in their quality of life. They take on problem-oriented activities, while people with low self-esteem express a need for

support and feel sorry for themselves. Self-esteem is a very important construct for an individual's success in a wide variety of areas. Furthermore, self-esteem is correlated with behavior, goals, and coping mechanisms that facilitate success at work, school, and in relationships and reduce the risk of mental and physical health problems (Chung et al. 2014).

Based on the results obtained we could say that the idea of the key role of the self-acceptance of one's own physical appearance for the mental health of these students is supported. Body esteem serves as an important aspect during this period of life, largely because of the great significance attributed to romantic relationships among young adults (Nelson et al. 2018; Olenik-Shemesh et al. 2018). This result can also be explained by the importance of physical appearance in emerging adults and the value system in the cultural context. Internalizing the thin beauty ideal may lead to a perceived discrepancy between the desired and the actual body, low body esteem and low self-esteem, as well as depression and eating disorders, diminishing well-being (Olenik-Shemesh et al. 2018). Sanftner (2011) indicated a significant impact of body image and eating habits perception on the quality of life of Americans. Similar conclusions were made by Cox et al. (2010), emphasizing that individuals with greater body dissatisfaction are more prone to developing eating disorders and body dysmorphia, which can generally lead to a reduction in quality of life. On a large student sample, the results showed that students who are less worried about body shape/with less pronounced body dissatisfaction, who perceive themselves as competent in health-related behavior, who study successfully and do not consume drugs, have a better quality of life (Silva et al. 2018). Some other findings in this direction are those of Cox et al. (2011) and Kolodziejczyk et al. (2015) who assessed the relationship between some aspects of body image and quality of life in different samples and consistently verified that the greater the concern/dissatisfaction of individuals with their body, the poorer their quality of life. In a study on a large sample of Portuguese-speaking students, the results showed that women who are less concerned about their body shape, who eat less emotionally, perceive themselves as competent in managing their own health, study daily, have better expectations, study successfully and do not consume drugs due to the pressure of studies also have a better quality of life measured by the WHOQOL-Brief questionnaire (Silva et al. 2018). In the same study, on a sub-sample of male students, it was shown that students with less pronounced body dissatisfaction and cognitive restriction of food intake, who consider themselves competent in health-related behavior, who study regularly, have better expectations and are successful in their studies, and who do not consume drugs because of their studies, also have a better quality of life.

It is important to refer to the results that body esteem is a significant predictor for all aspects of quality of life, while self-esteem is a significant predictor of psychological and physical health. The results indicate that body esteem has a more important role, compared to self-esteem, when it comes to the aspects of quality of life that refer to social relations and the environment during the period of emerging adulthood. One of the possible explanations could be found in the characteristics of the developmental phase our respondents find themselves. On the one hand, relationships with peers and partners, with whom emerging adults spend their free time most often, are of great importance for emerging adults. On the other hand, they still largely invest in their body image, which represents an important source of self-evaluation in general and in the context of relationships with other people. Previous research showed that many aspects of body image correlate with social anxiety (Luqman & Dixit 2017) and dating anxiety (Swami et al. 2021) in youth. Therefore, previous, as well as the results obtained in our study, point to the importance

of further examination of the correlation between the experience of body image and relationships with others when it comes to the mental health of young people.

The results obtained should be considered in the light of some limitations of this study. Some of the limitations are primarily reflected in the characteristics of the sample. Namely, it consists only of psychology students, so in future research it would be important to include students from other faculties, as well as people who are in the period of emerging adulthood, but who are not university students. It would also be desirable to counterbalance the sample by gender and other sociodemographic variables such as place of residence, partner and work status. Another limitation is that the cross-sectional nature of the data means that causal inferences cannot be extrapolated from the findings. On the other hand, bearing in mind that this topic has insufficiently attracted the attention of researchers, not only in our environment but also around the world, the results obtained certainly represent a significant contribution to a better understanding of the mental health of emerging adults and the factors associated with it in Serbia. In addition, in previous research, the experience of body image attracted the attention of researchers to a small extent in the context of understanding quality of life. The findings of our study showed that body esteem is one of the most important predictors of quality of life. Its role must be further examined in order to gain more knowledge that could be relevant for preventive programs aimed at improving the mental health of individuals.

We believe that the results obtained will find their place in the development of preventive programs aimed at improving and preserving the mental health of emerging adults. This is particularly important, bearing in mind that choices made during this period related to one's career, work, romantic relationships, and worldviews could potentially affect the rest of their lives. Knowing that an important role in the quality of life is played not only by the level of self-esteem, but also by body esteem, provides the possibility of forming effective workshops that can encourage and promote the development of a positive image of oneself and one's body. Workshops could be aimed at promoting self-acceptance and self-nurturing, teaching young people to notice and appreciate different aspects of the self as whole and especially one's body, at the decontamination of unrealistic constructs of the body image, and at teaching emerging adults how to accept their body imperfections as well as strengths.

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SAMOPOŠTOVANJE I PRIHVATANJE TELA KAO PREDIKTORI KVALITETA ŽIVOTA U ODRASLOM DOBU U NASTAJANJU

Osnovni cilj ovog istraživanja bio je da se utvrdi da li se domeni kvaliteta života mogu predvideti dimenzijama prihvatanja tela (izgled, težina, atribucija) i samopoštovanja (intelektualna sposobnost, socijalna adekvatnost) kod ispitanika u odraslom dobu u nastajanju. Primenjena je Skala prihvatanja tela, Skala aktuelnog samopoštovanja i Uptinik o kvalitetu života Svetske zdravstvene organizacije – kratka verzij). Uzorak je činilo 155 osoba u period produžene mladosti – studenata psihologije (133 žene), starosti od 19 do 29 godina (M=21.05, SD=2.05). Procenat varijanse kriterijumskih varijabli (domena kvaliteta života) objašnjenih prediktorskim modelima kreće se od 21.3% za okruženje do 58.6% za psihološko zdravlje. Dimenzija prihvatanja telesnog izgleda je statistički značajan prediktor svih domena kvaliteta života sa pozitivnim β koeficijentima. Drugi značajan prediktor za domene fizičkog i psihičkog zdravlja je dimenzija aktuelnog samopoštovanja intelektualna sposobnost. Rezultati našeg istraživanja pokazuju da što je veće samopoštovanje i manja briga/nezadovoljstvo pojedinaca sopstvenim telom, to je kvalitet života ovih osoba bolji, što je u skladu sa nalazima dosadašnjih istraživanja.

Ključne reči: *kvalitet života, samopoštovanje, prihvatanje tela, odraslo doba u nastajanju, studenti.*

ELEMENTS OF POPULISM IN BORIS JOHNSON'S POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON BREXIT

UDC 81'42:32.019.15

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Abstract. *This paper explores Boris Johnson's political communication style by analyzing his use of language and its populistic elements. The aim is to shed light on his linguistic construction of reality by examining the statements he made in a Brexit-related context. Therefore, qualitative discourse analysis was chosen as the most suitable method and 100 statements were generated by the Google search engine from multifarious sources. This included the systematization of several categories of used rhetorical figures, phrases, slogans, and word types. The paper discovered specific patterns in named language categories depending on which elements of populistic communication Johnson is practicing. For example, this is reflected in rhetorical questions when he is talking about "dangerous others", the repetition of words such as "fantastic" and "great" and associating them with nouns like "country" and "people" in the sense of national unity, or an evident "us-them" division displayed while referring to Britain's uncertain future.*

Key words: *Boris Johnson, Brexit, political communication, populism, language analysis.*

1. INTRODUCTION

For the analysis of Boris Johnson's political communication on Brexit to be valid, it is necessary to place it in its social and cultural background. Therefore, it is important to highlight a lot happened since Johnson opted for Vote Leave until the United Kingdom left the European Union. Firstly, this period coincided with the general election campaign and Boris Johnson became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Secondly, Vote Leave itself was a campaigning organization in the context of the 2016 membership referendum. Encyclopedia Britannica explains Brexit as the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union (EU), which formally occurred on January 31, 2020 (Wallenfeldt 2023). Therefore, it could be argued that Johnson's orientation on Brexit had a defining role in this election (Evans, de Geus & Green 2021).

When it comes to political communication, McNair (2003, 4) defines it as "purposeful communication about politics". His basic assumption is that one of the best ways to assess the effects of political communication is by "observing voting behavior, relating this to the communication strategies of the contestants in a political campaign" (McNair 2003, 32). Accordingly, it is important to note that in 2019, Johnson's Conservatives won their biggest majority in more than 30 years. It was considered a great triumph, and many agreed that Johnson won this majority on a promise to "get Brexit done" (Henley 2019). Based on that, the chosen method for analysis in this paper is qualitative discourse analysis. As Temmerman (2016) explains it in her paper on linguistic discourse analysis as a tool for analyzing political communication; "a careful and detailed linguistic analysis helps to reconstruct the ideational and interpersonal meanings a speaker consciously or unconsciously conveys". Van Dijk (1997) emphasizes that to understand discourse, it is the context that is crucial. Therefore, Robertson (2021, 4) explained that Vote Leave (championed by Boris Johnson, Michael Gove, and Nigel Farage) bestowed itself as the anti-establishment option. Since populism is defined as a call to the people opposed to the established society structures (Canovan 1999), this paper aims to explore the elements of populism in Boris Johnson's political communication on Brexit. The research questions aim to find out if the analyzed material contains elements of populistic communication, what Johnson's communication style is, and what patterns he uses in his linguistic construction of reality. Therefore, several rhetorical figures have been chosen as best suited to the theoretical context and the purpose of this paper. Led by this, the following chapters present the theoretical context on which the paper relies on, methodology concepts, the analysis itself, results, and in the end, discussion.

2. THEORETICAL CONTEXT

2.1. Populism and its forms

On one hand, Johnson has a very common elite political background and yet, he managed to profile himself as one of the "ordinary" people (Wood, Corbett and Flinders 2016). This statement can be closely linked to the features of populism. Canovan (1999, 3) defines populism as "an appeal to the people against the established power structure and the dominant ideas and values of society". She claims that populism is the shadow of the representation of modern democracy (1999, 12). While explaining populism as a political communication style, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) try to elaborate its elements to a broader understanding. "Populism is conceived of as a political style essentially displaying proximity of the people, while at the same time taking an anti-establishment stance and stressing the (ideal) homogeneity of the people by excluding specific population segments" (2007, 319). Furthermore, there are many other elements to populism. While some authors tend to describe it as a "thin ideology", and others as a communication style, Mudde (2007, 23) stresses its appeal to "pure people" as opposite to the "corrupt elite", as one of its most outstanding characteristics. The corrupt elite may be rivals, representatives of other ideologies, or the establishment which, in the context of this paper, is often related to the European Union. Alexandre-Collier (2022, 527) stresses other possible enemies in his claims of Boris Johnson's more contemporary leadership as a reflection of a new populist rhetoric in its combination of hard Brexit, antiimmigration and anti-Parliament discourse. He also explains how Johnson related identity politics to the

disengagement from the EU and puts it in the context of the parties' failure to ideologically modernize (2022, 535). While explaining populism as a communication phenomenon, de Vreese et al. (2018, 425) emphasize that the focus is "on the unique contribution of communication processes to 'construct' populist ideas, and the communicative styles that systematically co-occur with it". This statement is of special importance to this paper as it focuses on construction of populistic messages. Jagers and Walgrave (2007) also claim that defining populism as a style enables shifting it into a concrete concept and use this suggestion to explain why they chose comparative discourse analysis in their paper. In other words, they find said definition the most operational one, which is taken as a model in this paper.

2.2. Rhetorical figures

While justifying why they analyzed rhetorical tropes in their discourse analysis, Derakhshani, Qaiwer, Kazemian and Mohammadian (2021) claim that language and politics work well together, especially while deconstructing certain political discourse. Accordingly, this paper also uses discourse analysis tools to examine Boris Johnson's political communication elements by exploring the rhetorical figures he uses.

Starting with metaphor, which is perceived as very important in structuring of human perception (Lakoff and Johnson 2003), speech writers use it for simplifying complex issues, raising emotions or for persuasion (Eriksson 2022, 13). The author even claims that Brexit's political success depended on whoever controlled the debate (2022, 13). More on persuasive purposes, Bagić emphasizes how repetition is used to highlight key ideas. He explains how the spaces between repetitions of expressions play an important role in producing an effect on the audience. The shorter and more frequent the intervals between repetitions of expressions, the stronger the figurative effect (Bagić 2012, 101). He explains why repetition is used in texts/speeches, which is mainly due to the enrichment of statements, evoking memorability, rhythmicity and emphasizing key thoughts and ideas to the audience (Bagić 2012, 256). Putting rhetorical questions in the context of populism, it is important to understand this matter in terms of oration. Derakhshani et al. (2021, 1231-1232) explain this matter while analyzing rhetorical tropes in Donald Trump's First Speech to the UN. They claim that the utilization of rhetorical questions can assist the speaker to bolster his rhetorical influence and affective force of his oratory. Furthermore, Bagić claims that the distinctive feature of an adjective is its purpose to emphasize the property of the phenomenon in question. Therefore, it "makes the expression stronger, more convincing, more picturesque" (Bagić 2012, 110). He also explains that the range of discursive possibilities of the epithet is wide and that it is able to concretize, or even revive, the topic (2012, 111).

It would be insufficient not to mention the role of slogans and their rhetorical features when it comes to populist communication. In his text on slogans, Sharkansky explains that they simplify communication. They provide meaning to everyone; they reinforce or trigger existing sentiments, they soothe or provoke, bring out what is attractive or ugly in their audience (Sharkansky 2002, 75). Specifically in the context of Brexit, apart from the carefully thought-out slogans, Eriksson (2022) claims politicians were attentive with their use of pronouns as well. "By repeatedly using 'we' and 'us' when referencing Britain, Boris Johnson humanizes the country as he tries to foster a group feeling, a sense of togetherness" (Eriksson 2022, 3). The author claims that the presentation of the 'warring parties' (the EU and the UK) is an essential part of the Vote Leave strategy, which is evident while analyzing the contrasting conceptual roles in Johnson's speeches. The

author refers to the creation of the classic "us-them" populistic division (2022, 27). Another important populistic feature is the role the future plays in their communication. In times of unclear social identities and questionable futures, populists have created identities based on divisions and roles, and this has produced feelings of belonging and purpose, which culminate in emotions of victim-seeking (Nagel 2021). Dunmire (2005, 483) further discusses this by asserting that political evocation of the future perceives human anxiety as prey. Expectations regarding the future are always unclear, and thus influence the audience (2005, 484). Therefore, promising a better future and assigning character to the actors who will illuminate it could create an optimistic discourse among voters. Moving along to political speeches, Salih and Braim (2014) analyze the textual use of hyperbole in political speeches: "that is why they use more hyperbole in their speeches, to make images and matters bigger and more important on the part of the audience, so as to convince and direct them to a particular aim, for example, to vote for their own benefit" (2014, 66). Hyperbole often leads to superlative, and Swanson (2014) studied the comparative and superlative adjectives in Tacitus, a truly great Roman orator and public official. He argues that Tacitus uses the comparative and superlative degrees of the adjective to make the emotions he expresses even more intense and to declare the intensity of these feelings (2014, 25). This seems to be of particular interest due to Johnson's apparent love for literature and his academic direction.

This paper aims to deconstruct Boris Johnson's political communication with discourse analysis. It does so by asking what types of words/phrases/slogans Johnson uses in terms of Brexit and what is their meaning in relation to populist communication.

3. METHODOLOGY

De Vreese et al. (2018) accentuate the growing acceptance of the importance of discourse when it comes to populism. Discourse analysis deals with the study and analysis of language use. It is imperative to note that this paper uses an integrative qualitative discourse analysis approach that conveys many disciplines which contribute to the specific context of this research. "Discourse analysts illuminate the ways in which people create, convey, share, acquire, and/or (mis)understand the meaning(s) of moments, events/experiences, lives, and (sub)cultures" (Scharp and Thomas 2017, 6-7). What all these analyses have in common, is that they all reject a realistic understanding about language only being a simple way of describing words (Halmi, Belušić and Ogresta (2004, 35). The analysis of discussion is one of the main features for the construction of social reality. The authors state that even the simplest phenomena can be described in countless different ways, and that will inevitably depend on the orientation of the speaker or writer (2004, 38). Regardless of the approach, a wide range of data sources are available to the discourse analyst, including interview transcripts, published literature, media, and web materials (Hodges, Kuper, and Reeves 2008, 570), a combination of which is used in this paper. Furthermore, Wodak (2001) discloses the importance of translating theory into instruments, which is further explained in the context of this paper in the following section.

For the purposes of this study, 100 statements were collected in the period from January 22, 2016, when Johnson opted for Vote Leave, until January 31, 2020, when the United Kingdom officially left the European Union. This period coincided with his general election campaign as Johnson became Prime Minister in the meantime, and his general election campaign significantly clashed with Brexit. The sample was collected with the use of Google search engine and keywords, generating Johnson's statements related to Brexit. The Google search engine offers a time tool which was used to select the period from January 22, 2016, until January 31, 2020. The collected material generated results from the British media (e.g., The Sun, SBS News, The Spectator), Boris Johnson's Facebook and Twitter page (posts, photos, captions, videos), his YouTube interviews and video materials placed during the campaign (e.g., "One day with Boris Johnson", "12 questions", "Love Actually parody"). These materials were then transcribed and taken into analysis and some of the statements are used here as examples. Naturally, not all types of words and figures that were used are named here, as that would not be concise or efficient. Rather, some of the most outstanding and effective forms mentioned in the literature are brought out here as examples of Johnson's communication and language style. Sources mentioned in the text can be found in the list of references at the end of the paper.

As already stated in previous chapters, this paper strives to shed light on Johnson's linguistic construction of reality through the statements he made in Brexit related context. Since qualitative discourse analysis was evaluated as most methodologically suitable, this chapter is divided into several subcategories based on the figures of speech he used. Each of the figures is analyzed and consequently, with examples, placed in the context of this topic. Due to discourse analysis and its exploration of recurring patterns and language, the following pages present a thorough analysis of Johnson's rhetorical language use, political communication style and its populistic implications.

4. THE ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1. Repetition

In his first speech to the assembly after becoming Prime Minister, Johnson talked about the changes that are going to follow. A part of his speech is an example of extensive repetition of specific words, such as "parliament": "This new democratic parliament, this people's parliament, is going to do something and you can guess what it is, that this parliament is going to do, once we put the withdrawal agreement back, we are going to get Brexit done."

The Sun spent a 16-hour day with Johnson during the 2019 general election campaign in which he talked about his political obligations and answered questions about it. The journalist mentioned actor Hugh Grant, who stated his opinion on Johnson as Prime Minister, saying it would be catastrophic and that people should do whatever they can to deny his majority. Johnson responded and included repetition of specific words, such as "people" and "great":

"Look, of course a lot of people care very strongly about Brexit, and they want to stop it, but I think the people of this country voted for it. Most people I meet, with the exception of the gentleman you mention obviously, but most people I meet, do think

this is a great country, great democracy, they want us to move forward, and they see great excitement and great potential" (*The Sun* 2019).

In The Sun's article named "Boris Johnson urges Sun readers to back Conservatives in General Election to get Brexit done & unite Britain", Johnson made a clear connection between his wishes and the audience (the people), populistically emphasizing how relevant they are with repetition:

"I want us to get Brexit done. I want to focus on Sun readers' priorities. I want to unleash this country's potential. Above all I want to end the division and bring this country back together again. Whether you voted Leave or Remain, you matter and your voice matters" (Dunn, Dathan & Gutteridge 2019).

4.2. Epithets

Johnson has a pattern of articulating words like "fantastic" and "great", which he then associates with nouns such as "country" and "people." By adding these epithets to these nouns, he creates a repeating discourse of the terms used in his statements. During one of his Brexit speeches, Johnson stated: "We can leave the EU as one UK, whole and entire and perfect, as we promised" (*Global News* 2019).

By constantly repeating specific kinds of words, he familiarizes people with the populistic elements of his discourse which often contain unfriendly characteristics regarding his opponents. For example, as part of the general election campaign, he answered 12 questions about himself, one of which was "why are we having this election", to which he had replied:

"We are having this election because, basically, the whole political system is paralyzed and we have a fantastic Brexit deal what we did, and then Parliament refused to lock it through so that we are stuck in the EU when people voted to leave, so we need to have an election" (Conservatives 2019).

In that same interview, he combined directly addressing the people with the creation of an impressionistic idea of excellence: "Vote for a compassionate one-nation Conservative government that understands the symmetry between a free-market economy and great, great public services" (*Conservatives* 2019).

Another example of combining epithets with repetition and the propagation of national unity and perfection is evident in the context of "dangerous others": "Every one of you who wants us to focus on a positive, united future, every one of you who worries about the chaos of a Corbyn-Sturgeon alliance in a hung Parliament…" (*Tapsfield and Maidment* 2019).

Illustration 1 shows how elements of Johnson's communication are intertwined and how he echoes them in different statements by circulating the same messages and same patterns. All of these phrases reflect populistic characteristics. For example; the column "political system vs. government" represents the use of a populistic distinction between "them" and "us." Evidently, his statements often include incorporated campaign slogans.

PEOPLE	GREAT	COUNTRY	POLITICAL SYSTEM vs. GOVERNMENT	VOTE	POTENTIAL	FANTASTIC
British people	Great country	Great country	Our political system is blocked	Vote Conservative	Unleash the potential of this whole country	A fantastic Brexit deal
People of this country	Great potential	People of this country	The whole political system is paralyzed	Vote Leave	Unleash the potential of the entire people of this coutry	Fantastic city
Prioritites of the people	Great public services	Heart of this country	Conservative government	Change people voted for	Let's unleash Britain's potential	Fantastic thing
Will of the people	Greatest civlization	Uniting this country	We work as a government	Vote today to break the gridlock	Unleash the full potential of this brilliant country	Fantastic country
People's Parliament	Greatest place to live	Energize the country	I think this has turned out be a historic election, that gives us now, the people in this government, the chance to respect the democratic will of the British people	Vote to get Brexit done Vote to unleash Britain's potential	Vote to unleash Britain's potential	Fantastic to meet great people

Illustration 1 Systematical representation of repeating patterns in Boris Johnson's communication

4.3. Campaign slogans

Johnson's campaign slogan was originally "Deliver, Unite, Defeat." Afterwards, he added the letter "E" for "Energize*"*, adopted the "DUDE" acronym, and stated: "Dude, we are going to energize the country, we are going to get Brexit done" (Picheta 2019).

Some of the other slogans are: "Vote to get Brexit done", "Vote to unleash Britain's potential", "Enough is enough, let's get it done", "Come with us."

Apart from these slogans, which were directly used as inscriptions, posters, and bits on ex-Prime Minister Boris Johnson's social media, he often "spontaneously" incorporated them into his statements:

> "When I look at the potential of this country waiting to be unleashed, I know that we can turn this opportunity into a stunning success. And whatever the bumps in the road ahead, I know that we will succeed. We've obeyed the will of the people. We've taken back the tools of self-government. Now is the time to use those tools to unleash the full potential of this brilliant country and to make better the lives of everyone in every corner of our United Kingdom" (Conservatives[a] 2019).

The "obeying the will of people" statement is a clear example of populist communication. Also, the previously mentioned article by The Sun, in which Boris urges readers to back the Conservatives, is another example of him incorporating slogans: "I want us to get Brexit done. I want to focus on Sun readers' priorities. I want to unleash this country's potential" (*The Sun* 2019).

"We will get Brexit done, invest in our NHS, schools, and police, and cut taxes for you and your family" was both his Facebook and Twitter post on November 23, 2019, with a picture of him hugging a man dressed in work clothes, while Boris is also wearing a yellow fluorescent jacket and a helmet.

Ahead of his last day of campaigning, Johnson posted a Tweet saying: "Let's get Brexit done and get on with spreading opportunity and hope across the whole UK and let's unleash the potential of this country."

4.4. Metaphor and Comparison

Considering the relationship between metaphor and comparison and Johnson's orating skills, it is crucial to mention the time he caused various reactions in the media with a speech he made at the UN General Assembly in New York:

> "It is a trope as old as literature, that any scientific advance is punished by the gods. When Prometheus brought fire to mankind in a tube of fennel as you may remember with his brother Epimetheus, Zeus punished him by chaining him to a Tartarian crag while his liver was pecked out. I talked about a hangover cure. His liver was pecked out by an eagle, and every time his liver regrew, the eagle came back and pecked it again, and this went on forever. A bit like the experience of Brexit in the UK" (*The Guardian* 2019).

While giving a Brexit Day speech he stated that the UK's departure from the European Union is a moment of hope and new beginnings while combining said figures: "This is the moment when the dawn breaks and the curtain goes up on a new act in our great national drama*"* (*CNN* 2020).

He created revolt among the EU legislators by comparing their institution to previous, more forced attempts to unify the continent*:* "Napoleon, Hitler, various people tried this out, and it ends tragically, the EU is an attempt to do this by different methods" (*CNBC* 2016).

Another example is when he compared the parliament to a reality show. He did so in his Tory conference speech as a criticism of Parliament, which he blamed for failing to get a Brexit deal approved. That way he is simplifying complex issues by using metaphor. "If the Parliament were a reality TV show, then a whole lot of us, I'm afraid, would have been voted out of the jungle by now. But at least we would have the consolation of a Speaker being forced to eat a kangaroo testicle" (*Hereford Times* 2019).

Sky News posted a part of Johnson's interview on Twitter on October 31, 2019, and the post is captioned with a quote from his interview: "We've got an oven ready (Brexit) deal, put it in the microwave as soon as we get back from the election." Interestingly, he uses the oven/microwave version of this statement regularly in many of his interviews, thus making it closer to the "regular people" by using simple wording and visualizing his points.

4.5. Rhetorical questions

Johnson uses rhetorical questions to belittle his opponents or to build a positive self-image, whereby the pattern of "us-them" division mentioned before, thematizes populist communication. In the context of speaking about the upcoming elections which were near Christmas time, Johnson directly called out his rival Jeremy Corbyn: "What would you rather have under the Christmas tree — £150billion of investment or two referendums from Jeremy Corbyn?" (Wooding 2019).

Populistically turning against the elite, while emphasizing one's own benevolence and understanding of the people, can also be seen in his expressions of worry: "I am afraid that it is clear that if the Parliament had its way, then this country would not be leaving even on January the 31ˢᵗ and that, of course, is bad for democracy, it's disastrous for trust in politics, why should MPs decide that they can cancel the result of a referendum?" (*Global News* 2019).

At the end of his campaigning, Johnson decided to use a series of rhetorical questions while talking about his opponent and the future:

> "How can you trust Jeremy Corbyn when he said he would respect the result of the referendum, only to want to prolong the uncertainty and chaos by rerunning it? This election is the most important in a lifetime. The result will define the next decade – will we go forward, grow as a country, unleash our potential? Or will we remain stuck, stood still, unable to make any progress?" (Conservatives[a] 2019).

On December 13ᵗʰ, his morning victory speech contained several rhetorical questions. This time they were meant to emphasize the victory and the promises he made. It is also important to notice that he is using first-person plural and, once again, giving "people" importance:

> Good morning, everybody – well, we did it – we pulled it off, didn't we?
> And with this mandate and this majority, we will, at last, be able to do what?
> And so we will deliver 50,000 more nurses, and 50 million more GP surgery appointments and how many new hospitals?
> And all the other priorities that you, the people of this country, voted for. Record spending on schools, an Australian-style points-based immigration system, more police, how many?
> And that is what we will now do, isn't it? That is what we will now do. Let's go out, let's go out and get on with it" (*Al Jazeera* 2019).

4.6. First-person plural and first-person singular

It is clear now that Boris Johnson makes a distinction in his communication while creating the idea that he is a part of the same group as the voters and while giving the impression that he is a special individual who possesses talent. This chapter is divided into two sections which differentiate these two practices.

4.6.1. First-person plural

In his arrival speech in Downing Street, after succeeding Theresa May, he framed himself as part of the people by firstly using "we" and then "British people": *"And that is why we will come out of the EU on October 31ˢᵗ because in the end Brexit was a fundamental decision by the British people"* (*Reuters* 2019).

He also regularly uses "we" while referring to the "enemy", which often seems to be the EU establishment: "We need to look at the legal reality, which is that this is an accelerating effort to build a country called Europe" (*ITV News* 2016).

His Facebook post from June 23, 2016, displays a similar pattern:

> *"Now is the time to believe in ourselves, and in what Britain can do, and to remember that we always do best when we believe in ourselves. Of course we can continue to provide leadership and support in Europe – but intergovernmentally, outside the supranational control of the EU system. Today, I hope you will Vote Leave, and take*

back control of this country's destiny; and if we Vote Leave, then all our votes will count for more in the future. Let's make today our Independence Day".

An example of this can also be seen in a part of a statement he made when asking people to take back control, while populistically addressing the problem of immigrants: "We can take back control of 350 million pounds a week and spend on our priorities here in this country, including on the National Health Service. We can take back control of our immigration system…" (*AP archive* 2016).

4.6.2. First-person singular

On the other hand, Johnson's use of first-person singular seems to be present while asking people to trust him and back him up directly or when he is stating his power and abilities.

On November 7, 2019, a video was posted to his Facebook page saying: "If I come back here with a working majority in Parliament, then I will get Parliament working again for you".

While giving a speech about Brexit at Downing Street, Johnson used that same statement (*Global News* 2019) and again insinuated that politicians should be subjected to voters.

When British MPs voted against an early election in September 2019, Johnson accentuated his power and abilities while furthering himself from "them" (the government): "I will go to that crucial summit on October the 17th and no matter how many devices this parliament invents to tie my hands, I will strive to get an agreement in the national interest… This government will not delay Brexit any further" (*SBS News* 2019).

Another example of this is evident in a statement (a version of which he regularly makes): "My job is to bring this country together now and take us forward" (*CNN* 2020).

While expressing that all of the Conservative Party candidates in the December 12 election have pledged to back his Brexit deal, he added: "I am offering a pact with the people: if you vote Conservative you can be 100% sure a majority Conservative government will unblock Parliament and get Brexit done" (*Reuters*[a] 2019).

4.7. Future tense

Johnson uses the future tense in form of promises and repetition. An example is taken out of his first speech after becoming Prime Minister:

"The doubters, the doomsters, the gloomsters - they are going to get it wrong again. The people who bet against Britain are going to lose their shirts, because we are going to restore trust in our democracy and we are going to fulfil the repeated promises of Parliament to the people and come out of the EU on October 31, no ifs or buts" (*BBC News* 2019).

More on the subject of promises and its appeal to the future, a video was posted to his Facebook page on December 29 incorporating his slogans: "We will be out of the EU on the 31st of January. We will invest billions more in our NHS. We will level up and unite our country."

A little more than a month before the elections, on November 7, 2019, a video was posted to his Facebook page making a condition: "If I come back here with a working majority in Parliament, then I will get Parliament working again for you".

Another example of his references to the people and serving them was incorporated in his Facebook and Twitter posts shared five days after the general elections in 2019: "This is a people's government, and we will deliver on the priorities of the British public".

4.8. Superlative and hyperbole

Expressing nationalism and its consequent need for unity is another characteristic of populist communication described in the literature. Johnson tends to use superlatives and hyperbole while referring to nationalism. A part of his Facebook post, published on June 23, 2016, was about the polls being open all day and encouraging people to go for Vote Leave and it said: "This is the most remarkable country on earth".

On November 12, 2019, a post on his Facebook page accentuated the promises he made about making Britain great again: "I want us to get Brexit done so that we can get on with making this the best country in the world to live. The greatest place to start a business, to have a family, to get an education – to have a life".

One month later, on December 12, 2019, he was thanking people through a Facebook post, this time emphasizing the role of democracy: "Thank you to everyone across our great country who voted, who volunteered, who stood as candidates. We live in the greatest democracy in the world".

Johnson's Twitter post from December 15, 2019, is another example of his descriptions of a bright and, conditionally possible, future: "Let's unite this country, let's spread opportunity to every corner of the UK, with superb education, superb infrastructure, and technology. Let's get this done and move forward".

5. DISCUSSION

This paper aims to understand how Boris Johnson communicated during Brexit by analyzing his statements. The conducted research suggests that Johnson uses populistic elements in his communication while appealing to the people or mobilizing voters. Grbeša and Šalaj (2018) discuss three main elements of populist communication. The first one being positive evaluation of the people, and negative evaluation of political elites. Johnson frequently uses a patriotic and helpful tone while addressing "the people", and a hostile tone while attacking, for example, his rival – Jeremy Corbyn. He does so by insinuating that Corbyn and his party are a threat to the country's progress (*Conservatives* 2019). The second criterion is about identifying with people by using informal language. Johnson uses slogans and simple wording while trying to address the masses, which is perhaps best represented in his slogans: "Dude, we are going to energize the country, we are going to get Brexit done" (Picheta 2019). The last criterion is the "empty signifier", which is associated with "dangerous others". Normally, dangerous others are political rivals. This can be confirmed for Johnson, as he often talks about Jeremy Corbyn and the Labor party like they are the enemies, but even more so, while referring to the European Union. One of the examples is when he said the EU is forcingly trying to unify the continent, just like Napoleon and Hitler tried to (*CNBC* 2016). He distinguishes himself from the elite by using first-person plural and presenting himself as "one of the people". He does so by, for example, posting on his Facebook page: "if we Vote Leave, then all our votes will count for more in the future." He uses first-person singular to further himself from the elite too, but in a way that accentuates his will and power: "no matter how many devices this parliament

invents to tie my hands, I will strive to get an agreement in the national interest… This government will not delay Brexit any further" (*SBS News* 2019). Repeating the word "people" is often put in the context of Johnson working for his voters and trying to turn things in their favor. Using epithets, superlatives, and hyperbole is about describing the United Kingdom as: "a fantastic country", "the greatest democracy", "the most remarkable country on earth", which is a populistic way of evoking nationalism. Another one is using the concept of the future against human uncertainty: "The doubters, the doomsters, the gloomsters – they are going to get it wrong again. The people who bet against Britain are going to lose their shirts, because we are going to restore trust in our democracy…" (*BBC News* 2019).

CONCLUSION

This paper aims to explore the ways and style of Boris Johnson's political communication. Therefore, it analyzes Johnson's communication style by asking what types of words/phrases/slogans he uses in the context of Brexit and what their analyzed meaning in terms of populism is. The analysis of 100 statements, some of which are included in this paper as examples, indicates that Boris Johnson's communication style contains populistic elements. In relation to the theoretical context, linguistic figures that stood out are repetition, metaphor, comparison, rhetorical questions, epithets, slogans, use of first-person plural vs. first-person singular, future tense, superlative and hyperbole. It should be noted that this paper does not cover all the populistic elements, nor does it use all the tools discourse analysis provides as it does not tend to determine whether Johnson is a true populistic figure nor what that would contain. In future research, it would be valuable to do a comparative analysis of different politicians in different national contexts or to explore Johnson's rhetoric in the context of anti-immigration and other far-right populist characteristics. Also, it would be interesting to explore Brexit in relation to the media and new media with more detail, as this research showed it was extensively used.

Johnson's populistic references to "the people" are reflected in his glorification of the English nation by evoking nationalism and using epithets, superlatives, and hyperbole. He frequently uses populistic phrases like "people's government" or "parliament working for you", which is closely related to "empty signifiers" (Spruyt, Keppens and Van Droogenbroeck 2016, 335–336). When it comes to metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson (2003) suggest that an integral part of metaphors is the structuring of human perception and thinking, or even action. This is particularly interesting in the context of Johnson comparing Brexit with continuous liver pecking done by an eagle (*The Guardian* 2019) or comparing the parliament to a reality show while talking about a Speaker eating a kangaroo testicle (*Hereford Times* 2019). Rhetorical questions are used to bolster the oratory, and they are his way of attacking the enemies directly: "How can you trust Jeremy Corbyn when he said he would respect the result of the referendum, only to want to prolong the uncertainty and chaos by rerunning it?" (*Conservativesa* 2019). A lot like metaphors, his political slogans are witty, creative, and carefully thought out. A statement by British politician Geoffrey Van Orden in The Parliament Magazine perhaps best sums up the effectiveness of these slogans: "Boris' simple promise to deliver Brexit and unleash Britain's potential touched people's hearts in a way that didn't happen since Margaret Thatcher". In the same article, Labor politician Neena Gill called "the lies about Brexit and the outcome of the election the price of populism" (*Banks* 2019).

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ELEMENTI POPULIZMA U POLITIČKOJ KOMUNIKACIJI BORISA JOHNSONA O BREXITU

Ovaj rad istražuje politički komunikacijski stil Borisa Johnsona analizirajući njegovo korištenje jezika i popratne populističke elemente. Cilj je prezentirati njegovu lingvističku konstrukciju stvarnosti istraživanjem izjava koje je dao u kontekstu Brexita. Stoga je kvalitativna analiza diskursa odabrana kao najprikladnija metoda te je generirano 100 izjava putem Google tražilice iz različitih izvora. To je uključivalo sistematizaciju nekoliko kategorija korištenih retoričkih figura, fraza, slogana i vrsta riječi. Rad je otkrio specifične obrasce u navedenim jezičnim kategorijama ovisno o tome kojim se elementima populističke komunikacije koristi. Na primjer, to se odražava u njegovim retoričkim pitanjima dok govori o „opasnim drugima", ponavljanju riječi kao što su „fantastično" i „sjajno" te njihovom povezivanju s imenicama kao što su „zemlja" i „narod" u smislu nacionalnog jedinstva, ili evidentna podjela „mi-oni" dok se referira na neizvjesnu budućnost Britanije.

Ključne riječi: *Boris Johnson, Brexit, politička komuunikacija, populizam, analiza jezika.*

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, SOCIAL DISPARITIES AND EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES: THE CASE OF ELECTRONIC DIARIES IN BULGARIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

UDC 373.5.061:004(497.2)

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Abstract. *The paper focuses on inequalities in access to digital technologies and their influence on education (electronic diaries in particular) across secondary schools in Bulgaria. It tries to answer the following research question: does the impact of digital technologies on access to the educational process depend on the existence of social inequalities and horizontal differences between and within schools? The theoretical framework is based on Bruno Latour's Actor-network theory, Bourdieu's capital theory, as well the concept of technical capital. The research methodology includes case studies of three different types of schools with qualitative methods of data collection: interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders such as principals, students, teachers, and parents. According to the different social actors in the educational process, the usage of electronic diaries makes it significantly easier to access, store and distribute information, but not for all groups of children and their parents. The analysis of three different types of schools reveals the presence of significant differentiation and inequalities in the Bulgarian education system. The results show that the theories of Bourdieu and Latour are suitable for analysis of the Bulgarian education system. Based on the obtained results it is concluded that a comprehensive reform in the education system requires not only educational innovations but also adequate and long-term changes in all fields of society.*

Key words: *electronic diary, education, technologies, social inequalities, access to educational processes.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Children nowadays are born into a world in which technologies are intrinsically linked with their everyday lives and they use different devices connected to the Internet ever since they learn how to talk and read. The so-called digital generation includes

millions of people born in a multi-technological world, using various devices from childhood, with constant Internet connectivity as a major part of their conscious lives.

At the same time, the most important area for children and young people's development as individuals is the education system, adapting to the digital world. Education is a key area in which digital technologies, wireless Internet, and all different kinds of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have an influence on children's lives. Many schools recognise the process of change due to digitalisation and the impact it has on students' behaviour. More and more educational institutions are starting to use new digital methods of teaching oriented towards finding the most effective way in which students want to study. ICTs have the potential to change the way of teaching in the coming years and many different electronic platforms are used in classrooms across the world. ICTs can no longer be considered some kind of desired "addition" to the education process. Instead, they should be seen as an essential part of it (Philip 2007).

One of the educational technologies integrated in the Bulgarian education system are electronic diaries. They are integrated into a platform for marking grades, absences, and other student data. They have a communication function as well and some of them could also serve as a platform for distance learning. Electronic diaries replace the paper versions – the personal ones for students, as well as for the whole class.

Using electronic diaries at schools requires having devices and an Internet connection, as well as certain competences and experience with using digital technologies, which allow parents and students to be fully engaged in the education process. According to the definition of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2001: 5), the digital divide is the "gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard both to their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to their use of the Internet for a wide variety of activities".

More current studies indicate that there is a general relationship between offline resources and the digital divide and that "the internet remains more beneficial for those with higher social status, not in terms of how extensively they use the technology but in what they achieve as a result of this use. When information and services are offered online, the number of potential outcomes the internet has to offer increases. If individuals with higher social status are taking greater offline advantage from digital engagement than their lower status counterparts, existing offline inequalities could potentially be acerbated" (Van Deursen et al. 2015: 30). Another analysis by same author finds that the focus of the policies related to the digital divide has shifted to skills and usage access, but at the same time motivational and material access should remain a relevant focus since they are necessary through the entire process of Internet use (Van Deursen et al. 2015). Taking into account these considerations, we accept that the digital divide refers to inequalities not only in access to ICT, but also in their use (possession of skills) and the outcomes (benefits) from their use.

Inequalities in socio-economic status that generally affect student achievement may be further intensified if the available family resources are insufficient to ensure access to education and success in it. In such an environment, the differences in relation to the level of competence for the use of technology and in relation to the availability and accessibility of resources stand out, regardless of whether it is a case of remote or face-to-face learning. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the findings of Hristova et al. (2020), in a significant share of schools in Bulgaria (14%) between 1 and 16% of teachers do not have access to an electronic device at home.

Also, "in 3% of schools there isn't a single teacher who has Internet at home and ¾ of these schools are in villages" (ibid: 45). However, it is important to keep in mind that the necessary resources for successful participation in the education process refer not only to technical ones (such as broadband Internet access or the number of available devices) but also to the family's motivation and attitudes, parents' goals for their children, digital skills and literacy, etc. These conditions for using e-diaries lead to several challenges for some families and may result in social inequalities among students, which are further reflected in educational inequalities at school. In that context, the paper focuses on the relationship between digital technologies, social disparities, and educational inequalities. It is worth studying in-depth how the role of digital technologies and, more specifically, of electronic diaries in the educational process depends on social inequalities and differences between and within schools.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Electronic diaries and their role in education could be understood through the Actor-network theory (ANT) of Bruno Latour. The theory focuses on the ways, in which human and nonhuman elements are intertwined into objects. ANT follows the specific links and translations which connect all these objects, processes, concepts, and institutions, as well as the movements of these objects that assemble and arrange the everyday practices in certain ways. Most studies, when using ANT, perceive all things as actions which result from continuously produced networks of relationships. According to ANT, there are no "social explanations", which we can use to explain every phenomenon (similarly to laws in natural sciences). The focus on relationships which makes up the network, and not the network in its entirety, allows for a different type of understanding of the process of creating this network and the variability of its connecting elements (Latour, Akrich 1992; Латур 2007).

Latour's theory introduces key concepts which allow understanding the role of innovations in education and the creation of new networks between the actors. The concept of a *network* is the most important in ANT (found in the name of the theory itself). In Latour's view, networks are particularly suitable for describing the connection between actors in a community or society. Instead of thinking in terms of several dimensions, spheres or other objects, the network makes us think about the nodes, which have as many dimensions as there are connections between them (Latour 1996).

Other key concepts in ANT are *inscription* and *translation*. Inscription refers to the creation of technical objects, which guarantee the protection of the interests of the actors. An example is the documentation related to a certain software or regulation in view of meeting the organisation goals (Latour, Akrich 1992: 259). Inscriptions determine who and how takes part in the network and what their role is. In order to stabilize the network and establish social order, actors constantly participate in negotiating and connecting certain interests. At the same time, translation is a process of creating actor-networks. It is the term used by Latour to describe how humans and nonhumans connect, act together, and form a network through the connections they create. In this sense, the change in the network could come from translations (Callon, Rip, Law 1986).

In addition, the concepts *intermediary* and *mediator* should also be explored. The intermediary is a substitute. This role could be fulfilled by anyone in the same way (Callon

1991 in Sayes 2014). It is not transformed when transmitting meaning, so the input data is the same as the output data. The mediator, on the other hand, adds something to interactions, so they constantly get changed. For the aims of the study, the focus is on the concept of mediators and on the extent to which electronic diaries could be understood as such. This means that the ICTs are not passive intermediaries in the educational process, but active participants in it instead (ibid).

ICTs are nonhumans according to Latour's theory. Nonhumans could be understood as mediators. Nonhuman social actors are not replacements for human actors or fully used and managed by them, in fact they have an active force affecting social relationships, so they are not passive intermediaries.

Last but not least, the concepts of *assemblag*e and *portfolio* are also important. Assemblages are the aggregates of multiple associations, insofar as associations, in turn, are the connections between actors in the network constituting the "social" (Латур 2007). In classrooms, standard-based portfolio creation practices become networks that translate different dynamics of teaching, learning, and assessment (Fenwick & Edwards 2010: 96). In the present analysis, electronic diaries are understood in a given aspect as the students' electronic portfolio.

Latour's approach is applicable for conducting research in the field of sociology of education and more specifically when it comes to connections between educational technologies, students, teachers, parents, and the other social actors who are stakeholders in the field of education (Tummons 2014). Tummons (2014) conducted an ethnographic study of a curriculum for teacher training in a network of colleges in the UK. Using ANT and basing the research approach on the principle of symmetry between humans and non-humans, it is demonstrated how the educational process could be studied only if both human and non-human actors in the network are taken into account. In Tummons' view, it is of key importance to understand that students are actors in a network, which includes their relationships with their peers, teachers, but also with technological and non-technological devices in the classroom and school.

ANT has a heuristic potential for deepening the understanding and making sense of important educational processes and problems. However, the relationship between the introduction of digital technologies in education, the existing social and educational inequalities and the (re)production of social and educational inequalities remains insufficiently analysed. This gives reason to study the networks that "humans" (students, teachers, parents) and "non-humans" (digital technologies and related artefacts) construct, how they are influenced by existing social inequalities and how they impact them.

Apart from ANT, as a part of the theoretical overview it is necessary to consider the understanding of social inequalities, as they are a key aspect of the sociological problem in the article.

One of the most prominent theories that is essential for understanding the nature of social inequalities and their preconditions in social life was proposed by Pierre Bourdieu[1]. Bourdieu's theoretical framework includes a definition of the concept of capital and a distinction of its forms. "Capital is accumulated labour (in its materialized form or its "incorporated," embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form

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[1] It should be noted that Bourdieu's theory of social capital has been used in numerous studies, which are outside of the scope of the analysis of this article.

of reified or living labour." (Bourdieu 1986 241). Taking into account the field in which capital functions, as well as the cost of the transformations which are the preconditions for its efficacy, Bourdieu argues that "capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations ("connections"), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility" (Bourdieu 1986: 242). Economic capital is related to financial resources and could vary hierarchically and be quantified through the income of a member of the household and the different sources of income, among which salary is the main one. Cultural capital is related to the attitudes and habits acquired in the process of socialisation, as well as to the owned cultural items. Social capital is related to membership in different organisations, networks, and structures created by the social agents, in which they participate directly (Bourdieu 1986). It actually represents the set of informal and formal "connections" that people make, the relationships they enter into, within the networks which they are a part of.

It is important to emphasise that in Bourdieu's view "capital is a social relation, i.e., an energy which only exists and only produces its effects in the field in which it is produced and reproduced, so each of the properties attached to class is given its value and efficacy by the specific laws of each field" (Bourdieu 1984: 113). Therefore, the relative weight and significance of the different forms of capital (and whether they would actually function as capital for social actors) varies between different fields, so educational capital could be most important in one area, economic capital in another and so on. Bourdieu goes further and highlights that the specific logic of the field determines which properties are valid and active in a given game "and which, in the relationship with this field, function as specific capital and, consequently, as a factor explaining practices. This means, concretely, that the social rank and specific power which agents are assigned in a particular field depend firstly on the specific capital they can mobilize, whatever their additional wealth in other types of capital" (ibid). Thus, social games are played, and the positions of social agents are determined, depending on the possession of a different type of capital or power resource. On one hand, the agents' roles may be predetermined by these positions and possession of capital, but on the other hand, they depend on how these positions are interpreted. Education is a specific field that is characterised by its own history and "rules of the game".

In order to analyse the relationship between digital technologies and educational inequalities, it is necessary to highlight another key type of capital that links digital technologies to other fields, namely technical capital (Zhang 2010). It is defined as a structural relationship between technologies and other actors. These "relations" are structural because they exist "independent of the consciousness and will of agents" and are constitutive of what Bourdieu (1989: 14) calls the "fields" that frame the practices of those same actors. In other words, whether human or institutional actors recognize these connections or not, the relations nevertheless guide and constrain the actors who are included in the field" (Zhang 2010: 1021-1022). Zhang outlines that technologies are not regarded as supportive tools that can be used in social interactions. In contrast, her understanding of technical capital "suggests that technologies, along with financial resources, educational credentials, interpersonal

connections and symbolic reputation, can define actors through the structural connections between them" (Zhang 2010: 2022).

In relation to ANT, technologies are considered actors, and technical capital refers to the connections to technologies that make up the social order together with other connections (e.g. money, educational institutions, etc.). The accumulation of technical capital is understood as establishing and maintaining connections with technology. Some connections are more ephemeral than others, such as thoughts written on paper versus those saved in a Microsoft Word file. The convertibility of technical capital is reflected in the relationship between technology and other actors in a similar way to financial resources (ibid.). One type of non-human actor in the education system are the electronic diaries in Bulgarian schools.

3. THE DIGITAL DIVIDE AND ELECTRONIC DIARIES IN BULGARIAN SCHOOLS

Bulgarian students, in general, use digital devices from a relatively early age. Data from PISA 2018 shows that around 36% of 15-16-year-old students used digital devices for the first time before the age of 7. They use digital devices and Internet primarily for entertainment. Online activities related to student learning and education are relatively less prevalent (Hristova et al. 2020).

There have been attempts to adapt to the transformations in the technological world. The introduction of information technologies in the classroom happened in the period 2005-2008 with the implementation of the National Strategy for the Introduction of Information and Communication Technologies in Bulgarian schools (Ministry of Education and Science 2005). In 2005, the National Strategy for the Introduction of ICT in Bulgarian Schools (2005-2007) was created, followed by other strategies in the following years. In 2015, as part of the national program "ICT in school", a pilot project was implemented, including 40 schools, which received a budget for laptops and tablets, projectors, etc.

In spite of these efforts, data cited in the report "Distance Education: Readiness of Schools and Families for Online Learning" (Hristova et al. 2020) shows that, in comparative terms, Bulgaria has the most unfavourable ratio between the number of students and computers at school. On average in the EU, one computer is used by 7 students in lower secondary school (ISCED 2) and 8 students in upper secondary school (ISCED 3). In Bulgaria, these indicators are respectively 14 students in lower secondary school and 19 students in high school. Only 36% of high school students study in schools where the necessary number and quality of digital devices and good Internet connectivity are provided.

The report on the consequences of distance education in the 2020/2021 school year made by the Ministry of Education and Science analyses the access of vulnerable groups to various aspects of the educational process during distance learning. Additional requirements for a suitable environment and means for learning and teaching from home, for additional support and the involvement of parents, for self-regulation skills and active participation in the learning process despite the lack of in-person social contacts create new challenges especially for children and students from the vulnerable groups: they come from low-educated and poor families, some live in villages, do not speak Bulgarian at home or have special educational needs (around 20-25% of all children) (Ministry of Education and Science 2021: 2). It can be seen that at least several factors leading to challenges for vulnerable groups are indicated – the home environment, way of learning, level of involvement of parents and students, etc. Also, data from the MoES study of the

consequences of ORES 2020/2021 shows that in 43.5% of schools in large cities, all children have access to the Internet, with the percentage falling to 12.5% in villages (Ministry of Education and Science 2021: 26).

It is also important to point out that according to an analysis of the Institute for Research in Education, cited in the report of the Ministry of Education and Science, there is a statistically significant relationship between the socio-economic status of parents and the regular participation of students in distance learning. Significant differences were highlighted - 29% of children of parents with less than a primary education and about 55% of those of parents with a primary education participated in distance learning classes every school day (Ministry of Education and Science 2021: 26). This shows that there is a clear relationship between parents' attitudes towards education and the overall family environment and the extent of student participation in the educational process, which in turn could affect student outcomes.

Electronic diaries have been used in the Bulgarian educational system since 2017. The most used platform is "Shkolo", although there are already many other options of electronic diaries and companies providing them. In 2010, the idea of an electronic diary was born to replace the paper version and ease documentation at school. Two friends, high school graduates, created an initial version of an electronic diary, and subsequently, together with two others, in 2016 founded a startup and the software platform "Shkolo".

Initially, the use of electronic diaries was set in the legal framework in Bulgaria in 2016, in Ordinance 8 of the Ministry of Education and Culture, according to which a school can fully switch to keeping an electronic diary if the details in its electronic sections are compatible with the National Electronic Information System for preschool and school education. The budget for the implementation of electronic diaries in the following academic years is BGN 2 million. All schools that submitted a request through the MES platform that they will use electronic diaries in 2019/2020 received funds according to their number of students.

Ahead of the transition from face-to-face to distance learning due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, schools were encouraged to varying degrees to move to documentation in a virtual environment and 73% of them had an electronic diary in 2019 (Hristova et al. 2020). In the 2020/2021 academic year, 96% of schools were solely using an electronic diary (Hristova et al. 2021) and in 2022/2023 all of the schools were obliged to transfer to the electronic version.

Taking into account the theoretical considerations and the process of introduction of digital technologies, and more concretely – of electronic diaries – in Bulgarian secondary schools, the paper tries to answer the following research question: does the impact of digital technologies on access to the educational process depend on the presence of social inequalities and horizontal differences between and within schools?

4. METHODOLOGY

In order to trace the process of introducing electronic diaries in Bulgarian education and the aspects of their current use and to analyse in-depth the opinions of the various interested parties on the subject, three schools of different types were visited. A categorisation was made based on the following indicators: stage of education (secondary school/high school), geographical location (capital city, large city, village), average success rate in the state matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and mathematics for the academic year 2019

/2020, use of digital technologies and electronic diaries in the school, the socio-economic status of the population in the settlement and the region. In this way, the following types of schools were selected:

1. "Advanced School" – located in the capital, with a high average grade from the matriculation exams, using an electronic diary, with a high socio-economic status of the population;

2. "Medium-type School" – located in a large city in the country, with an average level of success compared to other high schools, using an electronic diary and some digital technologies, with an average or mixed socio-economic status of the population in the region and the settlement and

3. "Lagging behind School" – located in a small settlement, with a low success rate from the matriculation exams, using an electronic diary and some technologies, with a low socio-economic status of the population in the village, with marginalized groups.

The following methods were used to achieve the research goals and objectives: in-depth interviews and focus groups with principals, teachers, parents, and students, interested parties regarding electronic diaries, as well as representatives of companies that created and supported electronic diaries for the majority of schools in the country. Each of the three defined cases (types of schools) was analyzed in detail via a case study approach through the different data collection methods used in order to make somewhat valid conclusions for similar types of schools based on the mentioned categories.

The scope of the study includes three interviews with high school principals, six interviews with teachers and one focus group with teachers; four focus groups with students from grades 9, 10, and 11 (with a total of 35 students), as well as one focus group with parents of such students and one interview with a parent. Grades 9-11 were chosen in order for the students to have sufficient experience in the education system and with the use of information and communication technologies, but at the same time not to be in the last years of their studies at the relevant education stage, which is associated with various challenges. An interview was also conducted with a representative of a company that created and maintains electronic diaries in Bulgarian schools. The interviews and focus groups were conducted using a semi-structured in-depth interview guide.

To process the qualitative data, an audio recording of the interviews was made to create a detailed transcript and coding. For this purpose, a coding tree (Glaser and Strauss 1967) was developed with the main codes according to the semi-structured questionnaire, supplemented with specific topics from the interviews through the method of induction (starting from the general topics and creating codes for the more specific aspects). In other words, a summary coding tree of the most general themes was first created and subsequently enriched with other major and "sub-codes" from the interviews and focus groups. Different coding trees served to analyse the different target groups of the study such as teachers, students, principals, parents, and other respondents. NVivo software was used for coding, content and thematic analysis, visualization, and data processing.

5.1. Case № 1 Limited capital, limited access to digital technologies and reproduction of social inequalities

The first studied case is a "lagging behind school" in one of the largest villages in North-West Bulgaria. The school has a low average success rate in the matriculation exams compared to other schools in the country. According to the last census of 2021, the population of the village is about 2,500 people, and its main livelihood is agriculture. In the last 30 years, the living standard of the people in the village has decreased due to the closure of a factory, and agricultural production has also decreased. As a result, the unemployment rate in the region is high. In addition, according to data from the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria (NSI), the share of households with Internet access in the Northwest region is 83% (which is 4% less than the total for the country). At the same time, 74% of the population in the region regularly use the Internet every day or at least once a week (79% in total for the country) while 16% have never used Internet (13% for the whole country). This shows that the Internet is used less or inaccessible in the region as opposed to Bulgaria as a whole, which corresponds with the low living standard, high unemployment rate and overall socio-economic situation in the region.

The data from the conducted interview with the school director complements the information about the socio-economic situation, which determines the prospects for students graduating in the region. Five years ago, the vocational high school and the primary school merged and as a result the school became secondary with vocational classes. It is also important to emphasize that the school has been using an electronic diary since 2019 (the first year it was used in a hybrid form along with a paper one).

According to the principal, this is a large school with many students, some of whom, however, go abroad with their parents, which is why there is a serious turnover. This departure of students is related to the search for a livelihood for their families in various factories, and the principal also relates it in his narrative to the concentration of vulnerable groups in the region.

From what the principal shared, the ways in which the students and their families deal with poverty stand out, for example from donations or the school budget by purchasing the necessary resources not only in connection with the education process, but also as a matter of necessity. In relation to the socio-economic situation of the families, there are other shared challenges. With regard to the admission to the 8th grade, since the school serves several neighbouring villages, it is rather difficult to secure the necessary numbers for the admission of students who want to attend it, due to the fact that some of them prefer to study in the village rather than in the nearby city, where the standard of living is unbearable for their families and it is difficult to move around. This leads to the fact that there are too many students and not enough places for them in the 8th grade. It can be seen that what is shared by the principal is related to the families' daily lives and dealing with the basic needs of their children, with the principal finding ways to solve the problems, such as hiring a car and a driver to provide transportation for students whose families have to travel far and do not have the necessary resources to transport their children to school.

At the same time, in the last 3 years, there were no students dropping out, but there were those at risk of dropping out, due to different factors: the whole family going abroad, low grades or other cases such as family problems – a student shared directly with the principal that she would be taking care of her father because he was sick, so she

had no way to continue her education. Also, there are early marriages in the region, which affect the dropout of students and their desire to start learning independently.

The described socio-economic picture of the school gives reason to assume that social inequalities have an impact on all aspects of the education process. The forced distance learning due to the pandemic created an additional need to use technology for participation in the learning process. Of key importance is how this affects the access of students and their families to the necessary educational resources, and from there to education in general, in schools such as the one described, where students lack high levels of economic, social, and cultural capital and live in poverty. The availability of key digital skills needed by students and parents to use e-resources, namely the availability of technical capital, is essential for their positioning in the field of education and participation in the teaching and learning process.

The introduction of a new non-human actor such as the electronic diary changes the relationships among the social agents and creates barriers and limitations to their involvement in the actor-network. The change was difficult for the teachers and parents to accept. With the old paper type of communication, parents had access to their child's grades long after they were given, and students actually were also informed if and when their parents would get all the information. At the same time, however, the habit of having information available on paper rather than in electronic form, which requires logging into a profile with a username and password and technical capital in order to use it effectively, appears to be an obstacle for the creation of new connections between actors in the process of the introduction of an electronic diary. This is expressed in the teachers' dissatisfaction with electronic diaries when they were first introduced and in the low activity of the parents regarding access to the electronic diary which prevents their inclusion in the new network.

> *"They were not mandatory, and the colleagues worked for one year, so they were dissatisfied from the beginning, but they also worked on paper, and they had to write in 2 places, but I said that it will be easier for them from next year, if we enter only electronically".* (Interview with the school principal)

The limited economic and cultural capital that result in limited access to resources such as relevant software, a device in good working order through which the diary can be accessed (smartphone, computer, tablet, etc.), a good connection to the Internet, network coverage, and also the skills to use the devices stand out as obstacles to the inclusion of vulnerable groups of children and their parents in an actor-network with electronic diaries.

Although one way to address the challenges for families without sufficient technical resources was to provide devices, the data shows that some families refuse to use them in order not to damage them because they are "too new and of high quality" and they might need to pay if there is any damage (and these families do not have sufficient economic capital).

According to the teachers, the principal, the students and parents themselves, the lack of resources (social, cultural, and digital capital) and skills is of particular importance in their school. Electronic diaries seem to have been introduced in an environment that lacked the basic readiness for this change to occur in an effective way. As a result, some families are practically excluded from the education process and can no longer follow the necessary information that they previously saw on paper. It is evident that e-diaries require different types of capital to be used and for parents to be a part of the education process.

5.2. Case № 2 Emerging capital and opportunity to use digital technologies and to overcome social inequalities

The second analysed case is of the so-called, according to the categorization above, "medium-type" school - a vocational high school in electrical engineering and electronics in a large city in South-East Bulgaria. According to the last census, the population of the city numbered 210,720 inhabitants, and the city is one of the important economic and industrial centres in Bulgaria. In 2021, the employment rate in the region was 64% (it is 68% in the country on average), while the unemployment one was 6% (5% in the country on average). Investment and business activity in the district were among the highest in the country in 2020. Demographic indicators put the district in the top three (Slavova et al. 2022). In addition, according to data from the NSI, the share of households with Internet access in the Southeast region is 85% (which is 2% less than the total for the country). At the same time, 74% of the population in the region regularly use the Internet – every day or at least once a week (79% in total for the country) and 16% have never used the Internet (13% for the whole country) (NSI 2022). Obviously, the Internet is less used or accessible in the region than in Bulgaria as a whole, but at the same time the share of households with Internet access is a little bit higher than in the first analysed case in the Northwest region. This shows that the region is developing in general in view of the socio-economic situation, but is still at a lower position in comparison with the rest of the regions and the country when it comes to Internet access and usage.

The data from the conducted interview with the principal of the school and from the information placed on the school website completes the picture of the socio-economic situation. The main area of the students' interest is precisely hardware and software solutions, which indicates their interest in the field of IT. The school participates in numerous projects related to digitization and innovation. It is also important to emphasize that the school has been using the electronic diary "Admin plus" since 2018 (the first academic year it was used in hybrid form with the paper version).

The access of students and their families to the necessary resources is a key condition for participation in the education process and familiarity with all the necessary information contained in the electronic diary. In comparison with the previous school, there are also families for whom this access is difficult or there are differences in their skills and opportunities to obtain and understand the necessary information from the diary, but they are lower in number, given the socio-economic situation of the families in the region and the school. Most of the participants in the study shared that they are participating and managing the digital tools but at the same time they are aware that many families face serious challenges in that process.

> *"Do you or your classmates have such a problem that there are fewer devices at home, the Internet is not good, that type of thing? - Well, yes. They provide us from the school, in the sense... Literally, there are none for my class, but for the others, yes."*
> *"And do all students use the electronic diary, was there someone who has a hard time, can't register or has no device to access the diary, are there such problems? – For some students I think there are, yes, because they are a little more…, I don't know how to say it... For some students it is more difficult to deal with technologies."* (Focus group with the students)

As in the first case, the school is looking for ways to deal with the lack of access of some families to the necessary resources so that they become involved in the education

process and the network of actors. This happens through donations from the school budget for families needing to pay for the Internet or devices.

> *"Some do not have access to the Internet, families do not have enough devices... Last year, almost everyone made a donation... - We gave them Internet. - We gave 10% of the salary and bought laptops for the children."* (Dual interview with the principal and a teacher)

Also, the availability of access to resources is checked by the school, so that the teachers can monitor whether all students and their families, despite the limited economic (and other kind of) capital of some of them, are included effectively in the network created within the educational process.

> *"Yes, we have even made a declaration from the class teachers to sign that every student has access. Sometimes they don't know their passwords and forget them. Students can't log in, everyone is reimbursed, there are lists of students we might need to give laptops to. So, we are ready, but we want to increase this over time, if possible."* (Interview with the principal and a teacher)

In the parents' opinion, they do not have information about the socio-economic status of the other families whose children study at the vocational high school. Only one of them expresses the opinion that there are probably students with a different socio-economic status. Some of them share that their children have everything they need in terms of technology at home. They also do not believe that the introduction of the electronic diary is the way to overcome social inequalities.

5.3. Case № 3 Possession of capital and ensured access to digital technologies and education

The third studied case is of the so-called "advanced school" according to the categorization introduced in the methodology – an elite language high school with a high average success rate in the matriculation exams compared to other secondary schools in the country. It is located in a large city, key for the country's economy in the Southwest region of the country. The city has a high gross domestic product per capita. The labour market is well developed and there is extensive investment activity. Therefore, the level of unemployment in the municipality is between 3 to 4 times lower than the average in the country (Institute of Market Economy 2022).

Local taxes are the highest in the country. The city is located in the region with the most favourable demographic picture, a leader in the field of education with a high enrolment ratio, a low share of out-of-school children, good student performance and a large number of students (Institute for Market Economy 2022). In addition, according to data from the NSI, the share of households with Internet access in the Southwest region is 91% (which is 3% more than the total for the country). At the same time, 85% of the population in the region regularly use the Internet every day or at least once a week (79% in total for the country) and 8% have never used the Internet (13% for the whole country) (NSI 2022). This shows that the Internet is used more and accessible in the region than in Bulgaria as a whole, with quite higher shares than for the other analysed regions above. This corresponds with the favourable socio-economic situation described.

The high school in the third case is one of the leading profiled high schools in the country, with consistently high results in Bulgarian language and literature, second foreign language,

and other general education subjects. The high school cooperates with national and international non-governmental organizations and educational centres, former students, the parent community. Modern approaches in management and training are used: cloud technologies for managing administrative activities and training through the Office 365 platform, working entirely with an electronic diary, participation in international projects under the "Erasmus+" program, etc. The school has been using an electronic diary since 2017.

Given that the high school in this case is elite, the families of the students have enough capital, and the access to electronic resources, the Internet, etc. is ensured, the attitudes of the human actors in the network have become more important than access. This was shared by various respondents such as the principal, teachers, and students.

> *"They are used by everyone, with us there are no such differences... The differences are mainly due to the family environment, if there are any." "They had what was needed by the Ministry of Education and Science, they supplied the whole country. Access is not the main problem."* (Interview with the school principal)

> *"We do not force them to register, but all students and parents use them...whether the student and the parent will look at the diary depends on whether they have registered, whether they have logged in, we cannot force them. There are those who at the end of the 8th grade realize that it has to happen, but they are not many...If they want, they will do it, the important thing is for the students to understand that it is for their own good, to follow what is happening."* (Interview with a teacher)

> *"There are students who don't have their own accounts and use their parents' accounts, but I don't think there is anyone who doesn't use it at all."* (Focus group with the students)

This shows that families have the necessary capital so that their children can effectively participate in the education process. Students say that access to the diary is easier than before when paper versions were used. Also, the journal has been integrated particularly well into the education process, as students report that when there are any problems and there is no access to the journal, this creates panic, since they are used to being able to access and use it all the time.

> *"The same thing with grades, it's much easier to access, they don't have to be collected every month and written down, there's a lot less mistakes, a lot easier to fix."* (Focus group with the students)

> *"I want to say that it is generally a good thing and a path to progress. The platform we use is very good. But I think it's not simplified enough and it's quite complicated. It has also stopped working many times, which leads to great panic in both us and the teachers. It's happened to us I don't know exactly how many times, but more than 3-4 and it's pretty scary for us and for the teachers, we're all wondering what to do, what's going on, etc."* (Focus group with the students)

In summary, it can be said that in the third case, access to the necessary resources for students is ensured, as their families have sufficient and different types of resources. In some cases, the families' attitudes are crucial, and the electronic diary is well integrated in the education process. The reasons why some schools starting to use an e-diary later than others (when the study was conducted the e-diaries were not yet mandatory for all schools) were highlighted by the representative of a company providing e-diaries who described

them as lack of technical capital, insufficient skills of older teachers in using technology, as well as limited access to resources such as the Internet and even electricity in certain localities. This means that socially and materially deprived areas have numerous limitations to equal access to educational resources compared to developed ones.

5.4. Socio-economic factors affecting access, use, and benefits from electronic diaries

Table 1 presents the different socio-economic and demographic factors affecting access to digital technologies (electronic diaries), their use, and the benefits from their use, and it can be seen how inequalities are exacerbated within and between schools.

Table 1 Socio-economic factors affecting access, use, and benefits from digital technologies (electronic diaries) and educational inequalities

Socio-economic and demographic factors	Case № 1	Case № 2	Case № 3
Educational status of the parents	Most of the parents have a low level of education, therefore they prefer to use a paper version of diaries and they do not always have the necessary skills to use the electronic diary due to a lack of technical literacy.	Some of the parents have a lower level of education and digital skills in order to use the electronic diary. Therefore, they cannot register onto the platform or know how to log into the e-diary once registered.	All or most of the parents are of high educational status, therefore their children also study in one of the elite high schools in the country. The principal can think of a case of a vulnerable family only from the other primary school using the same building.
Economic situation of the parents	Students and their families have a low socio-economic status and low level of income (about 96% of the students are from vulnerable groups according to the principal). The school often buys basic necessities for them like shoes, bags, etc. Due to this, they often cannot afford to have the necessary devices to use an e-diary, Internet connection or even electricity.	Some of the families (a small percentage from the school, for instance a teacher shares there is only one such parent in her class) do not have access to the Internet or enough devices due to their low level of economic status. The school deals with that through donating devices to those vulnerable families like laptops and tablets or Internet prepaid cards.	All of the parents have enough resources and mostly are of high socio-economic status. The differences, if such even exist, could be due to attitudes in the family environment according to what is shared by the principal.

Age of the student	Age is an influencing factor since older students are independent when using the electronic diary and check the necessary information themselves and their parents are not so involved in the process. This is also mostly due to lack of interest on behalf of the parents and low value of education in their lives, which is often transferred to students as well.	Age does not seem to be an influencing factor in this case, perhaps due to particularities of the school or the different platform that is used in comparison with the other two cases, using the same type of diary.	Age is an influencing factor since it is expected from children to be independent and responsible and track the information about school themselves when they are older. This is, however, due to a manner of upbringing of children and not lack of interest on behalf of the parents, as in the first case.
Location, place of living of the family	The place of living of the families is often in a remote village, not the big regional city, so they sometimes cannot get to school, since public transport is lacking, and they do not have their own car. There is a school bus, but it often also does not function. Sometimes there is no Internet connectivity or electricity also due to the location or type of house the vulnerable parents and their children live in.	The parents with low socioeconomic status are often the same ones living in remote villages, where there are similar challenges to their participation in the education process as in the first case. However, the principal shares that sometimes these parents have positive attitudes and want to be informed and access the diary.	The parents' place of living is not commented as a barrier or influencing factors, since almost all of them live in the capital.
Ethnic minorities	The traditions and way of living of the (predominantly Roma) community, which is an ethnic minority in the country influences students' lives, decisions and degree of participation in the educational process. Some of them transfer to home schooling to get married, travel abroad with their families to take part in agricultural activities, take care of younger siblings or their parents due to illness. In their cases, transferring to home schooling practically means they stop their education.	There is no concrete data about whether the vulnerable groups are from a certain ethnic minority.	No parents and children from ethnic minorities have been identified.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The three analysed cases show the presence of significant differentiations in Bulgarian society and inequalities in the Bulgarian education system. The analysis and the results demonstrate that the theory of Bourdieu on the types of capital is particularly suitable and applicable for studying the Bulgarian education system. In turn, the ANT of Bruno Latour allows to regard new technologies (and electronic diaries) as new actors in education and to understand how these nonhuman actors are intertwined with human ones and if and when they build a new network. A potential limitation that should be noted here is that the limited empirical data did not allow to use the whole array of concepts in ANT. In order to fully reveal the heuristic potential of Latour's basic concepts, it is necessary to carry out a long-term study, which follows the creation of networks and relationships between actors in time while the study at hand captured a specific moment.

The analysis of the three cases allows us to positively answer our research question. More concretely, it reveals that the impact of digital technologies on access to educational process depends on the existing social inequalities and horizontal differences between and within schools. That is why the introduction of digital technologies in education could produce and reproduce educational inequalities. In schools with students having less economic capital, therefore also less technical capital, electronic diaries are not successfully integrated into the education process and are used only by some students. Due to this, social inequalities are reproduced within the given school and between the different schools. Electronic diaries also cannot be fully integrated into the actor-networks as non-human participants due to the lack of sufficient and adequate cultural capital by some parents and students. The analysis shows that digital divide is manifested in inequalities in access to ICT (electronic diaries), in their use, and in the benefits from their use.

The differences in the socio-economic situation of the three cases determine different perspectives for the students and imply significant socio-economic, which in many cases transform into educational inequalities between them. The presence or absence of IT resources such as relevant software, a proper device through which new technologies can be accessed (smartphone, computer, tablet, etc.), a good Internet connection, network coverage, and also having the skills to use technologies (that is, simultaneously technical, economic, and cultural capital) is central to the participation of the different social actors in the actor-network and assemblages they make. The use of e-diaries affects the social inequalities between students (and their families), deepening on and reinforcing them, to the extent that families of lower socio-economic status do not have access to the necessary resources (or types of capital) to use an e-diary. Unequal opportunities for education are caused by social inequalities that further influence students' success and performance in school, their interests, aspirations and attitudes toward education. This is especially relevant for schools from less developed areas, schools with vulnerable children, schools in which neither electronic diaries nor other technologies are available or used effectively.

The use of electronic diaries in schools affects educational inequalities in several ways. Some of the effects are linked to the digital divide, as the use of electronic diaries may increase the digital divide between students from low- and high-income families. Students from low-income families may not have access to the necessary technology and resources to use and benefit from electronic diaries while those from high-income families may have access to the latest technology and resources. E-diaries as non-human actors which are mediators instead of intermediaries provide students with access to a lot

of information and resources. However, if students from families of low socioeconomic status do not have these resources, this may widen the achievement gap between them and the other groups of students.

In general, in schools with high access to e-diaries, effective communication between parents, teachers, and students and the active participation of parents and students in the education process lead to higher educational results. This means that there is a stable actor-network. Schools with high levels of parental involvement and effective communication tend to provide a more supportive learning environment as parents and teachers work together to address student needs and provide the necessary support. This can lead to improved student results and neutralisation of negative influences from existing social inequalities in the family environment. At the same time, schools with limited access to technological resources and electronic diaries and distance learning platforms, with poor communication between parents and teachers and limited parental involvement in school life face challenges in providing an adequate level of support to their students. Students from low socio-economic status families lag behind in such schools, and this deepens existing social inequalities and leads to their lower education outcomes.

The theoretical and empirical analyses in the article are based on limited qualitative data, so there is no basis to draw generalisable conclusions for the whole country. However, research has highlighted important empirical facts that show that digital technologies have a key role in the education process and significantly influence it. It is clearly evident that inclusion in digital technology-based learning depends on the possession of certain resources, and more specifically on the availability of economic capital in families of different social status. The three cases show how the existence of significant social differences in terms of resources or individual's possession of different types of capital leads to the functioning of distance learning and e-diaries as a mechanism for turning social inequalities into educational ones and thus legitimising them.

The empirical research carried out clearly highlights several main problems in secondary schools in Bulgaria related to:
1. the gap between different schools in connection with socio-economic, transforming into educational inequalities;
2. the level of participation and commitment of parents and students in the educational process and
3. ineffective use of technology.

It is obvious that there is a need to reform the education system to reduce the influence of socio-economic inequalities on the education process, respectively to prevent the transformation of these inequalities into educational ones. Realising and turning this need from a slogan into a reality requires coordinated and consistent policies, both in the field of education and in the overall socio-economic environment.

The use of digital technologies - and in particular electronic diaries – should be the subject of planning, achieving a common understanding of the objectives and expected results, of researching available and necessary resources, and of assessing needs, so that the process becomes effective and helps to reduce the impact of socio-economic differences. With new challenges emerging, such as those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, imposing a new (ab)normality and distance learning, digital technologies can help to implement a more effective, albeit "substitute" learning process compared to what happened in the period 2020-2022, but only if they are introduced as a result of research and planning, followed by an evaluation of effects and results.

The study reconfirms the role of parents as important social actors in the educational process, and not just as passive outside observers. Therefore, when educational reforms are undertaken, parents' understanding of the educational process, the necessary changes in it, and the way they could be engaged in the education reforms should be seriously considered.

Communication and parental involvement in school life, carried out through electronic diaries, can have a serious impact on the educational process and its results. The use of electronic diaries in schools has the potential to affect social and educational inequalities since in schools where parents and students have limited access to technology, the introduction of electronic diaries in practice deepens social inequalities and transforms them into educational ones. Therefore, it is important - both at the level of schools and in the development of national policies - to take these potential effects into account and work to mitigate and neutralize the possible negative impacts on students from families with a lower social status. This can be achieved by guaranteeing access to technological resources and conducting training on digital competences for vulnerable families. At first glance, it seems that providing access to the information and resources of e-diaries for all students and parents, regardless of their social background and status, is a task whose solution is solely the responsibility of the creators of educational policy. However, from the sociological point of view, this is not true and comprehensive reform and effective innovations in the education system are only possible when they are accompanied by adequate and long-term changes in all fields of society.

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DIGITALNE TEHNOLOGIJE, DRUŠTVENI DISPARITETI I OBRAZOVNE NEJEDNAKOST: SLUČAJ ELEKTRONSKIH DNEVNIKA U BUGARSKIM SREDNJIM ŠKOLAMA

Rad se fokusira na nejednakosti u pristupu digitalnim tehnologijama i njihov uticaj na obrazovanje (naročito elektronski dnevnici) u srednjim školama u Bugarskoj. Pokušava da odgovori na sledeće istraživačko pitanje: da li uticaj digitalnih tehnologija na pristup obrazovnom procesu zavisi od postojanja društvenih nejednakosti i horizontalnih razlika između i unutar škola? Teorijski okvir je zasnovan na teoriji mreže aktera Bruna Latura, Burdijeovoj teoriji kapitala, kao i konceptu tehničkog kapitala. Metodologija istraživanja uključuje studije slučaja tri različita tipa škola sa kvalitativnim metodama prikupljanja podataka: intervjue i fokus grupe sa ključnim akterima kao što su direktori, učenici, nastavnici i roditelji. Prema mišljenju različitih društvenih aktera u obrazovnom procesu,

korišćenje elektronskih dnevnika značajno olakšava pristup, čuvanje i distribuciju informacija, ali ne za sve grupe dece i njihovih roditelja. Analiza tri različita tipa škola otkriva prisustvo značajne diferencijacije i nejednakosti u bugarskom obrazovnom sistemu. Rezultati pokazuju da su teorije Burdijea i Latura pogodne za analizu bugarskog obrazovnog sistema. Na osnovu dobijenih rezultata zaključuje se da su za sveobuhvatnu reformu obrazovnog sistema potrebne ne samo obrazovne inovacije već i adekvatne i dugoročne promene u svim oblastima društva.

Ključne reči: *elektronski dnevnik, obrazovanje, tehnologije, društvene nejednakosti, pristup.*