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Aims and Scope:

Changing Societies & Personalities is an international, peer-reviewed quarterly journal, published in English by the Ural Federal University. *CS&P* examines how rapid societal-level changes are reshaping individual-level beliefs, motivations and values – and how these individual-level changes in turn are reshaping societies. The interplay of personality traits and sociocultural factors in defining motivation, deliberation, action and reflection of individuals requires a combination of theoretical and empirical knowledge. Since an interdisciplinary approach is needed to understand the causes and consequences of the contemporary world's changing socio-political institutions, moral values, and religious beliefs, the journal welcomes theoretical and empirical contributions from a wide range of perspectives in the context of value pluralism and social heterogeneity of (post)modern society.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to

- value implications of interactions between socio-political transformations and personal self-identity;
- changes in value orientations, materialist and post-materialist values;
- moral reasoning and behavior;
- variability and continuity in the election of styles of moral regime and/or religious identity;
- the moral bases of political preferences and their elimination;
- social exclusion and inclusion;
- post-secular religious individualism;
- tolerance and merely "tolerating": their meanings, varieties and fundamental bases;
- ideologies of gender and age as variables in political, moral, religious and social change;
- educational strategies as training for specific social competences;
- social and existential security.

The journal publishes original research articles, forum discussions, review articles and book reviews.

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EDITORIAL

Contemplating About Well-Being in Turbulent Times

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The concept of social well-being is broadly understood as a diverse set of interactions between social agents and the surrounding environment with the aim of reaching a mutual balance of interests. This concept emerged in social sciences comparatively recently, just in the 1980s. Social well-being was initially discussed largely in terms of financial comfort. However, today it falls under a broader scope of sociopolitical theories dealing with the questions of social justice, inequality, the need to support more vulnerable social groups and create conditions for personal growth, etc. Theories of the welfare state, which by definition imply promotion of social well-being, emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. In essence, whatever approach is applied, well-being can only be adequately described when it is viewed as a result of the interaction between numerous factors, which affect individuals and groups within their historical and cultural contexts. Such factors are commonly considered to include self-esteem, control over one's own life, good health, economic security, access to community resources, both physical and social, meaningful participation in community and family life, recognition and respect within and by community, sense of freedom, sense of love for others, and spiritual fulfilment.

It is often emphasized that well-being features two dimensions, each of which corresponds to different aspects of human life. The former dimension is hedonic well-being, capturing the manner in which people experience their daily lives, the quality of lives, and their moods (both positive and negative) during those experiences. The latter dimension is eudaimonic well-being or evaluative well-being, encompassing how people think about and assess their lives as a whole. Many contemporary studies draw a distinction between the two aspects of social well-being—social well-being of an individual and well-being of the society. For social well-being of an individual, their subjective evaluation is of prime importance. It may depend on the person's social status, personality, upbringing, world view, etc., going far beyond psychological characteristics.

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Research literature approaches the problem of social well-being predominantly from the perspectives of social psychology or sociology. This problem is also discussed in comparative studies of various sociocultural contexts.

It is therefore hardly surprising that well-being as a research theme occupies a central position in social studies and the humanities. This is also true of the current issue of *CS&P*, where several articles are directly related to the problem of social and individual well-being, considered from social and psychological perspectives. The interest in this topic, among other things, can be explained by the ongoing relevance of the idea of prosperous life despite those contradictory and sometimes tragic events taking place in the modern world.

The ARTICLE *Cities of Vanadium: Technological Development and Post-Industrial Transformation in Emalahleni, Nizhny Tagil, and Panzhihua* by Konstantin D. Bugrov (Russia) focuses on the problem of deindustrialization and subsequent economic and social depression in industrial centers in various parts of the world, which is increasingly attracting the attention of urban scholars. Many of them employ the concept of "cultural economy" when cultural forms are embedded in productive activity, and culture as a whole is subjected to various options of commercialization and commodification in order to attract wealth. Among such examples is creative tourism as an involving, interactive, and appealing form of leisure. The rise of a variety of creative industries might be referred to as creative reindustrialization in the sense that it follows the global discursive and cultural turn towards sustainable, diverse, and creative development. The author concentrates on the study of creative reindustrialization in second-tier industrial cities with a historical single-industry profile, especially on the metallurgy of vanadium. He limits the scope of study to second-tier, non-metropolitan cities with metallurgical specialization, namely, to the three locations producing vanadium in South Africa, Russia, and China. The article outlines the historical trajectory of each of these "cities of vanadium" both in terms of their industrial development and their ability to transfer towards creative industries and sustainable growth. In addition, the trajectories of vanadium cities are compared with those of steel cities having a similar industrial specialization in the context of national and historical circumstances within the post-industrial transition.

Sholpan Jamanbalayeva, Elena Burova, and Shyryn Tlenchiyeva (Kazakhstan) in the ARTICLE *The Impact of Religious Self-Identification on Happiness and Well-Being: A Case Study of Kazakhstan* extend their academic interest toward the relationship between religiosity and happiness. They make the assumption that religious beliefs and practices can significantly influence an individual's sense of well-being, although the relationship between religiosity and subjective well-being is not direct and depends on several other factors. The authors stress that their research is motivated by the unique sociocultural landscape of Kazakhstan as a multicultural and multiconfessional society, as well as by the fact that well-being and quality of life of former atheistic communities remain largely unexplored. The authors set out to answer the following question: "Are there statistically significant differences in the level of happiness between believers and nonbelievers in Kazakhstan as a secular state with a multicultural and multi-confessional society?" Accordingly, they set the

following tasks: "To assess satisfaction with various material and immaterial (spiritual, social) aspects of life from the standpoint of both believers and nonbelievers; to establish the strength of the effect of religion on subjective well-being compared with other socioeconomic factors." The research is based on the results of studies conducted in 2022 by the authors (the sample size was $N = 1500$) with the premise that subjective well-being rests on two pillars: happiness (affective component) and life satisfaction (cognitive component).

In the ARTICLE *Islamic Inclusivism: Insight From Abu Dhabi, Silaturahmi Tunnel, and Walisanga-Ende* by Hendrikus Maku, Asep Saepudin Jahar, Stephen Bevans, and Ambros Leonangung Edu (Indonesia–USA) the authors center their study around the key point, notably: "Is Islam an inclusive religion?" receptive to dialogue and collaboration with other faiths worldwide. Their aim was to illustrate the concept of inclusiveness within Islam, particularly in Indonesia. The study revolves around three specific subjects. The first subject is *Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration* as written in *A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* co-signed by Grand Mufti Al-Azhar, Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, and Pope Francis in Abu Dhabi on February 4th, 2019. As the authors indicate, "the conception of the declaration, described as revolutionary, employs language that challenges conventional ideas about religious relationships previously veiled by diplomatic theories." The second subject is the Silaturahmi Tunnel, which connects the Istiqlal Mosque and the Catholic Cathedral in Jakarta. It attracts much comment and triggers the presence of a new religious perspective, increasingly strengthening interreligious dialogue in Indonesia. The third subject is the Walisanga Islamic Boarding School in Ende established in 1982. A defining characteristic of this institute, according to the authors, consists in its commitment to serving the underprivileged from various religious backgrounds. The authors argue that each of these examples— "a formal declaration, a physical infrastructure, and a successful communal practice—converges to support the contention that, at its finest manifestations, Islam should not be typecast as a religion characterized by intolerance and violence", drawing upon various historical instances that showcase Islam's benevolent and peaceful aspects.

Anna N. Gureeva (Russia) in the ARTICLE *University's Information Policy in a Mediatized Reality: Youth as the Main Target Audience* presents a detailed analysis of youth policy concepts across leading Russian universities motivated by significant changes in the Russian higher education system, which requires the development of comprehensive communication strategies. The analysis reveals several key focus areas: "Promotion of youth employment and entrepreneurship; fostering research and innovation engagement; providing value-based guidance centered on patriotism, volunteerism, and public activism among young people." The author aims to uncover the principles and unique characteristics of university communication based on the concept of mediatization, which examines both the influence of media on society and social institutions, and the impact of technological and communication advancements on society. Anna N. Gureeva particularly stresses the experience of the third wave of mediatization, known as "deep mediatization," which is characterized by the integration of social practices with digital media remaining understudied and underrepresented in academic publications. She argues that "a major challenge faced by Russian

universities is the lack of efficient long-term strategies for communicating their research, education, and student development activities to various target audiences, including scholars, students, applicants, regulatory authorities, and international groups." Therefore, the objectives of the study, as the author puts them, are to describe the significant patterns of media consumption among modern students, identify their content, format, and platform preferences, as well as to outline the challenges universities face in building media communications.

The ARTICLE *On Professional Values Under a State of War: Exile Journalists From Ukraine in Russia* by Pavel V. Volkov and Olga A. Baysha (Russia) discusses the relocation of Russian-speaking oppositional journalists from Ukraine to Russia after 2014 and February 2022. The article assesses the current state of journalistic fields in both states. By "exile journalists," the authors mean the producers of media content who have been forced to relocate abroad due to issues of limited press freedom, political conflict, or persecution in their home country. The authors explain that their "research interest has been informed by academic studies suggesting that the mainstream journalistic discourse about core professional values may be considered secondary or of little concern by media workers within non-Western cultural milieus and in dangerous contexts." They stress the rising awareness that normative journalistic ideologies may be questioned and problematized. The research is based on 15 interviews with journalists who agreed to participate in face-to-face meetings in Moscow. The authors are interested in "whether global journalistic principles have been an important consideration in the relocation of journalists from Ukraine, and if so, whether these norms are still important for them while in Russia." The following critical questions are put: What was unacceptable to the exile journalists in the Ukrainian journalistic field? What did they find problematic in this respect in Russia?

Olga Yu. Smyslova and Andrei A. Linchenko (Russia) in the ARTICLE *Representations of Trust and Distrust in Financial Institutions in Russian Regional Speech Culture* presume that scholarly interest in the societal and institutional forms of trust is particularly relevant to the Russian context due to the rapid development of financial digital infrastructure and increased efforts to enhance financial literacy among various segments of the population. The authors employed qualitative methods in analyzing sociocultural sources and reasons of trust and distrust. The research aim is formulated as follows: "To analyze representations of trust and distrust toward financial institutions in the language and speech culture of people in a Russian province, considering gender-related, generational, and urban-rural characteristics." The analysis is based on 55 interviews conducted in rural areas, cities, and towns of the Lipetsk Oblast. The method of semi-structured interview was used, including both semantic analysis of interview narratives and content analysis of lexeme usage frequency. The authors are particularly interested in determining how these characteristics are connected with collective memory of the events of *perestroika* and the economic crisis of the 1990s. They determine the culture of trust "as a set of value-normative attitudes and orientations of a social group or community, reflecting expectations and confidence in the ability to fulfill mutual obligations and social functions." The research is based on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social capital.

In her ARTICLE *Leadership in Technical Fields Through a Gender Lens* Irina S. Oblova (Russia) argues that "while over half of people living in the world are women, men still make up 75% of parliamentarians and hold 73% of managerial positions. Of the ministers in the Russian Government, women constitute only 12%". The article carries out an analysis of factoring leadership in technical fields through a gender lens in both the EU and Russia. The factors influencing women's careers, starting from secondary education and continuing through career development, including socio-psychological and cultural aspects, are explored aiming to identify best practices in fostering gender diversity in technical sectors. In order to estimate a trend towards increased numbers of female leaders working in technical fields, Irina S. Oblova puts the following research questions: "What is the academic background of women leaders in technical fields? What are the ingredients of successful female leadership in technical fields? How can secondary, tertiary education and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) industries achieve gender parity in leadership in technical fields?" The article provides reliable responses to these questions.

Sami Çoksan, Burak Kekeli, Buse Turgut, and Elif Sağdış (Türkiye) in the ARTICLE *Personality Traits and Common Ingroup Identity: Support for Refugee Policies Among Host Members* deal with the impacts of global mobilization that began with the Arab Spring and has given way to an unprecedented refugee movement in modern history. As a result, in 2023, Türkiye hosted approximately four million registered Syrian refugees, which was about five percent of the total population. Together with unregistered refugees, this figure is thought to be much higher. The authors underline that this unexpected contact between communities has motivated social psychologists to investigate the social psychological factors enabling groups to live harmoniously, as well to figure out the reasons for intergroup conflicts. Today, negative attitudes toward Syrian refugees are typical not only of Türkiye, and, as the authors argue, such attitude appears to be independent of whether the immigration policy is positive or negative. The research is aimed at elucidating the association between personality traits, CII (Common Ingroup Identity), and support for social policies toward refugees, which has been rarely explored in the academic literature. In order to address the question of whether personality traits influence these attitudes, the authors examine the relationship between personality traits and common ingroup identification with attitudes toward social policies concerning Syrian refugees among host communities, specifically Turks and Kurds.

In the ARTICLE *Moderated Mediating Effect of Behavioral Psychology on Generation Z's Selfie-Posting Behavior: A Two-Stage Analytical Approach* by Sanjoy Kumar Roy, Shamsun Arefin, and Md. Rahat Khan (Bangladesh), the authors note the growing attention toward the concept of Generation Z (Gen-Z) in public discourse and explain the purpose of the study as investigating "the mediating and moderating effects of body appreciation and exhibitionism on the relationships between self-esteem, narcissism, and Selfie Posting Behavior (SPB), as well as on the moderating effect of attitude towards selfies (ATS) from the Generation Z perspective." Selfie-sharing remains a nascent behavioral concern. The authors mention that an intriguing question arises regarding the widespread practice of sharing self-portraits on social

networking sites and the increasing academic curiosity surrounding the selfie phenomenon, namely: What are the causes and mechanisms that drive this behavior? The target population of the study consists of Gen-Z, who currently reside in Dhaka City, Bangladesh. The final sample comprised 414 undergraduates who belong to Gen-Z. This research endeavor explored the direct and positive correlation of self-esteem and narcissism with body appreciation, exhibitionism, and SPB.

Alifah Nur Istiqomah, and Bagus Riyono (Indonesia) in the ARTICLE *Flourishing Among Emerging Adulthood: A Perspective From Anchor Personality* examine the theory of well-being in positive psychology, which aims to increase individual flourishing. Flourishing consists of five elements known as PERMA, i.e., positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, and accomplishment. At the same time, the authors presume that the factors that correlate with flourishing need to be investigated further to understand the concept of flourishing in greater depth. An anchor personality theory is proposed as the theoretical framework of the study. This theory "defines personality as the resultant of various repetitive dynamics of behavior, as a result of the fundamental dynamics of human motivation, namely "in search for anchors". This theory emphasizes the possibility of an individual to change according to the understanding of the individual concerned; the anchor is defined as something that is trusted as a mainstay in solving problems. Based on 217 participants from Indonesia aged 18–25 years, the study aims to determine the relationship between anchor virtues, self, others, and materials on the flourishing of emerging adulthood.

In the ARTICLE *Transformation Patterns of the Psyche's Regulatory Subsystem in the Context of Digitalization*, Anatoliy V. Karpov, Alexander A. Karpov, and Anastasia A. Volchenkova (Russia) state that the rapid advancement of digital technologies creates new challenges for psychology, as digitalization significantly impacts cognitive processes and personality traits. This impact could be negative fostering episodic, fragmentary, short-term, mechanical, and involuntary memory while more complex forms of memory, such as semantic, voluntary, and long-term memory, may remain underdeveloped. The authors identify a syndrome of reduced metacognition, which "stands for the insufficient development of metacognitive processes, such as metathinking and metamemory, and the associated personality traits under the influence of digitalization." In order to prove this conclusion, the authors examined a range of representational regulatory processes, both primary and secondary, which are essential for metacognitive regulation using established and reliable psychodiagnostic methods. The research design involved a comparative analysis of two data sets. The first examined the level of development of basic regulatory and metaregulatory processes and personality traits among Russian students in 2013 (78 persons). The second set contains similar data collected from a survey of students in 2023 (74 persons). Two groups of students from Yaroslavl universities comprised female and male participants from 17 to 26 years.

Ani Purwanti, Zahroh Shaluhiyah, Bagoes Widjanarko, and Aga Natalis (Indonesia) in their ARTICLE *Exploring the Complexities of Dating Violence in Indonesia: Understanding Dynamics, Norms, and Strategies for Prevention* state that violence against women in Indonesia persists as an unresolved matter, although

efforts have been undertaken by the government, civil society, universities, and communities to resolve this issue through a range of preventative and intervention programs. The authors highlight various forms of dating violence including physical, emotional, economic, sexual, and activity restrictions and attribute the correlation of violence to some factors, such as limited educational attainment, traditional gender roles, substance abuse, and authoritarian parenting practices. They formulate the objective of the research as addressing the problems associated with dating violence in Indonesia by proposing two distinct strategies: preventive measures aimed at empowering women, and repressive actions directed at perpetrators who commit acts of violence. The authors prove a strong correlation between individuals' beliefs about gender roles and their encounters with intimate partner violence. They conclude that "individuals who hold traditional beliefs about gender are more likely to exhibit a higher level of acceptance of violence within relationships … Likewise, men who conform to gender norms are more prone to participate in intimate partner abuse." Generally speaking, the source of violence is seen by the authors in power dynamics that are ingrained in societal structures and cultural norms, namely, patriarchal beliefs in sustaining violence against women, as masculinity is frequently correlated to power and superiority, while femininity is oppressed and regarded as inferior.

Discussions around the topics raised in the present issue will be continued in the subsequent issues of our journal. In planning to introduce new interesting themes, we welcome suggestions from our readers and prospective authors for thematic issues, debate sections, or book reviews.

For more information, please visit our journal web-site: https://changing-sp.com/

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ARTICLE

Cities of Vanadium: Technological Development and Post-Industrial Transformation in Emalahleni, Nizhny Tagil, and Panzhihua

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ABSTRACT
The paper investigates the trajectories of social and economic development of second-tier single-industry cities specializing in metallurgy of vanadium under the circumstances of post-industrial economy. In the middle of 20th century, a technology of processing titaniferous ore made it possible to use vast deposits of previously unexploited natural resources to produce steel and vanadium. The large integrated steel mills were erected in Witbank (Emalahleni) in South Africa, Nizhny Tagil in Russia, and Panzhihua in China. Being industrial monotowns dependent on mining and metallurgy, these cities were seeking for diversification which could provide sustainable development. Such diversification was generally following two directions: either establishment of belt of smaller technological enterprises and creating section of product with higher added value, or growing the system of industries of culture, leisure, and health. While Emalahleni failed in striving for diversification due to boom in coal industry, which ultimately led to bankruptcy of its steel industry, Nizhny Tagil and Panzhihua remained successful steel-making centers even in 21st century. However, even economic success and focused attempts to diversify city's economy by means of creative reindustrialization were circumscribed by the cultural and environmental issues caused by the very fact of such industrial survival.

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metallurgy, industrial cities, creative reindustrialization, urban development, post-industrial city, sustainable development

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Introduction: The Problem of Creative Reindustrialization

The problem of deindustrialization and subsequent economic and social depression in industrial centers is among the key issues of recent urban studies and historical research (Culter, 1999; Koistinen, 2013). The "classical" image of a depressive manufacturing city emerged from the dramatic experience of the economic crisis of 1970s in industrial centers of United States (the cities of so-called Rust Belt), United Kingdom, or France (High, 2013; Strangleman et al., 2013; Zukin, 1985): the fall of production with the subsequent lay-offs, shrinking of tax base, and loss of population (Feldman & Leana, 1989, p. 55). As Neumann (2016) emphasizes, "contemporary narratives of the inexorable decline of basic industry in North America and Western Europe make the postindustrial transformation of national economies and old manufacturing centers seem like a historical inevitability" (p. 3). However, the processes of deindustrialization varied from place to place. While the deindustrialization on greater scale was soon followed by the emergence of "new economy" based upon the tertiary sector and the knowledge-intensive service providing, this development was uneven, and many former industrial cities suffered crisis. As Cowie and Heathcott (2003) emphasize: "We should see this political-economic order and the culture it engendered as temporary and impermanent development in space and time" (p. 5).

Anyway, by the end of 20th century, *sustainability* emerged as key feature of a successful city: "For a city to be considered sustainable, certain important elements must be present. These elements (sustainable education, renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable transportation, sustainable buildings, waste management, etc.), when combined with informed and willing inhabitants, dividends of sustainability may be realized" (Sodiq et al., 2019). The diversification (restructuring) of city's economy to increase sustainability had become the most important issue (Koritz, 1991; Lord & Price, 1992). Among the ways to assure sustainable development through increasing diversity was the concept of *cultural economy*. Trubina stresses: "Cultural economy is a significant sector of the economy as a whole. This is due to the fact that capitalism today is probably at a stage of development when cultural forms are embedded in productive activity, and culture as a whole is subjected to various options of commercialization and commodification. The production and marketing of goods and services presuppose endowing them with aesthetic and semiotic features, and in general they turn out to be objects of symbolic economics" (Trubina, 2011, p. 243;

Trans. by Konstantin Bugrov—K. B.). Within the context of economic change at the turn of 21st century, cultural economy started to be seen as creative economy (Florida, 2003; Landry, 2008). The concept was criticized for ascribing innovative capacity to artificially aggregated group of "creative class" and for neglecting the role of factors other than "technology, talent, and tolerance" (Krätke, 2010, pp. 6–7).

However, the key feature of the creative city is not to innovate, but to attract wealth. Landry (2008) puts it like this: "Every city of real ambition wants to move up the value chain and capture centrality for themselves and become a central hub of wealth creation by exporting, yet controlling from a distance, low-cost activities and attracting high-value ones to itself" (p. xviii). The creative economy is based on attractiveness, and if creative environment plays pivotal role in the attraction of creative persons (be it producers or consumers) into the city, then narration and imagery emerge as the most important medium. Cunningham (2002) explained the difference between the old-fashioned concept of *cultural industry* and the new idea of *creative industry* in the following terms: "Interactivity, convergence, customization, collaboration and networks are key. Creative industries are less national, and more global and local/regional, than is typical among public broadcasting systems, flagship arts companies and so on. Their characteristic organizational mode is the micro-firm to small to medium-sized enterprise (SMEs) relating to large established distribution/circulation organizations" (p. 59). Kloudova (2010) stresses creative class's tendency to concentrate in large cities and describes two possible strategies for smaller cities: "First is to concentrate on creating conditions for creative economy, attraction of creative specialists and firms. For this, the open creative space, a network of educational institutions has to be installed … Second is to attract not creative firms but the consumers of their production, who can spend the money, earned in the center of creative activity, were spent there. That require, for instance, centers of leisure or locations for cultural or entertainment events" (pp. 121–122; Trans. by K. B.). Of course, these two strategies are interconnected, because both of them suppose the creation of certain environment. The *creative tourism* rose as a result of transformation of cultural tourism into more involving, interactive, appealing form of leisure (Rogerson, 2006, pp. 150–154). Tourism, therefore, must be considered as an integral part of creative industry being the key mechanism of attracting consumers (Richards, 2011). Moreover, creative tourism allowed the inclusion of new destinations beside traditional types of resorts; in particular, it opened the way for industrial cities to compete as tourist destinations, as in cases of Duisburg, Wolfsburg, or Lodz.

The rise of variety of creative industries might be called the *creative reindustrialization*, not in the sense that it literally replaces the shattered manufacturing industry in particular town, but in the sense that it follows the global discursive and cultural turn towards the sustainable, diverse, and creative development, which made even successful industrial cities sought diversification through the rise of creative industries. Since the process of creative reindustrialization develops on the basis of concentration and attractiveness, the metropolitan areas are naturally in better position to face it. For this reason, it is of particular to study

this process in second-tier industrial cities with a historical single-industry profile. Such cities are widely known as single-industry towns. Moreover, the concept of deindustrialization is valid mainly for the societies of Northern America and Europe; the things were different in other parts of the world, where emerging industries had to benefit from the collapse of American and European manufacturing giants. Steel industry had been in the focus of the attention of researchers. Of all the branches of manufacturing that suffered from deindustrialization, metallurgy was perhaps the most harmed. It faced severe discursive challenge, since it started to associate both with economic troubles and environmental harm. The aim of this paper is to examine the ways in which centers of steel industry, the second-tier cities from outside of the USA, Canada, and Western Europe, which historically emerged around the technologically similar branches of steel-making, faced the challenge of creative reindustrialization.

The steel industry across the globe is diverse; there are some distinct branches of metallurgy which are based upon specific approach to processing iron ore and obtaining different products. One of such branches is the metallurgy of *vanadium*. Vanadium is a metal that is used as an alloying agent for carbon steels, tool steels, and high-strength, low-alloy steels, as well as aerospace industry (Taylor et al., 2006, p. 80); since in improves the qualities of steel allows, it is known as "vitamin" for the steel. Vanadium is typically produced from titaniferous ore. This ore includes titanium dioxide which is hard to smelt in blast furnaces, and, therefore, titaniferous ore is difficult to use for iron-making, even though its deposits are rather abundant. Industrial use of titaniferous ore became possible when technologies of vanadium extraction were developed, that is, "precipitating a vanadium salt from a leach of a salt-roasted ore and precipitation from a leach of salt-roasted slag obtained after smelting the ore to make a vanadium bearing pig iron followed by an oxygen blow in a converter forming the vanadium-rich slag" (Taylor et al., 2006, pp. 80–81). These technologies were developed in the middle of 20th century almost simultaneously in South Africa (Emalahleni), the USSR (Nizhny Tagil), and China (Panzhihua). These three countries remained leading producers of vanadium for a long time (Moskalyk & Aftanazi, 2003). Each of mentioned metallurgical centers were on the list of world's largest steel-making hubs by the beginning of 21st century (Mazein, 2009). Each of them is typically characterized as second-tier city of their respective regions, the industrial centers outside the key metropolitan areas. And, due to their connection with the processing of complex titaniferous ore, each of them represented the science-intensive branch of steelmaking.

Thus, we narrow the scope of study to the second-tier, non-metropolitan cities with metallurgical specialization. Then, among these cities, we limit the scope of study to the three locations producing vanadium in South Africa, Russia, and China. We shall trace the historical trajectory of each of these "cities of vanadium" both in terms of their industrial development and their ability to transfer towards creative industries and sustainable growth, and then provide the comparison to see the trajectories of steel cities with similar industrial specialization under different national and historical circumstances within the post-industrial transition.

Emalahleni: Coal vs. Steel

The city of Emalahleni (formerly Witbank) lies 100 kilometers to the east from the agglomeration of Pretoria and Johannesburg, South Africa's largest metropolitan area. It was founded in 1903 as a center of coal mining. However, by 1950s it also became a center of metallurgy. At that time, South African steel market was dominated by state-owned Iscor corporation, and several local companies were attempting to compete by installing their own mills (Cross, 1994). The technology of obtaining vanadium through leaching was developed by 1950s on the basis of pioneering works of South African metallurgist Bleloch (Steinberg et al., 2011, p. 705). Bleloch's ideas allowed to exploit the vast deposits of titaniferous ore at Highveld plateau in the proximity of Witbank. In 1957, a small vanadium factory in Witbank was launched by Minerals Engineering Company, which in 1959 was acquired by Anglo-American Industrial Corporation, and so the factory changed the name to Highveld Steel and Vanadium Company. The vanadium slag was obtained in Witbank through pre-reduction in a rotary kiln and subsequent leaching in a sodium salt, then smelting in electric furnaces to produce vanadium iron which could be separated into vanadium slag and iron (and subsequently steel) in oxygen converter (Taylor et al., 2006, p. 82). By the end of 20th century Highveld Steel and Vanadium became the leading producer of ferrovanadium in the Western world, even though it never mastered the production of titanium (Dworzanowski, 2013, p. 682); additionally, it became nation's second-largest steel producer, after the large integrated mill, which Iscor operated at the city of Vanderbijlpark.

The general layout of the city is made by collieries; already in 1920s, the local landscape was dramatically changed, and the local authorities even promoted it as a "different kind of beauty," emphasizing industrial significance of Witbank for the needs of coal-driven electrification in South Africa (Singer, 2011, pp. 33–34). Emalahleni is half-encircled from the west by the coal mines and industrial sites like Highveld Steel and Vanadium plant and some other ferroalloys factories. The well-to-do quarters of the city are concentrated to the east of the railroad station and the oldest Witbank colliery, which is now defunct. The western part of the city, located in proximity to industrial zones, was occupied by poor areas since 1920s including the "informal townships" of Thushanang, Vosman, Lynnville, Kwa Guqa, and others. The environmental situation in Witbank became disastrous already in 1930s, though main threat were not steel mills but coal-fired power plants and coal dumps (Akinlabi et al., 2019).

Despite the success of Highveld Steel and Vanadium, Emalahleni was unable to become global exporter of steel. The industrial modernization of the country was driven by a narrow circle of huge corporations such as state-owned Iscor, Excom, and Sasol, and privately owned Anglo-American, which formed the dominant economic force of South Africa (Fine, 1997, p. 131). This "mineral-energy complex" relied upon the increase of global export. However, despite limited successes reached under the import-substituting politics of the apartheid era, the economy of South Africa was "trapped between its origin as an imperialist export enclave and an aspiration to become a fully modern industrial

economy which has been frustrated by continuing reliance on cheap black labor" (Hart & Padayachee, 2013, p. 60). After the collapse of apartheid, the combination of political crisis and neo-liberal turn in global economy led to massive capital flight out of country; most of local industry was overtaken by international companies.

In 1998, Anglo-American Industrial Corporation moved overseas, which some researchers considered to be the "loss of the champion" (Robinson, 2016, p. 774). Highveld Steel and Vanadium was unable to compete with Russian and Chinese steel exporters. In 2007, steel mill went bankrupt and was acquired by Russian corporation EVRAZ, which already possessed vanadium facilities in Russia. EVRAZ aimed at becoming world's leading producer of vanadium by concentrating Russian and South African facilities, but this attempt was unsuccessful. The steel industry of Emalahleni was plagued by the lack of trained personnel; the plan to install a national steel and metal fabrication hub in the area also went nowhere (Campbell et al., 2016, p. 76). In 2010s, the decline of steelmaking in Emalahleni was seen as a key risk factor for the local community, even though city's economy in general boomed due to high demand for coal and the population was growing in the period from 2001 to 2011 with annual rate of 3.6% (Marais, 2016, pp. 73–75). In 2016, EVRAZ halted the production at Highveld Steel and Vanadium (Marais et al., 2022, p. 15), signaling the demise of once-powerful South African vanadium industry. Part of the mill survived, being acquired by ArcelorMittal group and transformed into a "structural mill" aimed at production of rails and structural steel for purposes of construction, and the rest of the mill was transformed into business park.

However, this collapse, while being undoubtedly the result of defeat in international competition, did not lead to deindustrialization; the coal mining at Emalahleni flourishes and is seen by local administration and business as the key factor of economic and social stability (Marais et al., 2022, p. 157). Coal mining remained the dominant force in making the urban layout of Emalahleni, as the city continue to grow due to migrations from rural areas. In 2011, it was a typical mining town, as coal mining made up 36% percents of its GVA and 30% of employment, while manufacturing made up 5.8% and 16.8% correspondingly; the local economy became totally dependent on coal (Marais et al., 2022, p. 40).

The coal mining, much less demanding in technological sense than metallurgy of vanadium, did not created opportunities for any sort creative reindustrialization. Even the tenants of Highveld Business Park that emerged in place of former vanadium mill are mainly operating in different fields related to services in coal mining. No particular creative strategy had been applied to solve economic issues at Emalahleni. There are some local cultural and leisure facilities, that is, Witbank Civic Theatre and The Ridge Casino, though nothing more than that. The tourism is not developing: in 2017, 85% of all trips to Emalahleni were visits to friends and relatives, while leisure and business trips accounted for only 8% (Emalahleni Local Municipality, 2017, p. 89). In 2020, Emalahleni tourism strategy, while referring to the natural beauty and industrial history of the area (and, in particular, proposing to establish a museum of mining), emphasized various threats, including deteriorated social infrastructure, crime and violence on visitors, and environmental security.

Emalahleni gained negative image of polluted city with poor administrative management. The problems with air pollution are complemented by the blackouts and shortages in water supply, caused by city's rapid growth with which obsolete communal infrastructure fails to cope. The biggest polluter, state-owned power-producing Eskom, is unable to comply with the state regulations in terms of emissions. For instance, in 2018, some local newspaper in Emalahleni proclaimed: "We have the dirtiest air in the world" (Goldswine, 2018). Additionally, the acid mine drainage remains serious threat to the local river system (Laisani & Jegede, p. 1590). In general, Emalahleni administration prioritized mineral wealth above social, agricultural and environmental concerns (Campbell et al., 2017, p. 223).

Nizhny Tagil: Paradoxes of Titanium Valley

Nizhny Tagil is an old steel-making town in the Ural Region of Russia: the local mill started production as early as the 18th century, although it has subsequently undergone a number of reconstructions. In Soviet era, new integrated mill was erected in 1940 (Mikheev, 2024, p. 60), with blast furnaces, steel-melting and rolling facilities, as well as large coke plant. Initially, this *Nizhnetagil'skii metallurgicheskii kombinat*, or *NTMK* [Nizhniy Tagil Iron and Steel Works], was using high-quality iron ore of local mines; however, in the middle of 1950s, the deposits of this ore were exhausted, and the new reconstruction project was launched to exploit vast deposits of titaniferous ore from Mountain Kachkanar located 112 kilometers away. In addition to general problems with smelting, this ore was rather poor in iron, therefore, two problems had to be solved: the technology of ore dressing, and the technology of smelting it in blast furnaces. There was a debate about technological possibility and economic justification for this costly project. Since 1930s, the idea of producing vanadium from titaniferous ore was discussed by the local scientists, and now it became an argument in favor reconstruction. Several other technological innovations were implemented at NTMK in 1960s and 1970s: the USSR's first oxygen converters were launched in 1963, and the first experimental continuous casting machine was installed in 1968. By the end of 1980s NTMK was able to produce 5.5 million tons of steel.

However, NTMK did not concentrate the finishing stages of vanadium processing. Instead, the vanadium slag was delivered from NTMK to Tula where final production facilities were deployed. Another valuable metal that could be obtained from titanomagnetite, titanium, was merely dumped, since no technology of its extraction was developed. In the proximity of Nizhny Tagil another plant in smaller town of Verkhnaia Salda was producing titanium from ilmenite ore of Volnogorsk and Irshansk Combines located in Ukraine. Thus, within the entangled planned economy of Soviet Union, vanadium slag was making its way nearly 2,000 kilometers to the west, while ilmenite had to travel the same distance to the east.

The city's layout corresponded with the development of its industrial economy in 20th century. Generally, Nizhny Tagil was sandwiched between the old iron mine and mill in the west, and the new integrated mill in the east. Some smaller living districts are scattered in the industrial zone of NTMK. In 1930s, another large

factory, *UralVagonZavod,* or *UVZ* [Ural Wagon Plant], was established, with its own settlement located 11 kilometers to the east. However, NTMK retained key influence upon city's social life. In 1970s, when environmental pressure of the steel mill became obvious, it launched the construction of large living massive in the southwest, as far from the source of pollution as possible. Indeed, environmental issues became crucial by 1970s. NTMK was emitting nearly 600,000 tons into the air; on the other side, the extensive mining at Mountain Vysokaya led to serious threat for the landscape. When in 1988 a new coke furnace was erected with serious shortcomings, the wave of protests swept the city, which became the center of the environmental movement of *perestroika* years. Environmental upheavals were soon followed by the economic collapse; the combination of these factors threatened to send Nizhny Tagil the same way of decline that the American cities of the Rust Belt had already went through.

However, the Russian steel industry was saved from the collapse through export. While in 1980 the USSR exported only 6.2% of its rolled steel output, by 1998 the share of export in Russian metallurgy grew to 62% (Fortescue, 2009, p. 253), as former Soviet mills substituted the decreasing domestic demand for fulfilling the needs of Western countries. Even though Nizhny Tagil suffered severely from the crisis, the lay-offs in industry (several smaller factories went bankrupt) and overall poverty, the city never went through the deindustrialization (Turgel, 2009). In 1995, NTMK was acquired by industrial holding EVRAZ. The new owners benefited from the cheap workforce, raw materials, and electric power; in addition, they were capable of investing into technological reconstruction of their facilities more effectively than Soviet government did, even though this reconstruction was mainly implemented with the assistance of Western firms which provided technologies and equipment to make production more effective and environmentally friendly (Saveliev et al., 2020, pp. 552–554; Temnikov et al., 2018). However, despite its stable position, NTMK was gradually lowering employment due to new technologies and automatization, and its social role was shrinking.

Nowadays, Nizhny Tagil has 332,292 inhabitants. Nihny Tagil surely possessed some capacity to grow as a creative center. There are renowned art school and pedagogical university in the city. The old steel mill had reputation of a valuable monument of industrial history, and in 1987 it became a museum. The local intelligentsia of 1980s clearly intended to shape Nizhny Tagil as a "mining-metallurgical ethnical park", and in 2010, they developed the concept of an "Eco-Industrial Technopark". Since 2000, local authorities pursued the creative strategy by installing tourist facilities around Nizhny Tagil. At Mountain Belaya, a ski resort was opened in 2003–2006, while in Nizhny Tagil and in neighboring old factory town of Chernoistochinsk two creative clusters were installed in 2021. Since 2018, EVRAZ launched its own industrial tourism program. In 2022, the number of visitors to Nizhny Tagil exceeded the number of its inhabitants, reaching 400,000 people. At the same time, an attempt was made to create special economic zones to stimulate science-intensive production. In 2010, such zone under the title of *Titanovaia dolina* [Titanium Valley] was opened halfway from Nizhny Tagil to Verkhniaia Salda, and in 2011,

a Chemical Park was installed in Nizhny Tagil. The number of employees at the steel mill is approximately 13,000 people (by the end of Soviet period it was 30,000, and in 2017 it was 23,300); to compare, the total number of people working in non-state sector of Nizhny Tagil's economy was 108,100 people, of them small or medium businesses employed 42,200 people. Thus, heavy industry still dominates the employment in the city, yet the prominence of steel mill fell considerably over past decades.

The environmental problems of the city became a cliché in public sphere, damaging the reputation of the city and showing Nizhny Tagil as a polluted place full of industrial ruins. The environmental policies of NTMK were summarized in 2018 in a report, which states that "open and available to anyone reliable information about the condition of environment allows to remove many doubts and promotes social stability in the city" (Itogovyi Dokument, 2019, p. 26; Trans. by K. B.). It also emphasized the difference between the overall control over emissions and the specific control over odor; even though the share of unpleasant-smelling emissions is low, it usually provokes complaints, and so special system of managing such odors has to be implemented. In other words, technological and environmental improvements at NTMK were at odds with the degrading public image of Nizhny Tagil, which was further damaged by the popular TV show which in 2011 presented Nizhny Tagil as an uncultured city, populated by hooligans.

Thus, the city faced rather paradoxical effect of "tantalizing": while the steel mill operates successfully, and a set of clever policies is implemented to diversity the city's economy, the overall effect is negated by the unfavorable public opinion regarding environment, shortage of new housing, and worn-out communal structure. The local museum and school of arts did not have enough support to turn into the anchoring public centers. The attractiveness of the city remains limited, and the public image is still controversial.

Panzhihua: The Capital of Vanadium and Titanium

Panzhiua's ore deposits in southwestern China were discovered in 1930s, and the idea of industrial colonization of this remote district was growing steadily among Chinese political establishment (Kinzley, 2012). In 1960s, the ambitious program of the "Third Front" was launched by Chinese government: a program of industrialization of mountain areas lying far from the seashore ("First Front") and old industrial districts in the North ("Second Front"), and thus protected against the possible attacks from either the USA or USSR. In the distant southwestern part of the province of Sichuan, a vast deposit of titaniferous ore was drawing attention; it was planned to install a steel mill to produce steel and additionally vanadium. The construction was among key priorities within the whole "Third Front" (Tan et al., 2021). In 1970, Panzhihua Iron and Steel (Group) Company Limited, or Pangang, started to produce iron; the city gained a new name, Dukou (since 1987 the city again became known as Panzhihua). However, only in 1979 smelting of local ore was mastered by Pangang with the assistance of a collective of researchers led by prominent metallurgist Zhou Chuandian. Unlike NTMK, Pangang produces both vanadium slag and ferrovanadium.

The "Third Front" was the first Chinese major project after the dismissal of Soviet technological assistance, and as such it saw many technological achievements by Chinese scientists and technicians, yet at the same time faced many serious problems (Naughton, 1988, p. 377; Sugimoto, 1993, p. 270). In Chinese media, the foundational role of steel-making in Panzhihua for the development of remote Western districts of the republic is referred to as "iron bowl of rice." As a strategic facility, Pangang remained secret until 1990s, and in 1985 an author from South Africa mistakenly indicated two vanadium powers, the USSR and South Africa, as possessing 95% of titanomagnetite ore deposits of the world, being apparently unaware of Panxi's resource opulence (Rohrmann, 1985, p. 143).

The city of Panzhihua is made of several living areas along the rivers Jinsha and Yalong, making up the Western and Eastern districts. Today, Panzhihua is characterized as a mountain city and resource-based city (Yang et al., 2021), or a medium-sized industrial city dominated by iron and steel (Xiao et al, p. 1). In 2019, the metropolitan area of Panzhihua had population of 700,000 people (Qin & Yang, 2019, p. 3). The nearby area is the zone of intense mining, which include "three extraordinary mines of Hongge, Baima and Panzhihua" (Huang, 1996, p. 121). The steel production in Panzhihua was increasing over time: in 1992, Pangang produced 2.4 million tons of steel (Huang, 1996, p. 124), while in 2009 it was capable of producing 7.8 million tons, and this capacity increases. The competition with the other Chinese steel mills in the light of extreme remoteness made Panzhihua seek science-intensive strategy of growth. However, the threat of resource-dependency was recognized by local authorities already in 1990s. Since 2001, under the 10th Five Year Plan, Chinese metallurgical enterprises were encouraged to "develop one main business and diversified subsidiaries" (Li, 2020, p. 384).

The new strategy, pursued by Panzhihua governance since 2004, was twofold. On the one side, it was aimed at promoting forestry, agriculture, and overall environmental sustainability to develop tourism. In 2017, the city was honored as National Garden City and National Forest City. In 2021, a hydroelectric power station was constructed on the Jinsha river, which led to significant decrease in consumption of fossil fuels (Zhou et al., 2019). The environmental policy at Panzhihua is typically characterized as successful, with the significant improvement in terms of air quality, and allowed to create rejuvenated urban environment, as "investments were poured into ecological maintenance, the health and wellness industry, and constructing a city that was attractive to tourists" (Yang et al., 2021). Panzhihua started to position itself as "city of sunshine and health care" due to its unique climate specifics, and the concept of "path of sunshine health" was developed to attract more visitors into the area (Xiao et al., 2020, p. 3). Among Chinese researchers the transformation of Panzhihua is typically seen as successful example of diversification (Li et al., 2015, p. 15). One of official press releases circulated by the local authorities proudly proclaimed: "Panzhihua is a city of sunshine and flowers in southwestern China, and a world-class model for resource-intensive industrial cities yearning for green transformation and development" (The Environment Protection Bureau of Panzhihua, 2019). To organize the branding and tourism politics, a firm called Panzhihua Sunshine Poetry Culture Propagation Co.,

Ltd. was established to promote the tourism products of so-called Panzhihua Story, including the selling of light jewelry and utensils made of titanium (Jiang & Dai, 2016, p. 480; Yang & Luo, 2019, p. 14).

Moreover, by 2011, Pangang managed to develop the technology of producing titanium from its ilmenite deposits. The ore deposits of Panzhihua contain 9%–10% of titanium oxide, and so they could, with proper beneficiation, be used for production of ilmenite concentrate, even though the recovery of titanium is quite low due to presence of calcium and magnesium (Filippou & Hudon, 2020, p. 23) Therefore, titanium dioxide is being produced from ilmenite using the sulfate process, rather than chlorination, which poses environmental issues (Li et al., 2006). Thus, Pangang become world's leading producer of vanadium and titanium, while at the same time remaining important supplier of steel. In spatial terms, that led to construction of new industrial complex to the southeast from Panzhihua, on the banks of the Jinjiang river called the Vanadium and Titanium Industrial Park (Xie, 2009). This industrial transformation is, again, typically seen as one of successful cases of industrial diversification in Chinese metallurgy (Li, 2020, p. 41; Li et al., 2015). To include its industrial imagery into the broader politics of creative development, Panzhihua authorities started to shift the public image of the city from iron and steel to vanadium and titanium, for it sounded more innovative: "After the concerted dedication of several generations, Panzhihua Iron and Steel Co. overcame the world-class problem of smelting high titanium vanadium vanadium-titanium magnetite with ordinary blast furnace, gradually actualizing scalable utilization of iron, vanadium and titanium, and garnering feats lauded across the globe" (The Environment Protection Bureau of Panzhihua, 2019). It was aimed at emphasizing the superiority of Panzhihua as a global center of technological excellence in the field of metallurgy of vanadium and titanium, to present the city as Vanadium and Titanium Capital of China. The local media refer to Panzhihua as "City of Heroes" or emphasize certain "spirit of Pangang", the specific ability, inherited from the era of "Third Front", to overcome difficulties, be it construction of a huge mill in the remote area in 1960s, or the competition struggle under the free market conditions in 2000s.

However, more detailed studies, undertaken by L. Dai, revealed inherent problems in Panzhihua steel industry which was suffering both from old-fashioned style of governance and from its geographical location in the distance from key consumers; even "sunshine and healthcare industry" is seriously limited by transportation inconvenience (Dai, 2019). The industrial and cultural heritage of the "Third Front" also represents a problem, since the approaches to promote it are unclear yet. At least some authors recently emphasize the historical and cultural value of the industrial heritage of "Third Front", particularly in Panzhihua (Zhang & Rui, 2017, pp. 371–372). The "Pangang spirit" is not turned into a symbolic capital for the city. In 2019, Yang and Jiang were assessing the sustainability of Panzhihua rather sceptically: "First, the supply-side structural reform makes the competition of Panzhihua Iron and Steel more fierce. Second, Panzhihua vanadium and titanium products are single, scientific and technological content is not high; third, Liangshan, Lijiang and Chuxiong, the surrounding cities of Panzhihua City, have great competitive power in the healthy and tourism industries, at present, Panzhihua has a good

development momentum of health and tourism, but the total amount is still small, and the natural environment and scenic spots are still relatively lagging behind. Fourth, it is lack of cultural and creative industries" (Yang & Jiang, 2019, p. 593). The number of employees at Pangang was around 100,000 at the beginning of 21st century and already in 2015 was still incredibly high by global standards, reaching approximately 70,000 people (though that number also includes the employees at minor mills in Chengdu and elsewhere); in the last decade, there were drastic staff reductions at Pangang. The current importance of Pangang in the structure of employment in the area is comparable to that of Nizhny Tagil steel mill, accounting for approximately 10%–15% in overall employment of the city.

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The "cities of vanadium" had much in common: they were resource-dependent single-industry cities, capable of developing innovative production due to advances in science and technology. In the post-industrial era, these cities remained bastions of industrial production, even though each of them faced severe shock by the end of 20th century: the collapse of apartheid and marker reforms in South Africa, the collapse of planned economy and privatization in Russia, and the transition to market in China. However, within the context of global economy their historical trajectories of development were different. In Emalahleni, the whole metallurgical segment was dismantled with all the sophisticated steel-making and vanadium production going nowhere. At the same time, the continuous growth of the city due to unfinished demographic transition (delayed by apartheid) and increase of coal-mining prevented diversification of local economy in Emalahleni. South Africa encountered the severe urban crisis in 1990s, under which housing and public facilities went even worse than they were under the apartheid (Bond, 2000, p. 363). In Nizhny Tagil and Panzhihua, the mills survived, yet the growth of these cities stopped. The heavy industries like steel-making dominated these cities financially while accounting for 10%–15% of employment within the city. Such stabilization created certain conditions for further diversification, albeit shaped by the presence of these steel-making heavyweights.

Both Niznhy Tagil and Panzhihua sought diversification and new market strategies, which led both to reconstruction of mills and to attempts at developing science-intensive production and to promote cultural industries and tourism. The serious challenges for these strategies include environmental issues, problematic cultural status of industrial heritage, and overall capacity of metallurgical industry to support creative and innovative sector. The creative reindustrialization, which relies upon cultural authenticity and attractiveness, was troubled in these cities since steel mills, which once formed the cultural core and specific "spirit" of settlements, became suspectful sources of pollution. Thus, economic trajectories of steel and vanadium mills were defined by the complicated interactions within international competition and ownership. In turn, even the cities which avoided the destiny of de-industrialized Rust Belt were trapped within the complexity of converting their economic strength into the post-industrial attractiveness pivotal for successful creative development.

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ARTICLE

The Impact of Religious Self-Identification on Happiness and Well-Being: A Case Study of Kazakhstan

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ABSTRACT
Faith helps religious people persevere, hold back, refrain from fighting as much as possible, bear through life tribulations, and keep their loved ones in good spirits. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that people who identify as believers are happier than those who do not. The purpose of this study is to determine the influence of religiosity on self-assessed well-being and satisfaction with various material and immaterial aspects of life from the perspective of religious and nonreligious people and to determine the strength of the effect of religion on subjective well-being in contrast to other socioeconomic factors. In the present study, 1,500 respondents from Kazakhstan took a survey that touched upon their perceptions of social well-being and self-assessed religious status. The survey results were subjected to quantitative analysis via descriptive statistics and correlation analysis via Spearman's rank correlation coefficient and the Mann–Whitney U test. The results indicate that people in Kazakhstan demonstrate a fairly high level of self-assessed happiness. There is a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation between self-assessed happiness

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and being religious. Research shows that regardless of religiosity, happiness is likely to be experienced by people if they are healthy.

KEYWORDS
Christianity, Eastern Orthodoxy, faith, Islam, life satisfaction

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Introduction

The concept of happiness and well-being has become a focal point in social science research, particularly in understanding the factors that contribute to life satisfaction across different cultural and socioeconomic contexts (Alieva & Sheripova, 2024; Sheripova & Alieva, 2024). The relationship between religiosity and happiness has been a subject of considerable academic interest, with numerous studies suggesting that religious beliefs and practices can significantly influence an individual's sense of well-being (Alimova et al., 2023; Togaibayeva et al., 2021). However, the nature of this relationship remains complex and context dependent, varying across different societies and religious contexts.

In 2011, the UN at its 65th session adopted the resolution *Happiness: Toward a Holistic Approach to Development* (United Nations, 2011), which recognized international happiness indices as key parameters of the successful development of states. Creating the greatest possible level of happiness for people is adopted as the goal of social development instead of the growth of wealth.

The UN annually publishes happiness rankings for different countries on the basis of six key variables that help explain people's life assessments. These variables include GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity, and corruption (Helliwell et al., 2024). These happiness rankings do not rely on a single index of the six factors. Instead, scores are based on people's assessments of their lives.

Material and social living conditions do not exhaust the conditions in which a person can be happy. Happiness is a state of social or individual consciousness that has spiritual and worldview roots. Religion in accordance with its function presents believers with a system of worldview coordinates, which contributes to subjective well-being (Divisenko & Belov, 2017).

The choice of this topic is motivated by the unique sociocultural landscape of Kazakhstan, a country characterized by its multicultural and multiconfessional society. As Kazakhstan continues to evolve in terms of socioeconomic development,

understanding the factors that contribute to the well-being of its citizens becomes increasingly important (Bagratuni et al., 2023; Bayazitova et al., 2023).

Given the focus of our research, we should note that the ranking is criticized in academia for using a limited set of variables (factors) to explain life assessments in different countries. These variables cannot give proper credit to other influential factors that are either not measured or measured indirectly. This may result in erroneous conclusions about the factors that affect well-being. Furthermore, the method of assessing happiness may be subject to cultural bias, since different cultures can interpret happiness differently or show different trends in reactions to surveys (Alieva & Sheripova, 2024; Tungatova et al., 2023). For example, cultural norms can influence the probability of how respondents rate their level of happiness, e.g., one may claim that it depends on the semiotic code of every single culture (Wu et al., 2023).

In continuation of this argument, when planning this study, we proceeded from the need for theoretical reconstruction referencing the concepts of religiosity, happiness, subjective well-being, and religious spirituality to determine the place and possibilities of religion in the life of the modern society of a particular country.

Researchers have documented that links between religion and well-being persist in different cultural contexts, although they are strongest in more religious countries (Tay et al., 2014; Togaibayeva et al., 2021). By demonstrating the positive role of religion in life assessment by believers at the individual level, researchers have consistently argued that religion works as a coping mechanism and gives meaning in life to those who participate and believe in religion (Mussatayeva et al., 2024; Smagulov et al., 2023). This effect is achieved because people can use "God's will" to explain why they are experiencing difficulties (González-Rivera et al., 2017; Sinnewe et al., 2015). The more firm, devoid of scrupling respondents' faith, the more likely they are to feel happy (Rojas & Watkins-Fassler, 2022).

The relationship between religiosity and subjective well-being is not direct but depends on several other factors (Divisenko & Belov, 2017). Lim and Putnam (2010) reported that regular attendance of religious services and having friends from the congregation were important factors in life satisfaction. Hackney and Sanders (2003) determined that a stronger religious identity allows people to use their religion to reevaluate difficult situations and achieve personal spiritual growth. A survey in more than 20 countries revealed that more frequent participation in a religious community is associated with higher happiness levels (Ugur & Aydın, 2022; Zabolotskaia et al., 2021).

Large-scale European and global research indicates that a positive connection between religiosity and life satisfaction is stronger in highly religious countries; cultures with a low level of religiosity show a negative relationship (Gan et al., 2023; Pöhls, 2021; Sholihin et al., 2022). Berg and Veenhoven (2010) and Aldiyarova et al. (2023) reported a negative correlation between how much importance people assign to religion and the happiness of their country. In one of the world's happiest country, Denmark (Happiest Countries in the World 2024, n.d.), religion has received little attention, whereas highly religious countries such as Zimbabwe have the lowest happiness levels. Similarly, the religious countries of Southern Europe are less happy than the less religious countries of Northern Europe.

Mak et al. (2011) and Edling et al. (2014), who reported no correlation between religiosity and happiness, stated that stronger religious devotion does not have a significant direct effect on a person's affective experience. Sorokoumova (2021) noted that there is no reason to consider religion important for happiness, well-being, or depression. Nonreligious people do not risk being less happy than religious people because religion usually does not matter for happiness. Religiosity can increase social support, and social support is associated with happiness. However, once social support is statistically controlled, most of religiosity's effect on happiness is mediated. If religious behavior does not affect happiness, it is likely to be an indirect influence of social media (Sehmi et al., 2020; Speed et al., 2020). The relationship between religion and life may also stem from the influence of social support networks within church groups. Support networks based on religious beliefs are often more important in life than other social networks are. The reason for this can be that people tend to find greater meaning in things when social exchange comes from someone with whom they share basic goals and values.

The well-being and quality of life of atheistic communities remain largely unexplored. Nevertheless, some studies are worth highlighting and considering. Several scholars have concluded in their analysis of happiness that it has no significant or meaningful relationship with either religiousness or nonreligiousness and that empirical evidence shows no difference in subjective well-being between religious and secular people (Edling et al., 2014). Sociopsychological studies on a large sample of atheists and believers (Christians and Buddhists) indicate that there are no significant differences between these groups in terms of subjective well-being and empathy (González-Rivera et al., 2019). Leondari and Gialamas (2009) suggested that different religious beliefs and leaving religion can be linked to life satisfaction. Researchers have reported that faith is not related to any of the indicators of psychological well-being used in this study. On the other hand, in a study conducted by Baker et al. (2018), atheists demonstrated better physical health and fewer mental health symptoms (anxiety, paranoia, obsessions, and compulsions) than other secular people and believers did.

The inconsistencies of different studies can be explained by their dissimilar practical implementation and different assessment tools (Villani et al., 2019). Religion influences people's quality of life at both the macro and micro levels of social reality (Divisenko & Belov, 2017). The results at the country level may differ from those at the individual level. The relationship between faith and happiness does not seem to be universal. There is no research to answer what the cause and consequences are: whether faith makes people happier or happier people are more likely to believe (Berg & Veenhoven, 2010). Furthermore, the effects of religiosity as a predictor of greater happiness are contingent on the respondent's culture, lifestyle, and circumstances (Diener et al., 2018). Distinguishing cause-from effect requires longitudinal studies of people who leave or join a religion.

Each country, including Kazakhstan, has unique cultural and social features that can affect the relationship between religion and happiness (Amirbekova et al., 2013). The problem of the connection between religion and subjective well-being in

the social reality of Kazakhstan has several gaps. Research into the understanding of happiness in society has not developed as intensively in Kazakhstan as in Europe or the USA, although interest in this subject is growing. Kazakhstan participated in the 6th and 7th rounds of the World Values Survey. The survey in Kazakhstan as part of the 6th wave was conducted by BISAM Central Asia. The 7th wave survey was conducted by the Public Opinion Research Institute (World Values Survey Association, 2018). The 2024 World Happiness Report (Country Rankings by Life Evaluations from 2021–2023) ranks Kazakhstan 49th (out of 143 countries). However, considering age groups in the happiness ranking, Kazakhstan ranks 69th in terms of the happiness of youth (under 30 years old), whereas it ranks 42nd in the ranking of people aged 60 and older (Helliwell et al., 2024). This significant gap in happiness between different age groups, particularly in terms of reduced happiness among youth everywhere except Western Europe, demonstrates the need to find factors that could better capture and explain ongoing social processes.

Research interest in the positive aspects of human existence has led to the emergence of numerous theoretical concepts and empirical studies developing the concepts "life satisfaction," "quality of life," "subjective well-being," "psychological well-being," and "happiness." It is rather problematic to correlate these terms, since their elements are partially overlapping, and the constructs are defined by referring to related concepts.

Given the lack of Kazakhstani studies on the relationship between religiosity and subjective well-being, the research question we address in this paper is as follows: are there statistically significant differences in the level of happiness between believers and nonbelievers in Kazakhstan as a secular state with a multicultural and multiconfessional society?

The research goal is to determine the influence of religiosity on self-assessed well-being and satisfaction with different aspects of life.

Thus, the authors of the study set the following tasks:

- To assess satisfaction with various material and immaterial (spiritual, social) aspects of life from the standpoint of both believers and nonbelievers.
- To establish the strength of the effect of religion on subjective well-being compared with other socioeconomic factors.

Methods

Sample

The data used in this study are based on the results of research conducted in 2022. The mass survey was initiated and designed by a research team that included the authors of this article. The field stage of research and statistical data processing was carried out by BISAM Central Asia (2021). The sample size was N = 1,500 (Table 1). The survey used a random multistage cluster sample representative of regional, settlement, gender, age, and national population profiles. The population survey was conducted via standardized personal interviews via the CAPI method. The sampling error at the 95% confidence interval did not exceed ±2.5%. The survey utilized

a questionnaire on personal perceptions of one's social well-being and respondents' self-assessed religious status.

Table 1

Demographic Information About the Respondents

Category		*N*	Percentage
Type of settlement	City	897	59.8
	Village	603	40.2
Gender	Male	726	48.4
	Female	774	51.6
Age	Under 18	0	0.0
	18–24	225	15.0
	25–34	415	27.7
	35–44	339	22.6
	45–54	280	18.7
	55–65	241	16.1
	Over 65	0	0.0
Ethnicity	Kazakh	997	66.5
	Russian	323	21.5
	Other	179	11.9
	Mixed ancestry, cannot define ethnicity	1	0.1

Methods

In this study, we proceeded with the premise that subjective well-being has two components: happiness, that is an affective component, and life satisfaction representing a cognitive component (Rikel et al., 2017). Accordingly, the social well-being of believers and atheists was assessed in the survey through the following questions:

1. Speaking about your life in general, how happy or unhappy are you?
2. Considering all aspects of life, how satisfied are you with your life in general at present?

These questions used a 5-point scale ranging from *very unhappy* to *very happy* and from *completely dissatisfied* to *completely satisfied*, where the answer options ranged from 1 to 5 points. The dependent variable was an index of subjective well-being, which included *happiness* and *life satisfaction* with the same weight.

To analyze the relationship between religiosity and the level of subjective well-being, we operationalized religiosity in terms of the respondents' religious self-identification. The survey included the question "Do you consider yourself a religious person?" The respondents were offered one of the following responses to this question:

1. I am a believer, I participate in the life of a religious community, consistently follow religious norms, lead a religious lifestyle, and regularly visit religious temples (mosque, Orthodox church, church, kirkha, synagogue, Buddhist temple, prayer house, etc.).
2. I am a believer, observe some religious norms, rarely visit religious temples and religious community.
3. I am a believer but virtually do not participate in religious life.

4. I am a nonbeliever but sometimes visit religious temples due to ethnocultural traditions.
5. I am a nonbeliever and am indifferent to religious traditions.
6. I am an opponent of religion.

On the basis of the chosen answer option, the study participants were divided into devoutly believing (answer option 1), nominally believing (answer options 2–3), and nonbelieving (answer options 4–6).

A question on the confessional preferences of the respondents was also included to determine whether religious affiliation had an impact on the subjective well-being of people.

To compare the peculiarities in the assessments of subjective well-being by believers and nonbelievers with respect to its cognitive component, the survey included variables reflecting satisfaction with different aspects of life. The respondents were asked to answer the question "To what extent are you satisfied with the following aspects of your life?" across 11 items: Economic status; Living conditions; Health; Spiritual well-being; Family relationships; Relationships with members of the religious community; Personal qualities; Professional realization; Personal safety; Situation in the country; The work of the government. The respondents rated their agreement with the statement on a 5-point scale from 1 (*completely dissatisfied*) to 5 (*completely satisfied*). As control variables, we also considered several socio-demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, marital status, nationality, residence in a city/village, and employment status. Various prior studies have shown that these factors affect a person's subjective well-being.

The present study tested the following research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Respondents' religiosity affects their level of subjective well-being.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Respondents' religious self-identification does not affect their level of self-assessed happiness.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Depending on the degree of respondents' religiosity, a different set of variables may determine subjective well-being.

Data Analysis

The present research is based on a descriptive nonexperimental cross-sectional study. Data analysis was performed with IBM SPSS Statistics 25 software. The analysis included descriptive statistics calculation, evaluation of data distribution normality and the reliability of the employed scales, and group comparative correlation analysis (Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, Mann–Whitney U test).

Results

Our research was conducted without fully removing the limitations of COVID-19, and the value of health significantly increased for respondents at all levels of religious engagement. The correlations obtained in our study reflect the influence of religiosity on the happiness of an average citizen. The effect might be more pronounced in certain

categories. Religiosity has a greater impact on the happiness of people who find the spiritual aspects of religion more important than the ceremonial aspects or who need social and emotional support (elderly people, widows, poorly educated people, and unemployed people). However, the small number of respondents in the subsamples prevented us from analyzing these aspects.

According to the respondents' self-assessed religious status, 187 (12.5%) were devout believers, 1,063 (70.8%) were nominal believers, and 250 (16.7%) were nonbelievers. This distribution matches the results of previous studies conducted in Kazakhstan (Togaibayeva et al., 2021).

The mean level of happiness on a 5-point scale in Kazakhstan is 4.18 (SD = 0.61). Correlation analysis of the total sample with Spearman's rank correlation coefficient reveals a statistically significant but weak connection between having faith and the level of happiness: r_s = +0.084 (the correlation is significant at the .01 level, that is two-tailed). Let us consider the distribution of respondents' self-assessed personal well-being by the level of religiosity (Table 2). We observed that people who considered themselves very happy were somewhat more prevalent among devout believers. The shares of "rather happy," "unhappy," and "very unhappy" respondents taken together were lower in the two groups of religious respondents than in the nonbelievers.

Table 2

Distribution of the Respondents' Answers About Happiness by Level of Religiosity (2021, N = 1,500)

Response	Devout believers		Nominal believers		Nonbelievers	
	N	**%**	***N***	**%**	***N***	**%**
Very happy	71	38.0	280	26.3	72	28.8
Happy	103	55.1	692	65.1	145	58.0
Rather happy	7	3.7	84	7.9	32	12.8
Unhappy	5	2.7	7	0.7	1	0.4
Very unhappy	1	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	187	100.0	1,063	100.0	250	100.0

The study further revealed that sociodemographic characteristics did not affect the happiness of devout believers. For nominal believers, r_s = +.174 (correlation significant at the level of .01, two-tailed) and nonbelievers, r_s = +.177 (correlation significant at the level of .01, two-tailed), married individuals were the happiest. A gradual decrease in happiness with age was observed in nominal believers: r_s = –.086 (correlation significant at the level of .01, two-tailed). Women in this group were somewhat happier than men: r_s = +.08 (correlation significant at the level of .01, two-tailed).

Comparing average happiness levels across the different respondent groups, we found the highest level among devout believers (μ = 4.27, SD = 0.71), somewhat lower happiness among nominal believers (μ = 4.17, SD = 0.58), and the lowest level among nonbelievers (μ = 4.15, SD = 0.64). Overall, all respondent groups fell within the range of a high level of happiness.

The question is whether the described differences in subjective well-being among the three groups are statistically significant. To answer this question, group differences were analyzed via the nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test. The analysis demonstrated that devout believers (*Mean rank* = 234.01) had a significantly higher happiness level than nonbelievers did (*Mean rank* = 207.77): U = 20568.000, Z = –2.431, p = .015, r_s =.008. Furthermore, no differences were found between nominal believers (*Mean rank* = 658.39) and nonbelievers (*Mean rank* = 651.07): U = 131392.500, Z = –.324, p = .746, and r_s = .372. These results allow us to conclude that devout believers feel happier than nominal believers and nonreligious respondents do. However, this significant difference between the groups is not significant enough to guarantee happiness. Thus, the degree of engagement of the respondents' religious self-identification weakly influenced their subjective well-being.

To determine whether confessional affiliation affects happiness, we analyzed the relationship between self-assessed happiness and religious affiliation among religious respondents, with Islamic and Eastern Orthodox faiths being the two most predominant religions in Kazakhstan. Owing to their small sample sizes, other religious confessions could not be included in the analysis and were instead grouped under the category of "other." The distribution of self-assessed happiness by respondents' confessional affiliations indicated that representatives of Islam were happier than Eastern Orthodox Christians were (Table 3).

Table 3

Self-Assessed Happiness of Respondents Distinguished by Religious Affiliation

Religious Affiliation	*N*	Very happy	Happy	Rather happy	Unhappy	Very unhappy	Total percentage
Islam	955	34.6%	51.2%	10.7%	2.8%	0.7%	76.4%
Eastern Orthodoxy	261	21.1%	54.9%	15.4%	6.8%	1.9%	20.9%
Other	34	20.6%	52.9%	17.6%	8.8%	0.0%	2.7%

Given the abnormal distribution of the variables, we once again deployed the Mann–Whitney U test. The results revealed that the differences in happiness between the representatives of Islam (*Mean rank* = 644.02) and Eastern Orthodoxy (*Mean rank* = 529.89) are statistically significant: U = 105438.500, Z = –5.077, p = .000, and r_s = .000.

However, these differences cannot be attributed exclusively to confessional factors. Our analysis also established a superimposition of the factors of religious confession and nationality. Muslim Kazakhs were found to be happier (r_s = +.151 (correlation significant at the level of .01, two-tailed) than Orthodox Russian and nonbelievers belonging to other ethnic groups.

By analyzing differences in the cognitive component of happiness between believers and nonbelievers, we found that the happiness of religious Kazakhs was associated with their satisfaction with the situation in the country and their health. Satisfaction with all other aspects of life and social ties, including relations with members of the religious community, did not affect the personal happiness of

religious people. For nominal believers and nonbelievers, more factors describing social life circumstances are correlated with happiness. In these groups, self-assessed happiness was influenced by satisfaction with economic status and living conditions in addition to satisfaction with health. Greater happiness was demonstrated among nominal believers by those who were satisfied with the overall situation in the country, personal safety, and personal qualities. The closest association with happiness in nonbelievers was demonstrated by satisfaction with one's economic status, professional realization, and health. In addition to these factors, family relationships and living conditions are important in this group (Table 4).

Table 4

Results of Correlation Analysis of Satisfaction With Various Aspects of Life and Subjective Well-Being and the Influence of Socio-Demographic Parameters on the Level of Happiness

	Total sample	Devout believers	Nominal believers	Nonbelievers
Family economic status	+.163**	+.139	+.153**	+.155**
Living conditions	+.121**	+.049	+.126**	+.122**
Health	+.163**	+.150*	+.170**	+.168**
Spiritual well-being	+.076**	–.028	+.086**	+.077**
Family relationships	+.100**	+.092	+.098**	+.097**
Relationships with friends	+.064*	+.047	+.089**	+.085**
Relationships with members of the religious community *	+.018	+.014	+.010	+.015
Personal qualities	+.105**	+.125	+.117**	+.117**
Professional realization	+.114**	+.055	+.101**	+.099**
Personal safety	+.107**	+.125	+.121**	+.123**
Situation in the country	+.134**	+.195*	+.128**	+.139**
The work of the government	+.098**	+.060	+.082*	+.084**
Education	+.002	–.026	+.019	+.010
Settlement	+.013	–.004	–.009	–.008
Income	–.002	–.019	–.013	–.016
Nationality	+.083**	+.080	+.100**	+.099**
Marital status	+.175**	+.077	+.174**	+.165**
Gender	+.041	+.021	+.080**	+.071*
Age	–.062*	+.028	–.086**	–.074**

Note. * The correlation is significant at the .05 level; ** the correlation is significant at the .01 level.

The size of income and the availability of work did not affect feelings of happiness in any of the respondent groups. There was a positive correlation between happiness and satisfaction with economic status in nominally believing and nonbelieving people.

In our study, devout believers revealed a connection between happiness and the respondents' confidence that religion contributes to spiritual purification and repentance and that the observance of religious norms and values in life deters from immoral deeds. In nominal believers, there was a positive correlation between happiness and conviction that religion provides great opportunities for the development of spiritual and moral values and spiritually enriches a person. Negative correlates of happiness in nominal believers were associated with doubts about the existence of God and the approval of the possibility of transition from faith to nonbelief. Differences in the happiness profiles of believers and nonbelievers point to the need for different grounds in studies of the relationship between religiosity and subjective well-being.

Discussion

Our study revealed a high level of self-assessed happiness among people in Kazakhstan. This result is expected because previous studies also found Kazakhstan to have one of the highest happiness levels among Central Asian countries. This is due to the gradual improvement in socioeconomic and political conditions and expanding modernization in the country (Yessimova et al., 2024).

Our research revealed a statistically significant positive, albeit weak, relationship between faith and the respondents' happiness (H1). This finding is consistent with the results of several studies. Specifically, Villani et al. (2019) reported that adherence to a particular religious worldview helps both religious and nominally religious people experience positive emotions. Fredrickson (2002) demonstrated the role of religiosity in the emergence of positive emotions, whereas Vishkin et al. (2016) and Zein et al. (2022) reported that religious people learn more adaptive strategies to regulate their emotions.

Depending on the degree of religiosity, the respondents reported different levels of self-assessed happiness (H2). Compared with nominal believers, devout believers were somewhat happier and showed a small average difference in self-assessed social well-being, although this difference is not significant enough to guarantee happiness. All the respondents, i.e., devout believers, nominal believers, and nonbelievers, demonstrated a high level of happiness (Table 2).

The issue of statistically significant differences in the level of social well-being between believers and nonbelievers in Kazakhstan (H3) requires a more detailed discussion. Previous studies have shown that self-assessed happiness is influenced by gender, age, and marital status, although this relationship is not universal across countries (Helliwell et al., 2018). Other problems may become more acute with age, e.g., in the family or at work (Bayazitova et al., 2023). Our study revealed that socio-demographic characteristics do not influence the happiness of religious respondents, but among nominally believing and nonbelieving respondents, those who were married felt the happiest. The same can be observed in the results of Jebb et al. (2020). In every part of the world, married people have greater subjective well-being than unmarried people. The findings of Helliwell et al. (2018) indicate that married people at every stage of life in the USA have greater life satisfaction. For Kazakhstan, the institution of marriage has historically served an important function in regulating

quality of life, especially for young women, as well as for the continuation of the species (Zhunussova, 2022). Gender differences are superimposed on the feeling of happiness among nominal believers: in this group, women are somewhat happier than men. This finding is also consistent with previous research findings suggesting possible differences in happiness between men and women in different social groups (Helliwell et al., 2018).

The structures of social well-being characteristic of devout believers, nominal believers, and nonbelievers are different. Among all the variables correlated with self-assessed happiness in general for the whole sample, only satisfaction with health showed a significant correlation in all groups (Table 4). This parameter has a positive effect on the social well-being of both believers and nonbelievers. Health not only influences the state of happiness but also affects all other variables and is the foundation of happiness (Chernysh, 2020; Gurinovich & Petrykina, 2021).

Almost all the variables that are significant for the happiness of nonbelievers are also significant for nominal believers. Satisfaction with life circumstances such as economic status, living conditions, family relationships, professional self-realization, the work of the government, and the situation in the country is important for respondents in both groups in their self-assessment of happiness.

There is no association between income level and the overall social well-being of people both across the sample and among devoutly believing, nominally believing, and nonbelieving respondents. This result is different from the findings of existing studies (Boes & Winkelmann, 2010; Rukumnuaykit, 2016), which have revealed a robust statistically significant relationship between respondents' income and their level of happiness irrespective of their level of religiosity. Research has also shown that a lack of differences in happiness across different income levels is characteristic of developed countries as opposed to poorer countries, where these differences are strong (Easterlin & O'Connor, 2020).

Kazakhstan belongs to a group of developing countries. The absence of a direct dependence of the population's self-assessed happiness on income can be explained by the fact that the level of income does not play a major role in assessing one's well-being in life as the person's subjective satisfaction with their material status does, which is conditioned by the level of claims and lifestyle they find minimally acceptable. Accordingly, our study reveals a positive correlation between happiness and satisfaction with economic status in nominally believing and nonbelieving people.

The lack of dependence of the level of happiness on income can also be explained from the perspective of comparison theory, which suggests that income affects life satisfaction indirectly through the individual's expectations and situations of social comparison (McBride, 2010). Inflating income expectations and comparing one's income with the higher earnings of others have a detrimental effect on life satisfaction (Eskerkhanova et al., 2023; Rybakov et al., 2022), whereas the current amount of income by itself does not have such an influence.

Among nominal believers, Kazakhs are happier than representatives of other ethnic groups. This finding agrees with the data of a cross-country study, in which Kazakhstan refers to the group of countries where the assessment of happiness is

formed and expressed mainly under the influence of national and cultural factors (Amirbekova et al. 2013; Andreenkova & Andreenkova, 2019; Bekbenbetova et al., 2022; Helliwell et al., 2024). Some studies conclude that ethnicity is significant and consider the possibility that, for example, Russians are less satisfied with the level of social well-being in general (Zavisca & Hout, 2005). It can be hypothesized that the processes of the formation of Kazakh identity at the current stage in the development of Kazakhstan, the strengthening status of the Kazakh language, and the outflow of a large number of representatives of European ethnic groups from the country can have diametrically opposite effects on the feeling of happiness among ethnic and other Kazakh citizens.

Conclusion

The study established that, regardless of religiosity, people are most likely to feel happy if they are healthy. The degree of religiosity enhances the differences in the system of interrelations between happiness, people's satisfaction with different aspects of life, and worldview factors. Religious socialization and education play decisive roles for believers and devout believers. The present study is the first to compare the levels of social well-being of devout believers, nominal believers, and nonbelievers in Kazakhstan. Hence, some limitations that need to be considered in future research should be highlighted.

The relatively small size of the subsamples of devout religious and nonreligious people, especially given the wide age range of survey participants, constitutes a limitation of the present study. In interconfessional comparisons of subjective assessments of social well-being, it is also important to use comparable religiosity and spirituality criteria because of the presence of confessional and denominational specificities. Representatives of the wealthiest and poorest groups of the population may be underrepresented in the study sample. This circumstance may distort the results of studies concerning the influence of income, employment, and satisfaction with life circumstances and religious beliefs on the subjective well-being of believers and nonbelievers. When analyzing the happiness of believers, along with their satisfaction with life and its aspects, greater emphasis should be placed on the phenomenology of religious life with the study of value and meaning systems and the subjective religious experience of believers and their existential well-being.

Despite these limitations, we hope that our study offers useful information on differences in the structure of the social well-being of believers and nonbelievers. Further research in the outlined directions will contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between happiness and faith. Future studies should examine how religious orientations are understood within the framework of general background culture to examine the connection between religion and well-being in the context of the level of social approval/disapproval of the religious system of norms. Further research should focus not on whether religiosity increases happiness but rather on what factors affect this influence and to which social groups it applies.

By examining the case of Kazakhstan, the authors contribute to the existing body of literature on the impact of religiosity on happiness and satisfaction with various aspects of personal life. When interpreting the findings, other researchers and readers should be mindful of the limitations highlighted in detail in the conclusion.

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ARTICLE

Islamic Inclusivism: Insights From Abu Dhabi, Silaturahmi Tunnel, and Walisanga-Ende

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ABSTRACT
This article responds to the claim that Islam is a religion of violence, which has fostered a generation afflicted with Islamophobia. To support their argument, the authors present several historical instances that showcase Islam's benevolent aspects. These historical instances, elaborated upon in this article, include the Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration (A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together), the Silaturahmi Tunnel connecting the Istiqlal Mosque and the Catholic Cathedral of Jakarta, and the interreligious cooperation occurring at the Walisanga Islamic Boarding School in Ende, Flores, Indonesia. Quraish Shihab's Quranic exegesis serves as an analytical tool to examine these three instances. Data were collected through documentation, participant observation, and interviews, then qualitatively analyzed. Through this methodology, the study demonstrates that Islamic ethics and inclusive communal life have manifested an inclusive nature within Islam. By employing this selected method, the study demonstrates how elements of Islamic ethics and

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the ongoing inclusive communal life ingrained among people illustrate the inclusive nature of Islam.

KEYWORDS
Islamic Inclusivism, the Abu Dhabi Declaration, the Silaturahmi Tunnel

Introduction

"Islam rahmah li al-'âlamîn" [Islam is a mercy to the universe] is an appealing and inspirational saying, resonating with Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This concise statement is among the many universal Islamic expressions that serve as gifts to the world. Those moved by this saying often seek to fully grasp its meaning (Meslec et al., 2020). In 1973, the French existentialist Gabriel Marcel remarked, "*esse est co-esse et esse est pro-esse*" [to be is to be for another] elucidating that "to be" signifies not only existing with another but also existing for another (Ningsih et al., 2022). It is inevitable that those enlightened by this saying perceive themselves not solely as passive observers amidst others ("*esse est percipere*"), but rather as individuals striving for the collective welfare of the community. The concept of "to be for another" can also contribute positively by deepening faith, reinforcing religious identity, broadening understanding of other religions, fostering tolerance, and embracing diversity (Muttaqin, 2020).

We could mention any scholar as a model of "to be for another." One of the most outstanding academics is the late Azyumardi Azra, CBE. Azra dedicated all his writings to concretizing the vision of Islam as a mercy to the universe. His entire life reflects his belief that he is not merely an observer amidst humanity but also someone who strives for the greater good. Azra's *Relevansi Islam Wasathiyah: Dari Melindungi Kampus Hingga Mengaktualisasikan Kesalehan* [The Relevance of the Islam of Wasathiya: From Protecting the Campus to Actualizing Piety] (2020), Masykuri's *Islam Agama Kedamaian* [Islam, a Religion of Peace] (2021), and Hendrikus Maku's *Peace in Islam According to Muhammad Šarif Ahmad* (2019), are publications that elaborate on this theme of Islam being a mercy to the universe (Ivana, 2022). These authors, approaching from different angles, conceptually converge at the highest point of consciousness that Islam is a holistic religion whose teachings have become a source of motivation to act, to promote tolerance amidst diversity, and to demonstrate what Azra refers to as "the smiling and colorful Islam."

Academics, in their respective capacities, have collaborated to demonstrate that Islam truly embodies mercy to the universe (Khamdan & Wiharyani, 2018). However, there are others who, under the guise of Islam, propagate debates regarding whether Islam is genuinely a religion of peace. Some argue that there exists a dichotomy within Islam: it is friendly, yet not entirely so; it is great, yet not entirely so. This perception emanates from two distinct sources: Muslims themselves and non-Muslims. Irfan Amalee, the co-founder of PeaceGeneration Indonesia, asserts that Islam is a frequently misunderstood religion by outsiders and its adherents (Ja'afar, 2022).

According to CNN Indonesia's report on the findings of the Public Virtue Research Institute, there have been 19 terrorist bombing incidents in Indonesia over the past 20 years (Daftar Kasus Ledakan, 2021). These include Bali I (2002), JW Marriott (2003), Bali II (2005), Ritz Carlton (2009), Az-Dzikra Cirebon Mosque (2011), Sarinah (2016), Mapolresta Solo (2016), Kampung Melayu (2017), and Surabaya and Sidoarjo (2018). Additionally, the public still recalls incidents such as Thamrin (2016), Samarinda (2016), Bandung (2017), Mako Brimob (2018), and the husband-and-wife suicide bombers at the Makassar Cathedral (2021).

The attacks in various parts of the world have been devastating. On November 13, 2015, in France, 137 people were killed and 368 wounded. Another tragic incident occurred in the Philippines on January 27, 2019, when a suicide bomber killed 20 people at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church in Jolo (Rizky et al., 2022). Moreover, Sri Lanka suffered a grievous attack of suicide bomber on April 21, 2019, resulting in the deaths of 259 people. In the United States, on August 3, 2019, 22 people were killed in El Paso, and another 10 lost their lives in Dayton. These attacks deeply disturbed the public (Al Qurtuby, 2015). Although not all mass media sensationalized these events, public opinion often associated Islam with violence due to media reports highlighting terrorists inspired by Islamic teachings. Islam bore the blame for these tragic occurrences (Hafidh et al., 2022).

Unfair reporting on Islam perpetuated a negative perception, challenging the belief of Islamic academics who view Islam as a religion of peace. Hendrikus Maku, an interreligious dialogue activist, faced opposition from both Islamophobic individuals and fellow academics with negative views of Islam during a seminar where he advocated for Islam's peaceful nature (Madakir et al., 2022).

The main focus of this study revolves around several key points, notably: "Is Islam an inclusive religion?" The authors aim to illustrate the concept of inclusiveness within Islam, particularly in Indonesia. This inclusiveness is not confined solely to ideological realms but extends into tangible social manifestations. The study centers on three specific subjects: the Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration as written in *A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* (2019), the Silaturahmi Tunnel [Tunnel of Friendship], and the Walisanga Islamic Boarding School in Ende.

The systematic exploration of Islamic inclusiveness encompasses the following components:

1. A concise overview of the Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration (hereinafter—the Declaration).
2. A brief description of the Silaturahmi Tunnel.
3. A detailed profile of the Walisanga Islamic Boarding School in Ende.
4. Insights from Quraish Shihab concerning Islamic inclusiveness are juxtaposed with the three focal points of the study.

In this study, the central argument is that Islam is an "inclusive" religion, receptive to dialogue and collaboration with other faiths worldwide. This argument is substantiated by delineating three illustrative examples: the *Declaration* co-signed by Grand Mufti Al-Azar, Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, and Pope Francis in 2019; the Silaturahmi Tunnel linking

the Istiqlal Mosque and the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Jakarta, Indonesia; and the notable interreligious cooperation initiatives at the Walisanga Islamic Boarding School in Ende, Flores, Indonesia. Each of these examples, a formal declaration, a physical infrastructure, and a successful communal practice, converges to support the contention that, at its finest manifestations, Islam should not be typecast as a religion characterized by intolerance and violence. Instead, it should be recognized as a faith that fosters and thrives in dialogue and collaboration (Rahmatullah, 2021).

Methodology

This study uses a literature review methodology to respond to the assertion that Islam is inherently violent, leading to the proliferation of Islamophobia. It begins by introducing the central argument and purpose of the article. To support this argument, the authors draw upon various historical instances that showcase Islam's benevolent and peaceful aspects. These instances include the Declaration, the Silaturahmi Tunnel connecting the Istiqlal Mosque and the Catholic Cathedral of Jakarta, and the interreligious cooperation at the Walisanga Islamic Boarding School in Ende, Flores (Nur Isnaini et al., 2019).

Quraish Shihab's Quranic exegesis is employed as an analytical tool to delve into these historical instances and provide deeper insights. Furthermore, the authors detail the methodology used in the study, which involves data collection through documentation, participant observation, and interviews. The collected data are qualitatively analyzed to extract meaningful conclusions (Supratman et al., 2021).

Through this rigorous methodology, the study aims to demonstrate that Islamic ethics and the inclusive communal life among adherents reflect the inclusive nature of Islam. By employing a literature review approach, this study synthesizes existing knowledge and presents a compelling argument that challenges prevailing misconceptions about Islam's propensity for violence.

Finding and Discussions

A. The Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration

This declaration, co-signed by Grand Mufti Al-Azhar, Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, and Pope Francis in Abu Dhabi on February 4th, 2019, was preceded by an international conference themed "The Brotherhood of Humanity." Hosted by the Council of Muslim Elders and chaired by Grand Mufti Al-Azhar, the conference included clergy and intellectuals from various countries. Father Markus Solo Kewuta, SVD, from the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, emphasized the declaration's importance for two reasons (Al-Latif et al., 2023). First, the conception of the declaration, described as revolutionary, employs language that challenges conventional ideas about religious relationships previously veiled by diplomatic theories. Second, the declaration was signed by Pope Francis, the supreme head of the Universal Roman Catholic Church, and Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, Grand Mufti Al-Azhar (Burhani et al., 2021).

While acknowledging the significance of the co-signatories of the Declaration, it is important to recognize that neither individual represented Christianity or Islam in their entirety. Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayyeb is a Sunni Muslim but did not speak for the entire Sunni world. Similarly, Pope Francis is the supreme pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, but he did not encompass all of Christianity. Both Islam and Christianity encompass numerous sects and denominations, each with its leadership structures (Solihah, 2020).

Explaining the Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration comprehensively is challenging. With this complexity in mind, the authors highlight several points raised in the document itself, guided by the wisdom of Quraish Shihab: "What cannot be completely achieved should not be completely disregarded." These points are presented here without evaluation, and there is no intention to judge other aspects that have not been addressed.

The Setting for the Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration. Since 1998, there has been a working relationship between the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and Al-Azhar in Cairo, Egypt. This relationship was formally and permanently established through a pact signed by the Vatican and the Permanent Commission of Al-Azhar for Interreligious Cooperation Between Monotheistic Faiths on May 28th, 1998. This pact signifies a shared commitment to enhance peaceful relations between the Catholic Church and Sunni Muslims worldwide and collaborate in alleviating human suffering. The cooperation between these entities has been effective, fostering a spirit of brotherhood through regular bilateral meetings held every two years.

The Leader of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Said Agil Siradj (Syaifuddin & Fahyuni, 2019) appreciates the Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration. He says that the spirit of *A the Document on Human Fraternity* has been inspiring NU since 1984 when they officially declared the three categories of brotherhood including a brotherhood of fellow Muslims (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*), the brotherhood of fellow citizens (*ukhuwahwathaniyah*), and brotherhood of fellow humans (*ukhuwahbasyariyah*). In addition, Siradj emphasizes the contributions of that conception, namely (a) stopping the hostility between Muslims and non-Muslims; (b) accepting the nation-state and rejecting the concept of the caliphate; and (c) accepting the legal constitution (Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution) and not contradicting sharia and finally realizing world peace (Anshori et al., 2022).

This cooperation faced a crisis when Pope Benedict XVI gave an open lecture at the University of Regensburg, Germany, on 12th September 2006. In that lecture, Pope Benedict quoted a statement from a medieval ruler who said Muhammad's innovations were "evil and inhuman," offending Muslim people. One hundred and thirty-eight Muslim clerics from around the world signed a letter titled *A Common Word Between Us and You*, which was sent to the Pope on October 13th, 2006. Pope Benedict responded by tasking the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue to establish a forum together with the Muslim clerics who had written to him. After that, this forum was formed. In November 2008, members of the forum came to the Vatican and discussed efforts towards reconciliation, mutual understanding, and mutual respect. After that meeting, the relationship between Catholics and Muslims slowly but surely

was restored (Karwadi & Indrawan, 2023). The crisis, which had gone on for a long time, ended on April 28th to 29th, 2017, when Pope Francis visited Cairo, with a special mission to promote interreligious dialogue as a means of realizing peace. During the meeting, Pope Francis noted the problem of the violence promulgated by ISIS[1]. He said, "Christian–Muslim Dialogue is the only way ISIS can be defeated. I come here as a messenger of peace at a time when the world is being blindly torn apart by violence."

The Brotherhood of Humanity Declaration. The Declaration was signed by the Pope and the Grand Mufti, declaring that every person, from whatever religious background, is required to study and reflect deeply on the plurality of society and the deep differences that can often cause misunderstandings. A concrete suggestion in the declaration is addressing the importance of education. Poor education can blind people to the reality of life around them. Both leaders called on Christians and Muslims, as well as all people, to adopt a culture of dialogue as the best way of building up religious cooperation.

Pope Francis, in his sermon at the occasion of the launching of the declaration, said that there is no alternative: "We must build a future together. If not, there will be no future for us." He then emphasized, "Religions cannot disregard this vital task of building bridges between peoples and cultures." One Indonesian Muslim scholar, Komaruddin Hidayat, also said: "No peace among nations without peace among religions. No peace among religions without dialogue between religions. No dialogue between religions without investigation of the foundation of religions" (Ihsan, 2018).

There is a prophetic dimension of the Brotherhood of Humanity Declaration. The linguistic style of the declaration has a certain innocence, addressing several problems that haunt the way of peace between religions. In addition, another prophetic aspect is the emphasis on time and process, and not on place or venue, reflecting, perhaps, an often-quoted principle of Pope Francis[2]. Furthermore, the declaration truly stresses the need to pass over from tolerance to fraternal coexistence to pass over from the status of the guest to brother or sister, and pass over from tolerance to the level of love. This is because love makes it possible for people to live side by side in peace and harmony. In this way, perhaps, the declaration anticipates Francis's emphasis on brother and sisterly love articulated in depth in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (Yanto, 2021).

Another important point in the declaration is a call to know oneself, as well as to know one's sister or brother. The Pope, at that historic moment, underlined the importance of knowing the history of our sisters and brothers, knowing their culture, and knowing their religious beliefs (Yunus et al., 2020). Along the same lines, Komaruddin Hidayat says that in these times, believers cannot live, are cut off from others, and are excluded. They must be involved in dialogue with people of other religions. He says, "To be religious, someone has to be interreligious."

[1]ISIS has been designated a terrorist organisation and is banned from all activities by the United Nations, United States, European Union, Russia, and many others. We condemn all forms of terrorism, particularly this organisation's activities. ИГИЛ была признана террористической организацией; любая деятельность ИГИЛ запрещена в России, США, Европейском Союзе и многих других странах. Мы осуждаем любые формы терроризма, в том числе деятельность этой организации.

[2] See, e.g., EG 222–225 (Apostolic exhortation, n.d.).

Quraish Shihab speaks of the brotherhood of humanity as being both a religious teaching and a simple demand of social life. Imam Ali bin Abi Thalib (559–661 M), the fourth caliph after the death of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, said, "The person you meet who is not of your brother in religion is your brother as a fellow human being." There is social oneness that can assist a person to have a positive view in the way they relate to their fellow human beings. Different views of brotherhood do not have to be in opposition. A wise person will always find meeting points in the middle of diversity.

B. The Silaturahmi Tunnel

"If people build a wall, they will be imprisoned behind it. If people build a bridge, they open the way for a long journey." The following description of the Silaturahmi Tunnel is the result of a conversation between Hasiholan, a journalist from the weekly magazine *Hidup* [Life], and Markus Solo Kewuta, SVD, a staff member of the Pontifical Commission for Interreligious Dialogue. The results of this conversation were published in three consecutive issues of *Hidup*, on October 24th and 31st, 2021, and November 7th, 2021 (Badry & Rahman, 2021).

The Silaturahmi Tunnel (ST) connects the Istiqlal Mosque and the Catholic Cathedral in Jakarta. It attracts much comment and triggers the presence of a new religious perspective. According to Markus, ST will increasingly strengthen interreligious dialogue in Indonesia. He says, "I am truly moved by the extraordinary initiative of Muslim and Catholic leaders, particularly those based at the Istiqlal Mosque and the Catholic Cathedral in Jakarta, who have worked hard and succeeded in building this tunnel. As far as I know, it is unique, in the entire world. Firstly, and primarily, I really do appreciate this unique project. This is not just an underground tunnel that allows people to walk from one place to another. Rather, it is a symbol that speaks a thousand words" (Anshori et al., 2022). According to Markus Solo, there are several symbolic meanings of ST (Anshori et al., 2022):

1. It is a pathway, nothing more, nothing less. However, it is a pathway that opens possibilities for meeting and dialogue. By building this tunnel, both parties—the Christian Catholic faithful and the Muslim faithful—show that they want to intensify their relationship and open more ways of meeting and carrying out dialogue.
2. It proposes that interreligious dialogue and the relationship between Christians and Muslims are not stuck in a static, old-fashioned form that cannot change. It shows that it is a dynamic activity that can break through barriers.
3. In the spirit of the Abu Dhabi Declaration, signed by the Pope and the Grand Mufti in 2019, this tunnel expresses the special fraternal relationship between Indonesian Muslims and Catholic Christians. This relationship is so close that this tunnel symbolically concretizes it.
4. It is similar to a bridge. It connects two points that previously were separated. Now, they are joined.
5. It symbolizes the success of dialogue and cooperation, which are pillars of dialogue within the Catholic Church. The others are life, theology, and spirituality. This construction shows dialogue can always be realized by working together for the common good. Interreligious cooperation is clearly a matter of urgency and is always possible. Openness and goodwill are needed to make it happen.

There is a common thread that connects ST with the Abu Dhabi Declaration. The essence of the Declaration revolves around fostering fraternal relationships and straightforward cooperation in various ways to oppose evil. This includes combating the exploitation of religion and faith for selfish agendas, which are destructive, as well as the exploitation of nature and the poor for personal gain, leading to poverty and limited educational opportunities, among other issues. Working together for the common good is always preferable among brothers and sisters. ST and the Abu Dhabi Declaration are great inspirations for advocating religious moderation and interfaith dialogue. In their research, Wasisto Raharjo Jati et al. (2022) discovered that promoting interfaith dialogues within communities is more effective for younger generations, as recent interfaith dialogues among young people have proven to be intimate and impactful. Moreover, they emphasize the need to critically assess the religious moderation discourse and campaign propagated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia. These findings highlight the involvement of conservatives eager to participate in interfaith campaigns to counteract hardliner stigmas (Arifin et al., 2023).

The Pope and the Grand Mufti caused a stir when they called on their respective faith communities to regard each other as brothers and sisters. They emphasized shared humanity, common historical destiny, and citizenship despite religious differences. Simply tolerating one another is insufficient; love is necessary among brothers and sisters. In Indonesia, it is time to usher in a new era, echoing the spirit of Abu Dhabi, where mutual love among brothers and sisters is embraced. The Grand Mufti suggests that to prevent interreligious conflicts, mere interreligious dialogue falls short; instead, fostering multiculturalism and practicing mutual respect are essential (Famularsihet al., 2022).

Implementation of ST's inspiration transcends geographical and age barriers. Markus Solo suggests that at the grassroots level, individuals of different faiths need to reflect together before they embark on building bridges for common life. Markus challenges the youth to consider what bridges they wish to construct. Ideally, what sort of bridges would they like to see? He asserts that young people need not fear other religions. Previous generations have demonstrated some effective ways of harmoniously and peacefully living together. They collaborated for the nation's freedom and showcased this freedom through commendable deeds, of which we are proud today.

C. The Walisanga Muslim Boarding School, Ende, Indonesia

A Profile of Walisanga. Established in 1982 by Mahmud EK, Siti Fatimah Nganda, Siti Khadijah Abubakar, and Muhammed Fakheuddin Razi, the school initially served Muslim children from Flores, Lembata, and Timor. After seven years, it gained government recognition and became Walisanga Muslim Boarding School.

According to J. Habermas, everything in this world and history has its place. With this in mind, the founders of the school and the madrasah faced some contextual challenges, which were seen later as the background for this project. These include:

1. The growing Islamic population in Flores, Lembata, and Timor showed the need for Islamic institutes.

2. Mahmud EK, a Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia official, decided to establish a Muslim boarding school in Ende due to the low quality of religious life among Muslims. The curriculum of ordinary madrasahs did not meet the needs of the Muslim community, particularly the "Identity Card Muslims" phenomenon.
3. The problem of poverty. Many Muslims were living below the poverty line. Mahmud EK wanted to open an institute for school-age children from poor families who would receive free tuition.
4. The senior madrasah would accept students from the junior madrasah, while not being close to accepting other students from elsewhere.
5. The heterogeneous nature of the society inspired the founder of the institute to build interreligious relationships, particularly with Catholics. He saw the institute as a venue for interfaith cooperation.

Walisanga Muslim Boarding School operates two curricula, one mandated by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs and the other by the Ministry of Education and Sport. A defining characteristic of this institute is its commitment to serving the underprivileged. According to Mahmud EK, prioritizing this demographic was the primary impetus behind the school's establishment. The founder aimed to establish an institution focusing on improving impoverished youth, achieved through collaboration with individuals from various religious backgrounds, including the Catholic Church. The institute is guided by several overarching visions:

- Fostering the development of faith and genuine belief in God.
- Guiding individuals to follow the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).
- Cultivating individuals with noble character traits akin to those exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

To actualize these visions, the institute has set forth the following mission:

- Empowering the institute as a safe, well-maintained, beloved, and complete sanctuary.
- Creating an environment where students can elevate their ethical standards.
- Helping students comprehend the necessities of life and the purpose of existence, recognizing that true happiness and success are attainable only through devotion to the Divine and the practice of faith.

The Walisanga Muslim Boarding School, Ende, as a Meeting House. The following section delves into the inquiry, "Is Walisanga truly a meeting house?" If so, "Who convenes there?" and "What fosters these gatherings?" Prior to conceiving the institute, the founders of Walisanga were deeply engaged in interreligious dialogue. Mahmud EK's encounter with Catholics during a leadership training program at Ende Social Development Institute led to a new perspective on interfaith collaboration, valuing its importance in a diverse society. They align with the sentiment expressed by Ary Roest Crollius, affirming that "a religion that rejects pluralism in society isolates itself and stunts its growth. Plurality raises thought, ethics, cultural creativity, and religious perspective" (Hidayat et al., 2022).

During a meeting with the St. Michael Education Trust, Mahmud EK expressed his vision for interreligious collaboration in education. He founded an educational trust

with dialogue partners, including Dami Mukese, Jon Paul Asa, and Hubert Embu. The institute aims to foster harmony among Muslim and Catholic educators.

In line with the insights provided by Muhammad Fahmi et al., the pesantren fosters an organic tolerance deeply ingrained in its core principles. This endeavor requires ongoing efforts to nurture harmony, managed with professionalism. The pesantren places a premium on the essence of Islamic orthodoxy, prioritizing it over outward religious symbols while simultaneously embracing diversity without scrutiny of ethnic, racial, cultural, or religious distinctions among its educators. For them, pursuing excellence and professionalism in their roles outweighs all other considerations (Riinawati, 2022).

Since 1998, nearly every year, witnesses candidates for the Catholic priesthood (seminarians) has been engaging in a year of pastoral work at Walisanga. They actively contribute to teaching and assist in the administration of the dormitory, leaving a profoundly positive impact on the institute and society. Despite some holding a prejudicial view that the involvement of seminarians harbors an ulterior motive, such as Christian proselytization, the reality contradicts this assumption. Not a single individual at Walisanga has renounced their Muslim faith due to the presence and activities of the seminarians (Thohir, 2022). Historical data shows that 26 seminarians dedicated their lives to Walisanga from the beginning.

Seminarians' presence at Walisanga has sparked mixed reactions within the Muslim community, but it has also positively impacted cooperation and the social fabric, including:

- facilitating the formation of discussion groups comprising religious leaders who collaboratively address social issues and challenges;
- organizing interreligious meetings involving representatives from diverse faiths to strategize ways to combat radical ideologies threatening religious harmony in Ende;
- proactively guiding and fostering dialogue to promote peaceful coexistence among people of different faiths.

D. Insights From Quraish Shihab Concerning Islamic Inclusiveness

The term "inclusivism" gained popularity through Alan Race's seminal work "Christians and Religious Pluralism" (Khamdan & Wiharyani, 2018), which identified three perspectives within Christianity: exclusivism, pluralism, and inclusivism. Exclusivists assert their religion as the sole truth, rejecting all others as false. Inclusivists acknowledge truths in other religions while regarding their own as superior, while pluralists see diverse religions as paths to the same salvation.

Studying the theme of inclusive Islam as mirrored in the Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration, the Silaturahmi Tunnel, and the Walisanga Islamic Boarding School, the perspective of religious inclusivism of Quraish Shihab, as will be discussed below, is relevant in the modern era.

Plurality: A Part of The Divine Plan. "If it is God's will, it is correct that He makes you one people. However, God can deceive whomever He wishes and guide

whomever He wishes. Truly, you will be asked to be accountable for what you have done" (QS. An-Nah1 [16]:93). Shihab interprets this as indicating that God does not intend for there to be just one homogeneous humanity, sharing a single inclination, thought pattern, religion, or set of principles. Rather, he suggests that God creates humanity with diverse characteristics and attributes, allowing individuals to excel and compete in virtue, fostering creativity and innovation. Constructively, individuals can cultivate the inherent qualities of their nature as stewards of creation. Healthy competition, according to Shihab, does not diminish respect for others. Instead, it is founded on fraternal love and is characterized by a culture of mutual respect; as emphasized in the preamble to the Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration, faith inspires individuals to see themselves as interconnected siblings, supported and loved. Through belief in God's grace, they are compelled to express fraternity by caring for the environment and supporting the most vulnerable. This call to action aims to alleviate poverty, mitigate conflicts, and address various global challenges, fostering unity and cooperation among people of faith for the betterment of future generations.

The construction of the Silaturahmi Tunnel and the interreligious collaboration at Walisanga exemplify a profound sense of shared fraternity. "Faith urges believers to regard each other as siblings." The tunnel linking the Istiqlal Mosque and the Cathedral, along with Walisanga, exemplifies what occurs when people of faith genuinely perceive each other as kin. The desire to engage with others is a reaffirmation of one's faith. However, not everyone seeks such encounters. Only those who recognize the uniqueness of others, acknowledging this diversity as divinely ordained, demonstrate a willingness to bridge the gap (van Es et al., 2021).

Globalization has transformed our world into a global village, facilitating the construction of bridges of encounter while diminishing the potential for erecting barriers. It can be argued that the tide of globalization, which encompasses the globe, is unstoppable. Islam advocates for the prohibition of all forms of coercion. The genuine propagation of faith always highlights the role of God, who grants individuals the utmost freedom to chart their paths. The primary function of religion is to instill a sense of security among its adherents. Therefore, there exists an inherent relationship between faith and security. A disrupted belief system undermines one's sense of security and well-being.

Freedom of Religion. The Quran and Sunnah stress that the validity of religion must be based on sincere submission to God. The source of religion is in the soul and human conscience. If there is a compulsion to believe, this goes against the conscience. Religious leaders and teachers are responsible for sharing their beliefs, while the individuals who hear their message are free to make their own decisions. "No one can be forced to embrace a religion (Islam). The true way is clearly distinct from the false way. Whoever turns from evil and has faith in God truly has taken hold of a very strong rope that will not break. God hears everything and knows everything" (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:256).

According to Shihab, the phrase “No one can be forced to embrace a religion” means that God wants every person to have peace. In this case, peace cannot be experienced if one’s soul is not at peace.

A claim of superiority is triggered by a different kind of disturbance. Consciousness of equality becomes unclear and could disappear from a person’s awareness if they think they are superior to others. This goes against the thrust of the Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration, which calls on everyone to recognize each other as equals. “In the name of the Lord, who created humanity with equal rights, responsibilities, and status, who has called us to live as sisters and brothers, to fill the earth and to acknowledge the values of goodness, love, and peace.” The Declaration continues, stating that freedom is a universal human right: Every person has a right to enjoy the freedom to believe, to think, to express themselves, and to act. Pluralism and the variety of religions, different races and skin colors, different sexes, and different languages are part of the Divine plan for humanity, which has been created by God. The Divine wisdom is the source from which comes the right to be free to believe, and to be different. Because of this, the use of force in religion and cultural usage must be rejected (Khoirurrijal, 2018).

The building of the tunnel between the Mosque and the Cathedral and the model of interreligious cooperation at Walisanga show the Islamic belief that humanity precedes a religious code. Religion is for the benefit of humanity, not vice versa. In addition, God does not need it. The tunnel and the school have not primarily been built to promote religion but to strengthen human ties. It is hoped that these constructions enable people to meet in a deep sense of this word. With this in mind, the words of Imam Ali bin Abi Thalib (559–661) have particular relevance: “The person whom you meet who is not a brother in religion is certainly a brother in human being.”

Relationships. Do good and act justly with everybody. This command is found in verse 8 of the Surah al-Mumthahinah. “God does not forbid you to do good and act justly towards those who do not attack you for religious reasons and do not expel you from your land. Truly, God favors those who act justly)” (QS. Al-Mumtahinah [60]:8).

According to Shihab, there is no obligation to view non-Muslims as adversaries. Muslims are encouraged to engage with anyone, as God has commanded fair treatment towards all good individuals, regardless of their religious affiliation. Religious identity should not obstruct objective assessment of issues. Muslims are instructed to pursue truth even in matters involving individuals of different faiths. Moreover, Muslims are directed to assist non-believers as long as they do not attack Islam or coerce them to abandon their homeland. The path of love should be embraced to ensure the dignity of all humanity, a principle emphasized in the Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration (Ja’afar, 2022).

The visions of Walisanga consist of fostering genuine faith and understanding of the One God, guiding people to emulate the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and establishing a robust religious foundation for life. They aim to educate discerning youth who embody justice in their perspectives and actions towards all.

The tunnel linking the two religious institutions of Islam and Catholic Christianity serves as inspiration for believers to forge new connections and break down the exclusivity and primordialism associated with religion. Believers are encouraged to take proactive steps in fostering healthy dialogue and a culture of tolerance and acceptance of differences. A proactive approach can help alleviate social and political tensions that burden any community.

Faith and Good Works Are the Way to Salvation. "Truly, believers, Jews, Christians, followers of Shabiin … Anyone who truly believes in God and has led a good life on Judgement Day will receive a reward from their Lord. They should not doubt, nor should they be down-hearted" (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:62). According to Shihab, this verse is speaking about the compassion of God who always opens the door for the faithful. God makes the right path known to all peoples, who believe and put their faith into practice. The role of the prophets, Moses, Jesus, and Muhamad PUBH, in the lives of the faithful, according to their respective faith traditions, is presumed.

The Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration echoes the same sentiments: a dialogical approach stresses that dialogue between the faithful of different religions means coming together and sharing spiritual, human, and social values. The following step is giving precedence to the highest moral values that are the ideal of all faiths. This also means avoiding unproductive debates.

It should be noted that terrorists have a claim on truth. They say their acts of terror are an integral part of faith and that they are putting that faith into practice. Responding to this claim, the Declaration says that what the terrorists are doing is not a religious act; but rather, the terrorists have hijacked religion for their cause. They have misinterpreted sacred texts and have played upon the negatives of life, such as hunger, poverty, injustice, oppression, and pride, which people experience. It is so important for financial and military support to be withdrawn from terrorist groups and to prevent them from using mass media to promote their cause. This is an international evil that threatens security and world peace. All forms and expressions of terrorism must be opposed (Basyir, 2020).

Evangelization. "Tell people about the way of your Lord wisely and teach well. Discuss with them in appropriate ways. Truly, your Lord knows who has gone astray along the path. The Lord knows best those who can receive guidance" (QS. An-Nahl [16]:125).

According to Shihab, this verse points to three kinds of evangelization that need to be adapted to different situations. Highly qualified experts are called to propagate their faith intelligently, using wise words appropriately. Lay people should use simpler methods, such as giving advice and using parables to teach. Those who follow other religious traditions are called to debate in fitting ways that avoid negativity, as virtue and evil compete in a person's soul (Hoesterey, 2020).

Good evangelization will bear lasting fruit. According to the Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration, a firm conviction invites people to be rooted in values of peace, maintain mutually held values, and promote human fraternity and a harmonious lifestyle.

It calls people to re-strengthen bonds of wisdom, justice, and love, to resurrect religious awareness in the youth so that future generations will be protected from the evils of materialism, not succumbing to the law of power but following the power of law.

The Walisanga School has outlined three primary missions:

1. To empower the school as a secure, well-maintained, and beloved institution with all necessary resources.
2. To foster an environment where students actively practice the virtues inherent in their faith.
3. To facilitate a deep understanding of life's true purpose, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing God and responding to His calling in the best possible manner. The success of these missions will be evident in the quality of evangelization that ensues.

The Silaturahmi Tunnel serves as a symbol of the innovative approaches taken by evangelists to foster opportunities for new evangelization. Just as there are multiple paths to Mecca, various forms and methods of evangelization exist. However, evangelization in the digital age presents unique challenges. In a webinar themed "Islamic Evangelization and Change in Society in the Digital Era" (November 21, 2021), Gus Mus noted that some individuals possess a strong understanding of religion but lack proficiency in information technology (IT). In contrast, others are proficient in IT but possess minimal religious knowledge.

Discussions

Indonesia is uniquely fortunate due to the development of wasathiyah Islam, or the middle path Islam, since its Islamization period in the mid-13th century. This form of Islam is characterized by qualities such as moderation (*tawashut*), balance (*tawazun*), justice (*i'tidal*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), reformism (*islah*), mutual cooperation (*ta'awun*), consultation (*syura/musyawarah*), love for the homeland (*muwathanah*), equality (*musawa*), and exemplariness (*qudwah*) (Rafi'i et al., 2020).

Implementing *wasathiyah* Islam in Indonesia extends beyond doctrinal matters and is evident in empirical, historical, sociological, and cultural realms. This is exemplified by the presence of various Islamic organizations across the archipelago, including but not limited to Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), al-Washaliyah, Persatuan Tarbiyah Islam (Perti), Mathla'ul Anwar, Persatuan Islam (Persis), Persatuan Umat Islam (PUI), Jamiatul Khair, al-Irsyad, Nahdlatul Wathan (NW), Alkhairaat, Yayasan Pendidikan Islam (Yapis), and many others. These organizations not only serve as the main pillars of Islam in Indonesia but also act as strongholds for upholding *wasathiyah* Islam in the region (Yanto, 2021).

Currently, *wasathiyah* Islam in Indonesia faces challenges from transnational Islam, which adheres to rigid, literal, and radical religious ideologies and practices. These ideologies and practices have infiltrated various *wasathiyah* Islamic institutions in Indonesia. Consequently, *wasathiyah* Islam in Indonesia requires ongoing revitalization and renewal. By pursuing these two aspects, *wasathiyah* Islam in Indonesia can become resilient against attempts to undermine it.

Despite undergoing revitalization and renewal, anomalies within Islam persist. Islam, revered as a religion of mercy to the universe (*rahmatan lil'alamin*), paradoxically exhibits hostility towards followers of other religions. As the majority religion tasked with protecting minorities, Islam often oppresses them. Notable instances include the dissolution of Catholic student groups praying the Rosary in South Tangerang, Banten (May 5, 2024). Similarly, three days later (Wednesday, May 8th, 2024), the congregation of the Protestant Church in Western Indonesia (GPIB) Benowo in Cerme Indah Housing Complex Blok P, Betiting Village, Cerme District, Gresik Regency, East Java, faced a similar incident. Minority Christians celebrating Christmas in Batu Gede Village, Cilebut District, Sukaraja Subdistrict, Bogor Regency, West Java (December 25, 2022) also experience oppression from the majority. These incidents and various others are digitally recorded and easily accessible. Notably, the series of bombings targeting several churches in Surabaya in May 2018 stands out as a grim reminder of such occurrences (Woodward, 2019).

The aforementioned anarchic actions attributed to Islam, as highlighted in the study, are believed to stem from external influences. Transnational ideologies, fostered by the impact of globalization, often target individuals who lack strong roots in Nusantara culture. Nusantara culture embodies Indonesian *wasathiyah* Islam, characterized by its friendly and inclusive nature, capable of accommodating diversity (Al Qurtuby, 2015).

This Indonesian Islamic ethos finds its foundation in verse 48 of Surah Al-Maidah in the Quran: "For each [religious following] We have appointed a law and a way. And if Allah had willed, He could have made you [of] one religion, but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you; so, race to [all that is] good. To Allah is your return all together, and He will [then] inform you concerning that over which you used to differ" (Quran 5:48).

Conclusion

"Islam as a mercy to the universe" always presumes an inclusive character of Islam. This inclusive character is mirrored in the Abu Dhabi Brotherhood Declaration, signed by the Grand Mufti Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, and the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis. The Silaturahmi Tunnel connecting the Istiqlal Mosque and the Catholic Cathedral in Jakarta also mirrors this, as does the Walisanga Muslim Boarding School in Ende, Flores, Indonesia.

The study of these three distinct entities yields several important insights.

Firstly, plurality is a deliberate creation of the Creator, emphasizing the diversity among human beings.

Secondly, fostering a wise attitude that respects and appreciates freedom of religion is crucial in promoting harmony and understanding among different religious communities.

Thirdly, it is imperative for individuals to treat others with justice and fairness, regardless of their religious beliefs or backgrounds.

Fourthly, recognizing the significance of faith and good deeds as pathways to salvation underscores the importance of spiritual practice in one's life.

Finally, effective evangelization efforts should embrace a multicultural approach, acknowledging and respecting the diverse cultural contexts in which it takes place.

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ARTICLE

University's Information Policy in a Mediatized Reality: Youth as the Main Target Audience

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ABSTRACT
One of the key challenges faced by Russian higher education institutions is the lack of effective long-term strategies for communicating their research, educational activities, and student development efforts to various target audiences such as scholars, students, prospective applicants, regulatory authorities, and international groups. This study aims to uncover the principles and key features of universities' information policies targeted at youth in Russia. The paper presents findings based on data obtained from a series of in-depth interviews (n = 17) with student representatives, vice-rectors, and department heads specializing in youth communication policy and pedagogical activities at Russian universities. Additionally, the study includes empirical data from a pilot survey conducted among students across four federal districts (n = 150). In the final section, the paper offers a set of key recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of media communication efforts with youth audiences.

KEYWORDS
mediatization, media communication, mediatization of research and education, university, information policy, youth

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Introduction

Efficient use of human capital is crucial for the strategic stability of states today, making it essential to educate the youth, who represent a key source of innovative potential for national progress. In the Russian context, this task is reflected in the document *Osnovy gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2025 goda* [Foundations of the state youth policy of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025][1], which sets a strategic priority "to create conditions for the formation of a harmonious, constantly improving, erudite, competitive, and caring individual, possessing a strong moral core, capable of adapting to changing conditions and receptive to new creative ideas" (Ob utverzhdenii Osnov, 2014; Trans. by Anna Gureeva—A. G.).

The primary goal of state youth policy in Russia is "to educate patriotic youth with independent thinking, a creative worldview, professional knowledge, a high level of culture—including interethnic communication—and the responsibility and capability for independent decision-making aimed at the prosperity of the state, its people, and their own families." The objectives specified in the document include "creating an information space that allows for personal growth, as well as enhancing the efficiency of information infrastructure use, aiming thereby to foster patriotic and civic upbringing of the youth, primarily accomplished by means of education" (Ob utverzhdenii Osnov, 2014; Trans. by A. G.).

Several researchers, notably Smirnov (2023), have advocated for a transforming model of state youth policy, highlighting the increasing role of the educational system, particularly higher educational institutions. A detailed analysis of youth policy concepts across leading Russian universities performed by the author of the present paper reveals several key focus areas: promotion of youth employment and entrepreneurship, fostering research and innovation engagement, and providing value-based guidance centered on patriotism, volunteerism, and public activism among young people. Additionally, universities prioritize socializing students through mechanisms like student self-governance and mentorship, empowering creativity, and promoting a healthy lifestyle to sustain young people's interest in wellness. These efforts underscore universities' evolving strategies in shaping youth policy and nurturing the development of young individuals in Russia.

The urgent need to study shifts in communication strategies among Russian universities is motivated by significant changes in the Russian higher education system. These changes include the sovereignization of science and higher education, which requires the development of comprehensive communication strategies to ensure the stability of the educational system. With full understanding of this task, the state has scaled up the support for universities that goes beyond financial and organizational aspects to include communication policy development (e.g., similar initiatives are embodied in the national project *Nauka*

[1] The document was approved by the Federal Government (Decree of November 11, 2014 No. 2403-r). The Russian Ministry of Education and Science, along with other relevant federal executive authorities, is responsible for its implementing.

i Universitety [Science and Universities][2] and *Prioritet 2030* [Priority 2030] academic leadership program)[3].

The rapid evolution of media trends requires universities to improve both internal and external communication strategies to effectively engage their target audiences. This is vital not only for the academic community but also for other stakeholders such as the state and society, who depend on well-functioning higher educational institutions. Since youth represent a primary audience for universities and are significant recipients of university communications, understanding their media consumption habits and communication preferences is essential for developing effective management strategies. Therefore, this study aims to uncover the principles and unique characteristics of university communication policies tailored specifically to youth.

Theoretical Framework

Mediatization as the Driving Force of University's Communication Efforts

In recent years, mediatization has become a crucial concept for studying the interaction between media, the state, and society. This theory has developed on multiple levels: it examines both the influence of media on society and social institutions, and the impact of technological and communication advancements on society (Arif, 2019; Hepp & Krotz, 2014; Hjarvard, 2008; Nim, 2017; Schulz, 2004; Silverstone, 2006).

We are now experiencing the third wave of mediatization, known as "deep mediatization." Each wave, driven by technological developments such as the printing press, telephone, radio, television, Internet, personal computers, and big data, adds new dimensions while preserving previous ones. Deep mediatization, coinciding with digitalization and datafication, is characterized by the integration of social practices with digital media.

The idea of mediatization as social change through shifts in communication models was first introduced by M. McLuhan in his *Understanding Media: The Extensions of*

[2] The national project *Nauka i Universitety* [Science and Universities] aims to elevate Russia into the top-ten countries globally for research and innovation. It operates under Presidential Decree No. 204 of May 7, 2018 *O natsionalnykh tseliakh i strategicheskikh zadachakh razvitiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2024 goda* [On the national goals and strategic objectives of the development of the Russian Federation for the period until 2024] (2018) and the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 474 of July 21, 2020 *O natsionalnykh tseliakh razvitiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2030 goda* [On the national development goals of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030]. The implementation period of the national project is from January 10, 2018 till December 31, 2024. The national project encompasses four federal initiatives: *Integratsiia* [Integration], aimed at integrating science, higher education, and industry; *Issledovatel'skoe liderstvo* [Research Leadership], focusing on large-scale scientific and technological projects in priority research areas; *Infrastruktura* [Infrastructure], dedicated to developing research and training infrastructure; and *Kadry* [Staff], which aims to enhance human capital for regional, industrial, and research and development sectors.

[3] *Prioritet 2030* [Priority 2030] program aims to create over 100 progressive modern universities in Russia by 2030 that would serve as centres of scientific, technological, and socio-economic development. The selection of participants for the program is regulated by the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 729 of May 13, 2021 *O merakh po realizatsii programmy strategicheskogo akademicheskogo liderstva "Prioritet 2030"* [On implementation measures of the Priority 2030 Strategic Academic Leadership].

Man (1964). The scholar invited particular attention to the role of the communication environment itself, expanding the focus beyond the channelled content, deviating from the concept of medium and arguing against the theory of mediation that views journalism merely as a channel of communication.

The term "mediatization" was coined by the British researcher J. Thompson in 1993 (Thompson, 1993) to describe attribution of media logics and media forms to the fundamental elements of socio-cultural reality. In modern research, the term serves as an umbrella concept (Kolomiets, 2014) referring to the growing influence of modern communication technologies and embracing the notions of media content, media organizations, media effects, media logics, as well as media consumption and its significance, individual and social. Mediatization captures the increasingly indispensable nature and vital importance of media for various areas of public life, resulting in qualitative changes in individual daily routines.

The ideas around mutual influence of media and social routines were advanced by a cohort of scholars including Krotz and Hepp (2014), Hjarvard (2008), Lundby (2014), etc. They further studied mediatization, querying specifically how communication environment and processes impact the society. At the end of the 20th century, multiple researchers including Porter and Millar (1985), Drucker (1988) first recognized the onset of "information revolution," which has made a drastic impact on all aspects of organizational life that still reverberates today (Zammuto et al., 2007). For instance, information and ICT not only significantly enhance organizational performance (Choi et al., 2007; Hitt & Brynjolfsson, 1996), but they can also dramatically change organizational processes, structures and culture, as well as duty regulations for employees (Markus, 2004). Given its ever-increasing importance, information is often compared to the "DNA of the organization," i.e., if the information flow is severely restricted or compromised, the organization can wither and die (Peppard et al., 2007).

Today, any social communication is predominantly mediated and cannot be isolated from its deeply mediatized nature. Communication of this kind is increasingly hosted on digital platforms, social media above all, joined recently by messengers. Most receptive to innovation and digital technology, the youth are the most active audience of such media (Gureeva, 2020). According to the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM) for 2023, young people aged 18–24 normally spend more than eight hours on the Internet every day, which significantly exceeds the average for the Russians in general, that is 4.5 hours (Sotsial'nye Seti i Messendzhery, 2023). Success of digital media is primarily driven by the demand of the modern information society for fast access to information. Moreover, social networks are oftentimes treated by the modern youth not only as the major channel and source of information, but also as a platform where they develop and articulate their socio-political and civic stance.

A lasting concern among some researchers who study the impact of mediatization on society is media dependence and the resulting loss of autonomy (see, e.g, Scott & Orlikowski, 2014). The use of media gradually ceases to be perceived as an optional or additional choice, becoming mandatory. Deep mediatization implies that application of certain media technologies is no longer a matter of individual choice. Flexibility

generated by mediatization entails a peculiar dialectic between individual choice and compliance with the structural demands of digital transformation.

The above-described effects of mediatization trigger reverse social mechanisms that dampen the pace and intensity by which media technologies and media logics spread into different areas of social life. Mechanisms of this sort form today's scholarly discourse on de-mediatization (Gavra & Bykova, 2022; Hepp, 2017; Rauch, 2014). However, academic discourse does not always oppose de-mediatization to the growing social impact of media. According to the famous mediatization theorist Hepp (2017), deep mediatization is neither homogeneous nor linear but a complex, intrinsically contradictory and sometimes conflicting process that integrates people's attempts to "cope" with their lives being completely infiltrated with media. Giving up on certain types of digital media, people resort to the "oases of de-mediatization" in order to disrupt the constant connection to the entire world at least for a short while. In other words, deep mediatization offers space for self-reflection and controlled escape, thus remaining manageable for people as individuals and media consumers (Hepp, 2017).

Information Policy of the Modern University: Primary Objectives and Development Trends

The term "information policy," originating in the field of public administration, refers to a power instrument whose significance has soared over the past decades, leading to the emergence of the concept "information state" (Braman, 2006). While the classic narrow definition of information policy focuses on access to government information, the term was first used by governments in the context of propaganda efforts during World War I (Braman, 2011).

Targeted information policy developed and applied by each educational institution proves key to efficiently solve a whole range of information transparency issues (Asmolova, 2020). Analysis of definitions around the concept of "information policy" reveals the underlying concepts of "system" and "activity" (Asmolova, 2019). Information strategy of an educational institution can be described as an organized process managed by the institution with a view to addressing users' information needs, developing structure and content of information resources in accordance with legal regulations, selecting efficient means to inform and assess the quality of information resources. As an actor of information and communication activities, the university pursues an information strategy through a sequence of actions aiming to achieve informative-motivational results and ensure participation in public dialogue.

Value system that lies at the core of an information strategy has its share in setting goals and objectives of the educational institution and in identifying the best methods and tools to achieve them. Studies show that in the discourse of foreign academic institutions, the term "information policy" does not describe strategies to build university's positive image, but normally refers to a set of rules on the use of information systems and a list of work standards concerned with safety and accessibility of information. Whereas promotion of socially significant information about the organization is commonly outlined by the rules of engagement with the press and termed as Media Relations (Kalachinskii, 2012).

Academic research is substantially lacking in large-scale studies centred on the analysis of information policy and media communication, in particular, in the higher educational setting. The issue of university's information policy in the competitive higher educational environment lies at the intersection of different theoretical and empirical areas, including media communication, journalism, education and communication sociology, marketing research and political science, international relations, etc. However, a number of papers on strategic management in higher school touches upon the problems of competitiveness and media communication work (Asaul & Kaparov, 2007; Bok, 2003; Clark, 1998; Faiustov, 2021; Fatkhutdinov, 2005; Filippov et al., 2005; Gorokhov et al., 2018; Grudzinskiy, 2004; Gureeva, 2017; Rosovsky, 1995; Shevchenko, 2017; Sokolov, 1996). The aforementioned papers explore methods and strategies for university promotion through various media, including social networks, official websites, and digital mass media platforms. They highlight specific promotion practices for each platform and provide extensive statistics on the communication effectiveness of leading Russian universities. Drawing on this experience, the scholars propose specific guidelines to improve university positioning.

Information dissemination has grown to become a centrepiece for strategic plans of universities. Troubled over their position in the specialized international rankings, universities begin to reflect on their information dissemination strategies and their institutional websites (Perez-Montoro, 2014). On the one hand, university's information resources are normally structured by types of audience (Morville & Rosenfeld, 2006), including five large target groups: future students (applicants), lecturers (teaching staff), researchers (scholarly community), students (and graduates), and administration. On the other hand, such classification is incomplete, since it fails to integrate business community, state authorities, and foreign target audiences.

The success of a university's administration, business operations, research, and educational activities largely depends on effectively creating and managing information assets. Universities should adhere to principles of freedom of information by allowing public access to records for legitimate research purposes. Managing information systems is one approach that can enhance universities' competitiveness (Dachyar & Dewi, 2015). However, many global rankings fall short in accurately evaluating the performance of Russian universities, as they fail to capture the full complexity of the national higher education system.

Methodology

A major challenge faced by Russian universities is the lack of efficient long-term strategies for communicating their research, education, and student development activities to various target audiences, including scholars, students, applicants, regulatory authorities, and international groups. To address this challenge, an effective communication strategy should be based on leading research in the field. However, the mediatization of university activities in Russia remains understudied and underrepresented in academic publications. Consequently, most contemporary studies focus on case studies of the scholars' own universities, which results in a lack

of comprehensive analyses comparing multiple educational organizations using various criteria, especially qualitative ones. This gap is further compounded by the fact that while there is substantial research from 2010–2015, significant geopolitical, social, economic, and technological changes have occurred since then, necessitating updated and more robust communication strategies.

Due to the increased importance of universities' work with the younger generation, actively articulated at the state level, it is necessary to continue conceptualizing this target audience and specifying its characteristics. To build effective media communications with young people today, universities must consider emerging trends. The research question that is particularly relevant to the academic community and that has guided the purpose of this paper is to identify and systematize the features of young people as the target audience of university media communications.

The objectives of the study are (a) to describe the significant patterns of media consumption among modern students, (b) to identify their content, format, and platform preferences, and (c) to systematize the challenges universities face in building media communications. Additionally, the study aims to highlight effective practices to overcome these challenges. The novelty of this work stems from incorporating feedback not only from experts from several Russian universities but also from the young people themselves, the primary target audience of these media communications. This methodological strategy enabled us to formulate conclusions that reflect the perspectives of all actors involved.

The practical significance of the study lies in the recommendations for improving universities' information policy, presented in the conclusion.

This paper provides results drawing on data from a series of in-depth interviews (n = 17) with two groups of informants: information policy experts (vice-rectors of Russian federal universities and major higher educational institutions) and students of Russian universities aged 18–25; and a pilot survey (n = 150) among students aged 18–25 from four federal districts: Central, Volga, Southern, and Siberian. All in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face in the fall of 2023; a pilot survey carried out in the summer of 2023.

The first group of informants comprised information policy experts representing vice-rectors and heads of departments supervising information activities in Russian universities (n = 9). Jurisdiction of this kind often lies with the vice-rector for student development, which highlighting the crucial role of effective information management in the university's extracurricular and student development programs.

The second part of in-depth interviews features students aged 18–25, mostly majoring in journalism and media communications, believed to be the most informed and progressive media consumers (n = 8).

Questions for the expert interview are divided into clusters. The first cluster deals with the specifics of target audiences in university communication, in particular, information needs of young adults as key recipients of messages in this regard; while the second one centres on features of content published on Internet sources of educational organizations. The interviews were analysed using an open coding method, interpretations of in-depth interview informants are selectively presented in

this paper. To facilitate presentation of respondents from different groups, quotes by experts supervising communication policies in Russian universities are marked as E1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8/9, and quotes by students are marked as S1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8.

Students were also surveyed using an online questionnaire with closed questions, which included an "other" option for participants to provide their own answers if the available choices were not suitable. The first cluster of questions revolves around the patterns of youth media consumption, while the second aims to assess the respondents' awareness of youth policy issues. The pilot nature of this study, along with its small sample size (n = 150) and representativity issues, can be considered limitations. However, the results presented in this paper can still contribute to the discussion on the efficiency of traditional communication approaches between universities and youth in social media spaces.

Results

University Media Communication With the Youth: Features and Trends as Perceived by the Expert Community and Young Audiences

The extent to which operations by different economic and social actors are mediated has become a key criterion for assessing their efficiency (Vartanova, 2009). Mediatized reality has brought about new professional activities as well as the need to communicate both general performance and significant achievements to the public. Consequently, the mediatization of Russian higher education, a critical social institution, is a priority in national educational policy.

The mediatization of university activities aims to create a positive image of higher education in Russia, encourage young people to obtain higher education, and promote specific training programs, particularly in fields such as IT and engineering, which are in high demand in the labor market. Through their mediatization efforts, universities also seek to attract younger teaching staff, showcase scientific achievements, and position themselves on international platforms. Currently, the information activities of Russian universities focus on several major areas of interaction, including communication with society, the state, and the professional community. As one of our experts has put it,

> *it is our duty as a university to efficiently convey values approved by the Russian Federation. Moreover, universities are communities that accumulate the highest knowledge, culture and depth, the cumulative knowledge and experience that they should bring home to the public.* (E9; Trans. by A. G.)

A university's target audiences can be divided into external and internal according to the vector of media communication. External target audiences include applicants and their parents, employers, state authorities and public structures, grantors, and larger academic community; whereas internal group is mainly represented by the university staff and students. In this context, media communication with external audiences such as applicants, parents, employers, state authorities, the academic community, and the public is a high priority. Both external and internal groups are predominantly composed of youth.

A unique feature of academic organizations is the high likelihood of audience members transitioning between internal and external groups. Therefore, developing corporate information resources that effectively attract and inform both internal and external audiences is crucial.

University target audiences can be grouped into several categories: applicants and their parents, including those applying for Master's, PhD, and second higher education programs; foreign students and applicants; the state, including the Russian Ministry of Science and Higher Education and various educational authorities; university management, including administration and the board of trustees; teaching staff and university members; students; the Russian and international academic community; graduates; employers; and the mass media.

The target audiences defined in research are further confirmed by the surveyed expert practitioners.

> *There are three major target audiences. The first group comprises applicants and their parents, with a subgroup of foreign students. Secondly, there is a group of students and their parents, followed by a third group represented by the teaching staff. These are the three core groups that are further supplemented by other clusters, such as academic community, industrial partners and potential employers, state, graduates, external students, schoolchildren, and the wider population of the region.* (E1; Trans. by A. G.)

> *There are two groups of target audiences: external and internal, both including the youth—applicants, students, graduates and young scientists, who become primary focus of our media communication strategy.* (E7; Trans. by A. G.)

The majority of universities combine different target audiences into larger groups:

> *Since not all applicants make their decisions independently, we do not separate them from their parents, and attempt to package information for both within one piece.* (E7; Trans. by A. G.)

The youth are mainly present in two groups of target audiences, applicants and students, whose paramount importance is highlighted by the experts:

> *Applicants are a vitally important target audience. These are high-schoolers of 10th and 11th grade. While students are certainly the most active audience, potential applicants and their parents hold more significance for us. … I would prioritize applicants, since they are the future of the university.* (E2; Trans. by A. G.)

> *Admission being essential to university functioning, applicants and their parents constitute two crucial audience groups that consume around 70% of our efforts. The third group in terms of importance is, naturally, the students. It is vital that they feel part of the university in all forms, be it research or any other area. Without students, their achievements, initiatives and complaints, there would be no education.* (E4; Trans. by A. G.)

Students themselves highlight the particular importance of targeting applicants through media communication:

> *Taken together, applicants are a larger audience group that consumes content more greedily, as it is more relevant to them. I think students resort to university*

resources for information less often, perhaps due to the fact that they have already entered the educational institution, and their ardent interest ... has subsided, or it might be due to more pressing information needs that are better satisfied by other resources. (S3; Trans. by A. G.)

Efficient information strategy for universities requires a nuanced approach towards target audiences, and the youth in particular. Beside applicants, universities strive to establish communication with their parents, who largely influence young people's choice of future specialization:

We have 23 institutes, all of them are different. ... Lawyers, for example, are more in tune with their parents, since legal education, oftentimes being a dynastic, family decision, is most frequently opted for by parents, ... paid education is also up to parents. Other institutes, such as the gastronomic faculty, are more focused on applicants. Still others consider students as their primary target audience. For some, partners constitute major target audience, so they are centred on building active interaction with companies lacking in human resources and technologies. There is no one-size-fits-all kind of scenario because the setting varies too much. Everyone is different—biologists, chemists, mathematicians, analysts, gastronomes, librarians, historians, philosophers, journalists, architects, and many more. (E5; Trans. by A. G.)

Apart from the youth and their parents, experts stress the importance of working with faculty as the main agents of young people's socialization during their studies.

If we group applicants and their parents into one category and students into another, then the third one will comprise the university staff. While being an internal audience, it is large in number and consists of the major ambassadors greeting students in classroom. They carry the university spirit and communicate with students, passing on knowledge; they work in direct contact with students. Their close communication with students makes them a highly important target audience. (E4; Trans. by A. G.)

Each target audience has preferred channels to access information about the educational institution. Applicants use social networks, their parents are informed primarily through traditional media, while faculty heavily rely on the website of their organization:

Based on their role in university communication, I would rank website, social media, and mass media the following way: first come social media, after that mass media, then the website. Why do social media come first? Since I mostly consume information on social media, such as VK[4] *and Telegram*[5]*, I have no need to look for information anywhere else. This platform is of higher priority, as it is convenient to communicate and consume content in one place. Next come mass media. Since my parents consume mass media content and share what they read/hear with me, I appear to indirectly consume mass media content as*

[4] VK (short for its original name VKontakte) is a Russian online social media and social networking service. https://vk.com VK™ is a trademark of VK.com Ltd.

[5] Telegram™ is a trademark of Telegram Group Inc., its operational center is based in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

well. To my mind, website is visited least commonly, and faculty might be the only audience to actively use it. (S4; Trans. by A. G.)

We are aware that social networks are preferable for everyone, both for the youth and their parents, but we still try to give full attention to the website and its content in attempt to make it more appealing, because it is, as a matter of fact, our official representation on the Internet. (E6; Trans. by A. G.)

Data from our pilot survey also indicates that social media content dominates youth media consumption patterns: 98% of young people use social networks every day. Communication (52%) and latest news (24%) are major motives for using social media among the students. Of the respondents, 16% access social media primarily for entertainment, while 8% seek educational content. It is especially noteworthy that being active users of social networks, more than half of the respondents (54%) have already practiced digital detox, when they deliberately abstained from digital resources (social media, messengers, etc.) for a specific period. Moreover, every tenth person does this on a regular basis (12%), e.g., every weekend. Similar results indicating the growing popularity of digital detox practices among young people can be found in several national and foreign studies (Efimova & Semenov, 2020; Rauch, 2014; Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). Media use by the "digital youth" is marked by independence, thoughtfulness and awareness (Dunas, 2022).

Abstention from digital resources is motivated by the belief that they consume too much time that can be spent otherwise (30%), fatigue from online communication (26%), and abundance of content (22%). Some respondents limit social network access to prove they can spend time effectively without digital resources (8%). Of particular interest are responses of those who selected "other" (14%) in our online questionnaire and shared their reasons for temporary withdrawals from social networks. Some people perceive online platforms as work environment and strive to leave their "digital office" for the weekend: *"I use social networks and messengers primarily for work, while on weekends I try to put business aside and make time for myself and my loved ones in the offline world"; "my work is related to social media, so I need a break from time to time", "rest, emotional discharge"* (Trans. by A. G.). Others find that "digital detox" is vital to improve the psycho-emotional background: *"I get tired of the Internet, yet, for me it is impossible due to work"; "news made me feel anxious, resulting further in physical discomfort and health issues"; "[social media] make me depressed"; "[I practised digital detox] to improve my mental well-being"* (Trans. by A. G.).

Universities play a vital role in modern society; they are essential for advancing knowledge and laying scientific foundations for future generations. Effective information policies in the digital age must uphold humanistic ethical ideals to achieve balance, ensure sustainable development, and protect the rights and freedoms of all individuals in society.

When discussing the specifics of interaction with the modern youth, many experts stressed the importance of channelling meaningful content:

We are now focusing more on promoting values, but this is our side of the story. As far as the audience is concerned, there is a demand for useful content packaged

in an entertaining, accessible format. They (the youth) have clip thinking, unable to perceive long formats, which also impacts our strategy. We witness frantic demand on podcasts, VK clips, YouTube[6] *shorts—these are very much in demand. Values are extremely important. Take one example, the last presidential decree, which has 21 values set out. Now it is impossible to talk about patriotism too much, as it often provokes rejection. Too many of them (the youth) have been raised in liberal tradition for too long. Values are an apt place to start, gently yet persistently, aligning them more with the state's interests. Apart from the state itself, these efforts should be spearheaded by those who influence opinions of adolescents: family, parents, community, faculty, professors.* (E1; Trans. by A. G.)

Our experts point out that the youth have the following key features as a target audience of media communication:

First of all, they are passive. Secondly, young people are less toxic than those aged 20+, which is quite an advantage. This is somehow seen from the comments and their online behaviours. Perhaps being more passive, they write fewer comments. Moreover, their comments are not meaningful, they are more on an emotional side, so they can confine their opinion expression to emojis. I cannot say that this is a drawback, it is merely their own communication culture. (E1; Trans. by A. G.)

At the same time, such observation might as well be explained by a discrepancy between the content of university's social media and the needs of young people.

The survey among the youth revealed a relatively low level of students' awareness of the primary areas of the state youth policy: 44% indicated that they have a general understanding of but lack knowledge about the primary areas of the youth policy and specific measures undertaken in this regard. Only 24% of respondents have a detailed understanding of the youth policy, while 22% of survey participants rated their level of awareness as not high enough: *"I just know about the term, yet I struggle to explain its meaning and essence"*. Of the respondents, 10% found this concept unfamiliar. In most cases, young people first learned about the youth policy when studying (42%), from online media (20%) and traditional media (16%), and every tenth from family members, friends, or colleagues.

Speaking of social media content on youth policy, 42% of respondents said that their feeds currently lack such content. This topic goes completely unnoticed by 30% of young people on social media, while 28% regularly encounter related posts. Understanding social media algorithms is crucial for effectively reaching young audiences, but it remains a challenging area, as noted by nearly all experts interviewed:

The Zen[7]*, which is, from our perspective, the second most popular social media platform after VK, requires understanding of algorithms. If set up properly, Zen can help any content skyrocket.* (E7; Trans. by A. G.)

I envision Telegram coming forward more and more, as it is very convenient, fast and efficient. VK's feed functions in a peculiar way, and after countless attempts to deconstruct the way promotion and targeting works on that platform, we have

[6] YouTube™ is a trademark of Google Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries.

[7] Zen™ is a trademark of Dzen.Platforma LLC.

come to realize that it is a toss of a dice. Which is why professional community that deals with media promotion will increasingly resort to Telegram. Clearly, Telegram is not for video uploads, but according to our experience, posting videos from VK on Telegram leads to growth in viewership because our content does not go unnoticed by the audience in Telegram. Whereas VK renders us invisible unless the audience deliberately chooses to access our channel's feed. It is not quite clear to us why but this happens. (E9; Trans. by A. G.)

The increasing media activity at Russian universities is closely tied to the expanding capabilities of the Internet as a vital platform for informing the public. To ensure a university's post stands out amidst a vast array of diverse content, it is crucial to select specific angles to present each topic.

Fast-growing and frequently changing, social media development is inconceivable without the factor of "emotion," emotional presentation of information. Entering the reader's (mindset) on social media constitutes an emotional aspect of a kind. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that social media are monitored by the wall (i.e., algorithmic content feed), and users do not access specific pages. Therefore, it is of vital importance to be aware of the criteria that underlie algorithmic prioritization of content in the user feed. (E7; Trans. by A. G.)

Being sensitive to the current trends of youth media consumption in terms of topics and formats would allow universities to be more efficient in building their information policy and making priority topics more "visible" for their target audience. Students stress the importance of exclusive educational content that advances their understanding of complex topics:

Educational content remains very popular with the youth. Naturally, there is also demand for news, agenda, and expert opinion, i.e. content from people who are well versed in certain areas. (S1; Trans. by A. G.)

Experts believe that universities should deliver serious content through personal stories and by highlighting the practical value of "complex" topics:

Entertaining content is important for young people, they "dig it" ... at the same time, they try to take on serious topics as well, driven by the need to scrutinize processes and understand underlying mechanisms. There is a common belief that they (the youth) are generally unconcerned with science, but they can be lured through technology transfer and technological entrepreneurship; there are entire infrastructures for this. Once they see how science can be applied, going beyond research for the sake of research, once they learn how it can be converted into startups. Our graduate biochemists have developed a line of ecological household chemicals becoming Forbes millionaires. Once they see that chemical laboratories can manufacture practical products, and there is an idea to be presented, funded, operationalized via technology, conveyed to consumers—they take interest and delve into the topic. There is a portion of students who are keenly interested in this, and when we talk about Master's programs that include scientific research, they wish to become "Elon Musks" of a kind, smart and commercially successful. This is what seems appealing to them. (E3; Trans. by A. G.)

As for specific content strategies, many experts stress the significance of content authorship:

> *Content produced by the youth works better, because they pay attention to people they know. The more content is produced by the students themselves, the better it will be perceived. To my mind, content policy should be changed through cultivating opinion leaders on social media who will convey the meanings.* (E7; Trans. by A. G.)

Students' involvement in implementing the university's information policy positively influences the perception of the its brand within the youth community (Mukhamadullin et al., 2023).

The need to personalize content of university resources is also pointed out by the surveyed students.

> *Everyone wants to see and hear unique information that is not to be found anywhere else and that captures attention. People's attention is attracted by other people. Very few actually seek anonymized information. Personally, I would like to hear about successful people who went big, for instance, thanks to the project they created at our university from scratch.* (S2; Trans. by A. G.)

> *I prefer to consume content through personal stories, that is when general information is told through personalization.* (S4; Trans. by A. G.)

Conciseness and modern visual design can be cast as yet another key element of media communication between the university and the youth.

> *My information needs are as follows: text should be visually literate and well-designed, so as not to be too long. Simultaneously, supporting information should be present in cards or in audio format in the context of podcasting. Information should be verified and reliable, while its presentation should allow for the easy perception. My habits have changed with the development of the Internet. Previously not so important, today visualization holds everything together. And my needs have changed accordingly.* (S4; Trans. by A. G.)

Keeping up with young audiences' demands for quality audiovisual content helps universities increase the engagement of their audiences on social networks. Recent content analysis reveals that photos published by the top 50 universities from Shanghai Ranking on their social media accounts generate the highest number of likes and shares, and video posts generate more shares than text-only messages (Fähnrich et al., 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

A key goal of Russia's state youth policy is to create an information space that promotes personal growth and efficiently uses the information infrastructure, fostering professional development and patriotic and civic education through educational means. Thus, new methods of engaging the target audience and improving media communication between universities and their youth audience are crucial for academia, the state, and society.

The information policy of Russian universities requires significant revision. On the one hand, universities are key to implementing state policies; on the other, they are engaged in constant competition for students, human resources, and funding. This competition complicates strategies for the dissemination of information in academia, especially given the deep mediatization of social routines.

Mediatization, a defining feature of modern society, has deeply penetrated social routines, making any activity without media coverage effectively invisible. External audiences, not directly involved in university activities, cannot access the true reality of life in the university community. However, accessible university news especially regarding scientific discoveries, achievements, business reputation, and educational pathways is crucial in influencing young people's decisions to pursue higher education and choose specific institutions. Public information about university events and achievements serves as the primary connection between society and the academic world.

Mediatization in all spheres of public life has influenced state efforts as well. One of the priority tasks of state youth policy is to create an information space that promotes personal growth and efficiently uses the information infrastructure, aiming thereby to foster professional development and patriotic and civic education among young people. The education sector, especially higher educational institutions, is primarily responsible for addressing these challenges. Therefore, proper management of universities' information assets is critical for the effective implementation of state youth policy.

To ensure the success of a university's information policy, proper allowance must be made for the impact of "de-mediatization" on all target audiences, specifically on the youth. According to the 2021 survey, the modern youth all over the world revisit their media consumption habits more frequently than other age groups, striving to build healthier relationships with social media by limiting the time of use (The Ultimate Social Media Trends Report, n.d.). It is, therefore, necessary to realign information flows and content strategies with the latest trends and specifics, including social media algorithms.

The following recommendations to enhance digital communication between universities and the youth might be proposed based on the data obtained through our interviews with experts and students as well as an online survey of Russian students.

First of all, a university's information policy requires a nuanced approach towards target audiences. Modern media communication strategies are multilayered, involving not only efforts to engage applicants and students but also separate work with their parents and faculty, who are key influencers on young people's identity formation. Target audiences vary in preferred information channels: applicants primarily use social media and spend over eight hours online daily, parents rely more on mass media, and faculty extensively use their institution's website. Therefore, universities should develop official social media resources to cater to young people and create a network of informal blogs to share student perspectives on university life.

Secondly, a clear understanding of target audiences' information needs in terms of content, format, and technology is necessary to increase youth engagement with universities. Although entertainment is often more popular with young people, it is essential to create meaningful information flows and guide the audience through complex topics. Additionally, the trend of de-mediatization, where young people aim

to limit their media consumption, calls for a more selective approach to content. This trend includes individual and collective practices of deliberate limitation or avoidance of mediatized communication and conscious media withdrawal in certain contexts. In their media use, the "digital youth" demonstrate independence, thoughtfulness, and awareness. Our research shows that more than half of students from different parts of Russia have practiced digital detox, consciously abstaining from social networks and messengers for a certain period. Moreover, one in ten does this regularly, for example, every weekend. By independently controlling their engagement and being selective in media consumption, young people act as active stakeholders in the media communication space.

As far as social media are concerned, understanding mechanisms behind algorithms remains a daunting challenge to building an efficient information strategy. At the same time, experts generally agree that, when dealing with serious and complex information, universities should present content primarily through short personal multimedia stories, preferably authored by young people, and necessarily marked by a strong emotional component and articulated practical significance. Conciseness and modern visual design are other important components of media communication between universities and the youth because it greatly increases the chances that such content will be shared on social media, going "viral."

Modern universities are keenly focused on establishing effective communication with their target audiences, which requires a structured vision of their diverse interests and research into their behaviors and media preferences. The youth represent the largest and most dynamically shifting audience for universities. Implementing a systematic information strategy based on technological trends and modern media consumption patterns will not only enhance media communication with the youth but also bolster the overall effectiveness of initiatives supporting Russian youth.

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[8] Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

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ARTICLE

On Professional Values Under a State of War: Exile Journalists From Ukraine in Russia

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ABSTRACT
This paper discusses the case of exile journalists from Ukraine who moved to Russia between 2014 and 2022. What, in terms of journalistic norms, was unacceptable to them in the Ukrainian journalistic field? What did they find problematic in this respect in Russia? These were the basic questions driving the research, in the course of which 15 exile journalists were interviewed; their answers were analysed using Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. The findings presented in the paper show that, despite all the difficulties of their personal situations, exile journalist still consider professional values such as independence and truth-telling to be important, continuing to use these normative yardsticks to measure the quality of the journalistic condition. The biggest concern that most of the informants shared was that journalists in both Russia and Ukraine used the language of hatred and discrimination toward political and cultural others, that is so-called antagonistic discourse that only contribute to the spiralling of violence and can never help in reaching peace. These findings allow the suggestion that by occupying a unique position from which to witness the contingency of hegemonic orders exile journalists advocating for peace may re-affirm the values of human dignity and peaceful coexistence, two basic principles of the journalistic profession, as identified by UNESCO.

KEYWORDS
exile journalists, Ukraine, Russia, journalistic norms, critical discourse analysis, antagonistic discourse, hate speech.

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Introduction

As of March 2024, according to the United Nations, about six million refugees from Ukraine have been recorded globally (6,486,000), with more than a million of them (1,212,585) registered in Russia. The exact number of Russian-speaking journalists from Ukraine who left the country for Russia after February 24, 2022, the beginning of Russia's special military operation (SMO), is unknown, but there are numerous well-known examples. Some, like Dmitry Vasilets, run personal blogs on Russian information platforms such as RuTube[1], while others like Taras Sidorets, work in diaspora media such as Mriya[2]; many collaborate with Russian news outlets, e.g., Yuri Podolyaka, a regular contributor political talk-shows on Channel One (Russia). After moving to Russia in 2022, these and other reporters joined their fellow professionals from Ukraine who relocated to Russia several years earlier, after the Maidan revolution of 2014.

The overturning of the Ukrainian government as a result of the Maidan led to the uprising in Donbass and the creation of two republics, which declared themselves independent from Ukraine. Activists in this separatist movement were labelled "terrorists" by the new Kiev government, and an "anti-terrorist operation" (ATO) was launched against the region of the rebellion in April 2014. Journalists who presented the Donbass uprising as legitimate local protest against the unconstitutional overthrowing of power in Kiev were declared "the accomplices of terrorists," "pro-Russian propagandists," and the "enemies of the Ukrainian people" (Baysha, 2018).

In the aftermath of the Maidan, many Russian-speaking journalists left Ukraine for Russia to avoid the fate of Oles Buzina, Ruslan Kotsaba, Dmitry Vasilets, Kirill Vishinsky, Vasiliy Muravitsky, Yevgeniy Timonin, Pavel Volkov, Oleg Sagan, Elena Boiko, and other oppositional journalists who were arrested or killed after 2014 for performing their professional duties (Baysha, 2023; Cohen, 2022; Marcetic, 2023; Myrolub, 2022; Yasinsky, 2022).

The second big wave of journalists relocating from Ukraine to Russia occurred after February 24, 2022, when Russia launched the SMO. As a result, all oppositional political parties were banned in Ukraine, and a unified telethon called "United News #UARAZOM" was launched, making independent reporting impossible (Zelensky put into effect, 2022). The President of Ukraine, Vladimir Zelensky, justified these moves with the importance of a "unified information policy" under martial law (Ze!President, 2022a). According to Zelensky, anybody who linked the ongoing war with NATO expansion and the interests of the military-industrial complex of the United States would be considered a mouthpiece for Russia (Ze!President, 2022b). Numerous Ukrainian journalists and bloggers, including Dmitry Dzhangirov, Yuri Tkachev, Yan Taksyur, Dmitry Skvortsov, and Nikolai Sidorenko, were arrested on these grounds in the spring of 2022, after the SMO began (Baysha, 2023; Cohen, 2022; Marcetic, 2023; Myrolub, 2022; Yasinsky, 2022). To avoid a similar fate, many oppositional journalists left Ukraine for Russia. This paper considers their assessment of the state of journalistic fields in both states.

[1] https://rutube.ru

[2] https://rutube.ru/channel/30465865/

Exile Journalism: Literature Review

By "exile journalists," we usually mean the producers of media content who "have been forced to relocate abroad due to issues of limited press freedom, political conflict, or persecution in their home country" (Crete-Nishihata & Tsui, 2023, p. 297). Exile journalists may or may not relocate abroad together with media organizations (Cook, 2016); they may act independently, producing their own content and making money as bloggers. Others, if their language abilities allow, may join local media organizations. These are the cases, and more specifically Russian-speaking journalists from Ukraine who have relocated to Russia, that are the focus of this study.

Our research interest was informed by academic studies suggesting that the mainstream journalistic discourse about core professional values may be considered secondary or of little concern by media workers within non-Western cultural milieus and in dangerous contexts (Bishara, 2013; Harb, 2011; Mellado, 2020; Ogunyemi, 2017; Waisbord, 2013). For journalists under constant threat, the relevance of the dominant U.S. approach to "objective" journalism may be questioned, argues Lisa Brooten (2006), for example. In her view, the definitions of the concepts "media independence" and "censorship" must be seen as "provisional and contested, given the various pressures brought to bear on journalists" (Brooten, 2006, p. 354).

Omar Al-Ghazzi (2023) agrees with the above. Questioning the relationship between journalistic roles and professional norms, he discusses the difficulties of "performing journalism when one is asked to uphold journalistic values while risking their lives, witnessing the suffering of loved ones, and sacrificing for a cause" (p. 288). Personal or family traumas may be a serious factor impacting the performance of professional principles, a "paralysing factor", as put by Lidia Peralta García and Tania Ouariachi (2023, p. 58). Having to work in the face of unrelenting risk, not only to themselves but also their loved ones, journalists may "adjust their professional roles to suit the new environment", Winston Mano maintains (2005, p. 56).

The growing recognition of the limits of truth-telling in risky, conflict-ridden situations has led to a rising awareness that normative journalistic ideologies may be questioned and problematized (Munro & Kenny, 2024). However, this critical academic discussion is unfolding in parallel with a more traditional, normative line of academic inquiry that suggests the normative professional principles of journalism should guide reporters all over the world, regardless of the circumstances (e.g., Cook, 2016; Crete-Nishihata & Tsui, 2023; Domańska, 2023; Geybulla, 2023). These normative principles are well-known to the global journalistic community. They were formulated in UNESCO's International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism (UNESCO, 1983), later adopted in different formulations in the ethical codes of various journalistic communities. Among them, are the principles of people's right to true information, the journalist's professional integrity, the journalist's social responsibility, respect for public interest, respect for universal values and diversity of cultures, elimination of war and other great evils confronting humanity, and so forth (UNESCO, 1983).

Situating our research at the crossroads of these two lines of inquiry, normative and critical, we have been interested in investigating whether these global journalistic

principles have been an important consideration in the relocation of journalists from Ukraine, and if so, whether these norms are still important for them while in Russia. What was unacceptable to the exile journalists in the Ukrainian journalistic field? What did they find problematic in this respect in Russia? These were the basic questions driving our research.

Research Design

As one of the authors of this paper, who also fled to Russia after the onset of the SMO in 2022, personally knows many Ukrainian immigrants now residing in Moscow, it was not difficult for him to contact potential interview subjects. However, of the 34 journalists invited to participate, only 15 consented. The main reason for refusal was a reluctance to disclose personal data, even under the promised condition of anonymity. Most of those who refused cited the hypothetical possibility of a leak to the intelligence services of Ukraine, which could harm their relatives and friends remaining in the country.

All 15 journalists who agreed to participate were interviewed in face-to-face meetings in Moscow; 11 of them expressed a desire to speak under their real names, and four opted for anonymity. The basic information provided by the interviewees including the city in which they lived and worked before emigrating, the year in which they did so, and why is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Journalists Who Left Ukraine for Russia Before February 24, 2022

	Name/city of origin/ year of relocation	Reasons for emigration
1	Roman Gnatyuk Kiev 2014	Political persecution for journalistic activities. In August 2014, Gnatyuk was kidnapped by nationalists while filming an oppositional TV channel report on Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which was shot down over Donbass in March of that year. He was tortured for several days, led to believe he was being taken out to be shot, and then left without clothes near one of the villages in Donbass
2	Konstantin Kevorkyan Kharkov 2014	Pressured to leave by Ukrainian authorities, Kevorkyan was expelled from the National Union of Journalists after an article in which he criticized the Ukrainian airstrike (June 2, 2014) on the Donbass city of Lugansk that killed eight peaceful citizens and wounded 28 citizens. The Security Service of Ukraine (SSU) demanded that Kevorkyan leave the country within 24 hours
3	Olga Yarmak Kharkov 2014	Forced Ukrainization; inability to perform professional duties due to ever-increasing ideological pressure; fear that her son would be forcibly mobilized to fight against the people of Donbass in the Donbass war, which Yarmak considers a civil conflict
4	Ivan Lisan Odessa 2015	Fear for life and safety after the massacre of anti-Maidan activists on May 2, 2014, in Odessa. Realization that the radical nationalistic agenda that was dominant in Ukraine after the Maidan's victory had become established and would endure for a long time

Table 1 Continued

	Name/city of origin/ year of relocation	Reasons for emigration
5	Vasiliy Tkach Odessa 2015	Fear for life and safety amid political repression that began in Odessa after the massacre of May 2, 2014, when many anti-Maidan Ukrainians were jailed
6	Participant 8 Kiev 2018	The arrest of Kirill Vishinsky, editor-in-chief of the publication where Participant 8 worked, and the closure of the outlet; security concerns and inability to perform professional duties by reporting on oppositional outlooks
7	Vladimir Skachko Kiev 2019	Life in danger. Skachko was suspected of "encroaching on the territorial integrity of Ukraine", i.e., supporting Donbass insurgency. His apartment was subjected to a 14-hour search. Armed members of the right-wing C14 group came for him at a hospital where he was being treated for hypertension, but he managed to escape thanks to a warning
8	Pavel Kukharkin Kiev 2019	Fear for life and safety due to threats from right-wing radicals on political grounds; the normalization of radicalism and nationalism in Ukraine; opposition to the nationalistic agenda of the school curriculum

Table 2

Journalists Who Left Ukraine for Russia After February 24, 2022

	Name/ city of origin/ year of relocation	Reasons for emigration
1	Gorin (pseudonym) Kharkov 2022	Fear of arrest; lack of opportunity to express and report on oppositional views and opinions
2	Lancelot (pseudonym) Zaporozhye 2022	Threats and denunciations for oppositional views; nationalistic propaganda and lack of opportunity for children to study in their native Russian language.
3	Lihograi (pseudonym) Dnepropetrovsk 2022	Lihograi had planned to move to Russia after the Maidan, but remained in Ukraine for family reasons. Right after the SMO started, she left Ukraine as soon as she could due to fears for her life and safety.
4	Taras Sidorets Kiev 2022	Anticipation of arrest because of his oppositional stance and the detention of many of his friends and colleagues. After the SMO started, he went into hiding within Ukraine for a month and a half before he could escape
5	Elena Markosyan Kiev 2022	Expectation of arrest and reluctance to endanger people who would be willing to help in case of trouble
6	Dmitry Vasilets Kiev 2022	Fear of another arrest. Vasilets spent two years and three months in prison for journalistic activities, from November 2015 to February 2018
7	Valeria Yemelyanova Dnepropetrovsk 2022	Threats to life and safety due to Russian birth and nationality; fear of "stabilization measures" by the SSU, involving door-to-door visits to detain people with opposition views

Methodology

In order to trace what value assumptions informed the judgments of our interviewees, we employed Norman Fairclough's discourse-analytical method (Fairclough, 2003). According to Fairclough, "what is 'said' in a text is always said against the background of what is 'unsaid'—what is made explicit is always grounded in what is left implicit" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 17). This is partly a matter of "intertextuality", that is "how texts draw upon, incorporate, recontextualize and dialogue with other texts" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 17). In other words, assumptions always link texts to other texts, "the world of texts" or "what has been said or written or thought elsewhere, with the 'elsewhere' left vague" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 40). It is the previous history of a specific community, in the course of which specific norms come to be accepted as part of normalized judgment that makes some values seem "natural" as people take them as given.

Normalized assumptions that underlie any specific discourse are of great ideological significance, as power relations are significantly influenced by indisputable values that serve as a basis for legitimizing political regimes, that is a central idea of Antonio Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony, to which Fairclough refers. Another theoretical legacy that Fairclough invokes is the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), according to which a discourse forms when elements from the discursive field (signifiers) are linked, articulated to one another in an equivalential chain (p. 96). For the purposes of our analysis, before analysing the value assumptions that informed the criticisms offered by our interviewees, we found it useful to identify the equivalential chains of signifiers forming their critical discourse.

In the analytical part of the paper, we also referred to Nico Carpentier's (2017) conceptualization of antagonistic discourse, whose main features are as follows: the radical othering of political opponents ("we" are not "them", and there is nothing in common between us); the homogenization of both the self and the other ("wedom" and "theydom" are both characterized by a lack of internal contradictions); and the presentation of the self and the other in hierarchical terms ("we" are superior; "they" are inferior).

Findings

What Was Unacceptable in the Ukrainian Journalistic Field?

While answering this question, the interviewees identified two problems as the most important: first, the radicalization of the cultural agenda (its radical nationalization along ethnic lines), and second, the lack of freedom of speech, which was closely intertwined with the first point. As Vasilets put it, since 2014, when the Maidan overthrew the government in Kiev, Ukrainian media have been systematically "inciting ethnic hatred". Yemelyanova agreed. "'Drown the Donbass in blood,' 'Fry koloradi' ... Ukrainians were taught to think that people in Donbass are not entirely human, that they are marginalized and losers", she argued.

The development to which Yemelyanova referred is well-known and rather well-researched (Baysha, 2018; Ishchenko, 2020; Moen-Larsen, 2020; Myshlovska, 2023).

In pro-Maidan hegemonic discourse, anti-Maidan "others" appeared as socially and mentally "underdeveloped": They were labelled "slaves," "serfs," "sovki" (those holding the "Soviet mentality"), and so forth. In the most extreme cases, anti-Maidan Ukrainians were imagined as insects, such as "koloradi" (Colorado potato beetles) in need of extermination (e.g., Sindelar, 2014). On May 2, 2014, when a fire during street clashes between pro-Maidan and anti-Maidan forces in Odessa killed 48 anti-Maidan protesters and left more than 200 with burns and other injuries, Maidan supporters celebrated this tragedy (perceived by them as a victory) by spreading messages such as "Fry koloradi!" and "Burn koloradi!" on social networks (Baysha, 2020).

Other interviewees also invoked the Odessa tragedy as one of the most striking examples of the dehumanization of political and cultural others. For Gorin, "all these 'fried colorados', 'colorado barbecue'" comments were the "purest manifestation" of how Ukrainian Russophones came to be dehumanized. "It is too much", Kukharkin maintained, to see journalists taking part in the "Separ's Meat" jokes and openly calling for violence. What Kukharkin referred to was a line of canned food with cannibalistic labels such as "Separ's Meat," "Separ in Oil," and "Separ in Sour Cream," where "Separ" served as a generic name for Donbass people (Korzun, 2020).

Since the Maidan revolution, Lizan argued, the Ukrainian information mainstream has been increasingly characterized by "a desperate desire to impose the Ukrainian language on everyone and standardize everything according to the principle 'one nation, one Reich, one Fuhrer'". Markosyan and Lancelot agreed. Both of them maintained that after the Maidan, "the formation of a new society and a new person began—the Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainian". As a result, Gnatyuk asserted, the division of society reached a level "as it was in the case of Rwanda, into Tutsi and Hutu".

The denigration of Russophones, according to Gnatyuk, had become "increasingly brutal and acquired unprecedented proportions since the beginning of the SMO." Calls for the murder of Russians and the banning of everything Russian, even Russian songs, had become a distinctive feature of the media landscape since the SMO began, Tkach pointed out. As a result, Kevorkyan went on, the freedom of speech in Ukraine "exists in the paradigm of discussion by cannibals, whether it's tastier to eat the victim's ear or eye, but the principle of cannibalism itself is not questioned."

"This is totalitarianism incarnate. Everything is completely regulated with the same brush, there is no alternative opinion at all", Gnatyuk said, recalling how in 2014 he was required by his editors "not to call the LPR and DPR fighters 'militias'", but to use the word "militants" instead. There was a "cult of lies" in Ukraine, Sidorets continued. "The number of lies has increased greatly, it is overflowing", Gorin echoed. "Lies permeate the entire cultural agenda erasing the entire common [Russian–Ukrainian] history, both distant and modern", he claimed. "In such a world, it is impossible to do anything important and interesting, because in such a society the cultural flow is interrupted", Markosyan contended. "The media in Ukraine does not have freedom of speech," Skachko summarized, adding that "unfortunately this process is emerging everywhere, and in Russia, too". According to Skachko, media in both Ukraine and Russia "are ceasing to be the support of democracy and the so-called fourth estate. The media are returning, not even to informing, but to serving." This observation

regarding the lack of media freedom both in Ukraine and in Russia by a Ukrainian political refugee may serve as a good transition to our second research question, discussed in the next section.

What Is Unacceptable Within the Journalistic Field of Russia?

In general terms, Skachko's criticism with respect to both the Ukrainian and Russian journalistic field was shared by some other interviewees. However, although all the interviewees agreed that propaganda existed both in Russia and Ukraine—"It is clear that in any war the corpse of the enemy smells good", as Kevorkyan put it—not all of them agreed that the scale of Russia's problems concerning freedom of speech was commensurate with that of Ukraine. "Propaganda exists on both sides", Lancelot argued. "But if in Ukraine there is an outright lie, then in Russia it is more likely an embellishment of reality and silence", he said, noting he did not approve of Russia's style of manipulating information either. "We need to talk to the people, conduct a dialogue", he maintained.

A noticeable point of disagreement among interviewees occurred with respect to the issue of hate speech and dehumanization of the enemy. In Kevorkyan's opinion, for example, there was no dehumanization of the enemy in the Russian media. "If Ukrainian propaganda says that all Russians are pigs, which concerns almost all racial and ethnic origins, Russian propaganda avoids this", he claimed. Yarmak agreed, "I constantly hear in the Russian media that it is necessary to separate the Ukrainian state and Ukrainian society, that Ukrainians are the same people as Russians, we are the same." But other interviewees, although not necessarily denying what Yarmak said, admitted that the dehumanization of Ukrainians does exist in the Russian media sphere, albeit on the margins. "I don't understand the general narrative of dehumanization that sometimes pops up, especially in Telegram[3] channels–*svinosobaki* or *nahruk* [derogatory terms to denote Ukrainians]," Lizan commented on the issue.

Most journalists also emphasized the inadequacy of lumping together all Ukrainians and denigrating them. "Where there are generalizations, there are no human beings," Lihograi claimed. In her view, the terms "nationalists," "neo-Nazis," and "militants" were inappropriate with respect to all Ukrainian troops, at least because "the total forced mobilization in Ukraine" made it impossible for Ukrainian men to avoid being drafted into the army. Expressing a dehumanizing view like "all hohli [a derogatory term to denote Ukrainians] must be cut out" was unacceptable in mainstream Russian media, Sidorets went on, arguing that "some inadequate individuals who run their own channels" may be engaged in this, "but not at the level of state media."

As a result of such denigrating generalizations, "the rhetoric begins to be no different from everything that we have been witnessing in Ukraine in relation to Donetsk and Lugansk—Downbass, Lugandon [derogatory terms to denote Donbass cities] and everything else," Gorin argued, adding that he "constantly hear[s] on talk shows that there are no normal people there [in Ukraine] anymore". Pointing to the contradiction inherent in Russia's state narrative regarding the necessity of liberating

[3] Telegram™ is a trademark of Telegram Group Inc., its operational center is based in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

Ukrainians from the yoke of a neo-Nazi regime, Gorin inquired: "If there are no normal people there, then whom did you go to liberate?"

While other participants of the study also criticized their Russian colleagues for resorting to the language of hatred with respect to Ukrainians, there were two interviewees who suggested that even harsher rhetoric toward Ukraine (although not necessarily toward all Ukrainians) would be more fitting. "In some cases, there is a lack of tougher rhetoric, the rhetoric of justice—a crime should lead to punishment," Gnatyuk argued. But he immediately corrected himself, "Sometimes they [editors] ask me to be more restrained in my statements, to avoid excessiveness. Putting myself in the editor's shoes, I agree, because too much harm is just as bad as being too soft." Kukharkin supported Gnatyuk's argument that "the rhetoric of my TV channel is too soft." "There is no need to consider them [Ukrainians] brothers and think that they are just victims," Kukharkin argued. "So, in my workplace, the most radical person is me, for one simple reason—I looked the enemy in the face while living there."

Analysis

Universal Journalistic Values

As is evident from this brief account of the critical remarks made by the study participants, the chain of equivalence holding together their critical discourse with respect to Ukraine was made up of the following key signifiers: nationalism, radicalism, intolerance to cultural others, cultural homogenization, Russophobia, ethnic hatred, hate speech, dehumanization of opponents, calls for violence, lack of freedom, lies, ideological totalization, intolerance to alternative opinions, and failure to fulfil the role of the fourth estate.

This chain of equivalence allows the discerning of several value assumptions that informed the criticisms made by the interviewees. First, their concern about Ukrainian journalism's ideological servility, lies, and lack of freedom was voiced against the background of an unspoken normative assumption that journalism should be independent and truthful. Second, their condemnation of intolerance to alternative opinions, ideological totalizations, and failure to fulfil the role of the fourth estate was informed by taken-for-granted beliefs about the central role that journalism plays in a democratic society. Finally, their criticisms of Ukrainian journalists for endorsing intolerance toward cultural others, ethnic hatred, and cultural homogenization drew on the assumption that journalism should be unbiased, inclusive, and attentive to the opinions of underprivileged and marginalized minority groups.

The chain of equivalence characterizing the critical discourse of Ukrainian exile journalists with respect to Russia looks quite similar: propaganda, servility, silence, dehumanization of cultural others, their homogenization and denigration through hate speech, and the promotion of violence. The value assumptions that informed the interviewees' criticisms of their Russian colleagues were similar to those they implicitly made while speaking about Ukraine: journalism should be free, independent, inclusive, attentive to alternative opinions, respectful of cultural others, and do no harm. As when discussing Ukrainian media, they placed the problems of Russian

media's dependence on the state and lack of freedom on a par with intolerance toward cultural others as closely interrelated issues.

According to Fairclough (2003), unspoken assumptions that inform texts always link them to a variety of other texts related to the issue under consideration. The unspoken assumptions about journalistic principles that guided our interviewees in their criticisms of both the Ukrainian and Russian journalistic fields were briefly presented in the Literature Review section of the paper (UNESCO, 1983). Although none was referenced specifically, each of the principles mentioned earlier clearly informed the criticisms made by our interviewees. The invocation of the principles of people's right to true information, the journalist's professional integrity and social responsibility, respect for diversity of cultures, and elimination of war were evident in the journalists' criticisms of media distributing propaganda, dehumanizing cultural others, being intolerant to alternative opinions, and so forth. By appealing to these principles, taken by many as universal, the exile journalists under study implicitly presented themselves as members of the international journalistic community who shared similar assumptions regarding professional principles and duties.

This finding does not support the perspective of scholars arguing that core professional values may be considered secondary or of little concern by journalists within non-Western cultural milieus, especially in dangerous contexts (Al-Ghazzi, 2023; Bishara, 2013; Brooten, 2006; Harb, 2011; Mellado, 2020; Ogunyemi, 2017; Waisbord, 2013). As is clear from the analysis presented in this paper, for the exile journalists from Ukraine now residing in Russia, truth-telling standards of impartial reporting still serve as a normative yardstick for evaluating how journalists perform their professional duties, a traditional outlook within journalism studies, which has been endorsed by our findings (e.g., Cook, 2016; Crete-Nishihata & Tsui, 2023; Geybulla, 2023). What has also been supported are the observations of scholars who argue that exile journalists often perform their journalistic duties "in the name of unity correlating with peaceful coexistence and avoidance of confrontation" (Brooten, 2006, p. 366). As our informants devoted the lion's share of their criticisms to the potential of journalists to instigate hatred, animosity, and intolerance toward cultural others, thereby contributing to the spiralling of wars and conflicts, we decided to discuss this aspect in more detail.

Journalism for Peace

Although some respondents believed that in Russia the radical othering of Ukrainians was a marginal phenomenon while in Ukraine the radical othering of Russians was commonplace, they nevertheless agreed that it was unacceptable for media to dehumanize cultural others and cultivate intolerance. By making this claim explicitly, the respondents (all but one) shared an unspoken assumption that the media should foster an inclusive sociocultural environment and promote peace.

Traces of the UNESCO (1983) principles mentioned earlier were clearly discernible in this criticism. According to the principle "respect for universal values and diversity of cultures," the journalist "contributes through dialogue to a climate of confidence in international relations conducive to peace and justice everywhere." The

goal is "to eliminate ignorance and misunderstanding among peoples, make nationals of a country sensitive to the needs and desires of others, ensure the respect for the rights and dignity of all nations, all peoples and all individuals" (UNESCO, 1983). All of the critical remarks made by our interviewees with respect to hate speech in both the Russian and Ukrainian journalistic fields were clearly informed by these normative standards, adopted as background normative judgments by journalistic communities all over the world. Gnatyuk's reference to the Tutsi and Hutu peoples explicitly illustrated this point, as the story of the Rwandan genocide has become a classic example discussed in educational literature on journalism regarding the detrimental role that journalists can play in provoking conflict, mutual hatred, and genocide (e.g., Thompson, 2007).

To translate this point into the conceptual language of discourse studies, by highlighting the importance of responsible reporting that does not promote violence, our interviewees criticized what discourse analysts call "antagonistic discourse" as presented in the methodological section. This is exactly what our informants highlighted in their discursive constructions such as:

- "Where there are generalizations, there are no human beings" (criticism of the homogenization of otherness).
- "I constantly hear on talk shows that there are no normal people there" (criticism of radical othering).
- "Ukrainians were taught to think that people in Donbass are not entirely human, that they are marginalized and losers" (criticism of the inferior positioning of "them" vis-à-vis "us").

According to Carpentier (2017), to transform antagonism into agonism, that is a state that involves relating as "adversaries" rather than as "enemies," it is necessary to re-articulate the nodal points of antagonistic discourse, re-create a common symbolic space, and re-establish "conflictual togetherness." This is what our informants actually suggested by arguing that not all Ukrainians are neo-Nazis, that "normal" people exist in any community, and so forth. Instead of drawing solid dividing frontiers between "us" and "them," deepening existing antagonisms and provoking new ones, the agonistic discourse propagated by the interviewees aimed to restore a common symbolic space necessary for communication, negotiating differences and reaching compromise.

Conclusion

In this paper, we discussed the case of exile journalists from Ukraine who moved to Russia between 2014 and 2022. After interviewing 15 such journalists, we came to the conclusion that, despite all the difficulties of their personal situations, they still considered professional values such as independence and truth-telling to be important, continuing to use these normative yardsticks to measure the quality of the journalistic condition. The biggest concern that most of the informants shared was that journalists in both Russia and Ukraine used the language of hatred and discrimination toward political and cultural others, so-called antagonistic discourse that only contributed to the spiralling of violence and could never help in reaching peace.

This finding allows the suggestion that by occupying "a unique position from which to witness the contingency of the prevailing social order" because "exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience" (Said, 1994, p. 147) exile journalists advocating for peace may re-affirm the values of human dignity and peaceful coexistence, two basic principles of the journalistic profession as identified by UNESCO (1983). Rather than sacrificing professional principles under the hardship of immigration and the necessity of adapting to new ideological pressures, at least some of the exiles may insist on telling the truth and defending the humanistic principles of peaceful coexistence.

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[4] *Hezbollah* has been designated as a terrorist organisation and is banned from all activities by many countries, including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Paraguay, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. Hezbollah's military wing is listed as a terrorist group by the European Union.

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ARTICLE

Representations of Trust and Distrust in Financial Institutions in Russian Regional Speech Culture

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ABSTRACT
The article is devoted to a comparative analysis of the representation of trust and distrust in financial institutions in the language and speech culture of the Russian province. The use of the constructivist methodology of P. Bourdieu made it possible to interpret trust as an internal component of the practices of an agent involved in the current situation in the financial market. The content analysis of 55 semi-structured interviews with three generations of residents of the region showed that the conservative model of financial behavior continues to be reproduced in the speech culture. The difference between generations is less noticeable against the background of a significant difference between residents of rural and urban settlements. The study revealed a high level of resentment associated with the collective memory of the collapse of the USSR and privatization. All generations in rural settlements showed a low level of assessment of their own financial situation, while both rural and urban informants had a rather pessimistic representation of social change. Semantic analysis revealed the dominance of the image of the state as a "collector of payments" in their consciousness, and to a lesser extent, an "assistant" supporting a person in their relationship with financial institutions.

KEYWORDS
trust in financial institutions, distrust, speech culture, culture of trust, language of trust, financial literacy, collective memory

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Introduction

In recent years, there has been a noticeable surge of scholarly interest in the societal and institutional forms of trust. Among them, a special place is occupied by trust in financial institutions, which, unlike other forms, is increasingly coming under scrutiny due to the digitization of financial services, as well as the logic of "surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff, 2019). This trend is particularly relevant in Russia, where the development of financial digital infrastructure has been intensifying, and there are increased efforts to enhance financial literacy among various segments of the population. Consequently, studies on trust in Russian financial institutions are proliferating (Aiurzanain, 2011; Chichulenkov, 2021; Golik, 2017; Ibragimova, 2012, 2015; Smyslova et al., 2023).

Studies on public trust in Russia are aimed at measuring the level of trust and, in most cases, consist of large-scale surveys (Kuzina & Ibragimova, 2010; Veselov & Skvortsov, 2023). While we do not in the least wish to cast doubt on the methodological capabilities of the most popular tool, we believe that qualitative methods can be equally significant for analyzing the intricacies of trust and distrust, particularly their sociocultural sources and reasons. Trust itself is a complex phenomenon, which can be considered both as "expectation" (Bauer & Freitag, 2018; Hardin, 2002) and as "behavior" (Barr, 2003; Cook & Cooper, 2003; Fehr et al., 2002). Moreover, active discussions surrounding the concept of "culture of trust" in recent years (Blank, 2011; Marty, 2010; Sztompka, 1999) show that societies create systems of rules and norms to form trust/distrust deeply rooted in their history and culture. From our perspective, language plays an equally important role in constructing images of trust and distrust. It not only reflects the current state of trust/distrust levels but is also inherently involved in the process of shaping the culture of trust.

The aim of this article is to analyze representations of trust and distrust toward financial institutions in the language and speech culture of people in a Russian province, considering gender-related, generational, and urban-rural characteristics. This analysis is based on 55 interviews conducted in rural areas, cities, and towns of Lipetsk Oblast. While gathering material, we intended to identify core values and meanings associated with trust and distrust toward financial institutions, the direction of expressions, and the peculiarities of language usage when discussing past and present interactions with these institutions. We were also interested in determining how gender-related, generational, and urban–rural differences influence institutional trust in the financial sector and how these characteristics are connected to collective memory of the events of *perestroika* and the economic crisis of the 1990s.

Defining Trust and the Research on Financial Trust in Russia

The studies of trust and its institutional forms have been on the rise in recent years. As Eric M. Uslaner (2018) observes, "Putnam's discussion of social capital … put trust at the center of a collection of positive behaviors, such as participation in voluntary associations, civic participation (including voting), and participation in informal social networks" (p. 5). Even a cursory glance at key monographs and collections of papers allows us to identify the following main areas of research.

The first group of studies is dedicated to social and generalized trust, or out-group trust (Govier, 1997; Luhmann, 1979; Rothstein, 2005; Sztompka, 1999; Weber & Carter, 2003). This group also includes studies dealing with the methodological issues of social and political trust (Dernbach & Meier, 2005; Frings, 2010; Uslaner, 2018; Vallier & Weber, 2021). Sociological perspective enables us to discern at least two methodological approaches within this group. One of them views trust as faith, a higher sentiment (Fukuyama, 1995), as well as a moral category (Uslaner, 2002). The other defines trust not as a feeling, but as a rational attitude linked to various types of risks and uncertainties in personal and social life (Coleman, 1990; Giddens, 1990; Luhmann, 1988; Sztompka, 1999).

The second group of works is devoted to various aspects of trust within organizations, as well as in patron-client relationships (Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1984; Powell, 2013). In this group, of special interest are works discussing issues of trust in the banking and financial consulting sectors (Peterreins et al., 2010; Steinmann, 2013). These works do not target the fundamental principles of social and political trust. Instead, their significance lies in the development of various taxonomies of types and forms of trust/distrust.

The third group of works, similar to the previous two, stands out among the numerous publications on trust. This group includes a series of collections and monographs dedicated to various aspects of trust in the context of online communications, network society, and social networks (Connolly, 2020; Fladnitzer, 2006; Ljung & Wahlforss, 2008).

Research interest in trust in Russian financial institutions has remained persistent over time. This topic has been regularly investigated through nationwide studies. For example, surveys and interviews conducted by O. Kuzina and D. Ibragimova (2010) revealed that citizens' awareness of financial institutions' activities plays a significant role in shaping trust levels among the population in Russia: "those who are more knowledgeable about managing personal finances are characterized by a greater degree of trust in banks and government regulators" (p. 27; Trans. by Olga Smyslova & Andrei Linchenko—O. S. & A. L.).

The conclusions of the National Agency for Financial Studies (NAFI) are particularly relevant to our study. Since 2005, the Agency has been conducting annual monitoring of the levels of trust in financial institutions. This monitoring is conducted through survey methods and personal interviews with citizens. The main criteria for evaluation are the informational transparency of financial institutions, their reliability, and the convenience of their services. Table 1 shows the results of the analysis of

respondents' answers to the question "How much do you trust the following financial organizations?" as a percentage of all respondents who chose "completely trust" and "rather trust" for the period from 2012 to 2018.

Table 1

Level of Trust in Financial Institutions

Type of financial institution	Percentage of all respondents who chose "completely trust" and "rather trust" according to NAFI monitoring						
	2012	2013	2014	November 2015	July 2016	July 2017	November 2018
Banks	64	78	74	59	67	60	65
Insurance companies	35	41	38	34	40	35	36
Investment companies	17	19	19	16	18	17	15
Microfinance organizations	14	13	11	11	8	5	6
Non-state pension funds	19	19	19	22	24	15	15

Note. Source: calculated by the authors according to data from NAFI.

The table clearly shows that, throughout the entire period, the highest levels of trust were observed for banking organizations (over 60%) and insurance companies (35%). In contrast, microfinance organizations were the least trusted, with their trust levels rapidly declining over the past six years. In 2019, the Bank of Russia published a report that categorized three groups of indicators affecting the overall level of public trust in financial institutions: individual (value orientations of individual citizens, social preferences), institutional (values and powers of regulators), and social (affiliation with social groups, globalization, digitalization of the economy).

Recent research indicates the persistence of conservative behavior in Russia, reflected in the relatively stable level of trust in banking and insurance organizations. However, attitudes toward investment, microfinance organizations, and non-state pension funds are either declining or remaining at a low level, signaling low demand for these services (Uroven' finansovoi gramotnosti, 2020). In this regard, it seems important to focus not only on the annual measurements of changes in people's attitudes toward financial institutions already established but also on studying the sources and specifics of the culture of trust among various population groups in Russian regions with regard to financial institutions.

Culture of Trust, Speech Culture, and the Language of Trust

In this study, the culture of trust is understood as a set of value-normative attitudes and orientations of a social group or community, reflecting expectations and confidence in the ability to fulfill mutual obligations and social functions. Depending on the number of social groups and communities, as well as the relationships between them, we can talk

about the dynamic interaction of cultures of trust, encompassing political, economic, social, religious, and other dimensions (Marty, 2010).

To study the dynamics of trust cultures and their long-term transformation, the analysis of the structure of interaction and circulation of forms of social capital should be considered. This is underscored by the enduring relevance of R. Putnam's methodological approach in contemporary sociological practice. Putnam (1995) regards trust as a pivotal element of social capital, acting as a link that fosters cooperation among social agents.

One of the most relevant theories regarding the circulation of different types of capital and their impact on societal dispositions is Pierre Bourdieu's theory (Bourdieu, 1986). He emphasizes the praxeological aspect of studying capital circulation in society (Bourdieu, 1990). According to Bourdieu, social reality is shaped by both objective social structures, including institutions, and the habitus of social agents. These agents mold the social world based on their dispositions or predispositions. The distribution and circulation of capitals (cultural, social, economic) in society are influenced by the competition among social agents and the dominance of some over others. In our case, the assertion of Bourdieu is fundamentally important, emphasizing that competition among agents is always linked to the peculiarities of their habitus, that is, their practical behavioral patterns and the corresponding level of trust.

One of the environments where social reality is structured through the habitus of social agents is the language environment, where language not only reflects objective social structures but also constructs the social world. The culture of trust is, in a certain sense, "immersed" in the space of the speech culture of the subject of trust. Sirotinina (2011) explains that "the concept of speech culture is broader than the concept of culture of speech, which includes only the manner of language use, but not the language itself and the worldview embedded in it" (p. 343; Trans. by O. S. & A. L.). This aspect of speech culture is pointed out by Gol'din & Sirotinina (1997), who define speech culture as "an integral part of the culture of a people, connected with the use of language" (p. 413; Trans. by O. S. & A. L.). The connecting link between the culture of trust and speech culture is the concept of "language of trust" (Gefen et al., 2020; Schroer, 2016; Wubs-Mrozewicz, 2020). In a narrow sense, this concept refers to "linguistic devices which purposefully convey trust and demonstrate trustworthiness, and create grounds for continuing or improving relations" (Wubs-Mrozewicz, 2020, p. 91). In our case, the concept of the "language of trust" should be understood on a wider scale. It refers not only to the trusting relationships manifested in specific linguistic forms but also to the sociocultural context of language usage concerning the object of trust. From this viewpoint, the language of trust encompasses the unique characteristics of trust, the significance of its values expressed in speech culture, as well as the historical and cultural factors influencing the prevalence of corresponding forms of trust or distrust toward financial institutions. In agreement with the authors cited above, we would also like to emphasize the discursive nature of the language of trust, which highlights its dynamic character and its deep interrelation with practice (Candlin & Crichton,

2013, p. 9). From this perspective, trust is simultaneously a social construction and a process dependent on specific spheres of life and types of activities.

According to Bourdieu (1990), practice encompasses any action performed by an agent in the social world, as well as what the agent encounters. However, it is the habitus that serves as the necessary condition for the possibility of practices themselves, as it acts as the schema for their production and reproduction (Bourdieu, 1990). This implies that trust is not merely a "reflection" of a particular situation in the financial services market but rather an internal component of the collective practices of an agent. In this context, the most crucial characteristic is not so much financial knowledge but rather involvement and immersion in the actual situation in the financial market.

Sources and Methods

In the autumn of 2022, we conducted a sociological study consisting of interviews with 55 individuals from urban (26 interviews) and rural (29 interviews) areas of Lipetsk Oblast. The region was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, in the 1990–2000s, it was part of Russia's "red belt," where the influence of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation was quite noticeable. Secondly, a key characteristic of the region is its agro-industrial specialization, which is reflected in the significant role of rural settlements and their population. Thirdly, despite the high level of income compared to neighboring regions of the Central Black Earth Region, and the government's efforts to promote financial literacy, Lipetsk Oblast is characterized by a conservative model of financial behavior and an average level of financial literacy (Uroven' finansovoi gramotnosti, 2020).

Our urban respondents included 10 men and 16 women; the rural respondents included 16 men and 13 women. In the study, we focused on three generations: the older generation (19 interviews), the millennial generation (22 interviews), and the centennial generation (14 interviews). Age boundaries between generations were defined by taking into account the comments on the specifics of the Russian context made by V. V. Radaev (2019).

The study relies on the method of semi-structured interviews, where informants were asked several specific questions about their understanding of financial institutions, the characteristics of trust in these institutions, positive and negative experiences of interaction with them. Informants were also asked to self-assess their financial literacy levels. The remaining questions were not pre-planned and were formulated during the interviews to clarify certain statements made by the informants.

Afterwards, the collected interviews underwent transcription for frequency content analysis, aimed at examining the specific content and structure of the texts. We reduced the words to their base forms or lexemes, which enabled us to identify the main thematic groups and conduct a comparative analysis regarding generational, gender-related, and urban-rural differences.

In the following stage, we analyzed the main semantic intentions expressed in the interviews, which helped us identify the underlying forms of the informants' value-based attitudes toward financial institutions and their services. An important aspect in this analysis was examining references to history and autobiographical experiences. Subsequently, we compared these value-based forms within the context of generational characteristics and urban-rural differences.

General Results of Content Analysis

The first step in our content analysis was to identify the two main characteristics of the interview texts: verbosity (the portion of text lacking informational value) and academic nausea (the density of the use of individual words and statements). The results of this stage of content analysis are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Characteristics of Interview Texts

Respondent profile		Average value		
		Number of words	Verbosity, %	Academic nausea, %
Age	18–25	1,424	82.93	7.45
	26–45	1,095	81.46	7.72
	46–70	1,512	81.44	7.63
Gender	men	1,228	82.36	7.45
	women	1,382	82.55	7.56
Area type	rural	1,366	82.66	7.12
	urban	1,217	81.33	7.85

As shown in Table 2, the text verbosity level surpasses the norm (which typically falls between 60% and 75%), indicating a high level of emotional intensity in these texts. Notably, this trend is consistent across all three generational groups. Both men and women, regardless of their urban or rural residence, exhibit similar levels in this regard. We believe that the primary reason for the heightened emotional intensity in the interviews of all groups is the topic of finances, which undeniably ranks as one of the dominant themes in everyday discourse (e.g., family budget discussions).

The next step was to assign fragments of interview texts to key thematic groups. It should be noted that in Russian research literature, a thematic group is understood as "a set of a large number of words, stable word combinations, and idiomatic expressions, units of different parts of speech related to one sphere of reality" (Khudiakova, 2019, p. 195; Trans. by O. S. & A. L.). We identified six thematic word groups: financial institutions, money, changes, fraud, country, and financial literacy (Table 3).

Table 3
Main Concepts of Thematic Groups Identified in Interviews

Financial organizations	Money	Changes	Fraud	Country	Financial literacy
bank (95.4%)	money (98.1%)	crisis (81.4%)	fraud (73.2%)	country (78.2%)	financial literacy (88.3%)
financial institution (92.3%)	loan (89.5%)	problem (80.9%)	pyramid schemes (68.9%)	state (71.6%)	economy (76.4%)
Sberbank (91.7%)	salary (87.1%)	privatization (75.3%)	MMM pyramid (65.4%)	taxes (70.2%)	insurance (72.3%)
Central Bank of the Russian Federation (71.3%)	microloan (84.6%)	hard life (74.1%)	lawlessness (51.2%)	society (55.4%)	insurance companies (71.2%)
VTB Bank (53.7%)	savings (73.2%)	scarcity (52.6%)	trust (49.6%)	*perestroika* (51.2%)	investment companies (43.2%)
Alfa Bank (44.1%)	lack of money (72.7%)	decline (40.2%)	fraud (46.8%)	collapse of the USSR (50.3%)	stocks (30.1%)
Tinkoff Bank (32.1%)	currency (69.1%)	banditry (31.3%)	reputation (39.3%)	collapse of the USSR (49.7%)	financial knowledge (28.3%)
Pochta Bank (31.8%)	financial hardships (68.8%)	devastation (31.1%)	impunity (32.1%)	Russia (45.3%)	bankrupt (27.3%)
interest (28.3%)	financial cushion (64.2%)	experience (28.1%)	debt collectors (30.6%)	USSR (42.1%)	business (27.1%)
bank deposit (24.1%)	profit (61.6%)	time (epoch) (25.5%)	injustice (29.7%)	1998 meltdown (36.2%)	default (26.8%)
Russian Standard Bank (23.6%)	fund (45.3%)	uncertainty (23.5%)	debts (29.4%)	1990s (34.9%)	voucher (22.5%)
microfinance organization (19.4%)	ruble (44.9%)	disappointment (19.4%)	dubious firm (20.6%)	Gorbachev (31.1%)	denomination (21.9%)
Pension Fund (19.3%)	card (44.6%)	hunger (18.2%)	theft (19.8%)	Yeltsin (24.6%)	inflation (21.6%)
savings book (18.9%)	finance (32.1%)	reforms (18.1%)	lies (18.4%)	Gaidar (19.4%)	nationalism (19.5%)
organization (17.4%)	funds (19.7%)	stratification (17.2%)	distrust (17.9%)	Moscow (18.5%)	markets (18.3%)
bank branch (16.9%)	inflation (19.6%)	coup (16.8%)	dirty money (17.6%)	state debts (16.4%)	bonds (17.2%)

Even though the thematic groups that we have identified do not reflect the age and gender specifics, nor do they take into account the informant's place of residence, they reveal the key elements of the linguistic representation of trust in the given region. They also allow for a deeper understanding of the images of trust/distrust toward financial institutions that dominate the informants' economic consciousness as well as indirectly point to certain characteristics of their financial behavior.

A detailed examination of the thematic groups supports the findings of NAFI for Lipetsk Oblast in 2018–2020 (Uroven' Finansovoi Gramotnosti, 2020). These findings primarily indicate the prevalence of a conservative financial behavior model and an average level of financial knowledge among the population. Recent studies on the socioeconomic well-being of regions in the Central Federal District have uncovered significant problems in Lipetsk Oblast compared to other regions (Smyslova et al., 2023).

The thematic groups in Table 3 point to a conservative model and show a high level of resentment related to the experiences of events from thirty years ago, which are the collapse of the USSR and the difficult economic situation of the 1990s. It is quite remarkable that the banking sector continues to hold primary importance for respondents, who predominantly associate it with two or three key players, namely Sberbank, Alfa Bank, and VTB.

The second thematic group, as expected, was associated with the concept of "money." In this group, we also encountered a fairly conservative perception of the monetary sphere, which is reflected in the most popular concepts: credit, salary, microloan, savings. Additionally, this group includes several frequently encountered concepts that clearly indicate people's low assessment of their financial situation (microloan, lack of money, financial hardships, financial cushion).

The concepts of the third thematic group, related to the interpretation of social changes, turned out to be no less pessimistic. In this case, it should be noted that the most popular concepts in the informants' minds either contain a clearly negative assessment of the changes (crisis, problem, hard life, decline), or refer to the most obvious perceived reasons for social changes (privatization, reforms).

Quite predictably, the thematic groups related to the financial sphere included a group of concepts dealing with the theme of fraud. We found that the collective memory of major scams in the 1990s still lingers, as indicated by the high frequency of such concepts as "pyramid scheme" and "MMM." The abbreviation MMM refers to a Russian company notorious for one of the largest Ponzi schemes in history, led by Sergei Mavrodi in the early 1990s, which collapsed, causing significant financial losses to investors and becoming synonymous with financial fraud and pyramid schemes. The interviews lacked any discussion of current aspects of fraud involving digital technologies, suggesting that the informants were reluctant to engage with and comprehend this topic in depth.

Given that in Russia, trust in the government remains a key indicator of generalized trust, as repeatedly emphasized by Veselov and Skvortsov (2023), it is reasonable to expect concepts related to the state among the thematic groups. Notably, after the abstract concepts of "government" and "country," the concept of

"taxes" occupies the third position. This suggests that in the minds of the informants, the image of the state leans more towards being a "collector of payments" rather than an "assistant" supporting people in their daily lives. Furthermore, within this thematic group, we observed a high frequency of concepts related to memories of the collapse of the USSR and the *perestroika* era. We believe that the prevalence of these concepts not only reflects nostalgia for the USSR but also contributes to shaping public trust or distrust in current socio-economic processes and financial institutions (Posle Konferentsii, 2021; Utekhin, 2021).

The sixth thematic group was associated with financial literacy issues, around which active efforts have been underway in Lipetsk Oblast for several years (Smyslova et al., 2023). However, even here, the key concepts were predominantly associated with a conservative model of financial behavior, more focused on relations with banks and insurance companies, as repeatedly noted by researchers studying trust in financial institutions in Russia (Chichulenkov, 2021; Ibragimova, 2015; Kuzina, Ibragimova, 2010; Smyslova et al., 2023). Figure 1 shows a word cloud of the most frequently occurring words in the interviews produced by using the online resource Wordcloud generator[1].

Figure 1

Word Cloud Based on the Results of Frequency Content Analysis of Interview Texts

[1] https://www.wordclouds.com

However, the word cloud and thematic groups do not account for gender, age-specific word frequency, or the informant's residence. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the representations of trust/distrust toward financial institutions, we analyzed not only nouns but also the usage patterns of adjectives and verbs. Our research primarily focuses on studying generational and gender-specific characteristics, as well as the relationship between language-based trust representations and the informant's place of residence (urban or rural areas).

Linguistic Images of Trust and Distrust Toward Financial Institutions

All the lexemes being analyzed were translated by the authors from Russian into English language. A comparative analysis of key lexemes from the interviews with rural and urban centennials, revealed differences in their understanding of the financial sphere. While both groups displayed a conservative model of financial behavior in their language, associating the financial sphere with banks, salary, and interactions with well-known banking brands (Sberbank, Alfa Bank, VTB), there were notable distinctions. Rural centennials in particular, more frequently used such nouns as "microloans," "loans," "crisis," "financial hardship," and "poverty" compared to their urban counterparts.

For the millennial generation, a similar pattern is observed. Urban millennials exhibit greater stability in their financial situation, reflected in their use of lexemes such as "experience," "salary," "enterprise," "loan," "government," and "financial cushion." In contrast, the linguistic representation of rural millennials is dominated by a negative interpretation of personal and collective financial experiences, with lexemes like "microfinance organization," "privatization," "fraud," "pyramid scheme," and "MMM" being prominent. However, both urban and rural millennials demonstrate a conservative financial behavior model, with a focus on banks, insurance organizations, and salary as their primary source of income.

A similar trend in the interviews with the older age group was quite expected. The stability of the financial situation of city residents aged 46–70, in this case, is reflected in lexemes related to the state, the Russian Pension Fund, salary, insurance, insurance companies, and is also expressed in the high frequency of usage of the lexeme "experience." The most frequently used lexemes in the older age group in rural settlements of the region turned out to be quite different, however. In addition to the expected and most frequent lexemes related to Sberbank, the banking sector, and the Pension Fund, we identified a significant number of nouns indicating the complex financial situation of our informants: "hard life," "lack of money," "banditry," "microfinance organization."

The analysis of how different generations perceive and articulate trust and distrust toward financial institutions, based on the frequency of adjective usage in interviews, reveals that both urban and rural centennials use adjectives less frequently when discussing financial institutions and their interactions with them. In contrast, the speech of the older generation is notably more adjective-rich: adjectives are employed three times more frequently compared to centennials and

twice as frequently compared to millennials. Furthermore, the analysis of adjective usage frequency indicates that the discrepancies between generations are less pronounced compared to those observed between residents of rural and urban areas. Among interviewees from rural areas across all three generations, adjectives such as “heavy,” “state-owned,” “unreliable,” “empty,” and “difficult” were prevalent, while urban residents more commonly used adjectives such as “state-owned,” “non-state,” “commercial,” “private,” “balanced,” and “reliable.”

Our thesis regarding the lack of significant differences between generations in a region with an average level of financial literacy, and the substantial differences between rural and urban residents, proved to be relevant once again when we looked at the frequency of verb usage in the interviews. The speech of rural residents is abundant in verbs indicating distrust in financial institutions such as “to deceive,” “not to pay,” “to suffer,” “to lose,” whereas urban residents demonstrated a more positive view of their experience with the financial sector. Moreover, among urban centennials, a number of the most common verbs indicated the attractiveness of investment activities, e.g., “to trust,” “to save,” “to invest,” “to provide,” “to earn,” while in their interviews urban millennials did not demonstrate such varied speech activity. As expected, the usage of verbs in the interviews with representatives of the older generation turned out to be conservative, where the most frequently used verbs with such as “to trust,” “to manage,” “to control,” “to buy,” and “to pay.”

Equally remarkable is the fact that the environment of rural settlements turned out to be the most saturated with collective memories of the USSR’s collapse and privatization. Among urban residents, we encountered mentions of the USSR’s collapse only among centennials, which can be explained by the recent trend in education toward reevaluation of the events connected with the dissolution of the USSR and the events of 1991. In the official discourse, these events have been increasingly referred to as “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century,” emphasizing the traumatic nature of this event. Unlike the speech of urban residents, this theme was present in the speech of rural residents of all three generations. It should be noted that the lexeme “collapse of the USSR” was among the fifteen most commonly used in all three generational groups, with its usage being most intensive among millennials and the older generation, who witnessed these events and their impact on subsequent socio-economic situation in rural Russia.

We found little or no significant gender-based differences in the speech patterns of residents, both in rural and urban settings. Similar to previous findings, rural dwellers, regardless of gender, portrayed a predominantly negative perception of the financial sector. Both men and women described their experiences using terms like “difficult life,” “financial hardships,” “inflation,” “crisis,” “microloan,” and “criminality.” References to banks, insurance, and microfinance organizations were common across genders. Gender differences were minimal in urban areas, where both men and women frequently used terms like “state,” “experience,” “salary,” “organization,” “economy,” and “country.” Additionally, women’s interviews often included terms related to pension payments.

Semantic Interpretations of Trust and Distrust in Financial Institutions

Our study employed both semantic analysis of interview narratives and content analysis of lexeme usage frequency. This dual approach allowed us to delve into not just the "what" of informant discussions about financial institutions but also the "how." Our analysis considered generational disparities and settlement types.

The respondents were asked to describe how they feel about the 1990s, which helped us identify the features of collective memory of the events three decades ago and their role in shaping representations of trust/distrust toward financial institutions. The centennial age group's responses revealed a notable reliance on collective memories, largely influenced by cinema and family recollections. Both urban and rural centennials uniformly expressed negative sentiments toward the events of *perestroika* and the economic reforms of the 1990s.

We observed no attempts to contextualize the post-Soviet crisis years within specific historical factors. Informants simply listed negative phenomena of the 1990s, likening them to a historical "tsunami." Rural centennials notably offered an emotionally charged interpretation, while their urban counterparts maintained a more neutral stance, associating the early 1990s with "destructive Gaidar reforms," "criminality," and "total crisis." Similar trends emerged in interviews with rural and urban millennials, marked by emotional intensity, narrative inconsistency, and a predominantly negative view of *perestroika* and the 1990s economic reforms.

As millennials were direct participants in events from thirty years ago, we anticipated a significant role for their personal autobiographical memories and more personalized negative assessments of the era. For some, the primary negative aspect was associated with the ruble devaluation, while others focused on queues, shortages, or the collapse of the USSR itself. A notable difference between rural millennials and their urban counterparts was the urban dwellers' noticeable feelings of ressentiment associated with the USSR's collapse, along with nostalgia for the Soviet era.

Contrasts between urban and rural residents were more pronounced in the older age group. Here, we encountered not only situational comments and an unequivocally negative interpretation of events but also a tendency to compare life experiences in the USSR with those of the early 1990s. Similar to younger generations, their interview narratives lacked a desire for rational explanations; instead, they identified "the government who deceived the people" as the main culprit. Interestingly, urban informants frequently mentioned the growth of freedom in the 1990s and viewed this era as a time of relative youthfulness.

The subsequent questions aimed to uncover commonalities in the informants' comprehension of financial institutions and to analyze specific grounds for trust and distrust. Comparative analysis showed that across all age groups, respondents lacked a clear understanding of financial institutions. Instead, they often described them by giving specific examples of interactions with financial organizations in their region. This highlighted both the most popular and distrusted institutions among the informants.

The majority of rural and urban informants perceived banks and insurance companies exclusively as financial institutions, indicating their dominance in everyday practices. This trend persisted across all three generations. Notably, banks, particularly Sberbank, appeared as the most trusted institutions across all age groups. While urban residents mentioned other credit institutions, rural residents predominantly relied on Sberbank.

However, while urban residents mentioned other credit institutions, interviews with rural residents revealed an almost exclusive role of Sberbank in their everyday practices. Urban centennials prioritized favorable conditions in their ideal credit organization, while rural centennials valued convenience in addressing all financial matters in one place. Both millennials and older generations viewed state support or ownership of banks as key factors for trust. This paternalistic view was pervasive in interviews across both generational groups, with the state seen as the only entity deserving of some trust. However, some urban millennials saw the state less as an assistant and more as a tax collector altering the rules of the game. Nonetheless, respondents acknowledged that, given Russia's specific conditions, only the state could fairly regulate the financial sphere.

Referring to NAFI studies, we were not surprised to see microfinance organizations as the most distrusted institutions, as well as commercial banks, with Tinkoff Bank standing out as a sort of anti-leader. In this case, a major source of distrust for urban and rural dwellers is their personal experience in interacting with these organizations. While centennials in their responses demonstrated a desire to explain the specifics of the functionality of microfinance organizations and, as a result, their high lending rates, representatives of the millennial and older generations did not attempt to distinguish between commercial banks and microfinance organizations at all, considering them a single and "equally unreliable" entity.

A significant divergence between centennials and millennials/older generations lay in their perception of negative experiences with financial institutions. While rural and urban centennials described unpleasant encounters with banks such as card issues, high credit interest rates, or additional financial charges, most millennials and older individuals, regardless of their location, associated negative experiences with the 1990s. Notably, our questions did not specifically direct attention to this era.

Comparative analysis showed that for the majority of informants, disillusionment with the 1990s stemmed from either the ruble devaluation in 1992 and 1998 or fraudulent financial pyramid schemes. When probed further, respondents hesitated to delve into the causes of their financial losses, often attributing blame to the state.

At the conclusion of the interviews, participants were asked to describe their perception of financial literacy and to self-assess their own financial knowledge. The majority of respondents defined financial literacy as the ability to manage finances effectively and avoid unfavorable banking conditions. This view was consistent across all generations except for urban centennials. Unlike their rural counterparts and other age groups, urban centennials discussed financial literacy not only in terms of household budget management but also regarding investment and loan analysis. This may be attributed to the concentrated efforts in financial literacy education in Lipetsk, as documented in previous studies.

Centennials, regardless of urban or rural background, rated their financial literacy as low. Urban residents, regardless of age, exhibited significant skepticism. In contrast, rural millennials and older individuals perceived their financial literacy as adequate and saw no need for improvement. This can be explained by their reluctance to depart from a conservative financial behavior model and the limited availability of financial literacy education in rural areas.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of interview content and underlying meanings, we not only identify key trends in trust levels toward financial institutions in Lipetsk Oblast but also uncover nuances in lexicon usage, highlighting generational, gender-related, and urban-rural differences. The findings of this study clearly show a high level of emotional intensity in descriptions of people's experiences with the financial sphere, characteristic of both rural and urban residents across all generational groups. Depictions of the financial sphere indicate the prevalence of a conservative model of financial behavior and a significant level of resentment toward events from thirty years ago (the collapse of the USSR, privatization). This pattern persists in the speech culture across all three generations. The enduring presence of conservative behaviors contributes to the shaping of a distinct speech culture among people in Russia's provinces, one marked by distrust toward financial institutions and modern financial practices. Within this framework, banks and insurance companies remain the primary financial institutions with which residents of the Russian provinces prefer to interact.

Our study revealed a perceived low level of financial security among respondents, who often mentioned microloans, financial hardships, and the absence of a financial safety net. This trend was particularly notable among residents of rural settlements, regardless of age group. Both urban and rural residents painted pessimistic pictures of their experiences during periods of social instability. The most frequently used lexemes "crisis," "problem," "difficult life," "decline" conveyed explicitly negative assessments of the changes or referenced obvious factors such as privatization and the reforms of the 1990s. The study confirmed previous findings regarding the enduring collective memory among residents of Russian regions concerning the privatization and financial pyramids of the 1990s. This memory serves as a source of resentment and continues to influence perceptions of the financial sphere. The events of the 1990s persist as a cultural trauma, with the state often portrayed as the main culprit of people's misfortunes. Semantic analysis of the interviews indicated that respondents predominantly view the state as a "collector of payments," rather than as an "assistant" supporting individuals in their interactions with financial institutions.

We found no concepts or intentions related to the current issue of digital fraud. In regions with moderate living standards and levels of financial literacy, the dominance of conservative financial behavior models makes intergenerational differences less noticeable compared to the significant disparity between rural and urban residents.

The study was limited to only one region of Russia, which opens up interesting prospects for a comparative analysis of the patterns of trust and distrust in financial

institutions in Russia's macro regions, where the influence of collective memory and cultural traditions will be especially noticeable. Another obvious limitation of our study was that the interviews were conducted during the first year of the conflict with Ukraine and the introduction of sanctions against Russia. It did not contribute to the reproduction of a long-term culture of trust, and especially trust in the financial sector. No less promising for continuing the line of research presented in this paper may be a comparison of Russian and Western generations of millennials and centennials, who have different historical experiences of the 1990s and 2000s and project it onto the sphere of trust in financial institutions and organizations.

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ARTICLE

Leadership in Technical Fields Through a Gender Lens

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ABSTRACT
Although women have fought for labor rights for many years, they continue to be underrepresented at almost all levels of decision-making. The present study aims to provide insights into female leadership in technical fields both in the EU and in Russia. The article examines the principal leadership aspects of women's status and career experiences. To identify the ingredients of successful leadership, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire and interviews were administrated to a sample of 200 mining students and 40 senior executives. The research data were processed by means of correlative, regressive, and autocorrelation analyses. To track the consistency of the identified leadership factors, female heads of enterprise divisions and university departments shared their views on career progress. The Mann–Whitney U test was employed to analyze the leadership factors. Studies indicate that the more senior the position is, the fewer women there are in leadership roles. Women's progress in technical careers is hindered both by their own uncertainty and judgments made by others about their abilities. To rectify this situation, practices for encouraging young women to pursue technical careers are recommended along with approaches for maintaining them within the career structure. The research findings also indicate a positive emerging global trend towards increased gender diversity in technical fields.

KEYWORDS
female leadership, high-level leadership, technical fields, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), gender aspects, technical university, mineral resource sector, female career development, gender pay gap

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Introduction

Whether in Russia, New Zealand, Norway, or Iceland, women have always been found on the front lines of a productive economy. Moreover, empowering women in the economy is a key to achieving equality and promoting full and productive employment for all. However, when it comes to their participation in higher levels of decision-making, women continue to be in short supply. While over half of people living in the world are women, men still make up 75% of parliamentarians and hold 73% of managerial positions. In the course of negotiations associated with the end of conflicts, men continue to take the lead role (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 2015). There has never been a female head of the state of the Russian Federation. Of the ministers in the Russian Government, women constitute only 12%. Women hold a mere 16.7% of the seats in the State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament. While there are two women currently serving as deputy chairpersons in the government of the Russian Federation, in the Cabinet of Ministers itself, there is only one woman, Olga Lyubimova, who became the first woman to hold the position of Culture Minister since Yekaterina Furtseva headed the Soviet Ministry of Culture from 1960 to 1974. Thus, politics is almost exclusively the domain of men, with women making up around 18.3% of national and state legislatures (Members, n.d.; Senior Russian Government Officials, n.d.).

The term "female leadership" divides opinions: some people would not make a distinction whether it is a man or a woman who leads, considering leadership to be gender neutral, while others do not see a problem with using the prefix "female." In the present paper, the word "female" is stressed to emphasise women's particular characteristics and the value of these characteristics to institutions and enterprises in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. The definition of "high-level leadership" or executive staff positions varies; for the study, we considered posts occupied by women involved in managing and directing the course of an organization, including senior or executive vice presidents, chief financial or operation officers, heads of departments at a technical university, etc.

Globally, the proportion of women working in senior management grew to 31% in 2021, marking considerable progress achieved in the last few years. According to a recent study, the number of areas in which women are applying for leadership positions increased to nine (Field et al., 2023; National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, 2023). The proportion of female leaders is less than a half in such areas as education (42%), healthcare (39%), finance (29%), retail (24%), and real estate (22%). In the mineral resource sector, just as in the political affairs, men control nearly all aspects of decision making. Women are least likely to run companies in the mining, public sector, and security sectors (6%) (Hinchliffe, 2021).

There is a great deal of research into the lack of gender equality in technical fields (Funk & Parker, 2018; Kazanin et al., 2021). Similarly, there is a large body of literature on the lack of gender equality in leadership areas (Women in Business Report, 2021; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). However, there is little statistics-based research into the intersection of women's leadership in technical fields in the EU and in Russia.

The present work focuses on how leadership in technical fields is factored through the gender lens both in the EU and in Russia. In order to champion gender equality in STEM industries, the root cause is to be recognised and addressed. This article analyzes factors influencing women's careers, starting from secondary education and continuing through career development, including socio-psychological and cultural aspects. Such statistical research closes the gender data gap as well as addressing both the suppression of women's achievements and concealment of their experiences in executive or managerial positions.

By examining women's career experiences, female governance, and career barriers, the study aims to identify recommended practices for fostering gender diversity in technical sectors. With its focus on gender in STEM areas, the work seeks to expand the existing studies of female leadership by addressing the following research questions:

- What is the academic background of women leaders in technical fields?
- What are the ingredients of successful female leadership in technical fields?
- How can secondary, tertiary education and STEM industries achieve gender parity in leadership in technical fields?

Two research hypotheses are investigated. The first identifies a trend towards increased numbers of female leaders working in technical fields. The second hypothesis proposed by the study suggests that certain practices can motivate young women in schools and universities to pursue technical careers, thus addressing the current gender disparity in technical fields.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

The study lying in the intersection of technical fields and female leadership consists of the theoretical and experimental parts covering Russia and EU28 countries.

The research steps comprised: (a) collection of background information on the STEM workforce; (b) research planning; (c) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire administered to two age groups of respondents (technical students and senior managers); (d) analysis of the questionnaire results using the nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test; (e) semi-structured interview of female leaders; (f) analysis of the semi-structured interview results; (g) formulation of recommendations that can encourage young women at schools and universities to pursue technical careers in order to centre women in technical fields.

After gathering STEM workforce background information, we conducted a comparative analysis on the proportion of women in both academic and senior management positions in technical fields. The revised list included official statistics documents from a 5-year period from 2019 to 2023, Russian and western academic publications, and the most recent data on this topic. Using correlative, regressive, and autocorrelation analyses, we predicted the proportion of women in STEM senior management up to 2025. The selected time period and countries are constrained by the data availability and readiness of female CEOs to share their leadership experiences.

To collect the empirical data, we surveyed technical students and senior managers using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 1990). The first part of the experiment was initiated at Empress Catherine II Saint Petersburg Mining University, the leading higher technical university in Russia, which provides international integration in issues of training and continuous professional development of mining specialists from all over the world, as well as international accreditation and certification of educational programs for mining engineers. The data were collected on an anonymous basis via an online survey application. All participants were informed about the study and consented to participate.

In the first survey, 200 mining students comprising 100 males and 100 females between the ages of 17–19 were surveyed along with and 40 heads of technical university departments (20 males and 20 females) to identify and compare their leadership qualities. There was no special selection criterion in the student group other than the status of the group monitor in the Mining University. It should be added that the percentage of female and male respondents did not reflect the male-to-female ratio in technical fields as evidenced by statistical data (UNESCO, 2017). The choice of the equal number of respondents was applied randomly to provide equal opportunities for male and female representatives. The students' ages were mentioned only for reference and not taken into account in the calculations.

In the second part, women leaders taking part in the professional workshop programme for engineers held in the Leningrad Oblast on the Day of the Metallurgist in 2023, along with female heads of technical departments at Empress Catherine II Saint Petersburg Mining University in the 2022–2023 academic year, were interviewed to analyze perceptions of women holding managerial posts in the mineral resource sector to identify the drivers of women's career growth in STEM, along with their suggestions of how to advance and increase the number of women leaders in technical fields. We collected data via both semi-structured interviews and anecdotal testimony collected between 2022 and 2023. This part of the study relies on a qualitative research design focusing on the experiences and perceptions of the informants.

Statistical Data Processing

Statistical data processing and graphical representation of the data obtained were performed by IBM SPSS 17 and Microsoft Office Excel 2016. Skewness and kurtosis indices characterising the distribution curve were used to assess the attribute type. Numerical values are presented as $M \pm SD$, where M is mean, SD is standard deviation. The qualitative attribute values are displayed as observed frequencies and percentages. Since factors 6 and 7 in the two groups lacked a normal distribution of the sample, the group comparison was based on the nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test. The values measured in point scales were analysed. The linear regression analysis with calculation of the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to assess the temporal dynamics. Pearson's linear correlation coefficient was utilised to conduct correlation analysis, followed by testing for significance. Statistical significance was determined at $p < .05$, where p represents the probability of Type I error. All cases adhered to the use of two-tailed criteria. The Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons was used to compare the average values for several groups.

Results

Based on the statistics analysis, we identified that both Russian and European women are highly educated, but begin to lag behind in technical fields starting at the PhD level. Analysis of societal, organizational, and individual factors reveals that women's advancement in managerial careers depends on tackling gender stereotypes, which result in psychological obstacles and misconceptions about their professional abilities.

The results of the correlative, regressive, and autocorrelation analyses presented an increasing global trend in the percentage of female executives in STEM is forecast. Our research findings revealed a pay gap mainly due to the gender imbalance in technical fields across both Russian and EU-based engineering organizations. The research results indicate that male students outperform female students on the leadership quality test in terms of reasoning skills, suggesting they excel in critical thinking and providing logical justification for actions and decisions. Efforts of secondary and tertiary education providers to attract more girls to STEM are analysed along with the initiatives of the technical industries to retain female specialists.

Outcome 1: Overview of Women in Senior Technology Roles

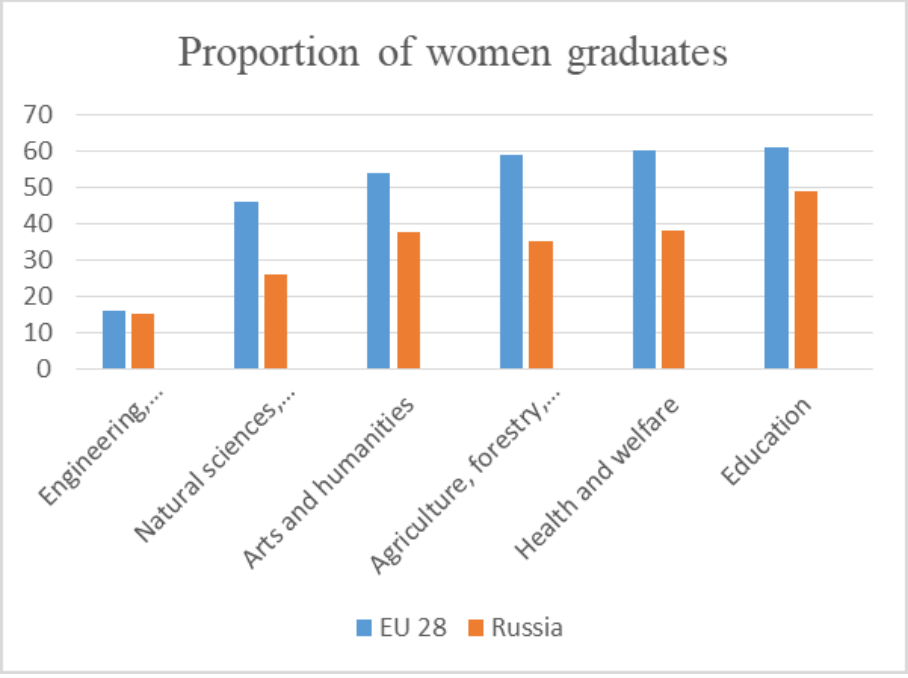
Women in Tech Statistics. Since an interest and motivation toward technical sciences may begin early in human formation and development, we considered all levels of education in our research. According to a recent UNESCO study, 91% of females worldwide completed secondary school, while males were slightly behind at 90% (UNESCO, 2017). Turning to higher education, it can be noted that 89% of women have higher education, while the figure for men is lower at 75%. Since the early 1990s, a massive generational shift has seen more women than their male counterparts attaining bachelor's degrees in universities in 60 countries (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 2015; Times Higher Education & the UNESCO International Institute of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2022; Varlamova et al., 2023). In this regard, one of the epochal events took place in 2010. Since it was in that year that more women than men obtained advanced degrees for the first time.

In the EU's 28 member states, 60% of university graduates were women last year (Eurostat, 2024). However, if taking into account the field of study, the enrolment of female students is particularly low in ICT (3%), natural science, mathematics, and statistics (5%), and in engineering, manufacturing, and construction (8%). Only 29% of all female students opt for STEM-related fields in higher education (Golovina & Grebneva, 2021; UNESCO, 2017).

The varying proportion of women among doctoral graduates across fields of education is also reflected in Russian statistics. In the EU, women ranged from 61% of social and related scientists to 16% of engineers among the college-educated employees in 2021 (Figure 1). As can be seen from the figure, Russia has fewer university graduates than the EU in all spheres.

Figure 1

Female Doctoral Graduates by Field of Study, 2021



Note. Source: compiled by the authors based on Times Higher Education & the UNESCO International Institute of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2022; Varlamova et al., 2023.

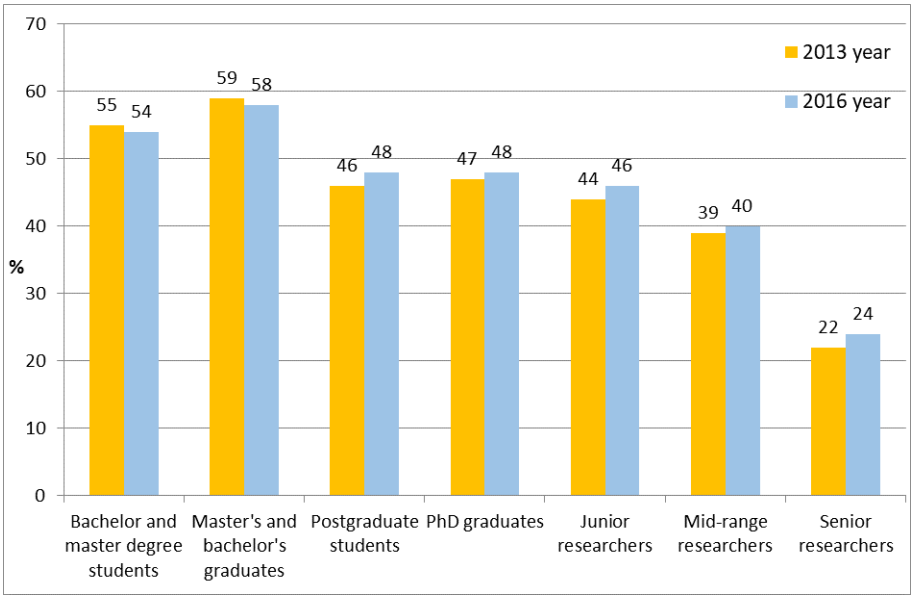
In the mineral resources sector, which is a key driver of the health and vitality of the economy over time, while there are many examples of outstanding leaders, nearly all of them are men. When studying the high-ranking positions, the imbalance is even more apparent. Even in European Union countries where equality policies are implemented, the proportion of women in high academic positions is 24% (European Commission, 2019; TeamStage, n.d.). Moving to the top of the career pyramid, the decline in women's representation, sometimes referred to as the "leaky pipeline", is observed in almost all countries (Figure 2).

According to the statistics, nearly two-thirds of women working in STEM jobs had at least a bachelor's degree education compared with less than half (43%) of men in STEM jobs in 2021 (The UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021).

In 2019, the percentage of women researchers in top-level positions in science and engineering was 39.6% in Russia (Rosstat, 2021). When it comes to university professors in Russia, women are still very much a minority, comprising only 6%. In the European Union, while the proportion of female researchers accounted for 29%, the share of full professors was only 18% (Table 1).

Figure 2

Proportion of Women at Different Stages of Academic Career



Note. Source: compiled by the authors.

Table 1

Participation Percentage of Women Among Academic Staff in STEM in Russia and the EU in 2019

Academic staff	Proportion of women in academia (%), *n* = 100	
	Russia	EU-28
Researchers	39.6	29.0
Full professors	6.0	18.0
PhD	45.0	47.9
Academicians	9.4	5.1

Note. Source: compiled by the authors based on Bondarenko et al., 2020; European Commission, 2021.

Female engineers outnumber male ones in Lithuania (57%), Bulgaria (53%), Portugal (53%), Russia (52.4%), and Norway (54%). In the Russian Federation, this trend has not changed over the years since more than half of Russian women scientists work in technical fields. Nevertheless, the share of women among researchers has not approached 50% in some economically developed European countries (The UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020; Times Higher Education & the UNESCO International Institute of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2022). The proportion of women scientists and engineers in the EU and Russia is listed in Appendix (Table A1).

In her report, Irina Donnik, Vice-President of the Russian Academy of Sciences, indicated that 52.4% of women scientists in the Russian Federation work in technical fields, while 23.6% work in natural sciences. Social sciences take the third place in popularity among women; here, female scientists constitute 8.0% of the total number of researchers (Vitse-Prezident RAN, 2021).

Female participation in the top-management (CEO and directors reporting to the CEO) differs from year to year (Table 2).

Table 2

Women's Participation in Senior Management in STEM

Year	**Percentage of women, %** ***n* = 100**
2022	29
2021	31
2020	28
2016	24.4
2015	14.7
2014	13.7
2013	12.9
2012	11.3
2011	10.3
2010	9.6

Note. Source: compiled by the authors based on Kalinina, 2022; Leibundgut, 2022; Women in Business Report, 2021.

The share of female senior managers employed in the STEM sector varied significantly between selected regions, ranging from 39% in Africa to 28% in the Asia Pacific. Appendix contains data on the representation of women in senior STEM management across various countries (Table A2).

Overall, statistical data show that both Russian and European women are highly educated, often surpassing men in secondary education, bachelor's and master's engineering studies. However, the situation takes a turn for the worse starting from the PhD level of technical studies. There are correspondingly fewer women in top-management in technical fields both in Russia and in the EU. While an increased appetite within companies to appoint more women into technology roles can be observed, this apparently does not apply to senior positions.

What Do Female Leaders in Technical Fields Earn?

Since salary serves as the basis of the population's source of income, researchers examined remuneration for equal types of work in the labour market. Despite the fact that equal payment for work of equal value is declared in the UN Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs), such as Goal 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and Goal 8 “Promote progressive, inclusive and sustainable development”, women earn 77 cents of every dollar made by men who fulfil the same jobs, comparable jobs, or equivalent functions.

In the European Union, the gender pay gap, which has been narrowing quite slowly over the last decade, averages 14.1% as compared to 15.7% in 2014 (European Commission, 2023; Eurostat, 2024). The permanent workforce in the UK office in April 2022 was 33% female, with 17% of women in senior management positions (Gender Pay Gap Reporting, 2023) (Table 3).

Table 3

Pay Gaps Across UK Organizations

Pay quartiles	Men, %				Women, %			
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2019	2020	2021	2022
Top quartile	89	88	90	89	11	12	10	11
Lower quartile	52	45	49	49	48	55	51	51

Note. Source: compiled by the authors based on Gender Pay Gap Reporting, 2023; Women in Management, 2022.

In Russia, the average hourly wage of women was at the level of 70%–77% of men’s wages. Due to the implementation of programmes on public employment, women’s pay has gradually improved. In 2019, the Russian gender pay gap was 27.9%, which still significantly exceeds the global average (Rosstat, 2021). In 2021, the pay gap between male and female specialists working in scientific and technical fields averaged 30 percent. Meanwhile, the largest pay gap between men and women in the professional group “top managers” is in the mineral resource sector, where men earn, on average, 32.7% more than women (Table 4).

Table 4

Average Salary of Men and Women in the Russian Federation in 2021, per Month

Employees categories by major activities	Average salary of men, rubles	Average salary of women, rubles	Gender gap in average salary, %
Heads of enterprises and their structural subdivisions	201,590	135,664	32.7
Specialists of the highest-level qualification	124,066	86,736	30.0

Note. Source: compiled by the authors based on Haan, 2024; Roshchin & Yemelina, 2022; Rosstat, 2021.

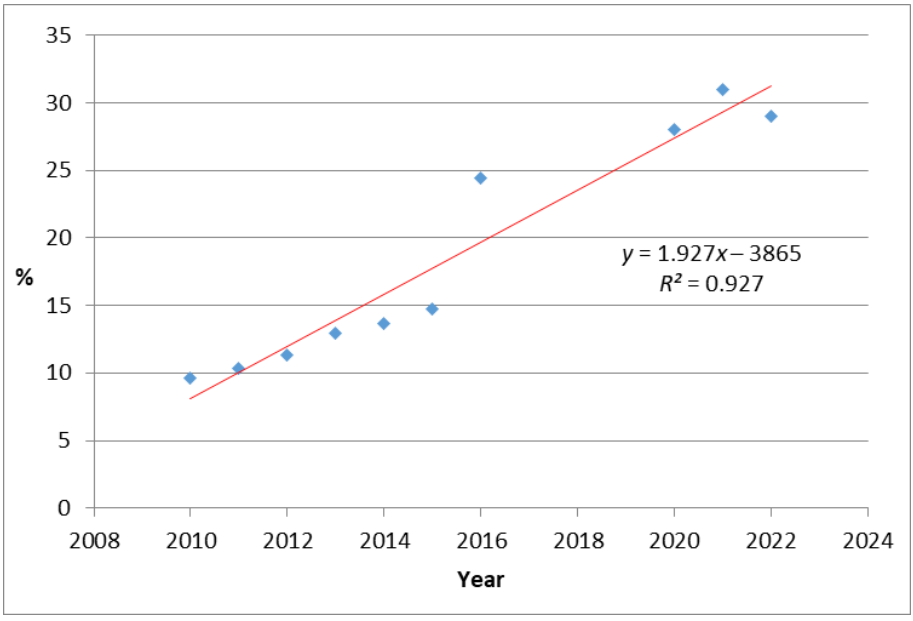
From Tables 3 and 4, it is evident that earnings for male and female senior managers showed significant differentials, notably at the very top.

Outcome 2: Trend Towards Gender Diversification in Technical Fields

Using correlative and regressive analysis, we have revealed a linear, strong, direct, statistically significant ($p < .05$) correlation between the observation years and the percentage of female CEOs in the mineral resource companies. The high consistency of the results is evidenced by the chief values of both determination coefficient ($R^2 = 0.927$) and Pearson's linear correlation coefficient ($R = 0.963$). In the process of statistical analysis, a linear regression equation was constructed: $y = 1.927x - 3865$, forming a basis to predict the proportion of female managers (y) in subsequent years (x). Thus, we can estimate that the share of women leaders will reach 37.2% in 2025 (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Dynamics of the Share of Women in Senior Management in Companies From 2010 to 2022, %

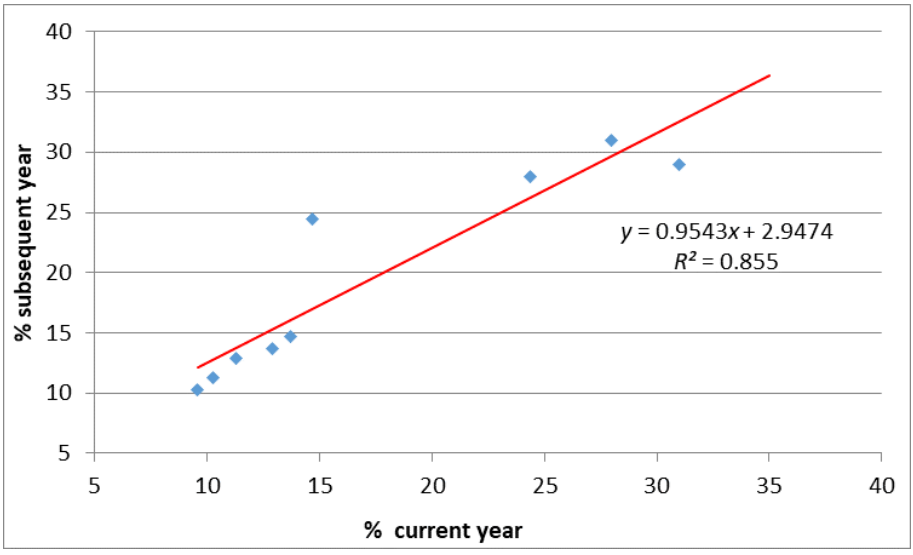


Note. Source: calculations by the authors.

Using autocorrelation analysis with a shift by one observation period, representing an alternative method for estimating the dynamics of a time series, a similar result was obtained. The determination coefficient having a value of 0.855 ($R^2 = 0.855$) and Pearson's autocorrelation coefficient ($R = 0.925$) were calculated to be high. The share of female managers (y) in technical fields in subsequent years in relation to the value of this share in the current period (x) was forecast based on the linear autoregressive equation ($y = 0.954x + 2.947$). For example, in 2025, the share of female managers will amount to 35.0% based on the autoregressive model (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Autocorrelation of the Dynamics of the Share of Women in Senior Management From 2010 to 2022, %



Note. Source: calculations by the authors.

Thus, between 2010 and 2022 there was a pronounced, statistically significant increasing trend in the percentage of the female CEOs being substantiated by two methods of analysis of dependence.

Outcome 3: Ingredients of Successful Female Leadership

The principal features of female governance and women's career setbacks in Russia and in EU were compared and analysed. In order to understand the female approach to decision-making, management style, challenges, and sources of inspiration, we surveyed production foremen, metallurgical workshop supervisors, and heads of technical university departments. The statistical tables are based on the information supplied by female leaders and data from the statistical sources.

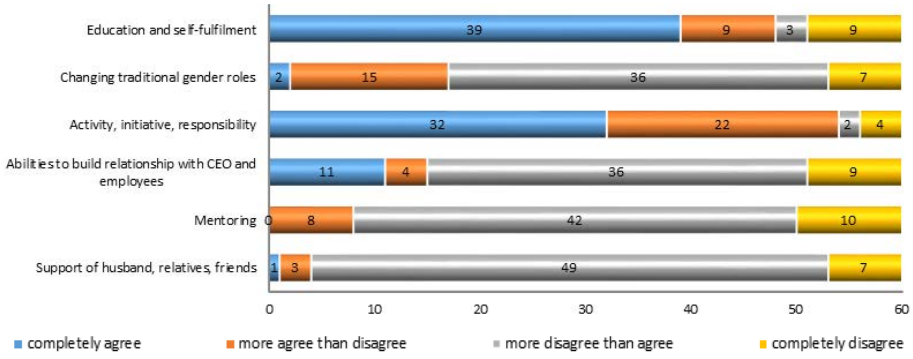
In the first part of the survey, individual, societal, and organizational factors were appraised to analyse women managers' views on their career development. The surveyed executives have a lengthy managerial background, with 10% holding their positions for one to five years, 10% for more than five years, and 80% for over 10 years. The periods of holding a leadership position are listed in Appendix (Figure A1).

The motivation of women to obtain a managerial position is viewed as an important attribute. Most surveyed respondents were offered a post based on their fruitful work either at the technical university or at an industrial enterprise. However, some women were obligated to shoulder the responsibility due to possessing a distinct competency over others and the company's need for this competency. Only 1% said it had been their own drive to improve on existing university performance.

The next questions concerned women's career advancement approaches and obstacles to acceding to higher management positions (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Results of 20 Women's Self-Assessment of the Ways of Female Career Promotion



Note. Source: compiled by the authors.

As stated by 39% of respondents, excellent education and skills are deemed crucial for career development. The proactivity formula viz. activity, initiative and responsibility rank the second in the degree of prevalence in the list of career-enhancing factors. A great deal of information about the barriers to career growth had been made available in a self-critical manner, especially concerning household responsibilities leading to time constraints. The main structural and qualitative reasons preventing women from climbing the career ladder were identified based on the analysis of the female leaders' responses (Table 5).

Table 5

Main Barriers to Career Advancement

Individual	Cultural	Workplace	Structure/policy
Wrong choice of educational institutions	Perception of women's commitment	Inflexible work schedule	Lack of shared parental leave
Sector choices	Double standards	Staff rather than line role promotions	Lack of childcare assistance
Pipeline availability	Role of spousal / relatives	Lack of training (coaching)	Differentiated taxation
Risk aversion disparity	Work-life balance priorities	Promotion rates	Enterprises/university departments designed for men

Note. Source: compiled by the authors.

The next issues connected with female career advancement were analysed based on both interviews with women leaders and by studying statistical data. Upon being asked about obstacles women may face in pursuing a career, some private and educational factors were identified. Many women meet discouragement when choosing occupations in which women have not traditionally worked, for example, in technical fields (Table 6).

Table 6

Impediments to Career Growth

Barriers to women's career development	Respondents, %	*n* = 100
	Statistical sources	Survey data
Lack of confidence in their professional skills and career goals	24	21
Inadequate perception of professional skills and career goals by others	19	18
Shortage of time because of running the home and childcare	15	16
Limited access to self-development opportunities	13	14
Paid less than men	12	12
Little support from others	9	10
Insufficient professional education	8	9

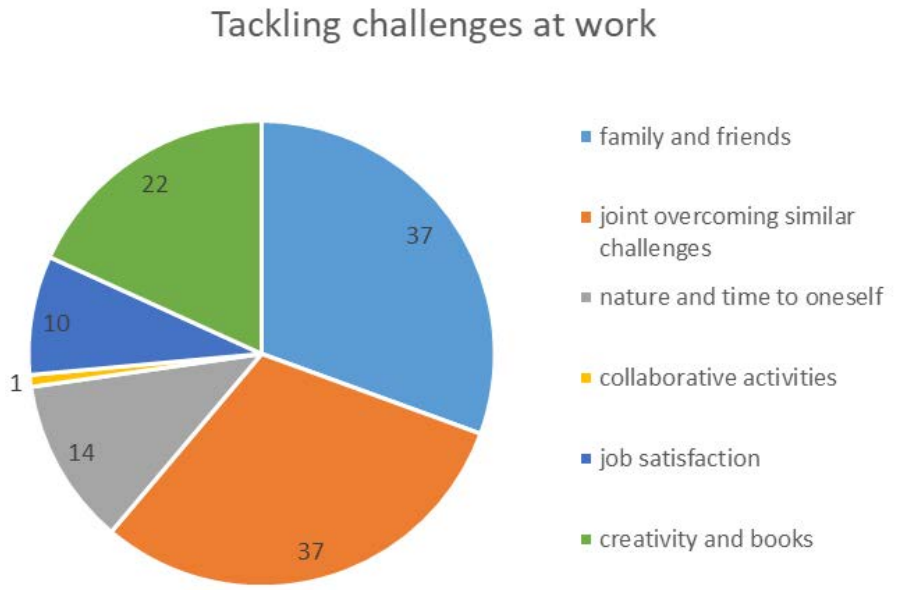
Note. Source: compiled by the authors based on the survey data and the data from national statistical sources: Breakdown of Women Holding CEO Positions, 2020; Dawson et al., 2014; TeamStage, n.d.

As can be seen from Table 6 above, the survey data almost coincided with the statistical data. Many women struggle with psychological difficulties concerning a lack of confidence in their leadership potential and professional skills, as well as inadequate perceptions of women's professional skills and career goals on the part of others.

Figure 6 shows that about 70% of respondents placed support from family or friends and overcoming similar challenges together at the top of the list.

Figure 6

Facilitating Challenges at Work



Note. Source: compiled by the authors.

Factors having an impact were classified as individual, cultural, professional, and structural. Through the course of their examination, it was determined that advancement of women in managerial careers on a global scale depends on traditional gender roles, organizational culture, women's perceptions, and professional competencies. While the majority of respondents face work-related challenges, they have been able to work out some strategies for overcoming workplace issues in order to better manage their leadership roles.

The differences between male and female styles of leadership are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Features of Female/Male Leadership Styles

Leadership style	Respondents, % *n* = 100
Women's multitasking and men's goal-oriented	16
Women negotiate, men order	20
Women's flexibility and men's conservatism	19
Women's softness, men's aggressiveness	18
Men are result-oriented; women are process-oriented	14
Men are more rational when making decisions	13

Note. Source: compiled by the authors.

As can be seen from Table 7, female senior-level executives have more developed skills associated with encouraging and supporting, while men are considered better at decision-making and problem-solving.

Based on the respondents' views, we summarised the proposed benefits for an industrial sector if its leaders were women (Table 8).

Table 8

Benefits of Female Leadership

Benefits for organizations	Respondents, % *n* = 100
Improving organization efficiency and quality	15
Financial return	10
Gender does not play any role	55
Promotion of the mining engineering profession among women	20

Note. Source: compiled by the authors.

In determining factors that female leaders bring to an industrial sector (STEM), 15% of the female respondents placed increasing productivity and creativity at the top of the list, while 10% accentuated financial benefits as the main driver behind promoting gender equality. Among the respondents, while 20% specifically highlighted the need to promote mining engineering to women, a majority (55%) did not consider men and women differently.

In sum, the ingredients in successful female leadership are confidence in the leadership potential, appropriate educational level, well-developed professional skills, and specific personal abilities such as activity, initiative and responsibility.

Outcome 4: Traits of Female and Male Leaders

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was employed to explore their leadership potential of 200 student leaders and 40 executives. To evaluate each statement, a five-point Likert scale was employed. From the processed results of the test, seven major factors associated with transformational leadership allows identified (Table 9).

Table 9

Description of the Leadership Factors

Factors	Interpretation
Factor 1 Acting with integrity (formerly Idealised Influence—Behaviors)	Abilities to inspire based on authority
Factor 2 Building trust (formerly Idealised Influence—Attributes)	Abilities to build trust
Factor 3 Encouraging innovative thinking (formerly Intellectual Stimulation)	Abilities to encourage employees' creativity, as well as to develop their innovative potential in solving occupational tasks
Factor 4 Coaching & developing people (formerly Reasoning Factor)	Abilities to find an approach to a particular person, even an unfamiliar one
Factor 5 Encouraging others (formerly Inspirational Motivation)	Abilities to create an attractive image of the goal clearly outlining criteria and expectations
Factor 6 Management by exception	Abilities to manage the process of achieving the goal; desire to make the group work as effective as possible, not just to ensure the formal achievement of indicators
Factor 7 Empowerment	Abilities to organize the group work to effectively achieve goals

Note. Source: compiled by the authors.

The results of the comparative analysis of the questionnaire data using the nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test showed the total seven-factor mean was statistically significantly ($P_{st\text{-}ex} < 0.05$) higher for the female executives than for the female students. The difference (d%) between them ranged from 73.2% to 108.0% in favor of female executives. The similar differences were calculated between the male executives and male students ($P_{st\text{-}ex} < 0.05$). The difference (d%) ranged from 58.7% to 83.6% in favor of male leaders.

The results of the statistical data analysis by the nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test indicated gender differences in Factor 4. We define reasoning factors as the rationale, motivation, and preferences people use to guide others.

The male students showed predominance in this factor by 11.9% (P = 0.019). They have a tendency to motivate using a sensitive approach towards personal requirements. Statistically significant differences were also calculated between male and female executives only for the mean of Factor 5 (Encouraging others). The female executives showed 10.9% predominance in this factor ($P_{f\text{-}m}$ = 0.026) (Table 10).

Table 10

Results of Descriptive Statistics and Comparative Analysis of Respondents of Different Gender and Social Status

Parameters	Factor 1 Acting with integrity (formerly Idealised Influence—Behaviors)	Factor 2 Building trust (formerly Idealised Influence—Attributes)	Factor 3 Encouraging innovative thinking (formerly Intellectual Stimulation):	Factor 4 Coaching & developing people (formerly Reasoning Factor)	Factor 5 Encouraging others (formerly Inspirational Motivation)	Factor 6 Management by exception	Factor 7 Empowerment
Female students (n = 100)							
M	5.5	5.6	5.2	5.0	5.5	6.2	5.0
±SD	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.5	1.3	1.1	1.4
Female executives (n = 20)							
M	10.5	10.5	10.0	9.5	10.6	10.7	10.3
±SD	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.5	0.9	1.2	1.1
$P_{st\text{-}ex}$	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001
d% st-ex	88.7%	87.6%	92.2%	90.5%	92.8%	73.2%	108.0%
Male students (n = 100)							
M	5.6	5.8	5.5	5.6	5.7	6.3	5.2
±SD	1.0	1.0	0.7	0.9	1.1	0.9	1.0
$P_{f\text{-}m}$	0.996	0.739	0.130	0.019	0.693	0.941	0.471
d% f-m	1.1%	3.1%	6.4%	11.9%	3.5%	2.0%	5.6%
Male executives (n = 20)							
M	9.7	10.1	9.4	9.2	9.4	10.0	9.6
±SD	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.4	1.5	1.1	1.1
$P_{st\text{-}ex}$	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001
d% $_{st\text{-}ex}$	72.3%	74.2%	69.7%	64.9%	66.1%	58.7%	83.6%
$P_{f\text{-}m}$	0.160	0.472	0.366	0.874	0.026	0.143	0.135
d% $_{f\text{-}m}$	–7.7%	–4.3%	–6.0%	–3.2%	–10.9%	–6.5%	–6.8%

Note. Source: calculated by the authors.

Summarising the statistical analysis data represented in Table 10, the male and female executives in technical industries outscored the technical students in all leadership factors. The female executives outperformed male ones on the inspirational factors (Factor 5) demonstrating better developed leadership potential and strong business focus. Male students demonstrated superior critical thinking and logical justification in personalised leadership compared with their female counterparts.

Outcome 5: Initiatives Aimed at Improving Gender Diversity in Technical Fields

Practices to Encourage Young Women at Secondary Schools and Universities to Pursue Technical Careers

Below, we summarise the efforts of secondary and tertiary education to attract and retain more girls in STEM. The most common initiatives are aimed at school-age girls who are about to make a choice for their future profession. According to the statistical results, while 58.1% of girls expressed a desire to attain to STEM professions (Times Higher Education & the UNESCO International Institute of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2022; Varlamova et al., 2023) more than half have doubts about their capability to excel in technical subjects. Seminars and interventions of informing girls about gender stereotypes are integrated into the educational process or held as separate events to overcome girls' uncertainty about their future technical career choice.

Many girls rate their intellectual abilities lower and show more insecurity than boys. Videos and articles about brain plasticity and ability to develop over the course of a lifetime are presented within the practices of "growth mindset" developed the theory of stereotype threats (Reilly et al., 2022; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Another approach is active learning via a set of pedagogical approaches to encourage the involvement of students in learning through discussions and role-playing games, solving professionally oriented cases (Hartikainen et al., 2019; Gerasimova et al., 2022).

Placing an emphasis on the public benefit of a career in STEM serves as a practice for increasing girls' engagement with STEM subjects. Increasing the confidence of students that their future profession is beneficial to society will contribute to attracting more girls into STEM (Diekman et al., 2017).

An alternative practice of attracting girls to STEM is through the Service Learning programme, which combines the educational process with socially useful activities. For example, in the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Chile, Spain, students and schoolchildren are involved in local professionally oriented community organizations (Cheryan et al., 2015).

Efforts have been made to create targeted school programmes with government-led funding and the involvement of employers expressing their commitment to gender equality. The School Leader Contest programme run by the Empress Catherine II Mining University is aimed at motivating talented students of both genders to choose technical universities. As well as comprising one of the mechanisms for integrating secondary and higher education, this programme represents an important step towards developing the popularity of engineering professions.

To identify potential leaders among students and create conditions for their realisation, there are special training programmes in the Mining University, for example, as scientific assistants. This course provides numerous opportunities for the academic development and advancement of assistant scientists. Thus, the technical university serves as a platform for their continuing personal and professional development.

As well as weekend training sessions, summer schools for girls involving immersion in technical sciences are annually held to strengthen girls' psychological readiness to learn technical sciences. At the Mining university, psychological support is provided to students in the form of a comprehensive programme of psychological and pedagogical support of the professional training and educational process.

As well as taking measures to expand opportunities for girls in STEM education, it is also important to promote female participation in the STEM labor market. To increase incentives for women's employment in technical fields, partnerships between leading technical universities and industrial enterprises are developed to support gifted students. Scholarships and grants for research and development in technical sciences are established in partnership with business organizations to support female scientists. An alliance of business companies has been formed to support universities, women's organizations and school principals in pilot regions that have committed to developing STEM programmes to train women in technical fields.

We suggest that such influence may be conducted through "role models" based on portraying women professionals in technical industries. In the Mining university, the female senior executives who work in the traditionally male-dominated STEM fields are invited to share their views of successful career with students. If girls see more women in prominent STEM roles, they are more likely to start to picture themselves there.

STEM Industries' Initiatives to Achieve Gender Parity in Technical Fields

According to the statistics, in the last five years, there has been assertive action from technology companies to alter the makeup of their senior leadership team as a means of ensuring that they become more diverse, especially in terms of senior female appointments (Table 11).

Table 11

Most Common Actions Being Taken by STEM Industries to Achieve Gender Parity

Initiatives for gender parity	STEM industries, % *n* = 100
Ensuring equal access to career development	14
Creating an inclusive culture	25
Enabling flexible working hours	11
Providing coaching	20
Reviewing recruitment approaches	6
Linking senior management's reward to progress on gender	3
Setting quotas for gender balance at leadership levels	16
Specific approaches based on gender	5

Note. Source: compiled by the authors.

Considering the research data, we revealed the standard actions taken by STEM industries to get more women into senior management worldwide. These are coaching, setting quotas, and the creation of an inclusive culture (Kersley et al., 2021; Women in Business, 2020).

Globally, such countries as the Netherlands, Italy, France, Germany, Norway, and India have applied quotas to scale up women's presence in managerial positions. In 2019, more than 20% of board members were women worldwide, representing an increase of almost 2% from 17.9% in 2018 (UN Women, 2024; Women in Business, 2020). A bill that adopts quotas for the number of female leaders is being prepared in Spain. The guideline states that the proportion of women on boards of directors in medium and large companies, government agencies, and the country's government must be at least 40%. In Russia, there are only 6.5% of women among the leaders of the top 200 largest Russian companies (UN Women, 2024; World Development Report, 2012). CEOs in STEM industries should actively mentor women to support a more inclusive workplace. In Russia, coaching is provided, along with the development of an inclusive culture.

International events like STEM Forum Russia and STEM+E forum, which are aimed at popularising STEM careers among girls, are already being organized in Russia.

Discussion

The present study focused on how leadership in technical fields is factored through the gender lens both in the EU and in Russia. The topic of the presented research is important in connection with the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on gender equality, as well as the increasing demand in the labor market for representatives of technical professions not only in Russia, but also in Europe (European Commission, 2016, 2023). The comparison between the EU and Russia reveals similar challenges concerning the underrepresentation of women in technical fields. Despite the many campaigns in support of gender equality, there is still a lack of competent female specialists in technical fields, especially in the top management.

The practical outcomes of this research include a statistical overview of women leaders in technical fields, identification of key features of female governance, as well as factors and initiatives for achieving gender equality in the economy. We have confirmed the hypotheses on the rising global trend of female leaders in technical fields and need for initiatives capable of promoting women leaders in technical fields. We estimate that the share of women leaders will reach about 35.0%–37.2% in 2025.

The present study results confirm the data about the underrepresentation of women in decision-making bodies in STEM (Edwards et al., 2020; Kersley et al., 2021; Women in Business Report, 2021); thus, male scientists constitute 72% of the world's technical researchers. We fully endorse research findings stating that gender equality in technical fields is not yet a reality (National Center for Science and Engineering

Statistics, 2023). While women now enjoy excellent education and are ready to take responsibility at work, they continue to face unexpected obstacles after entering the workforce and looking forward to promotions. In general, the higher a company's revenue is, the less likely it is to have a female CEO.

Our findings about career counselling coincide with the data presented in the *STEM Statistics: Workforce* (2023). For example, potential female leaders are more drawn to those companies that build teams on the principles of co-operation and empathy (Largest Listed Companies, 2024; Rudnik et al. 2023).

A STEM degree serves as a tool to perform jobs and move into peak leadership roles (Bazhin et al., 2021; Pashkevich & Bykova, 2022; Syrkov et al., 2021). Our findings are in line with research stating that career development is influenced by a multitude of factors, including education, psychology, sociology, economics, that shape an individual's career path over their lifetime (Helgesen & Goldsmith, 2018; Sveshnikova et al., 2022). If fortunate, women may find their passion and excel in their chosen field, acquiring skills and values that drive them to explore, establish, and maintain their career development.

Considering the concept of leadership in relation to the mineral resource sector, it is worth mentioning that companies employing multi-gender teams are up to a third more effective (Kersley et al., 2021; Litvinenko et al., 2023). Companies having women in high-administration positions are estimated to be 18% to 69% more profitable and competitive than their peers. They also perform better over time, generating 10% more cumulative revenue over a 5-year period (De La Rosa et al., 2021; Makhovikov et al., 2023). However, as reported by Hunt et al. (2018), National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (2023), women tend to be segregated into a small number of productive sectors, which translates into gaps in their earnings and productivity with respect to men.

We also endorse research stating that the great challenges of our time cannot be solved using the same kind of thinking we used to create them (Boyadjieva et al., 2024; Dorofeev et al., 2023; Mikeshin, 2022).

Our study also validated the finding that, both in the EU and Russia, women tend to be employed in education, health and agricultural sectors, where wages are often lower (National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, 2023). Globally, the largest pay gap between men and women in the professional group of "top managers" is in the mineral resource sector, where men earn, on average, 32.7% more than women. Several possible explanations for this gender pay gap include occupational segregation, missing out on valuable work experience caused by childbirth and childcare responsibilities, differences in working hours and the tendency of men to take risks and compete (Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2020; Panov, 2014; Unadjusted Gender Pay Gap, 2022).

Impediments to achieving gender parity in senior leadership posts and corporate boards remain. However, one of the key factors behind women's economic empowerment is social pluralism within corporate management teams (20 Women Tech Leaders, 2023; de Kleijn et al., 2020).

Further research suggests the following steps: (a) a case study of female engineers and their careers; (b) gaining insight into career advancement opportunities; (c) development of more comprehensive and accessible cross-gender mentoring practices to promote and reinforce female leadership.

Conclusion

The research findings indicate that women believe their inability to advance in the technical careers stems from both their own doubts and others' negative judgements concerning their capabilities. Such doubts and negative judgements can be explained in terms of gender stereotypes. In general, the proportion of women in management decreases in increments of seniority: the higher up the corporate ladder you go, the fewer women there are.

By examining the statistical data, we now have a better understanding of the current state of women in STEM, both in terms of education and employment. While Russian and European women frequently outperform men in secondary education, as well as in bachelor's and master's level technical studies, a "leaky pipeline" for PhD-senior researchers has been confirmed. Thus, the proportion of women in technical fields, including PhD students, researchers, and senior managers, remains below 50% in both Russia and the EU.

Our research findings shed light on female characteristics that are valued in technical fields. The key ingredients of successful leadership are confidence in leadership potential, quality education, honed professional skills, personal abilities such as activity, initiative and responsibility, as well as the capacity to foster relationships with both CEOs and employees. The main attributes of female leadership, such as multitasking, process-orientation, negotiation skills, flexibility, and softness have been identified.

Our analysis of practices provided by the secondary and tertiary education to bring more girls into STEM careers, as well as STEM industry initiatives for facilitating female leadership in technical fields, revealed the importance of the following aspects:

- Mindsets, role models, active learning, service-learning projects (practices of secondary and tertiary education).
- Coaching, setting quotas and the creation of inclusive culture (STEM industry initiatives).
- Leadership obstacles can also be addressed by means of support from family and friends, including the joint overcoming of similar challenges.

The authors of the present study actively participated in the "role model" practices. So-called gender trainings are traditionally organized in the Mining University in order to demonstrate that female careers in technical fields is a present reality. According to the research results, while a gender imbalance in technical fields remains, there is an emerging trend towards increased gender diversity.

To sum up, addressing the gender gap in leadership in STEM industries promotes women's participation and creates career pathways for women. Gaining insights into trends in gender parity in leadership can elicit high-level attention and know-how on the part of the scientific community as a means of elevating women's careers.

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Appendix

The Representation of Women in Senior STEM Management

Table A1

Proportion of Women Scientists and Engineers in the EU and Russia

Country	Proportion of women, %
Lithuania	57
Bulgaria	53
Portugal	53
Russia	52.4
Denmark	50
Sweden	49
Ireland	49
Poland	48
Spain	48
Croatia	46
Cyprus	46
Slovenia	43
Belgium	43
Romania	42
The UK	41
France	41
The EU	41
Estonia	39
Czech Republic	39
Greece	38
Malta	38
The Netherlands	38
Slovakia	38
Italia	35
Austria	34
Germany	33
Finland	29
Luxemburg	25
Hungary	25
Norway	54
Iceland	36
Switzerland	33

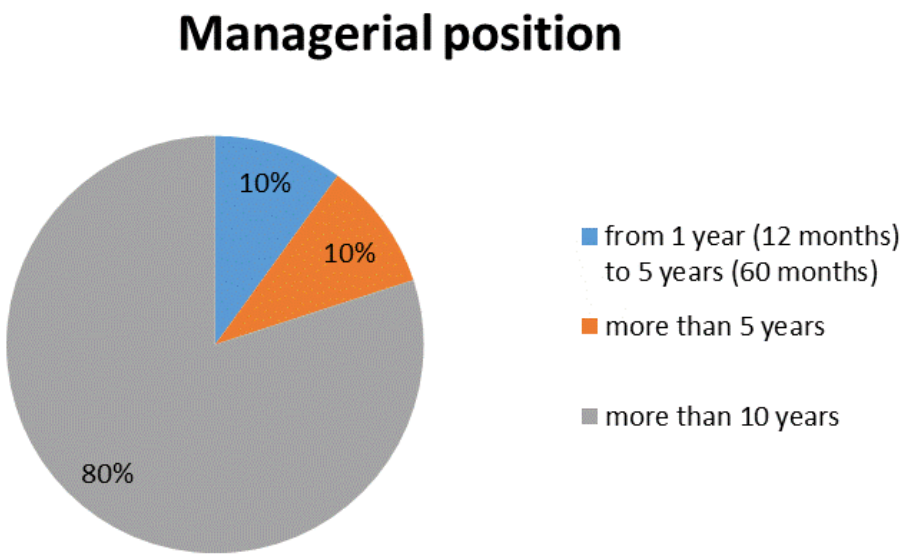
Note. Source: calculation by the authors based on de Kleijn et al. (2020); Rosstat (2021).

Table A2
Proportion of Women in Senior Management in STEM

Region	Percentage of women, % *n* = 100
Africa	39
Southeast Asia	38
European Union	34
North America	33
Asia Pacific	28

Note. Source: Dawson et al. (2014); Field et al. (2023).

Figure A1
Period of Holding a Leadership Position



Note. Source: calculation by the authors.

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ARTICLE

Personality Traits and Common Ingroup Identity: Support for Refugee Policies Among Host Members

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ABSTRACT
Türkiye, which has hosted the largest number of refugees in recent years, requires remedial intervention programs to facilitate adaptation and coexistence. The irony of harmony studies that guide these interventions seem incomplete due to limited sample characteristics and a lack of attention to personality traits. Hence, we aimed to explore relationships between personality traits, identification with common ingroup identity, and support for social policies toward refugees by sampling the advantaged majority and the disadvantaged largest minority in Türkiye across two correlational studies (N_{total} = 772). In Study 1, agreeableness, extraversion, openness, narcissism, and psychopathy were associated with support for positive social policies. On the other hand, neuroticism was linked with support for negative social policies. However, when identification with common ingroup identity was included in the model, the significance of personality traits in almost all models disappeared, indicating that only the prediction of identification with common ingroup identity remained. The findings of Study 2 replicated and extended the previous result by sampling

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disadvantaged group members. We suggest that it may be more effective to focus on intergroup variables rather than personality traits to strengthen support for refugee policies, as the overall findings pointed out.

KEYWORDS
advantaged host members, Big Five, common ingroup identity, Dark Triad, disadvantaged host members, irony of harmony, personality traits, social policies

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Introduction

The global mobilization that began with the Arab Spring has given way to a refugee movement the likes of which modern history has never seen. This unexpected contact between communities has motivated social psychologists to investigate the social psychological factors enabling groups to live harmoniously. The researchers believed that exploring intergroup cohesion, conflict management, and resolution in this way would be more effective. In parallel with this purpose, this research aims to explore personality traits and the potential predictive effect of identification with the common ingroup identity (CII) that may underlie attitudes of support for various social policies toward Syrian refugees living in Türkiye.

More than a decade of civil war in Syria has forced dozens of civilians to seek refuge in neighboring regions. The exodus was so large that refugees sought asylum across the ocean in countries such as Canada and the United States. The United Nations has described this migration as the largest collective forced movement in recent centuries. As a northern neighbor, Türkiye hosts approximately four million registered Syrian refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023), which is about five percent of the total population. Together with unregistered refugees, this figure is thought to be much higher.

Such a demographic change, which brought about unexpected intergroup contact in a rather short period, also brought about intergroup conflicts. Hosts in Türkiye quickly adopted negative attitudes toward Syrian refugees (Çakal & Husnu, 2023). In fact, this finding is not specific to Türkiye. White Americans report fewer positive feelings toward immigrants overall when they receive information that immigration is increasing. This effect appears to be independent of whether the immigration policy is positive or negative (Huo et al., 2018). Similarly, in cities with low intergroup contact, perceptions of demographic change are associated with white respondents' support for relatively negative immigration policies (Arora, 2020). National financial difficulties, along with demographic change, negatively affect host people's attitudes toward

refugees (Wilkes et al., 2008). These attitudes are often reflected in national media. Media studies showed that negative discourses against refugees rapidly accumulated (Seo & Kavakli, 2023). Mass media, in particular, has a significant negative impact on public opinion and policymakers by presenting a negative frame of Syrian refugees (Salas, 2023). News coverage of refugees often focuses on the voices of Western politicians and experts, while the personal stories and perspectives of refugees are often left in the background. Refugees are often represented through numerical data and statistics, ignoring their humanity and individuality (Xu, 2021).

Moreover, Syrian refugees have become a source of realistic and symbolic threat (Çoksan et al., 2023). These findings are also observed in different cultures. For example, children of Jordanian parents with discriminatory attitudes exhibit more negative attitudes toward their Syrian peers (Barron et al., 2023). Germans, who have a high perception of security threats, show more negative attitudes toward refugees (Igarashi, 2021). Similarly, not only the politically powerful Turks in Türkiye, but also the Kurds began to say that Syrian refugees would disrupt local culture and take away their jobs (Çoksan et al., 2023). The rapid growth of these problems has pushed social scientists to explore the source of the issues and find solutions. As part of this effort, this study focuses on the predictive effect of personality traits and identification with CII in supporting social policies toward Syrian refugees.

Irony of Harmony and Common Ingroup Identification

Intergroup contact theory is a powerful guide in studies focusing on attitudes and behaviors between advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Hodson & Hewstone, 2012; Vezzali & Stathi, 2016). Positive direct or indirect contact makes host communities' attitudes and behaviors toward Syrian refugees relatively positive (Özkan & Ergün, 2023). On the other hand, over the last decade, there has been debate about the possible negative effects of contact. Accordingly, members who have contact with their outgroup are less likely to demand change in their favor (Saguy et al., 2009, 2016) and less likely to intend to participate in collective action to bring about such change (Hässler et al., 2021). They also perceive outgroup members as fairer and attach less importance to inequality (Saguy & Chernyak-Hai, 2012). This concept, called the irony of harmony by Saguy (2008; see also Çakal et al., 2011), refers to the fact that, while acknowledging the positive aspects of positive contact with the outgroup, members hold themselves back from social change in their favor.

Although studies provide slightly different explanations for how the concept works, the basic premise is that contact leads members, particularly those from disadvantaged groups, to classify themselves under a common identity with advantaged group members. In this way, members now identify themselves in a higher and common ingroup with their "former" outgroup members. An ingroup refers to a collective where individuals feel a strong sense of belonging, united by shared identity, values, norms, and beliefs. An outgroup is characterized as a set of individuals perceived as separate or different from one's own group, often resulting in a sense of detachment or rivalry, particularly when contrasted with the identity, norms, and values upheld by the ingroup.

These definitions elucidate how individuals perceive their social worlds and how these perceptions influence behavior within the frameworks of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and group dynamics (Reicher et al., 2010).

The irony of harmony states that the CII reduces participants' attention to their disadvantaged position and its associated variables (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). In other words, the CII suggests that when individuals define themselves under a broader and more inclusive group identity, prejudice and discrimination will decrease. This is possible when individuals from different groups unite within a larger group identity, and the sense of *we* is strengthened through this expanded identity. Group identity might be expanded by encouraging students from different ethnic backgrounds or social classes to work on joint projects (Dovidio et al., 2007).

Not only do studies in the contact literature, but also studies based on the social identity approach (Reicher et al., 2010) highlight that intergroup behavior is differentiated when individuals classify themselves in a common superordinate identity with the outgroup (Ufkes et al., 2012). One of the most important consequences of this process is that these members are less supportive of social policies targeting disadvantaged group members. For instance, Ufkes et al. (2016) showed through an experiment that when members see themselves sharing a common meta-identity with outgroup members, they are more likely to support social policies for disadvantaged groups. In their seminal study, they conducted two experiments. Their first experiment focused on university students, who reported lower intentions to engage in collective action, even if they were to gain an advantage, in the condition where shared ingroup identity was emphasized. These students also showed less group anger toward the outgroup. In addition, these students were less likely to believe that their ingroup could act effectively. Similar findings were replicated in their second experiment, which focused on a larger sample. This study suggests that shared ingroup identity, compared to dual identity, reduces intentions to engage in collective action and reduces perceptions of group-based inequality. This effect is referred to as the sedative effect on group members (Çakal et al., 2011).

Although this idea has been empirically tested predominantly for disadvantaged group members (e.g., Ufkes et al., 2016) and similar results have been obtained, relatively recent studies suggest that advantaged group members may also experience a similar cognitive process due to intergroup contact (Cocco, Vezzali, Stathi et al., 2024). For instance, Vezzali and colleagues (2017) showed a similar pattern regarding the relationship between CII and collective action among advantaged group members. However, since empirical studies mainly focus on disadvantaged group members, it is stated that new studies should concentrate on advantaged group members. In this research, we aimed to fill this population gap by sampling both the political and numerical majority, that is advantaged Turks, and the largest minority in Türkiye, namely Kurds, being disadvantaged compared to Turks but advantaged compared to the targeted outgroup of Syrian refugees, across two correlational studies (for similar conceptualizations, see Tropp et al., 2021; Ünver et al., 2022).

Similar findings are repeated in recent studies. For instance, Cocco, Vezzali, Kola-Daisi, & Çakal (2024) examined the relationship between shared ingroup identity

and social policy support. The study was conducted by considering two tribes with different statuses: a minority group (Edo tribe) and a majority group (Igbo tribe). The findings revealed how being perceived as a group affects collective action intentions by increasing moral beliefs and developing positive attitudes toward minority groups. Specifically, in the context of tribal conflict in Nigeria, identification with a common Nigerian identity was found to be positively associated with collective action intentions toward both advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Moral beliefs were found to mediate the relationship between this identity and collective action. However, this study only focuses on attitudes toward groups in different power positions (advantaged or disadvantaged) and not the participants themselves in these positions. In this study, we aim to present a more comprehensive narrative by focusing on both advantaged and disadvantaged group members.

Personality Traits and Support for Social Policies

In addition to the population gap, which is a shortcoming of these studies, the relationship between a priori characteristics of the individual, such as personality traits and attitudes toward social policies for disadvantaged group members, seems worth exploring. Research has predominantly addressed this irony of harmony at the group-level variables (Saguy et al., 2016). On the other hand, can personality traits influence these attitudes? To address this question, in this study, we examined the relationship between personality traits and common ingroup identification with attitudes toward social policies concerning Syrian refugees among host communities, specifically Turks and Kurds who interact with Syrian refugees in their everyday lives.

In psychology, personality refers to the relatively stable and distinctive patterns of an individual's thinking, feeling, and behavior. Personality encompasses an individual's characteristic traits, attitudes, temperaments, and emotional reactions. In psychology, personality is examined within the framework of various theories and approaches (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Personality trait, on the other hand, refers to the permanent behavior, thought, and emotional response tendencies that individuals consistently exhibit in certain situations. Personality traits are the basic components of an individual's general personality structure and have an important place in personality theories (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Recent studies examining the relationship between personality traits and attitudes toward refugees and support for social policies offer valuable insights into this topic. For instance, Medeiros et al. (2024) analyzed the effect of personality traits of politicians on their attitudes toward immigrants using the data from the 2010 Swedish Candidate Survey. Notably, traits such as extraversion and openness were linked to positive attitudes toward immigrants and greater support for social policies. Politicians who scored high on these traits tended to be more supportive of social policies. Furthermore, candidates higher in party rankings exhibited a stronger correlation between extraversion and positive attitudes toward immigrants. Similarly, Bakker et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between personality traits and political preferences in the Netherlands, Germany, and the USA using panel data

sets. The results indicated that there may be a bidirectional causality between these two variables. Additionally, traits like openness and conscientiousness showed significant direct relationships with political preferences. Conversely, right-leaning political preferences were associated with more closed personality traits, such as high conscientiousness and low openness.

Personality researchers aim to identify individuals' personality traits by observing the behaviors individuals show in situations and categorizing these behaviors. Analyses conducted in this direction have shown that five traits are primarily observed among people with many personality traits (McCrae & Costa, 1985), which is called the Big Five. These five personality traits are neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness to experience. Generally speaking, extraverted people are social, energetic, talkative, and cheerful (Watson & Clark, 1997); neurotic ones are anxious, indecisive, inconsistent, and depressed (Costa & Widiger, 1994); agreeableness points out willing to help, generous and lovable, conscientiousness focuses on core traits such as trustworthy, reliable, highly organizational, productive (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997); finally, the openness to experience focuses on traits such as sensitive to different issues, curious, artistic (McCrae & Costa, 1997). These personality traits highly influence both individual and intergroup behavior (e.g., Gallego & Pardos-Prado, 2014; Rosenstein, 2008). For instance, extraversion is related to prejudice toward outgroups such as refugees (Carlson et al., 2019). All these traits are dimensions of personality, and different traits may be observed at high or low levels in the same person.

In addition, many researchers have recently investigated the most prominent malevolent traits of personality, known as the Dark Triad, which covers psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism. Machiavellianism refers to a personality type that adopts any means to an end, a principle famously outlined in Machiavelli's *The Prince*. This personality trait is less emotional than others but is more likely to engage in deceptive or manipulative actions (Christie & Geis, 1970). Narcissism refers to focusing more on oneself and finding oneself superior, creative, and attractive (Campbell et al., 2006). Psychopathy, on the other hand, is associated with characteristics such as a lack of empathy, irresponsibility, and difficulty in controlling one's behavior (Hare & Neumann, 2008).

Paulhus and Williams (2002) show that positive aspects of the Big Five personality traits are negatively associated with the scores of Dark Triad personality traits. Moreover, like the Big Five, Dark Triad personality traits are also related to intergroup behaviors. For instance, Dark Triad personality traits are associated with intergroup attitudes (Anderson & Cheers, 2018; Pruysers, 2023). Based on this, the present study was focused on the Big Five and Dark Triad personality traits' attitudes toward social policies for disadvantaged groups and identification with a CII for exploratory purposes.

Social policies are strategies, regulations, and programs developed and implemented by governments and other public authorities to increase the welfare of society, ensure social equality, and improve the living conditions of disadvantaged groups. These policies deal with various social problems such as education, health,

housing, unemployment, social security, and poverty. Two of the most important goals of social policies are to support disadvantaged groups and strengthen social solidarity between advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Titmuss, 1974). Social policies may directly affect perceptions and prejudices in society toward refugees. For instance, positive social policies may help refugees to be seen as useful members of society and reduce prejudices. On the other hand, effective implementation of social policies in regions where refugees are densely populated may reduce the potential for conflict between hosts and refugees. This could foster a more peaceful and harmonious society (Berry, 1997).

Study 1

Social identities and the societal position of these identities in terms of power relations shape people's intergroup behavior (Saguy et al., 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For instance, members in an advantageous position in the context of power relations see the world as more threatening and are less supportive of diversity, equity, and inclusion policies (Iyer, 2022). The contact between hosts and Syrian refugees, which constitutes the research context, may also point to a similar context.

In the first study, we sampled the majority members (KONDA Interactive, 2022), namely Turks, who hold political power in Türkiye. Turkish-dominated regions receive more investment and enjoy greater educational opportunities. Turkish parties have formed governments throughout the history of the Turkish Republic (Saatci, 2002). By focusing on Turks, we aimed to explore the predictive effect of (a) the personality traits of the group members who have more political and social power in the context of intergroup power relations and (b) the categorization of themselves in a common group identity with Syrian refugees, who are disadvantaged group members, on social policies regarding Syrian refugees.

Method

Participants

Using convenience sampling, we sampled 639 lay people. Forty-three participants failed on the attention check statements (e.g., As an answer to this statement, mark the "strongly disagree" option. Your response will be used to determine whether you have read the statements). Nine participants had spent most of their lives outside of Türkiye, and five were not native Turkish speakers. The remaining 582 self-identified Turkish lay people (M_{age} = 24.2, SD = 6.93, 67.5% female) participated in Study 1. Most participants (54.0%) are high school graduates and classify themselves as middle socioeconomic level (57.2%).

Measurements

The Short Dark Triad Scale. The abbreviated Dark Triad Scale developed by Jones and Paulhus (2011) and adapted into Turkish by Özsoy et al. (2017) was used to measure participants' Dark Triad personality traits. The scale consists of 27 items using

a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) measuring three sub-dimensions, which are narcissism (e.g., Many group activities tend to be dull without me, Cronbach's α[1] = .66), Machiavellianism (e.g., Most people can be manipulated, Cronbach's α = .70), and psychopathy (e.g., People who mess with me always regret it, Cronbach's α = .66) with nine items. High scores indicate that participants have stronger Dark Triad personality traits.

Big Five Inventory. We used the Big Five Inventory developed by John et al. (1991) to measure Big Five personality traits, which are extraversion (e.g., I see myself as someone who is talkative, Cronbach's α = .85), agreeableness (e.g., I see myself as someone who tends to find fault with others, Cronbach's α = .71), conscientiousness (e.g., I see myself as someone who does a thorough job, Cronbach's α = .73), neuroticism (e.g., I see myself as someone who can be tense, Cronbach's α = .76) and openness (e.g., I see myself as someone who is original, comes up with new ideas, Cronbach's α = .77). The scale consists of 44 items using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *completely agree*). Higher scores indicate having more relevant personality traits.

Common Ingroup Identification. The identification with CII scale items developed by Ufkes et al. (2016) and adapted to Turkish by Çoksan (2021) were used to measure the extent to which the participants identified themselves in a common identity with the members of the disadvantaged outgroup. The scale consists of three items (e.g., I think all groups in Türkiye, including Syrian refugees, can have a common identity, Cronbach's α = .75) using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *completely agree*). A high score on the scale indicates a tendency to identify oneself more in a common identity with the outgroup.

Support for Social Policies. We used vignettes developed by Çoksan (2021) to measure participants' support for various fictional social policies toward Syrian refugees. The first of these policies only benefits Syrian refugees. This policy does not include benefits or harms for Turks (supportive policies). The second policy helps the host people, the Turks, but harms the Syrian refugees (segregation policies). The third policy provides an advantage to Syrian refugees despite harming the hosts (altruistic policies). Support for all these policies was measured with three 10-point Likert-type items (Cronbach's α = .97, .70, .84, respectively). Higher scores indicate greater support for each respective policy.

Procedure

The research protocol was approved by the institutional ethics committee of [ANONYMIZED] University under the approval number [ANONYMIZED]. After receiving IRB approval, we announced the aim of the study through the department's web page. Those who volunteered to participate in the study reached the study's online link. They filled out the demographic questionnaire after their consent. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Then, they

[1] Cronbach's α is a measure of reliability widely used in social sciences, especially psychology. It is used to assess the internal consistency of a test or questionnaire, that is, how consistent the items or questions are with each other.

answered the short Dark Triad scale, Big Five Inventory, identification with CII items, and support for social policies tasks. The research concluded after participants were debriefed. Each participant completed the study in approximately 25 minutes. Data were collected between February and May 2023.

Results and Discussion

Analytical Approach

We conducted hierarchical regression analyses (six hierarchical regression analyses in total) for three dependent variables (support for supportive, segregation, or altruistic policies) with (a) Big Five personality traits or (b) Dark Triad personality traits in the first hierarchical cluster and identification with CII in the second hierarchical cluster[2] to examine our research questions. We considered the results of the Breusch–Pagan[3] test to check whether the heteroskedasticity assumption was violated and the Durbin–Watson[4] test to check whether the autocorrelation assumption was violated. We examined the VIF values of each analysis to assess whether there is a collinearity problem. None of the analyses conducted violated these assumptions. All analyses were conducted using Jamovi 2.3 statistical software (The Jamovi Project, 2023).

Main Findings

The model where Big Five personality traits are the predictors and support for supportive social policies is the outcome is significant, $F(5,576) = 3.18$, $p = .008$, $R^2 = .03$. The agreeableness trait positively predicted support for supportive social policies ($b = .42$, $SE = .21$, $p = .044$), whereas extraversion trait negatively predicted it, $b = -.32$, $SE = .15$, $p = .041$. Other traits did not predict the outcome. The second model in which the identification with the CII variable is added as a predictor is significant, $F(6,575) = 34.57$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .27$. Model comparison is also significant, $F(1,575) = 186$, $\Delta R^2 = .24$, $p < .001$. In this model, identification with CII positively predicted support for supportive social policies ($b = 1.34$, $SE = .09$, $p < .001$), and the significance of all predictors in the first model was lost.

The model where support for segregation policies is the outcome is significant, $F(5,576) = 2.05$, $p = .047$, $R^2 = .02$. Only neuroticism negatively predicted support for segregation policies, $b = -.30$, $SE = .18$, $p = .049$. The second model in which the identification with the CII variable is added as a predictor is significant, $F(6,575) = 9.91$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .09$. Model comparison is also significant, $F(1,575) = 48.4$, $\Delta R^2 = .07$, $p < .001$. In this model, identification with CII negatively predicted support for

[2] We followed Fein et al. (2022) to answer the question of which cluster should be analyzed in which order in the hierarchical regression.

[3] The Breusch–Pagan test is used to test whether the error terms of the regression model have constant variance. The fact that the error terms have constant variance, i.e., homoskedasticity, is one of the assumptions of the classical linear regression model. If this assumption is violated, the standard errors of the regression coefficients may be misleading, and the results may not be reliable (Breusch & Pagan, 1979).

[4] The Durbin–Watson test is used to check whether the error terms are serially dependent. The test tests whether there is a positive or negative correlation between the consecutive error terms.

segregation policies (b = –.78, SE = .11, p < .001), and neuroticism continued to negatively predict the outcome, b = –.35, SE = .18, p = .048.

The model where support for altruistic policies is the outcome is significant, $F(5,576) = 2.39$, p = .043, R^2 = .02. Only openness negatively predicted support for altruistic policies, b = –.26, SE = .10, p = .040. The second model in which the identification with the CII variable is added as a predictor is significant, $F(6,575) = 10.81$, p < .001, R^2 = .10. Model comparison is also significant, $F(1,575) = 52.9$, ΔR^2 = .08, p < .001. In this model, identification with CII positively predicted support for altruistic policies (b = –.78, SE = .11, p < .001), and openness continued to negatively predict the outcome, b = –.25, SE = .11, p = .034. Results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

The Association Between Big Five Traits, Identification With CII, and Support for Refugee Policies Among Advantaged Group Members (Study 1)

Model	Predictors	Outcome	*b*	*SE*	*p*
1	Agreeableness	Supportive policies	.42	.21	.044
	Extraversion		–.32	.15	.041
2	Identification with CII		1.34	.09	< .001
1	Neuroticism	Segregation policies	–.30	.18	.049
2	Neuroticism		–.35	.18	.048
	Identification with CII		–.78	.11	< .001
1	Openness	Altruistic policies	–.26	.10	.040
2	Openness		–.25	.11	.034
	Identification with CII		–.78	.11	< .001

Overall, these findings suggest that identification with a CII has higher predictive power than personality traits for all types of social policies. Identification with a CII explains both support for supportive and altruistic policies (positive policies) and support for segregation policies (negative policies) with a higher coefficient. While identification with a CII retains its predictive power, neuroticism retains its predictive power only for segregation policies and openness for altruistic policies. Compared to other personality traits, neuroticism has a stronger predictive power for negative attitudes toward refugees (Gallego & Pardos-Prado, 2014). Especially in perceived high outgroup threat cases, there is a positive relationship between neuroticism and attitudes toward the relevant outgroup (Rosenstein, 2008). In Türkiye, Syrian refugees are seen as a strong source of realistic threat (Çoksan et al., 2023). Therefore, while other personality traits lose their predictive power in the second model, neuroticism may maintain its prediction. On the other hand, openness is more associated with positive attitudes toward refugees and support for positive policies than other personality traits. Openness may lead to a positive view of social diversity and, thus, support for prosocial policies toward immigrants (Medeiros et al., 2024; Thompson et al., 2002).

The model where Dark Triad personality traits are the predictor and support for supportive social policies is the outcome is significant, $F(3,578) = 8.35$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .20$. Narcissism ($b = -.40$, $SE = .18$, $p = .028$) and psychopathy ($b = -.35$, $SE = .18$, $p = .048$) negatively predicted support for supportive social policies. Machiavellianism did not predict the outcome. The second model in which the identification with the CII variable is added as a predictor is significant, $F(4,577) = 50.32$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .51$. Model comparison is also significant, $F(1,577) = 169$, $\Delta R^2 = .22$, $p < .001$. In this model, identification with CII positively predicted support for supportive social policies ($b = 1.28$, $SE = .09$, $p < .001$), and the significance of all predictors in the first model was lost.

No traits predicted the outcome in the model where support for segregation policies and altruistic policies is the outcome. However, identification with CII predicted support for both segregation policies ($b = -.78$, $SE = .11$, $p < .001$) and support for altruistic policies ($b = .46$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$). Although both model comparisons were significant ($p < .001$ for both), the findings remained unchanged, indicating that Dark Triad personality traits did not predict the outcomes. Results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

The Association Between Dark Triad Traits, Identification With CII, and Support for Refugee Policies Among Advantaged Group Members (Study 1)

Model	Predictors	Outcome	*b*	*SE*	*p*
1	Narcissism	Supportive policies	–.40	.18	.028
	Psychopathy		–.35	.18	.048
2	Identification with CII		1.28	.09	< .001
2	Identification with CII	Segregation policies	–.78	.11	< .001
2	Identification with CII	Altruistic policies	.46	.06	< .001

As in the analysis with the Big Five, identification with CII significantly predicted support for social policies in the models where Dark Triad personality traits were predictors. In all analyses where identification with CII was included in the model, no Dark Triad personality trait predicted support for social policies. This indicates that attitudes toward positive or negative policies concerning refugees are influenced by group-level social variables such as identification with CII, rather than by individuals' intrinsic characteristics like personality traits.

Study 2

The findings of Study 1 indicated that agreeableness, extraversion, narcissism, and psychopathy were associated with supportive social policies, neuroticism with segregation social policies, and openness with altruistic social policies. However, when identification with CII was included in the model, the significance of personality traits in almost all models disappeared, indicating that only the prediction of identification with CII remained.

This finding is significant in demonstrating the power of identification with CII over personality traits. The limited number of advantaged group members of the study sampling showed that when people categorized themselves in a common identity with disadvantaged group members, their support for social policies toward those disadvantaged members varied (e.g., Vezzali et al., 2017). Study 1 revealed that personality traits played a minimal role in this relationship.

On the other hand, for relatively disadvantaged group members, recategorizing oneself in a common identity is associated with collective inertia and, thus, the perpetuation of the disadvantaged social system (Saguy & Chernyak-Hai, 2012; Ufkes et al., 2016). But what will these members' attitudes toward social policies regarding more disadvantaged members? Will higher identification with CII, as indicated by the irony of harmony studies, be associated with less support for remedial social policies for more disadvantaged groups? Or, will greater common ingroup identification with the more disadvantaged due to potential empathy (Capozza et al., 2010; Dovidio et al., 2007), perspective taking (Andrighetto et al., 2012), and having similar life events in the context of power relations (Saguy et al., 2008) be positively related to attitudes in terms of social policies toward these members? Moreover, what is the role of personality traits in this relationship? As we mentioned before, a few findings showed that some positive personality types were associated with positive attitudes toward refugees, while some negative personality traits were associated with negative attitudes. Will this pattern also apply to their thoughts on social policies toward Syrian refugees, one of the most disadvantaged groups for Kurds states as disadvantaged in Türkiye (e.g., Tropp et al., 2021)? In the second study, we sought to answer these questions.

The reason why we seek answers to these questions in terms of disadvantaged group members is that groups in different positions in terms of power relations may have different perspectives toward groups that are more disadvantaged than themselves (Saguy et al., 2008). For instance, disadvantaged members may have more positive attitudes toward other disadvantaged members than advantageous ones (van Oudenhoven et al., 1998). However, in this research, we chose Syrian refugees, one of the most disadvantaged groups in Türkiye, as the target group. Some recent studies have indicated that there is no difference in the attitudes and behaviors of Turks (advantaged hosts) and Kurds (disadvantaged hosts) toward Syrian refugees (e.g., Çoksan et al., 2023). This further motivated us to seek answers to these questions.

In fact, Turks are the predominant group in Türkiye, whereas Kurds form the largest minority group in this country (KONDA Interactive, 2022). There is less investment in areas where the Kurds dominate and fewer education opportunities. For various reasons, political parties founded by Kurds have been closed. More importantly, although no law explicitly prohibits it, Kurds cannot freely use their native language in public. Mutual trust between Turks and Kurds is low (Çelebi et al., 2014), and the groups hold negative stereotypes about each other (Bilali et al., 2014). The two main ethnic groups in Türkiye are the Turks and the Kurds, despite the differences in power and conflicting relationships. Consequently, they may

identify themselves with a single identity, such as citizenship, which can affect their intergroup orientations when assessing an outgroup membership of Syrian refugees.

Method

Participants

Using convenience sampling, we reached 218 laypeople for Study 2. Twenty-eight participants failed on the attention check statement. Most of the remaining 190 self-identified Kurdish people (M_{age} = 25.5, *SD* = 7.12, 52.6% female) are high school graduates (52.1%) and at the middle socioeconomic level (48.4%).

Measurements and Procedure

The Kurdish-adapted versions of the measurement tools in the previous study were used in Study 2 (The short Dark Triad scale, Cronbach's α between .60 and .71; Big Five Inventory, Cronbach's α is between .69 and .79; identification with CII, Cronbach's α = .68; support for social policies, Cronbach's α is between .69 and .96). The procedure was carried out in a manner similar to Study 1.

Results and Discussion

Analytical Approach

In Study 2, we examined the research questions from the first study for the disadvantaged group of Kurds. We used the same analytical approach and analyses as in the first study. No assumptions were violated during the analyses.

Main Findings

The model where Big Five personality traits are the predictor and supportive social policies are the outcome is not significant, $F(5,184) = 1.48$, $p = .97$, $R^2 = .04$. However, the second model in which the identification with CII variable is added as a predictor is significant, $F(6,183) = 4.01$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .12$. Model comparison is also significant, $F(1,183) = 16.0$, $\Delta R^2 = .08$, $p < .001$. In this model, neuroticism negatively ($b = -.65$, $SE = .31$, $p = .036$), and identification with CII positively predicted support for supportive social policies ($b = .83$, $SE = .21$, $p < .001$).

Similar to the previous analysis, the model where support for segregation policies is the outcome is not significant, $F(5,184) = 1.66$, $p = .147$, $R^2 = .04$); however, the second model in which the identification with CII variable is added as a predictor is significant, $F(6,183) = 2.26$, $p = .039$, $R^2 = .07$. Model comparison is also significant, $F(1,183) = 5.10$, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p = .025$. In this model, extraversion ($b = -.77$, $SE = .31$, $p = .015$), and identification with CII both negatively ($b = -.45$, $SE = .20$, $p = .025$) predicted support for segregation policies.

Neither Big Five personality traits in the first hierarchical cluster ($F(5,184) = 1.28$, $p = .274$, $R^2 = .03$) nor identification with CII in the second hierarchical cluster ($F(6,183) = 1.10$, $p = .363$, $R^2 = .03$) predicted to support for altruistic social policies toward Syrian refugees. Results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3
The Association Between Big Five Traits, Identification With CII, and Support for Refugee Policies Among Advantaged Group Members (Study 2)

Model	Predictors	Outcome	*b*	*SE*	*p*
2	Neuroticism	Supportive policies	–.65	.31	.036
	Identification with CII		.83	.21	< .001
2	Extraversion	Segregation policies	–.77	.31	.015
	Identification with CII		–.45	.20	.025

The model where Dark Triad personality traits are the predictor and supportive social policies are the outcome is not significant, $F(3,186) = .44$, $p = .72$. The second model in which the identification with CII variable is added as a predictor is significant, $F(4,185) = 5.24$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .10$. Model comparison is also significant, $F(1,185) = 19.5$, $\Delta R^2 = .09$, $p < .001$. In this model, identification with CII positively predicted support for supportive social policies, $b = .93$, $SE = .21$, $p < .001$.

The model where support for segregation policies is the outcome is not significant for either the first hierarchical cluster, $F(3,186) = .51$, $p = .68$, $R^2 = .01$, or the second hierarchical cluster, $F(4,185) = 1.48$, $p = .211$, $R^2 = .03$.

The model where support for altruistic policy is the outcome is significant, $F(3,186) = 3.34$, $p = .020$, $R^2 = .05$. Only psychopathy negatively predicted support for altruistic policies, $b = –.46$, $SE = .22$, $p = .035$. The second model in which the identification with the CII variable is added as a predictor is significant, $F(4,185) = 2.56$, $p = .040$, $R^2 = .05$. However, the model comparison is not significant, $F(1,185) = .254$, $\Delta R^2 = .001$, $p = .615$. Results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4
The Association Between Dark Triad Traits, Identification With CII, and Support for Refugee Policies Among Disadvantaged Group Members (Study 2)

Model	Predictors	Outcome	*b*	*SE*	*p*
2	Identification with CII	Supportive policies	.93	.21	< .001
1	Psychopathy	Altruistic policies	–.46	.22	.040

Like the previous study, the findings indicate that personality traits have minimal effects. Neuroticism is negatively associated with supportive policies, extraversion segregation policies, and psychopathy with altruistic policies. We may discuss neuroticism and extraversion in line with Rosenstein's (2008) study, as we did in the previous research, and consider that the relationship between these personality traits and social policies may reflect a perceived potential outgroup threat. On the other hand, in situations that will affect the outgroup, low positive attitudes toward the outgroup may be observed more frequently in high negative attitudes. This may be related to our inability to find a fundamental pattern between the Dark Triad and supporting

social policies. Also, contrary to the first study, identification with CII among Kurds is less associated with supporting policies. A limited number of significant relationships in Study 2 showed that high identification with CII is positively related to support for supportive policies and negatively associated with support for segregation policies. This may indicate that the sedative effect of disadvantaged members categorizing themselves in a common identity with advantaged members does not apply when they categorize themselves in a common identity with more disadvantaged members; instead, identification with CII may be related to support for policies that improve the social system.

General Discussion

This research aimed to explore the association between personality traits, CII, and support for social policies toward refugees. The irony of harmony studies (e.g., Saguy & Chernyak-Hai, 2012; Ufkes et al., 2016; Vezzali et al., 2017) has indicated that CII among both advantaged and disadvantaged members suppresses support for positive social policies toward disadvantaged members such as refugees. However, the role of personality traits in this relationship has been rarely explored. Our goal was, first, to explore the relationship between these personality traits and support for policies toward Syrian refugees. Second, since our theoretical framework depends on the irony of harmony, we examined the possible predictive effect of personality traits against CII. Overall, however, the results indicated that personality traits had a minimal relationship with support for policies toward refugees and that this relationship was mostly absent in the face of CII.

Among Turks, agreeableness, extroversion, and openness are associated with positive policies. Agreeableness is characterized by traits such as helpfulness and generosity. The higher this personality trait, the more likely one is to engage in benevolent behavior and to be generous in sharing one's resources (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997). As a result, individuals with higher agreeableness may be more supportive of positive social policies toward refugees.

Extraversion is characterized by social, talkative, and energetic characteristics. Since such people lead a socially active life and value friendships in social settings, they may struggle to accept refugees with a foreign culture and habits (Watson & Clark, 1997). Therefore, we may observe a negative relationship between extraversion and supportive policies toward refugees. Recent studies (e.g., Carlson et al., 2019) also indicate positive associations between extraversion and prejudice against Syrian refugees.

For disadvantaged group members, extraversion may represent an opportunity to talk to outgroup members who share similar cultures and habits within the same context. The regions in Türkiye where Kurds, whom we conceptualize as relatively disadvantaged group in this study, live predominantly overlap with the living areas of Syrian refugees, whom we conceptualize as an outgroup in the research. Before the Syrian civil war, Kurds and Syrian refugees were neighbors. Since segregation policies would mean separating these people from each other, we might observe

a negative relationship between support for these policies and extraversion in Kurdish participants.

Openness includes behavioral traits such as being interested in different subjects, artistic, and curious (McCrae & Costa, 1997). No matter how positively individuals with openness personality traits may approach new cultures, they may consider regulations that would harm them as a threat to their productivity and freedom. Therefore, we might observe a negative relationship between openness and altruistic policies.

Among Turks, neuroticism is associated with support for unfavorable social policies, such as segregation policies. Neuroticism is characterized by inconsistent behavior, indecisiveness, and anxious mood (Costa & Widiger, 1994). Support for segregation policies may reflect the instability and anxiety present in peopl's attitudes and behaviors. By their very content, such policies separate the in-group from the out-group and make the future predictable by limiting what the out-group can do. Thus, support for segregation policies may be seen as an escape from the potential anxiety caused by neuroticism and a desire for emotional stability. Other studies also suggest a positive relationship between neuroticism and perceiving refugees as a threat (e.g., Gallego & Pardos-Prado, 2014).

Among the Dark Triad personality traits, psychopathy and narcissism are negatively associated with support for positive social policies. Psychopathy is associated with a tendency to engage in uncontrolled behavior, irresponsibility, and lack of empathy for others (Hare & Neumann, 2008). It is an expected result that changes in society may cause a negative reaction in them, and the tendency to react to positive developments against the outgroup increases. In parallel to this, studies in the literature show a positive relationship between psychopathy and support for negative policies toward refugees (e.g., Anderson & Cheers, 2018). Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between psychopathy and negative attitudes toward refugees (Pruysers, 2023).

Narcissism involves beliefs that one is more creative, attractive, and remarkable than others (Campbell et al., 2006). As narcissism increases, so does the tendency to view others as competitors. Similarly, in this study, we might observe a negative association between narcissism and support for positive social policies toward refugees due to perceiving refugees as competitors or threats to one's own benefits.

The most striking finding of the current study is that CII predicted support for nearly all policies, overshadowing the predictive effects of personality traits. In fact, when CII is included in the model, the predictive effect of personality traits disappears, and CII becomes the primary predictor. In almost all models, CII is positively associated with positive social policies and negatively related to negative social policies. This suggests that support for policies toward refugees may be better explained by dynamic factors like CII rather than more static elements like personality traits.

As previously mentioned, the irony of harmony studies, in general, shows that identification with the CII may suppress support for positive social policies toward disadvantaged members such as refugees. However, the findings of this study seem to indicate the opposite. Identification with the CII is positively associated with support for positive social policies toward Syrian refugees among both advantaged and relatively

disadvantaged members of the host community. However, we would like to remind readers that our design is correlational; that is, although our research design shows the opposite of what the irony of harmony studies have shown, we cannot determine what results variations in identification with the CII within participants might produce, or at least whether it will produce findings contrary to the irony of harmony studies.

One of the primary explanations for this difference is that people's identification with their own ingroup identities may have differentiated the relationship between the variables. For instance, depending on people's ingroup identification levels, the relationship between variables differs from the irony of harmony studies (e.g., Çoksan, 2021). Since Syrian refugees are seen as a realistic and symbolic threat by both Turks and Kurds in Türkiye (Çoksan et al., 2023), the research context may have intensified ingroup identification. Accordingly, the relationship between the variables we focus on may indicate the opposite of the irony of harmony studies.

Another possible explanation may point to our participants' characteristics. The majority of the irony of harmony studies have sampled WEIRD[5] (Henrich et al., 2010) participants. The relationship between variables in non-WEIRD populations, such as our sample, might be in the opposite direction to what irony of harmony studies indicate. Therefore, it can be argued that more heterogeneous, global, and inclusive studies, such as the distinguished work by Hässler et al. (2021), are needed.

Some limitations must be considered when evaluating the findings. First, we collected data via web-based online tools. However, Türkiye is relatively weak in terms of technological literacy (OECD Skills Studies, 2016); therefore, the possibility that we could not reach a representative sample should be considered. Second, we collected data mainly from participants who were high school graduates. This means a relatively low level of education. It is possible that we were not able to adequately convey the fictional social policies to these participants. Finally, as we mentioned above, our research used a correlational design; hence, we still do not know whether we can obtain findings parallel or opposite to studies on the irony of harmony studies when we differentiate existing identification with CII.

In conclusion, our study clearly shows that personality traits do not play a dominant role in shaping support for policies toward refugees. In comparison, identification with a CII is much more influential in supporting these policies. This shows that people can be made aware of policies toward refugees through various interventions, regardless of which personality trait is dominant. Environmental elements that will be changed by such interventions, such as identification with CII, may offer opportunities for researchers to create a more peaceful society.

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[5] It denotes participants who live in Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic societies.

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ARTICLE

Moderated Mediating Effect of Behavioral Psychology on Generation Z's Selfie-Posting Behavior: A Two-Stage Analytical Approach

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study was to investigate the mediating and moderating effects of body appreciation and exhibitionism on the relationships between self-esteem, narcissism, and Selfie-Posting Behavior (SPB), as well as on the moderating effect of attitude towards selfies (ATS) from the Generation Z perspective. The research comprised 414 samples through convenience sampling. The empirical data were analyzed using a hybrid SEM-artificial neural network (SEM-ANN) approach. The sensitivity analysis outcomes discovered that body appreciation has the most considerable effect on the SPB, with 89.18% normalized importance, followed by narcissism (87.02%), exhibitionism (72.66%), and self-esteem (48.95%). Body appreciation and exhibitionism independently and sequentially mediated the relationships between self-esteem and SPB, as well as narcissism and SPB. In addition, attitude moderated the relationship between exhibitionism and SPB but not the relationship between body appreciation and SPB. The study results emphasize the importance of recognizing the moderating mechanisms that affect the mediated pathways between self-esteem and SPB, as well as between

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narcissism and SPB. Based on these findings, the study outlined several applicable ramifications for educators, professionals, service providers, designers, and developers.

KEYWORDS
self-esteem, narcissism, body appreciation, exhibitionism, behavioral psychology, Generation Z

Introduction

Every person is unique. This premise rationalizes the conduct of persons and their actions or decision-making process. Various elements, such as family, education, social circle, political climate, cultural influences, and society, significantly influence individuals' development and shape their conduct. Community members have diverse roles shaped by their common interests and shared feelings, reflecting their unique personalities. Nevertheless, irrespective of the factors above, a shared feature is defined equally—each individual is a customer (Verma et al., 2021). The advent of contemporary social media technology has expanded the range of choices available to users for disseminating personal data. Users enhance their social media presence by providing additional details to favorably, discerningly, and appealingly present themselves. They hope to receive validation, recognition, approval, and admiration from the wider audience (Arpaci et al., 2023).

The impact of behavioral psychology extends beyond an individual's character and influences the behaviors they engage in daily (Hossain & Khan, 2021; Khan et al., 2024). Behavioral psychology is a fundamental aspect of determining professional activity and consumer behavior (Pervin & Khan, 2024). Recently, the concept of Generation Z (Gen-Z) has brought increased attention to behavioral psychology and various aspects of individual development in public discourse (Chaturvedi et al., 2020). Being one of the largest cohorts, Gen-Z individuals can alter prevailing societal beliefs and are well-versed in and up-to-date with technology (Bejan, 2023). In addition, they prioritize their psychology by actively engaging in social sites, which reflects their behavioral intention. The increasing prevalence of mobile phones and the widespread adoption of wireless technologies has resulted in innovative commercial phenomena (Khan & Roy, 2023a). In contemporary society, individuals' daily routines are significantly characterized by capturing photographs and disseminating them on social networking sites (SNSs). Hence, scholars exhibit more interest in behavioral psychology concerning the Selfie-Posting Behavior (SPB) of Generation Z. Selfie-sharing remains a nascent behavioral concern (Ansari & Azhar, 2022). An intriguing question arises regarding the widespread practice of sharing self-portraits on social networking sites (SNSs) and the increasing academic curiosity surrounding the selfie phenomenon: what are the causes and mechanisms that drive this behavior?

Earlier behavioral psychology research on SPBs focused on such phenomena as personality traits (Barry et al., 2017; Qiu et al., 2015), seeking peer acknowledgment (Chua & Chang, 2016), attracting attention, communication, and entertainment (Kim &

Chock, 2017), social self-esteem (Bodroža et al., 2022), between adults (Fardouly et al., 2018), teenagers (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014), and cultural settings (Ansari & Azhar, 2022; Arpaci et al., 2023). Therefore, there is a lack of generation-based research on the selected context. In addition, most of the behavioral psychology of SPB research used structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques as an analyzing tool. To bridge the gap in the existing literature, the study aimed to investigate the role of body appreciation and exhibitionism in mediating the relationship between self-esteem and SPB, as well as narcissism and SPB. Additionally, the study examined the moderating role of attitude towards selfies (ATS). Data was collected from 414 Gen-Z individuals using a hybrid SEM-artificial neural network (SEM-ANN) approach. Structural equation modeling exclusively addresses linear relationships. Artificial Neural Networks (ANN) handle both linear and non-linear interactions and verify the outcomes of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The following sections will provide an explanation of the relevant literature, the methodologies and procedures used, the analysis and empirical data obtained, a discussion of the findings, the implications of the study, and concluding remarks.

Literature Review

Behavioral Psychology and Generation Z

Generation Z has experienced distinct circumstances during their upbringing compared to previous generations. Despite recent entrants into the workforce, Gen-Z individuals have already garnered opinions and distinctive features. Gen-Z is the most current, culturally varied, and largest generation ever recorded. They reside in a realm characterized by constant updating and can assimilate information at a swifter pace than preceding generations. Gen-Z is born between the mid-1990s and 2010 (Ameen et al., 2023; Pervin & Khan, 2022). With a population of over two billion individuals, Gen-Z is the largest generation cohort. They have witnessed a greater magnitude of transformation throughout their lifespan than those who came before them. They are not mere representatives of the future but actively shape and bring it into existence. Comprising 18% of the global population, they are projected to assume global leadership within two decades (Chen et al., 2023). Several individuals, among the most senior in age, have completed their college education and are now entering the labor market, where they are generating their financial resources (Dadić et al., 2022).

The primary characteristic of this demographic is its expansion during the Great Recession amidst the crisis of terrorism and global warming. It is categorized as worldwide, technological, visually appealing, and societal (Subawa et al., 2020). This generation is characterized by their high level of education, extensive network of connections, and advanced sophistication. They uphold the values of diversity, fairness, and non-discrimination within society and the media. The current generation exhibits strong optimism and is highly motivated by their aspirations. Gen-Z prioritizes self-actualization, rewarding employment, and a positive work environment (Munsch, 2021). Gen-Z can be behaviorally characterized by excessive production,

interconnectedness, and virtual experiences. Their psychology pursues material wealth, immediate profits, gratification, and a lifestyle centered around consumerism. They reside in an interconnected realm that enables them to exchange messages and communicate globally with a single click effortlessly (Dadić et al., 2022). Technology's remarkable advancement has provided them access to the entire planet. They can find out and discover practically everything. Encountering unfamiliar individuals, traditions, behaviors, diverse societies, perspectives, journeys, and revelations—all made easily accessible by the abundance of knowledge and the convenience of technology (Ameen et al., 2023). By identifying the capabilities and virtues of this generation, they possess a higher tolerance, solidarity, openness, and willingness to embrace diversity than their predecessors. Accessing the internet provides a solid basis for cultivating empathy for others, comprehending a diverse and inclusive society, and disseminating various viewpoints (Salleh et al., 2017). This study closely adheres to the behavioral psychology viewpoint of Selfie-Posting Behavior (SPB) to understand Gen Z's psychological views.

Self-Esteem (SEE) and Selfie-Posting Behavior (SPB)

Self-esteem assesses an individual's perception of their value or degree of satisfaction (Shin et al., 2017). It is the overarching sense that one is adequate in and of oneself. It also encompasses acceptance, friendliness, and honesty with oneself and others. High self-esteem strongly indicates satisfaction with life, body, and others (Körner & Schütz, 2023). According to a recent study by Ansari and Azhar (2022), self-esteem improves when users share and interpret information on social media following their current emotions, mental state, and worldview. Also, young people's SNS use substantially and indirectly impacts their interpersonal self-esteem and well-being (Körner & Schütz, 2023). Individuals with higher levels of self-esteem were more likely to use SNS to disseminate information and interact with friends and acquaintances. Positive compliments on social media boost a person's social support network, self-esteem, body appreciation, and happiness while decreasing their feelings of loneliness and dissatisfaction (Ansari & Azhar, 2022). On the other hand, receiving criticism can lead to lower self-esteem and enjoyment, feelings of inferiority, shame, and lack of self-assurance (Fox & Rooney, 2015). Therefore, the study proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Self-esteem is significantly correlated with body appreciation (**H1a**), exhibitionism (**H1b**), and SPB (**H1c**).

Narcissism (NAM) and Selfie-Posting Behavior (SPB)

Narcissism is a personality trait characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance and an unrealistically favorable appraisal of one's social standing and physical attractiveness. Narcissists are more prone to use SNSs to promote themselves because they want to feel good about themselves from the attention they receive (Körner & Schütz, 2023). Narcissistic people with high narcissism exhibit SPB more frequently, and the egocentric self-regulatory processing framework explains this

phenomenon better (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). The framework demonstrates that narcissists manage their conduct to receive affirmation from others. Choosing attractive selfies and sharing them on social media platforms could be a form of self-control, which narcissists use to achieve their self-regulatory goals, namely, further positively increasing their sense of self-posting view (McCain et al., 2016).

Consequently, people with more excellent narcissism scores are the ones who share the most selfies on social media. As shown by prior empirical research, a positive correlation exists between narcissism and SPB (Ansari & Azhar, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). Thus, the study proposed the next hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Narcissism is significantly correlated with body appreciation (**H2a**), exhibitionism (**H2b**), and SPB (**H2c**).

Body Appreciation (BOA), Exhibitionism (EXM), and Selfie-Posting Behavior (SPB)

Body appreciation encompasses the act of accepting, cultivating good attitudes towards, and demonstrating appreciation for one's physical form while rejecting the notion that media-driven beauty ideals represent the sole definition of human attractiveness. Levine and Smolak (2016) also argue that a positive self-image is a buffer against low self-esteem. Body appreciation is essential to positive body image and can protect against negative body image (Körner & Schütz, 2023). It is related to overall appearance and is focused on the "body" in general. It is favorably correlated with positive assessments of physical attractiveness (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Earlier studies found that people with higher levels of body appreciation had a more positive body image because they were less likely to internalize the media's hyper-stylized definitions of beauty (Körner & Schütz, 2023; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Basing on that, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Body appreciation correlates significantly with exhibitionism (**H3a**) and SPB (**H3b**).

Narcissists tend to have positive self-views of their body attractiveness. They place a high value on physical appearance and tend to be overconfident in their beauty. Narcissism and self-esteem have been shown to have a favorable relationship with body appreciation (Körner & Schütz, 2023). A positive correlation between narcissism and physical attractiveness has been consistently found in meta-analyses (Holtzman & Strube, 2010). Again, body appreciation is significantly associated with self-disclosure or exhibitionism and SNS's body display (Chan & Tsang, 2014). Users of SNSs (e.g., Facebook[1]) express a higher level of body image acceptance and are also more likely to engage in extensive body exposure online (Chan & Tsang, 2014). In the context of SPB, it has been shown that sharing one's images online correlates with a more positive body appreciation (Körner &

[1] Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

Schütz, 2023). These results demonstrate that those who appreciate their physical appearance are likelier to share selfies online. Based on these arguments, the study hypothesized that the degree of body appreciation would mediate the motivations behind the behavior of uploading selfies online:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Body appreciation mediates the relationship between self-esteem, SPB (**H4a**), narcissism and SPB (**H4b**).

Exhibitionism is identified as one of the underlying motivations for exposing personal information over the Internet. Exhibitionism refers to the psychological phenomenon when individuals desire or want to attract the attention of others by publicly revealing and discussing intimate details of their personal lives (Ansari & Azhar, 2022). Similarly, earlier research demonstrated that users are inclined to share their positive and attractive self-images on social media to generate a favorable impression (Murray, 2015; Yang et al., 2021). People who ranked higher on exhibitionism were more likely to take and post selfies and quickly update their status. Furthermore, those with high exhibitionism are inclined to self-disclose, publish, and share more information. They are more likely to get the attention and appreciation of their peers and other people (Yang et al., 2021). Regarding this, the hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Exhibitionism is significantly correlated with SPB.

Many researchers have concluded that narcissism and high self-esteem are at the root of the selfie phenomenon (Ansari & Azhar, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). Multiple studies have looked into the correlation between selfie-taking and a wide range of personality traits, for example, such as narcissism, hyperactivity, preoccupation, body appreciation, desire for connection, social support, body satisfaction, self-image, perfectionism (e.g., Ansari & Azhar, 2022; Jain et al., 2021). These results reveal that selfie-takers and those seeking the perfect selfie are egocentric and fixated (Richa et al., 2021). These behaviors help them to feel attractive about their body. This way, body appreciation leads them to show exhibitionism, forwarding them to SPB. So, exhibitionism would mediate the association between self-esteem and SPB, narcissism and SPB:

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Exhibitionism mediates the relationship between self-esteem and SPB (**H6a**), narcissism and SPB (**H6b**), and body appreciation and SPB (**H6c**).

Fox & Rooney (2015) argued that men identifying narcissism and self-esteem as their most prevalent personality traits are more likely to engage in exhibitionism and selfie-posting activity. Selfie-posting favors people's actions, although social display is linked to emotions of superiority and adulation (Seidman, 2015; Weiser, 2015). Based on these discussions, the study hypothesized that the degree of exhibitionism would act as a mediator for the motivations that lie behind the behavior of uploading selfies online. Therefore, the research proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Body appreciation and exhibitionism serially mediate the relationship between self-esteem and SPB.

Hypothesis 8 (H8): Body appreciation and exhibitionism serially mediate the relationship between narcissism and SPB.

Attitude Toward Selfie (ATS) as a Moderator

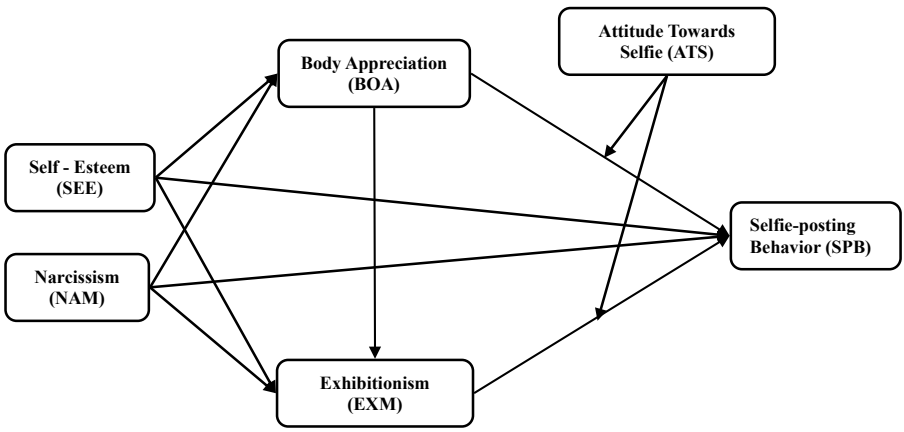
An individual's attitude can be described as the individual's favorable or unfavorable judgment of executing a specific behavior. As a result, the attitude might be the driving force behind the conduct that constitutes external self-regulation. Many studies have revealed that positive attitudes significantly influence individuals' intention to do a target behavior in various circumstances (Khan & Sharma, 2020; Khan et al., 2022; Roy, 2023b, 2023d; Wang et al., 2020). A favorable attitude toward SPB is positively and substantially associated with the desire to share selfies on SNSs (Lee & Sung, 2016). In addition, a more positive outlook on SPB is associated with a higher likelihood that the individual will follow through on their desire to share selfies on SNSs (Kim et al., 2016). As a result, the relationship between body appreciation and SPB, as well as exhibitionism and SPB, may be moderated by ATS. Therefore, the research proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 9 (H9): ATS moderates the relationship between body appreciation and SPB (**H9a**) and exhibitionism and SPB (**H9b**).

Based on the developed hypotheses, a proposed research model can be created (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Proposed Research Model



Note. Source: developed by the authors.

Method

Participants

The target population of this study consists of Gen-Z, who currently reside in Dhaka City, Bangladesh. Gen-Z comprises the largest demographic of social media users, resulting in a proliferation of selfies during this era (Ansari & Azhar, 2022). Therefore, the study considers them within this age limit. This homogeneous sample will facilitate a more profound comprehension of the behavior of posting selfies. Gen-Z commonly engages in this practice in Bangladesh. Individuals use cell phones to capture and distribute photographs on the Internet on platforms like Facebook[2] or Instagram[3]. Therefore, Gen-Z, who posted selfies throughout the previous week on social media, were surveyed. The study applied convenience sampling and personal interviews to collect data (Al Ahad & Khan, 2020; Roy & Ahmed, 2016). The information for this study was gathered with a structured questionnaire that the participants were free to administer to themselves. Five hundred respondents (who belong to Gen-Z) were requested to participate in the survey, and 432 completed and correctly returned questionnaires. After taking out the unfinished questionnaires, the final sample comprised 414 undergraduates.

This investigation used the G*power software, version 3.1.9.4, to determine the smallest possible sample size (Faul et al., 2009). It employed .05 effect size, .95 statistical power (two-tailed test), .05 error probability, *t*-tests (in test family), linear multiple regression (in statistical test), and four predictors to estimate the required minimum sample size (Roy, 2023e). The software estimated that the minimum sample was 262. Due to this, the responses collected for the study were adequate for statistical analysis.

Measures

The study has included six constructs: self-esteem (SEE), narcissism (NAM), body appreciation (BOA), exhibitionism (EXM), attitude towards selfies (ATS), and selfie-positing behavior (SPB). Constructs' indicators were derived from earlier research. Several questions were transformed to ensure they were pertinent to the study's setting. All the items were made up in English. This study used a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *completely agree* (Khan & Roy, 2023b; Roy et al., 2023).

Demographic Profile

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for the study sample. Male undergraduates comprise the majority (55.30%), while females comprise the remainder (44.70%). The average age of the respondents was 22.62 years (standard deviation: 1.35 years). The

[2] Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

[3] Instagram™ is a trademark of Instagram Inc., registered in the US and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Instagram полностью заблокирована в России как экстремистская организация.

average years of Facebook[4] use was 4.85 years. Most respondents (52.70%) take one selfie daily.

Table 1
Respondents' Profile

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	229	55.30
	Female	185	44.70
Selfie-taking per day	1	218	52.70
	2	103	24.90
	3	61	14.70
	4 or more	32	7.70
	Mean (*SD*)	**Minimum**	**Maximum**
Age (years)	22.62 (1.35)	19	27
Facebook[4] using years	4.85 (1.84)	2	10

Note. Source: developed by the authors.

Data Analysis and Results

This study has employed a two-phase analytical approach to testing the suggested model, combining an artificial neural network (ANN) with partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) (Hair et al., 2021). A bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 iterations was carried out to determine the constructs' significance. For this, the authors have checked the weights and path coefficients of the constructs (Al Ahad et al., 2020; Roy, 2023c). The study employed a two-step process that adhered to the PLS-SEM guidelines to analyze the results. The measurement model was analyzed in the first step, and the structural model was computed in the second step. The combined SEM-ANN approach enables the detection and analysis of linear and non-linear associations among the variables, enhancing the comprehension of factors influencing SPB. The collected data were analyzed using two statistical software, IBM SPSS (Version 22) and SmartPLS (Version 3.3.5).

Normality Test

The study employed a web-based calculator (Zhang & Yuan, 2018) to examine the information for multivariate normality by adopting Mardia's (1970) test. An essential requirement for more precise model prediction is multivariate normality. Multivariate skewness (β = 518.3395, $p < .001$) and multivariate kurtosis (β = 2723.1846, $p < .001$) revealed multivariate non-normality. PLS-SEM excels at handling non-normal data (Hair et al., 2021). It is another justification for using PLS-SEM.

[4] Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement items and their associated factor loadings (λ) are presented in Table 2. All the λ values are more than the threshold value of .70, except NAM12 and NAM13; these values are close to the threshold value (Hair et al., 2021; Roy, 2022). For internal consistency, composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (α) values must be greater than .70. The study results showed that these values are higher than the expected value. Again, the research has examined average variance extracted (AVE) values for convergent validity. All the AVE values exceed the cut-off value of .50 (Roy, 2023a). Hence, the work achieved convergent validity. The study also assessed the validity of the discriminant. The study used the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) and Fornell–Larcker criterion to test the validity of the discriminant. The HTMT results were under the recommended threshold of .85 (Kline, 2016; Roy, 2023e). Therefore, both convergent and discriminant validity have been achieved for this investigation. The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

Table 2

Measurement Model Results

Factors	Items	Sources	λ	α	CR	AVE
Attitude Towards Selfie (ATS)	ATS1: I think selfie-posting is pleasant	Lee & Sung, 2016	.853	.930	.943	.673
	ATS2: I think selfie-posting is enjoyable		.845			
	ATS3: I think selfie-posting is valuable		.832			
	ATS4: I think selfie-posting is beneficial		.832			
	ATS5: I think selfie-posting is good		.859			
	ATS6: I think selfie-posting is essential		.770			
	ATS7: I think selfie-posting is helpful		.805			
	ATS8: I think selfie-posting is satisfactory		.762			
Body Appreciation (BOA)	BOA1: I respect my body	Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015	.823	.942	.950	.657
	BOA2: I feel good about my body		.790			
	BOA3: I feel that my body has at least some good qualities		.814			
	BOA4: I take a positive attitude towards my body		.818			
	BOA5: I am attentive to my body's needs		.816			
	BOA6: I feel love for my body.		.775			
	BOA7: I appreciate the different and unique characteristics of my body		.819			
	BOA8: My behavior reveals my positive attitude toward my body		.815			
	BOA9: I am comfortable in my body		.809			
	BOA10: I feel beautiful even if I am different from media images of celebrities		.824			

Table 2 Continued

Factors	Items	Sources	λ	α	CR	AVE
Exhibitionism (EXM)	EXM1: I post selfies online to gain others' attention	Ansari & Azhar, 2022; Hollenbaugh & Ferris, 2014	.885	.902	.931	.772
	EXM2: I post selfies because my selfies make me cool among my peers		.900			
	EXM3: I post selfies to gain fame		.885			
	EXM4: I post selfies because I like it when people see me		.844			
Narcissism (NAM)	NAM1: I like having authority over other people	Gentile et al., 2013	.812	.942	.949	.591
	NAM2: I have a strong will to power		.799			
	NAM3: People always seem to recognize my authority		.796			
	NAM4: I am a born leader		.766			
	NAM5: I know that I am a good person because everybody keeps telling me so		.720			
	NAM6: I like to show off my body		.797			
	NAM7: I like to look at my body		.733			
	NAM8: I will usually show off if I get the chance		.835			
	NAM9: I like to look at myself in the mirror		.784			
	NAM10: I find it easy to manipulate people		.766			
	NAM11: I insist on getting the respect that is due to me		.794			
	NAM12: I expect a great deal from other people		.693			
	NAM13: I will never be satisfied until I get all I deserve		.682			
Self-Esteem (SEE)	SEE1: My selfie possesses several commendable attributes	Ansari & Azhar, 2022	.905	.915	.940	.796
	SEE2: I feel that I am a person of worth or value		.909			
	SEE3: I can do things just like everyone else		.880			
	SEE4: On the whole, I am satisfied with my selfie		.875			
Selfie-Posting Behavior (SPB)	SPB1: I post selfies on social media	Ansari & Azhar, 2022	.923	.949	.961	.830
	SPB2: I enjoy posting selfies on social media		.912			
	SPB3: I think using social media to post selfies is a good idea		.912			
	SPB4: I encourage my peers/friends to post selfies on social media		.918			
	SPB5: I help my peers/friends to post selfies on social media		.889			

Note. λ = Factor loadings, α = Cronbach's alpha, CR = Composite reliability, AVE = Average variance extracted.
Source: developed by the authors.

Table 3
Discriminant Validity Results

Fornell–Larcker results

	ATS	BOA	EXM	NAM	SEE	SPB
ATS	***.820***					
BOA	.639	***.810***				
EXM	.640	.678	***.879***			
NAM	.701	.745	.653	.769		
SEE	.680	.704	.673	.731	***.892***	
SPB	.738	.800	.784	.803	.772	***.911***

HTMT results

	ATS	BOA	EXM	NAM	SEE	SPB
ATS						
BOA	.680					
EXM	.699	.735				
NAM	.747	.789	.706			
SEE	.735	.758	.741	.786		
SPB	.783	.846	.847	.848	.829	

Note. The square roots of the AVEs are shown in italics and boldface on the diagonals of the preceding table. The off-diagonal values indicate the intercorrelations between the different factors. ATS = Attitude towards selfie, BOA = Body appreciation, EXM = Exhibitionism, NAM = Narcissism, SEE = Self-esteem, and SPB = Selfie-Posting Behavior. Source: developed by the authors.

Structural Model Assessment

In this stage, the study has evaluated the structural model to confirm the hypothesized link. The research analyzed the variance inflation factors (VIF) to verify that there was no multi-collinearity issue. The cut-off value for VIF value is 5 (Roy, 2023b). The findings indicated that the VIF values for all the variables (SEE = 2.806, NAM = 3.096, BOA = 2.805, EXM = 2.316, and ATS = 2.381) are less than the cut-off value. So, collinearity was not a concern. In this work, PLS-SEM approaches were utilized to assess the impact of the predictor constructs on SPB. To evaluate the outcomes of the structural model, the authors first determined the importance of the path coefficient (β), then calculated the coefficient of determination (R^2), and last determined the predictive relevance (Q^2). Table 4 presents the findings from the evaluation of the structural model. The findings showed that both the direct and indirect hypotheses were significant. The outcomes confirmed that SEE was positively and significantly correlated with BOA (β = .344, p < .001), EXM (β = .311, p < .01), and SPB (β = .151,

$p < .01$) and supported the hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c. Again, there was a significant and positive association between NAM and BOA ($\beta = .493$, $p < .001$), EXM ($\beta = .189$, $p < .05$), and SPB ($\beta = .225$, $p < .01$) and supported the hypotheses H2a, H2b, and H2c. Additionally, BOA significantly influenced EXM ($\beta = .319$, $p < .001$) and SPB ($\beta = .252$, $p < .001$) and supported the hypotheses H3a and H3b. Finally, hypothesis H5 was endorsed as the direct path between EXM and SPB was significant ($\beta = .276$, $p < .001$) (See Figure 2). EXM has the highest impact on SPB among these independent constructs since $\beta = .276$, $p < .001$.

Table 4

Structural Equation Model's Results

H	Relationships	β	t-value	p-value	95% BC-CIs	Decisions
	Direct paths					
H1a	SEE—>BOA	.344	6.608	.000	[.299; .400]	Significant
H1b	SEE—>EXM	.311	4.688	.001	[.241; .361]	Significant
H1c	SEE—>SPB	.151	3.800	.003	[.115; .166]	Significant
H2a	NAM—>BOA	.493	8.014	.000	[.394; .570]	Significant
H2b	NAM—>EXM	.189	2.411	.037	[.124; .318]	Significant
H2c	NAM—>SPB	.225	4.770	.001	[.179; .279]	Significant
H3a	BOA—>EXM	.319	5.195	.000	[.223; .385]	Significant
H3b	BOA—>SPB	.252	7.241	.000	[.201; .298]	Significant
H5	EXM—>SPB	.276	6.834	.000	[.185; .300]	Significant
	Indirect paths					
H4a	SEE—>BOA—>SPB	.087	3.933	.003	[.065; .117]	Significant
H4b	NAM—>BOA—>SPB	.125	5.918	.000	[.091; .147]	Significant
H6a	SEE—>EXM—>SPB	.086	3.411	.007	[.056; .105]	Significant
H6b	NAM—>EXM—>SPB	.052	2.520	.030	[.026; .078]	Significant
H6c	BOA—>EXM—>SPB	.088	4.718	.001	[.065; .100]	Significant
H7	SEE—>BOA—>EXM—>SPB	.030	3.501	.006	[.027; .028]	Significant
H8	NAM—>BOA—>EXM—>SPB	.043	4.370	.001	[.029; .055]	Significant
	Moderation paths					
H9a	ATS*BOA—>SPB	–.061	1.930	.082	[–.117; .052]	Insignificant
H9b	ATS*EXM—>SPB	.061	2.644	.025	[.024; .095]	Significant

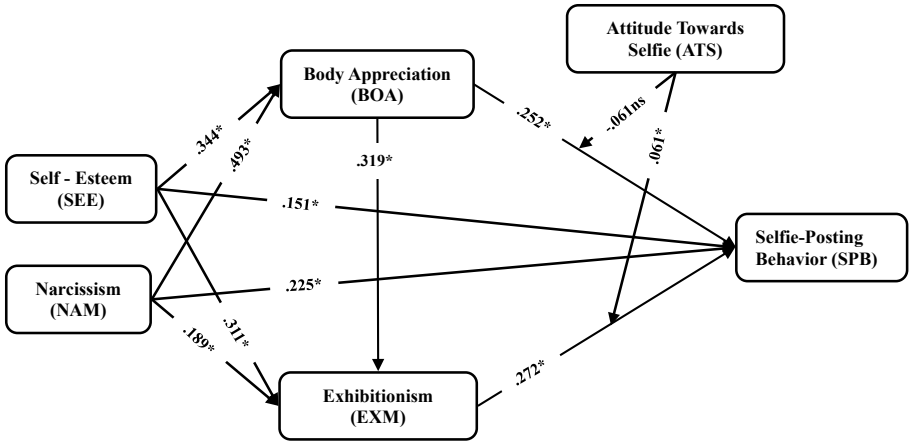
Note. ATS = attitude towards selfie, BOA = Body appreciation, EXM = Exhibitionism, NAM = Narcissism, SEE = Self-esteem, SPB = Selfie-Posting Behavior, and BC-CIs = Bias corrected confidence intervals. Source: developed by the authors.

Mediation Analysis

Following the recommendation made by Rungtusanatham et al. (2014), the study evaluated the mediation effect using the transmittal method. A bootstrapping method was utilized to calculate the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals of the indirect impact, and 5,000 subsamples were used (Hair et al., 2021). The research applied the decision tree to classify mediation (Nitzl et al., 2016). The bootstrapping results revealed that each of the indirect factors has a significant impact on the outcome. The results of the mediation analysis are presented in Table 4. The outcomes of the mediation analysis showed that BOA mediates the relationship between SEE and SPB (β = .087, p < .01), NAM and SPB (β = .125, p < .001). So, the hypotheses H4a and H4b were supported. Again, EXM also mediates the association between SEE and SPB (β = .086, p < .01); NAM and SPB (β = .052, p < .05); BOA and SPB (β = .088, p < .01) and supported the hypotheses H6a, H6b, and H6c. Finally, the results revealed that BOA and EXM serially mediate the relationships between SEE and SPB (β = .030, p < .01) and NAM and SPB (β = .043, p < .01). So, the serial mediation hypotheses H7 and H8 were supported. Since all the direct hypotheses were supported, the mediations were partial.

Figure 2

Results of the Structural Model



Note. *p < .05, ns = non-significant. Source: developed by the authors.

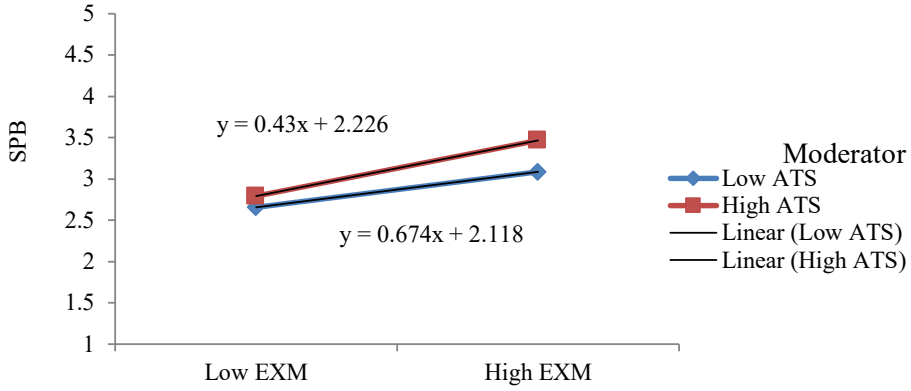
Moderation Analysis

The study hypothesized that ATS would be a moderator in the current investigation to investigate the moderating effect. According to the results of the moderation analysis, the link between EXM and SPB (β = .061, p < .05) was moderated by ATS. So, hypothesis H9b was supported. From Figure 3, it was seen that at the high level of ATS, the curve was much steeper than at the low level. So, at the low level of EXM, the impact of ATS was low, but at the high level of EXM, the impact was high. It indicated

that ATS contributed to the growth of the positive association between EXM and SPB. The other moderation hypothesis (H9a) was found insignificant (β = –.061, p > .05). Results are presented in Table 4.

Figure 3

Moderation Effects of ATS



Note. ATS = Attitude towards selfie, EXM = Exhibitionism, SPB = Selfie-Posting Behavior. Source: developed by the authors.

Assessment of the Explanatory Power

The study calculated the R^2 and Q^2 values to evaluate the structural model's predictive power. The R^2 value for the SPB was .818. Therefore, all the independent variables (SEE, NAM, BOA, and EXM) explained 81.8% of the variation of SPB. Again, SEE, NAM, and BOA explained 54.9% of the variation of EXM. Furthermore, SEE and NAM presented 61.0% of the variation of BOA. As a result, the model possesses a powerful potential for explanation. Evaluation of the predictive relevance was carried out using the Stone–Geisser Q^2 (Roy, 2023e). The Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates good predictive relevance. The Q^2 scores were more than 0 for BOA (.390), EXM (.414), and SPB (.674), signifying the outstanding predictive relevance of the model (Chin et al., 2020).

Artificial Neural Network (ANN) Results

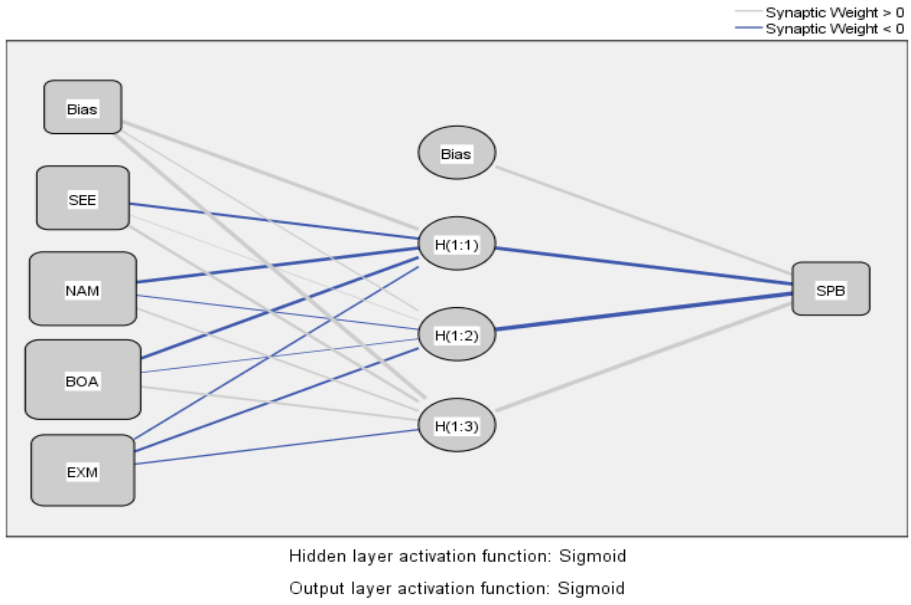
In the initial stage, PLS-SEM was used to test the correlations and determine the variables influencing Gen-Z's SPB. In the second stage, the ANN technique was used to rank the variables affecting the SPB. ANNs typically consist of three layers: the input layer, the hidden layer, and the output layer. The activation function establishes the connection between each layer in a neural network. The sigmoid function is a frequently employed activation function in ANN. It is favored due to its ability to compress the initial data at upper and lower extremes. The backpropagation neural network operates under the supervision of a learning algorithm. This technique is frequently employed in ANNs (Chiang et al., 2006).

Neural Network (NN) Validation

An NN model was performed utilizing SPSS (Version 22) software. The present study employed the widely utilized feed-forward backpropagation multilayer training approach. The multilayer perceptron and sigmoid activation techniques were used to implement the input and hidden nodes. The phenomenon of overfitting is a significant concern in the context of ANNs. The present study employed a 10-fold cross-validation methodology to mitigate this issue. The research on NN computing nodes does not provide any available heuristic (Chong, 2013). The present investigation employed a training dataset comprising 90% of the available data points, with the remaining 10% reserved for testing purposes (Roy, 2023c). According to the research framework, the ANN evaluation only used a single model for its analysis. The input layer of the ANN model consisted of neurons labeled as SEE, NAM, BOA, and EXM, while the output layer included the neuron labeled as SPB (Figure 4). The present study utilized the widely accepted Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) metric to validate the ANN assessment outcomes (Chong, 2013). The RMSE served as a metric for both training and testing errors. Table 5 presents the RMSE evaluation. The mean RMSE values for the training and testing procedures were .053 and .051, respectively, indicating a relatively low error level. Therefore, the research declared that the predictive algorithm is a perfect fit, and the results of the ANN analysis can be relied upon entirely (Chong, 2013).

Figure 4

Architecture of Neural Network



Note. ATS = attitude towards selfie, BOA = Body appreciation, EXM = Exhibitionism, NAM = Narcissism, SEE = Self-esteem, SPB = Selfie-Posting Behavior. Source: developed by the authors.

Table 5
Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) Assessment

Training		Testing		Total Sample
N	RMSE	*N*	RMSE	
370	.051	44	.052	414
372	.050	42	.051	414
371	.056	43	.044	414
360	.050	54	.049	414
362	.056	52	.047	414
375	.051	39	.059	414
369	.052	45	.058	414
373	.054	41	.052	414
366	.061	48	.049	414
375	.051	39	.045	414
Mean	***.053***		.051	
SD	.003		.005	

Note. Source: developed by the authors.

Sensitivity Analysis

Sensitivity analysis within a model involves identifying the fluctuations in the dependent variable due to modifications made to the independent variables. The current investigation involved the computation of the mean importance of SEE, NAM, BOA, and EXM as independent factors for forecasting the dependent factor SPB. Table 6 displays the outcomes of the sensitivity evaluation. According to the findings, the variable BOA holds the highest level of influence as an independent variable in predicting SPB because it has the highest normalized importance of 89.18%. Then, it was followed by NAM (87.02%), EXM (72.66%), and SEE (48.95%). Based on the ANN analysis, it can be inferred that the variable BOA holds the highest degree of influence in predicting Gen-Z's SPB.

Table 6
Sensitivity Assessment

Neural network	SEE	NAM	BOA	EXM
1	.145	.247	.207	.400
2	.113	.345	.375	.167
3	.193	.360	.253	.193
4	.198	.337	.282	.183
5	.168	.231	.337	.264
6	.143	.298	.283	.276

Table 6 Continued

Neural network	SEE	NAM	BOA	EXM
7	.177	.299	.278	.246
8	.162	.274	.327	.236
9	.215	.240	.366	.178
10	.132	.289	.287	.293
Average Importance	***.165***	***.292***	***.300***	***.244***
Normalized Importance	***48.95%***	***87.02%***	***89.18%***	***72.66%***

Note. SEE = Self-esteem, NAM = Narcissism, BOA = Body appreciation, and EXM = Exhibitionism. Source: developed by the authors.

Discussion

Previous investigations have extensively documented the positive association of self-esteem and narcissism with SPB (Ansari & Azhar, 2022; Arpaci et al., 2023). However, the exploration of the mediation and moderation strategies that underlie this association has been predominantly limited (Wang et al., 2020). Limited studies have investigated mediation or moderation analysis with a single mediator or moderator (Ansari & Azhar, 2022). The current investigation developed a moderated mediation framework featuring two mediators and one moderator. The objective was to investigate the potential indirect association between self-esteem and narcissism with SPB via body appreciation and exhibitionism. Once again, it examined whether the relationship between body appreciation and SPB and exhibitionism and SPB was subject to moderation by ATS. The results of this research contributed to a better comprehension of how self-esteem and narcissism are connected to SPB.

This research endeavor explored the direct and positive correlation of self-esteem and narcissism with body appreciation, exhibitionism, and SPB (H1a–H2c), body appreciation and exhibitionism and SPB (H3a–H3b), and exhibitionism and SPB (H5). The findings of this study provide evidence in favor of all the aforementioned direct hypotheses. The findings suggest that self-esteem and narcissism significantly and positively correlated with body appreciation, exhibitionism, and SPB. As a result, respondents with higher levels of self-esteem and narcissism have a positive feeling about their bodies, and this feeling encourages them to engage in more exhibitionism and SPB as a means to seek attention, acclaim, and validation from others. Similarly, getting positive feedback from their peers and friends increases their self-esteem and motivates them to post selfies. These observations enhance our understanding of the impact of self-esteem and narcissism on SPB. Previous research also revealed a noteworthy correlation among these variables (Ansari & Azhar, 2022; Arpaci et al., 2023; Chowdhury & Roy, 2015). The study's findings have substantiated the correlation between body appreciation, exhibitionism, and SPB, signifying that body appreciation is a precursor to exhibitionism and SPB. Prior research has confirmed the

existence of these associations (Ansari & Azhar, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). Youngsters who are satisfied with their body appearance are more likely to show exhibitionism tendencies and highly engage in SPB. In addition, undergraduates who want to get attention or fame from other people are involved in posting selfies. So, the findings of the present investigation indicate that self-esteem, narcissism, body appreciation, and exhibitionism are influential factors in forecasting SPB.

The research revealed that body appreciation mediates the link between self-esteem and SPB and narcissism and SPB, supporting the study's proposed hypotheses. In previous research on SPB, personality psychologists focused primarily on the influence of a personality characteristic (such as narcissism) on this behavior (Sorokowska et al., 2016; Weiser, 2015). At the same time, the primary concern of other investigators was the function of body image (Ridgway & Clayton, 2016; Wagner et al., 2016). The two areas of study, namely personality traits and body image characteristics, have undergone separate development with little to no integration. As a result, the possible correlation between the two has been overlooked. The current study creatively combined self-esteem, narcissism, and body appreciation to explore SPB and evaluated the mediating role of body appreciation in the link between self-esteem, narcissism, and SPB in light of the relationship between body image and personality traits (Allen & Walter, 2016; Fortes et al., 2015). The proposed mediation model posits a potential explanation for the heightened frequency of selfie-posting on SNSs among individuals with narcissistic tendencies and high self-esteem. Specifically, the model suggests that such individuals experience a sense of body appreciation, which may contribute to their increased propensity for sharing self-portraits on SNSs.

Once again, the findings of the study corroborated the research assumptions, showing that exhibitionism mediates the connection between self-esteem and SPB, narcissism and SPB, and body appreciation and SPB. These results are consistent with earlier research (Ansari & Azhar, 2022; Kim & Chock, 2017). The findings suggest that those with higher levels of narcissism and self-esteem also tend to share more selfies on social media platforms using the exhibitionism approach. According to the mediated findings, such people may be more inclined to share self-portraits on SNSs because they feel compelled to do so. Finally, the mediation analysis revealed that body appreciation and exhibitionism sequentially mediate the relationship between self-esteem and SPB and narcissism and SPB. The findings widened our understanding of how Gen-Z behave while sharing selfies online. It implies that body appreciation and exhibitionism play a significant role in augmenting Gen-Z's SPB. The mediation analysis findings indicate that self-esteem and narcissism's impact on SPB was highly conveyed through body appreciation and exhibitionism rather than only through direct effects.

Moreover, it is noteworthy to delineate the two phases in the mediation framework. The initial phase of the mediation procedure aligns with the characterization of self-esteem and narcissism, whereby individuals with narcissistic tendencies tend to possess an excessively favorable self-perception, particularly concerning their physical attributes (Ansari & Azhar, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). Furthermore, this discovery provides backing for the hypothesis that individuals with narcissistic traits (self-esteem

and narcissism) exhibit a more favorable perception of their physical appearance, aligning with prior investigations (Ansari & Azhar, 2022; Lipowska & Lipowski, 2015). The results of the subsequent phase of the mediation procedure align with previous research indicating that higher levels of body appreciation and exhibitionism are positively associated with a greater frequency of online self-presentation, such as posting selfies (Wang et al., 2020). The potential predictive function of body appreciation and exhibitionism regarding SPB can be elucidated by the influence of intrapersonal processes on interpersonal self-regulatory strategies, as outlined in the dynamic self-regulatory processing theory of narcissism (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). The internal assessment of one's cognitive and affective state regarding one's body visuals directly impacts one's interpersonal self-regulatory approach, which involves posting selfies on SNSs. It has been observed that individuals with elevated levels of both body appreciation and exhibitionism are more likely to participate in self-presentational behaviors (for example, SPB) to enhance their sense of self-views.

As hypothesized, the moderation effect of ATS on the relationship between exhibitionism and SPB was supported. The joint impact of exhibitionism and ATS, both intrapersonal functions, on SPB, can elucidate the influence of attitude as a moderator. Respondents with higher levels of exhibitionism exhibit a greater propensity to post selfies on SNSs. Integrating ATS can potentially augment the predictive capacity of exhibitionism concerning SPB. Individuals with positive ATS may perceive such conduct as advantageous, profitable, and valuable to their SPB. In addition, people experience feelings of pleasure and contentment when sharing selfies on social networking sites (Lee & Sung, 2016).

Consequently, individuals who experience contentment with their physical appearance and possess a favorable inclination towards self-display are more likely to engage in SPB when they receive positive feedback. However, the moderating influence of ATS on the association between body appreciation and SPB is statistically non-significant. Prior research has indicated that the influence of body satisfaction on SPB is moderated by ATS (Wang et al., 2020). One possible explanation for the lack of significant findings could be that youngsters with a positive body appreciation may not require additional motivation to post selfies. They are confident in their appearance and enjoy exhibiting it by posting exposing selfies on social media.

All independent variables of the SPB were deemed statistically significant; however, their order of importance concerning the SPB remains unclear. As a result, ANN modeling was utilized in the research to determine the order of importance of the SPB determinants. The ANN technique can evaluate whether non-compensatory decision-making processes follow a linear or non-linear pattern. In contrast to the findings of the PLS-SEM analysis, which indicated that exhibitionism was the most reliable SPB contributor, the outcomes of the ANN analysis demonstrated that body appreciation was the most critical factor in SPB prediction. This finding diverges from previous investigations, which identified narcissism as the primary predictor of SPB (Ansari & Azhar, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). As a result, ANN was advantageous to apply in comparison to other statistical techniques that are extensively utilized. So, when youngsters feel good about their body appearance and are satisfied with themselves,

it motivates them to post more selfies online. Again, if they find positive feedback about their body from their social partners, it highly influences them to engage in SPB. Therefore, the findings above carry significant implications for theoretical frameworks, research endeavors, and practical implementations.

Implications of the Research

Theoretical Implications

This study makes significant theoretical contributions by incorporating a comprehensive modeling approach to examine the direct and indirect associations between self-esteem, narcissism, body appreciation, and exhibitionism with SPB from Gen-Z perspectives. Several studies have tried to achieve this task individually, but none have done so in combination. PLS-SEM in SPB was a common explanatory technique utilized in empirical investigations (Ansari & Azhar, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). The study also examined the underlying mechanism behind youngsters' tendency to post selfies and identified the critical predictors of SPB. Therefore, the study provides a noteworthy addition to the body of knowledge by clarifying the interdependent nature of these pivotal constructs. It expands the range of behavioral and psychological research areas. It also enhances our comprehension of the psychological components of human conduct and validates the current body of knowledge. These findings support the dynamic self-regulatory processing model for narcissism in the SNSs (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). The correlation between self-esteem and narcissism and SPB suggests that sharing self-portraits on SNSs can serve as an effective self-regulatory tactic for individuals with narcissistic tendencies to enhance their self-views. Furthermore, the impact of intrapersonal processes on interpersonal interactions is supported by the moderating effect of ATS and the mediating effects of body appreciation and exhibitionism. As a result, the moderated mediation model exhibits a greater depth of concept and offers enhanced predictive capability compared to a direct association between predictors and SPB.

Practical Implications

The current investigation yielded several practical implications that can be drawn from its findings. The study results revealed that all the independent factors significantly correlated with SPB. The results indicate that youngsters with higher levels of self-esteem and narcissism tend to post selfies to seek praise and approval from others. So, youngsters with lower self-esteem may use selfie-posting to enhance their self-worth and increase self-awareness. They may use this awareness to reflect on themselves and grow personally. They can also practice self-help techniques to improve their interpersonal skills and self-esteem.

Furthermore, by using the study results, mental health practitioners and organizations can help narcissistic persons address their underlying emotional needs and self-esteem difficulties. They apply these results to raise the self-esteem of those with low self-esteem. Once more, exhibitionism can occasionally be a symptom of underlying mental health problems. These findings provide options and aid for anyone

struggling with similar issues. Again, professionals can assist Gen-Z in displaying exhibitionist tendencies, understanding the underlying causes of their behavior, creating healthy coping mechanisms, and cultivating a positive body image. In addition to addressing any problems with negative self-image, therapeutic interventions can assist people in developing a positive body image and sense of self. Promoting body appreciation can help youngsters in creating a more positive body image. Thus, depending on the results, professionals can work with people to develop a sense of self-worth and self-esteem. Educational institutions and community organizations can implement media literacy initiatives that educate youngsters and future generations about the possible repercussions of using social media to get positive reinforcement. This knowledge may aid in developing a more critical understanding in the minds of young people regarding the effects of their online behavior (posting selfies) on their self-esteem and body image, as well as the significance of body positivity and unattainable beauty standards. In addition, marketing strategists, social media professionals, designers, developers, and industry experts may design their products and services to meet the self-esteem and exhibitionism of their target audience. It means that they must consider how their offerings will satisfy the needs and desires of consumers in terms of what they are searching for. They can tailor their strategies to appeal to individuals with narcissistic tendencies who may be more inclined to respond positively to their products (e.g., smartphones and webcams). Once again, they can create features and algorithms based on the study's findings to encourage better online activity.

Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Directions

The study sought to investigate the specific roles of body appreciation and exhibitionism in mediating the relationship between self-esteem and sexualized body presentation, as well as the association between narcissism and SPB. Additionally, the study attempted to explore the moderating effect of attitude towards selfies (ATS) on these relationships from the perspective of Gen-Z youngsters. Like other studies, the study has several limitations. The study was limited to Gen-Z youngsters, with a majority of male participants. It could potentially hinder the generalizability of the study's findings and make it difficult to assess the impact of gender on the relationships being studied. It is recommended that forthcoming investigations integrate samples that exhibit greater diversity and enhanced representativeness. This work is the first to use linear and non-linear models to investigate the connections between SPB parameters. This work tests and validates the suggested model using a two-stage analytical procedure. In the first step, PLS-SEM was utilized to examine the link and determine how self-esteem, narcissism, body appreciation, and exhibitionism affected SPB. The second stage involved ranking the important antecedents and validating the PLS-SEM outcome using ANN. Due to its superior performance over conventional statistical techniques (for example, PLS-SEM) in identifying linear and non-linear correlations, the research employed an ANN. ANN effectively ensured the validity of the constructs and determined that body appreciation is the most significant predictor of the SPB. The

present study suggests a more reliable and predictive framework that can overcome the fundamental constraints of the existing model and forecast the users' SPB. The current investigation is confined to a singular cultural milieu and has not accounted for cross-cultural contrasts; hence, future research should incorporate more cross-cultural analyses. The conclusions drawn in the present inquiry were derived from cross-sectional data. Subsequent research initiatives should employ longitudinal or experimental methodologies to obtain additional empirical support regarding the causal relationship between predictors and Selfie-Posting Behavior. The present investigation utilized body appreciation and exhibitionism as mediating factors and attitude towards selfies as moderating variables. Subsequent research endeavors may consider integrating alternative mediator variables, such as extraversion, or moderator variables, such as personality trait variables. Further research may utilize a combination of methodologies, including surveys and content assessments, to more precisely determine the associations between various forms of selfie habits and motives. More investigation may also be conducted to analyze the impact of selfie usage on self-concept.

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ARTICLE

Flourishing Among Emerging Adulthood: A Perspective From Anchor Personality

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of well-being theory in positive psychology is to help people achieve flourishing conditions. Personality is an essential factor influencing flourishing, but no research has examined the relationship between anchor personality and flourishing. Anchor is something that is trusted as a mainstay in solving problems. With that in mind, this study aimed to determine the relationship between anchor virtues, materials, self, and others on flourishing among emerging adulthood. This current research used a non-experimental quantitative method by online survey. The research participants are Indonesian citizens aged 18–25 years. The results showed that virtue was the only anchor that predicted overall flourishing positively and significantly. Anchor virtues also significantly predicted each flourishing elements separately. Anchor self and materials did not predict flourishing significantly, while anchor others predicted flourishing negatively. This study empirically proves the importance of emerging adulthood in adhering to virtues to achieve a flourishing condition. When an individual places virtues as the main anchor, they hold on to an anchor with high abstraction power, not limited by space and time and universal; so that stability and positively impact well-being can be achieved.

KEYWORDS
anchor personality, emerging adulthood, flourishing, personality, virtues, well-being

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Introduction

Well-being is a crucial topic to be researched because of its great benefits, from the individual to the macro level. At the individual level, well-being becomes essential to maintain the quality of mental health because well-being is the opposite of the spectrum of common mental disorders (Huppert & So, 2013). Well-being at the macro level is vital as it is one of the benchmarks for the success of a country's development in addition to GDP. Indeed, GDP is considered insufficient to be the only measure of the success of a country's development because it only focuses on meeting basic needs (Diener & Seligman, 2004).

There are various opinions regarding the notion of well-being in psychology. So far, most assessments of well-being have relied on the principles of hedonic philosophy. According to this viewpoint, well-being is characterized by experiencing the maximum amount of pleasure and the least amount of pain and having a goal of life satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman, 2011). Unfortunately, the concept of happiness from the hedonic approach has received much criticism from experts. Hedonism has been expressed in many forms, varying from a relatively narrow focus on bodily pleasures to human appetites and self-interest (Ryan & Deci, 2001). In addition, the measurement of subjective well-being is dependent on the mood at the time of the assessment, thus being temporal (Ryff, 1989; Schwarz & Clore, 1983; Seligman, 2011). The concept of sustainable well-being does not require individuals to feel good all the time because the experience of painful emotions (e.g., disappointment, failure, sadness) is a normal part of life; moreover, the ability to manage negative or painful emotions is essential for long-term well-being (Huppert, 2009b).

So far, one theory of well-being that goes beyond positive emotions and emphasizes the importance of sustainable human growth has been the well-being theory from Seligman (2011). According to Seligman, the theory of well-being in positive psychology aims to increase individual flourishing. Literally, the verb "flourish" means "to develop quickly and be successful or common" or "to grow well, to be healthy and happy" (The University of Oxford, n.d.). That is, Seligman considers that the purpose of the theory of well-being is for humans to grow and develop healthily and robustly while living in the world. Flourishing is synonymous with high levels of mental well-being and a symbol of mental health (Huppert, 2009a; Huppert & So, 2013). As stated by Keyes (2007), individuals who experience flourishing can exhibit high psychological resilience, low feelings of helplessness, clear life goals, and good intimacy in relationships.

Flourishing consists of five elements known as PERMA, i.e., positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011). Positive emotion is an element of the hedonic approach, while engagement, relationship, meaning, and accomplishment are derived from the eudaimonic approach. Seligman (2002) explains that meaning is the peak of lasting fulfilment, means that although each element plays a vital role in determining a person's well-being, the most sustainable well-being is one that contains elements of high meaning. The importance of meaning from Seligman is in line with Baumister's statement that a happy life is impossible without meaning (Hanson & VanderWeele, 2021). Furthermore, Huta and Ryan's study

also showed that eudaimonia produced more benefits in the longer-term follow-up. Conversely, the hedonic intervention resulted in more well-being benefits at the short-term follow-up (Huta & Ryan, 2010).

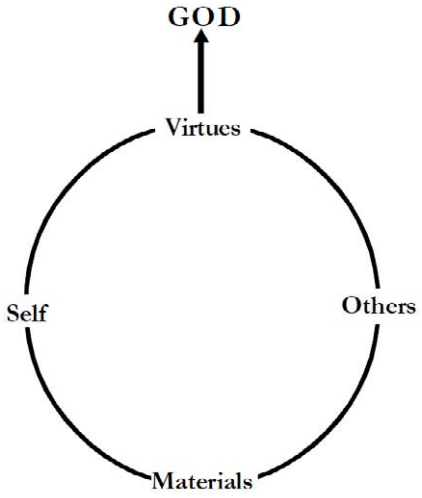
The factors that correlate with flourishing need to be investigated further to understand the concept of flourishing in more depth. Schotanus-Dijkstra et al. (2016) state that personality trait is the most potent factor influencing flourishing. Villieux et al. (2016) found that personality has a role of 30% in predicting flourishing. Most previous studies have used the Big Five Personality theory to examine the factor influencing flourishing. Theoretically, the Big Five Personality theory emphasizes personality stability in adulthood. However, there is no consensus on whether stability is achieved at the age of 30 years (McCrae & Costa, 2003), 50 years (Ardelt, 2000), or 33–42 years (Rantanen et al., 2007). The weakness of the Big Five Personality theory is that it is often seen as less capable of describing the mechanisms that can promote stability and change (Funder, 1994).

The personality theory used in this study is the Anchor Personality Theory proposed by Riyono (2020a). The Anchor Personality Theory defines personality as the resultant of various repetitive dynamics of behavior, as a result of the fundamental dynamics of human motivation, namely "in search for anchors" (Riyono, 2020a). In contrast to the Big Five Personality theory, which tends to be deterministic, the Anchor Personality Theory emphasizes the possibility of an individual to change according to the understanding of the individual concerned.

Riyono defines anchor as something that is trusted as a mainstay in solving problems. There are four kinds of anchors, namely virtues, self, others, and materials, which are illustrated in the anchor structure in Figure 1. God is the ultimate

Figure 1

Anchor Personality Structure



Note. Source: Riyono et al., 2012.

anchor because logically, only God is Almighty and Perfect, so when someone rely on God, human powerlessness will be perfectly compensated (Riyono, 2020b). However, humans cannot achieve God directly except through divine principles or God's divine attributes, termed virtues (Riyono, 2020a). The highest position of anchor, which is virtues, is in the highest layer of abstraction, while the lowest position, which is materials, is in the lowest layer of abstraction. For an individual, the anchor is not permanent because the anchor will be perceived according to the level of understanding.

According to Riyono et al. (2012), a person's happiness or despair is determined by how the individual chooses and arranges their anchors. Furthermore, Riyono explained that individuals who achieve true happiness have a proper anchor structure (Riyono et al., 2012). The most appropriate anchor structure is when the virtues is placed as the main anchor. Research conducted by Akhtar and Firmanto (2021) explains that virtues is the only anchor that significantly predicts the life satisfaction of the four types of anchors. When an individual places virtues as the main anchor, thee hold on to an anchor with high abstraction power, not limited by space and time and universal, so that it can achieve stability and positively impact well-being.

On the other hand, individuals who are too dominant in holding on to the self will tend to be too self-reliant or rely on themselves for all their problems. Previous studies have shown that excessive self-reliance is negatively correlated with psychological well-being and is associated with lower help-seeking behavior, depressive symptoms, and serious suicidal thoughts during initial screening in adolescents (Choo & Marszalek, 2019; Labouliere et al., 2015). Conversely, if the individual is too dependent on others, they will tend to be too dependent. Research has shown excessive interpersonal dependence is associated with susceptibility to depression and online game addiction (Franche & Dobson, 1992; Škařupová & Blinka, 2016). If the materials that are opposite to virtues become the main anchor, it will lead people away from true happiness. Previous research has shown that individuals who are materialistic, or who place too much importance on income and material possessions, exhibit lower self-esteem, higher narcissism, greater social comparability, low empathy, low intrinsic motivation, and vulnerability to relational conflict (Kasser, 2002; Kasser et al., 2004). In addition, materialism is negatively related to pro-social and pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors (Kasser, 2018).

Emerging adulthood, i.e., aged 18–25 years, are individuals who feel strongly in search for anchors in their lives because the developmental period of emerging adulthood is a period of identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in between, and possibilities/optimism (Arnett, 2018). There is a paradox in emerging adulthood, which is a phase of instability as well as a phase of optimism with great possibilities for change. The heterogeneity of emerging adulthood is interesting to study because it is a wealthy, complex, and dynamic period of life (Arnett, 2000). Therefore, emerging adulthood was chosen as the research subject. Emerging adulthood has the possibility of various anchor variations because it is a dynamic developmental period.

Emerging adulthood begin to separate from their parents, determine the direction of life, get to know various cultures, be exposed to various worldviews and choose them independently (Arnett, 2018). The various changes can lead emerging adulthood individuals into flourishing or floundering. According to research from Nelson & Padilla-Walker (2013), flourishing in emerging adulthood is characterized by minimal engagement in potentially harmful activities, decision-making based on internal beliefs and values, progress in identity development, and positive relationships with parents. In contrast, emerging adulthood who experience floundering is indicated by the high prevalence and problems of alcohol, drug use, sexual behavior, and games (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013). Research form Wiens et al. (2020) shows that the prevalence of poor/fair perceived mental health, diagnosed mood and anxiety disorders, and past-year mental health consultations among youth increased from 2011 to 2018, indicating a growing concern for youth mental health. In Indonesia, transitional-age youth (ages 16–24) face significant mental health challenges, with a study highlighting that 95.4% of students experienced anxiety, more than 90% faced financial and academic difficulties, and around 50% reported self-harming and suicidal thoughts (Kaligis et al., 2021). Individuals in emerging adulthood may experience a quarter-life crisis due to instability, constant change, an abundance of choices, and a sense of helplessness with panic (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). Consequently, they need an anchor to bring stability and help them achieve a flourishing condition.

Theoretically, the anchor development process begins with anchoring others at the age of children. Then as the individual progresses towards adolescence, others shift to self. Furthermore, anchor materials grows when individuals start their careers and are financially independent. Finally, as human intellectual development matures, the anchor will shift to virtues (Riyono, 2020b). However, virtues can grow in line with the understanding of the individual concerned, making them more adaptable. They can be nurtured from a young age by studying and increasing knowledge and understanding of the virtues themselves.

Emerging adulthood marks the beginning of the transition towards full independence in one's life. Individuals at the developmental stage of emerging adulthood begin to feel the freedom to choose and full responsibility for their choices. Therefore, individuals at the stage of emerging adulthood strongly feel the process of searching for the most appropriate anchor for themselves to provide stability in their lives. An anchor that is understood according to the capacity of understanding will be a mainstay in dealing with and solving problems, thereby positively impacting their well-being. Based on this explanation, researchers are interested in examining the role of each anchor personality type on the flourishing of emerging adulthood. The research question is: "To what extent do anchor virtues, anchor self, anchor others, and anchor materials predict flourishing among individuals in the emerging adulthood stage?" The following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Anchor virtues predicts flourishing significantly.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Anchor self does not predict flourishing significantly.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Anchor others does not predict flourishing significantly.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Anchor materials does not predict flourishing significantly.

Method

This research method is non-experimental quantitative research aimed at examining the relationship between virtues, self, others, and materials on flourishing.

Research Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 217 Indonesian citizens in the developmental stage of emerging adulthood aged 18–25 years. The sampling method used in this study was non-probability sampling with a convenience sampling approach.

Research Procedure

The survey was conducted online using Google[1] Forms as the research was performed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Informed consent and demographic data forms are attached to the first page of the Google Form, and each participant participated voluntarily by marking the statement on the informed consent page.

Research Instruments

The flourishing scale used in this study is the PERMA Profiler from Butler and Kern (2016), adapted in Bahasa Indonesia by Elfida et al. (2021). Butler and Kern's PERMA Profiler is based on Seligman's theory of well-being, which views well-being as encompassing five elements: positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, and accomplishment. This study used 15-item PERMA Profiler with an 11-point Likert scale model and answers ranging from 0 to 10. The flourishing score is determined by the overall well-being score, which is calculated as the average score of 15 items. The use of 15 items in measuring overall well-being is also in line with the research of Bartholomaeus et al. (2020).

The anchor personality scale in this study is the Anchor Personality Inventory (API) compiled by Riyono (2020a). The API is constructed basing on four personality factors: virtues, materials, self, and others. The API consists of 40 items, consisting of 10 items per factor. The aspects of the anchor personality are the cornerstones for selecting and decision-making, the attribution for success, the attribution for happiness, the cornerstones for the dependence of hope, and the cornerstones for understanding phenomena (Riyono, 2020a). The API is structured using a Likert scale model with answers in the range of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating *strongly disagree* and 5 indicating *strongly agree*.

Data Analysis

Hypothesis testing in this study was carried out using structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis. Before testing the hypothesis, the researchers conducted a descriptive analysis, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for the instruments, and bivariate correlation analysis. Statistical analysis was performed using JASP 0.16.0.0 software.

[1] Google™ and the Google Logo are trademarks of Google Inc. in the U.S. and other countries.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The research participants consisted of 217 Indonesian citizens aged 18–25 categorized by sex, educational status, marital status, occupation, and religion. Demographic data of participants showed that the majority of participants were female (*N* = 156; 71.89%), with the last education being high school/equivalent (*N* = 146; 67.28%), unmarried (*N* = 213; 98,16%), with student occupation (*N* = 180; 82.95%), and Muslim (*N* = 181; 83.41%). The age range of participants was 18–25 years, with the majority of participants aged 19 years. A more detailed explanation of the participants' demographic data can be seen in Table 1 below. The results of descriptive statistics show that most participants' flourishing, virtues, and materials are in the high category. While the level of self and others, most participants are in the medium category. The results of descriptive statistical analysis can be seen in Table 2.

Table 1

Participants Demographic Data

Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Female	156	71.89
	Male	61	28.11
Educational level	Master's degree	5	2.30
	Bachelor's degree	63	29.03
	Diploma	2	0.92
	High school/equivalent	146	67.28
	Junior high school/equivalent	1	0.46
Marital status	Unmarried	213	98.16
	Married, no children	2	0.92
	Married, have children	2	0.92
Occupation	College student	180	82.95
	Housewife	2	0.92
	Private sector employee	20	9.22
	Government employee	0	0.00
	Professional	2	0.92
	Unemployed	5	2.30
	Others	8	3.69
Religion	Islam	181	83.41
	Christian Protestant	15	6.91
	Catholic	15	6.91
	Hindu	1	0.46
	Buddha	4	1.84
	Confucius	0	0.00
	Others	1	0.46

Table 1 Continued

Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18	15	6.91
	19	73	33.64
	20	38	17.51
	21	17	7.83
	22	14	6.45
	23	19	8.76
	24	26	11.98
	25	15	6.91

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Score Categorization

Variable	Mean	*SD*	Min	Max	*N High*	*N Medium*	*N Low*	*N Valid*
Flourishing	97.567	18.304	43.000	139.000	142	73	2	217
Virtues	21.304	2.679	13.000	25.000	178	39	0	217
Materials	18.793	3.626	10.000	25.000	127	81	9	217
Self	17.447	3.330	7.000	24.000	90	118	9	217
Others	16.668	3.311	7.000	24.000	69	133	15	217

Instrument Validity Test

The criteria for the accuracy of the model are CFI (Comparative Fit Index), TLI (Tucker–Lewis Index), SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square) and RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation). The model is expected to have an SRMR result below the cutoff value of .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The RMSEA value, which indicates good model accuracy, is less than .06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999), while the RMSEA value between .08–.10 indicates moderate model accuracy (MacCallum et al., 1996). A good CFI value is more than .90, and the standard TLI value ranges from .80 to .90, while a TLI value above .90 is said to be a good model accuracy (Bentler & Bonett, 1980).

CFA PERMA Profiler. The five-factor multidimensional CFA on the PERMA Profiler is performed with three items per factor, except for the engagement dimension with two items. Unidimensional CFA is carried out with five parceling items based on each PERMA element. The researchers excluded item number 11 on the engagement element because the loading factor was not significant. This CFA result is in line with research from Elfida et al. (2021), which explains that the Indonesian PERMA Profiler shows the fit model as a multidimensional and unidimensional construct. Elfida et al. (2021) also suggest removing item 11, or E3, which stated, “How often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?” because the sentence tends to be ambiguous for Indonesian people.

The results of the CFA PERMA Profiler show good model accuracy on flourishing as multidimensional, based on a CFI score greater than .90 and an SRMR score below .08. When examining flourishing as a unidimensional variable, the model shows reasonably good fit, indicated by the SRMR score below .08 and a TLI score within the standard range of .80 to .90. Each score of the criteria for the accuracy of the model results from the CFA PERMA Profiler can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Results of CFA PERMA Profiler

Variable	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Multidimensional	.877	.909	.106	.056
Unidimensional	.811	.840	.131	.065

CFA Anchor Personality Inventory (API). The CFA results on the API separately for each dimension, between virtues, materials, self, and others initially show a poor fit model. Therefore, the researchers reduced the items with low factor loading in each aspect to five items per variable representing five aspects. Subsequent CFA results on the API after item reduction demonstrate a good fit model. The fit criteria for the CFA results for each anchor can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4
Result of CFA Anchor Personality Inventory

Variable	Item	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Virtues	2, 4, 6, 7, 10	1.050	1.000	.000	.022
Materials	2, 3, 5, 8, 10	.942	.971	.068	.038
Self	2, 5, 7, 8, 10	.977	.989	.031	.034
Others	1, 2, 4, 5, 6	.853	.926	.083	.050

Correlation Analysis

Bivariate correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between virtues, self, others, and materials variables with overall well-being and each PERMA element. Overall well-being is the flourishing score as a unidimensional construct. The results of the bivariate correlation analysis showed that only virtues ($r = .269$) and others ($r = -.155$) were significantly correlated with overall well-being. However, the virtues correlation coefficient was positive, while the others correlation coefficient was negative.

In the correlation with flourishing as multidimensional model, virtues persist by showing a significant positive correlation with each PERMA element, with correlation coefficient ranging from .162 to .278. The higher the individual holds on to virtues, the higher the level of well-being, including positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, and accomplishment. On the other hand, the correlation results also show that the higher the individual holds on to others, the lower the individual's level of well-being. The results of the correlation analysis can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5
Bivariate Correlation

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Virtues	–									
Materials	–.046	–								
Self	.094	.437***	–							
Others	.116	.191**	.132	–						
Overall well-being	.269***	.028	.125	–.155*	–					
Positive emotion	.278***	–.020	.040	–.118	.897***	–				
Engagement	.168*	.041	.187**	– .112	.737***	.589***	–			
Relationship	.246***	.041	.045	–.072	.844***	.746***	.551***	–		
Meaning	.253***	.039	.140*	–.178**	.906***	.757***	.585***	.673***	–	
Accomplishment	.162*	.023	.166*	–.172*	.826***	.635***	.586***	.550***	.744***	–

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

SEM Analysis

Model 1 in the SEM analysis is a regression between exogenous variables consisting of virtues, materials, self, and others, as well as endogenous variables in the form of overall well-being. Each of the latent variables of virtues, materials, self, and others consists of five manifest variables consisting of five single items based on aspects of the anchor's personality. At the same time, the overall well-being consists of five manifest variables consisting of parcel PERMA items.

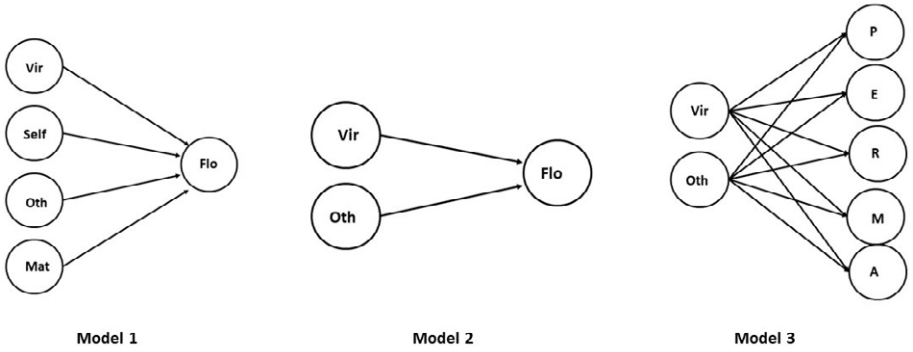
Model 2 in the SEM analysis is a regression between exogenous variables in the form of virtues and others to the overall well-being as an endogenous variable. The manifest variable remains consistent with the previous model. Model 2 only includes virtues and others as exogenous variables and does not include latent materials and self variables because, based on correlation analysis, only virtues and others are significantly related to overall well-being.

Model 3 in the SEM analysis is a regression between exogenous variables in the form of virtues and others for each of the five flourishing dimensions, namely PERMA. Each PERMA latent variable consists of three single-item manifest variables (except engagement consists of two items because item 11 is discarded). These results can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6
Results of SEM Analysis

Model	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
1	.849	.829	.060	.075
2	.892	.869	.075	.084
3	.859	.832	.078	.080

Figure 2
Path Diagram of Three SEM Models



The estimator used is the maximum-likelihood estimator for all models. The results with Models 1, 2, and 3 show that the model fit is acceptable, with the criteria for the model fit that are fairly consistent across all three models, suggesting a robust model fit. RMSEA scores on the three models ranged from .060 to .078, indicating an acceptable model fit. The SRMR scores of the three models ranging from .80 or less, indicating good model accuracy. Expected CFI and TLI scores were anticipated to be above .90, but the actual results showed that the CFI and TLI scores ranged from .80 to .90. TLI scores ranging from .80 to .90 are classified as standard scores (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). The three models can meet the model fit criteria based on the SRMR and RMSEA scores. Despite the CFI and TLI scores are below the cut-off of .90, they still fall within the standard TLI scores. Each score on the model fit criteria can be seen in Table 6.

The results of the SEM analysis in Model 1 show that the significant relationship between the variables was virtues and others with flourishing. Meanwhile, materials and self did not predict flourishing significantly. Therefore, the researchers excluded the materials and self in Model 2 to focus more on variables that had a significant effect.

Model 2 was conducted to determine the effect of virtues and others on flourishing, assuming that the model fit was better than Model 1. In Model 2, the regression coefficient obtained on the regression relationship between virtues and flourishing was .408. The result indicates that the strength of the regression between virtues in influencing flourishing is moderate. While the regression coefficient on the regression relationship between others and flourishing was –.367, others also predict flourishing in a negative relationship with moderate strength.

Model 3 was conducted to determine the relationship between virtues and others with each flourishing element, namely positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, and accomplishment. This result showed that both virtues and others could predict flourishing as a whole and each PERMA element separately. The analysis results showed that the regression coefficient of the relationship between virtues and each PERMA element ranged from .279 to .420. The most robust regression coefficient was the relationship between virtues on positive emotion. On the other

hand, the weakest regression coefficient was virtues on accomplishments. The regression coefficient on the relationship between others and the PERMA element ranged from –.255 to –.409.

Discussion

Based on the SEM analysis result, it is found that virtues and others are anchors that predict overall well-being significantly. However, virtues are the only anchor that predicts flourishing positively, while others predict flourishing negatively.

Role of Anchor Virtues in Flourishing

The results of this study indicate that virtues are the only anchor that persist in all models in predicting positive flourishing across Models 1, 2, and 3. The results of this research are in line with the results of research from Akhtar & Firmanto (2021) that virtues significantly predict well-being. However, Akhtar & Firmanto's research was based on the theory of subjective well-being that apply a hedonic approach. On the other hand, this study used the flourishing theory, encompassing both hedonic and eudaimonic approaches to well-being.

Suppose the individuals hold on to the virtues; they make virtues the primary cornerstone for their problems. They do not make themselves, others, or materials the main cornerstone because these dependencies do not give stability to them. Therefore, individuals who hold on to virtues are not easily disappointed with the mainstays they believe in, leading to greater happiness as well as optimal growth and development.

Theoretically, virtues serve as an anchor with the highest abstraction power, making them resistant to distortion by changes in space and time (Riyono, 2020b). Being universal and eternal, virtues are not easily lost or changed and can provide strong stability to individuals. Humans can imagine virtues as a guide to their lives, such as "kindness" (the principle of goodness) or "love" (Riyono, 2020b). The results of this study support the evidence that virtues are universal and can predict well-being, encompassing elements of the hedonic and eudaimonia approaches.

The process of finding anchors and the process of increasing knowledge and understanding about virtues is essential for individuals. This statement is in line with the theory of Al-Ghazali (1873), which explains that to achieve happiness, humans need to understand the knowledge of the soul, knowledge of God, knowledge of the world, and knowledge of the future world. Thus, the virtues in Anchor Personality Theory are closely related to spirituality.

Emerging adulthood experience increased self-exploration, including exploration of understanding spirituality and religiosity (Barry et al., 2020). According to Lapsley and Hardy (2017), emerging adulthood may be a period of "personality trait moratorium," that is, a moratorium on dispositional qualities. Virtues are closely related to the development of morality and understanding of existence and self-identity. Morality and identity growing in the personal formations of emerging adulthood have dispositional implications for how the rest of their lives go (Lapsley & Hardy, 2017). The more emerging adulthood individuals understand spirituality and adhere to virtues, the

better their well-being, ultimately leading to a flourishing state. The results of the meta-analytic review of Yonker et al. (2012) explained that spirituality and religiosity are important things that hold emerging adults from risky behaviors such as drug abuse, drinking, premarital sex, and other deviant behaviors. In addition, the results of this meta-analysis also show a relationship between spirituality and religiosity with high mood and overall well-being in emerging adulthood.

Role of Anchor Others and Anchor Self in Flourishing

The results of this study indicate that others predict flourishing significantly, but the relationship is negative. This result can be interpreted in two ways. The first explanation is that to achieve flourishing, individuals must consciously choose their anchors. Theoretically, individuals need to have the autonomy to search for anchors based on the laws of human life, namely the freedom to choose (Riyono, 2020b). According to Riyono, "in search for anchors" is a paradox between the dynamic of freedom and a tendency to achieve stability. Individuals who are too strong to hold on to others will be too dependent on others so they do not feel the freedom to choose and find anchors with their autonomy. As a result, the more individuals depend to others, the lower their flourishing level will be.

The second explanation is that there is a possibility that the flourishing measuring instrument used in this study tends to be culturally biased. PERMA Profiler (Butler & Kern, 2016) and flourishing theory (Seligman, 2011) were made in the context of individualist culture in America so they did not accommodate the importance of social relations in a collective culture. As a result, if the others' scores were analyzed for the relationship with the flourishing measuring instrument, which tends to be individualistic, it resulted in a significant negative relationship. Awareness of the possible individualist cultural bias of the PERMA Profiler has also been raised in the scale adaptation study of Elfida et al. (2021). Elfida recommends the need to review the items in the relationship elements in the PERMA Profiler and adapt them to the context of the collective Indonesian society. Previous studies showed the difference of flourishing scores in individualist and collective societies, where American scores are higher than Malaysians (Khaw & Kern, n.d.).

Based on the perspective of developmental psychology, emerging adulthood involves the challenge of developing intimacy versus isolation. Erikson explains that intimacy is finding oneself and losing oneself to others, which requires a commitment to others (Santrock, 2018). Since adolescence, individuals have an increased need for intimacy. At the same time, individuals in the transition period from adolescence to early adulthood also carry out the task of developing identity and building independence from their parents. Therefore, the main task of early adult individuals is juggling between the needs of intimacy, identity, and independence (Santrock, 2018). The need for intimacy in early adulthood is indicated by the task of early adulthood to find a partner. At this stage, if the individual is too focused on the need for intimacy, without understanding self-identity and independence, the individual will hold on too strongly to others. Dependent individuals tend to be sensitive to interpersonal relationships; they fear abandonment and rejection, feel lonely and helpless and want to be close and dependent on others

(Franche & Dobson, 1992). Franche and Dobson also explain that individuals who have low self-esteem tend to try to increase their self-esteem from feedback and interactions with others, which can lead individuals to become dependent.

The results of this study align with the current phenomenon, where most emerging adulthood in the digital era is active users of social media. The use of social media creates opportunities for individuals to seek validation from others while increasing social comparison behavior. The existence of social comparison makes it easier for individuals to feel jealous of the achievements or lives of others (Chae, 2018). In addition, higher social media use is associated with online violence, poor sleep quality, low self-esteem, and poor body image, which are associated with higher depression scores (Kelly et al., 2018). Therefore, emerging adulthood in the digital era has the vulnerability of being too dominant to hold on to others, which is associated with low flourishing.

On the other hand, the results of this study indicate that anchor self does not predict flourishing significantly. The study's results align with Choo and Marzalek's research that extreme independence (self-reliance) is associated with low well-being (Choo & Marszalek, 2019). According to Smith (2014), extreme independence can lead to isolation and make individuals feel unsupported and depressed. Emotional support and individual willingness to seek help from others are associated with good well-being (Lynch, 2013). If the individuals do not get emotional support and are reluctant to seek help from others, their well-being will deteriorate. Individuals who rely too much on themselves tend to focus primarily on themselves rather than on external matters. Research by Hall et al. (2013) explained that individuals who have self-judgmental thoughts and experience isolation tend to have higher symptoms of depression because they tend to be easier to ruminate about perceived shortcomings and isolate themselves from others.

According to Arnett (2018), individuals at the developmental stage of emerging adulthood have several main character traits, including exploring identity and self-focused age. During this period, individuals begin to develop character qualities towards independence or self-sufficiency, including accepting responsibility, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent. Riyono (2020b) also explained that the anchor self begins to develop in adolescence and will continue with the development of materials when individuals become financially independent. The strong drive to be self-sufficient at this stage of development can make individuals vulnerable to being too dominant to hold on to self.

From the perspective of the theoretical framework of anchor personality, the self and others should be balanced with each other in order to produce good anchor stability (Akhtar & Firmanto, 2021). Being overly reliant on oneself can lead to excessive self-reliance, while being too dependent on others can result in excessive dependency, both of which can hinder the achievement of a stable personality.

Role of Anchor Materials in Flourishing

In line with the proposed hypothesis, materials do not predict flourishing as a whole or each element of PERMA significantly. Theoretically, materials are at the lowest

abstraction layer so their nature is easily distorted by changes in space and time (Riyono, 2020b). This instability often causes disappointment in individuals if the materials are used as the main anchor.

This finding corresponds with earlier studies indicating that excessive reliance on materials things does not contribute to well-being. For example, Dittmar et al.'s (2014) meta-analysis of 258 research reports confirms the negative correlation between materialism and well-being is robust on several demographic, participant, and cultural factors. Although the results of this study did not show a negative relationship between materials and well-being, its findings were consistent with Dittmar et al.'s research, which similarly indicates no evidence of a positive relationship between materials and well-being.

Dittmar et al. (2014) explain that the negative impact of materialism on well-being is mediated by low satisfaction with the need for autonomy, competence, and connectedness. This contributes to challenges in achieving a healthy and happy life. In addition, Dittmar et al. (2014) suggest that individuals who prioritize materialistic goals experience low satisfaction in the financial field due to constant comparisons with others who possess more. In today's digital era, social media facilitates these comparisons, especially in terms of materials. Influencers on social media tend to upload stories about luxury life through high-end fashion items, vacations in exotic locations, interactions with mainstream celebrities, and dinners at luxury restaurants (Chae, 2018). Content containing other people's luxuries on social media can evoke negative emotions in ordinary people who cannot achieve such a luxurious life, namely raising feelings of envy (Chae, 2018).

Materialist lifestyles are on the rise among young people today (Dittmar et al., 2014), including those in emerging adulthood. At this developmental stage, one of the developmental tasks is achieving financial independence (Arnett, 2018). Emerging adulthood in the digital era offers a wide array of career opportunities than in the previous era, such as becoming a YouTube[2] celebrity, social media influencer, and entrepreneur (Gilmore, 2019). Individuals at this stage of development are vulnerable to emphasizing material stability over virtues, potentially leading to a disproportionate focus on material possessions. Twenge et al. (2010) found that today's American youth exhibit heighted psychopathological symptoms, possibly linked to a focus on extrinsic goals like material possessions, appearance, and status rather than on community and close social relationships. Overemphasis on materialism may hinder individuals from achieving a flourishing state.

Role of Anchor Virtues in PERMA Elements

The results show that virtues predict overall well-being and each PERMA element separately. Based on the SEM analysis carried out on the PERMA elements separately, it was found that virtues predict the most positive emotion and meaning elements.

The positive emotion element is the only element based on the hedonic approach. So far, the theory of well-being with the hedonic approach commonly

[2] YouTube™ is a trademark of Google Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries.

used has been the subjective well-being theory. This study's results align with the results of Akhtar and Firmanto (2021) research that virtues are the only anchor that significantly predicts subjective well-being. Positive emotion elements emphasize feelings, unlike the eudaimonic approach, which emphasizes optimal functioning in individuals. Seligman (2011) emphasizes positive emotions, including pleasure, ecstasy, comfort, and warmth. However, in his book, *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman (2002) explained positive emotion in greater detail. Seligman explained that positive emotion is divided into three types according to the period: positive emotions about the past, present, and future. Positive emotions about the past include satisfaction, contentment, fulfillment, pride, and serenity, which can be achieved through forgiveness and gratitude. Positive emotions about the future include optimism, hope, faith, and trust. Meanwhile, positive emotions about the present include pleasure and gratification. When individuals rely on universal virtues or noble values, they often experience feelings of hope, gratitude, a sense of peace, satisfaction, and optimism more readily. Hence, virtues predict positive emotion with the most significant predictive power compared to other elements.

In addition to the positive emotion element, the results of this study show that virtues predict meaning, which is considered the highest element of flourishing. Theoretically, meaning is closely related to virtues because individuals who hold on to the virtues experience a profound sense of deep meaning in their lives. Riyono (2020b) explains that individual's ability to uphold virtues is influenced by their level of understanding, shaped by intellectual abilities and the influence of the social environment.

The meaning element in this study is also significantly correlated with self positively but negatively correlated with others. Upon closer examination, meaning can be categorized into true and false forms. According to Riyono (2020c), false meaning appears to provide a sense of significance, but ultimately proves deceptive and leads to disappointment. False meaning involves short-term, self-centered, illusory, triggered by hurt, and superficial. True meaning, on the other hand, includes sense of purpose, sense of contribution, sense of competence, sense of enjoyment, and sense of values (Riyono, 2020c). True meaning is seen not only subjectively but also objectively. Hanson and VanderWeele (2021) outline three key components of the meaning aspect, namely coherence, both globally and individually, significance, both subjectively and objectively, and direction, which includes mission, purpose, and goals.

The meaning element in the PERMA Profiler lacks specificity in defining whether it aligns with true meaning as it remains subjective, so it cannot be ascertained that the intended meaning is true meaning. However, the results of this study show a positive correlation between virtues and self with meaning, but others negatively correlated with meaning. These results indicate that within the framework of flourishing theory, the concept of meaning often remains subjective and self-focused rather than focusing on true or objective meaning.

Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the relationship between anchor virtues, self, others, and materials on the flourishing of emerging adulthood. The results of this study suggest that if individuals dominantly rely on the anchor self, others, or materials, they do not achieve a flourishing condition. The flourishing condition can be predicted by the strength with which individuals adhere to virtues, which can grow stronger as their understanding deepens (Riyono, 2020b).

Based on this study result, the researchers suggest that emerging adulthood constantly improves their understanding of the virtues obtained through knowledge. This allows them to rely on virtues rather than becoming overly dependent on other anchors such as self, others, or materials. By firmly adhering to virtues, individuals can experience a flourishing state, characterized by positive emotions and optimal psychological function.

This research has several shortcomings. First, although the model fit criteria indicate that the model is quite good, the CFI and TLI scores, ranging from .80 to .90, were lower than expected, despite the SRMR and RMSEA scores showing good model fit and no issues in the SEM model. Second, the demographics of the participants in this study were not very diverse. Most participants were women, unmarried, had a high school education/equivalent, were students, and were Muslim. Further research should explore the consistency of these results with participants from more diverse demographic backgrounds.

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ARTICLE

Transformation Patterns of the Psyche's Regulatory Subsystem in the Context of Digitalization

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of digitalization on the formation and development of the regulatory subsystem, which is a key component of the human psyche. The findings reveal that digitalization has a significant and complex influence on this subsystem, operating at two complementary levels: analytical and structural. The analytical level reflects a profound decrease in the development of the subsystem's individual components, including essential regulatory processes and their associated qualities. This decline raises concerns about the capacity of individuals to effectively manage their cognitive and emotional resources in a digital context. In contrast, the structural level involves meaningful transformations in the organization, structuring, and integration of these components. These changes indicate a shift in how the regulatory subsystem operates, suggesting that digitalization is reshaping the very foundation of psychological regulation. As a result of this complex influence, a new phenomenon emerges, referred to as the syndrome of reduced personality regulation. This syndrome holds significant implications for overall personality development and regulatory potential, sharing similarities with previously identified syndromes of decreased cognition and metacognition. The structural transformations in the regulatory subsystem, influenced by digitalization, primarily manifest as changes in the degree of organization and integration, rather than qualitative alterations. The qualitative aspects remain invariant and resist the pervasive effects of digitalization, suggesting the subsystem's resilience that may offer avenues for further exploration and intervention.

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Introduction

One of the key factors influencing society, including its professional and educational aspects, is the rapid shift brought about by digitalization and widespread computer technology. This shift is not merely an additional influence on social reality; it signifies the creation of a new reality altogether. The rapid advancement of digital technologies creates new challenges for psychology, which requires not only a deeper understanding but also the development of new responses to these challenges. Notably, while digitalization significantly impacts cognitive processes and personality traits, this impact is often negative, as highlighted by numerous studies (Bobrova, 2019; Bondarenko, 2006; Carr, 2011; Gazzaley & Rosen, 2016; Parsons, 2017; Small & Vorgan, 2009).

Empirical evidence has documented several of these consequences. For example, the dynamics of the Flynn Effect, which measures changes in IQ over time, demonstrate a concerning trend. Until 2000, IQ levels in developed countries increased by an average of 1.5 points every decade (Attrill, 2015; Spitzer, 2012). After 2000, however, this trend reversed, with IQ levels declining by the same rate, which lead to an approximate decrease of three points over the past 20 years (Karpov & Karpov, 2022).

Additionally, modern middle school students are reported to have roughly half the active vocabulary of their peers from two decades ago (Attrill & Fullwood, 2016; Whitty & Young, 2017). Many educators observe that by the ninth grade, students struggle to articulate their thoughts clearly. Modern children also experience difficulties and discomfort when reading long texts and books. Furthermore, creativity test scores among today's students are approximately 20% lower than those of students from twenty years ago.

The nature of digital information, which is often superficial and does not require deep semantic processing, primarily fosters episodic, fragmentary, short-term, mechanical, and involuntary memory (Bakunovich & Stankevich, 2018; Bevz & Goriagin, 2019; Curzon, 2017; Kudinova, 2017; Serezhkina, 2012). In contrast, more complex forms of memory, such as semantic, voluntary, and long-term memory, frequently remain underdeveloped (Matveeva, 2012).

The most significant cognitive transformations provoked by computer technologies are associated with thinking, the most complex cognitive process. To describe these changes, several concepts have been introduced, including mosaic

thinking, digital thinking, and 5G thinking (Attrill & Fullwood, 2016; Curzon, 2017; Klingberg, 2008; Kudinova, 2017; Maslova, 2013; Petrova, 2011; Toffler, 1980). These cognitive transformations are fundamentally shaped by the inherent characteristics of digital information, such as multitasking, hypercontextuality, and distribution.

There is also evidence highlighting the impact of digitalization on various cognitive processes. For instance, in terms of attention, research has shown that when multiple modalities such as lexical, spatial, operational, and structural elements are involved in a stimulus, the cognitive load on attention increases significantly (Soldatova & Nestik, 2010; Tretyakova & Tserkovnikova, 2021). In this context, "modality" refers to specific types of perception processed by different areas of the brain, such as auditory or visual pathways. When a stimulus contains several modalities, the demand on attention grows, leading to cognitive overload (Serezhkina, 2012). Moreover, the structure of modern content is specifically aimed at capturing and retaining attention, which in turn diminishes an individual's ability to manage their attention voluntarily. This reduction in voluntary control weakens volition, a key attribute of consciousness and conscious regulation, and leads to a decline in the capacity for voluntary regulation, especially in the early stages of ontogenesis.

Regarding imagination, another crucial cognitive process, digitalization appears to hinder rather than stimulate its development (Barak, 2008; Whitty & Young, 2017). The digital environment, including internet-specific content and the extensive use of infographics, offers unprecedented tools for generating new, original, and unusual images that surpass the capabilities of even the most developed imagination. This convenience often eliminates the need for the "labor of imagination," replacing active creative processes with passive searching and filtering of ready-made information. Given that imagination is crucial for visual-figurative thinking, which in turn drives overall cognitive processes (a fact acknowledged by many scientists who report thinking *in images*), this negative impact affects the entire cognitive system.

These types of cognitive transformations are often grouped under what is known as *cognitive decline* (Carr, 2011; Small & Vorgan, 2009; Tretyakova & Tserkovnikova, 2021). Essentially, this concept refers to the underdevelopment of basic cognitive processes and personality traits due to the overall influence of digitalization and the widespread use of computer technology.

In addition, our research has identified another phenomenon related to and stemming from digitalization, which can be described as a *syndrome of reduced metacognition* (Karpov, 2021a; Karpov & Karpov, 2022). This syndrome stands for the insufficient development of metacognitive processes, such as metathinking and metamemory, and the associated personality traits under the influence of digitalization. Studies (Karpov, 2021a; Karpov & Karpov, 2022) have shown a decline in these basic metacognitive processes among modern first-year students compared to those in 2013, with reductions averaging 30%–35%. A similar, though less pronounced, decline was observed in the overall level of reflexivity, with a decrease of 20%–25% (Karpov, 2021b).

It is also important to note that cognitive processes, personal qualities, and metacognitive processes together form only one part of the psyche's overall structure

albeit a crucial one, that is the cognitive subsystem. In addition to this, the psyche comprises two other fundamental subsystems: the regulatory and communicative subsystems. Given the close relationship and interdependence among these subsystems, it would be logical to assume that the transformations in the cognitive subsystem will also impact other subsystems, particularly the regulatory one. The regulatory subsystem relies heavily on the cognitive potential associated with basic cognitive processes, which leads us to the reasonable assumption that digitalization acts as a transformative factor not only for the cognitive subsystem but also for the regulatory subsystem of the psyche.

Methodology and Data

To achieve our research goal, we examined a range of representational regulatory processes, both primary and secondary, which are essential for metacognitive regulation. The level of their development was assessed by using established and reliable psycho-diagnostic methods. The following methods were employed to diagnose these processes and the related qualities.

The first set of methods for diagnosing the development of primary regulatory processes, such as self-control, decision-making, planning and programming, includes the following:

- G. S. Nikiforov's method for assessing the degree of self-control development (Nikiforov, 1989), hereafter referred to as SC;
- a method for assessing the decision-making ability, developed by us and described in (Karpov, 2015), hereafter referred to as DM;
- V. I. Morosanova's self-regulation style method (Morosanova, 2001), specifically the scales for diagnosing levels of planning and programming (PL and PR, respectively).

The second set of methods was aimed at evaluating the development of basic metacognitive processes, which are crucial for the functioning of the regulatory subsystem:

- The Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI) (Schraw & Dennison, 1994);
- Self-Assessment of Metacognitive Behavior (SMB) by D. LaCosta (as per Attrill, 2015);
- D. Everson's method for assessing the extent and nature of metacognitive monitoring (MM) (as per Karpov, 2015);
- The KMAI method by S. Tobias for assessing "knowledge monitoring" (as per Karpov, 2015) (KMAI). This term stands for "the monitoring component of metacognition, specifically, students' ability to monitor their learning by differentiating between the known and unknown" (Tobias & Everson, 1996, p. 1).

The research design involved a comparative analysis of two data sets. The first set consists of results from our previous studies, which examined the level of development of basic regulatory and meta-regulatory processes and personality traits among Russian students in 2013. The second set contains similar data, but collected from a survey of students in 2023.

The results of the psycho-diagnostic examination were processed by using two main methods, or more precisely, at two distinct levels of depth and "resolution." Initially, the well-known method of "parallel profiling" was applied. This statistical procedure is designed to generate graphical representations of the studied indicators, enabling their comparison (typically within a shared coordinate system) and highlighting their key distinctive features. The use of this method corresponds to first-level result processing, or *analytical processing*, as it allows for the *separate* identification of differences between the subjects.

Subsequently, a more sophisticated method was employed, allowing for a deeper level of processing at the *structural* and *psychological* levels. This was achieved through the calculation of intercorrelation matrices, a method that determines mutual correlations (i.e., intercorrelations) between the development levels of the studied indicators.

Next, for each group, the method of determining *generalized indices* of structural organization was applied. In our study, these indices include the structure *coherence* index (SCI), the structure *divergence* (differentiation) index (SDI), and the structure *organizability* index (SOI). The structure coherence index is calculated by using the number and significance of positive relationships in the structure, while the structure divergence index is based on the number and significance of negative relationships. The structure organizability index reflects the ratio of positive to negative relationships, as well as their significance (Karpov, 2015). Relationships significant at $p < .01$ are assigned a weight factor of three points, and those significant at $p < .05$, two points. The weights for the entire structure are then summed to produce the values of these indices. This method enables the identification of a phenomenon not only in terms of its isolated connections with individual qualities or parameters but also in relation to its complex structural dependencies within their subsystems.

The matrices contain a comprehensive set of interrelations among the individual qualities under study, expressed quantitatively through their correlation coefficients. As a result, these matrices enable us to identify interrelated complexes of specific qualities and the relationships between them, specifically, in our case, between indicators of regulatory processes.

Finally, the χ^2 method was employed to assess the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the intercorrelation matrices and the corresponding structure diagrams. This method further involves displaying the entire set of intercorrelations from the matrices as structure diagrams (also referred to as correlograms), which visually represent all the significantly correlated components. The correlograms provide a comprehensive view of how these components are interconnected, enabling us to observe patterns and relationships within the regulatory subsystem. The primary objective in this context is to assess the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the matrices, as well as their corresponding structure diagrams.

The *sample* for this study consisted of two groups of university students drawn from the same academic institutions in Yaroslavl (Russia), ensuring a consistent environment for comparison. The first group included a total of 78 students, all of whom were majoring in either humanities or natural sciences. This group comprised

44 female and 34 male participants, with an age range from 17 to 26 years. The inclusion of both genders, nearly in equal proportions, allowed for a more balanced and comprehensive analysis of the regulatory and cognitive processes across male and female participants.

Similarly, the second group consisted of 74 students, also from the same Yaroslavl universities, drawn from comparable academic disciplines. This group included 38 females and 36 males, with a slightly narrower age range of 18 to 24 years. The relatively even distribution of participants in terms of gender and academic focus across both groups was designed to minimize any potential confounding variables, ensuring that the results would primarily reflect the variables under investigation, such as the effects of digitalization on cognitive and regulatory subsystems.

Results

As noted in the previous section, the research procedure involved two main stages. In the first stage, the *analytical method* was used to identify indicators that individually measure the development of the primary parameters of the regulatory subsystem. These indicators are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Values of the Diagnosed Parameters in Two Groups of Subjects

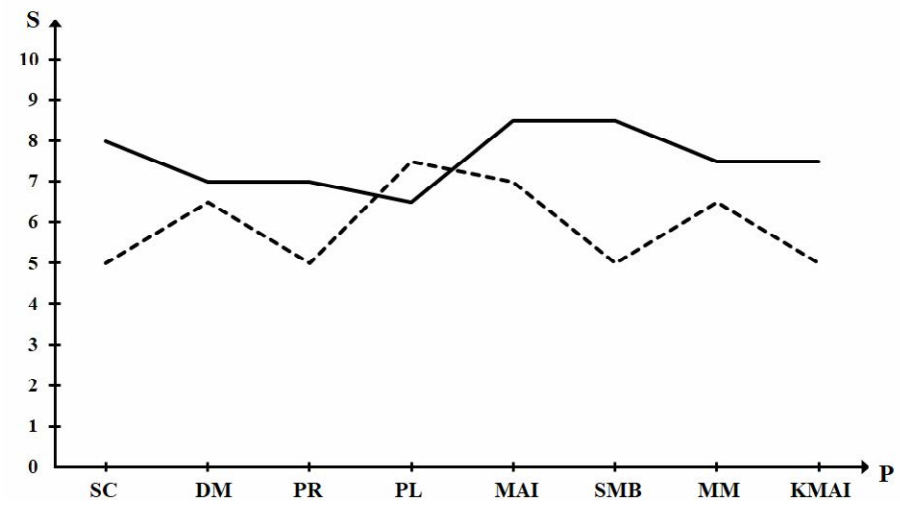
Variable	Groups of Subjects		
	1st group (2013 data)	2nd group (2023 data)	*p*
SC	77.08 (6.22)	41.41 (7.63)	**.000**
DM	59.84 (5.21)	51.41 (4.92)	.159
PR	7.44 (1.01)	5.20 (1.00)	**.000**
PL	5.66 (1.20)	7.88 (1.44)	.051
MAI	181.02 (7.78)	143.36 (10.57)	**.000**
SMB	46.44 (5.02)	30.49 (5.01)	**.000**
MM	14.79 (2.01)	11.66 (2.60)	.051
KMAI	12.44 (2.01)	8.39 (3.40)	**.000**

Note. SC = self-control; DM = decision-making; PR = programming; PL = planning; MAI = metacognitive awareness of activity; SMB = self-assessment of metacognitive behavior; MM = measure and nature of metacognitive monitoring; KMAI = formation of "monitoring knowledge"; *p* = asymptotic differences of the Mann-Whitney U test; the values of $p < .05$ are highlighted in bold.

Using the data obtained from the two test groups, profiles were constructed that reflected the entire *set of values* found, all displayed on a single coordinate plane. To ensure comparability, the primary psychodiagnostic data, originally represented as numerical scores from the matrices, were converted into standard (sten) scores. This allowed for the application of the well-known parallel profiles' method (Figure 1).

Figure 1

The Parallel Profiles Pairwise Comparisons of the Studied Parameters



Note. Source: developed by the authors.

The profiles enable pairwise comparisons of the studied parameters across groups, resulting three key findings.

Firstly, the profile of the students from 2013 is generally situated higher in the coordinate grid compared to that of the students from 2023, indicating that the main parameters of the regulatory subsystem for the 2013 cohort are at a more advanced level of development. This suggests that the basic parameters of the subsystem have undergone significant transformation, which can be characterized as a regression in their developmental level.

As shown in Table 1, this regression is statistically significant for five out of eight parameters, while two parameters only show a trend. Additionally, it is noteworthy that this regression reflects the comparative intensity of these parameters as a whole, since one parameter is actually higher among the students of 2023, although these differences also appear as a trend.

Secondly, the degree of differences between the development levels of the diagnosed parameters is inconsistent when comparing primary and secondary regulatory processes. On one hand, this includes parameters related to self-control, decision-making, forecasting, and planning processes. On the other hand, it involves predominantly secondary parameters such as metacognitive involvement in activities, self-assessment of metacognitive behavior, the extent and nature of metacognitive monitoring, and the formation of “knowledge monitoring.”

Therefore, it can be inferred that primary and secondary regulatory processes exhibit different sensitivities and tolerances to the impact of digitalization factors. In this context, secondary processes appear to be more sensitive and less tolerant to these factors, a phenomenon that will be further explained below.

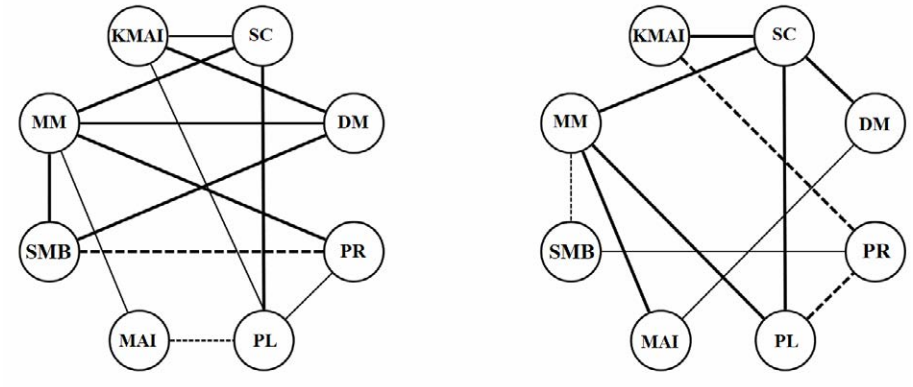
Thirdly, the notable differences in overall profile configurations also stand out. The 2013 students' profile resembles a plateau-shaped configuration, while the 2023 students' profile is closer to a saw-like pattern. As general and professional diagnostics indicate, a plateau-shaped profile reflects a higher degree of organization and development across the diagnosed indicators. Additionally, as shown in various studies, including ours, a plateau-shaped profile is associated with higher external criteria, such as professional effectiveness and social adaptation.

Taken together, these findings show significant, primarily negative, transformations in the regulatory subsystem. Importantly, these changes likely extend beyond individual parameters and their combined effects, impacting the overall organization as well, which necessitates moving to a more advanced level of research that is better suited to the complexity of the subject or, in other words, to a *structural* level.

At the structural level, intercorrelation matrices of the parameters were determined separately for each group. Based on these matrices, structure diagrams of significantly correlated parameters (correlograms) were constructed (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Structure Diagrams of Significantly Correlated Parameters (Correlograms)



Note. Source: developed by the authors.

Next, the method for determining generalized structural indices, as described above, was applied. This method calculates the coherence index, indicating the degree of integration and synthesis of parameters into a whole; the divergence index, reflecting the degree of differentiation and disintegration; and the general organizability index, which combines the first two indices and describes the overall organization, defined as the extent to which integrative tendencies prevail over disintegrative (or disorganizational) ones. The resulting index values are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Values of the Structural Indices in Two Groups

Structural Indices	Group 1	Group 2
SCI	29	22
SDI	5	8
SOI	24	14

An analysis of the results, particularly the data in Table 2, brings to light the following key findings and patterns.

Firstly, the most significant difference between the two groups lies in the coherence index of the regulatory subsystem's processes. The first group has a coherence index (SCI) of 29, while the second group has only 22. This indicates a decrease in overall coherence, suggesting that a reduction in structural integrity is the dominant trend in these transformations.

Secondly, the divergence index shows less pronounced dynamics, especially in absolute values (SDI), which can be explained by the inherent organization of the regulatory subsystem. The latter, as noted by Karpov (2015), is primarily influenced by synthetic, structure-forming mechanisms. These mechanisms are generally more prominent than those responsible for differentiation.

Thirdly, in its most generalized form, the dominance of integrative tendencies and the underlying means and mechanisms finds its clearest expression in the dynamics of the *organizability* index, which stands at 24 and 14 points, respectively. Furthermore, since this dynamic is primarily influenced by changes in the coherence index, and the dynamics of the divergence index is significantly smaller, it closely resembles the coherence index.

Overall, these results indicate a decline in the regulatory potential of individuals in the second test group, both concerning individual regulatory processes at the analytical level and their overall organization at the structural level. Notably, in the latter case, these transformations are predominantly negative; a decrease in the degree of structuredness, or organization, is recognized in theory as a significant determinant that can diminish the functional capacity of systems, including the regulatory system in this context.

The most general and fundamental conclusion from the analysis of the presented results is that there is a significant and noticeable *decrease* in the degree of organization (structuredness and integration) of the main parameters within the regulatory subsystem of the individual in the two examined groups. Additionally, the difference in the most important structural index, that is general organizability, between the two groups is nearly two-fold; it is over 1.7 times higher in the first group. Such differences cannot be dismissed as mere artifacts; rather, they signal a profound and fundamental restructuring. Therefore, it is essential to identify and explain these differences, as well as their broader implications and underlying causes. This necessity is further underscored by another important result, which will be discussed below.

The comparison of the identified matrices of the regulatory subsystem parameters, along with the structural diagrams constructed from them, aimed to investigate their *homogeneity-heterogeneity* using the χ^2 criterion. The results demonstrated statistically reliable homogeneity (at $p < .05$), indicating a *uniformity* among the studied parameters. This suggests that the dominant direction of transformations in the structural organization of the regulatory subsystem is characterized by quantitative changes rather than qualitative ones. In other words, the general structural organization of the regulatory subsystem remains fundamentally invariant between the two groups, with changes primarily occurring in the degree or measure of its organization.

The above observation does not imply a complete absence of qualitative transformations; such changes do occur, but they are somewhat localized and mainly result from the reduction of certain structural connections and their replacement with new ones. Nevertheless, the overall pattern of these connections is preserved. While isolated features and manifestations may change, the structure remains broadly homogeneous.

Discussion

The following interpretation can be drawn from the above-described results. The question of potential changes in the regulatory subsystem and its key parameters was largely influenced by findings related to similar changes in the cognitive subsystem. As previously noted, the cognitive subsystem has undergone well-documented declines, including cognitive decline and reduced metacognition, which we identified in our work. The close relationship and interdependence of these two subsystems are widely recognized and considered fundamental to the theory of mental processes. The distinction between cognitive and regulatory processes is not structural but functional, as both can perform cognitive and regulatory roles. Therefore, the development levels of these subsystems, taken both individually and as a whole, are closely interconnected. Consequently, changes in cognitive and metacognitive processes inevitably affect regulatory processes. The unidirectionality and fundamental similarity of these changes are evident in our results and help explain them.

Furthermore, it is crucial to consider the fundamental fact that the entire array of cognitive and, especially, metacognitive processes should not be viewed as a collection of fragments created for analysis, but rather as an integral system effectively represented in the maximally integrative formation known as consciousness. Additionally, from the perspective of modern theories in metacognitive knowledge and the psychology of consciousness, it is the metacognitive processes that serve as the primary components ensuring this integration. These secondary cognitive processes collectively form the content of a tertiary process—reflection—which is interpreted as the fundamental procedural means of supporting consciousness as a whole.

Perhaps most significantly for the objectives of this work is that the level of development of the basic procedural components of reflexive regulation, and consequently of consciousness, underpins critical properties of the psyche and human activity, such as volition, controllability, and manageability. These qualities are

unified under the constructive concept of agency, often interpreted as "subjectivity." Thus, what may appear to be a neutral and "harmless" decline in cognition and metacognition can lead to potentially negative consequences, particularly a decrease in volition, controllability, and behavioral agency. These changes have clear phenomenological manifestations and empirical references widely documented in contemporary research. Examples include the noted growth of immaturity among modern adolescents (and others), a decline in independence and activity, a reduction in traditional motivational attitudes, decreased social adaptation and readiness, and a decline in conflict competence and communication skills (Bobrova, 2019; Kerdellant & Grezillon, 2003; Skinner, 2019; Spitzer, 2012).

Additionally, significant changes in the strategies and methods for searching information needed to solve behavioral problems in a digital environment must be considered. Computerization has shifted strategies from active extraction to request-based methods. Internal search is replaced by external scanning and filtering, leading to a significant reduction in the active provision of information for tasks. This shift partially inhibits the cognitive mechanisms that process information, particularly those involving reflection, contributing to an increase in reflexive tendencies.

Moreover, these results align naturally and comprehensively with our previously developed concept of integral processes in the mental regulation of activity and behavior. This concept, which elaborates on traditional classes of mental processes (cognitive, regulatory, emotional, motivational), introduces a distinct class: *integral processes of activity regulation*. Detailed in (Karpov, 2015, 2021a, 2021b; Karpov & Karpov, 2022), this class includes specific regulatory processes such as goal formation, anticipation, decision-making, forecasting, planning, programming, control, and self-control. These processes, along with the regulatory potential of cognitive and metacognitive processes, form the core of the regulatory subsystem of the psyche.

The most important feature of the structural and functional organization of these processes is not only their regulatory orientation but also the fundamentally synthetic and integrative nature of their content. This means that they are formed and function as procedural syntheses of other classes of processes: cognitive, emotional, motivational, and volitional. Through their integration, specific systemic synergistic effects emerge, leading to new features and patterns that constitute the qualitative specificity of the integral processes.

It is crucial to note that the class of cognitive processes plays a key role in implementing these integrative means and mechanisms, as it is foundational to their overall structure. Consequently, integral processes largely derive from the potential characteristic of cognitive and associated metacognitive processes. Therefore, it is both understandable and natural that any deficits in cognitive and metacognitive processes, defined as syndromes of decreased cognition and metacognition, will similarly manifest as deficiencies in the development of integral processes. As a result, the degree of their development diminishes, leading to a decrease in their regulatory resource, which, in turn, elucidates the mechanisms behind this decline.

Additionally, it should be emphasized that the degree of change, or sensitivity to external factors associated with digitalization, varies between primary and secondary

regulatory processes. The results indicate that secondary regulatory processes generally experience a higher degree of reduction compared to primary processes. This reveals a new observation: primary processes exhibit greater tolerance to digitalization influences than secondary processes. Conversely, secondary processes, due to their more complex organization, tend to be more sensitive and "fragile" in response to such influences. This finding aligns with systems theory, which posits that complex systems and their components are typically more sensitive to external factors.

All of the above leads us to the conclusion that we are witnessing the rise of a new phenomenon, *the syndrome of reduced regulation*, primarily driven by the qualitative transformations of society under the influence of digitalization. This syndrome, closely linked to the previously identified syndromes of decreased cognition and metacognition, allows for a broader and deeper understanding of the true scale of societal transformations and their complex, multidimensional impact on the psyche and personality. Furthermore, these three syndromes–reduced regulation, decreased cognition, and decreased metacognition–do not operate in isolation but rather in synergy, amplifying their collective impact on individuals.

While acknowledging these generally negative and evident trends, it is important not to fall into the common trap of overemphasizing new results or dramatizing the situation. Our findings suggest this as well, particularly when examined at a deeper level. The identified structures of the regulatory subsystem's parameters were found to be statistically homogeneous according to the χ^2 criterion. This indicates that the differences are primarily *quantitative*, that is, related to the degree of organization, rather than *qualitative*. This outcome contrasts with the assumption that the strong influence of decreased cognition, metacognition, and digitalization would lead to qualitative changes.

While it might be more theoretically appealing to conclude that digitalization causes qualitative shifts in the regulatory subsystem, our results show no such phenomenon. This means that we have grounds for optimism in predicting future trends: regulatory processes and personality traits, as fundamental mechanisms, remain relatively resilient to external influences, including powerful factors like digitalization. Although these processes and traits do respond to such factors, they maintain their core structural principles and patterns, which appear stable and invariant.

Finally, it is crucial to emphasize that any interpretation of the entire set of results would be incomplete and flawed if it overlooked a broader, and somewhat "inconvenient," issue. This issue lies in the fact that the observed transformations of the regulatory subsystem are not solely the result of digitalization. They are also shaped by a wider and equally significant set of factors linked to the qualitative transformations occurring in society at large, and across its various core spheres.

For instance, the formation and development of the individual's regulatory subsystem are deeply influenced by changes in the educational system. Similarly, transformations in another, seemingly opposite domain—recreation and leisure, especially those connected to non-professional and extracurricular activities—have a profound impact on this subsystem.

In a broader sense, it is nearly impossible to identify any major sphere of society that has not undergone substantial changes in recent times. Each of these changes inevitably plays a role, to varying degrees, in shaping both the development of the individual's personality as a whole and the fundamental subsystems of the psyche in particular.

In this context, a key question arises: what aspects of the transformations in the regulatory subsystem are linked to digitalization factors, and which are associated with other influences, including the aforementioned societal changes? However, upon closer examination, this issue does not argue against but rather supports the ideas previously articulated. More general transformations in the main spheres of society are largely driven by the effects of digitalization.

Consequently, the significant influence of digitalization on the development of individuals and their psyche particularly on its fundamental subsystems, cognitive and regulatory, is evident in these broader transformations. Thus, the process of digitalization exerts both direct and immediate effects on the transformation of the regulatory subsystem. Additionally, it has an indirect impact: digitalization alters the major spheres of society, which, in turn, exert a specific transformative influence on the formation of the regulatory subsystem and the individual as a whole.

Conclusion

In summary, the conclusions drawn from the results presented above can be articulated as follows. Generally speaking, digitalization, which permeates nearly all major spheres of society, including professional and educational activities, significantly impacts the formation of the regulatory subsystem of the psyche. This influence is characterized by both positive outcomes and several negative trends. Consequently, the regulatory subsystem and its key components are notably sensitive to the determinative effects of digitalization.

Furthermore, it is important to note that this determinative influence is characterized not only by its significance and the presence of negative trends but also by its complex nature. It operates on two main levels: analytical and structural, with the latter having a priority and more pronounced effect on the transformations of the regulatory subsystem. The analytical level involves a notable decrease in the development of individual components of the regulatory subsystem, including basic regulatory processes and their corresponding qualities. In contrast, the structural level of determination reflects significant changes in the overall organization, or the structuredness and integration, of these components into a cohesive system, which is what the regulatory subsystem of the psyche essentially represents.

As a result of this complex determinative influence, a fundamentally new phenomenon emerges, which can be termed the syndrome of reduced personality regulation. This syndrome holds significant implications for personality development and its regulatory potential. It shares similarities in meaning and tendency with previously defined syndromes of decreased cognition and metacognition. Additionally, it is functionally and genetically linked to these syndromes, as the regulatory subsystem

is closely interconnected with the cognitive subsystem of the psyche. This relationship reflects the fundamental features of both the structural and functional organization of the cognitive subsystem, as well as the level of its development.

Finally, an important pattern emerges regarding the structural transformations of the regulatory subsystem influenced by digitalization factors. These transformations are primarily evident in changes to the degree of organization and integration—essentially the quantitative structural characteristics—rather than in qualitative changes, which remain relatively invariant. This invariance is reflected in the statistically reliable homogeneity of the regulatory subsystem structures across the two studied test groups. This observation serves as both a consequence and an indicator of the regulatory subsystem's high tolerance to the impacts of digitalization, as well as its significant compensatory capabilities. Not only does this suggest the potential to mitigate negative influences, but it also lays the groundwork for developing effective, action-oriented psychological recommendations and didactic procedures aimed at enhancing the formation and development of the regulatory subsystem in an increasingly digital society.

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ARTICLE

Exploring the Complexities of Dating Violence in Indonesia: Understanding Dynamics, Norms, and Strategies for Prevention

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ABSTRACT
Dating violence is still being a pervasive issue globally, affecting the health and rights of millions young individuals. Despite its prevalence, dating violence often receives less attention compared to domestic violence. This study delves into the complexities of dating violence in Indonesia, employing a mixed methods design to propose strategies for prevention and intervention. The research utilized qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods to comprehensively understand the phenomena under study. Using a thorough analysis, the research underscores the entrenched power dynamics and cultural norms that perpetuate gender-based violence. It also examined the role of gender norms in shaping attitudes towards intimate partner abuse, highlighting the influence of patriarchal beliefs, and hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, the study evaluates the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks in combating dating violence, noting challenges related to implementation, and gender biases. In proposing solutions, the research emphasized the importance of empowerment initiatives for women and community development efforts to challenge harmful stereotypes and foster societal change. By addressing these multifaceted issues, this study contributes to the broader discourse on dating violence prevention and underscores the urgency of comprehensive interventions in Indonesia and beyond.

KEYWORDS
dating violence, gender norms, empowerment, prevention strategies

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Introduction

Dating violence becomes a significant problem that affects public health and human rights, with a widespread impact on millions of young individuals globally (McNaughton Reyes et al., 2021). Its violence comprises a range of abusive behaviors, including physical, emotional, economic, and activity limitations, that are directed towards unmarried couples (Brown & Hegarty, 2018). Although it usually follows instances of domestic violence, this form of violence is generally disregarded by both the victims and the offenders, garnering less focus compared to domestic violence (Rakovec-Felser, 2014).

Wincentak et al. (2017) found that 20% of teenagers aged 13–18 experience physical abuse, while 9% experience sexual violence globally. In 2021, the World Health Organization emphasised the significant occurrence of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) among young individuals. It was shown that 24% of teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19 had encountered physical and sexual violence from their partners at least once in their lives.

Violence against women in Indonesia persists as an unresolved matter (Purwanti, 2020). Several efforts have been undertaken by the government, civil society, universities, and communities to resolve this issue through a range of preventative and intervention programs. Nevertheless, these efforts have proven ineffective in diminishing the quantity of instances. The data provided by the Indonesian National Commission on Violence Against Women indicates a progressive increase in the number of incidents annually. Cases increased from 119,107 in 2011 to 348,446 in 2017, and growing to 431,471 in 2019 (Kholifah, 2022; Suprihatin & Lestari, 2019). The Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection of Indonesia has reported a total of 19,593 registered incidences of assault in Indonesia between January 1 and September 27, 2023. Out of the total number, 17,347 individuals who suffered were female, while 3,987 were male. The age cohort of individuals between 13 and 17 years old comprises the most significant proportion of victims, representing around 38% of the overall victims of violence during that specific timeframe. Sexual violence is the most prevalent form of violence experienced by victims, with 8,585 incidents reported. It is followed by physical violence with 6,621 cases, and psychological abuse with 6,068 cases (Muhamad, 2023).

The 2023 Annual Report of the National Commission on Violence Against Women highlighted that dating violence cases had the highest prevalence among all forms of personal violence reported to service organizations in 2022. According to data from service institutions, dating violence is the most prevalent with 3,528 reported incidents. It is followed by violence against wives with 3,205 cases and violence against daughters with 725 occurrences. In 2022, the National Commission on Violence Against Women received the majority of complaints related to violence perpetrated by ex-partners, with 713 cases reported. Violence against wives accounted for 622 cases, while dating violence cases reached 422. According to the National Commission on Violence Against Women, the trends in personal violence, as indicated by complaints received, are consistent with the previous year. Psychological

violence is the most prevalent, accounting for 40% of the complaints, followed by 29% sexual violence, 19% physical violence, and 12% economic violence (Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan, 2023).

Dating violence encompasses a range of forms, including physical, emotional, economic, sexual, and activity restrictions. Physical violence refers to several acts, such as striking, slapping, and kicking, whereas emotional violence involves behaviors, such as making threats and using insults. Economic violence refers to the situation where one partner manipulates or takes advantage of the other's assets or places excessive demands on the other to meet all their requirements. Sexual violence encompasses the act of compelling someone to engage in sexual intercourse against their desires. Furthermore, partner activity limitation, which includes possessive behavior and exerting control over every aspect, is a frequently observed manifestation of violence (Patra et al., 2018; Putri et al., 2021).

The correlation of violence can be attributed to some factors, such as limited educational attainment, traditional gender roles, substance abuse, and authoritarian parenting practices. Female individuals who are victims of violence frequently experience a sense of helplessness and tend to grant forgiveness to their relationships, especially in cases where the partner's demeanor becomes affectionate after an episode of violence (Whittaker et al., 2014).

Dating violence can have detrimental effects on both physical and emotional health. Women who are subjected to physical or sexual assault are more likely to face health and psychological issues, including sadness, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts (Karakurt et al., 2014).

Pastor-Bravo et al. (2023) propose that a valid method for comprehending teenagers' perspectives on dating encounters and their tactics to prevent violence aims to evaluate their roles, relationships, and coping mechanisms. Noviani P et al. (2018) have found that assertiveness training helps empower women and victims of sexual violence to decline and effectively communicate their emotions confidently. Budiastuti (2018) emphasizes the importance of community engagement as companions and supervisors of youth in effectively addressing and mitigating the impacts of dating violence.

The prevention of dating violence among teenagers is gaining prominence as a critical concern for global public health and human rights organizations. This is due to the growing recognition of implementing effective prevention methods in policies and practices. The core of research on avoiding dating violence among teenagers is expanding. However, evaluations primarily concentrate on underdeveloped countries, disregarding the substantial prevalence of dating violence in these nations.

A study undertaken by McNaughton Reyes et al. (2021) emphasizes the significance of establishing dating violence prevention programs for adolescents that can influence different forms of violence and health risk behaviours in underdeveloped nations. Additional study is required in both developed and developing nations to create and assess programs that focus on the factors that lead to dating violence among teenagers at the community, family, and peer network levels. This involved evaluating the actions and methods contributing to the success of programs and identifying the programs' objectives to prevent dating violence among teenagers.

The objective of this research is to address the issue of dating violence in Indonesia by proposing two distinct strategies: preventive measures aimed at empowering women, and repressive actions directed at perpetrators who commit acts of violence.

Research Methods

This research employed a mixed methods design involving collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2014). This method enables the researchers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of research questions by integrating the strengths of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative research methods were utilized to gather and analyze numerical data. These methods typically involved using standard surveys, questionnaires, and experiments to collect data from large participant samples. On the other hand, qualitative research methods were employed to gather and analyze non-numerical data. These methods usually involved interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and observations to collect data from small participant samples.

There are several reasons why the researchers may preferred to employ a mixed methods approach. Research questions might require quantitative and qualitative data to fully comprehend the phenomena under study. By utilizing quantitative and qualitative data, the researchers are able to compare and contrast findings from each method to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

Based on the research methods described above, this study was conducted in two stages. The first stage of this research involved the collection of qualitative data through FGDs with women who have experienced dating violence. FGDs were conducted in a safe and supportive environment, exploring participants' experiences of dating violence, as well as their views on empowerment interventions.

The second stage of this research involved the implementation of empowerment interventions with a group of women who have experienced dating violence. The intervention was based on a program developed and evaluated previously. This intervention involved a series of sessions to empower women and build their self-esteem and confidence. The effectiveness of the intervention was evaluated through the collection of quantitative data using surveys before and after the intervention. These surveys included validated measures of dating violence, self-esteem, and empowerment.

Revealing Power Dynamics: A Study of Gender-Based Violence and Safer Sexual Negotiations in Dating Relationships Within the Indonesian Context

In 2023, Indonesia was surprised by a reported incident of assault involving a female student at a prestigious private university. The domestic abuse case came to light initially as a result of the victim's disclosure on her social media platform. The victim confessed to experiencing domestic violence perpetrated by her male partner since June 2022. The violence she endured encompassed both verbal and physical abuse,

which recurred on multiple occasions. The perpetrator attacked the victim with a lack of concern for the consequences because she declined his want to accompany him home. The victim admitted to being forcibly pulled into the car by the perpetrator and forcefully placed into the vehicle (Azizah, 2023).

The scenario above is not an isolated incident, as several such occurrences may have remained undisclosed to the public due to the culprits' reluctance to reveal them. The absence of bravery must be reassessed because intimate partner abuse is solely a form of gender-based violence. Hence, examining its origins cannot be detached from gender per se. In Indonesia, the society primarily follows a patriarchal structure and firmly upholds tight gender role distinctions as a requirement (Ernanda, 2023). In Indonesian society, masculinity is correlated to bravery, self-reliance, resoluteness, dominance, and assertiveness.

In contrast, femininity is also associated to tenderness, composure, caregiving, compliance, and docility. Masculine characteristics are commonly regarded as superior, while femininity is perceived as lacking masculine features. This impression contributes to the establishment of gender inequality. Men and masculinity are commonly regarded as possessing greater prestige and authority in comparison to women and femininity. The existence of this power imbalance results in a state of domination that has the potential to escalate into acts of violence (Kachel et al., 2016).

Research indicates a strong correlation between individuals' beliefs about gender roles and their encounters with intimate partner violence. Individuals who hold traditional beliefs about gender are more likely to exhibit a higher level of acceptance of violence within relationships. Women who conform to gender norms are at a higher risk of experiencing intimate partner violence. Likewise, men who conform to gender norms are more prone to participate in intimate partner abuse.

"Hegemonic masculinity" refers to a form of masculinity considered ideal and performed by men who possess the most power and innate characteristics. These individuals also happen to hold positions of global influence. These individuals are typically white, Western, upper-class, heterosexual men who possess complete privileges in terms of gender, race, class, nationality, and sexuality (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Indeed, these power dynamics are considered commonplace and rational if the participants abide by the rules established in legal systems or the prevailing societal norms. Nevertheless, these power dynamics can pose significant risks when exploited by individuals with superior authority or influence within these relationships. Frequently, criminals exploit these power dynamics to perpetrate their illicit activities.

Individuals' relative status, power, and dominance significantly impact interpersonal interactions. These factors influence the mutual expectations and behaviors of participants, which in turn shape their communication styles. This concept is also known as reciprocity. The power dynamics discussed here are a crucial element of interpersonal communication. They can be observed in the correlations, such as asymmetrical, complementary, parallel, and symmetrical connections.

Furthermore, dominance and subordination relationships can be observed in several contexts, including stratified social systems and international relations

(e.g., the West vs. the rest). Foucault's (1982) approach provides an additional level of comprehension, highlighting diverse forms of control and opposition in different social contexts. He emphatically stated that the existence of power relations is an indispensable element of any society, drawing attention to the inherent presence of power dynamics throughout societal frameworks (Foucault, 1982, p. 791).

Historically, it has been believed that rape within close relationships is attributed to physical qualities exhibited by the victim, such as her provocative clothing or perceived flirty conduct. Additionally, others argue that suitable settings can contribute to the perpetrator feeling secure enough to conduct the act of rape. However, during the period of dominant masculinity, the primary factor is the unequal distribution of power between the perpetrator and the victim.

According to Aryana (2022), sexual violence, including violence in romantic relationships, is an inherent manifestation of power imbalances between the offender and the victim, particularly within personal relationships. The existence of gender bias behavior can be traced back to patriarchal culture, which establishes rules that confer privileges to men while placing women in subordinate positions that can be easily controlled. This control can be observed through geographical constraints, determinations of position, and distinct behaviour patterns. The influence of patriarchal principles, as shown in social, cultural, and religious conventions, often leads to the mistreatment of women, both physically and psychologically, resulting in humiliating treatment towards them. The increase in sexual assault endured by women can be attributed to the presence of a patriarchal culture and permissive attitudes that are widespread in society. Women are susceptible to sexual violence as a result of societal standards that position them in subordinate, marginalized, oppressed, and exploited roles. The societal idea of male dominance and hegemony over women might foster an environment that is favourable to sexual assault against women. This is due to the perception of women as subordinate individuals and the prevalence of gender-based prejudices that contribute to acts of sexual violence against them.

The study conducted by Sholikhah and Masykur (2020) on women who have experienced intimate partner violence indicates that the three participants had distant relationships with their fathers. The subjects engaged in decision-making when choosing to enter, sustain, or terminate the connection as they deemed it the optimal choice for preserving the relationship. The behavior of persons who are subjected to violence will exhibit commonalities. The violence that typically transpires encompasses physical, emotional, verbal, economic, and sexual forms of aggression. However, in cases of intimate relationship violence, the victim typically adopts a passive attitude and does not resist. The perpetrator's aggression escalates when the victim resists. The causes of violence can be attributed to various factors, including the spouse's inability to satisfy the wants of their significant other, feelings of powerlessness, disapproval from parents regarding the relationship, possessiveness, a lack of self-restraint on the part of the partner, and the partner's desire to exert dominance. Victims of intimate relationship violence frequently experience physical, economic, social, sexual, and emotional consequences. The primary and long-lasting

effect on individuals who experience violence is psychological. The subjects utilized forgiveness as a stress-coping method. The three individuals continue to make efforts to forgive their spouses as they are currently in the process of working through their issues. They have come to understand the significance of forgiveness and the negative consequences of holding onto bitterness. The subjects continue to experience the repercussions of their partner's actions during the relationship.

The presence of this power asymmetry adds to disparities in sexual behavior between genders. For instance, men tend to have a more significant number of sexual partners compared to women. Additionally, men typically possess the ability to determine the timing, location, and manner in which sexual activities occur. This power dynamic makes it challenging for women to properly discuss and agree upon safer sexual practices, such as using condoms.

The presence of unequal power dynamics within sexual interactions greatly influences the significance and understanding of condom usage, as well as the occurrence and mode of its use. For example, in a romantic relationship, a strong influence or access to more resources that promote the use of condoms might be of great importance. When one lacks influence in a relationship to suggest using condoms, even if they have a positive attitude towards them, they may face difficulties in discussing or promoting condom use due to the power imbalances that already exist. Moreover, the use of condoms might create a barrier to communication, leading to a decrease in condom usage. This is because individuals may opt to avoid uncomfortable discussions within the context of their relationship.

The extent to which women may exercise control and influence over decisions about when to engage in sexual intercourse and use condoms is a crucial determinant of sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Recent research and sociological theories recognize the enduring presence of power imbalances within heterosexual sexual interactions. Such power imbalances influences the decision-making process regarding the use of contraceptives and condoms, as well as the timing of sexual intercourse. Power in relationships consists of two distinct elements: "power to" (the capacity to act by one's wishes) and "power over" (the ability to assert one's desires, even when met with opposition).

A study conducted by Pulerwitz et al. (2002) suggests that gender-based power disparities can impede women's capacity to engage in negotiations. Subsequent investigation employing the Sexual Relationship Power Scale showed that women possessing elevated levels of power are five times more inclined to declare consistent utilization of condoms than women having diminished levels of power. This discovery emphasizes the crucial significance of power dynamics in partnerships when making informed choices regarding sexual safety.

The research conducted by Alam and Alldred (2021) sheds light on the dynamics of trust and power within heterosexual relationships, particularly concerning deceitful sexual behavior, such as "stealing," which refers to the covert removal of condoms by one's partner, is recognized as a type of gender-based violence. This study demonstrates the influence of gender-based inequality on discussions around safer

sex, which might potentially undermine women's ability to make informed decisions about protecting their sexual health.

Exploring Dating Violence: Legal Frameworks, Social Biases, and Law Enforcement Challenges in Indonesia

Gender-based violence is a significant social phenomenon that need to be investigated. This phenomenon is driven by various aspects of intricate societal systems, including socio-religious ethics, cultural perspectives, economic settings, ideologies, and supportive legal frameworks. As a result, these social systems often lead to the occurrence of violence based on gender. This violence commonly includes various individuals residing in a family, including spouses, children, domestic servants (housemaids), or extended relatives. Gender-based violence predominantly arises from patriarchal ideologies, wherein men continually assume the role of perpetrators while women consistently bear the brunt as victims (Purwanti, 2020).

Violence against women is widely recognized as a violation of women's fundamental rights within the framework of gender-based violence (Manjoo, 2016). This predominantly victimises women and comprises a broad spectrum of abusive behaviors, such as verbal abuse, physical violence, and violations of women's fundamental rights. Hence, the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was established as a worldwide mechanism to protect and uphold women's rights. The statement posits that acts of aggressiveness, intimidation, and fear impede women's capacity to participate in society pursuits fully (Agung, 2022).

Indonesia adheres to fundamental concepts that embody the idea of humanism, reflecting in the second moral principle of Pancasila, referred to as "Fair and Civilized Humanity". As a result, the nation's core values and legislative structure have developed concepts on the fair and just treatment of human rights for both males and females. According to Article 27, paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia, all citizens are considered equal in the eyes of the law and the government. They are obligated to support and abide by these principles without any exemptions. Indonesia is legally bound to pursue gender equality actively, as mandated by the CEDAW and Law Number 7 of 1984. This obligation is based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia (Undang-Undang Dasar Republik Indonesia Tahun 1945, n.d.).

In the context of dating violence, criminal law plays a crucial role in upholding justice and protecting victims. Relevant to this issue is section 351 of the Criminal Code [Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana], which regulates the crime of assault and the consequences faced by those who engage in acts of violence (Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana, n.d.). However, to delve deeper into the subject, it is essential to analyze a real-life case that has occurred.

As a defendant, identifing as NK, who perpetrated an act of attempted rape and physically assaulted their partner. This case has substantial implications and necessitates a comprehensive understanding of criminal law and the circumstances surrounding dating violence.

On a particular day, NK committed an act of violence against their spouse with the explicit intention of forcing non-consensual sexual intercourse. The activities involved in physical abuse include forcibly kicking their partner's chest, causing them to fall subsequently. In this case, Article 351 of the Criminal Code is relevant. As per the article, committing assault can lead to imprisonment, and the severity and outcomes of the assault determine the duration of the punishment.

In this case, NK's conduct involved not only an attempted act of sexual assault but also resulted in physical harm to their spouse. According to Article 351, paragraph (2) of the Criminal Code, the perpetrator can be sentenced to five years if the action results in significant physical harm. The attack carried out by NK fulfils this criterion, as their actions significantly damaged their associate.

However, in this specific situation, some factors can mitigate or lessen the seriousness of the problem that should be considered. Regarding Article 49 of the Criminal Code, engaging in self-defence is deemed legal when an individual perceives a threat or is in immediate peril (Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana, n.d.). In this particular case, NK's partner took measures to safeguard themselves by intentionally cutting NK's palm with a knife. It can be inferred that NK's husband felt endangered and reacted by engaging in actions that were seen as protective measures.

Dating violence includes not only physical acts but also the use of threats or force to engage in sexual intercourse. Article 285 of the Criminal Code deals with the offence of rape, which has a maximum prison term of twelve years for those who forcefully engage in sexual intercourse or use threats of violence against a woman who is not their spouse (Flora, 2015).

Furthermore, criminal law also considers the motives and premeditation of the individual responsible for the act of violence. Article 353 of the Criminal Code pertains to the deliberate act of engaging in assault, which is punishable by a prison sentence of four years (Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana, n.d.). If it can be proven that NK's behavior was deliberate, the imposed penalty could be more severe.

The Law No. 12 of 2022 on Sexual Violence includes regulations about sexual violence along with relationship violence (Undang-undang Nomor 12 Tahun 2022 tentang Tindak Pidana Kekerasan Seksual, 2022). According to Article 5, individuals who engage in non-physical sexual acts to demean another person's dignity based on their sexuality and morality will be penalised for non-physical sexual harassment. The punishment includes a maximum prison sentence of nine months and a fine of up to IDR 10.000.000,00 (ten million rupiah) (Rahayu et al., 2023).

Article 6 outlines the prescribed penalty of physical and sexual harassment as follows: any individual who engages in physical, sexual acts to demean the dignity of another person based on their sexuality and morality, and this act does not fall under more severe criminal provisions, shall be subject to a maximum prison sentence of four years and a fine of up to IDR 50.000.000,00 (fifty million rupiah). Any individual who engages in non-consensual sexual acts involving the body, sexual desires, and reproductive organs to unlawfully dominate another person, regardless of marital status, shall be subject to a maximum prison sentence of 12 years and a fine of up to IDR 300.000.000.000,00 (three hundred million rupiah).

Individuals who misuse their position, authority, trust, or influence by employing deceit, manipulating circumstances, or exploiting someone's vulnerability, inequality, or dependence to coerce or deceive them into participating in or permitting sexual intercourse or indecent acts with themselves or another individual will be subject to a maximum prison sentence of 12 years and a fine of up to IDR 300.000.000.000,00 (three hundred million rupiah) (Santoso & Satria, 2023).

Nevertheless, the difficulty with criminal law, namely within its enforcement system, stems from the inherent legal framework, encompassing the police, prosecutors, and judges, which frequently demonstrate gender biases. According to prevailing societal beliefs in Indonesia, the responsibility for sexual violence, particularly in dating situations, is often placed on the woman. The patriarchal culture is widely seen as a fundamental factor in the tendency to justify and overlook perpetrators of abuse against women. A prevalent societal perspective is to prioritize the honor of the male perpetrator at the expense of the victimized woman, resulting in the degradation of her dignity.

Sexual predators knowingly and joyfully commit their deeds, taking advantage of a patriarchal culture and authorities who fail to take action, therefore providing them with safety. The denial of Baiq Nuril's cassation appeal appears to convey a message to all individuals who have experienced abuse, urging them to refrain from speaking out and reporting the incident, as they may face allegations of defamation, particularly if the offender possesses influence or authority. The disregard for factual information regarding the intention of documenting the assault as a means of self-protection and the sharing of content that the victim did not instigate demonstrates the viewpoint of our law enforcement towards sexual harassment (Akhmad & Arifin, 2022).

The attorney general's assertion that Baiq Nuril was not subjected to harassment and that the judgement aligns with the Electronic Information and Transactions Law terms reflects the gender bias underlies her case's rejection (Undang-undang Nomor 11 Tahun 2008 tentang Informasi dan Transaksi Elektronik, 2008). The inadequate comprehension of law enforcement officials regarding victims and their subsequent disregard lead to actions that deviate significantly from justice.

Empowering Women: Understanding and Addressing the Complexities of Dating Violence and Community Development

There is a case where a woman died while being taken to the hospital. However, based on preliminary suspicion, the perpetrator is her boyfriend. The woman is suspected of having assaulted her boyfriend to the point of his last breath. Hurt feelings and conflicts between them caused by arguments are often triggering factors for violence. This case serves as a reflection for everyone, especially women, not to fully trust others, especially partners who are not yet spouses. However, it is not always true that some people feel they can fully trust their potential partners and everything goes smoothly. The important thing to emphasize is related to various cases of abuse faced by women in a relationship.

Women's powerlessness in cases of abuse is an issue that often arises in the context of violence against women (Ray, 2018). Some factors causing women's powerlessness in abusive situations include economic dependence, where many women rely on partners or family for financial needs, making it difficult for them to escape from violent situations (Setiawati et al., 2022). Additionally, social isolation also often occurs, where the perpetrator restricts women's relationships with others, making them feel isolated and lacking social support, which makes it difficult for them to seek help. Threats and fear are also significant factors. Victims are often threatened by perpetrators, both physically and psychologically; they live in fear and uncertainty, making it difficult to report or seek help. Lack of knowledge about their rights in cases of violence also plays a role. Social stigma and discrimination against victims often make women feel ashamed or afraid to report or seek help. Women's empowerment is an effort to gain access and control over economic, political, social, and cultural resources so that they can regulate themselves and increase confidence to be able to play an active role in solving problems, thus building capacity and self-concept (Komariah et al., 2019). Women's empowerment is both a process and a goal, which cannot be separated from community empowerment. Community empowerment aims to realize an independent community capable of exploring and utilizing existing potentials in their area and helping the community to be free from underdevelopment or poverty.

Empowerment requires addressing several issues, including physical and sexual health, environment (lack of resources, environmental issues leading to displacement), social issues (community displacement, gender inequality, discrimination against women, gender-based violence, family trauma, and social stigma), and psychological issues (low self-esteem and guilt, rejection, anger/hatred, sexual anxiety, self-hatred leading to self-harm). Psychological issues generally receive higher priority than others because they cause a decline in strength and vulnerability (Yea, 2010).

Before initiating an empowerment program, it is essential to identify the emerging issues thoroughly. Identifying issues is not just a formal step but a solid foundation that will provide essential support for the success of the empowerment program. Gathering facts in the field is not just a routine procedure but a natural foundation that will facilitate the smooth implementation of the empowerment program. A deep understanding of the realities on the ground will be the key to success, along with factual support that can guide the program in the right direction.

The findings of this research indicate that dating violence issues are highly complex, requiring focused approaches tailored to the characteristics of each environment. This awareness prevents empowerment programs from being less effective or potentially creating adverse impacts. A successful empowerment program must be adaptive, adjust to the realities and consider women's direct experiences.

After identifying the issues, the next step is to develop an empowerment program. Such a program may include education, economic empowerment, and psychological support. The education program may encompass health education,

literacy and numeracy programs, as well as social skills development. Literacy and numeracy programs for women aim to assist those without educational opportunities. Literacy and numeracy are fundamental skills essential for adapting to various aspects of life, including personal, social, and professional aspects (Brooks et al., 2012). This program is an integral part of empowerment efforts that can positively impact basic skills improvement. Additionally, the program will focus on developing numeracy skills relevant to their daily lives and jobs. Thus, program participants can enhance their ability to participate more actively in society and improve their overall quality of life.

The education program should also encompass the development of social skills. These are the abilities of individuals as part of society to communicate and interact effectively with others. Some social skills that women should possess include oral, written, and sign language communication and the ability to use communication and information technology functionally.

Economic empowerment programs and psychological support are equally crucial as educational programs. Economic empowerment programs can involve job training and entrepreneurship (Sulaiman et al., 2019). They are self-development assets in improving women's economies, aiming to foster an entrepreneurial spirit, particularly by enhancing women's competency in entrepreneurship knowledge and skills. Job training and entrepreneurship should integrate scientific, technological, and sociocultural approaches; their advantage lies in providing a holistic and sustainable approach to assisting women in building stable and sustainable businesses. Economic empowerment programs for women must be solidly based on human rights, including concrete steps to ensure accessibility and equality in economic participation. First, programs should be designed with flexibility in attendance and other requirements according to women's needs and unique situations. Furthermore, economic empowerment is not merely about providing financial assistance but also ensuring the active involvement of women in program design and implementation, ensuring that implemented solutions meet their needs.

Essentially, the expected outcomes of empowerment aim to strengthen bargaining positions and awaken the power and potential of women to balance other powers (Lwamba et al., 2022). The subprocesses of power can be operated in three interrelated domains: power within, power with, and power over (Blanchard et al., 2013). Programs have emphasized the importance of inner strength in developing self-esteem, confidence, and awareness of vulnerabilities. Programs also stress the need for collective empowerment, or power together with others, to effectively address power imbalances and achieve social transformation; therefore, programs must also adopt community mobilization strategies to develop collective identity, trust, and mutual support as the basis for collective action.

Additionally, the domains of power within and power within must be complemented by the ability to exercise power over resources. Therefore, empowerment strategies should be utilized to enhance women's access to social rights, financial credit, and educational opportunities. It is also acknowledged that community mobilization strategies among women must be accompanied by structural interventions to bring

about comprehensive social, economic, legal, and political changes that initially cause disempowerment. Other factors affecting women's ability to benefit from empowerment programs include their socio-demographic characteristics, including age, marital status, level of education, and social status.

Conclusion

Research on gender-based violence and safer sexual discussions in dating relationships in Indonesia reveals intricate power dynamics that are firmly ingrained in societal structures and cultural norms. This statement underscores the role of patriarchal beliefs in sustaining violence against women, as masculinity is frequently correlated to power and superiority, while femininity is oppressed and regarded as inferior. Power imbalances give rise to different types of abuse, such as physical, emotional, verbal, economic, and sexual violence.

The investigation highlights the crucial influence of gender norms and beliefs on individuals' behaviors and attitudes towards intimate partner abuse. Conventional gender norms frequently result in the tolerance of violence in relationships, which increases the likelihood of women being subjected to abuse while also reinforcing men's inclination to engage in abusive conduct. The notion of hegemonic masculinity highlights how males in positions of power manipulate societal standards to commit acts of violence and uphold their authority.

Indonesia's legal system supposedly offers protection against gender-based violence through various statutes, including the Criminal Code and the Law on Sexual Violence, which are designed to prosecute those responsible. Nevertheless, the implementation of these laws is impeded by gender biases present in law enforcement organizations and social attitudes that frequently assign responsibility and stigmatize victims, particularly women. This inherent bias undermines the fairness of the legal system and perpetuates a culture where those who commit wrongdoing are not held accountable.

Empowerment is a vital component in dealing with dating violence and advancing gender equality. Women's empowerment projects seek to facilitate access to resources, knowledge, and support networks to liberate them from harmful circumstances and enable them to claim their rights. These programs incorporate educational, economic, and psychological elements to provide women with the necessary skills and confidence to confront power disparities in relationships and society.

Moreover, community development efforts are crucial in establishing conducive surroundings for individuals who have experienced abuse and in questioning profoundly ingrained gender stereotypes. These projects aim to promote collective action and structural change in order to eliminate gender-based violence by addressing social, economic, and psychological aspects that contribute to women's vulnerability.

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All authors must submit articles written in good English using correct grammar, punctuation and vocabulary. If authors are non-native English speakers or writers, may, if possible, to have their submissions proofread by a native English speaker before submitting their article for consideration.

A typical manuscript is from 6000 to 8000 words including tables, references, captions, footnotes and endnotes. Review articles should not exceed 4000 words, and book reviews should not exceed 1500 words. Manuscripts that greatly exceed this will be critically reviewed with respect to length.

Manuscripts should be compiled in the following order: title page (including Acknowledgements as well as Funding and grant-awarding bodies); abstract; keywords; main text; acknowledgments; references; appendices (as appropriate); table(s) with caption(s) (on individual pages); figure caption(s) (as a list).

Abstracts of 150–200 words are required for all manuscripts submitted.

Each manuscript should have 5 to 10 keywords.

Section headings should be concise.

All authors of a manuscript should include their full names, affiliations, postal addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses on the cover page of the manuscript. One author should be identified as the corresponding author. Please give the affiliation where the research was conducted. If any of the named co-authors moves affiliation during the peer review process, the new affiliation can be given as a footnote. Please note that no changes to affiliation can be made after the manuscript is accepted. Please note that the email address of the corresponding author will normally be displayed in the published article and the online version.

All persons who have a reasonable claim to authorship must be named in the manuscript as co-authors; the corresponding author must be authorized by all co-authors to act as an agent on their behalf in all matters pertaining to publication of the manuscript, and the order of names should be agreed by all authors.

Please supply a short biographical note for each author.

Please supply all details required by any funding and grant-awarding bodies as an Acknowledgement on the title page of the manuscript, in a separate paragraph, as follows:

For single agency grants: "This work was supported by the [Funding Agency] under Grant [number xxxx]."

For multiple agency grants: "This work was supported by the [Funding Agency 1] under Grant [number xxxx]; [Funding Agency 2] under Grant [number xxxx]; and [Funding Agency 3] under Grant [number xxxx]."

For all manuscripts non-discriminatory language is mandatory. Sexist or racist terms must not be used. The singular "they" or "their" is endorsed as a gender-neutral pronoun. Instead of using adjectives as nouns to label groups of people, descriptive phrases are preferred. Instead of broad categories, using exact age ranges that are more relevant and specific is preferable.

2. Style Guidelines

Font:	Helvetica, "Helvetica Neue" or Calibri, Sans-Serif, 12 point. Use margins of at least 2.5 cm (1 inch).
Title:	Use bold for your article title, with an initial capital letter for any proper nouns.
Authors' names:	Give the names of all contributing authors on the title page exactly as you wish them to appear in the published article.
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Abstract:	Indicate the abstract paragraph with a heading or by reducing the font size.
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Tables and figures:	Indicate in the text where the tables and figures should appear, for example by inserting [Table 1 near here]. The actual tables and figures should be supplied either at the end of the text or in a separate file as requested by the Editor.

If your article is accepted for publication, it will be copy-edited and typeset in the correct style for the journal.

Foreign words and all titles of books or plays appearing within the text should be italicized. Non-Anglophone or transliterated words should also appear with translations provided in square brackets the first time they appear (e.g., weltanschauung [world-view]).

If an English translation of a foreign work is referenced, the author, title, and so forth come from the version read, with a nod to the translator: Piaget, J. (1969). The psychology of the child (H. Weaver, Trans.). Basic Books.

If acronyms are employed (e.g., the BUF), the full name should also be given the first time they appear.

Please use double quotation marks, except where “a quotation is ‘within’ a quotation”. Long quotations of words or more should be indented with quotation marks.

To draw more attention to the items and help readers understand the separate, parallel items in a complex list, use lowercase letters in parentheses before each item. Do not use numbers in parentheses.

If you have any queries, please contact us at https://changing-sp.com/ojs/index.php/csp/about/contact

Description of the Journal's Reference Style

CHANGING SOCIETIES & PERSONALITIES STANDARD REFERENCE STYLE: ***APA***

APA (American Psychological Association) references are widely used in the social sciences, education, engineering and business. For detailed information, please see the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th edition, https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines and https://apastyle.apa.org/blog

In the text:	
Placement	References are cited in the text by the author's surname, the publication date of the work cited, and a page number if necessary. Full details are given in the reference list. Place them at the appropriate point in the text. If they appear within parenthetical material, put the year within commas: (see Table 3 of National Institute of Mental Health, 2012, for more details)
Within the same parentheses	Order alphabetically and then by year for repeated authors, with in-press citations last. Separate references by different authors with a semi-colon.
Repeat mentions in the same paragraph	If name and year are in parentheses, include the year in subsequent citations.

With a quotation	This is the text, and Smith (2012) says "quoted text" (p. 1), which supports my argument. This is the text, and this is supported by "quoted text" (Smith, 2012, p. 1). This is a displayed quotation. (Smith, 2012, p. 1)
Page number	(Smith, 2012, p. 6)
One author	Smith (2012) or (Smith, 2012)
Two authors	Smith and Jones (2012) or (Smith & Jones, 2012)
Three or more authors	Three or more authors is shortened right from the first citation: Smith et al. (2012) or (Smith et al., 2012).
Authors with same surname	G. Smith (2012) and F. Smith (2008) G. Smith (2012) and F. Smith (2012)
No author	Cite first few words of title (in quotation marks or italics depending on journal style for that type of work), plus the year: (Study Finds, 2007).
Not published yet	Do not provide a year in the reference if the document is not published yet. If the document is about to be published, use "in press": Smith (in press)
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Translated	Author, J. J. (2012). *Book title: And subtitle.* (L. Khan, Trans.). Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).
Not in English	Doutre, É. (2014). *Mixité de genre et de métiers: Conséquences identitaires et relations de travail* [Mixture of gender and trades: Consequences for identity and working relationships]. Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement, 46, 327–336. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0036218 For transliteration of Cyrillic letters please use the links: ALA-LC Romanization Tables at the web-site of The Library of Congress http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/roman.html
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Journal	
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Three authors	Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (1987). Title of the article. *Title of the Journal*, 22, 123–231. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx
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Organization as author	American Psychological Association. (2003). Title of the article: Subtitle of the article. *Title of the Journal*, *22*(1), 12–23. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx
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Article in journal supplement	Author, A. A. (2004). Title of the article. *Title of the Journal*, 42(Suppl. 2), p–pp. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx
Conference	
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Paper	Presenter, A. A. (2012, February). Title of the paper. *Paper presented at the meeting of Organization Name*, Location.
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Reports	
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Discussion paper	Author, A. A. (2012). *Title of work* (Discussion Paper No. 123). Location: Publisher. Author, A. A. (2012). *Title of work* (Discussion Paper No. 123). (The website name) https://www.w3.org
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Act	*Mental Health Systems Act*, 41 U.S.C. § 9403 (1988).
Audio and visual media	Taupin, B. (1975). Someone saved my life tonight [Recorded by Elton John]. On Captain fantastic and the brown dirt cowboy [CD]. London: Big Pig Music Limited (place of publication is optional). Author, A. (Producer). (2009, December 2). *Title of podcast* [Audio podcast]. (The website name) https://www.w3.org Producer, P. P. (Producer), & Director, D. D. (Director). (Date of publication). *Title of motion picture* [Motion picture]. Country of origin: Studio or distributor. Smith, A. (Writer), & Miller, R. (Director). (1989). Title of episode [Television series episode]. In A. Green (Executive Producer), Series. New York, NY: WNET. Miller, R. (Producer). (1989). The mind [Television series]. New York, NY: WNET.
Database	Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, A. A. (2002). A study of enjoyment of peas. *Title of the Journal*, *8*(3). Retrieved February 20, 2003, from the PsycARTICLES database.
Dataset	Author. (2011). *National Statistics Office monthly means and other derived variables* [Data set]. Retrieved March 6, 2011, (*The website name*) https://www.w3.org If the dataset is updated regularly, use the year of retrieval in the reference, and using the retrieval date is also recommended.
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Figures must be saved separate to text. Please do not embed figures in the manuscript file.

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