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**BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**



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**Symposium: Well-being and mental health of  
children and adolescents**

## **PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF SCHOOL STAFF IN SUPPORTING ADOLESCENTS' WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH**

**Ognen Spasovski\***

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of psychology, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius  
in Skopje*

Data from various surveys show significant decrease in mental health in adolescents in the last 10-15 years (HBSC, WHO, 2022; Haidt, 2024). The aim of this research is to explore how the teachers and professional service staff in schools—as one of the most important environments for students—perceive wellbeing and mental health in students/adolescents they work with, and whether the practices they employ meet the students' needs related to their wellbeing and mental health. The research is supported by UNICEF office in Skopje. The sample consists of 2670 participants (teachers, psychologists, pedagogues, special educators) (82% females, 89% teachers) from 74 primary and 26 secondary schools in the country (representing various regions, languages of instruction, size, urban-rural). They filled the questionnaire created for the purposes of this research.

Results show that contrary to the findings from HBSC survey, school staff perceive that adolescents they work with are happy in general and they feel related/attached to the school (83% of participants); they are not feeling overwhelmed (50%); the school provide appropriate care for their mental health (75%); mental health is important topic in the school (87%); and teachers have appropriate understanding of adolescents' needs and support them (85%). More than 90% of participants are confident that they have adequate competencies to support adolescents' mental health. However, in practice, most of their engagement is reduced to limited discussion with students and/or parents over the reason for intervention, without a well-thought and systematic action. It is recommended to use a holistic approach in developing program for improving wellbeing and mental health. It should be based on developing competencies in school staff for promotion psychological resilience and prevention of students' mental health.

**Keywords:** wellbeing, mental health, adolescents, school staff, holistic approach

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\* ognen@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

## **THE WELL-BEING OF TEACHERS AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBERS: FINDINGS AND NEEDS FROM NORTH MACEDONIA**

**Ivo Kunovski\***

*University Clinic of Psychiatry, Skopje*

The school is an important place for improving the well-being of young people. The well-being of teachers and professional staff also affects the quality of the educational process. So far, no data is available on the well-being of teachers and professional staff in North Macedonia. The aim of this study is to assess the needs related to the well-being of teachers and professional staff in North Macedonia. A cross-sectional study was conducted with a total of 2670 respondents (89% teachers, 11% professional staff) from 74 primary and 26 secondary schools in all eight regions of the country. Participants were predominantly females (82%) from schools with the Macedonian language of instruction (82%). A set of questions was asked in Macedonian and Albanian, regarding socio-demographic characteristics and stressful situations at the workplace. Descriptive and inferential methods using parametric tests were applied. The teachers reported variations of stressful situations, which were statistically more pronounced among women, schools instructing in Macedonian, primary schools, and in larger towns/cities. Significant differences were noted between the professional staff from schools instructing in Macedonian and Albanian. Teachers and professional staff, who reported workplace stress, felt significantly less energetic, experienced more fear, left work in a low mood, and felt a less positive work atmosphere. The same associations were observed for professional staff. The research identified areas where increased attention is needed to improve the well-being of school teachers and professional staff. Particular differences were noted in the needs reported by teachers. The results highlight the importance of caring for the well-being of these crucial professions in the educational process in the country.

**Keywords:** teachers, professional staff, well-being, mental health

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\* ivokunovski@gmail.com

## **UNLOCKING HAPPINESS: HOW TEACHER AND CLASSMATE SUPPORT, STUDENT PARTICIPATION, AND SCHOOLWORK PRESSURE SHAPE SCHOOL SATISFACTION**

**Kalina Sotiroska Ivanoska\*, Sheruze Osmani Ballazhi, Luljeta Bexheti,  
Ibrahim Neziri, Lina Kostarova Unkovska**

*Institute of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in  
Skopje;*

*Faculty of Philosophy, University of Tetovo, Tetovo*

*Center for Psychosocial and Crisis Action, Skopje*

The school context enables the development of the trajectory important for the healthy development of adolescents. Young people's experiences at school have effects on satisfaction and connectedness with school. Determining factors that increase school satisfaction contribute to adolescent health and academic achievement. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to predict school satisfaction based on teacher's support, classmates support, participation in school and schoolwork pressure. The sample consists of 5144 adolescents aged 11, 13, and 15 from North Macedonia. According to gender, 48.4% are boys and 51.6% are girls. According to the language of instruction, 66.6% of the adolescents involved in the study learn in the Macedonian language and 33.4% learn in the Albanian language. Binary regression was used to predict school satisfaction. Teacher and classmate support and schoolwork pressure explains 31% of the variance of school satisfaction among adolescents. The findings of this study highlight the importance of support from teachers, classmates, school participation and schoolwork pressure as factors that significantly increase school satisfaction, suggesting the need for educators and policy makers to delve deeper into specific mechanisms, through whom these factors promote higher academic achievement and general well-being.

**Keywords:** school satisfaction, teacher support, classmates support

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\* kalina.sotiroska@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

## A CULTURE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS

**Sheruze Osmani Ballazhi\***

*Faculty of Philosophy, University of Tetovo*

Schools as institutions offer the potential for education, development and improvement of children's mental health. A positive school culture of mental health in schools is associated with positive development of young people, prevention of risky behaviors and higher academic achievements. In order to investigate the perception of teachers and the professional service about the culture of mental health in schools, an online questionnaire intended for the purposes of the research was given. A total of 2670 respondents were included in the research, i.e. teachers and professional services from 74 primary and 26 secondary schools from eight regions in North Macedonia. Of the total number of respondents, 90% are teachers, 82% are women, and about 80% of participants are of Macedonian ethnicity. The participants involved in the research declare that mental health is taken care of in their schools and that it is an important topic in the collective, students are supported and various activities from the field of mental health are implemented. The professional service, in contrast to the teachers, significantly more perceives a positive culture of mental health in schools. It is important for schools, through a holistic approach, to create measures for building a culture and school climate of mental health that would develop at the level of the whole school but also at the class level.

**Keywords:** mental health, school climate, teacher

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\* sheruze.osmani@unite.edu.mk



## **DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN NORTH MACEDONIA: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY**

**Stojan Bajraktarov, Ivo Kunovski\*, Slavica Arsova, Stefanija Mitrovska**

*University Clinic of Psychiatry, Skopje*

Research shows that mental health problems have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Adolescents are considered to be a particularly vulnerable group when it comes to mental health. However, most data on prevalence rates and potential risk factors for mental health problems come from high-income countries. Data is not available on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health among adolescents in North Macedonia. The aim of this study was to determine prevalence rates of anxiety and depression, and potential risk factors, among adolescents in North Macedonia. Data was analyzed from a national cross-sectional study on the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of adolescents and their caregivers. Data was collected from 506 adolescents (31% boys, 69% girls) from schools in North Macedonia. A set of questionnaires assessing symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as data on sociodemographic characteristics and family experiences, was administered. Intensity of depression and anxiety symptoms was mild to moderate among adolescents. The prevalence rates of depression were 29.2%, while the rates of anxiety were 23.7%. A significantly higher score was registered among girls compared to boys, high school students compared to elementary school students, adolescents living with a family member with a chronic illness, as well as among those exposed to physical and emotional violence. This study provides a first insight into the mental health of adolescents after the COVID-19 pandemic in North Macedonia. The data indicated that the adolescent population experiences significant mental health problems, where adverse family factors can have a significant negative impact.

**Keywords:** adolescents, depression, anxiety, COVID-19

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\* ivokunovski@gmail.com

## **THE ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IN SCHOOL AND FAMILY CONTEXT**

**Gordana Nestorovska\***

*Elementary School "Joakim Krchoski"-Skopje*

The purpose of the research was to examine the primary school students' perception about the types of mental health support they receive in school and family context. A qualitative survey of focus groups was carried out on a sample of 34 students (17 boys and 17 girls) from 3 primary schools in the Skopje region, with Macedonian language teaching. The age of respondents ranges from 12 to 15 years. A semi-structured questionnaire was used as a guide for collecting students' responses. The analysis points towards significant differences in students' experiences between the types of their mental health support they receive in school and family context. The findings also show that students from grades 7 to 9 generally perceive that in both contexts they do not receive adequate and effective support for their needs to improve mental health. Support is not enough, adequate and often is missing especially in the family context. The discussion points to the need for improving the competences of teachers and school staff (psychologist, pedagogies, etc..) in primary schools aiming to build a culture of mental health and efficient support of adolescents. At the same time, primary schools should help parents to acquire parental skills, knowledge and practices for efficient mental health and well-being support of their children. In this sense, various recommendations will be discussed.

**Keywords:** mental health, students' perception, school and family context

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\* ngordana2000@yahoo.com

## **EXISTING SERVICES FOR MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN NORTH MACEDONIA (SOCIAL PROTECTION)**

**Elena Dimushevska\***

*National network to end violence against women and domestic violence*

This report was prepared based on the mapping of existing services within social protection providing help and support for children and adolescents, focusing on mental health prevention services in R. North Macedonia. The mapping concludes that mental health prevention is not included in the work programs of public institutions and authorized service providers. Only in some of the services, children and adolescents are recognized as direct beneficiaries. A lack of professional staff has been identified, especially in: information and referral services, professional assistance and support services, counseling services, home services, community services, non-family care services (supported living, care in another family and accommodation in institutions that have been transformed into so-called small group homes). The recommendations indicate the need to improve the work programs of public institutions and authorized service providers with prevention of mental health of children and adolescents. An increase of the number of authorized providers of counseling services at the national level is needed, and developing regulations for norms and standards for them. It is especially important to conduct campaigns, educational workshops with children and adults, meetings with parents at the local and national level. The field of social protection plays an important role in preserving the mental health of children and adolescents, which should ensure access to such services for all users of the social protection system. Particularly crucial is the detection of existing traumas, developmental crises and conditions related to the mental health of children and adolescent users of the system, which may appear as a result of risks to which they are exposed, or have appeared in the past.

**Keywords:** mental health, children, adolescents, social protection

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\* dimushevska@glasprotivnasilstvo.org.mk

## **Session 1: Educational Psychology 1**

## **REIMAGINING EDUCATION: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS FOR AN IDEAL SCHOOL**

**Nikolina Kenig\*, Violeta Petroska-Beshka**

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Psychology, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University -  
Skopje*

In response to the need for transformative changes in education, this research delves into the concept of an ideal school, exploring the perspectives from students and the meta-perspectives of their teachers.

The sample for the quantitative study consisted of 4909 students from the last two grades (51.9% girls) who study in Macedonian (61.4%), Albanian (33.9%), or Turkish (4.7%) language of instruction, as well as of 4783 teachers (72% females) who teach in grades 4-9 in Macedonian (61.9%), Albanian (36.9%), or Turkish (1.2%), from 119 different primary schools in the country. Additionally, 93 students from 9 selected schools, whose language of instruction is Macedonian (78.5%) or Albanian (22.5%), participated in focus groups, thus providing data for in-depth qualitative analysis.

The results from quantitative analysis emphasize student's priorities, such as clean toilets, internet access, and reduced number of subjects in curricula. The findings from the focus groups discussions on the other hand, highlight students' desire for a more engaging and practical curriculum, emphasizing their need for skill development over theoretical knowledge. Generally, teachers are well informed on student's preferences and expectations, however, their knowledge on this is rarely transformed into good practices.

The findings align with key educational theories and contemporary discussions on student-centered, engaging, and inclusive learning environments. The research sheds light on students' perspectives and aspirations, providing valuable insights for educators and policymakers aiming to create a more inclusive and student-centric educational system.

**Keywords:** ideal school, student's perspective, mixed-methods

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\* ninakenig@yahoo.com

**PERCEIVED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, PERCEIVED ACADEMIC  
SELF-EFFICACY AND SELF-REGULATION AS PREDICTORS  
OF SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT AMONG STUDENTS**

**Orhideja Shurbanovska\***

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Psychology, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University -  
Skopje*

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between the perceived learning environment, perceived academic self-efficacy and self-regulation with the school achievement of students in primary and high schools in Skopje. A total of 172 students were included in the research, of which 83 from primary schools (7th to 9th grade) and 89 from high schools (2nd and 3rd year) in Skopje. The following instruments were used: Questionnaire for Feedback, Identification and School Trajectories by Carvalho et al.; Perceived Academic Self -Efficacy Scale (Talent, Context, and Effort) by Jinks and Morgan; and the Academic Self-regulation Questionnaire (Extrinsic, introjected, identified self-regulation, and intrinsic motivation) by Ryan and Connel. The instruments meet the metric characteristics for reliability, that is, the coefficients of Cronbach`s alpha exceed the value of 0.70. The data were processed using the multiple linear regression analysis.

The results showed that intrinsic motivation, identified self-regulation and talent are significant predictors of school achievement among elementary school students. Interestingly, intrinsic motivation was found to be negatively related to student`s achievement. The main variables, i.e perceived learning environment, perceived academic self-efficacy and self-regulation, together, explain 51% of the variance in school achievement ( $F=5.418$ ,  $p=0.000$ ;  $R^2=0.509$ ). In high school students sample, the results showed that significant predictors of school achievement are: introjected self-regulation, invested effort, talent and student-directed feedback. Interestingly, effort and student-directed feedback are negatively related to school achievement. The main variables (perceived learning environment, perceived academic self-efficacy and self-regulation) together explain 51% of the variance in school achievement ( $F=7.929$ ,  $p=0.000$ ;  $R^2=0.506$ ). More detailed data and discussion of the research results will be presented in the paper.

**Keywords:** perceived learning environment, academic self-efficacy, academic self-regulation, school achievement, primary and high school students

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\* surbanovska@yahoo.com

## **VIOLENCE AND POWERLESSNESS: A LOOK AT VULNERABILITY AND OVERCOMING**

**Maja Cvetanovska\*, Ana Poprizova, Ivan Hristov**

*Association for Research, Education and Development - Center RED*

*High School „Orce Nikolov“, Skopje*

This paper explores the problem of peer bullying, both in-person and online, focusing on the children and young people who perpetrate the bullying, and aims to encourage informed approaches to prevention of this phenomenon. Data from the longitudinal international HBSC study on health behaviors in school-aged children, in which Macedonia has participated for 20 years, unequivocally show that these children and youth are at risk for their mental health, often with traumatic experiences in the background and low support from the family, teachers and peers. More than half of them (54%) report two or more symptoms more than once a week, such as headache, stomach pain, back pain, irritability, nervousness, difficulty sleeping or dizziness. Multiple indicators of mental health, traumatic experiences, coping with stress, and support from significant adults and peers in adolescents who perpetrate bullying are discussed further. The sample consists of 5144 adolescents aged 11, 13 and 15 from North Macedonia. Of them, 48.4% are boys, and 51.6% are girls; 66.6% study in Macedonian, and 33.4% in Albanian. The data presented are from the last research cycle conducted during 2022. Statistical operations at the descriptive level, such as percentages and cross-tabulations, were performed. The recommendations for strengthening relational competences based on empathy, respect for individuality and interest in the child's potentials derive from the knowledge about the protective role of family support and empathy, school achievements and attachment to school in terms of peer bullying.

**Keywords:** bullying, adolescents at risk, relational competences

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\* maja.cvetanoska14@gmail.com

## **THE CURRICULA AS BASIS FOR CREATING MODIFIED CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Snežana Trpevska, Žaneta Čonteva\***

*Bureau for Development of Education*

*Ministry of Education and Science*

Curricula in primary education are developed on the basis of competency-based National Standards. The central place in them is the learning results, the achievement of which ensures the acquisition of the necessary competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) covered by the National Standards. Each curriculum is also a basis for creating a modified curriculum for students with complex needs. According to the functional assessment opinion of the student, the members of the inclusion team for the student develop the modified program. It defines: adapted learning results and assessment standards, adapted teaching content, strategies, teaching aids, assistive technology and additional support. The purpose of the research is to analyze the curricula in the first educational period of primary education in order to detect the competencies that are a good basis and the main orientation towards which the planning and implementation of the modified curriculum should be directed. The results of the analysis show that in all curricula from the first to the third grade (in 24 total), competencies from the area of Personal and social development are represented in a large percentage, which is 113 or 51.13% of the total of 224 in the first grade, 118 competencies or 48.76% of the total 224 in the second grade and 129 or 47.42% of the total of 242 in the third grade. The paper provides guidelines for the development of a modified curriculum for students with complex needs with the possibility of choosing the competencies that correspond to their abilities and opportunities and through which they could develop independence, personal development and social relationships at the end of primary education.

**Keywords:** modified curriculum, students with complex needs, competencies

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\* [contevazaneta@gmail.com](mailto:contevazaneta@gmail.com)



## **THEORETICAL ELABORATION OF EMPATHY COEFFICIENTS IN GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS**

**Ljupčo Kevereski, Sofija Filipovska\***

*St. Kliment Ohridski University, Faculty of Education - Bitola*

This theoretical paper investigates the heightened empathy coefficients in gifted and talented students, focusing on the psychological and educational implications of these traits. The primary objective is to understand how advanced cognitive abilities and emotional sensitivities contribute to empathy development in this specific group. By integrating theories from developmental psychology and cognitive neuroscience, this study hypothesizes that gifted and talented students exhibit unique empathetic profiles due to their enhanced processing of emotional stimuli and superior cognitive-emotional integration. The theoretical exploration is based on a review of existing literature concerning cognitive-affective empathy models and their application to gifted education. While empirical data collection is not a component of this theoretical analysis, the paper draws on secondary data from previous studies that document emotional and cognitive characteristics of gifted individuals across various age groups, without specifying number or ethnic backgrounds due to the broad scope of the review. The conclusions suggest that educational strategies should be tailored to nurture the emotional and social skills of gifted and talented students, complementing their academic programs. Recommendations for future research include empirical studies to validate the proposed theories and to design specific educational interventions that effectively address the complex emotional needs of these students.

**Keywords:** gifted and talented education, empathy coefficients, cognitive-affective empathy, theoretical exploration, educational strategies

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\* filipovskasofijaa@gmail.com

## WORKSHOP 1

### GETTING OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

**Aleksandra Petroski, Kristina Egumenovska\***

*Department of psychology and psychotherapy, Zan Mitrev Clinic, Skopje*

How come we stay in a pattern of behavior which is not conducive to our personal growth? Are we afraid of change, even when we desire it? What is the comfort zone concept, and how can it help us to motivate ourselves in the desired and needed direction? The goal of this workshop is to clarify the concept of comfort zone and the dynamics behind staying or getting out of our comfort zone in terms of habits of actions and habits of thinking. The workshop is targeting every professional who is eager to learn something new about oneself through a guided personal exploration based on specially designed images which activate the right hemisphere of the brain and to find points of connections with other fellow colleagues in a more holistic approach to personal change. Optimal number of participants and duration: 20 participants; 45 minutes.

**Keywords:** comfort zone, awareness, motivation, personal growth

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\* kristina.egumenovska@zmc.mk

## DESIGNING DIDACTIC-METHODICAL TEACHING MATERIALS FOR TEACHING THE MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE

**Elizabeta Tomevska\*-Ilievska, Martina Trajkovska, Marija Krstanoska**

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Pedagogy Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in  
Skopje*

*Elementary School "LazoTrpovski", Skopje*

*High School "Georgi Dimitrov", Skopje*

The teaching materials are resources that the teacher specially designs to support the teaching process and represent a resource that has the role of a guide for the achieved goals and realized teaching contents, and they are in function of improving the learning process. The purpose of this paper is to examine the methodical, methodological and dokimological structure of the teaching materials, which are applied and create modern didactic-methodical teaching materials in teaching the Macedonian language. The research makes a content and structural analysis of the teaching materials, which are used from first-third grade in teaching the Macedonian language subject. Based on the obtained results designed are modern teaching materials. A total of 150 teaching materials are included in the analysis of the teaching materials for the Macedonian language syllabus components. From the analysis of the teaching materials for the syllabus components such as Basic reading and writing and Language, it is concluded that all principles are not fully respected during the design of the teaching materials, and the final conclusions point to the need to modernize the Macedonian language teaching process. The conclusions indicate that the appropriate teaching materials and their frequent use improve the learning process, individual development and the quality of the teaching lessons. The role of teaching materials is to enhance the teaching process, and provide better objectivity during formative and summative observation, evaluation and grading students. The research results in a design of modern didactic-methodical teaching materials according to didactic-methodical, dokimological and methodological principles, with graphic-technical, illustrative-aesthetic elements, according to the age of the students.

**Keywords:** didactic-methodical teaching materials, school subject Macedonian language, analysis of teaching materials

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\* trajkovska.martina997@gmail.com

**Session 2: Social Psychology / Personality  
Psychology**

## **GENDER ROLE ATTITUDES AMONG CITIZENS OF TEN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: COMPARATIVE ANALYSES**

**Mihajlo Popovski\*, Konstantin Minoski, Antoanela Petkovska, Ilo Trajkovski**

*Institute of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy – Skopje*

*Institute of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy – Skopje*

*Institute of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy – Skopje*

*Institute of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy – Skopje*

The paper presents the results of a research of gender role attitudes among citizens of ten European countries: Sweden, Norway, France, Italy, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Macedonia. Gender role attitudes are defined as beliefs and evaluations of the appropriateness of the behaviors of men and women in the private and public spheres of life. The research is based on data collected in the last wave of the "European Values Study" project, which was conducted in the period from 2017 to 2019. The research covers a total of 15,449 participants, aged 18 to 83, of which 45% are male and 55% are female. Gender role attitudes are determined based on the degree of agreement or disagreement of the participants with a certain number of statements that refer to activities and responsibilities that men and women should have in the family, the effects of women's employment, and what kind of activities are considered as more suited to men rather than to women. In data processing, the frequency and intensity of the attitudes among all participants in the research, their similarities and differences given the country they live in and the association of the attitudes with certain sociodemographic characteristics were determined. The comparative analysis showed that participants, in general, tended to express disagreement more than agreement with statements involving unequal treatment of women and men in the private and public spheres. However, this tendency to abandon traditional gender ideology varies significantly both in relation to the country the participants are from, and in relation to the association with certain sociodemographic characteristics.

**Keywords:** gender role attitudes, gender ideology, European values study, comparative analyses

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\* mihajlo@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

**WILL YOU BE THERE FOR ME WHEN I NEED YOU? THE  
PSYCHOLOGY OF PARENTING AS A CHALLENGE**

**Michal Čerešník\*, Miroslava Čerešníková**

*Faculty of Psychology, Paneuropean University, Bratislava*

*Faculty of Social Sciences and Health Care, Constantine the Philosopher University*

In the contribution, we will focus on presentation of the main approaches and the theoretical roots of parenting styles. We will present the socio-demographic changes that the Slovak family is going through and we will point out the changes in parenting styles in the context of Slovakia and Czechia over the last 30 years. The aim of the contribution is to present the opinion that this research topic is still not useless and represents a source of potentially valuable knowledge in the future. The main idea of the contribution is the presentation of the changes in the perspective of the adolescents who assess the parenting styles in their families. It seems that they perceive the parental control as an aggravating factor of their relations with parents but they also perceive the parental responsiveness a supporting factor, as we know it from the theory of Bowlby. We also identified that in many families in Slovakia there is often the negative relation among children and parents and the boundaries are missing. We can summarize that the Slovak family is passing through the changes, which are not optimal for child development, and these changes form the relations in the society.

**Keywords:** parenting styles, family, Slovakia

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\* [michal.ceresnik@paneurouni.com](mailto:michal.ceresnik@paneurouni.com)

## THE DYNAMICS OF MISINFORMATION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIOPOLITICAL PERSPECTIVES

**Matej Trojachanec\***

*Ss. Cyril and Methodius University*

*Metamorphosis Foundation*

In recent years it has often been said that we have entered a "post-truth" era, where the line between truth and lies is blurred. The effect of misinformation was most evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when anti-vaxxer conspiracy theories on the fringes of the information ecosystem entered the dominant discourse. Building upon these points, this paper examines the contemporary phenomenon of belief in, dissemination, and the impacts of misinformation, considering psychological, socio-political, and media perspectives, and particularly focusing on N. Macedonia. We explore some of the psychological drivers behind the belief and spread of misinformation, which we divide into several levels: *cognitive* (intuitive thinking, imagination, rehearsal, revision of beliefs), *socio-affective* (group affiliation and bias, ideology, collective narcissism), and *personological* (Big Five personality factors). Furthermore, we consider socio-political factors (such as party affiliation, media literacy, and public policies) and media factors (echo chambers, information cascades, information ecosystem) that correlate and/or moderate the effect of belief and the spread of misinformation. The paper aims to review the contemporary phenomenon of misinformation, emphasizing the complex interaction between psychological, socio-political, and other factors. Furthermore, some of the ways to deal with the spread of misinformation and areas for future research are discussed. In conclusion, although the variety of misinformation is diverse and shaped by the national/regional information ecosystem, the role of psychological theory in the fight against misinformation is undeniable, specifically because it offers practical insights that are applicable in the real world.

**Keywords:** misinformation, psychological factors, socio-political drivers

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\* thematthewtroy@gmail.com

**DO SELF-ESTIMATES AND ESTIMATES BY OTHERS OF  
INTELLIGENCE AND PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS  
RELATE TO SELF-ESTEEM?**

**Zoran Mihajlovski\***

*Faculty of Teacher Education, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University – Skopje*

An empirical study examining possible link between self-estimates and estimates by others of both intelligence and physical beauty (attractiveness), and self-esteem, was conducted on Macedonian sample of university students. The sample itself consisted of 203 respondents in total, all students of II or III year of either preschool or primary teacher education. Individual differences were measured employing two measuring tools: (1) SEI i.e. Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith), and (2) anonymous survey sheet with names of all respondents in attendance listed, seeking a three-point estimation (above-average, average, below-average) of (a) intelligence of each individual from the list, including oneself, as well as (b) physical beauty of each individual from the list, also including oneself. Results (correlation-based data processing, separately for females & males) only partially support previous findings in the field. The general self-esteem, regardless of gender, strongly relies on both intelligence and physical beauty as seen by others, as well as on self-assessed beauty, but not on self-assessed intelligence. Both intelligence and beauty as self-assessed significantly influenced the social self-esteem in female students. On the other hand, only self-assessed intelligence (but not beauty) showed very strong positive relation to the academic self-esteem in males. Overall, a very strong social component of self-esteem as related to intelligence was indicated in females, while a very significant achievement component was indicated in males.

**Keywords:** self-esteem, intelligence, physical attractiveness, students, gender

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\* zoranklaus@yahoo.com



## **VALUES, PERSONALITY TRAITS, MEANING IN LIFE AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG STUDENTS**

**Ana Đordević\***

*MIT University-Skopje, Faculty of Psychology*

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between values, personality traits, meaning in life and life satisfaction among students. In this research, a predictive model was applied with the aim of determining which of the researched variables best predict life satisfaction. The research was conducted on a sample of 243 students at the Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Pedagogy, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Information Sciences and Computer Engineering (FINKI) and from the Orthodox Theological Faculty in Skopje. The respondents were given the following instruments: Portrait Values Questionnaire, Hexaco Personality Inventory, Meaning in Life Scale and Life Satisfaction Scale. The regression model singles out the meaning in life, security and conscientiousness as significant predictors for life satisfaction, while conscientiousness in the predictor model has a negative sign. In the discussion, the meaning of the obtained findings is considered, as well as the shortcomings of this research are also pointed out. Additionally, recommendations are given for applying the findings in psychological practice, as well as recommendations for further research.

**Keywords:** values, traits, meaning in life, life satisfaction

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\* dordevic\_ana@hotmail.com

## DETERMINANTS OF HAPPINESS AND HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

**Sofija Georgievska\*, Frosina Denkova Zafirovska**

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Social Work and Social Policy, University St. Cyril and Methodius - Skopje*

*IT Labs, Skopje*

This study investigates the determinants of happiness and help-seeking behavior in North Macedonia, examining a diverse sample of 1,005 individuals aged 15 to 68, with an average age of 32 years. The sample was predominantly female (84.5%). Key findings indicate a significant positive relationship between age, pet ownership, regular exercise, and happiness levels. Older individuals reported higher happiness scores compared to younger individuals ( $t(1003) = 2.15, p < 0.05$ ). Pet owners exhibited greater happiness than non-pet owners ( $t(1003) = 3.10, p < 0.01$ ), and those who engaged in regular physical exercise were happier than those who did not ( $t(1003) = 4.05, p < 0.001$ ). The study also highlights a gender disparity in help-seeking behavior, with 92% of females willing to seek help during distress compared to 76% of males ( $\chi^2(1, N = 1005) = 18.27, p < 0.001$ ). These findings underscore the necessity for targeted mental health interventions that address age-related happiness disparities, promote pet ownership, encourage regular exercise, and acknowledge gender differences in help-seeking behavior. The research calls for destigmatizing mental health discussions and fostering supportive environments that facilitate open dialogue and community-wide conversations about well-being.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on happiness and mental health by providing unique insights into the North Macedonian context and emphasizing the need for mental health promotion.

**Keywords:** North Macedonia, happiness, help-seeking behavior, mental health, social support

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\* sofija.arnaudova@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

## WORKSHOP 2

### A GENTLE INTRODUCTION TO THE OPEN-SOURCE STATISTICAL SOFTWARE PACKAGE JASP

**Nikola Sekulovski\***

*University of Amsterdam, Department of Psychology,*

JASP, developed by the Department of Psychology at the University of Amsterdam, is a free and open-source statistical analysis software. Its intuitive (point-and-click) interface makes it accessible to users with varying levels of statistical expertise and (no) programming skills, while still offering powerful analysis capabilities. Supporting a wide array of statistical methods, from t-tests to machine learning, JASP accommodates both classical and Bayesian inference approaches. During this workshop, I'll provide a comprehensive introduction to JASP using practical examples. Participants will have the opportunity to explore the software hands-on, either with their own data or utilizing the extensive pre-installed datasets that come with JASP. Questions and assistance will be available throughout the session.

To participate, attendees should bring their own laptops with the latest version of JASP installed, which can be downloaded from: <https://jasp-stats.org/>.

**Keywords:** JASP, open-source, software.

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\* n.sekulovski@uva.nl



**Symposium : Psychology and AI: Reciprocity in  
Human-Virtual Player Interaction**

## **INTRODUCING CO-OP WORLD: A COMPUTER GAME EXPLORING RECIPROCITY IN HUMAN-VIRTUAL PLAYER INTERACTIONS**

**Chen Rozenshtein\*, Sigal Eden**

*Department of Computer Science, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel.*

*Departments of Psychology and Educational Psychology,*

*Max Stern Yezreel Valley College, Emek Yezreel, Israel.*

*Faculty of Education, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel.*

*Department of Computer Science, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel.*

This presentation introduces Co-Op World, a computer game featuring repeated interactions between a human player and a virtual player, responding to each other's help requests in a coin-collection environment. We will explore the system's capabilities and applications, detailing quantitative measures derived from the in-game data regarding participants' helping and reciprocity behaviors, among other factors. We will present a pilot study conducted in a therapeutic setting with four school-aged children, which revealed different behavioral strategies adopted by the children within the game, as well as their differing motives for helping or not helping the virtual player. We will further describe experiments analyzing the behaviors of children in three age groups—4th, 5th, and 6th graders—and adults. Our findings indicate that adults demonstrated more positive reciprocity compared to children, helping the virtual player in response to previous help received. Conversely, adults demonstrated less negative reciprocity compared to children, being more likely to help the virtual player even when they had not been previously helped.

**Keywords:** reciprocity, developmental psychology, social behavior, computer games.

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\* chenrozenshtein@gmail.com

## **FROM INTENT TO ACTION: EXPLORING AGE- DEPENDENT RECIPROCITY PATTERNS IN GAME-BASED INTERACTIONS**

**Alkalay Sarit\*, Eden Sigal, Rozenshtein Chen, & Sarne David**

*Max Stern Yezreel Valley College, Emek Yezreel, Israel.*

*Departments of Psychology and Educational Psychology Bar Ilan University, Ramat  
Gan, Israel.*

*Faculty of Education. Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel.*

*Department of Computer Science.*

The study examines age differences in the intent-behavior gap for reciprocity using a computer game, Co-Op World, with a total of 116 participants comprising 87 children (4th-6th graders) and 29 adults. We compare their in-game behavior and their explicit understanding of reciprocity which is measured by analyzing their responses to four open-ended questions about motivations for helping or not helping during social interactions with a virtual player in the game. Results reveal that participants' age group (children vs. adults) moderated the links between an explicit understanding of reciprocity and game behaviors, with no statistically significant effects of gender or grade level in children. These patterns can be explained using a dual-systems approach, contrasting an impulsive, emotional system and a reflective, reasoning system. Some key findings and conclusions are: (1) At the lowest understanding level, children show lower help rates and higher negative reciprocity following the virtual player defection, indicating that with a basic understanding of reciprocity, children strictly punish defection as a violation of norms, while adults' social experience provides latent expectations of reconciliation; (2) This gap diminishes only for adults as the level of understanding increases: help rate decreases and negative reciprocity increases at a greater rate compared to children's, reaching similar levels in the highest understanding level. This may indicate that adults better integrate reflective and impulsive systems, likely due to greater self-control and consequence-forecasting abilities enabled by reflective system maturation. On the other hand, children rely more on impulsive cognitive systems, remaining reactive despite understanding changes.

**Keywords:** social reciprocity; developmental changes; intent-behavior gap; dual-system approach

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\* sarital@yvc.ac.il

## **CAN YOU HELP? RECIPROCITY AND SOCIAL SKILLS AMONG CHILDREN WITH AND WITHOUT SLD/ADHD**

**Sigal Eden\*, Michal Ezra, Chen Rozenshtein, Sarit Alkalay, David Sarne**

*Bar Ilan University,*

*Bar Ilan University,*

*Bar Ilan University,*

*Max Stern Yezreel Valley Academic College, Bar Ilan University*

Children diagnosed with specific learning disabilities (SLD) and/or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) often encounter challenges not only in academic performance but also in social development, which can manifest as difficulties in effectively engaging in social interactions (Tamm et al., 2021). Additionally, they may exhibit deficient reciprocal behavior (Clark et al., 1988; Dumas, 1998). Nevertheless, our understanding of how reciprocal behavior relates to social interaction among children with SLD/ADHD remains limited. Therefore, the primary aim of this study is to explore potential differences in patterns of reciprocal behavior between children with SLD/ADHD and those with typical development (TD). Additionally, we aim to investigate the association between self-reported social skills and self-reported reciprocal behaviors, as well as those expressed within a computer game involving interactions with a virtual player, among both groups. A total of 120 children, comprising 43 with SLD/ADHD and 77 with TD, aged 9-11 years, participated in the study. They completed self-reported questionnaires focusing on social skills and reciprocity, and engaged in a computer game designed to simulate social situations. Results revealed no significant difference between the groups in self-reported social skills or reciprocity. However, analysis of actual reciprocal behavior during gameplay indicated that the SLD/ADHD group demonstrated higher levels of selfish reciprocity and lower levels of altruistic reciprocity compared to the TD group. Furthermore, a correlation was observed between self-reported social skills and reciprocity, as well as between these self-reported measures and the reciprocal patterns observed in gameplay.

**Keywords:** social skills, reciprocity, learning disability, ADHD, computer game

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\* sigal.eden@biu.ac.il



## **CORRELATES OF RECIPROCITY IN HUMAN-VIRTUAL PLAYER INTERACTION IN SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN**

**Biljana Blazhevskaja Stoilkovska\*, Katerina Naumova, Ana Fritzhand**

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Psychology, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in  
Skopje*

The norm of reciprocity represents the social standard that people who help others will receive benefits from them in return, i.e. it is seen as a process of giving and repaying. On the other hand, helping behavior does not always involve expectations of returns/benefits.

In this pilot study positive and negative reciprocity, as well as overall helping behavior were analyzed in a sample of school-aged children (N=37, 18 girls) interacting with a virtual player in the Co-Op World game. Additionally, the study investigated the relationships of these three types of behavior with self-perceived social skills and helping orientations, as well as strengths and difficulties assessed by the children's mothers. The findings indicate that children exhibited positive reciprocity more often than negative reciprocity and frequently chose to help regardless of the virtual player's helping behavior. The correlation analysis revealed different patterns of associations of positive vs negative reciprocity with specific social skills, helping orientations and psychological problems. The results might serve as a basis for explaining various aspects of pro-social behavior in human-virtual player interaction. However, further exploration is needed using a larger and more diverse sample in terms of sociodemographic background, educational and social experiences.

**Keywords:** reciprocity, helping, social skills, human-virtual player interaction

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\* biljanabs@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

**CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF RECIPROCITY IN HUMAN-VIRTUAL PLAYER INTERACTION: FINDINGS FROM MACEDONIAN AND ISRAELI SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN**

**Ana Fritzhand\*, Biljana Blazhevskia Stoilkovska, Chen Rozenstein**

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Psychology, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje*

*Bar Ilan University, Tel Aviv, Israel*

Reciprocity is a prosocial norm that is extensively studied in psychology, among other norms that motivate helping behavior. Grounded in social learning principles, children learn about reciprocity through social reinforcement and positive modeling, during social interactions and play. While developing, they acquire knowledge about the importance of helping those in need. But what if the help requester is a virtual player? Children today are growing up in a digital world and are frequently playing video games, but are they willing to reciprocate to their AI co-player when asked for help? This aspect of prosocial behavior is in the focus of the present research. 37 Macedonian (19 boys and 18 girls) and 91 Israeli (46 boys and 45 girls) school-aged children (ages 9 till 11) were included in this cross-cultural study. According to the experimental protocol, all of them played the “Co-Op world” game in two parts, 3-4 days apart, in school setting. Reciprocity was measured through: help rate, overall reciprocity, positive and negative reciprocity. The preliminary cross-cultural findings show no statistically significant differences between two groups of children on all measures of reciprocity. There is, however, a trend in terms of lower negative reciprocity in Macedonian group, which suggests that children from this group are a bit more prone to forgive the virtual player and provide help after the virtual helper responded negatively to their request. Further research, with larger sample, is needed in order to gain more detailed insight into helping behavior in human-virtual player interaction in school-aged period.

**Keywords:** reciprocity, human-virtual player interaction, school-aged children

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\* anaf@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

## WORKSHOP 3

### UNDERSTANDING FAMILY SECRETS IN FAMILY AND SYSTEMS PSYCHOTHERAPY

**Natka Pachoska\*, Tina Damevska, Gabrijela Boshkov, Despina Stojanovska**

*Institute for marriage, family and systemic practice ALTERNATIVE*

Secrets are present in everyday life in many families. Any taboo topic in the family in family psychotherapy is seen as a created secret, regardless of whether it is a hidden or an open secret. A hidden secret is when some of the family members know something and others do not, and an open secret is when everyone has learned from somewhere, but that topic is not discussed among family members. Secrets, silence around those topics, create communication and relationships between family members and affect the structure of the family and its functioning in different ways. Secrecy is keeping information from those who have a significant and legitimate stake in the situation. The purpose of the workshop is to show part of the psychotherapeutic work with families in which there are secrets, through the family systemic approach. A case of a family through genogram analysis will be presented. It will be shown how the secret turns into a symptom, the symbolism of the symptom, as well as the systemic relational phenomenon of the symptoms/secrets. Expected outcome of the workshop is participants to become familiar with genogram analysis and the family systems approach in working with families in which there are secrets through a case presentation. Also, to gain insight into the impact of secrets in creating reduced communication in families, building coalitions and distanced relationships, dysfunctional patterns of behavior, symptomatic behavior, etc. Optimal number of participants in the workshop is 20 to 25.

**Keywords:** secret, family and systemic psychotherapy, relational phenomenon, genogram analysis

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\* natpacc.np@gmail.com

## WORKSHOP 4

### INTRODUCING COGNITIVE STIMULATION THERAPY

**Bojana Vaskov\***

*Kognicija, Skopje, North Macedonia*

Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) sets out to improve the cognitive state and it can be defined as "activities aimed at improving general cognitive performance or one of its components, whether it be in healthy subjects or patients with some brain damage". It is recognized as the sole non-pharmacological intervention approved for the treatment of cognitive symptoms in dementia patients as well as the preservation of function. This workshop aims to introduce CST as an intervention that can be used to improve the functioning of various cognitive domains such as attention, memory, spatial cognition, executive functions, and visual and motor coordination in both neurodegenerative disorder patients and cognitively healthy adults. The workshop will begin with a presentation dedicated to the usage of CST and its benefits. It will be followed by demonstrations of activities used during CST sessions to improve attention and memory. Finally, attendees will get the opportunity to ask questions or express concerns about CST and its use. The recommended number of participants for the workshop would be 20-30, with an estimated duration of 30 minutes. The desired objective is to familiarise participants with CST and encourage its continued usage in the treatment of cognitive deficiencies.

**Keywords:** Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST), non-pharmacological intervention, cognitive domains.

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\* vaskovbojana@gmail.com

## **Poster Session**

## **NEEDS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT OF WOMEN UNDERGOING IVF: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN SERBIA \***

**Ivana Janković<sup>†</sup>, Jelena Opsenica Kostić, Milica Mitrović, Miljana Spasić  
Šnele, Mila Guberinić, Nikola Čirović**

*Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš*

We conducted qualitative research to understand the needs and expectations of women undergoing in vitro fertilisation (IVF) regarding psychological support. The sample comprised twenty-one women undergoing the IVF process (aged 27 to 42). A semi-structured interview was used for data collection and inductive thematic analysis was applied. We identified three themes: the form and frequency of support, vulnerable groups, and the specificity of the psychologist's role. Women emphasized that each couple has its unique needs, and that various forms of psychological support (e.g. individual, partner and group) would be needed. Support should be provided continuously, but the psychologists should also be "constantly available" for urgent consultation. It was recognized that the support should be specially provided to vulnerable groups, such as younger and older married couples, couples without reproductive material, and those with multiple unsuccessful IVF attempts. Also, women shared that their partners are in need for psychological support. Psychologists are perceived as individuals whose support would be more encouraging and helpful than the support they receive from members of the informal social network. Psychologists' role is seen as multifaceted: providing information regarding IVF process, providing help to relax, and cope with fear and anxiety. The study highlights the importance of understanding women's needs and expectations before implementation of psychological support program for women undergoing IVF.

**Keywords:** IVF, needs, psychological support, thematic analysis

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<sup>†</sup> ivana.jankovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

## **SUBJECTIVE VITALITY OF WOMEN FACING INFERTILITY: ROLE OF WOMEN'S AGE AND SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF INFERTILITY\***

**Miljana Spasić Šnele, Jelena Opsenica Kostić, Ivana Janković<sup>†</sup>, Mila Guberinić, Nikola Ćirović, Milica Mitrović**

*Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš*

The aim of this research was to examine the subjective vitality of women facing infertility in the context of the sex-specific diagnoses (male, female, male/female, unknown), the number of IVF processes (first or later), duration of the diagnosis and the age of the participants. 205 women aged 25 to 47 participated in the research ( $M = 38.66$ ,  $SD = 5.19$ ). To obtain data, the Subjective Vitality Scale and a questionnaire created for the purposes of this research were used. Results indicate that there are differences in subjective vitality regarding the cause of the fertility ( $F(3, 155) = 3.86$ ,  $p = .011$ ). Post hoc analysis using Tukey's-b test showed that participants with unknown diagnosis have higher scores on subjective vitality ( $N = 52$ ;  $M = 5.34$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ) than women who stated female factor infertility ( $N = 51$ ;  $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ), and women who stated both male and female factor infertility ( $N = 38$ ;  $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ). Differences in subjective vitality regarding number of IVF processes ( $t(156) = 1.123$ ,  $p = .26$ ), and duration of the diagnosis ( $F(4, 155) = 0.87$ ,  $p = .483$ ) were not obtained. Subjective vitality is not correlated with participants age ( $r = -.018$ ,  $p = .800$ ). The obtained results indicate that sex-specific diagnoses play an important role in the subjective experience of vitality of women facing infertility, implying the need to take it in consideration when creating psychosocial programs for women and couples facing infertility.

**Keywords:** subjective vitality, infertility, women

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\* This work was supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia under the project Identity Crisis in Women Facing Infertility: Mixed Methods Approach – InsideMe [Grant number 1568]

<sup>†</sup> ivana.jankovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

## CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING STYLES AND MOTIVES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Arife Ameti\*

*University of Tetovo*

The present research aims to find the relationship between consumer decision-making styles and consumer motives during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study used Consumer Styles Inventory and The Consumer Motivation Scale on a sample of 209 Albanian adults of both genders. Principal findings show that the perfectionist style emerged as the most dominant, while safety motives exhibited the highest presence. Correlative analysis revealed positive and significant relationships between consumer decision-making styles and consumer motives during the pandemic Covid-19 ( $r=0.74$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The comparative t-test analysis shows significant gender differences in novelty fashion conscious consumer style ( $t=2.16$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and price-value consciousness ( $t=3.42$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Additionally, significant gender differences are observed in the motive of safety, with a higher presence among women ( $t=3.25$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Regression analysis reveals statistically significant relationships between decision-making styles and consumer motives ( $R^2=0.564$ ,  $F(1,649)=269.930$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

**Keywords:** consumer behavior, decision-making styles, consumer motives, Covid-19.

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\* arifeameti@hotmail.com



## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BELIEF IN ACHIEVING SHORT- AND LONG-TERM GOALS WITH SELF-ESTEEM AND OPTIMISM

**Marija Milić\*, Ana Kurtović, Vladimir Bjelobrk**

*Faculty of humanities and social sciences, Osijek*

*Faculty of humanities and social sciences, Osijek*

*The Autism Centre, Osijek*

The aim of this study was to examine the relationships between belief in achieving short- and long-term goals, self-esteem (self-liking and self-competence), and optimism. Self-esteem, defined as one's evaluative perception of self, shapes how individuals see themselves and their future (Taylor and Brown, 1988). Goals, representing desired future states, reflect personal values and can be short-term (achievable within months) or long-term (taking more than five years). Data from 586 university students (417 female) from Osijek, Croatia, were analyzed. The mean age of participants was  $M=20.28$  ( $SD=1.40$ ). Participants completed four questionnaires: Scale of short-term student's goals (SKCS; Milić and Vranić, 2017), The Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale – Revised (SLCS-R; Tafarodi and Swann, 2001), The Aspiration Index (AI; Kasser and Ryan, 1996) and The Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R; Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994). Participants' estimates of the likelihood of achieving long-term goals were examined with the Aspiration Index, while the likelihood of achieving short-term goals was examined with the Scale of Short-Term Student's Goals. Correlation analyses showed positive relationships between estimates of the likelihood of achieving life goals and other examined variables. Optimism emerged as a full mediating variable between self-liking and the likelihood of achieving certain long-term goals like wealth, image, personal growth, relationships, and health. However, optimism didn't exhibit such mediation for short-term goals. Optimism plays a crucial role in explaining the link between self-liking and the likelihood of achieving some of long-term goals, but it doesn't similarly impact the likelihood of achieving short-term goals.

**Keywords:** short- and long- term goals, self-liking, self-competence, optimism

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\* mmilic@ffos.hr

## **SENSORY PROCESSING SENSITIVITY AND THE BIG FIVE MODEL AMONG STUDENTS**

**Maja Korubin\*, Angelina Taneva**

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Psychology, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in  
Skopje*

*Institute for Research in Environment, Civil Engineering and Energy*

Sensory processing sensitivity (SPS) is a hereditary personality trait which manifests itself in the way in which the central nervous system is processing external and internal sensory information. This character trait refers to the level of sensitivity that an individual manifests because of different stimuli, his/her emotional, cognitive and behavioral reactions, as well as the deep cognitive processing of stimuli and empathic behavior. The individuals with a high level of SPS trait are considered to have high sensitivity or are highly sensitive person (HSP). The author Elaine Aron who has been researching this character trait, is using both terms interchangeably - Sensory processing sensitivity and highly sensitive person. The research is examining the connection between highly sensitive person (HSP) and personality traits within The Big Five Model: extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experiences, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. The sample consists of 204 participants, students from all four years at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, of which 124 females and 80 males. For researching the variables, the following instruments have been used: Highly sensitive person scale and Big Five Inventory. The research results show that HSP is positively correlated with neuroticism, extroversion, and openness to experiences. Even though some previous studies have shown statistically significant correlation between HSP and the agreeableness trait, this research has not produced statistically significant correlation between these two variables, neither a correlation between HSP and conscientiousness trait. When analyzing the differences in relation to HSP, it was shown that women are more sensitive than men. These findings have relevant implications for the understanding of relationship between sensory processing sensitivity and personality among students. Hence, it is suggested to extend the study to a more heterogeneous sample.

**Keywords:** sensory processing sensitivity, highly sensitive person, The Big Five Model

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\* maja.korubin@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

**UNDERSTANDING STRESSORS, WELL-BEING HABITS, AND  
READINESS FOR HEALTH ENHANCEMENT AMONG PROFESSIONALS  
ACROSS CULTURES**

**Angelina Taneva\*, Maja Korubin**

*Institute for Research in Environment, Civil Engineering and Energy*

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Psychology, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in  
Skopje*

This study examines the well-being practices, sources of stress, and preparedness for health improvement among professionals hailing from Greece, North Macedonia, Lithuania, Spain, and Italy. A total of 125 participants, consisting of 67% females and 33% males, provided valuable insights into their experiences with workplace stress and their strategies for preserving well-being. The most prevalent stressors that have been discovered are excessive workload and tight deadlines, insufficient planning, lack of relationships, absence of appreciation, challenges in maintaining work-life balance, and the presence of uncertainty and change. The findings suggest that most respondents (26% completely satisfied, and 44% very satisfied of their time management) utilize efficient time-management strategies, such as arranging activities and prioritizing obligations. Nevertheless, despite these endeavors, 54% of the respondents' express high stress at work and 57% of them have sensations of emotional depletion and find it challenging to detach themselves from work, resulting in a significant influence on their mental well-being. Only 14% of the respondents don't employ any measure, and the rest of the respondents employ a range of measures, such as engaging in regular physical activity, practicing relaxation techniques, and cultivating supportive connections, in order to increase well-being. However, 77% of the respondents have detrimental coping strategies, such as engaging in excessive physical activity or adopting bad eating patterns. Respondents have expressed a desire to engage in mental and physical health activities (from 1-3 hours per week) in order to further improve their well-being.

**Keywords:** building healthy habits, mental health, stress, coping stress

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\* angelina@iege.edu.mk

## **Session 3: Clinical and Health Psychology**

## THE NETWORK STRUCTURE OF PERSISTENT POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS SYMPTOMS

**Katerina Naumova\***

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Psychology, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University -  
Skopje*

The network approach to psychopathology proposes that causal symptom interactions and their mutual reinforcement lead to the emergence and maintenance of mental disorders. Network analysis was introduced to the field of traumatic stress less than a decade ago and has since increasingly been utilized to explore the structure of posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS). Given the rising need in the field to focus on specific types of trauma and more homogeneous samples, this study aims to explore the interactions among persistent PTSS in community adults exposed to war-related potential traumas. The participants ( $N = 222$ , 47.3% female,  $M_{age} = 43.3 \pm 13.4$ , range = 20-65 years old) were selected from the national dataset of the CONNECT study, based on their self-reported level of PTSS (mild to extreme) four years after trauma exposure. The Impact of Event Scale-Revised was used for measuring typical PTSS: intrusion, avoidance and hyperarousal symptoms, while the network analysis was conducted with the EBICglasso algorithm. The most central nodes (symptoms) in the estimated network were 'flashbacks', 'avoiding thoughts' and 'psychological reactivity', while the strongest edges (partial correlations) were between the nodes 'trouble staying asleep' - 'trouble falling asleep', 'easily startled' - 'hypervigilant', 'flashbacks-nightmares' and 'avoiding thoughts-avoiding feelings'. The model generally aligns with the three symptom clusters and is comparable to networks estimated in larger samples and utilizing other measures of PTSS. Findings are discussed in light of ongoing debates regarding the utility of the network approach and the generalizability of PTSS networks.

**Keywords:** network analysis, posttraumatic stress symptoms, war traumas

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\* [knaumova@fzf.ukim.edu.mk](mailto:knaumova@fzf.ukim.edu.mk)

**ADAPTING START (STRATEGIES FOR RELATIVES): A  
MULTICOMPONENT INTERVENTION FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF  
PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA IN N.MACEDONIA**

**Marija Taneska\*, Svetlana Iloski, Andrea Ivanovska, Gabriela Novotni,  
Antoni Novotni, Iva Koceva, Vladimir Maksimovikj, Gill Livingston, Penny  
Rapaport**

*Department of Psychiatry, University College, London*

*Institute for Alzheimer's Disease and Neuroscience, Skopje.*

The aim is to present the process of adaptation of a psychoeducational intervention for family caregivers of people with dementia-START (STraTegies for RelaTives) in Macedonia. START has long- and short-term clinical and cost effectiveness and has been previously adapted to be used in different cultures and contexts. It is delivered by trained and supervised facilitators (commonly psychologists) and has the potential to address the gap in the provision of post diagnostic support for families affected by dementia in N.Macedonia. All materials were translated and then, online focus groups and interviews were held with stakeholders to obtain feedback about the content and delivery of START. We analysed the results using reflective thematic analysis informed by the Framework for Cultural Adaptations of Scalable Psychological Interventions to understand what changes need to be made to the intervention to fit the Macedonian cultural and sociopolitical context. Fourteen family caregivers and 5 professionals working with people affected by dementia took part in the study. The analysis showed that the caregivers experience the program as helpful in coping with the care better and offering the support and information that are otherwise unavailable. Due to the lack of postdiagnostic support and information on dementia, as well as the stigma surrounding it, START was expanded with a culturally congruent explanation. We changed the terminology and concepts, added more information on dementia, offered bigger flexibility in the delivery of the sessions and adapted the facilitator training. The study found that START could be delivered in North Macedonia with changes to its surface elements (appearance and delivery). This would allow fitting it in the local context and facilitate its acceptance as a new approach. START also opens the way for psychologists in Macedonia to be more involved in dementia management as facilitators and supervisors. With the help of the UCL Global Engagement Funding, the adapted intervention is currently delivered to a small group of caregivers.

**Keywords:** dementia, psychoeducation, family caregivers, cultural adaptation, post diagnostic support

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\*marija.taneska.22@ucl.ac.uk

## **NOMAD MODEL: REDUCING DEPRESSION IN FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA THROUGH PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS**

**Svetlana Iloski<sup>\*3</sup>, Marija Taneska<sup>3</sup>, Andrea Ivanovska<sup>3</sup>, Vesna Dimitrova<sup>6</sup>,  
Antoni Novotni<sup>234</sup>, Julia Fischer<sup>5</sup>, Ljubisha Novotni<sup>4</sup>, Milos Milutinovic<sup>24</sup>,  
Boban Joksimoski<sup>6</sup>, Ivan Chorbev<sup>6</sup>, Shpresa Hasani<sup>3</sup>, Vildan Dogan<sup>5</sup>, Timo  
Grimmer<sup>5</sup>, Alexander Kurz<sup>5†</sup> and Gabriela Novotni<sup>123</sup>**

*Department of Cognitive Neurology and Neurodegenerative Diseases, University  
Clinic of Neurology, Skopje, North Macedonia <sup>2</sup>*

*Faculty of Medicine, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, North Macedonia*

*<sup>3</sup>Institute for Alzheimer's Disease and Neuroscience, Skopje, North Macedonia*

*<sup>4</sup>University Clinic of Psychiatry, Skopje, North Macedonia <sup>5</sup>*

*Department for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Center for Cognitive Disorders,  
Technical University of Munich, School of Medicine and Health, Klinikum rechts der  
Isar, Munich, Germany <sup>6</sup>*

*Faculty of Computer Science and Engineering, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University,  
Skopje, North Macedonia*

Caregivers of individuals with dementia experience high levels of depressive symptoms, and worsened health particularly when there is a lack of post-diagnostic support such as in North Macedonia. This study investigates the efficacy of NOMAD: an innovative model of post-diagnostic support in North Macedonia combining personalized care plans, psychoeducation, and case management to improve health outcomes and service utilization. This presentation will discuss the model's effectiveness in reducing depressive symptoms in caregivers. We conducted a two-arm randomized controlled trial with 120 families recruited from 12 general practitioner (GP) offices in Skopje. The intervention comprised personalized care and psychoeducation delivered through four home visits to pairs of individuals with dementia and their caregivers. It was delivered by a multidisciplinary team comprising a dementia nurse and a social worker, collaborating with GPs and dementia specialists. Caregivers were predominantly women (56%) with an average age of 58.9 years, caring for a parent (47%), and co-residing with a person with dementia (78%). The majority were Macedonian (79%). Individuals with dementia had an average age of 74.6 years and were predominantly diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease (92%). A significant reduction in depression was observed among family caregivers in the intervention group, with an average decrease of 2.69 in depressive symptom scores (95% CI [-4.75, -0.62],  $p = 0.012$ ). Non-pharmacological interventions address the multidimensional needs of family caregivers, promoting resilience and reducing the risk of depression, which leads to improved mental health and quality of

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<sup>\*</sup> svetlanailoski@gmail.com

life. Implementing NOMAD in practice will require strengthening primary care capacity and prioritizing dementia as a national concern.

**Keywords:** depression, dementia, post-diagnostic care, psychosocial interventions, family caregivers



## **BENZODIAZEPINES MISUSE AND PERCEIVED STRESS AMONG MACEDONIAN ADULTS**

**Dimitrinka Jordanova Peshevska\*, Angela Nikolova, Kate Trajkova, Ana  
Tomovska Misoska**

*University American College, Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia;*

*Labyrinth, National Association - health and right of persons with mental illnesses,  
Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia*

The benzodiazepines misuse, although underestimated as an issue, become a major public health psychology concern, over the last decades with growing attention among researchers, and policymakers. The aim of the study was to explore the relationship between perceived stress and benzodiazepine dependence in adult participants in North Macedonia through the lens of the ecological model of understanding the multifaceted risks for benzodiazepine misuse. A cross-sectional study was conducted on a convenient sample with total 70 participants (51.43% male and 48.57% female) from 23 to 82 years old in the period April to June year 2023. The instruments used for data collection were: Benzodiazepine Dependence Questionnaire and Perceived Stress Scale, including sociodemographic data on gender, ethnicity, employment. The results presented statistically significant correlation between benzodiazepine misuse and perceived stress. Stress experienced among adults, significantly predicts benzodiazepine misuse ( $\beta=.624$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and explain a significant proportion of variance for perceived stress ( $R^2=.624$ ;  $F(1; 70)= 43.309$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The risk for benzodiazepine misuse was higher among group of divorced adults with lower level of income. The country passed the law banning benzodiazepine sales without a doctor's prescription. Still the rates of misuse among adults is worrying. The high rate of benzodiazepine misuse among population, especially among divorced adults with lower level of income, highlights a striking alarm that requires policy interventions and policy implementation.

**Keywords:** benzodiazepines, misuse, stress, adults

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\* jordanovap@uacs.edu.mk

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT OF SPEECH FUNCTION IMPAIRMENT AFTER CEREBROVASCULAR INSULT**

**Kristina Egumenovska\*, Aleksandra Petroski**

*Department of psychology and psychotherapy, Zan Mitrev Clinic, Skopje, R.  
Macedonia*

Ischemic stroke, also known as cerebrovascular accident or CVI (cerebrovascular insult) is defined as an interruption of blood flow within one of the brain feeding arteries. We present a case study of a 72-year old Macedonian male patient, who has recently suffered CVI and whose speech function has deteriorated. We combine results from computer tomography CT (with cerebral angiography) and neuropsychological tests (TMT-A, TMT-B, Bender-Gestalt, Addenbrooke's cognitive examination test ACE-R, and RAVLT) in order to corroborate the expected dysfunction in the patient. We then present the psychological interventions used to improve his overall well-being and tolerance to frustration of the speech dysfunction. In order to attain this two main goals we continuously used autogenic training, singing voice therapy i.e. melodic intonation therapy, psychological counselling, just as dialogue reading/shared reading, modeling, sentence recasting, elicited imitation and narrative based language intervention within a psychotherapy and counselling setting with the patient.

**Keywords:** Psychology treatment, speech function impairment, cerebrovascular insult

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\* kristina.egumenovska@zmc.mk

## **SHAME: A GESTALT APPROACH THEORY, METHODOLOGY, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

**Eli Grozdanovska\***

Shame as an important clinical and psychological issue, will be reviewed throughout the lens of the Gestalt theory and methodology, at the same time giving implications for psychotherapy work and interventions. Based on what is known Gestalt therapy theory has long addressed the phenomenon of shame, although often without mentioning shame by its name. In the heart of the Gestalt model is the field representation of experience that includes the experience of both oneself and one's environment as a relational whole, the interactional processes between self and other. As such, shame is seen as a rupture of support in the field and a disorganization of self-process. To arrive at an understanding of how the phenomenon of shame operates, it is necessary to utilize the concept of id, ego and personality functions of the self and the concepts of interruptions to contact, specifically introjection, retroflexion and confluence. All of this integrated within the theory of contact and Gestalt formation and fixation. This understanding of shame dynamics is essential for the deconstruction of shame in the therapy room, while working with individual and relational processes. It is also of great importance not to abandon the core pillars of Gestalt such as organismic self-regulation, the client's phenomenological experience, the constant interaction between the field and the self, all of this fitted in the form of I- Thou dialog.

**Keywords:** gestalt therapy, shame, psychotherapy

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\* eli.grozdanovska@gmail.com

**Session 4: Cognitive Psychology / Psychological  
aspects in other sciences**

**RETHINKING ESSENTIAL TOPICS IN PSYCHOLOGY: FROM MIND,  
CONSCIOUSNESS AND SELF-AWARENESS TO 21ST CENTURY  
CONSCIENCE**

**Olga Murdzeva Skarić\***

*Institute of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University -  
Skopje*

The psychology of mind and behavior, awareness for consciousness and self-awareness, as well as 21st century moral awareness and consciences are still the main topics and questions in the study of psychology.

Mind is a collection of mental processes and phenomena, a set of cognitive abilities that enables the state of (non)consciousness, the property of the brain's complex network of neural activity.

Consciousness is the state of being conscious, individual self-awareness of something internal or external.

Conscience is a personal moral sense, an internal compass of right and wrong.

Precise definitions, same as the one provided by the AI chat-bot Microsoft Copilot, the difference being that the AI has admitted: "*As an AI, I don't possess consciousness or a conscience!*"

Across thousands of years people have been searching for answers to still unanswered questions about *Consciousness, life and universe* (book by Xue Fan, 2024). As Xue writes, consciousness originates in life and is a fundamental life process. Life has a cosmic origin and evolves according to the universal laws of physics and chemistry. *In quantum view, nothingness, with infinite quantum potential, is omnipotent, from which a whole universe could emerge, including matter, space, and time* (Xue, 2024, p.168). The Supreme Mind, the mind of God or the origin of the universe from nothingness?

Seeking to unravel the phenomena of mind and consciousness, eventually, I recognize in humility that I don't know! Maybe conscience will be full of love?

**Keywords:** mind, consciousness, conscience

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\* oskarik@ukim.edu.mk

## INTELLIGENCE AND RATIONALITY: CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL DIFFERENCES

**Elena Achkovska Leshkovska\***

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Psychology, University Ss. Cyril and Methodius - Skopje*

For a long time in psychology, rationality was considered to be an integral part of intelligence, although there was no empirical evidence of such equalisation. This paper reviews the understandings of eminent contemporary theorists and researchers on the relationship between the two concepts in order to shed light on the development and changes in their conceptualisation. The idea that even highly intelligent people are prone to irrationality emerged in the early 1970s, when the psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky conducted series of experiments revealing that people tend to make decisions based on intuition rather than reason. In the late 1990s, Keith Stanovich noted that there were individual differences in rationality and explored what contributed in being more rational. He proposed a tripartite extension of dual-process theories to illustrate the distinction between intelligence and rationality. The author considered that the algorithmic mind encompasses the logical thinking assessed by intelligence tests, but those tests do not capture the reflective mind that is crucial for rationality. Based on the long-term theoretical and empirical work on the topic, Stanovich and his associates Richard West and Maggie Toplak prepared the Comprehensive Assessment of Rational Thinking test (CART) to measure the rationality coefficient. The structure of CART and empirical evidence on intelligence-rationality relationship are discussed.

**Keywords:** intelligence, rationality, difference

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\* elenaa@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

## **WE DON'T NEED A CLOCK TO SEE TIME**

**Vaska Leshoska\***

*Faculty of Philosophy, Department of psychology, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje*

Everything happens in time, yet the subjective experience of time is elusive. Understanding time perception and its neural implementation remains a challenge. Do we possess an internal clock-like mechanism that governs our subjective experience of time, or does the perception of time emerge from distributed neural dynamics? I present a selective overview of the research frameworks on time perception from a cognitive neuroscience perspective. I begin by outlining the internal clock as the dominant theoretical paradigm in time perception research over the last quarter-century and explain how attempts to find the internal clock in the brain ultimately failed. Using the concepts of change, content and hierarchy as organizing themes, I present alternative models arguing that time emerges from changes in neural dynamics; it is embedded in perception and memory as prospective and retrospective experience of time; and is structured in nested hierarchy of timescales, possibly mirroring each layer of the processing hierarchy. Possible implications are discussed.

**Keywords:** time, time perception, cognitive neuroscience.

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\* vaska@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

## ARISTOTLE'S PHRONESIS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON WISDOM

**Jasmina Popovska\***

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Philosophy, University of St. Cyril and Methodius -  
Skopje*

Psychological interest in wisdom is already entering its fifth decade of intensive research. It occurs in several subdisciplines of psychology, such as cognitive, developmental, and positive psychology. These studies are carried out in parallel with the philosophical discussions, without any important overlaps, but with a pronounced conceptual ambiguity. The rise of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, especially through the prism of the Aristotelian concept of phronesis, both in philosophico-ethical discussions and in psychology, opens new perspectives for conceptualizing wisdom within the framework of psychological practice and psychological research, which opens the possibility for productive collaboration between these two disciplines. In addition to the brief genesis of the approaches taken in psychological research on wisdom, this text will discuss the main philosophical concepts and criteria/dimensions on which these approaches are grounded. These are the concepts of sophia (theoretical wisdom), phronesis (practical wisdom), techne (skill) and deinotes (cleverness), as well as the criteria of (meta)cognition, morality and affectivity. Arguments for emphasizing the understanding of the main characteristics of phronesis as key to the psychological research of "wisdom" will also be presented.

**Keywords:** phronesis, wisdom, philosophy, Aristotle

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\* jasmina.popovska@fzf.ukim.edu.mk



## **ACEDIA IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EVAGRIUS PONTICUS AND ITS CONNECTION TO (UNDERSTANDING) DEPRESSION**

**Marija Todorovska\***

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Philosophy, University Ss. Cyril and Methodius,  
Skopje*

The text will overview the foundations of Evagrius Ponticus' theory of the eight evil thoughts (logismoi). The connection between Evagrius' psychology with the stances of some of the Byzantine philosophers will be shown, and the manners in which the ideas of the soul, the passions, and the handling of internal and external evil were later included in the anthropological and ethical ideas of orthodoxy will be outlined.

The main goal of the text is to devote some attention to the problem of acedia, or rather on the ways in which Evagrius' doctrine of acedia warns against the dangers of that which in contemporary context would be equated with, or compared to, depression. Initially conceived as a handbook for fighting against (and fighting off) demons (which puts it into the corpus of protopsychological monastic demonology), Evagrius' doctrine offers an interesting insight into understand the problems and challenges not only of the ascetic way of life, but of the hope for contemplation, and the building of the self of the contemporary (secular, desacralized) man.

The text will offer a brief analysis of the characteristics, influence, and significance of acedia; of acedia not only as a religious (or a "spiritual") problem, but as a concept that does not coincide with, but is similar to depression, or rather a concept that, established by Evagrius, anticipates later theologico-philosophical takes on depression; as well as the possibilities for a distinction between acedia and depression in the contemporary philosophy, theology, and psychiatry. One part of the historically relevant sources will be shown in the context of the need for pluriperspectivity in the modern grasp of the relevant concepts and problems, as well as through the importance of the collaboration between philosophy and psychology in building a multidisciplinary understanding of the psychological and metaphysical mechanisms of the contemporary man.

**Keywords:** Evagrius Ponticus, acedia, depression

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\* marija.todorovska@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

## **SARAH KANE'S THEATRE: THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE SUBJECT AS A REFLECTION OF SOCIAL VIOLENCE**

**Despina Angelova\*:**

*Faculty of Dramatic Arts, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje*

Despite committing suicide at just 28, leaving behind only five short plays, Sarah Kane (1971-1999) is considered one of the most striking contemporary British playwrights. Her plays, which some critics associate with "in-her-face theatre", are particularly shocking because of the omnipresent physical and psychological violence. From her first play *Blasted*, which points out the close relationship between the "private" violence of a hotel room in England and the "public" one of the war in the former Yugoslavia, until her last - testamentary - play *4.48 Psychosis*, wrongly reduced by some to a "suicide note of the depressed author", Kane's plays seem to gradually evolve from a committed theatre in which the traumas of the characters are shown in their social and realistic setting, to an intimist and poetic, fragmented and monologic theatre without characters, showing the ultimate disintegration of the traumatized psyche of the subject in our times. This paper prolongs the analysis of Edward Bond who insists on the persistent political dimension of Kane's theatre and who sees the author's suicide itself as a "theatrical act". It discusses the tearing down of the walls between public and private and the porosity of the self of the characters - exposed to social and gender violence, forced in the impasse to turn against themselves - in the author's plays, which strongly question the political foundation of the destructuring and dislocation of the subject at the end of the 20th century and which raise as a true call to humanity.

**Keywords:** Sarah Kane, theatre, psychology, intimate and political, suicidal subject.

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\* despina.angelovska@fdu.ukim.edu.mk

## **Session 5: Clinical Psychology / Developmental Psychology**

**SCREEN USE: ITS ASSOCIATION WITH CAREGIVER MENTAL  
HEALTH, PARENTING, AND CHILDREN'S ADHD SYMPTOMS**

**Gordana Nikolova\*, Franziska Waller, Katharina Prandstetter, Elena  
Jansen, Jamie M. Lachman, Judy Hutchings, Heather M. Foran**

*1 Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University Clinic of Psychiatry,  
Skopje, N. Macedonia;*

*2 Institute of Psychology, University of Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, Austria;*

*3 School of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD,*

*4 School of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD,*

*5 Department of Psychology, Bangor University, Bangor, United Kingdom*

Introduction Familial factors and screen use have shown to be significantly related to ADHD in children. However, theoretical models of the role of family environment, screen use, and ADHD have rarely been tested jointly. Objective The aim was to examine the relationship between caregiver's mental health, dysfunctional parenting, and the screen media use in understanding attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms of children within an integrated model framework. Methods and materials Data from 835 primary caregivers of children (2 to 9 years) from three MICs were analyzed using path analyses, and models were tested for generalizability across education levels and marital status using multigroup analyses. ADHD-related symptoms were assessed with a structured clinical interview MINI-KID-P and the CBCL. Results Whereas screen use was directly associated with ADHD symptoms across measures, a significant indirect effect of lax parenting on attentional problems via screen use was found only for the CBCL parent report. The final models were tested using multigroup analyses across education levels and marital status with no significant differences. Conclusion Investments in capacity building for children's primary caregivers that target lax parenting and limiting of screen use may impact children's attentional problems across educational levels and married and nonmarried caregivers.

**Keywords:** ADHD symptoms, parenting, psychological distress, screen media use

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\* gordana.shaleva@gmail.com

## THE ROLE OF SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-COMPASSION IN THE RELATION BETWEEN ATTACHMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH

**Ana Kurtović\*; Sara Vasilj; Marija Milić**

*Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Psychology, Osijek*

*County Hospital, Unit for Psychiatry, Požega*

*Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Psychology, Osijek*

The aim of this study was to examine the relations of attachment, self-esteem and self-compassion with mental health, more specifically to examine possible mediating role of self-esteem and self-compassion in the relation between attachment and mental health. A total of 204 participants (76.5% female) aged 18 through 65 ( $M=32.14$ ;  $SD=12.04$ ) participated in the study. Experiences in Close Relationship Inventory - Revised (Kamenov and Jelić, 2003), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 200) were used to examine attachment, self-esteem and self-compassion, while DASS-21 (Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) and Life Satisfaction Scale (Penezic, 2002) were used as measures of negative and positive aspects of mental health. Hayes's PROCESS was used to examine the mediations. The results have demonstrated that self-compassion alone did not mediate the relation between avoidant attachment and mental health problems nor life satisfaction. However, the paths containing self-esteem and both self-esteem and self-compassion were significant mediators of both relations. With regard to anxious attachment, paths through self-esteem, self-compassion and both were all significant in mediating the effects on mental health problems, but only self-esteem was a mediator of the relation between anxious attachment and life satisfaction. Only the relation between avoidant attachments was fully mediated, while all other direct effects remained significant, although significantly decreased. The implications of the results in the context of relational trauma will be discussed.

**Keywords:** attachment, self-esteem, self-compassion, mental health

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\* akurtovi@ffos.hr

## ATTACHMENT AND FEELINGS OF SHAME IN CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTAL CARE

**Vesna Stoimenov\***

*SOS Children's Village*

The purpose of this study is to determine whether is a difference in the style of attachment and a sense of shame in children living without parental care and children living with biological parents.

It presents various definitions, understandings and theories are presented about the family as a system and children without parental care, as well as attachment and sense of shame. The study involved 60 children aged 9 to 14 from male and female. One group consists of 30 children who are without parental care and live in alternative care (institution) - SOS Children's Village Skopje, while the other group consists of 30 children living with their biological parents. The respondents were given tow scales: Scale for classifying attachment styles for children Dottan and the Crozier Children's Shyness Scale. Some of the results show that there is no statistically significant difference in the style of attachment and a sense of shame in children who are without parental care and children living with biological parents.

**Keywords:** affection, sense of shame, children without parental care

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\*vstoimenov11@gmail.com

## **POSTTRAUMATIC GROWTH AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS IN PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES: A QUALITATIVE PILOT STUDY**

**Vjollca Berisha Avdiu\***

*Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje*

Posttraumatic Growth and Associated Factors in Parents of Children With Disabilities: A Qualitative Pilot Study. The aims of this pilot study are to better understand, through qualitative interviews, posttraumatic growth in parents of children with disabilities and the factors associated with it; to identify sources of social support and risk factors for parents' psychological well-being, and have a deeper understanding about changes in family dynamics and family coping mechanisms before and after diagnosing their child with a disability. The sample will consist of five parents of children with disabilities, purposively selected from service users at the Psychiatry Clinic, Child and Adolescent Department, in Prishtina. The semi-structured interview topics are family relations and communication, psychological well-being of the parent, coping mechanisms, social support, mental health, and posttraumatic growth. Interview transcripts will be analyzed with the method of thematic analysis. The main implication of this pilot study is to determine and improve the feasibility of the interview protocol. Another implication is to identify repeated themes related to posttraumatic growth in parents of children with disabilities for further exploration. The study will also provide initial insight for the design of interventions for achieving posttraumatic growth.

**Keywords:** posttraumatic growth, parents of children with disabilities, social support

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\* vjollca.berisha@gmail.com

## UKLO PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING SERVICE FOR STUDENTS

**Dragana Batić\*, Gordana Ristevska Dimitrovska**

*Faculty of Security-Skopje, St. Kliment Ohridski University, Bitola*

*Higher Medical School - University St. Kliment Ohridski Bitola*

The University "St. Kliment Ohridski" founded the first psychological counseling center for students within the University Center for Career, Lifelong Learning and Alumni KREDO in 2019. The main goal of the counseling center is to improve the mental health of students by developing healthy lifestyles, nurturing resilience, as well as helping to solve current and developmental problems. Psychological issues of students are: adaptation to the new environment; insufficiently developed learning strategies; failure in studies; psychological difficulties (anxiety, depressed mood, low self-esteem); difficulties originating from the social environment (conflicts with parents, adapting to partner relationships, etc.). Purpose of the service is to provide students with help in overcoming the difficulties of coping in the environment in which they live/work - the family, the faculty and society in general, as well as in the successful realization of emotional and social relationships and their own individuality and independence. The work in the counseling center also aims at breaking down prejudices regarding seeking psychological help. Activities of the counseling service are: individual psychological counseling, group psychological counseling, psychoeducational workshops and lectures, workshops for the development of life skills, development of educational and self-help materials and scientific – research work. In this paper will be presented the main results of the research COVID19 & students mental health 2020, as the students' experience with counseling service.

**Keywords:** psychological counseling, students, COVID 19, mental health.

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\* dbatic@yahoo.com



## PSYCHOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF THE ATTITUDES TOWARD FERTILITY AND CHILDBEARING SCALE

Daniela Nedelkova\*

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Psychology, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University -  
Skopje*

This initial study examines the psychometric properties of the Attitudes to Fertility and Childbearing Scale (Söderberg et al., 2013), translated into Macedonian. It was conducted on a sample of 274 female undergraduate participants aged 17 to 36 ( $M = 21.46$ ;  $SD = 1.60$ ), all female students at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje.

Using the principal axes factoring method, an exploratory factor analysis was carried out to extract a three-factor solution for the instrument's internal structure. The resulting structure generally corresponds to the original scale structure set in Sweden. Scale reliability was estimated using internal consistency coefficients, and two of the three subscales (*the importance of fertility and children as a value for the future* ( $\alpha = .93$ ) and *childbearing as a hindrance at present* ( $\alpha = .90$ )) have a high internal consistency. The third subscale, *personal responsibility, and conscious choice to have children* ( $\alpha = .68$ ), has acceptable internal consistency. Hence, the findings show that the Macedonian version of the scale of attitudes towards fertility and childbearing is a reliable instrument for measuring the attitude towards fertility and childbearing in our context.

Recommendations for future research are offered, such as conducting a study on a larger and more heterogeneous sample.

**Keywords:** psychometric analysis, attitude towards fertility and childbearing, female students

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\* daniela.nedelkova@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

## **Session 6: Work and Organizational Psychology**

**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIONAL DETERMINANTS OF  
STUDENTS' ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS IN REPUBLIC OF  
NORTH MACEDONIA**

**Ana Tomovska Misoska\*, Dimitrinka Jordanova Peshevska, Kate Trajkova**

*University American College, Skopje*

Becoming an entrepreneur is an important life choice. Studies show that a number of students worldwide think of becoming entrepreneurs and students in North Macedonia are above average in that regard (Sieger et.al., 2024). As such it is interesting to note what are the factors that drive such choices and how can we stimulate the entrepreneurial intentions as they are important for future life-satisfaction (Przepiorka, 2017). Various factors serve as determinants of the entrepreneurial intentions and studying the psychological and educational aspects is important in understanding and helping students in their career choices. The current paper explores the effects of resilience, life-satisfaction, self-efficacy, stimulating university environment, university learning and learning about support mechanisms on entrepreneurial intentions of university students from North Macedonia. The study is done on convenient sample of 254 from various universities in the country. The study utilized the following instruments: Brief resilience coping scale, Satisfaction with life scale, Entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale, University environment scale, University learning scale, Learning about entrepreneurial support mechanisms and Entrepreneurial intentions scale. The regression analysis shows that entrepreneurial self-efficacy, learning about entrepreneurship and learning about external help mechanisms are statistically significant positive determinants of entrepreneurship. The study reiterates the need for targeted educational interventions mostly aimed at enhancing their knowledge and skills to stimulate students to become entrepreneurs.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurial intentions, self-efficacy, resilience, life-satisfaction, university education

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\* tomovska@uacs.edu.mk

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTION EXPERIENCE AND PRIMARY AND SECONDARY COLORS IN INSTAGRAM ADS**

**Jovana Zatarakoska\***

*Market Vision - marketing, consulting and market research*

This research examined the emotional experience of primary colors and their combinations with secondary colors in social media advertising on Instagram. Three hypotheses guided the research, built upon the Theory of Color Psychology. H1: Primary colors evoke stronger emotional reactions than secondary colors, H2: The combination of red and blue evokes trust and security, H3: Yellow in combination with secondary colors evokes happiness and playfulness.

A mixed-methodology approach was applied, utilizing quantitative research with 30 participants aged 18-35 to gather data on color preferences and associations. Additionally, three focus groups were conducted, comprising participants aged 18-23, 24-29, and 30-35 years old, each with 10 participants. Participants were shown Instagram ads with different color combinations and were asked to share their thoughts and emotions.

The study results strongly supported all hypotheses. Primary colors elicited stronger emotional reactions than secondary colors. The combination of red and blue instilled trust and security, while yellow combined with secondary colors evoked happiness and playfulness.

These findings contribute to our understanding of how primary colors and their combinations elicit specific emotions in advertising on the Instagram platform. Marketers and designers can leverage these insights to create more effective and appealing campaigns that resonate with their target audience, effectively convey their brand message, and evoke the desired emotional responses. However, it should be noted that the findings of this research refer to the Instagram platform.

**Keywords:** colors, social media advertising, emotions

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\* jovanazatarakoska2@gmail.com

## THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN FOSTERING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

**Anita Sadikaj\*, Rinor Berisha, Zehra Saiti**

*Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia*

*UBT (University for Business and Technology) – Higher Education Institution,  
Prishtinë, Kosovë*

*Center of Family Medicine*

In educational contexts, transformational leadership plays a pivotal role in promoting positive organizational cultures, enhancing student outcomes, and fostering overall effectiveness. This paper investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership style among undergraduate college students. The study involved administering the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to 112 undergraduate students from University for Business and Technology (UBT), Prishtinë. The findings reveal that most undergraduate students reported employing transformational leadership (55.2%), with an even higher proportion (66.5%) incorporating emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the study uncovered a robust positive correlation between emotional intelligence and transformative leadership. Emotional intelligence significantly predicts transformational leadership. Integrating emotional intelligence training into college curricula and extracurricular activities can nurture a new generation of empathetic, adaptable, and visionary leaders capable of driving positive change in diverse settings.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, college students, higher education, leadership development.

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\* anita.sadikaj@hotmail.com

## THE RELATIONSHIP OF INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND WORKPLACE DYNAMICS IN IT SECTOR IN NORTH MACEDONIA

**Frosina Denkova Zafirovska, Sofija Georgievska\***

*IT Labs, Skopje, North Macedonia,*

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Social Work and Social Policy, University St. Cyril and Methodius - Skopje*

In the contemporary workplace, the role of inclusive leadership in shaping organizational dynamics and fostering employee well-being has garnered increasing attention. This study investigates the relationship of inclusive leadership and workplace dynamics within the IT sector in North Macedonia. Employing a quantitative approach, data were collected from 256 employees through an online survey. The study examined the correlation between inclusive leadership dimensions (including providing equal opportunities, encouraging integration and synergy, directly addressing needs for uniqueness, belongingness, and authenticity, and implementing diversity and inclusion policies and programs) and key workplace outcomes (psychological safety, voice behavior, and leader-member exchange).

The findings reveal significant positive correlations between inclusive leadership dimensions and workplace outcomes, with coefficients ranging from  $r=0.43$  ( $p<0.01$ ) to  $r=0.81$  ( $p<0.01$ ). Specifically, leaders who prioritize equal opportunities, integration synergy, addressing needs, and integrating diversity practices tend to foster environments where employees feel psychologically safe, are more vocal in expressing their opinions, and have higher-quality relationships with their leaders. These results underscore the importance of fostering inclusive leadership practices for enhancing organizational dynamics and promoting employee well-being and productivity.

In conclusion, this study highlights the need for organizations, particularly within the IT sector in North Macedonia, to prioritize inclusive leadership development initiatives. By cultivating a supportive work environment that values diversity, promotes inclusion, and encourages open communication, organizations can effectively navigate the complexities of the modern workplace and drive sustainable success.

**Keywords:** Inclusive leadership, workplace dynamics, IT sector, North Macedonia

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\* sofija.arnaudova@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF BIG TEAM APPROACHES IN BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

**Biljana Gjoneska\***

*Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts*

The decreased quality of research findings in behavioral sciences (i.e., *Reproducibility crisis*), has increased the efforts of researchers to join forces and pool their resources via grassroots initiatives (i.e., *Big Team Science, BTS*). The following study will offer narrative review of the challenges and opportunities for BTS approach in the behavioral research. The study will draw from empirical evidence (reviewing existing initiatives), narrative evidence (reviewing op-eds, position papers, communications and commentaries), and scholarly evidence (reviewing original research contributions), as a way to identify common themes and issues on the topic. Given the review type, the analysis will be conducted in a semi-structured way, by consulting the largest database of behavioral publications (APA) and provisionally following the review standards (PRISMA). BTS holds promise and provides novel perspectives when addressing the common challenges in replicability, reproducibility and generalizability of behavioral sciences. However, big-team efforts can result with large-scale failures stemming from organizational, managerial and financial struggles. Overcoming these would enable science that is more reliable and more robust, greatly accelerating the psychological research.

**Keywords:** Big-team, cross-cultural, generalizability, replicability, reproducibility

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\* biljanagjoneska@manu.edu.mk

## AN INTRODUCTION TO NETWORK PSYCHOMETRICS AND ITS BAYESIAN ANALYSIS

**Nikola Sekulovski\***

*Department of Psychology, University of Amsterdam*

Network psychometrics is an evolving research methodology that conceptualizes psychological phenomena as complex systems of interacting variables. The methodology uses graphical models to assess the network structure of psychological variables. An important task in its analysis is to determine which variables in the network are unrelated, i.e., independent given the remaining relations in the network. This conditional independence structure is a gateway to understanding the causal structure underlying psychological processes. In this talk, I aim to give a brief introduction to network psychometrics in general, and then discuss the state-of-the-art Bayesian methodology used to analyze these models. Using the results from a study that I have recently co-authored, I aim to show that there is a method of analyzing these models, known as Bayesian model averaging, which can adequately account for both the standard parameter uncertainty as well as the inherent uncertainty concerning the specific network structure (i.e., the conditional independence structure).

**Keywords:** Network psychometrics, Bayesian statistics, Conditional independence.

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\* n.sekulovski@uva.nl



**Session 7: Educational Psychology 2 /  
Psychological aspects in other sciences**

## **DIFFERENCES IN VISUAL PERCEPTION SKILLS IN DYSLEXIC AND NON-DYSLEXIC READERS**

**Maja Filipovska\*, Goran Ajdinski, Aleksandra Karovska Ristovska**

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Special Education and Rehabilitation, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje*

Dyslexia is the most prevalent specific learning difficulty that primarily affects the reading skills. Given that reading, besides other skills, relies on adequate visual perception, this research aimed to investigate differences in three visual perception skills between individuals with dyslexia and typical readers. The analyzed skills were: visual discrimination, visual, memory and visual closure. The sample consisted of 51 participants (21 dyslexic and 30 typical readers) with an age range of 8-21 years. All participants underwent testing using the appropriate items from the 4th version of the Motor-free Visual Perception Test. Group comparisons were conducted using the independent samples T-test. The general hypothesis, that statistically significant differences exist between dyslexic and non-dyslexic readers in visual perceptual skills, is confirmed. Dyslexic subjects scored significantly lower in all three visual perception sub-skills. The results suggest potential difficulties in visual perception among individuals with dyslexia, which may impact and impede the reading process. This implies the importance of incorporating visual perception tests into dyslexia assessments, while also ensuring that remediation approaches are multisensory in nature.

**Keywords:** dyslexia, visual perception, visual memory, visual discrimination, visual closure

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\* majaf@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

## ACCEPTANCE OF THE DIAGNOSIS BY PARENTS AS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR SUCCESSFUL EARLY INTERVENTION

**Silvana Filipova, Vasilka Gelevska Jovchevski, Biljana Arizankoska\*  
Eftimova, Dita Torte Chiche, Biljana Krstevska Kokormanova**

*Center for Rehabilitation of Verbal Communication Pathology-Skopje*

One of the biggest challenges for parents of a child with a diagnosed autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is the acceptance of the diagnosis. Parents reactions are essential because they allow them time to process their own emotions, and the timely initiation of early intervention and its outcomes will depend on this. The aim is to perceive the way parents deal with the child's condition, that is, their emotional and cognitive acceptance or non-acceptance of it, as well as whether there are differences in the acceptance of the diagnosis between mothers and fathers. The sample is composed of parents of 34 children diagnosed with ASD, 34 mothers and 13 fathers. The remaining 21 fathers from the parent pairs did not accept to participate in the research. Reaction to Diagnosis Interview (Pianta& Marvin,1992) was used in the research. The results show that the diagnosis of ASD in the child was accepted by half of the examined mothers. Most of them are thinking-oriented, that is, they used cognitive strategies that helped them accept the diagnosis. As for the fathers, 38.5% accepted the diagnosis. Most of them are oriented towards feelings. They believe that life must go on and draw a line between the past and the present. Those fathers who do not accept the diagnosis, are mostly emotionally overwhelmed. There is a difference in acceptance of the diagnosis and in the use of strategies between mothers and fathers. It is of great importance that professionals recognize the way parents cope with all challenges related to the child's diagnosis and provide them with appropriate support in time. Non-acceptance of the diagnosis by the parents is a risk factor for family adaptation and for the implementation of early intervention.

**Keywords:** diagnosis, autism spectrum disorder, early intervention

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\* bile\_arizankoska@yahoo.com

## THE CONNECTION BETWEEN STUDENTS' COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND THEIR USAGE OF ICT IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

**Angela Ikonomoska\***

*Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Pedagogy, University Ss. Cyril and Methodius–  
Skopje*

Mass digitization during the pandemic caused by the Corona virus has made today's normal life almost unimaginable without the use of technology. According to the needs of the digital age, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in schools has increased significantly. ICT is an important component of the educational process that has a considerable impact on students' cognitive development.

There is no definitive response to the questions of where ICT should be used in the pedagogical process and how it affects students' cognitive development abilities. From here, the aim of our scientific paper is to provide a detailed consideration of the relationship between the use of ICT and the cognitive development of students. A theoretical framework is presented, and relevant research findings and challenges concerning students' ICT competencies and their impact on cognitive development are analyzed. Looking at comparative knowledge, we saw the constructive side of technology that affects cognitive development and learning. All this highlights the vital importance of students' ICT competencies, which influence the development of cognitive abilities (perception, attention, memory, thinking, imagination).

According to the nature of the researched problem, which is constantly evaluated, it is necessary to highlight the need for appropriate and targeted use of the resources offered by technology, placing emphasis on the proper development and upgrading of the ICT competencies of students and teachers, the development of new modern strategies for self-regulation in the digital learning environment, as well as the acquisition of positive habits for continuous improvement of one's personality.

**Keywords:** cognitive development, ICT, educational process, students

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\* angela.ikonomoska@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

**SHAPING MINDS, CREATING WORLDS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS  
OF THE EDUCATIONAL AND LITERARY THEORIES OF JEROME  
BRUNER AND MARTHA NUSSBAUM**

**Vedran Dizdarevikj\***

*Department of General and Comparative Literature, "Blaze Koneski" Faculty of  
Philology, Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia*

In this paper we analyze and compare the theories of the cognitive psychologist and pedagogue Jerome Bruner and the philosopher and literary theorist Martha Nussbaum regarding the significance of literature for modern education. The central thesis of this paper is that the two authors, starting from different premises based on their scientific disciplines, reach similar and complementary conclusions that can help us better understand the place that literature should have in education.

In the first part of the paper, we show that Bruner and Nussbaum build their theories sharing a common assumption: that narratives (stories) are one of the most basic ways through which people perceive reality and orient themselves in society and the world. The knowledge gained from stories (the "narrative mode of thinking," according to Bruner, the "narrative imagination," according to Nussbaum) is qualitatively different from the knowledge we obtain from other forms of cognition, such as science or philosophy, and cannot be acquired in any other way.

In the second part we emphasize that the two authors believe that the study of literature is inseparably connected with democracy as a political system. Bruner and Nussbaum believe that the ability to critically perceive and analyze narratives is a necessary prerequisite for cultivating competent citizens with democratic inclinations who are able to recognize and respect diversity and otherness.

In our view, the theories of Jerome Bruner and Martha Nussbaum offer a theoretically sound and important contribution to a better understanding of the relationship between literature and education and their place in contemporary society.

**Keywords:** literature, education, Martha Nussbaum, Jerome Bruner, democracy

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\* vdizdarevik@flf.ukim.edu.mk

## FEEDBACK AS A TEACHING TOOL AND SELF-REGULATED LEARNING AMONG STUDENTS

**Irena Kitanova\*, Sadudin Sadikji**

*Faculty of Educational Sciences, Gotse Delchev University, Shtip, North Macedonia*

*Secondary Technical School - Gostivar, Republic of North Macedonia*

Teacher feedback is widely recognized as a critical component of students' academic performance, with self-regulated learning serving as a key mediator in this relationship. This study investigates the interplay between educational feedback and students' self-regulated learning. Data were collected from secondary school students in Shtip and Gostivar, comprising 377 participants (51.7% female, 48.3% male, with 55% Macedonian and 45% Albanian students).

Feedback in teaching was assessed using a structured 75-item Likert scale questionnaire based on the Ministry of Education and Culture's seven main indicators of teaching quality: teaching objectives, evaluation criteria, student records, motivation, teaching strategies, and self-evaluation. Self-regulated learning was measured using De la Fuente's (2020) standard questionnaire, which includes six subscales: Self-regulated learning, External regulation of learning, Internal dysregulated learning, External dysregulated learning, Internal dys-regulated learning, and External dys-regulated learning.

Descriptive (frequency display and comparisons) and conclusive statistical analyses (t-test, ANOVA) were employed to examine the relationship between feedback and self-regulated learning. We expected that feedback as a teaching tool might not achieve its intended pedagogical and psychological goals from the students' perspective. Additionally, it was anticipated that dis-regulated and unregulated learning would be more prevalent among secondary school students compared to self-regulated learning. Furthermore, we hypothesized that students exhibiting dominant self-regulated learning would perceive instructional feedback primarily as an evaluative tool.

The findings reveal that feedback in teaching is often utilized solely as a task for teachers, lacking an evaluative character. Moreover, dis-regulated and unregulated learning were found to be more common among students than self-regulated learning.

**Keywords:** feedback, constructive feedback, corrective feedback, evaluative feedback, self-regulated learning

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\* irena.kitanova@ugd.edu.mk

## FORMS AND FACTORS OF BULLYING IN SCHOOL

Alije Alimi\*

*St. Kliment Ohridski Univerzity, Faculty of Education*

Bullying is a complex form of interpersonal aggression, which takes many forms, serves different functions and manifests itself in different patterns of relationships. In this topic we will present the most common forms of bullying such as: verbal, social and physical. Harassment behavior is not only the result of individual characteristics, but is influenced by multiple relationships with peers, families, teachers and interactions with social influences (media, social networks, etc.). The aim of this work is to raise awareness and conscience in society as a whole, as well as educational institutions, through which students can easily recognize more of this phenomenon, and react in a timely manner to protect themselves as well as their peers. A major contribution to bullying prevention is attributed to: family, educational institutions, the media, NGOs, sports clubs and the settlements themselves where peer gatherings are held. This work will therefore describe the role and impact of the above factors for the recognition and prevention of bullying. Preventing bullying is not only important because of stopping violence, but also for acknowledging that everyone deserves respect.

**Keywords:** bullying, students, awareness, prevention.

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\* alije.alimi@pfsko.ukim.edu.mk

## THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF INTELLECTUAL EDUCATION ON STUDENTS IN THE STUDENT DORMITORY

**Katerina Mitkovska\***

*Student dormitory at Secondary Medical School "Dr. Panche Karagjozov"*

In high school student dormitories, five educational areas are applied in the work with students, which include intellectual education as a significant segment in the work of the student dormitories. The program content from the field of intellectual education, which is realized by educators, is one of the most important elements of educational work, where the process of intellectual education has its own specifics. It is about upbringing that is not applied in schools and families, considering the fact that students are far from their families, they study in schools in another city and live in an educational institution. Through intellectual education, the student dormitory contributes to the formation of the student's personality, to the development of intellectual abilities, developing habits for intellectual work, building a creative opinion, concentrating attention, memory, motivation for learning, independent learning, intellectual creativity and self-education. The purpose of this paper is to show the role and significance of intellectual education on students in student dormitories, as well as its impact on school success and behavior. Intellectual education with its diverse program content and activities can be said to be the privilege of home school students, unlike students who live with their families. The student dormitory also provides different forms of learning such as group and frontal work, work in pairs, individual work, work with weaker students, work with talented students in contrast to students who live in families with their parents who are not experts in this type of intellectual help and support. In fact, this is where the conclusion of this paper comes from.

**Keywords:** intellectual education, student dormitory, students

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\* katerina.mitkovska@yahoo.com



## WORKSHOP 5

### **ACTION INQUIRY AND SYSTEMIC MAPPING: TOOLS FOR DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP AND INCREASING JOB RESOURCE AVAILABILITY**

**Frosina\* Ristovska**

*WhiHub Skopje, North Macedonia*

Numerous studies have utilized the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory to examine the impact of the work environment on well-being and performance. While scholars have explored the relationship between leadership and the JD-R theory in various ways, this workshop focuses on the findings that highlight leadership as a factor influencing job demands and resources, rather than solely considering it as a job resource or demand. Our objective is to explore and introduce reflective practices that can contribute to transformative leadership and the enhancement of job resources. We will employ first-person action Inquiry and systemic mapping as self-reflective tools. Action inquiry is a research practice that recognizes all our actions, even those we are certain about and committed to, as inquiries. He proposes that action inquiry is a lifelong process of transformative learning that enables individuals, teams, and organizations to develop the capacity to effectively listen to the dangers and opportunities of the present moment, from which the future emerges. Systemic mapping is an explorative and reflective method that reveals hidden or invisible dynamics within organizations. It operates on the belief that organizations are living systems influenced by underlying forces that may not be immediately apparent. During this 60-minute workshop, participants will be encouraged to use themselves as instruments and engage in self-reflective work inquiring about their purposes, strategies and behaviors. This will involve individual, dyadic, and larger group activities, structured according to different stages of the workshop.

**Terms of Participation:** Registration is required, with a maximum group size of 16 participants.

**Keywords:** Action Inquiry, JD-R, Systemic Mapping, Transformative Leadership

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\* [contact@whihub.com](mailto:contact@whihub.com)

## **PSIHESKO session: From students to students**

## WORKSHOP 6

### DESIGN THINKING FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

**Ana Kostovska\***

*Center for Systemic Development - Center for Social Work SONIK*

Design thinking, as an interdisciplinary methodology for problem solving, offers a powerful framework for approaching the challenge created by the rapidly evolving work landscape. This is enabled by fostering empathy and creativity, providing a deep understanding of human needs, motivators, learning mechanisms and behaviors at the heart of the process. Created with insights from psychology, neuroscience, other cognitive sciences, engineering, technology, business and management, in this 45-minute workshop, participants will explore the theory of design thinking and its application. The number of participants is not limited due to the individual nature of the exercises to be assigned. Through a combination of interactive discussions, real-life examples and practical exercises, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the design thinking process and how it can be leveraged to create the job they want. More specifically, participants will understand the significance and tasks involved in each of the following phases: empathizing, defining, ideating, prototyping and testing and will be provided with the opportunity to apply these principles to advance within their current role, transition to a new career path, or pursue entrepreneurial endeavors, depending on the need. By the end of the workshop, participants will have:

- Understood the core principles and stages of the design thinking process
- Examined real-world examples involving application of design thinking principles for business advancement and career development
- Engaged in practical exercises to apply design thinking techniques to their own career aspirations
- Identified actionable steps to take towards creating the job they want.

**Keywords:** Design thinking, career development, application

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\* ana@csdsonik.com

## **WORKSHOP 7**

### **THE DANCE OF DEMONS AND FAIRIES -INTROJECT WORK AND SELF-NURTURING**

**Ivan Hristov\*, Maja Cvetanoska**

*Association for Research, Education and Development - RED Center*

In this workshop, we will examine negative introjects and explore the capacities for self-nurturing. We will focus on aspects of ourselves that we often struggle to accept, along with the anger and other emotions that are related to these aspects. It is important to understand where these emotions come from and what their functions are. Finally, we will delve into the nurturing part of the self and explore how to integrate these two polarities. The workshop is interactive, including practical exercises and projective techniques that participants can use to support themselves and the children and young people they work with. This workshop is designed for practitioners working in schools and healthcare institutions, as well as for students of psychotherapy and psychology. The aim of the workshop is to equip participants with tools to creatively explore introjects and their nurturing aspects, enabling them to better support those they work with in similar ways.

**Keywords:** introjects, self-nurturing, projective techniques

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\* ivanhristov87@gmail.com