

Anthology **GENDER** and **GLOBALIZATION** in the **BALKANS**



Editors:

Jasna Kovačević
Zilka Spahić Šiljak



CIS Centar za interdisciplinarnе studije
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Foreword

The uniqueness of this anthology before us lies in the manner of its creation. Before delving into that, let us remind ourselves that, thanks to a series of global initiatives, a significant number of various conferences, useful educational programs, relevant research studies, and a considerable number of publications on topics related to gender and globalization have been realized to date. Not coincidentally—these are inexhaustible subjects that are thought to be well-understood, carrying their inherent value judgments, coexisting as both “male and female” gendered, and seemingly not naturally aligned.

But is it really so?

Let’s start by acknowledging that, precisely with the process of globalization and its dynamism, there has been significant engagement in matters of gender (in)equality—drawing attention to different aspects of the issue. There has been activism from the academic and professional community, non-governmental sectors, politics, international organizations, and institutions. It begs the question: How can we explain that, despite this substantial (though not necessarily sufficient or adequate) engagement, gender (in)equality remains an area requiring prioritized attention today? Why do they not only persist and increase, but also generate new forms? Why, with even minor disturbances in economic functioning, do issues of gender (in)equality get pushed aside, diminished, or nullify the modest progress achieved?

Do we actually understand the true nature of the globalized economy (markets) and nationalized politics (state) on one hand, and the complexity of the causes behind different positions of men and women in society and the confusion in understanding the concept of gender and gender (in)equality on the other hand? Haven’t programs and policies that abstract inequalities (including gender) called into question the credibility of the fundamental principles on which states are built? And have not the states, with the process of globalization, “exempted” themselves from responsibility for issues of justice and equality? How do we explain that, with the process of globalization and accompanying structural adjustments, transitions, financial, Covid, energy, and other crises, states are “locked” in rigid structures unable to transform and adapt to the dynamics of changes in the environment? Is this not a reason for the creation of new forms of gender inequalities? Why are purely economic and market criteria still predominant in shaping policies today, with numbers of migrants, their origin, qualifications, abilities, and skills becoming the most important (gender-neutral), unfortunately not resulting in gender-neutral effects?

Today, looking back with this perspective, we can agree that the economic, technological, informational, political, social, cultural, and more have connected the world into one entity, creating a unified global market and operating at a supranational level, offering everyone a chance for development. Some recognized and utilized these opportunities more and faster, while others did so less. Some became “richer” than necessary, while others paid a high price for “global progress.” This kind of development

implied progress in all areas of social life, focused on the functioning of the economy as a whole, with equal reflections on all members of the social community regardless of race, class, ethnic or religious affiliation, gender, and so on.

At first glance, such qualifications and concepts appear to be gender-neutral. However, even a superficial examination leads us to several conclusions that deny the neutrality of such qualifications. A somewhat more careful analysis in the context of gender (in)equality leads to the conclusion that the most significant and serious gap exists between rhetoric and practice.

What does reality show us?

Gender inequality, where the unfavorable position of women in society is emphasized as a reflection of their social position and role, illustrates the inconsistency that, despite significant changes in social conditions and impressive economic growth, inequalities are growing to the detriment of the position and role of women in society, education, and employment. Experiences show that positive changes are not automatic unless placed in the context of equal opportunities and that gender equality is not a self-developing process.

Precisely because of these “historically reversed situations,” pausing to reflect on the topic of gender and globalization, especially from the perspective of current events, seemed worthy of our attention. Of course, this has its roots in a series of engagements by the “main culprits” on these issues who have recognized that understanding gender involves exploring different elements—historical, cultural, political, economic, legal, institutional, and others, all of which contribute to gender identity.

Therefore, the need for an interdisciplinary approach to any reflection, problematization, analysis, strategy, or groundwork for shaping policies in the field of gender equality is, by the nature of the problem, a kind of imperative. Additionally, it seemed particularly important to us that, regardless of the universality of the problem related to research on the gender and globalization theme, due to a sort of institutional vacuum characteristic of transitional countries and a deficit of relevant knowledge, we pause on these issues in our region and draw attention to some questions requiring prioritized engagement.

This led us to initiate a winter school on the topic of “Gender and Globalization” with 19 partner universities from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, and Serbia. We laid the foundations based on universally accepted and immutable principles that underlie human rights, democracy, equality, and justice. Aware of the complexity of the task and in an attempt to shed light on a part of this issue—interdisciplinary and in a regional context—we designed the school to provide a comprehensive overview of all relevant topics related to gender and globalization, especially from a developmental perspective. We also considered it particularly important to elaborate on issues related to the ubiquitous and dynamic phenomenon of migration and the role of gender in transnational migration research.

A series of engagements, lectures, and presentations of previous research followed, through which we endeavored not only to showcase specific areas of this issue from

the perspective of various disciplines but also to maintain a common thread of an academic framework and connect everything with practical needs and guidelines. Unconsciously, we created a network of individuals engaged in these topics who, through direct communication and dialogue, enriched their knowledge, questioned previously accepted views, and analyzed the connection between gender and globalization beyond the narrow perspectives of their disciplines. We consider this a particularly important contribution of our engagement and an additional value in terms of encouraging what we expect.

An important integral part of our engagement is the student research organized into four thematic areas of “globalization with a human face.”

Together with their mentors, students elaborated on specific topics, consolidating a significant amount of theoretical and practical content and placing them in the broader context of gender sensitization, particularly revealing gender realities.

As a result of this work, the idea for preparing the anthology before you emerged. We want to emphasize that the texts presented in the anthology provide an evaluation of the analyzed areas, viewing the engagement of the authors not only as such but also as promoters of ideas that drive change. We hope it will be a valuable resource for those seeking to deepen their knowledge in this field and, at the same time, sharpen the advocacy mechanisms in questioning commonly accepted views that often rely on incomplete and incorrect understandings of globalization and its effects on gender (in)equality. Thus, we perceive it as an open book—to be read, learned from, and taken forward.

In addition, publishing this anthology is seen as a form of communication serving the advancement of gender equality policies with a triple motivation—recognizing the rules of the game, developing adaptive abilities, and striving to highlight the growing cost of inaction. This also signifies a mobilizing tool for changing the paradigm and an instrument for introducing a gender perspective into classical economics and politics. This anthology owes its existence to many contributors.

First and foremost, we owe the enthusiasm of the authors and the valuable suggestions of their mentors.

Special thanks go to the collective of the University of Sarajevo and the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies – Prof. Dr. Zdravko Grebo of the University of Sarajevo, who, together with the TPO Foundation, are implementing the UNIGEM project (Introduction of Gender-Sensitive Policies in Higher Education) with the support of the United Kingdom Government. Many thanks to all of them, as well as to the lecturers, mentors, reviewers, consultants, and researchers who contributed to the successful implementation of the Winter School and the publication of this anthology.

It goes without saying about the gratitude to the students who were an inspiration for this engagement.

Sarajevo, July 14, 2023,
Professor Azra Hadžiahmetović Ph.D.



Introduction

Professor Jasna Kovačević Ph.D.

Professor Zilka Spahić Šiljak Ph.D.

Globalization has many faces and has been understood differently throughout history. However, according to most theorists (Giddens 1990, Castells 1996, Harvey 1999, Eriksen 2001),¹ it is only in the last few decades that the concept of globalization has been defined as a process of deterritorialization, mutual economic, social, and political interconnectedness, and the acceleration of the mobility of people and goods. Nevertheless, there are ambivalent attitudes towards globalization because, on the one hand, it enables progress, connectivity, technological and scientific exchange, and the mobility of people, while on the other hand, poverty and class differences are becoming more evident, accompanied by numerous dangers posed by climate change. Although a necessary and unstoppable process, globalization must be critically observed and assessed in every context. When viewed from a gender perspective, its impacts on the lives of women and men, as well as other marginalized groups, become clearer.

Gender and globalization, as two complex social phenomena, are so intertwined that no segment of globalization is not gendered, meaning that we cannot fully understand it without a gender-sensitive analysis. However, mainstream theoretical perspectives on globalization often omit a gender dimension, thereby obscuring the true state of society in which there are class, race, gender, and other differences that privilege some individuals over others. Feminist theorists (Afshar and Barrientos 1999; Sklair 2002; Marchand and Runyan 2011)² offer a wide range of arguments about globalization and its effects on women's lives. One focus is the critique of the neoliberal market controlled by corporate transnational conglomerates, resulting in the feminization of poverty and the exploitation of female labor in poorly paid occupations and jobs. Other authors (Sassen 1996; Eschle 2005)³ pay attention to the political face of globalization, examining how international programs in the establishment of democratic societies impact the lives of women and men. Women lose jobs, and social and

¹ Giddens, Anthony, 1990, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Stanford: Stanford University Press; Castells, Manuel, 1996, *The Rise of Network Society*, Oxford: Blackwell; Harvey, David, 1996, *Justice, Nature, & the Geography of Difference*, Oxford: Blackwell; Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, 2001, *Tyranny of the Moment: Fast and Slow Time in the Information Age*, London: Pluto Press.

² Marchand, Marianne and Runyan Anne Sisson. 2011. *Gender and Global Restructuring. Sightings, Sites and Resistances*. Routledge; Afshar, Haleh and Barrientos Stephanie. 1999. *Women, Globalization and Fragmentation in the Developing World*. Palgrave Macmillan. Leslie Sklair. 2002. *Globalization: Capitalism and its Alternatives*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³ Sassen, Sasken. 1996. "Toward a Feminist Analytics of the Global Economy", *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 10; Eschle, Catherine. 2005. *Skeleton Women*: Feminism and the Antiglobalization Movement. *Signs*. Vol 30, No.3, 1741-1769

economic security, but continue to perform the majority of unpaid and socially undervalued work. Therefore, these authors draw attention to the connections between politics, the economy, and the exploitation of women's labor, time, and health.

Gender is defined and explored through the social constructions and roles attributed to men and women in a given society, while globalization is defined as the processes of connecting and integrating different parts of the world through economic, political, technological, and cultural exchange. One way in which gender and globalization interact is through the change in traditional gender roles and patterns that have developed in specific societies. Globalization has facilitated the spread of ideas, values, and norms from one part of the world to another. This has led to an increased awareness of gender equality and the need to question and change traditional gender roles. Many social changes and movements for gender equality have their roots in globalization processes that have enabled the spread of ideas and mobilization of people worldwide.

Globalization has a multifaceted impact on the position of women and men in the economic and labor context. The integration of the global market enables labor migration, which can result in different consequences for men and women. Migrations due to globalization have had a significant impact on women and their role in the workforce (Lutz, 2012⁴; Phizacklea, 2022⁵). Many women migrate in search of better economic opportunities, often leaving their families and homelands. These migrations can have various effects on gender roles and family dynamics. Women are often faced with poor working conditions, low wages, and exploitation (King-Dejardin, 2019⁶). They more frequently work in low-skilled positions in industries that generate less profit on a global scale, while men are more represented in higher-paying positions in industries that generate more profit. Such phenomena in the global labor market create gender inequalities in economic opportunities and access to resources, potentially deepening the issue of feminization of poverty as a form of structural discrimination on a global scale (Kingfisher, 2013⁷; Heyzer, 2019⁸).

Through processes of globalization, gender-conditioned stereotypes and norms are spreading. Media and social networks have an increasing influence on our understanding of gender and the formation of identity (Cernat, 2014⁹; Sharda, 2014¹⁰).

⁴ Lutz, H. (2010). Gender in the migratory process. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 36(10), 1647-1663.

⁵ Phizacklea, A. (2022). *One way ticket: Migration and female labour*. Taylor & Francis.

⁶ King-Dejardin, A. (2019). The social construction of migrant care work. At the intersection of care, migration and gender. *International Labour Organization Report*, 978-92.

⁷ Kingfisher, C. (2013). *Western welfare in decline: Globalization and women's poverty*. University of Pennsylvania Press

⁸ Heyzer, N. (2019). Women in the era of globalization and fragmentation. In S. MacPherson and H.K. Wong (Eds.) *Social Development and Societies in Transition* (pp. 43-54). Routledge.

⁹ Cernat, M. (2014). Deregulating markets, deregulating media: The globalization of gender stereotypes in the age of corporate media. *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, 4(1), 895-904.

¹⁰ Sharda, A. (2014). Media and gender stereotyping: The need for media literacy. *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(8), 43-49.

Beauty ideals, gender roles, and behaviors are often transmitted through global media, influencing the perception of gender in different cultures (Ward and Grower, 2020¹¹). It is important to study and understand these connections between gender and globalization to recognize how social changes and global processes shape each other. On the other hand, globalization has facilitated faster and easier connections among activists and feminist movements worldwide (Ackerly and True, 2010¹²; Moghadam, 2020¹³). Through the internet, social networks, and other communication technologies, women can share experiences, ideas, and strategies for gender equality. Global movements such as #MeToo and #NiUnaMenos, as well as the regional movement #Nisamtražila, are examples of how issues of gender inequality and gender-based violence, along with associated activism, have spread worldwide. (Chenou i Cepeda-Masmela, 2019¹⁴; Lee i Murdie, 2021¹⁵, Šarić, 2022¹⁶; Roqueta-Fernandez i Caldeira, 2023¹⁷)

Another outcome of globalization is the spread of cultural influences and the overlap of different cultural values and norms that can impact gender identities and expressions. In some cultures, there is resistance to changing traditional gender roles and patterns due to the influx of foreign influences and global values. Accordingly, globalization has contributed to raising awareness of LGBTIQ+ rights issues worldwide (Dioli, 2011¹⁸; Bosia, 2015¹⁹; Sloomaeckers and Bosia, 2023²⁰). Activism for LGBTIQ+ rights is gaining increasing global attention, and the fight for equality includes changes in the perception of gender identities and sexual orientation (Adur, 2020²¹). These are just some of the numerous connections between gender and globalization. From different scientific perspectives and contexts, it is possible to study and explore how

¹¹ Ward, L. M., & Grower, P. (2020). Media and the development of gender role stereotypes. *Annual Review of Developmental Psychology*, 2, 177-199.

¹² Ackerly, B., & True, J. (2010). Back to the future: Feminist theory, activism, and doing feminist research in an age of globalization. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 33, No. 5, pp. 464-472). Pergamon.

¹³ Moghadam, V. M. (2020). *Globalization and social movements: The populist challenge and democratic alternatives*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

¹⁴ Chenou, JM, & Cepeda-Másmela, C. (2019). #NiUnaMenos: Data activism from the global south. *Television & New Media*, 20 (4), 396-411.

¹⁵ Lee, M., & Murdie, A. (2021). The global diffusion of the # MeToo movement. *Politics & Gender*, 17(4), 827-855

¹⁶ Šarić, J. (2022). The # MeToo movement's manifestation in Croatia: engaging with the meaningfulness of transnational feminist solidarity. *Transnational Legal Theory*, 13(1), 81-104.

¹⁷ Roqueta-Fernàndez, M., & Caldeira, S. P. (2023). Situating # MeToo: a comparative analysis of the movement in Catalonia and Portugal. *Media, Culture & Society*, 01634437231179351

¹⁸ Dioli, I. (2011). From Globalization to Europeanization—And Then? *Transnational Influences in Lesbian Activism of the Western Balkans*. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 15(3), 311-323.

¹⁹ Bosia, M. J. (2015). To love or to loathe: modernity, homophobia, and LGBT rights. *Sexualities in world politics*, 38-53.

²⁰ Sloomaeckers, K., & Bosia, M. J. (2023). The Dislocation of LGBT Politics: Pride, Globalization, and Geo-Temporality in Uganda and Serbia. *International Political Sociology*, 17(1), olad004

²¹ Adur, S. M. (2020). *Sexual Rights and Globalization*. In N.A. Naples (Ed.) *Companion to Sexuality Studies*, 427-444. Wiley

globalization affects gender roles, family dynamics, economic participation, political power, sexuality, and other aspects of gender issues.

Guided by this idea and within the framework of the UNIGEM project led by the TPO Foundation, which aims to connect and collaborate with 19 universities from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, and Serbia in the processes of gender mainstreaming in higher education, an initiative was launched to create a platform for male and female students to acquire knowledge and share experiences about the interaction of gender and processes of globalization. In February 2023, the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Sarajevo and the TPO Foundation organized a Winter School titled “Gender and Globalization” for students of social sciences from these four countries. The goal of the Winter School was to critically examine, in an interdisciplinary manner, the interdependence and connection between gender and globalization, as well as other social phenomena relevant to the processes of globalization. During the seven-day school, students had the opportunity to attend lectures, and participate in workshops, and learn from the experiences of human rights advocates. After the Winter School, students had the opportunity to write research papers on selected topics, under the mentorship of professors from partner universities. This facilitated further networking between faculty and the student population through a joint academic project in preparation for the anthology of final papers titled “Gender and Globalization in the Balkans.”

The editors have selected the top 12 papers for publication in the anthology, and four students have been specially rewarded for exceptionally well-structured papers: Nemanja Tubonjić from the University of Banja Luka, Helena Ćavar from the University of Mostar, Katarina Grković from the University of Novi Sad, and Jovana Marjanović from the University of Belgrade.

The chosen papers for publication are divided into four thematic sections: Gender and Globalization, Gender and Society, Gender and Migrations, and Gender and Politics. Below is a brief overview of the content of these papers.

1. Gender and Globalization

Within the thematic section “**Gender and Globalization,**” the impact of globalization processes on gender equality in various aspects of life is analyzed. This includes the use of modern technologies and the internet, literacy, leadership, access to resources, reproductive health, as well as upbringing and education.

Olovčić Adem from the International Burch University, under the mentorship of Prof. Dr. Selma Delalić, presents a paper titled “*Gender Equality in the Age of Globalization: Controversial Consequences of Growing Interdependence and Interconnectedness.*” In this paper, the author explores the impact of globalization on gender equality in a broader social context. The work provides an overview of relevant literature, including scientific and professional books, articles, and documents from relevant authors in the fields of globalization and gender equality. Additionally, the author analyzes gender-stratified secondary data on a global scale related to the use

of modern technologies and the internet, general literacy, leadership positions, and the participation of men and women in parliamentary work. The author concludes that the impact of globalization on reducing and eradicating gender inequality is very complex and controversial, with both positive and negative effects. The author argues that despite the positive changes brought about by globalization, instances of discrimination, gender inequality, and even violence persist as global phenomena in societies worldwide.

Muminović Omer from the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology (SSST), together with his mentor Prof. Zilka Spahić Šiljak Ph.D., has written a paper titled *“Menstrual Poverty: Reflections of Global Poverty in the Local Context of Bosnia and Herzegovina.”* The paper is based on the concepts of social stigma and feminization of poverty, which are closely related to menstrual poverty and the inequality between women and men. The authors conducted online research and interviews with women, and the results showed that menstruation is still a taboo topic. Women feel ashamed to speak publicly about it, use euphemisms, and there is no systemic solution to support women, especially those living on or below the poverty line. The authors note that, although globalization was expected to bring economic progress and improve the position of women, which to some extent has happened, the negative effects of globalization have disproportionately affected women who still work in lower-paid occupations, earn less, and have very few economic resources compared to men. Women still have to pay for menstrual hygiene products, which further economically burden them, and due to menstruation, they are exposed to social stigma.

Džananović Nejra from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Sarajevo, under the mentorship of Prof. Mirjana Mavrak Ph.D., has written a paper titled *“Globalization of Education – Opportunity or Obstacle to Gender Equality?”*. The author aims to explore the relationship between the processes of educational socialization and globalization. Through a review of relevant literature and synthesizing research results, the paper provides insight into the phenomenon of the globalization of education and identifies areas that require further investigation. The paper gives an overview of definitions of globalization in the context of education, the relationship between education and gender equality, the characteristics of gender socialization in family upbringing, and the occurrence of gender stereotyping in education. In conclusion, the author emphasizes that although globalization influences various spheres of society, including politics, economy, education, upbringing, culture, and gender equality, it has not contributed to gender equality in family upbringing or in the education system. The behaviors learned from the family in early childhood influence behaviors throughout upbringing. Accordingly, it is essential to model behaviors that promote gender equality.

2. Gender and Society

The second thematic section, **“Gender and Society,”** examines social norms, interpersonal relationships, and sociological phenomena arising from these relationships that significantly impact gender roles, gender norms, and gender equality.

Tubonjić Nemanja from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Banja Luka, under the mentorship of Prof. Željko Šarić MA, has written a paper titled *“Male Initiative and Female Passivity: The Problem of the Gender Norm of the First Step in Romantic Relationships.”* The author addresses questions about gender biases regarding male initiative and female passivity in romantic relationships. Some of the questions the author explores in this paper include: why is it believed that men must initiate romantic encounters, why must women be passive, and why is female initiative perceived as a form of promiscuity? Is a woman merely a reward for male initiative and persistence? Are shy men considered less masculine due to their shyness? The paper also reflects on the concept of the philosophy of love as a synthesis of beings in the field of their emotions, characterized by ideals of honesty, openness, and directness. It also discusses the elimination of achieving emotional relationships, resulting in the liberation of pure emotional affection in realized sociality. In the concluding part of the paper, the author notes that the contemporary era continues to struggle with prejudices inherited from centuries ago. The author concludes that these prejudices have not only shaped the issue of initiative in romantic relationships but have also shaped the understanding of love and interpersonal relationships themselves.

Ćavar Helena from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Mostar is the author of the paper titled *“(De)activation of Gender Stereotypes in Selection Situations,”* under the mentorship of Prof. Ivona Čarapina-Zovko Ph.D.. The paper explores gender stereotypes that tend to be (de)activated in selection situations. The presented results are from an empirical study conducted on a sample of young individuals from Bosnia and Herzegovina, aiming to investigate the relevance of gender as a variable in the selection of potential employees in the contemporary labor market. Using an experimental design with constructed resumes, a simulated selection situation was created in which young people had the choice to hire a man or a woman with the same qualifications for a stereotypical job position. The results of the empirical study showed that female students tend to hire individuals of the same gender, i.e., women, while male students do not show a tendency to hire individuals of the same gender, i.e., men. The paper concludes that among young people, the idea of gender roles and stereotypical male-female occupations is still present.

Husičić Maida from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Tuzla presents the paper *“Gender Norms and Eating Disorders: A Feminist Insight into Psychopathologies Related to the Female Body,”* under the mentorship of Prof. Jasmina Husanović Ph.D.. The main focus of the paper is the prevalence of eating disorders, especially among women, and their relationship with socially constructed gender roles. A distinctive feature of this paper is the use of a feminist perspective to examine socio-cultural factors contributing to eating disorders, including the pressure for women to conform to idealized body types. In addition, the author discusses the role of media in shaping these ideals. The author provides an overview of critical theoretical positions in the field of gender studies on common eating disorders and their relationship with socially imposed rules and gender norms. In this way, the author offers insights into several important feminist perspectives on the occurrence, causes, and consequences of eating disorders, explaining the influence of environmental factors in the development of eating disorders among the female population, and thus examining eating disorders through a sociological and cultural lens of gender construction.

Jagačić Izabela from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek is the author of the paper titled *“Vocal Fry, Masculine Molds, Feminist Perspectives,”* mentored by Prof. Anita Dremel Ph.D.. The author explores the mutual influence of language in use and gender as a set of culturally shaped attributes attributed to a man or a woman, with a significant emphasis on the role of so-called masculine molds in situated contexts where speech and meaning are produced and interpreted. The paper investigates the speech phenomenon of a deep and creaky voice in women in certain situations, known as the English phrase “vocal fry,” and the author raises the question of whether the vocal fry phenomenon is a form of women conforming to masculine molds as forms of bias representing standards within androcentric societies. The paper presents a literature review in search of an answer to the research question, and informational interviews were conducted with experts in the fields of phonetics and the sociology of gender and language. The results of the literature review and informational interviews indicate that vocal fry is a recent and poorly researched phenomenon, and there is no consensus among feminist perspectives, as illustrated in the paper through the presentation of a feminist debate with varying positions advocating for and encouraging voice change practices in women to those advocating for the rejection of such practices.

3. Gender and Migration

The third thematic section, **“Gender and Migration,”** explores the impact of globalization processes on migration trends in the Western Balkan countries from a gender perspective, with a particular focus on the position of migrant women in the labor market and gender-based violence against migrant women.

Lazić Dušan from the Faculty of Law at the University of Belgrade is the author of the paper titled *“Discrimination of Migrant Women in the Labor Market,”* mentored by Prof. Snježana Vasiljević Ph.D.. The author argues that due to a high degree of discrimination and gender inequality, an extremely large gap has been created between men and women in the world regarding employment, leading to pronounced injustice in the labor market. Migrant women are a particularly vulnerable group in the labor market. In this paper, the author analyzes the position of migrant women in the labor market through a presentation of comparative legislation, an analysis of empirical research in different legal systems, and case law. The aim is to identify problems specific to migrant women and their position compared to male migrants, primarily in terms of discrimination based on gender. The author concludes that there is still a fundamental misunderstanding of the position of migrant women in society, both by the broader community and by the authorities responsible for enforcing the law in this area. As a prerequisite for regulating the position of migrant women in the labor market, it is necessary to simultaneously raise awareness and educate all relevant stakeholders, as well as establish an adequate legal framework for the protection of vulnerable groups of people.

Žeravčić Karla from the Faculty of Law at the University of Zagreb has written a paper titled *“Gender-based violence and women on the move: How the shelter situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is affecting women and girls,”* under the mentorship of

Nidžara Ahmetašević Ph.D.. The author states that the aim of this paper is to identify gaps in research on risk factors for gender-based violence faced by women and girls in reception camps and alternative accommodations, with a special focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina as a transit country and a non-EU member state. To contribute to a comprehensive understanding of this issue, the author relies on relevant literature, including scientific papers, reports from international organizations, and research conducted in other countries. In addition to the literature review, the author conducted empirical research, including interviews with employees of international organizations providing support to people on the move in the field. In the concluding part of the paper, the author notes that one of the key issues identified in the work is the “invisibility” of gender-based violence during migration journeys, especially in transit countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. The situation with gender-based violence becomes significantly more complex in reception camps that are unsuitable for living, as basic human needs for water, electricity, and heating are often not met.

4. Gender and Politics

The fourth thematic section, “**Gender and Politics**,” focuses on studying the impact of right-wing political narratives and ideologies on gender equality, as well as the challenges arising from the influence of right-wing populism.

Memić Amila from the Faculty of Law at the University “Džemal Bijedić” in Mostar has written a paper titled “*Right-wing Populism: Possible impact on the Right to abortion in Bosnia and Herzegovina,*” under the mentorship of Prof. Emina Hasanagić Ph.D.. In her paper, the author presents the possible impact of right-wing populism on positive legislation related to the right to abortion in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As an independent state, Bosnia and Herzegovina inherited a large number of laws and regulations in this area from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including the Law on the Conditions and Procedure for Termination of Pregnancy, which was relatively liberal compared to the former comparative law. In this context, the author raises the question: Will Bosnia and Herzegovina in the near future continue the path of its former more liberal solutions, or will it follow some of the more conservative ideas spreading across Europe? To analyze this issue, the paper employs dogmatic, historical, comparative, normative, and comparative legal methods, as well as the case study method. After conducting the analysis, the author concludes that the issue of abortion in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not as prominent in the media as in countries like Croatia, Poland, and others. The laws regulating this area are not sufficiently implemented in practice, especially in public institutions. Clinics and hospitals in certain areas of the country do not comply with the law, i.e., they do not provide services as required by law, and there have been no recorded cases of their punishment by relevant authorities.

Grković Katarina from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Novi Sad is the author of the paper “*Gender Biopolitics in Serbia: Valuation of Women’s Lives,*” prepared under the mentorship of Prof. Ana Pajvančić-Cizelj Ph.D.. In this work, the author aims to clarify differences in the valuation of the lives of women and men,

providing various examples and theoretical frameworks. The empirical research utilized discourse analysis of statements from the media space on femicide and the punishments for it in Serbia, explicitly pointing out the disproportionate valuation of male and female deaths and, consequently, lives. The author further elaborates on this issue, drawing on the theoretical framework of biopolitical ideas developed by Judith Butler, Giorgio Agamben, and Jimmema Repo. Following this, the research is contextualized with examples of violence in Serbia, as well as theoretical analyses of misogyny in the Serbian context. The paper highlights a direct connection between the organization and disciplining of society through gender roles and gender-based violence, manifested both as direct violence and as a lack of institutional reactions to it. In the concluding part of the paper, the author notes that this research is, in fact, just “scratching the surface” of a much larger and more complex problem. Even when examining these few examples of violence in Serbia, it seems that in each of them, one can recognize some form of biopolitical motivation.

In conclusion, the anthology is finalized with the work of the **author Marjanović Jovana from the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Belgrade**, titled *“Guardians of Patriarchy: The Issue of Women’s Representation by Women in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia,”* mentored by Prof. Jelena Lončar Ph.D.. The paper addresses the issue of women’s representation by female representatives in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, focusing on the connection between descriptive and substantive representation. Using the methodology of theoretical analysis, the author provides an overview of the development of women’s representation in the Serbian parliament and also analyzes the behavior of individual female deputies, which results in the maintenance and deepening of patriarchal values and behaviors. It is demonstrated that despite increased descriptive representation of women in Serbian politics, substantive representation of women remains insufficient and unsatisfactory. The author considers how socio-economic and broader contextual issues of women, combined with a lack of political will, contribute to this matter. In the concluding reflections, the author provides insights into potential solutions, including the need for effective feminization of the political space, continued implementation of gender equality mechanisms, and simultaneously strengthening women’s movements and the connections between civil society and state institutions.

Learned Lessons:

- **Globalization** is a process, not a state, and it is necessary to monitor the changes that this process brings to each society individually to see its impacts on individuals and communities.
- **Globalization** has brought numerous changes on the social, political, and economic levels but has not contributed to breaking down gender stereotypes in family upbringing and the education system.
- **Globalization** has enabled women's participation in public life and politics but has not contributed to gender sensitivity among women in power, implicitly undermining efforts towards substantive equality.
- **Globalization** reactivates gender stereotypes in selection situations such as employment, as women and men tend to hire individuals of the same gender.
- **Globalization** influences women's self-perception and health, as they lose confidence and health under the influence of media images of idealized female body shapes.
- **Globalization**, as an ambivalent phenomenon, enables progress, connectivity, and transcends numerous divisions but still deepens key divisions based on class, race, and gender.
- **Globalization** affects the feminization of poverty, especially vulnerable groups of women engaged in the lowest-paid jobs.
- **Globalization** visibly influences population migrations and discrimination faced by both women and men.
- **Globalization** particularly affects migrant women, as they lack adequate medical care in camps, suffer from underreported violence, and find it difficult to secure employment.
- **Globalization** has contributed to the spread of the anti-gender movement, which challenges women's acquired reproductive rights through laws and symbolically disciplines women's bodies through various forms of violence and intimidation.

THEME I "GENDER AND GLOBALIZATION"



Gender Equality in the Age of Globalization: Controversial Consequences of Growing Interdependence and Interconnectedness

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Abstract: Globalization as a complex, multidimensional, and multi-layered phenomenon has undoubtedly made a deep and profound impact on all segments of society and the state throughout the world, directing contemporary economic, political, social, and cultural trends. The aim of this paper is to research and determine the impact of globalization on gender equality as a basic human right and a social construct. The method used for this purpose is of a qualitative nature, since it relies on a review of relevant scientific literature in the field of globalization and gender, supported by data from research conducted by international organizations such as the UN, World Health Organization, World Bank, and Oxfam. After conducting research, it was concluded that globalization processes have a gender-differentiated impact. While contributing to economic empowerment of women, which allows women greater and more equal representation in the work distribution, and increased access to technology, including internet and cell phones, globalization, at the same time, has increase level of poverty, exploitation of women, and ever-growing gender-base violence. Globalization has also limited educational opportunities and political representation of women and their access to leadership positions. Overall, the conclusion arises that the relationship between gender equality and globalization is very complex and controversial.

Keywords: globalization, gender equality, discrimination, violence, controversy

Classification: F60, F69, Z13

1. Introduction

Although a concept that completely dominates and significantly determines the contemporary economic, political, social, and cultural trends of the 21st century, globalization gained full momentum at the end of the 1990s. The events that gave a decisive impulse to globalization were the collapse of the Soviet Union, the demolition of the Berlin Wall, and the lifting of the Iron Curtain, events that marked the end of the bipolar world order and the beginning of the growing integration and interdependence on a global scale unprecedented in human history. Globalization is defined as “a multidimensional economic, political, cultural, and geographical phenomenon in which the movement of capital, organizations, ideas, discourses, and peoples has taken on a global or transnational dimension” (Moghadam, 1999., 367). It is a process that allows the unhindered movement and exchange of ideas, information, technologies, and access to those equally by developed and underdeveloped countries, at least in theory. Globalization has caused the opening and complete re-composition of the way markets, states, and societies function, creating, at the same time, interdependence and facilitating the flow of information, and money, especially electronic money, goods, and services like never before in human history (Rhoten, 2000., 593; Giddens, 1999.). Focusing on the economic aspect of globalization Nikiti & Elliott, as cited in Gaburro & O’Boyle (2003.), assert that globalization entails the development of a „global market free of socio-political control”.

The communication and technological revolution deeply facilitated globalization processes including the instant transfer of information as well as global connectivity, which has encouraged ‘cultural homogeneity,’ resulting in the formation of a single global civilization (Waks, 2006., 413). Globalization, according to Ake „...is about the emergence of a global mass culture driven by mass advertising and technical advances in mass communication” (1995., 23). Based on such a thinking, Nikoloz (2009.), stresses that the term globalization refers to the „exchange of information among nations, cultures, and diverse social, economic, and political organizations”. Having in mind all of the above, it could be claimed that globalization has had a multifaceted and far-reaching influence on societies, reshaping various aspects of social, cultural, economic, and political life. Its impacts are complex and diverse, shaping the ways in which societies function, interact, and adapt to the changing global landscape. One of the most important issues nowadays, deeply interconnected with globalization, which is the subject of this research, is gender equality and the impact of globalization on the achievement of its universal goals.

Gender equality refers to the equal treatment of individuals regardless of their gender identity. It implies equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities that exist between individuals of different genders. It is a fundamental human right and is enshrined in various international laws and treaties. World Health Organization defines gender as: „the characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys that are socially constructed” and seems that this understanding completely relies on assertions of authors such as West and Zimmerman, and Judith Butler. According to West and Zimmerman (1987.), “gender is not something we are born with and not something we have, but something we do”, or, “something we perform” (Butler, 1990.). It is not a static characteristic but a dynamic social construct that is performed through

various behaviors, roles, and expressions in society. Gender as such includes norms, behaviors, roles, and different psychological, social, and cultural aspects associated with being a woman, man, girl, or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender refers to the characteristics, opportunities, and interactions between men and women acquired through socialization. Gender varies from society to society; it is flexible and can change over time.

Similarly, Moser defines gender as „differences between men and women within the same household and across and within cultures that are developed socially and culturally and evolve through time” (1993., 12). These differences are reflected in men’s and women’s responsibilities, roles, and opportunities, including participation in public life, constraints, access to resources, needs, attitudes, and viewpoints. The goal of gender equality is to establish a society in which men and women of different backgrounds, behavioral patterns, and needs will be valued and recognized equally, without stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination, and bias, a society they will equally contribute to its political, economic, and cultural development, enjoying equitably its benefits and prosperity. Based on such a reasoning, Gendertoolkits (n.d.), defines gender equality as „the equitable treatment of women, men, girls, and boys regarding rights, responsibilities, and opportunities“. Despite numerous efforts at local, national, regional, and international levels, gender inequality is still a global phenomenon that persists in various societies, affecting both men and women. Achieving gender equality is important for various reasons, including social justice, economic growth, and the protection and promotion of human rights.

2. Globalization and Gender Equality

Towards the end of the 19th century (1888.), the Danish feminist, Astrid Stampe Feddersen, in the context of equal rights for men and women, wrote the following: „The primary aim is to make a direct female impact on society, to have woman’s moral strength, stronger compassion, and maternal instinct to influence societal life as deserved. How often do not women resent the existing laws and say to themselves: if we women participated in writing the laws, they would not be like that” (Stampe Feddersen, 1888., 41). In the center of consideration of the gender as a social construct lies the relationship, often unequal, between men and women, which affects their rights, roles, and responsibilities in society. The Gender initiative seeks to bridge this gap of inequality in society so that men and women participate equally in all social processes as equal partners. There are numerous studies that confirm that women are inferior to men in almost all aspects. Abati, for example, notes: „...that women are a de-centered, de-natured sub-species of humanity; harassed by culture, intimated by politics and subsumed in helplessly patrilineal and patriarchal structures which pamper the male ego” (1996., 27).

For centuries, the division of labor was directed towards women performing the unpaid or poorly paid jobs of mothers, wives, and housewives, while men provided for the family by doing various more or less paid jobs, advancing concurrently on the social ladder. The very concept of management and leadership was designed and

made by men for men and for male patterns of employment. Therefore, we can rightly claim that companies, organizations, and even government institutions are gendered and that they are dominated by gendered relations in which women are considered weaker, in need of protection, and less suited for senior roles (Singh and Point, 2006., 364). Thus socially constructed gender differences gave legitimacy to men to perform managerial and leadership positions, being excused, at the same time, from taking any responsibility whatsoever for domestic 'female' work (Court, 1997., 18). Contemporary societies around the world continue, to a greater or lesser extent, to function according to this matrix (Li and Wearing, 2004.; Williams, 2000.; Thanacoody, Bartram, Barker and Jacobs, 2002.). Such difficulties led to the formation of the 'glass ceiling', a phenomenon that prevents women from occupying the highest managerial and leadership positions, even in developed democracies (Wearing, 2004.).

It is a misguided perception that globalization processes are gender-neutral, i.e. that they have an equal effect on everyone, men and women. If we take a closer look at globalization processes, we will see that they have a gender-differentiated impact. In other words, globalization has both positive and negative effects on the achievement of gender equality goals. Giddens observes globalization as a multidimensional and multi-layered process, a system of increasing connectivity, but also interdependence between economy, politics, society, and culture, and highlights its multiple effects „on both the macro level (more commercial flows, more mobility, more communication, more innovation), and the micro level, redrawing the confines between time and space, local and global and, thus all forms of collective life, social relations and the living conditions of men and women” (Giddens, 2005., 618-622). Although in theory globalization should have an equal (positive) effect on both developed and developing countries, as well as on women and men, unfortunately, it has caused numerous inequalities. Namely, in many countries women and men are differently represented in manufacturing, formal and informal sectors, and the agriculture industry. “The uneven impact of globalization by sector, therefore, has gender-based effects” (Giddens, 2005., 284).

2.1. The Positive Impacts of Globalization on Gender Equality

There is numerous evidence that globalization has initiated and accelerated the process of gender equality. The political and social aspects of globalization accompanied by technological progress and the communication revolution favored raising awareness of gender problems at the global level, networking of feminist and other movements, and lobbying networks that advocate for gender equality and the prevention of violations of women's rights. Globalization has also led to the development of international agreements and policies aimed at promoting gender equality and women's rights. In addition, numerous economic advantages of globalization have had a positive impact not only on the economic growth and prosperity of countries but also on gender equality. Increased economic opportunities across the planet mean increased opportunities for women as well, and in some cases equally paid jobs. Women slowly began to move away from agriculture and engage more in the production and service industries (Dolan and Sorby, 2003.). Thus, we can see more and more often

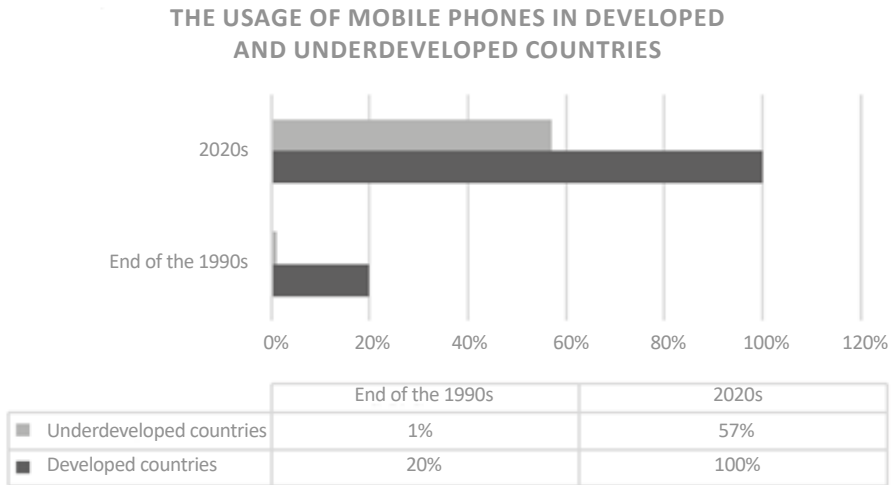
in the media and on social networks the stories of successful women entrepreneurs, women in high governmental positions, and women who leave an indelible mark in culture, science, and sports. According to Tibrizi (2019.), cultural homogeneity, which has arisen as a result of globalization processes, contributes to the spread of ideas and values of education and enlightenment, which affects the increasing number of girls and women who attend schools, even in developing countries which was not the case just a few decades ago.

Advancement in communication technologies, including the Internet, mobile phones, and social media, coincides with market liberalization, which resulted in employment growth and global mobility of goods, services, and capital (Shultz, 2005.). Thanks to the aforementioned technological achievements, an increasing number of men and women have access to information, both local, regional, and global. In addition to economic benefits, greater access to the Internet has provided women with better and faster access to information related to the roles and achievements of women in societies around the world. This resulted in increased self-awareness and self-respect, the inclusion of women in decision-making processes, both at the local and national level, as well as the shift, modification, and redefinition of behavioral models, and empowerment of women both socially and politically.

Increased access to the Internet undoubtedly equals increased business opportunities for women, access to financial services, work from remote locations, easier access to online education but also the markets for product marketing, easier interaction with customers, more flexible work in relation to the mode of operation and as well as working hours without significant travel expenses. One of the best examples is Morocco, where “home-based female weavers use the Internet to sell rugs and other textiles and to keep a larger share of their profits than traditional middle-man-based systems” (International Telecommunication Union, 2010.; Schaefer Davis, n.d.). Even in developed European Union countries and in the United States, the number of companies that employ so-called ‘teleworkers’ is increasing day by day. This mode of operation has huge benefits for women, especially those who have children and families, since women, compared to men, face greater restrictions in terms of mobility and available time (World Development Report, World Telecommunication / ICT indicators database, n.d).

In addition to the Internet, the use of mobile phones has also a very positive effect on the removal of the aforementioned limitations, i.e., their compensation, which is reflected in the coordination of work and the reduction of travel costs through online access to information and services. In addition to the difference in the number of mobile phone users between women and men, there is, unfortunately, still a significant difference between developed and developing countries when it comes to access to mobile phones. At the end of the 1990s, only one-fifth of the total population of developed countries (20%) used mobile devices. In the same period, the number of people in underdeveloped countries who had access to mobile phones was only 1%. Two decades later, there is a completely different, although still very unbalanced, picture. Today, that ratio is 100% in developed countries compared to 57% in underdeveloped countries (World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators database, n.d.). These developments are indicated in Figure 1:

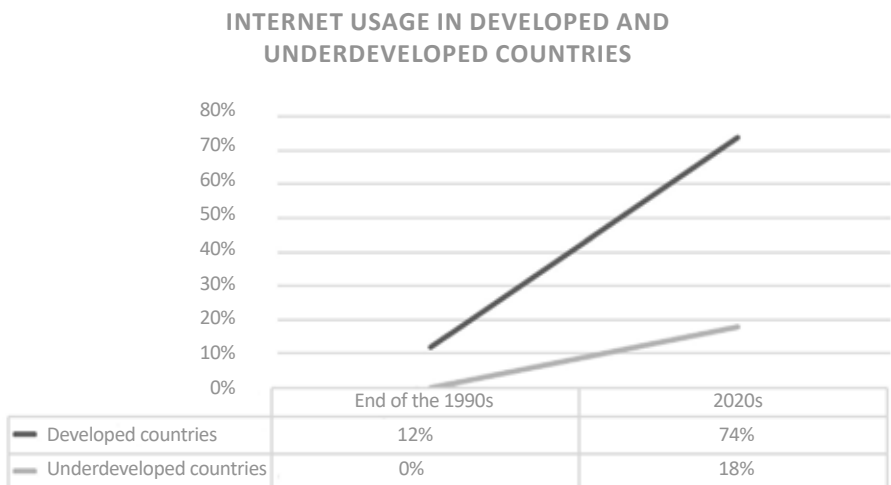
Figure 1: The increase of the usage of mobile phones in developed and underdeveloped countries in the last two decades.



Source: Authors' calculations based on the World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators database (n.d.)

Internet access has seen similar progress. Looking at the same time period, Internet usage in developed countries increased from 12% to 74% and from 0% to 18% in underdeveloped countries (World Development Report, 2020.). The mentioned data are shown in Figure 2:

Figure 2: The increase of internet usage in developed and underdeveloped countries in the last two decades.



Source: Authors' calculations based on World Development Report (2020.).

Bridging this gap would bring numerous benefits to as many as 300 million women in low and medium-developed countries, which would have numerous positive consequences for the family, society, and the country as a whole. The benefits include, *inter alia*, almost 15 billion in revenue for mobile operators, since women represent two third of the new market for the expansion of mobile telephony services. In other words, “stronger competitive pressures from greater economic integration should force employers to reduce costly gender (and other) discrimination” (Gaburro and O’Boyle, 2003.). According to Butale, globalization can be a very effective tool for eradicating gender inequality, taking into account its nature as a “complex, economic, political, cultural, and geographic phenomenon in which the mobility of money, organizations, ideas, discourses, and peoples has taken on a global or transnational dimension” (Butale, 2015.).

Globalization contributes to women’s economic empowerment, which allows women greater and more equal representation in the distribution of work: taking important positions in society and the state, including decision-making ones, making at the same time redistribution of household chores and their equal distribution between men and women. Numerous studies have shown that promoting and improving gender equality apart from having a positive effect on economic, political, and social growth and development, it has also a significant impact on reduction of the mortality of women and children, and even corruption (Katseli, 2007., 11; United Nations, 2007., 953). In addition, violation of women’s rights can have a very negative effect on the international image and positioning of the country.

According to Amartya Sen, a Nobel Prize Winner, and a famous economist, as quoted in Nusbaum (2007.) it is precisely globalization, global interactions, and interdependence, not isolationism, that forms the basis of economic growth and progress in the world. International trade, foreign investment, access to communication technology, and the spread of scientific and technical knowledge contributed to the extension of life expectancy and the reduction of poverty, which dominated a significant part of the world and unfortunately still dominate. Sen emphasizes that “despite all the progress, life is still severely nasty, brutish, and short for a large part of the world’s population. The great rewards of globalized trade have come to some, but not to others.”

2.2. The Negative Impacts of Globalization on Gender Equality

Even though the primary goal of globalization has been to bring economic growth and prosperity, its ultimate effects are highly controversial. It is estimated that globalization has increased the level of poverty, not only in poor parts of the world such as Africa and South America but also in Europe (Globalization and its Impacts 2004.). When it comes to gender equality, numerous authors agree that globalization has had a gender-differentiated effect, leaving a negative impact on the social and economic position of women, and their overall well-being (Marjit et al., 2004.). Women have always been in an inferior position in the labor market compared to men owing to the division of labor on a gender basis primarily due to reproductive and household responsibilities of women. However, liberalization processes have not been successful in

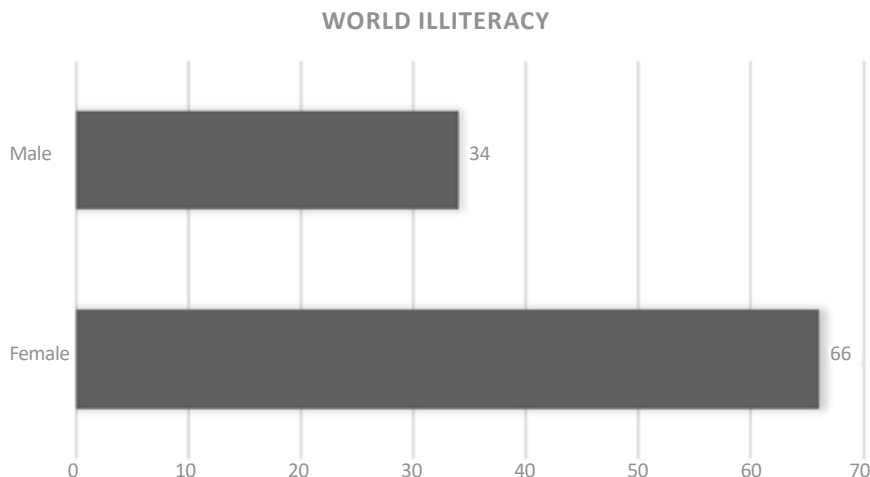
removing the inequalities of women in developing countries when it comes to access to resources, decision-making processes, and ultimately power and authority. Economic globalization guided by neoliberal policies, with an unregulated capitalist economy in its center dominated by multinational corporations and with profit maximization as the ultimate goal, has not greatly benefited women. Liberalization policies, which favor multinational corporations and the foreign direct investments they bring along, have had a negative impact on the majority of women engaged in agriculture, farming, and fishing in developing countries, whose survival depends on these products (Black and Brainerd, 2004.).

Globalization has also led to a widening income gap and increased economic inequality, which disproportionately affects women. Women are more frequently employed in the poorly paid informal sector, quite often working in the informal economy, without any legal and social protection benefits, such as pension and health insurance, sick leave, and maternity leave. Women also face numerous obstacles when taking bank loans, credits, and other financial resources, which greatly hinders the possibility and options for starting and growing small businesses (Moghadam, 1999.). Additionally, globalization has caused inhumane exploitation of women within the global supply chains of multinational corporations. Thus, women working in the garment and electronic gadget industry often work in very poor, even inhumane conditions, much longer than eight hours at a minimum wage. Overall, globalization has resulted in increased engagement of women in the labor-intensive low-wage service and production industries (World Bank, 2019.).

With the globalization of the female-dominated agricultural industry and trade, particularly in developing countries, poor local farmers, millions of them from developing countries, were left unable to compete with international economic giants, ending up being deprived of a regular income indispensable for their survival. Already difficult situation is further complicated by the serious environmental problems caused by these companies, which are reflected in the destruction of water and land resources, leaving women without access to basic resources. Unfortunately, it cannot go unnoticed that economic globalization and gender inequality have reduced the ability of many developing countries to integrate into the global economy and become a significant competitive factor, especially with female-intensive goods and services as the backbone of their economies (World Bank, 2021.). In other words, multinational corporations significantly reduced the ability of the countries to provide economic and social protection and meet the needs of their citizens in this field. It is an indisputable fact that economic growth and development are unevenly distributed and that women are much more affected than men (Fuentes Nieva and Galasso, 2014.).

Women still do most of the unpaid housework, necessary for the normal functioning of families. In addition, they have limited access to the new opportunities offered by globalization through various mobility programs, aimed at acquiring new knowledge and skills. Almost 120 million girls in the world still do not have access to education. It is estimated that of the total number of illiterate people in the world, two-thirds are women. This is clearly visible in Figure 3, indicating that 66% of the illiterate persons in the world are women and this ratio has remained unchanged for two decades.

Figure 3: World Illiteracy by Gender in %.



Source: Authors' calculations based on World Bank Data (2022.)

Another recent World Bank study estimates that the “limited educational opportunities for girls and barriers to completing 12 years of education cost countries between \$15 trillion and \$30 trillion dollars in lost lifetime productivity and earnings” (World Bank, 2018.). Such a situation has put millions of women in underdeveloped countries in a very unfavorable position compared to men, often resulting in ever-growing gender-based violence, that has become a truly global problem. The mental and physical violence to which women are exposed is not limited only to home but to the workplace and the whole of society. Many cases of violence never leave the home due to distrust in the legal system, fear of reprisals, and stigmatization in society. Fear, insecurity, uncertainty, and hopelessness have become the everyday life of millions of women in the world. According to the World Health Organization data (2019.), one in three women in the world is exposed to physical or sexual violence during their lifetime. In addition,

- „35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence,
- 7% of women have been sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner,
- 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner,
- 200 million women have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting...”

This situation poses a problem not only for the victims and the families but also for the entire society. In addition to presenting a violation of basic human rights, it also seriously threatens the economic development of the country. It is estimated that violence against women costs most countries twice as much as they spend on education (Tabrizi, 2019.). Apart from that, violence has far-reaching consequences in the sense that there is a high probability that children who grow up in dysfunctional families where violence is a daily occurrence will one day become violent themselves.

An important characteristic of gender-based violence is that it knows no borders, it occurs both in developed and developing countries, to women in all socio-economic positions (Hearn et al., 2017.).

Despite the aforementioned, 30 countries in the world still do not have a law that would regulate domestic violence, while 46 countries do not have effective legislation that treats sexual harassment in the workplace. To this should be added unequal property, ownership, and inheritance rights, which are considered crucial for economic development. Poverty, insecurity and inequality, both economic and social, favor gender-based violence (Bilimoria and Wheeler, 2020.). The fact that women perform 67% of the world's work, that they spend 3 times more time on unpaid work, and that they own only 1% of the world's wealth speaks in favor of gender inequality. Today, women perform only 10%-20% of managerial and administrative jobs, and about 600 million women work in jobs that are insecure and unprotected by labor laws. All of the above is proven to be true in a 2019 United Nations study, according to which in the private sector, less than 4% of executive director positions in 500 leading corporations are held by women, as shown on the following chart, confirming once again the thesis of 'glass ceiling' (Thanacoody et al., 2012.).

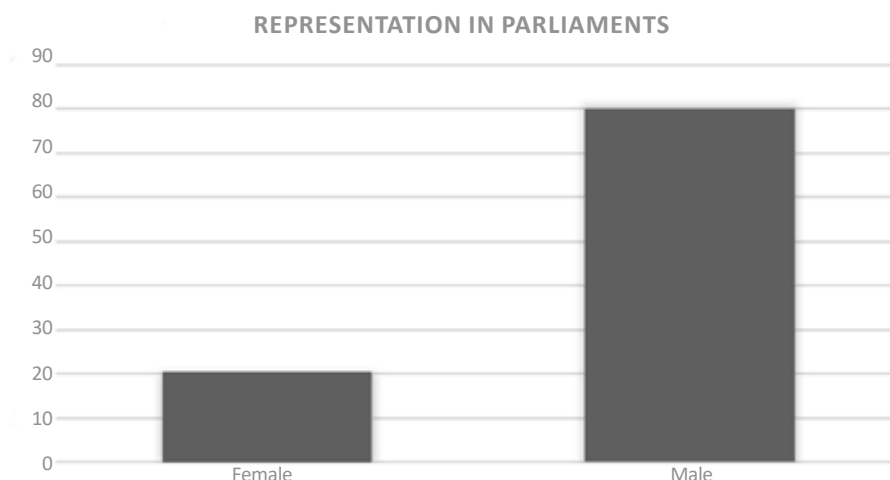
Figure 4: Leadership positions worldwide by gender.



Source: Authors' calculations based on: Zippia. "25 Women In Leadership Statistics (2023.): Facts On The Gender Gap In Corporate And Political Leadership" (2023.)

The aforementioned inequality was confirmed once again in the context of political participation or representation in world parliaments, according to which only one-fifth of seats, or 20% of the total number, are occupied by women.

Figure 5: Male and female representation in parliaments worldwide.



Source: Authors' calculations based on Zippia. "25 Women In Leadership Statistics (2023): Facts On The Gender Gap In Corporate And Political Leadership"(2023.)

Sylvia Walby (2009.) and Øystein Gullvåg Holter (2014.) emphasize the fact that almost half of the world's wealth, amounting to \$110 trillion, is in the hands of only 1% of the population, which evidences the inequality we are facing globally. At the same time, half of the world's poorest people own as much as the world's 85 richest people (Fuentes-Nieva and Galasso, 2014., 2-3). According to Oxfam data (2016.), "the situation is increasingly bleak as in 2015, 62 individuals had the same wealth as more than 3.6 billion people."

On the basis of the aforementioned, it can be concluded that globalization has caused the advent of the gender dimension of poverty. In support of this claim is the data of UN Women (2021.) that of the 1.5 billion people who live on 1 dollar a day or even less, the majority of them are women. Furthermore, based on the International Labor Organization data, the participation rate of women in the labor market is 47.4 compared to 72.3 percent of men (ILOSTAT, 2022.). This gap, disproportion and inequality between men and women, when it comes to access to education, resources, the labor market, which inevitably deepen the poverty of women, is called 'feminization of poverty'. The term was coined by Dr. Diana Pearce in 1978, and it began to enter the public discourse at the end of the 1980s, which coincides with the emergence of the third wave of globalization (Peterson, 1987.). With regards to the feminization of poverty, women from multiple marginalized groups such as single mothers, women with disabilities, women from ethnic, religious and other minority groups, and women from LGBTIQ+ communities are particularly vulnerable.

This brings us to the subject of intersectionality in the context of globalization. Oxford Dictionary defines intersectionality as "The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and

interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage” (2023.). Intersectionality is a theoretical approach that starts from the premise that people, in this case women, concurrently face numerous intertwined prejudices as multiple sources of oppression: religion, race, ethnicity, social standing, social identities, sexual orientation (Taylor, 2019.). According to Hopkins, “the concept of intersectionality challenges us to adopt a more systems-oriented and complexity-aware lens” in order to identify and explain the stated problem and adopt a multidimensional and multi-layered approach and method of tackling gender inequalities, discrimination, and poverty, which will be one of the key tasks of the governments individually, as well as the international institutions in the 21st century (Hopkins, 2018., 11).

Economic growth and prosperity of countries, as the primary goal of globalization, cannot be achieved without gender equality, equal chances, and choices for both men and women, relying on the knowledge, skills, and talents of half of the population. Based on the World Bank data (2019.), by closing the gender employment gap, GDP per capita would increase by an average of 20% across countries, and on a global level, income would increase by 5-6 trillion dollars if women had the same opportunities to start a business as men. In addition, women’s empowerment and leadership would significantly increase food production, which is of key importance not only for economic prosperity but also for the security of countries. Numerous studies have shown that gender equality is of crucial importance for the long-term and sustainable development and prosperity of countries, not only economically, but also politically, security, and socially (United Nations, 2017.).

3. Conclusion

A more decisive approach to solving the problem of gender inequality and systemic female discrimination at the international level was taken in the 1960s, which resulted, among other things, in numerous agreements, conventions at the international level and legislation at the national, the most significant of which is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). They serve as a legal framework, a basis, but also an instrument in the fight against all forms of discrimination. Numerous evidence indicates that participation in CEDAW has produced significant results in relation to the reduction of gender inequality. A very important role in reducing gender inequality was played by international economic agreements with their anti-discrimination clauses, many of which have priority over international conventions (Byrnes and Freeman, 2011.).

Although gender equality is recognized as a basic human right that all democratic countries should respect, cases of gender inequality or partial equality are present in almost all countries, democratic, less democratic, and non-democratic. There is almost no society that does not face the problems of prejudices, and stereotypes, coupled with traditional, religious, and cultural norms and standards that limit the full participation of women in public, social, and economic life. On the other hand, numerous household chores, performed by women, such as taking care of children, and the elderly, and domestic duties as well as agricultural work are still unrecognized and

undervalued. The marginalization of women, directly resulting in their discrimination in access to economic opportunities, has become widespread.

Despite all the positive changes, globalization has not succeeded in eradicating gender inequality, particularly in the field of economics, which is mostly caused by unequal opportunities and unequal access to education. Taking into account numerous definitions of globalization, it can be concluded that the mainstream deliberation about globalization is missing one very important segment, which is the gender perspective. It seems that we are facing global masculinity dominance. Overall, the conclusion arises that the relationship between gender equality and globalization is very complex and exceptionally controversial. A completely new and different approach, relationship, policies, and practices are needed that would ensure a more even, equal, and fair distribution of the benefits brought by globalization and at the same time the protection and advancement of women's rights equally throughout the world. Addressing gender-based violence, enabling female access to education, reducing economic inequality, and greater representation of women in managerial and leadership positions are key issues that need to be resolved in order to achieve gender equality. According to Dejardin: "gender equality with respect to opportunity and treatment in the global economy is essential for achieving equity and social justice, which are integral to achieving decent work for all" (Dejardin, 2009., 45).

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Menstrual Poverty: Reflections of Global Poverty in the Local Context of Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract: Menstrual Poverty in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) remains largely unexplored, and there is a lack of data on the number of women unable to afford essential menstrual supplies. The key argument of this paper is that tax policies in BiH are not gender-responsive in terms of reducing or eliminating taxes on menstrual hygiene products, which further impacts women's poverty, emphasizing that menstruation is still a taboo subject. The paper is theoretically grounded in the concepts of social stigma and the feminization of poverty, closely linked to menstrual poverty and gender inequality. Research results indicate that menstruation remains a taboo topic; women feel shame discussing it publicly, use euphemisms, and there is no systematic support solution to ease the burden on women, especially those living on or below the poverty line. It was assumed that globalization would bring economic progress and improve the status of women, which has occurred to some extent. However, the negative effects of globalization have disproportionately affected women who continue to work in lower-paying occupations, earn less, and have very few economic resources compared to men. In addition to all this, women must pay for menstrual hygiene products, further economic burdening them, and menstruation exposes them to social stigma.

Keywords: feminization of poverty, menstruation, stigma, tax policies, globalization.

1. Introduction

Due to their biological function of childbirth, women face additional monthly expenses for hygiene products, including pads, pain relievers, cleansing agents, contraceptives, and other pills for painful cycles. In developed Western countries, significant attention is given to this issue, and concrete measures are implemented to achieve gender equality. However, in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), there are no strategies to systematically address this issue. As a result, women do not have free access to these products in educational and other institutions, nor can they purchase them at lower prices. Menstrual poverty can be defined as "insufficient access to menstrual hygiene products, sanitary facilities, or adequate education" (Nadarević, 2022). Research in Croatia (Močibob, 2020, 9) on menstrual poverty showed that 36.4% of women buy

cheaper menstrual supplies, and over 10% of women stated that they cannot afford to buy them.

Although not among the most developed in the world, some countries have made significant strides in reducing the economic burden on women by abolishing the so-called “pink tax.” According to World Bank data (2022), Kenya, a lower-middle-income country, began abolishing taxes on menstrual products as early as 2004 and, by 2016, eliminated taxes on imported menstrual products and their production raw materials. Similarly, according to the same data, Malaysia, Lebanon, Tanzania, Colombia, and Mexico have completely abolished taxes on menstrual supplies, even though they cannot be classified as highly developed economies.

However, the mere abolition of taxes on menstrual supplies does not necessarily lead to a reduction in prices for end consumers due to non-competitive and/or unregulated markets. The World Bank study (2022) reveals that girls and women in Bangladesh, Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa still paid the full price for menstrual hygiene products despite the removal of taxes on these products. The reason for this is a non-competitive market, raising the question of whether the same would happen in the unregulated Bosnian market with a pervasive informal economy, and what should be done to make these products more accessible to women.

The paper is divided into three parts: the first elucidates the theoretical concepts of social stigma and the feminization of poverty, manifested both in unpaid and undervalued household labor and exploitative policies of capitalism; in the second part, the socio-cultural context of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is briefly presented, where women are still unequal, reflected in their underrepresentation in decision-making positions and additional feminization of poverty due to the costs of menstrual hygiene products; the third part presents the results of online research and interviews examining the attitudes of high school and university female students from public and private universities in BiH, as well as other young individuals aged 14 to 35, on the mentioned topic. The results will indicate whether there is an understanding among men about the processes that girls and women go through during menstruation and whether there is a stigma associated with discussing menstruation publicly.

2. Theoretical Insights into Women’s Poverty

The theoretical section of the paper is based on the concepts of social stigma and the feminization of poverty. Menstruation is commonly spoken of negatively in most societies (White 2013, 67). Due to the lack of open communication about the female body and reproductive health, menstruation becomes a source of stigma (Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler, 2013, 2-6). In the Balkans, menstruation is viewed as something dirty and as a deficiency that prevents a woman from being a complete human being (Spahić-Šiljak, 2007; Radulović, 2010). Menstrual blood is considered impure and a means of practicing black magic (Radulović, 2010), leading to people still feeling disgust and an irrational fear of seeing a sanitary pad with blood or clothes stained with menstrual blood (Roberts et al. 2002).

In addition to negative cultural and religious perceptions of menstruation, it is important to consider that menstruation is also a financial cost for a woman throughout an average of 35-40 years of her life. Feminist literature began addressing the concept of the feminization of poverty as early as the 1970s. American sociologist Diana Pearce concluded that men's poverty is mainly caused by a lack of employment, while women's poverty is more complex. Women were dependent on men and responsible for household chores, and caring for the elderly and sick, leaving them with less time for paid work (Spahić-Šiljak, 2019, 133). Women also did not and still do not have the luxury of choosing jobs and lifestyles, and when individuals do so, they face stigma and condemnation.

In the late 1990s, the United Nations further developed the concept of the feminization of poverty, now understood as "changes in poverty levels that are biased against women or households led by women" (IPC-IG 2008). Women are proportionally poorer than men, a situation that has not significantly changed, especially in less developed parts of the world. When the stigma women face due to menstruation and the additional costs of menstrual supplies are added to this, the problem becomes even more complicated.

In this paper, the concept of the feminization of poverty is used to describe the financial burden women face because they spend significant amounts from their budgets each month or face additional health problems due to the lack of hygiene products. Women's poverty is closely linked to menstrual poverty and is often invisible because menstruation is still whispered about, making it necessary to intersectionally explore poverty, gender, and the culture of each context to obtain an accurate picture of women's poverty.

Women's poverty is also linked to a gender-conditioned division of labor, as women have historically engaged in jobs that did not bring significant earnings or prestige. Gender roles placed women in the private sphere, responsible for tasks such as upbringing, education, care, and nurturing, while men were engaged as family providers, working in the public sphere that brought earnings and prestige (Spahić-Šiljak, 2019; Ferguson, 2022).

Considering that the concept of the welfare state experienced its decline in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the rise of conservative forces in the Anglo-Saxon world, global poverty levels increased. The rich became richer, and the poor became even poorer (Pudar, 2021). An Oxfam report shows that wealth disparity is growing, and corporate governance enables higher profits for a small number of the wealthy, while over 10 million people worldwide are hungry, with 60% of them being women (Oxfam briefing paper, 2023, 19). The same report estimates that over 50 countries will further reduce budgets for social needs, disproportionately affecting women again. Oxfam suggests measures such as abolishing taxes for women and other vulnerable groups, while increasing taxes for the wealthy (Ibid, 30). Until this happens, reducing taxes on menstrual hygiene products for women and making them available in educational institutions would help alleviate the situation.

3. Socio-political and Cultural Context of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

When discussing menstrual poverty and the feminization of poverty in BiH, it is important to consider the socio-political system established by the Dayton Constitution, which is based on ethnic rather than civic principles. In administrative and political terms, BiH is fragmented across multiple levels of government, making the implementation of policies and laws highly complex and challenging. Advocating for the abolition or reduction of taxes on hygiene products is a monumental task due to the need for harmonization of regulations at various levels of authority, from cantonal and entity levels to the national level. Therefore, the political complexity of the bureaucratic apparatus in the state of BiH presents a significant obstacle to regulating discrimination and enabling a fairer functioning of the state apparatus. Given that older and middle-aged men dominate decision-making positions in politics, and like many women, are not sensitized to gender issues, it is challenging to expect such a robust and complex state apparatus to reduce or eliminate taxes on menstrual hygiene products.

BiH is a patriarchal post-socialist society where globalization processes, as in other Balkan countries, have brought new employment opportunities in some sectors of industry and agriculture. However, gender inequality persists with numerous negative effects on the employment and income of women (Đurić Kuzmanović, 2019). The transition to capitalist market functioning undermined the achieved emancipatory potentials of women, who lost social and economic security and were instrumentalized for the goals of ethno national ideologies in power (Žarkov, 2008). The neoliberal market economy facilitated the privatization of large companies and the breakdown of the social justice system, disproportionately affecting women forced to work overtime on minimum wages while enduring harassment and gender-based violence. Society's impoverishment particularly affected Romani women, single mothers, women with disabilities, pensioners, and homemakers (Dokmanović, 2017).

Recent research in Bosnia and Herzegovina reveals numerous barriers to achieving gender equality in the labor market. Unpaid household work is one of the major obstacles, consuming a significant amount of women's time and resources (Selimović et al. 2022). The retraditionalization and repatriarchalization of society have also restricted women in their careers (Spahić-Šiljak and Penava, 2019). Ultimately, achieving a balance between career and private life remains a significant hurdle for women to be better represented in decision-making positions and thereby improve their economic status (Selimović et al. 2022).

In recent years, non-governmental organizations have been trying to draw attention to issues related to women's reproductive health in general, particularly menstrual poverty. One action taken was the introduction of free sanitary pads for high school girls in the Sarajevo Canton in 2022 (FENA, 2022). However, even this positive initiative in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian political landscape faced criticism, including offensive and chauvinistic comments that could even be characterized as misogyny (Nadarević, 2022). Defenders of traditional family values saw this measure as an attack on the modesty of women and girls. The question arises whether they even discuss menstruation with their daughters and wives and whether they feel embarrassed to

buy them hygiene products. It reflects a societal form of mental poverty unprepared to understand the challenges women face every month (Ibid.). Private companies, such as Violeta d.o.o., and the UNFPA office in BiH supported this initiative, but state institutions showed no interest in allocating budgetary funds for these purposes.

Despite Bosnia and Herzegovina having a strong legal framework for gender equality (Gender Equality Law 2003, Law on Protection from Domestic Violence in FBiH 2005), women remain underrepresented in political life and leadership positions. A significant number of women live on the brink of poverty. Women make up 50.9% of the population, and only 45.8% of women and girls aged 15 to 49 use contraception, positioning BiH behind countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where 67% of women use contraception (Miftari, Durkalić, and Barreiro 2021, 10).

3.1. The Cost of Menstruation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

On average, a woman in Bosnia and Herzegovina spends around 10 BAM on menstrual supplies, and monthly expenses amount to about 50 BAM (Boračić-Mršo, 2021). If the tax on menstrual supplies, currently set at 17% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, were to be eliminated, women and girls would experience significant savings. The abolition of the tax would not only be economically beneficial but would also provide psychological support, letting women know that their needs are recognized. For example, Scotland became the first country in the world to adopt a law on free menstrual supplies, thereby alleviating poverty among the most vulnerable groups of women. Attempts were made in Bosnia and Herzegovina to submit an initiative to abolish the tax on these products to the parliamentary procedure of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but unfortunately, nothing further was achieved (Boračić-Mršo, 2021). Considering that, on average, a woman spends 17,000 sanitary pads or tampons during her lifetime, costing around 3,000 Euros, the abolition or reduction of the tax would be significant support for women, especially the most vulnerable groups. Such initiatives can provoke different reactions, and those who interpret human rights and equality literally may oppose the abolition of taxes on menstrual supplies. However, international law distinguishes legal from substantive equality, which implies affirmative measures for those who do not have the same starting positions or who, due to their biological role, have different needs. Women have different needs than men, and these needs must be taken into account because they impact women's poverty.

4. Research Results

Methodology and Sample

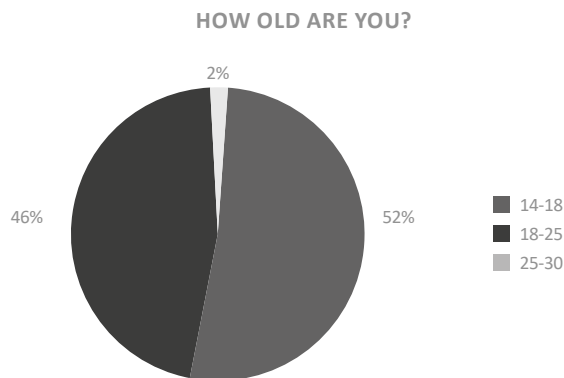
In this section, the results of qualitative and quantitative research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina are presented using an online survey method through the "Google questionnaire" form, with a sample of 447 respondents aged 14 to 35 years, including online interviews. The anonymous online survey was distributed to the

population of high school girls, female students, and women. The questionnaire consisted of 17 questions divided into several sections: the timing of the first menstruation, discomfort in talking about menstruation publicly and in front of men, euphemisms used for menstruation, fears of menstrual leakage on clothing, the availability of sanitary pads in school and at university, exemption from taxes for sanitary pads, and finally, male support in the fight to abolish taxes on menstrual supplies.

Interviews were conducted with ten respondents aged 18 to 30 years to gain better insights into the causes of menstruation-related stigma. The interviews explored whether respondents missed classes during menstruation, whether they were subjected to unwanted comments, whether they had access to menstrual supplies, what they used in the absence of such supplies, and ultimately, whether they believed these products should be free.

This sample is not representative and has its limitations, primarily because it did not cover a larger portion of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It did not include women from rural and urban areas, younger and older women, more educated and less educated women, and women from the most vulnerable groups such as Romani women, women with disabilities, and those facing developmental challenges. The interviewees were women who agreed to discuss this topic within a limited time for research. Most respondents come from the non-governmental sector in the five largest cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Mostar, Tuzla, and Zenica), as these women responded to inquiries and agreed to interviews. Two respondents completed high school, three are students, two work with a high school degree, and three have a higher education degree employed in non-governmental organizations.

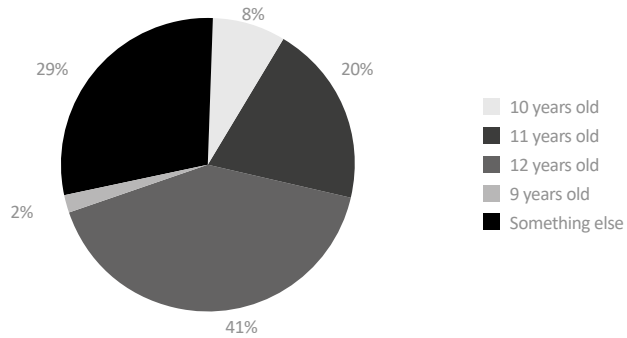
Graph 1: Age of interviewed persons



The majority of girls and women who participated in the online survey belong to the age group of 18 to 25 years, so this sample reflects the perceptions and attitudes of younger women, and it is not possible to make comparisons with older generations of women who may have different perceptions and experiences. Moreover, a staggering 98% of respondents, or 439 of them, are in the age range of 18 to 25 years, while only 2% of respondents, or 8 of them, are in the age range of 25 to 30 years.

Graph 2: Age of first period

HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOUR MENSTRUATION STARTED?



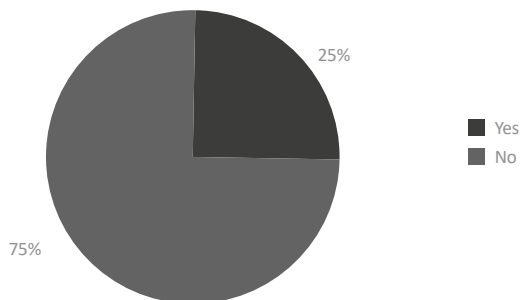
41% of the respondents had their first menstruation at the age of 12, and 30% below the age of 12, while 29% of the respondents experienced menstruation later. This indicates that it is an individual process of biological maturation, and there are no rules about when girls should have their first menstruation. Many factors can influence this, from genetic to economic conditions of life, as well as exposure to stress, but these were not the subjects of this research.

4.1. Understanding Menstruation

In this section of the paper, comparative results of the survey and interviews are presented, illustrating how girls and women perceive menstruation and the problems and obstacles they encounter. It explores whether they experience shame and stigma.

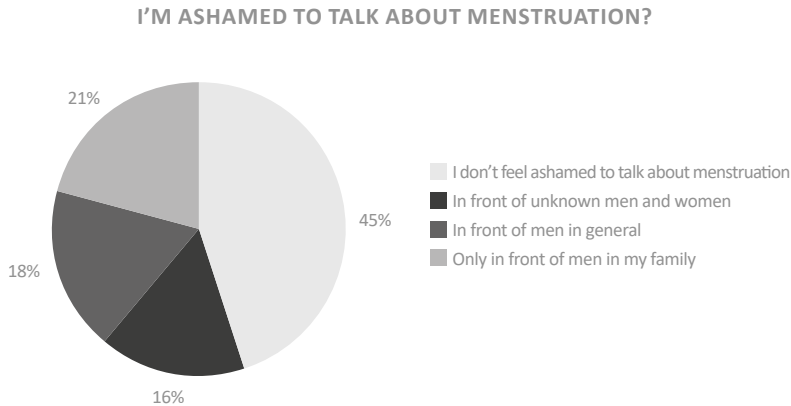
Graph 3: Understanding Menstruation

DO YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE TO PUBLICALLY TALK ABOUT MENSTRUATION?



In response to the question of whether they feel ashamed to openly discuss menstruation, 75% of the respondents answered negatively, which is encouraging. However, in the following question regarding whether they freely and without shame discuss menstruation in front of men, the responses were quite different.

Graph 4: Shame when discussing period in front of men



It has been revealed that discussions about women's reproductive health are, unfortunately, still a taboo subject. In the survey, 45% of the respondents feel ashamed to talk about menstruation and reproductive health in male society, 21% feel ashamed to discuss menstruation in front of male family members, 18.1% in front of all men, and 16.1% in front of men and women they don't know. This indicates that the respondents live in a society where menstruation is still a taboo and a source of shame (Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler, 2013, 2-6). Interviewed respondents elaborated on the cultural and socially conditioned causes of shame and stigma, which are slow to change due to socialization.

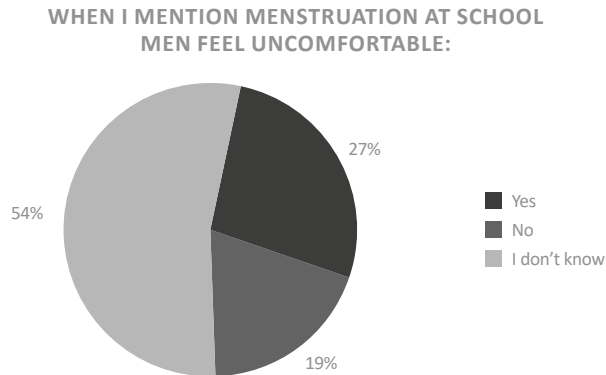
"In my house, we always whispered about menstruation in front of my father and older brother, so I tried not to let them know when I had my period." (Teacher, Sarajevo, 28 years old)

"My dad knew from the moment I got my first period and would buy me pads, but we never talked about it, especially not when I leaked on my jeans while I was at school." (Student, Mostar, 24 years old)

"In our house, we bow because we practice Islam, so when I have my period, my mother signals to my grandmother that 'those days' have come for me." (Educator, Tuzla, 30 years old)

"As much as things have changed, when we're out in public, we never tell guys that we have our period and we don't take out a pad from our bag when we go to the toilet. I somehow put it in my pocket or under my shirt so that no one notices." (Student, Zenica, 23 years old)

Graph 5: Men's reactions when menstruation is mentioned



The majority of respondents from the online survey (54%) did not know whether men feel discomfort when menstruation is mentioned. This is understandable, considering that the majority of the male population in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not sufficiently sensitive when it comes to discussing topics related to women's reproductive health. If we connect this with the previous response that women generally do not talk about menstruation in front of men, it is difficult for them to know whether men feel discomfort. In interviews, respondents spoke about the reason being that there is very little discussion about menstruation in front of men, and their friends and partners feel uncomfortable talking about it openly and with women they are not close to.

"My partner is not bothered and openly talks to me about menstruation. However, when we are with friends, I can see that he feels uncomfortable." (Lawyer, Banja Luka, 28 years old)

"As soon as one of the girls takes out pads from her bag, men turn away and leave or start looking at their phones." (High school student, Sarajevo, 18 years old)

"I, for one, openly talk about everything in front of everyone, and men are not a problem for me. It's the older women who immediately warn me that it's shameful and ask why I talk about women's matters in front of men, claiming that it bothers them. Well, it's hard for them to listen, and it's not for us to suffer from pain." (Nurse, Zenica, 20 years old)

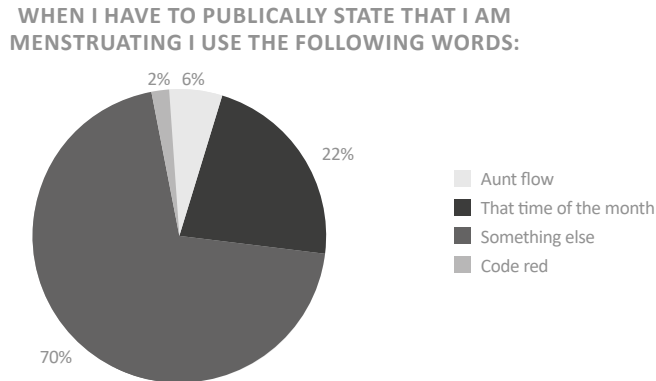
"My husband and I consider ourselves progressive, but when it comes to buying pads, he avoids it if he can, and I don't even know why he feels uncomfortable about it." (Teacher, Sarajevo, 28 years old)

4.2. Our Everyday Euphemisms

Euphemisms are used when discussing a topic that creates discomfort or when something is culturally and emotionally sensitive. This reduces or neutralizes the discomfort, making it easier to talk about a particular issue when a certain term does not have to be mentioned directly.

When it comes to menstruation, euphemisms can be as straightforward as saying, “I have that thing” or “I have that,” or they can be metaphorical, such as saying “Code red.”

Graph 6: Menstrual euphemisms



From this graph, we can see that a significant 70% of the respondents primarily use their own expressions when talking about menstruation, such as “I got that thing,” “I have those days in the month,” or “I have my thing.” Other expressions include “women’s problems,” “ketchup,” “I can’t go to the mosque,” “I don’t pray,” or “saving.” One-third (30%) of the respondents mention that they use offered euphemisms, such as “I am in the red,” “Aunt Flo came to visit,” and “I have my thing.” Interestingly, the majority use euphemisms because, as they say, it makes communication easier and also due to the taboos associated with menstruation and menstrual blood (Radulović 2010; Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler, 2013).

Interviewed respondents reflected on the reasons why they most commonly use euphemisms when talking about menstruation.

“It’s somewhat common for women to say, ‘I got it’ or ‘I have my thing’ because that’s how we got used to it, and people around us are used to it too.” (Administrative Assistant, Tuzla, 25 years old)

“To avoid people looking at me strangely or making men uncomfortable, I prefer to say ‘those days of mine’ or ‘I have my thing’ rather than saying I have my period.” (Student, Mostar, 24 years old)

“As far as I know, in every culture, women have special expressions they use instead of the word menstruation. Probably, the reason is the centuries-old stigma to which women were exposed, so they no longer question it.” (Lawyer, Banja Luka, 28 years old)

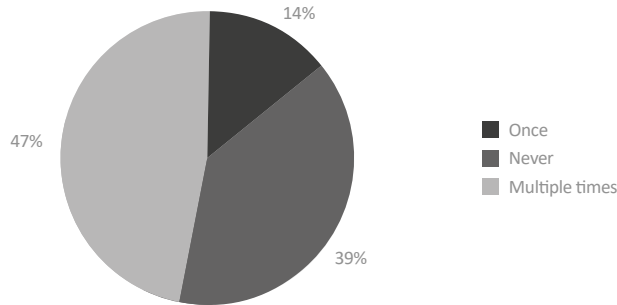
What the respondent from Banja Luka said actually shows that imposed stigma and shame are challenging to overcome, especially if active efforts are not made to deconstruct them and speak openly about menstruation, which is a biological aspect of women and is essential for their reproductive health and the reproduction of the human species.

4.3. Missing Classes Due to Menstruation

In this part of the research, we were interested in the experiences of the respondents regarding missing classes in school and at the university, with a particular focus on physical education classes and experiences related to the disposal of hygiene products.

Graph 7: Missing classes due to menstruation

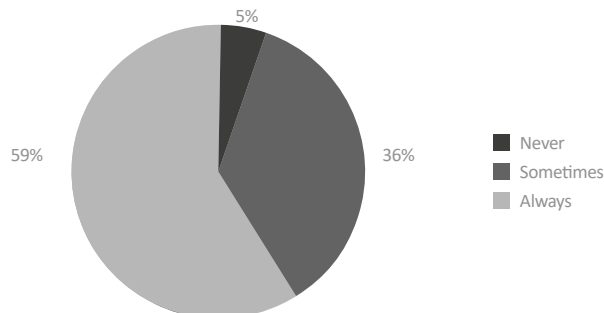
I MISSED AN EXAM OR CLASSES DUE TO MENSTRUATION:



A significant number of respondents (47%) report that they have missed classes multiple times due to menstruation. Additionally, a substantial number of respondents (39%) state that they have never missed classes due to menstruation, while the smallest percentage of respondents, 14%, missed classes only once. Women often miss classes due to menstruation, as some women experience painful menstrual periods. This makes it particularly challenging, especially in physical education classes where physical activities are expected. While most women might be able to perform these activities, they fear the possibility of menstrual leakage on their clothing, potentially causing embarrassment in front of others. When comparing these results with a study conducted in Croatia (Močibob, 2020, 17), a similarity is evident. Interestingly, the majority (72.1%) in that study misses classes due to menstrual pain, while 8.7% miss classes due to a lack of menstrual supplies.

Graph 8: Problems with active menstruating during classes

I AM AFRAID THAT MY MENSTRUATION WILL LEAK ONTO MY CLOTHES WHEN I AM AT THE UNIVERSITY/SCHOOL:



The shame ingrained in women due to menstruation is still present for the majority of women today. In fact, 59% of the respondents stated that they always or sometimes feared that their menstruation would leak onto their clothing during school classes or lectures at the university. Some girls and women experience heavy menstruation, and despite wearing double pads, there are instances where menstruation leaks onto their clothes. The fear is rooted in the potential ridicule and jokes they might face from colleagues, and this can be a very unpleasant experience (Roberts et al., 2002).

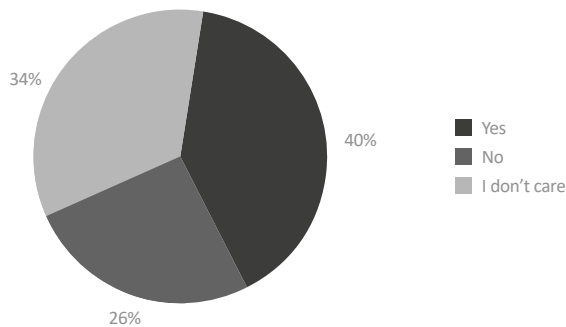
Interviewed respondents shared their own and others' uncomfortable experiences.

"I will never forget that day in seventh-grade physical education class. I didn't want the teacher to call me out because, you know, as soon as a girl says she can't participate in physical activity or will be absent, he would loudly say, 'Come on, reds, another excuse not to exercise.'" (Nurse, Zenica, 20 years old)

"My friend had very painful and heavy periods and would sometimes faint from the pain. However, that was nothing compared to the terrible comments she faced when she once went to the board, and there was a line of blood on her jeans, dripping down her leg." (Administrative Assistant, Tuzla, 25 years old)

Graph 9: Disposal of hygienic pads

I FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WHEN I NEED TO THROW AWAY MY HYGIENIC PAD IN CASE SOMEBODY CAN SEE IT:



Discomfort and shame arise when it comes to disposing of hygiene products, as the surroundings also react judgmentally. 40% of the respondents say they feel discomfort, while 34% either say they don't care or simply don't feel discomfort and shame.

However, interviewed respondents talk about being very cautious when wrapping pads and making sure they dispose of them properly, as they have been socialized to be attentive to this.

"Whenever I find myself in a unisex restroom, I don't feel comfortable disposing of a pad if there are men nearby." (High school student, Sarajevo, 18 years old)

“When disposing of trash in the dumpster, I always make sure to pack pads in a separate bag so that they aren’t visible when I take them out or don’t spill in the dumpster.” (Educator, Tuzla, 30 years old)

“I feel discomfort when I have to throw a hygiene pad in the trash so that someone doesn’t see it.” (26%)

“I have learned that menstrual blood in the trash can be used for black magic and spells, so I am very careful to wrap everything several times so that it is not visible in the bag.” (Teacher, Sarajevo, 28 years old)

“A friend told me that she went with two cousins to some witch to help her connect with a guy she liked, and that witch asked for her menstrual pad.” (Translator, Banja Luka, 25 years old)

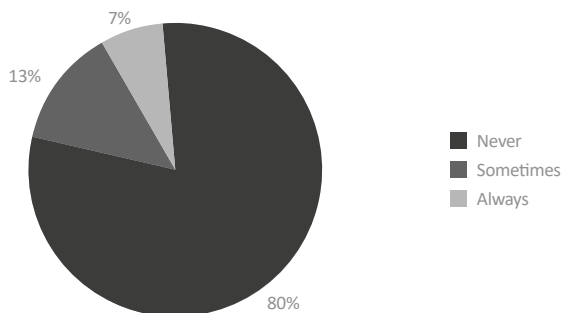
In addition to the discomfort of someone seeing a bloody hygiene pad, there are also fears that this blood might be misused for black magic, as mentioned in previous studies in the Balkans (Radulović, 2010). The reason is that menstrual blood is perceived and still regarded as impure, and this type of blood can be used to cause harm, especially to men.

4.4. Availability of Pads and Tax Benefits

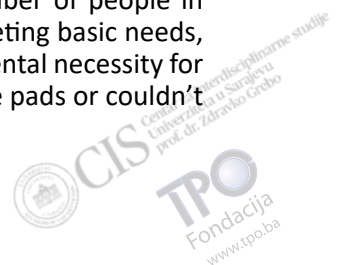
Continuing with the analysis, respondents were asked whether they had access to pads in school and at university.

Graph 10: Accessibility of hygienic pads at school

I HAD ACCESS TO HYGIENIC PADS AT MY SCHOOL/UNIVERSITY:



The majority of respondents (80%) indicated that they have never had access to sanitary pads in school or at university. Despite a significant number of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina living near the poverty line and barely meeting basic needs, purchasing sanitary pads is unfortunately not considered a fundamental necessity for many. Instead, some used toilet paper and tissue if they didn’t have pads or couldn’t afford them.



Interviewed respondents spoke about how some women, especially those from poorer families, could never afford to buy pads, so they would use rags that they washed. When at school, they would additionally use toilet paper if it was available.

Two girls who came to school in washed clothes and worn-out shoes, I saw them using toilet paper when they had their period, and sometimes they asked to borrow tissues. That’s when I realized that some girls simply don’t have the money to buy pads. (High school student, Mostar, 18 years old)

I knew that some schoolmates used cotton rags instead of pads because they couldn’t afford to buy them. (Teacher, Sarajevo, 28 years old)

The issue of acquiring sanitary pads and other necessary items for women during menstruation is a significant expense for many poorer families. For example, if two or three women in a household need to spend at least 30 KM per month, it becomes a substantial cost for the household budget. Therefore, it is essential to ensure sanitary products are provided in schools and universities.

When asked whether the law should regulate that sanitary pads are not taxed and should be more accessible for purchase, 98% of the respondents answered affirmatively. This could contribute to mitigating the effects of the feminization of poverty (IPC-IG 2008) and help women and families avoid additional financial burdens due to menstruation that men do not face. Women cannot choose to have their period every month, except in exceptional cases, so they have to budget for this expense every month, regardless of other costs they have to bear.

4.5. Support from Men

In the end, it was important to hear the opinions of the respondents on whether it is necessary to involve men in addressing the issue of menstrual poverty.

Graph 11: Men’s support



More than half of the respondents (64%) believe that they can receive support from men for changing the law to reduce taxes on menstrual hygiene products. However, 33% of the respondents believe that they would not receive such support, which is also a significant number when adding the 3% who are unsure.

The interviewed respondents provided interesting responses to this question:

“I think most men would support a tax reduction, but I don’t know if all women would support it. We lack solidarity in many issues, and now, I don’t know if we would have it in this case.” (Teacher, Sarajevo, 28 years old)

“Which capitalist man or woman, especially if we’re talking about private individuals, would support a tax reduction on a product from which they profit well?” (Educator, Tuzla, 30 years old)

“Women should organize themselves and find good lawyers, then prepare well for changes in the law, because otherwise, they will be ridiculed and portrayed as unserious and incompetent.” (Translator, Banja Luka, 25 years old)

It is significant that the majority of respondents believe that men are crucial allies in the fight against menstrual poverty and that they would support them in changing legal solutions to reduce taxes. Ultimately, menstrual poverty concerns men as well because, as spouses, partners, or fathers, they also have to bear these costs for their wives, partners, and daughters. Therefore, it is important to view this issue as part of the broader problem of family poverty.

5. Conclusion

Women and girls are subjected to greater public scrutiny and must adapt to the environment in which they live, unfortunately, an environment not sensitive to the issues of menstrual poverty, further deepening the feminization of poverty. Most of them are not familiar with these concepts, nor are they sufficiently aware of the stigma related to menstruation and women’s reproductive health. Women are so accustomed to hiding, not openly discussing menstruation, but using a large number of euphemisms, signaling discomfort and attempting to overcome it with code names. A large number of respondents stated that they have skipped physical education classes due to menstruation because they were ashamed that blood might leak onto their clothes, which could lead to ridicule and mockery, especially challenging during adolescence. Additionally, many of them are careful about how they dispose of used hygiene products in the trash, either out of shame or to prevent misuse for inappropriate purposes.

Considering that the majority of respondents stated they did not have access to free sanitary products in educational institutions, and that a large number of families in Bosnia and Herzegovina live on the poverty line, it is evident that menstrual poverty contributes to the overall poverty of women, i.e., the feminization of poverty. Tax policies need to be changed as they are not gender-responsive, and for that, the support of both women and men is required, as indicated by the majority of respondents.

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Globalization of Education - Opportunity or Obstacle for Gender Equality

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Abstract: The aim of this paper was to explore the relationship between two processes: educational socialization and globalization. Considering that globalization contributes to numerous changes, including those in education, the paper examined the state of gender equality in family upbringing and the educational system.

A literature review serves as a method for synthesizing the results of various studies to provide insights into the phenomenon of the globalization of education and identify areas that require further research. The paper provides an overview of the definition of globalization in the context of education, the relationship between education and gender equality, the characteristics of gender socialization in family upbringing, and the occurrence of gender stereotyping in education.

The main conclusions of the paper emphasize the impact of globalization on various societal spheres, including politics, economy, education, upbringing, culture, and gender equality. However, globalization has not contributed to gender equality in family upbringing or the education system. Behaviors learned from the family in early childhood influence behaviors during adolescence, making it essential to model behaviors that promote gender equality.

After internalizing values from the family, children continue the learning processes in the education system. Gender inequality is noticeable in textbooks, in the attitudes transmitted by teachers to children, as well as in the arrangement of spaces where boys and girls spend their time. In other words, education further confirms the majority of norms from the family.

Keywords: upbringing, education, globalization, gender equality, gender socialization

1. Introduction

Globalization has contributed to many changes in society. One example is the rapid development of technology and the ability to connect on a global level. The advancement of the internet and social networks has facilitated communication, even between less developed and more developed countries. It was assumed that the impact of globalization would leave a mark on gender equality, the rights of girls and women, and eliminate discrimination. However, there are still examples of discrimination based on various grounds and the denial of fundamental human rights.

One such example is the case in March 2022 when the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan banned the education of girls beyond the sixth grade.²² These events illustrate that, despite processes of modernization, digitalization, and globalization, fundamental human rights can still be violated. This paper reflects on the existing transmission of gender stereotypes and the potential promotion of gender equality through the globalization of education and upbringing.

The goal is to explore the relationship between primary and secondary educational socialization and the processes of globalization through a review of relevant literature. The research design is qualitative. Using a hermeneutic approach, the focus is not only on the research phenomenon of gender equality but also on its global and local context. The research approach is qualitative, and description, analysis, and synthesis will be the main paths of conclusion in this paper. The descriptive method is applied to depict phenomena, examining the state of gender equality in family upbringing and the educational system. This method is combined with the hermeneutic approach, which focuses on the context of the research subject.

2. Towards the Concept of Globalization

Globalization is a phenomenon of our time for which there is no unequivocal definition. The world has always been connected through various segments of human life. Historically, with each geographic discovery, the world became increasingly global in the sense that humanity sought to overcome distances between destinations. Today, globalization can increasingly be viewed as a development model that is not a choice but rather a contemporary reality of international relations because what happens there holds significance here (Babić Krešić, 2015).

An interesting perspective on globalization comes from the author Vandana Shiva: "Globalization is not the intercultural interaction of different societies. It is the imposition of a specific culture on everyone else. Globalization is not an aspiration for ecological balance on a planetary scale. It is a plunder carried out by one class, one race, and often one gender of a single species over all others. In the dominant discourse, 'global' signifies the political space in which the dominant local subject aspires to global control, liberating itself from responsibility for the constraints arising from the imperatives of ecological sustainability and social justice. In this sense, 'global' does

²² More about educational restrictions for girls in Afganistan: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/afganistan-talibani-djevojcice-skola/31766391.html>

not represent a universal human interest; it represents a concrete local and parochial interest and culture” (Shiva, 2006, cited in Babić Krešić, 2015, p. 383).

Globalization is transforming politics, culture, and society, thereby imposing new demands on upbringing and education. Pedagogy, as a social science, needs to embrace new challenges and create a modern and contemporary system of upbringing and education. In addition to enhancing information and communication skills, intercultural abilities, and foreign language learning, we must not forget the growing awareness of human rights. This includes the increasing need to create a gender-equal society and provide equal developmental opportunities for both boys and girls.

As Previšić (2007) emphasizes, “For the pedagogy of lifelong learning and socialization in the network of global knowledge society, alongside information, new technologies, and new competencies, new relationships among people and different friendships play an important role. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize its humane variant of nonviolence, tolerance, suppression of extremism, prejudices, and social stereotypes regarding differences among people in terms of origin, religion, race, and ideological diversity” (Previšić, 2007, p. 183).

The concept of globalization is closely tied to the idea of global education, which focuses on understanding the basic concepts and principles of global interconnectedness in a world of differences. Its main tasks include addressing issues resulting from this interconnectedness, developing the skills needed to solve fundamental global problems (such as poverty and inequality), and ultimately accepting the principles of the values of global interconnectedness through behaviors that affirm the interdependence of the world based on principles of equality, justice, and pluralism (Sablić, 2014). Globalization has set new standards for gender equality, and the following describes the current positioning of gender equality in family upbringing and educational institutions.

3. The Relationship between Upbringing and Gender Equality

Hudolin (2018, cited in Chang, 2003) believes that globalizing education means providing everyone with access to education, teaching, and knowledge, which is universally recognized as a right in numerous international documents. Hence, there is an increasing emphasis on equal opportunities, the significance of lifelong learning, adult education, principles of inclusion, the integration of school and work, etc. Education for all must also be the education of each individual (Vuksanović, 2009).

Upbringing is the process of shaping individuals, building and molding human beings with all their physical, intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and labor-related characteristics. It is equally important in the societal and individual life of each person because it enables the formation of every individual. The primary purpose of upbringing lies in transmitting the past experiences of humanity to new generations that continue the works of their ancestors. Upbringing is a fundamental condition for the maintenance and development of human communities (Slatina, 2005).

From a societal perspective, upbringing is viewed as a generational phenomenon. Therefore, upbringing is defined as the transfer of experiences, knowledge, and overall social heritage from an older generation to a younger one. In this sense, upbringing not only has the task of transmitting the experience of the older generation but also aims to equip the younger generation with the skills to develop and enrich that experience in the process of transmission and adoption. It is not only about maintaining continuity but also about further developing what already exists (Bratanić, 1993). In addition to transferring experience, older generations also pass on understandings of gender roles to younger generations. Future parents, for example, prepare for the arrival of a male or female child with stereotypically defined colors of clothing, strollers, cribs, encouraging boys to play with cars, guns, and tools, and girls with dolls and kitchenware. Gender stereotyping is most visible through upbringing, including certain elements of education.

When we consider the specifics of upbringing in the past and present, we cannot help but wonder what kind of upbringing we truly desire. Which educational principles and methods from the past do we want to retain in the present? Have we succeeded in raising boys and girls so that they have equal rights and choices? Are we nurturing empathy in our children, and are they ready to accept others who are different? Are daughters still (in some communities) considered a “shame to the family,” while sons are “reasons for celebration”? Was there an upbringing crisis in the past? Are we currently in an upbringing crisis, or is it yet to come? Does the truth scare us that we might still treat male and female children unequally and unfairly?

We can all agree that we want to raise individuals in the spirit of humanism, characterized by qualities such as honesty, justice, equality, integrity, sincerity, humanity, camaraderie, cultural behavior, principledness, critical thinking, self-criticism, a sense of personal dignity, optimism, self-mastery, a sense of community, a positive and responsible attitude toward work and its results, discipline, and so on. However, everyone expects parents and educational institutions to provide answers on how to achieve this, how we will educate for the common good. The answer lies in the values and knowledge we impart to boys and girls and the abilities we develop in them.

4. Gender Socialization in Family Upbringing

Anthropologists often express dissatisfaction with defining socialization as the process of learning social roles, considering it too narrow. Defined this way, socialization is, for them, the learning process that takes place in childhood, as an individual's personality begins to develop and integrates into society through family orientations (First-Dilić, 1983). Before explaining the phenomenon of gender socialization in family upbringing, it is essential to describe the difference between the terms “gender” and “sex.” Spahić-Šiljak (2019, cited in Lindsey, 2015, p. 4) states, “sex is what makes us biologically male or female, while gender determines masculinity or femininity in a specific context. Sex is an assigned category because a person is born with it, but gender is acquired because it must be learned.” On the other hand, “gender refers to social, cultural, and psychological attributes ascribed to one or the other sex, primarily inter-

preted as: 'A concept related to social differences between women and men, differences that are learned, change over time, and have a wide range of variations within a culture and between cultures'" (Spahić-Šiljak, 2019, cited in Anić, 2011, p. 25).

A characteristic of all societies is that a significant part of an individual's gender socialization takes place within the family framework, and only later within other social groups, both informal (e.g., peer groups) and formal (school, work organization). The family – defined as a socially recognized group of individuals in interaction – has been and remains the context in which each of us began to understand how to behave, developed initial work habits, and adopted stereotypes determined by gender. Even in the most developed societies (where a significant part of socialization, especially education, occurs outside the family framework), the predominant part of an individual's initial learning through interaction with others takes place within the family circle rather than outside it. This is why childhood is considered a critical period in the process of an individual's socialization. Socialization continues to be one of the fundamental functions of the family (First-Dilić, 1983).

In the development of personality traits, the first year of life is crucial, making primary socialization, as concluded by many sociologists and psychologists, the most important stage in the socialization process. Moreover, we can say that this process begins even before birth, as parents often plan ahead, choosing names, acquiring toys, and carefully decorating the space, selecting visible symbols that will make their child recognizable as a boy or a girl. Thus, the first identity imposed on us from the outside is our gender identity (Ždralović, 2019).

According to the theory of gender socialization, gender differences are a product of a specific culture, and gender inequalities result from the socialization of members of a society into different social roles. In the process of learning gender roles, children are guided by educational tools such as rewards and/or punishments that reinforce or inhibit behaviors. Many critics of gender socialization theory argue that people are not passive objects subjected to gender programming but are active creators of their own roles in society. However, contemporary research has shown that society does norm gender roles. Additionally, toys, books, and television content for young children influence the perception of differences between men and women (Giddens, 2007).

A similar understanding of gender roles is offered by the theory of social learning. Gender differences exist because the environment creates, interprets, values, and encourages them, prompting girls and boys to behave in ways that align with their culture. Differences between boys and girls will persist as a gender norm as long as the environment continues to believe that their behavior must be normatively different and thus associated exclusively with one gender (Maleš, 1988). The theory of gender schemas also emphasizes the influence of the environment. In early childhood, children learn gender-typed behaviors from others in their surroundings, and their accumulated experiences are organized into gender schemas that help them better understand the world. Multidimensional and critical thinking about gender encourages children to create gender equality (Berk, 2015).

Therefore, children learn about gender roles very early and conform to the patterns imposed by their environment. Beliefs that certain characteristics and abilities are appropriate and belonging to men or women are called gender stereotypes (Berk, 2008). For example, gender stereotyping is clearly demonstrated in the perceived division of tasks among children. They often believe that being a doctor and/or pilot is meant for men, while being a hairdresser and/or teacher is meant for women. Gender stereotyping is also noticeable in the perception of the roles of fathers and mothers. Topolčić (2001) explains that the traditional division of roles between spouses, which many blindly follow, implies that the man is the head of the household and responsible for providing for the family, while the woman is responsible for household chores, childcare, and caring for sick and elderly household members. Globalization changes are reflected in family life, altering the status of women in the family, who are no longer confined to the roles of wife and mother. Numerous dual-career families have emerged, automatically demanding the equalization of roles and power between marital partners. However, despite the significant changes in the status of women in society, with a drastic increase in their participation in the labor market, a different picture of the division of labor between marital partners in the household, or within the family, has emerged.

Moreover, in most marital communities, spouses, whether consciously or unconsciously, have adopted aspects of traditional marital roles, yet they have not fully adapted them to the egalitarian ideals of modern times (Kokorić et al., 2013). Although women now have significantly greater rights than before, when such thinking was legally sanctioned, patriarchal attitudes still influence the thoughts and actions of many members of contemporary society. From an early age, boys are raised to be strong, not to cry, not to show emotions, not to play with dolls, not to wear aprons, and not to help with household chores. They are expected to succeed, express their opinions, and fight for themselves (Topić, 2009). Striving for global values, educators should develop awareness in both boys and girls that equality provides equal opportunities to both groups. This way, the potentials of girls in, for example, information technology, can grow just as the potentials of boys in helping professions (such as educators or social workers), which are stereotypically believed to be male or female occupations. Additionally, with easier access to information today, educators are offered a wide range of educational content on gender equality that they can present through their own pedagogical work.

Traditional understanding of gender roles imposes burdens on both women and men. It limits the development of women's potential and opportunities for education, employment, and financial independence. On the other hand, the traditional view of the role of men affects their mental health and does not allow room for error. For instance, society creates and encourages beliefs that men must not be unemployed. Society expects them to earn a living and support their families. When they fail to meet these expectations, they are subjected to condemnation and criticism. It is important to note that various factors dictate the possibility of employment (education level, job market demand, economic-political situation, etc.) and that an individual cannot directly influence some of these factors.

5. Gender stereotypes in relation to the ecological systems theory model

We will notice that the development of a child is influenced by the entire system: family, kindergarten, school, peers, health institutions, media, etc. Transitions from the influence of the family to the influence of kindergarten, school, media, and the like clearly demonstrate the interaction of these systems. Bronfenbrenner, who emphasized the necessity of understanding child development in their immediate environment, wrote about these influences and transitions, providing the model of ecological systems theory (Pašalić Kreso, 2012). The system that has the first and most direct influence on the individual is the first circle of the microsystem, which includes the family and household members, kindergarten, school, and peers.

A child observes and understands life through relationships in the family. The “transition” from the family to kindergarten or school does not imply that the influence of family upbringing ceases or that previously learned beliefs and acquired habits are forgotten. Family upbringing has the most powerful influence on shaping personality, and what we adopt in the earliest age accompanies us throughout adulthood and through other social interactions.

In contemporary times, there is an institutionalization of childhood, meaning that children spend an increasing amount of time in educational institutions. Continuous development of the quality of the educational process, adaptation to individual needs of children, and collaboration between families and educational institutions emerge as a necessity. The microsystem represents the environment with which an individual interacts on a daily basis, emphasizing the importance of the role the individual assumes with respect to the environment as it determines the nature of relationships, e.g., childcare and school represent microsystems (Somolanji Tokić, 2018). The mesosystem, the next circle, represents the area of connection between different environments of the microsystem, the next exosystem consisting of the social, political, religious, and other environments with which the child interacts through other people. The broadest context encompasses all others, known as the chronosystem. Certainly, at the center of the model is the child (Pašalić Kreso, 2012). This chronological representation of a child’s environment shows the complexity of the ecological transition from one to another. The value system adopted in the family comes under the influence of the value system of childcare and school. The child adapts to new rules, adopts new values, habits, and ways of thinking.

However, the strongest influence on a child’s attitudes comes from the family. This is the first environment that a child encounters and interacts with. As it is ingrained in our culture, and has been emphasized several times, that the mother spends more time with the children, her role is crucial in shaping attitudes, choosing values that the child will cherish, and even adopting gender roles. Topić (2009) emphasizes that mothers raise their daughters to prepare them for entering a world where they will not be entirely equal. This can explain the upbringing in which a son helps his father with household repairs, and a daughter helps her mother with household chores. Children’s responsibilities often align with these divisions, so girls often have dishwashing as a household chore, while boys, for example, take out the trash, clean the yard, and so on. According to Topić (2009), upbringing and what we observe in

childhood, when we are not yet able to interpret or understand anything, irreversibly imprints on our memory and shapes our value frameworks and future behaviors.

Children, at around two to three years of age, begin to reliably categorize themselves or other individuals based on a specific gender. By the age of four, children have already developed ideas about who is responsible for what at home (Heinrich Boll Stiftung Foundation - HBS, 2004). Certainly, both women and men suffer from “gender-determined emotional dynamics” (Topić, 2009, according to Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1999). A father’s presence is defined by his absence, employment, fatigue, and in leisure time, mostly watching television and relaxing. It is not uncommon for children from an early age to learn to let their father rest while simultaneously considering it acceptable to interrupt their mother at any time and ask for what they need or seek help from her. This is something that later reflects in relationships where a husband feels entitled to interrupt his wife at any moment to ask something or seek help, while women do this less frequently (Topić, 2009, according to Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1999).

On the other hand, women’s employment has not at all reduced their responsibilities in the household. According to Milić (2007), regardless of how much a woman works and earns, it is expected of her, and she herself tries to see herself as the “victim” of the family. In other words, women accept the role of the victim or understand their own role in the family as primary (because they are mothers, wives, homemakers), all due to beliefs, acquired beliefs. This trinity of women’s roles in the family does not show a tendency to change or at least reduce women’s obligations. The long-standing tradition of transgenerational transmission of the belief that a woman is sometimes a victim, but that even as such, she can endure everything because it demonstrates her power and strength, sets high demands on upbringing and education. This self-relationship exhausts women and opens the possibility for these same women to raise the next generations according to these postulates.

6. Gender Stereotypes in Education with a Focus on the Mesosystem and Chronosystem

After analyzing the influence of family upbringing on the formation of gender stereotypes, we will now turn our attention to the occurrence of gender stereotypes in education. Following the family setting, children enter the next microsystem – kindergarten, and then school. The values promoted in these systems may not necessarily align with the values a child has adopted in the family.

Children independently or with the help of school staff study material from the primary educational tool – textbooks. Baranović and colleagues (2010) concluded that gender stereotypes are transmitted to children through textbooks. The analysis of the professional roles of characters in textbook texts yielded significant results. The results showed that female characters most commonly appear as homemakers, teachers, students, and nurses. “It is indicative that among the most represented professions are typical ‘female’ occupations, i.e., occupations traditionally considered feminine: teacher and nurse” (Baranović et al., 2010, p. 362). In contrast to the

‘female’ occupation of nurses, male characters appear as doctors, “thus sending a message to students about the higher positioning of men in the professional hierarchy” (Baranović et al., 2010, p. 363).

The textbooks exhibit stereotypical representations of the roles of men and women in society in general, but especially in the family, as highlighted by Mujić and Knežević (2016) concerning textbooks for primary education. Although the Law on Secondary Education states that contents promoting gender equality are an integral part of the curriculum, the following texts, encountered most often by children, include: mom cooks lunch, and dad watches television, or mom is depicted with an apron, and dad in business or work attire; girls cry, and boys, if they cry, are labeled as girls; girls are encouraged to be more obedient than boys because shyness, withdrawal, and emotionality are attributed to them, while boys are attributed with assertiveness and mischief; girls are shown in textbooks through examples that their place is at home with the stove and children; female characters are often placed in the sphere of private, passive, and dependent, while men belong to the public sphere of action with the role of family providers (Mujić and Knežević, 2016).

All these are stereotypes and stereotypical images of the roles of women and men, or girls and boys, who will later successfully live in these roles as formed men and women. However, many experts in the fields of sociology and psychology argue that stereotypes do not have to be harmful in themselves because they result from generalization, but they are harmful because they are associated with prejudices (e.g., biased and often incorrect evaluation of individuals or social groups) and discrimination (distinguishing one group or excluding one group or population from another) (Mujić and Knežević, 2016).

In the education system, there is a correlation of several factors. Besides personal motivation and genetically determined personal characteristics influencing a child’s or student’s personality, peers, educators, teachers, school staff, external school collaborators, and even the physical environment of educational institutions all play a role. It is considered that teachers reinforce feminine as opposed to masculine behaviors in children of both sexes, i.e., they reinforce obedience and assertiveness in both boys and girls (Gršetić, 2021, according to Berk, 2015). Boys usually receive more attention from educators than girls, from kindergarten to college. Boys will be given more time to talk and more time to receive praise, but they will also be disciplined more harshly. On the other hand, boys are usually louder and more demanding, which will be attributed to biology (Gršetić, 2021). Fortunately, although the genotype is important, it is not necessarily unchangeable.

Every person possesses both feminine and masculine traits; we are empathetic and harsh, weak and strong. However, depending on the upbringing influence and an individual’s choice of behavioral style, these traits will be more or less pronounced. Women endorse the value of strength, which society perceives as a powerful tool. Do men begin to support and demonstrate the values of tenderness and understanding? Although expressing feminine and masculine traits is a reason for gender discrimination, it is also a step towards gender equality. Additionally, gender discrimination based on the expression of “female and male” traits can be explained through the

concept of gender policing. Gender policing represents a “(self)regulation mechanism triggered by noticing an unusual gender identity performance, followed by sanctions or forcing the subject to conform to a valid gender expression. Gender policing is, in fact, an example of societal imposition, later enforcing normative gender expressions on an individual considered not to exhibit their gender identity appropriately, as assigned at birth” (Vučić, 2021: 47).

A child is born helpless. As mentioned earlier, it is born into one system – the family – and then becomes part of other systems: kindergarten, school, religious institutions, healthcare institutions, neighborhood, work environment, socio-political organizations, media, tradition, customs, culture, etc. All these systems communicate with each other and influence the central element of the system – the child – who carries various personality traits. Upbringing and education are processes that flow and are not tied to just one ecosystem or a specific institution. Similar to globalization contributing to the integration of norms, cultures, behavioral patterns, etc., from different societies, these systems also interweave, resulting in direct impacts on an individual’s life.

Family, educational institutions, and media are responsible for the educational and upbringing process shaping the mental perceptions of young people. It is common for parents to raise children in one way, without presenting stereotypical social roles, advocating for equal opportunities and actions for boys and girls in society, in education, and so on, while educational institutions teach children differently. In this context, society is responsible for prescribing the content of education, and educators for the style in which they will nurture or connect family beliefs with the beliefs of an institution that is part of public life. If there is a difference in beliefs and values taught by the family and the school, children encounter an unclear and undefined value system in which they don’t know whom to trust: parents or teaching staff who say and do what is written in the textbook. The media, which also follow a certain value system, are not immune to stereotypical representations of gender roles. By adopting this societal pattern, the media act in the public space through reporting, which also contributes to gender stereotypes. In this case, they, as the third party in the formation of truth, only confirm this traditionally well-trodden path of stereotypes (Mujić and Knežević, 2016).

The media and their reporting style influence the shaping of public opinion. This is most often manifested through politically incorrect speech, presenting women as objects, and men as respected leaders and politicians, etc. Since we are all consumers of media content, regardless of gender and age, we absorb gender stereotyping through media communication channels and subconsciously adopt its principles.

7. Conclusion

Globalization has impacted all spheres of society: politics, economy, education, upbringing, culture, etc. Its influence is reflected in shaping the behavior of individuals to respect the uniqueness and diversity of others, including marginalized groups, to which women belong. However, gender equality is not as pronounced in family upbringing or the education system.

Habits, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions are primarily adopted by children in the family, so it is desirable for parents to model and promote values such as gender equality. Behaviors learned from the family in early childhood influence behaviors during growth. If a child learns from an early age, by example, watching the mother do all the household chores and the father lying and resting; two outcomes are possible. First, a positive copy of the model when children adopt the behaviors of parents, and second, a negative copy of the model when children form completely opposite behaviors; for example, my mother took over all household chores, I will not do that but will strive to share responsibilities equally with my partner. Various studies in the field of psychology have shown that adopted habits and beliefs up to the age of five most often become part of one's personality but can be corrected with will and learning.

After internalizing values from the family, children continue the learning processes in the educational system. Educators and/or teachers do not necessarily have to support the same values as the family, but as mentioned earlier, it has been observed that they actually support gender inequality. This is evident in textbooks, in the attitudes teachers convey to children, in the organization of rooms where boys and girls spend time, etc. Therefore, education only further confirms the majority of norms from the family.

Contents and values adopted in the educational system influence society as a whole because students (who make up society) acquire knowledge about gender and gender roles, and this knowledge shapes their view of the world, others, and themselves. Textbooks, as the primary teaching tool, should contribute to strengthening awareness of gender equality. Textbooks are crucial in shaping young people's awareness of life, society, social and gender roles, values, and many other social principles.

In summary, globalization represents the development of science, information technology, the economy, and society in general, and through this process, gender equality is viewed differently. Even in developed countries worldwide, gender inequality exists, and globalization has contributed to understanding how gender stereotypes and discriminatory beliefs affect everyone. Respecting all members of society involves providing equal opportunities to every gender. Women's achievements and rights were supposed to contribute to their equal involvement in social, political, economic, and cultural spheres.

From the earliest age, children are not taught about gender equality by parents or educators. Even pedagogical tools and resources do not favor gender equality. Certainly, the globalization of education is an opportunity for gender equality. However, education of parents and educators is necessary, as well as strengthening skills to contribute to the equal participation of boys and girls, women and men in household duties, education, work environments, or society in general. In addition to education, it is necessary to strengthen skills for critically analyzing media content that propagates gender inequality, which is rapidly and widely disseminated to the public. It is certain that lifelong learning can develop competencies for living with others, with differences, where everyone will be provided with equal opportunities for growth and development.

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THEME II "GENDER AND SOCIETY"



Male Initiative and Female Passivity: Gender Norms as the First Step Issue in Romantic Relationships

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Abstract: This paper explores issues related to gender biases regarding male initiative and female passivity in romantic relationships. Key questions addressed by the paper include why it is believed that men must initiate romantic encounters, why women are expected to be passive, and why female initiative is viewed as a form of promiscuity. Is a woman merely a reward for male initiative and persistence? Are shy men considered less masculine due to their shyness? The paper will also delve into the philosophy of love as a concept that synthesizes the beings in the realm of their emotions, characterized by ideals such as honesty, openness, and directness, as well as the fulfillment of emotional relationships resulting in the liberation of pure emotional affection in realized sociality. This will raise questions about the presence of gender stereotypes in the domain of initiative in romantic relationships, with a snapshot provided by specific research conducted within the American context. The paper will also explore alternative perspectives, addressing what needs to be done to break down gender stereotypes and identifying the steps towards emancipation required to achieve this goal.

Keywords: initiative, passivity, stereotypes, norms, love

1. Introduction

The question of the first step in forming romantic relationships is one of the fundamental questions. Who will be the initiator of a romantic encounter? Who will be the one to ask for a date? Who will be the first to admit their feelings? These questions remain highly relevant on a global level, and debates continue both offline and online, especially on social media, regarding whether a man should take the first step or whether these traditional norms should be left to fade away, placing men and women in entirely equal positions. It is clear that the struggle against inherited norms in our society is still ongoing, and the task remains to examine the extent to which these norms are still relevant, how much they persist in society, and how they correlate with the emancipation of men and women from outdated behavioral patterns.

This paper will consist of three parts. The first part will be a philosophical overview presenting a more abstract and reduced philosophy of love, attempting to reach the question of love in its essential nature. It should not be expected that all the secrets of love will be unveiled or all its aspects examined in this summary. Although that would be an interesting and concise endeavor, it is sufficient for these paragraphs to stimulate thinking and deepen knowledge on this topic. Additionally, a few words will be shared on whether it is possible to achieve a quality romantic relationship when faced with the obstacles of gender norms.

The second part of the paper will have a sociological nature, addressing the presence of gender norms in romantic encounters that exist today. These norms will be illustrated through several studies from different time periods, providing a genesis of the development of these gender norms. The question of the extent to which civil society is capable of social emancipation will be raised. As an example, the American space, representing one of the dominant societies globally, especially in the realm of the internet as a contemporary means for romantic encounters, will be considered. This will allow for a comparison between a relatively advanced capitalist society and other advanced societies, as well as societies located on the capitalist periphery. Research conducted at various universities among student populations, in different cities among working people, and among people of different ages, etc., will provide a dynamic picture, primarily a generational one, of the understanding of gender norms in the realm of romantic encounters, especially the gender norms of the first step.

The third part of the paper will be a critical reflection on the results of these analyses, raising questions about what needs to be done, how one can contribute to the fight for emancipation, and whether there are lasting solutions to this issue.

2. The Possibility of a Philosophy of Love

When discussing the formation of romantic relationships, primarily a sociological question, one cannot overlook what emerges as the essence of romantic relationships – love. What is love? This is one of the most difficult questions. Attempting to reach a general definition of love would require a significant reduction, after which it could be said that love is a connection with something or someone. Different intensities and characters of love can be present, but its essence lies in approaching something outside of ourselves, to which we are attracted, fulfilling us as imperfect beings that surrender themselves to the Other in order to achieve synthesis with the Other. Thus, you can love friends, partners, ideas, things, states in which we find ourselves, etc., everything with which there is a sense of unity based on the freedom to approach.

When discussing different concepts of love, it should be noted that the concept of love is challenging to reduce to just one conception, but one very important conception is that love is the construction of truth. What would truth in love be? A truthful relationship is one built on honesty as one of its pillars, a space for beings to exist outside the pressure of imposed norms, a space of mutual giving and acceptance as an act of mutual construction. According to the theory posed by Badiou, the question arises of what the world is when it arises from duality, not unity (Badiou, 2011). This is

the question of the relationship between the subject and the object, the relationship between us and what is outside us, even when it comes to people. If connectedness with the Other is born through this sociality, then love can be considered a bond of realized sociality and a space of mutual construction. Sharing oneself means presenting oneself, and the common feature of these two beings that present themselves must be honesty. Thus, love is still reduced to this feeling of togetherness, of connection, but precisely this can help understand how certain obstacles presented in the form of the gender norm of the first step can be overcome by the natural spirit of human sociality that strives for freedom, and how much this gender norm can be an obstacle to the development of a truly loving relationship.

This will not delve into a deeper interpretation of love, primarily because the essence of the paper is not solely the philosophy of love. However, to understand some of its essential characteristics, at least in romantic relationships, an attempt must be made to provide an overview of some of its essential features without which its essence cannot be grasped. It could be said that love for a life partner is where the boundaries of acquaintance, friendship, and passion unite. What love for a partner could not be is the loss of the possibility of freedom in emotional connection. This is the moment when love turns into possessiveness, dependence, when it becomes uncontrollable jealousy and possession, and when it prevents the Other from being guided by their own feelings. My feelings of infatuation and love can be expressed, but one cannot force someone to be infatuated or in love. Does the freedom to express or not express feelings actually exist? Or is something compelling one to be the one who must express them because of their gender? If something is forcing it, this speaks of different factors outside the given being that decides, beyond some concept of free will, and thus, this individual question becomes a social question. Thus, understanding love and romance depends on the social reality in which they manifest. Hence, love in this context is what needs to be reached, considering that we are all, as evident from experience, subjects of certain social norms that seek to fit us into a specific reality (From, 1993, 11). The question of the validity of these norms arises, and whether they contain an emancipatory function or if their function is entirely reactionary.

If existing gender norms are understood as something observed as permanent, like a natural law stemming from the nature of human beings, then they simultaneously become a tradition attempting to rationalize itself through the falsification of reality. This is a kind of ritual maintenance of existing norms, thus closing the spiritual, or more precisely, the liberating horizon of life whose essential goal might be precisely to liberate individuals to be who they are through the development of their human and social forces, where love would mean accepting beings as they are (Kangrga, 1983, 405).

All these are factors in the formation of romantic relationships, but within them, stereotypical issues are also considered. Through the presented research in the text, it will be seen that within the framework of today's era, both sides are not equally able to act, although there is a necessary tendency to fight. Therefore, every theory of love must begin with a theory of existence (From, 1993), and every theory of existence, to avoid being one-sided or abstract if it focuses solely on the individual's existence, must become a theory of social existence.

Man is an animal like all others, but by its nature, it qualitatively differs from the rest. Love in the human world is not only a natural characteristic; it is a social phenomenon and to a large extent subject to social shaping. The question arises whether autonomy of love is possible and what that could be. Pure reason, pure emotion, pure attraction? Perhaps, in some basic form. If it is said that man progresses only by developing reason (From, 1993), if there is an appeal to the alteration of individual consciousness without a relationship with material reality, and all force is reduced to reason, can that be enough? What shapes reason? Reason about love is an awareness of processes that occur, but the establishment of love is not only rational; sometimes it is irrational, but it depends on the framework in which the emotional relationship is established. Love in slavery, feudalism, capitalism, communism, etc., differs primarily in how people relate to each other, and also in how they perceive each other, but in all these phases of social development, phases of understanding love can be observed. Is the object of satisfaction another person, or do partners surrender to each other as beloved beings, without compromising the independence and individuality of personality (Kangra, 1983, 422)?

It seems that such a concept of love must necessarily be a synthesis of the individual and the collective, freedom and necessity, perhaps the only possible concept of true love that is yet to be realized as a general rule arising from the very social reality, if social reality is understood as the totality of social relations. Here, there is an encounter with the dialectical nature of romantic connection, in which freedom, as a phenomenon that arises in our decision-making, also appears as a necessity that is perceived through our decisions based on our impressions and motivation toward the Other. It is impossible to speak of absolute autonomy. There is, to some extent, a determination by the Other. To achieve this synthesis of freedom and necessity, love must be a desire to share that state of interdependence with someone; it must be a matter of pure will, pure intention toward the Other (Singer, 2009.). The question arises as to how much social reality can turn desire into reality, or how much social reality allows the expression of desire and how much it forces that expression.

Giving oneself to another is not a sacrifice or loss but the giving of what lives within us, such as feelings, personal essence, positive intentions, time, etc. (From, 1993). Here, there is no encounter with individual will but rather with the will of the entire society, with the will of its normativity that is part of a culture and intertwines with habits. Certain habits are attacked when certain norms are challenged, and thereby, the given culture. Culture may not necessarily be negatively attacked; it can target the most reactionary layers of that culture, leading to an exploration of the essence of the legitimacy of a specific society—the entirety of its political-economic relations. What then remains of the destroyed old society and its norms? Only that realm of mutual affection that has always existed within the human being, subject to different forms of manifestation within the framework of a specific epoch, which now has the foundations for building the groundwork of a new society (Engels, 1975, 71).

If this philosophy of love is understood as a certain view on love and emotional relationships in general, it can open a spectrum of different philosophies of love, each offering a particular image of the world of love. However, if the substantive and fundamental concept of this philosophy of love is based on the ideal of the freedom of

beings to be as they are, the ideal of respect, unity, and sincerity, the ideal of non-oppression, then our philosophical discourse becomes a critique of different epochs. For example, isn't the critique of the patriarchal concept of marriage also a critical portrayal of what love and marital unions should be? Isn't the portrayal of different forms of relationships that deviate from traditional ones also a depiction of various forms of emotional and romantic expression, as well as the material conditions to which those relationships are conditioned (Engels, 1975)? Freedom is not something that exists now and here always. The question of freedom is always a question of some kind of limitlessness. It is impossible to speak of absolute freedom, not even of the absolute freedom of love. One cannot determine whom to fall in love with. Infatuation is determined by the force of a person's traits, and autonomy is lost in this regard. Acts and desires can further be a matter of the will of the being in love, but it is impossible not to acknowledge that alongside rational forces existing within each being and governing its autonomy, purely irrational forces also govern the being itself. Why and how this dialectical nature is possible is the subject of some other discussions.

3. Gender stereotypes in the first steps of romantic relationships

Moving from the realm of philosophy to a more concrete field of social science, attention here will be given to the question of who should take the initiative in the formation and further development of romantic relationships, i.e., who should make the "first move" among partners. The reason for posing this question lies in the fact that, from a certain context of freedom, starting from the individual and all of their characteristics, the issue arises of gender norms forcing individuals into societal patterns that are not inherent to them. Thus, the focus here is on the question of initiative.

This discussion will exclusively address romantic relationships between men and women, excluding considerations of homosexual relationships. The presented research spans several decades, using the American context as a basis, which can serve as a reflection of a dominant society on a global scale. Simultaneously, it allows us to observe how emancipatory ideas have embedded themselves in their social reality and how they influence the alteration of gender stereotypes within a generational context. This will touch not only on issues of initiating romantic relationships but also on what develops from them—sexual relations, marriage, etc. One of the purposes of this work is to provide examples of research conducted within a developed capitalist country, which can later be compared with other studies in different developed and peripheral communities still entangled in outdated gender patterns.

Questions that arise here include: Does a woman need to be passive because it is considered that a man should be the initiator? Is the position of initiative a privilege, or is passivity the one carrying the moment of privilege? Is initiative courage, and why should it belong only to men? Are both men and women victims of the injustice of social norms that force them to be something they are not? Should they pretend to fit into gender stereotypes? Should they be alienated from their essence, which differs in each individual? Should they accept this emotional division of labor (Dworkin and O'Sullivan, 2005, 153), which acts destructively on both genders? Why is shyness and

introversion taken away from a man? Why is he forced to be the “hunter”? Why is the emancipatory strength of a woman to be open, direct, strong, independent taken away from her? Why is she forced to be an object to be conquered? Should a man be the master of persistence in a romantic encounter? Or maybe both should be beings with different potentials for forming romantic relationships? Should a woman who makes the first move be considered promiscuous instead of being seen as strong and daring to admit her attraction to someone? Should a woman initiating a romantic encounter be branded as a prostitute, and a shy man as a weakling, so that both are rejected, lonely, or find a comfort zone within societal expectations? Or, instead of all that, should it be acknowledged that in our world there exists a spectrum of characteristics equally characteristic of both men and women? The analyses and critiques presented in this text will be an attempt to eventually find answers to these questions.

For a start, one older study conducted by Suzanne Rose and Irene Hanson Frieze at the University of Missouri and the University of Pittsburgh in 1989 can be considered. This research involved 97 individuals aged between 18 and 22, who were asked to describe their experiences in forming romantic relationships. The study examined traditional gender norms in romantic relationships between men and women, and the results showed that the majority of respondents believed that it is the man who should take the initiative, ask for a date, plan the course of the outing, initiate physical contact, and ask for a second date (Rose and Frieze, 1989). Have things changed since then?

A later study by Shari L. Dworkin and Lucia O’Sullivan, conducted with 32 men from a public university in New York, aimed to differentiate between how some men wish romantic encounters to unfold and how these encounters actually happen. The results of this study showed that the majority of respondents followed traditional gender stereotypes in forming romantic and sexual relationships, while a significant portion of them desired an equal initiative between men and women. According to the research, the sexual act was initiated by 18 men, while 13 of them wished for a more egalitarian approach to the act. The remaining men found themselves between an egalitarian approach and female initiative, with six men stating that their partners initiated the sexual act, and eight responding that the initiative was mutual. When asked about the reasons for this majority where men take the initiative, they provided answers reflecting typical gender stereotypes about the nature of men as active and women as passive. However, most of them believed that this could be changed towards a more egalitarian approach. Some respondents mentioned that men, due to the lack of female initiative, might feel lonely and burdened with the entire relationship, and they expressed that women who take the initiative are equally attractive, and they would like to be in a more equal position (Dworkin and O’Sullivan, 2005).

Similar results were found in a study conducted through interviews with 38 women in San Francisco in 2014 by Ellen Lamont. The age range of these women was between 25 and 40, and the questions were organized to provide an overview of experiences related to first dates, the development of romantic relationships, and the evolution of marriage. The majority of participants were highly educated and economically independent women. Traditional gender stereotypes were expressed by most women, including expectations for the man to initiate the date, cover the costs

of the outing, “lead” the relationship, and initiate the marital connection. Of these 38 women, only 10 asked men out. The research showed that, in addition to these factors, shyness and fear of rejection were also influential, and these were found in both men and women. The study also demonstrated that most respondents believed that these stereotypes weaken as the relationship develops. Of course, emotional alienation is the ultimate result of these stereotypes. Some participants ended their relationships precisely because of gender stereotypes, while others failed to establish romantic contact with people they liked (Lamont, 2014).

In the past decade, there have been significant changes in the structure of forming romantic relationships. Due to the increasing use of online services, a new form of meeting and establishing these relationships has emerged. There is now a broader space for communication, and the internet has become an indispensable means. The internet provides a certain distance between individuals who are in contact, unlike more direct face-to-face contact, reshaping the status of shyness as a characteristic.

One of the well-known apps for romantic encounters is OkCupid, based in America. Research in this spectrum of initiating the first romantic encounters, as well as questions about what should happen on the first date, was conducted in 2015 by Kelly Cooper and Dale Markowitz. The research showed that, here too, men mostly take the first step, with the chances of a man making the first move on their platform being almost 3.5 times greater than that of a woman. The age of members was also taken into account, and the question was raised whether initiative perhaps comes with age and experience. The result was the same—men predominantly make the first move. The research also showed that if a woman initiates first, she has 2.5 times greater chance of receiving a response to her message compared to when a man does it. Of course, one should take into account the unimaginable amount of sexism on the internet and dating apps, creating distrust of women towards men on these apps and, consequently, a degree of withdrawal (Cooper and Markowitz, 2015).

As can be observed in everyday life, gender norms are gradually fading away with social development, as these studies have shown. The question arises as to why they still survive and, in some cases, even return. What are the factors contributing to their persistence? Perhaps one of the numerous answers will be offered in the book “Make Your Move” by Jon Birger. The book explains that these gender norms are even promoted in literature addressing romantic encounters. One answer may be that women have been served books for years telling them that taking the initiative can be counterproductive for themselves. Authors advise women to pretend to be unattainable to make men strive to win them over because, for some reason, it is believed that men like a challenge, and romantic encounters are a reward for their efforts. Consequently, romantic encounters are often perceived as a trophy system where men can boast about the quantity of their sexual partners. If this logic were applied to women, it would lead to condemnation, equating directness and openness with prostitution. The book emphasizes the need for young women to change the world, especially through women’s movements, contrary to the visions of so-called dating experts who claim that women cannot be the directors of their own lives, subtly conveyed through literature. The book argues that the persistence of these norms arises more from the domains of culture, society, and habits than from biology (Birger, 2021).

We are also directed to Angela Saini, a scientific journalist whose theories explain that the notion of female passivity is not only sexist but also scientifically inaccurate. Women are not inherently passive, and this raises questions about whether scientists in the past have approached issues of female sexuality incorrectly. What if women have never been passive and monogamous, both now and through evolutionary development? What if the natural state of women, like men, transcends the boundaries of passivity and even monogamous relationships (Saini, 2017)?

That these prejudices about women are wrong was explained long ago in the research of Lewis H. Morgan, referred to by Friedrich Engels. In the book "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," it was demonstrated based on the anthropology of that time that there have been various forms of families and romantic relationships throughout history. Phenomena such as polyamorous relationships, communities with group marriage, and open sexual relationships where children are recognized only by their mothers, matriarchally organized communities, communities where all tribal children are shared, etc., are natural phenomena and depend on the way social organization is structured at a given stage of its development. Thus, in 1884, when this book was written, it was proven that men and women can be equally initiative in relationships that deviate from traditionally oriented norms. Since these norms of initiative and passivity are products of a specific form of class society, the resolution of this puzzle is seen in the emergence of machines that would equalize the position of men and women, relieve them of household work, provide more free time, and, through the democratization of production, achieve cultural emancipation based on the foundations of a new society (Engels, 1975).

Even these studies, whose essence was to provide a picture of the state of gender stereotypes that still exist, have shown that social emancipation leads to the universal emancipation of men and women, gradually evident in developed countries. However, this process is quite slow. Nevertheless, the wheel of development even in those countries is pushed backward or stagnates due to the crisis of civil society and its capitalist era. The development of emancipation is slow, and it is necessary both at the general level and at the personal level of each individual. The question of emancipation then becomes not only a theoretical question but also a question of applying theory in practice and creating social pressure to initiate waves of change. This is a common feature of every society. It could be said that these are global "scripts" of behavior that, depending on the context in which they manifest, take on different forms (Sobieraj and Humphreys, 2021).

4. What's to be done

The question of alternatives, as well as the methods of realizing these alternatives, is fundamental to every theory, including every critique. Criticism without alternatives is merely a depiction of the current state, but what benefit can this depiction offer if there is no activity in the struggle for alternative directions? And what alternatives can be considered regarding the modification or complete abandonment of gender norms regarding the first step in romantic relationships?

One attempt is the establishment of a form of “positive discrimination” in the Bumble dating app, extensively discussed by Sabrina Sobieraj and Lee Humphreys (2021) in the context of this application. With the intention to break the notion that men should be the ones initiating romantic encounters, this app is organized so that registered men are prevented from sending the first message. This possibility exists only for registered women. Research has shown that, using this app, women felt a sense of strength, motivation, and self-confidence by having the freedom to show their initiative. Now, the question arises whether this form of “positive discrimination” should be retained and transferred to real-life encounters. Should it be suggested that men should stop making the first move as a way to replace gender norms, or perhaps there are other more effective ways to equalize acts of initiative between men and women?

Through this first method, in the long run, a kind of conformity and the re-establishment of a negative way of realizing romantic encounters would occur. The diverse essences of men and women are stifled by traditional stereotypes, and retaining forms of “positive discrimination” in the long term would have a negative impact because it would do nothing more than shift gender norms from one sex to the other. Of course, in a certain phase of emancipation, it is necessary to respond to one extreme with another to show that there are different possibilities for romantic encounters. However, it would be absurd to stop there or even allow extremes to persist. The essence of change is the normalization of a direction that shows that outdated gender norms should be discarded, that the society producing these norms should change, and that both men and women can be equally initiative and emotional, reflecting not their weakness but their strength. It is necessary to normalize both male and female emotionality, their independence, their mutual initiative. Expressing one’s emotions, different interests, and positive relations with others should be normalized. Female openness and male shyness need to be normalized, above all, normalizing differences whose goal should never be oppression. Unfortunately, currently, oppression is precisely what is normalized. To potentially achieve this, it is necessary to be active in the field of social development every day, to point out problems daily, criticize them, find their sources, and strike at the sources themselves. It should never be the goal to focus solely on one problem within a society that creates it – that is the realm of futile struggle. Social development, people’s emancipation in society, all these factors depend on people themselves, on the process of social democratization, on creating material conditions in which certain ideas can be realized, established, and become permanent. The framework of civil society that remains in the chains of reformism, which gives in one moment and takes away in another, and which is bound by the chains of individual wills, unfortunately, cannot offer permanent solutions.

5. Conclusion

From all of this, it can be concluded that the present epoch is still grappling with prejudices inherited from hundreds of years ago. This not only shaped the question of initiative in romantic relationships but also influenced the very understanding of love and interpersonal relationships. If one of the foundations of love is mutual

respect, then reasonableness is necessarily a part of it. Therefore, all moments in which we perceive the Other as an object for the vulgar satisfaction of our needs in terms of the usefulness the Other provides must disappear, as love is not based on mutual desires, needs, and affections but on objectification. The modern epoch tends to equate romantic relationships with outdated parameters resembling dowries, reflecting pure economic utility. If the tendency of love is to share one's existence with the Other, then both the good and bad aspects that exist in a shared struggle must be recognized. Sharing oneself means presenting oneself to the Other, and the common thread must be understanding. It is evident that within gender norms, there is no complete possibility of representation. Within gender norms, there is a greater tendency to conceal something rather than present it. The research presented in this work illustrates a condition that must be overcome. Overcoming this condition is a matter of fighting against a certain society, its culture, habits, and conformism. It must be a comprehensive struggle. Just as there is a specific division of labor in every society, there must also be a division of labor in the transformations of social reality in the form of activism by those who want to change society. Alongside emancipation from gender norms and gender ideology, there must be emancipation from a society that continuously generates these norms. This is simultaneously an economic, political, cultural, national, international, fundamentally class-based, female, and male common emancipation.

Therefore, there is no specific predefined direction for the movement of the emancipatory struggle, but the most progressive directions can be discerned. This movement can be of a civil reformist nature, it can take extreme forms like "positive discrimination," or it can be based on revolutionary principles. Above all, there must be a clear goal, and when the goal is clear, the means and methods of the struggle are also clear. If the goal is the end of all oppression based on liberating people to be what they are by nature, then this change is necessarily of a revolutionary character.

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(DE) Activation of Gender Stereotypes in Selection Situations

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Abstract: Gender biases in the work environment arise when individuals assess men and women in different ways solely as a result of gender stereotypes. This paper addresses the topic of gender stereotypes that are (de)activated in selection situations with a sample (N=60) of young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, with an average age of 21.5 years (M=21.5, SD=1.944). An additional goal was to examine the relevance of the gender variable in the contemporary labor market. Using an experimental design with constructed resumes, a selection situation was created in which young people had to choose to hire a man or a woman with the same qualifications for a stereotypical job position. Group-level data show that female students tend to hire the same gender, i.e., women, while male students do not show a tendency to hire the same gender, i.e., men. Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that among young people, the idea of gender roles and stereotypes about typical male-female occupations is still present.

Keywords: gender stereotypes, gender roles, labor market, employment

1. Introduction

The topic of this paper is the relationship between gender stereotypes and gender roles in the contemporary labor market. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) defines gender stereotypes as general views or preconceptions about the characteristics and roles that both women and men have or should have. According to OHCHR, "gender stereotypes are harmful when they limit the ability of women and men to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers, and/or make decisions about their lives." The question that arises when examining gender (in)equality in any form is who discriminates and why do they discriminate? As times are changing rapidly, and the younger generation is becoming more liberal, it is important to verify whether gender stereotypes are present among

young people today. The paper presents a simple experimental design testing the decision-making of young individuals in hiring situations with stereotypical elements. The main focus is on role congruity theory, explaining stereotypes about specific job positions and gender roles. Gender stereotypes can restrict women's career advancement and promote only limiting behaviors, contributing to phenomena such as role congruity theory and the glass ceiling. For these reasons, the implementation of policies promoting gender equality, including mentorship programs and highlighting successful women in all areas of the labor market, has the potential to shift traditionally male-dominated occupations to be more accessible to women and vice versa.

2. Theoretical Background

Gender biases in the work environment arise when individuals assess men and women in different ways solely as a result of gender stereotypes. One explanation for gender biases in the work environment is the theory of role congruity (Eagly and Karau, 2002), which explains biases in terms of the congruity of gender role stereotypes and stereotypes about the requirements of a particular job. Specifically, greater gender biases arise when there is a significant incongruity between stereotypical gender roles and the gender stereotype associated with a specific job (Eagly and Karau, 2002). For example, the "think manager – think male" phenomenon, found in the United States in the early 1970s (Schein, 2001), where both men and women stated that characteristics associated with managerial success are more expressed in men than in women. Some characteristics significant for success, such as dominance, aggression, and emotional stability, are more commonly and automatically associated with men than with women (Schein, 2001). Martell, Lane, and Emrich (1996) used computer simulations as a tool to assess the impact of gender differences and showed how subtle biases can affect the distribution of men and women in different positions within an organization. Computer simulation showed that in situations where men and women are equally qualified for advancement, but 5% of the variance in promotion decisions comes from negative biases against women, the proportion of women can decrease from over 50% of the workforce at a lower level to 29% at higher hierarchical levels in the organization (Martell, Lane, and Emrich, 1996).

The question arises of how women can be simultaneously discriminated against in areas such as leadership positions and favored when it comes to areas of childcare and their physical appearance. In this case, sexism is mentioned, defined as discriminatory and prejudiced beliefs and practices directed against one of the two sexes, usually against women. Sexism is associated with the acceptance of stereotypes about gender roles and can occur at multiple levels: individual, organizational, institutional, and cultural (APA Dictionary, 2023). Glick and Fiske (1996) argue that this general view of sexism overlooks a significant aspect of sexism, namely the subjectively positive feelings towards women that often go hand in hand with sexist antipathy. Researchers argue that "sexism should be viewed as a multidimensional construct that encompasses two sets of sexist attitudes: hostile and benevolent sexism" (Glick and Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexism aims to preserve male dominance over women by emphasizing male power. Women who do not adhere to these traditional (gender)

roles are seen as a threat to male dominance, and hostile sexism keeps women in an openly subordinate position (Begany and Milburn, 2002). Benevolent sexism is a subtler form of sexism, compared to hostile sexism, and is more socially acceptable. It is believed that a man should cherish and protect a woman, as in fairy tales, and she, in return, should be obedient and good, relying on traditional gender roles (Cross and Overall, 2018). This seemingly positive description makes benevolent sexism more socially acceptable, and consequently, it becomes a mechanism that increases gender inequality in all fields (Glick and Fiske, 2001). Research has also shown that this type of sexism encourages women to prioritize relationships (family, children) over achieving educational or professional goals and undermines women's perception of their competence and performance (Dardenne et al., 2007).

Referring to women's advancements, the literature often mentions the term "glass ceiling," which is a metaphor for an unofficial, intangible psychological, social, or organizational barrier that prevents capable and ambitious individuals, especially women and members of minority groups, from reaching the highest positions in many jobs and organizations (APA, 2015). Although significant progress has been made in the 21st century, it can be said that the glass ceiling is still something women face today compared to other forms of discrimination and inequality. The glass ceiling is a specific form of inequality due to several criteria (Cotter et al., 2001), the first of which is that the essence of the glass ceiling is the discrimination against women in management. The glass ceiling affects women regardless of their level of education, experience, and skills and is observed to be a barrier to women's career advancement, advancement to leadership positions, rather than the number of women in leadership positions at a given time (Cotter et al., 2001). These barriers to advancement become more prevalent as a person, in this case, a woman, approaches the top of the hierarchy (Cotter et al., 2001). A term often associated with the glass ceiling is the "glass cliff," which refers to the fact that women are usually promoted to leadership roles in certain industries during periods of crisis or decline and are therefore automatically doomed to failure (Reinwald, 2023). Companies look good when they promote women to leadership roles, and even if they fail, the company still gains a positive reputation. Placing a woman in a leadership position gives the company someone to blame if it fails to pull the company out of a downward spiral or crisis (Reinwald, 2023).

Although the result that women assist other women may not be surprising at first, literature has shown that there are cases where women hinder female candidates. Farrell and Hersch (2005) demonstrated that the likelihood of employing a woman significantly increases when there is no woman on the committee. In Spain, when evaluating regular professors, female candidates have better chances of success when evaluated by a committee with more women (Bagues, Sylos-Labini, and Zinovyeva, 2017). Bagues and colleagues (2017) state that a higher number of women on evaluation committees neither increases nor decreases the quantity or quality of qualified female candidates. Data from individual voting reports suggest that female evaluators do not significantly favor female candidates. At the same time, male evaluators become less favorable towards female candidates as soon as a female evaluator joins the committee. The conclusion of these studies is not limited to women helping women, but they imply that people of the same gender are sometimes helpful to each other in potential employment situations, and sometimes not.

Data on gender inequality are unfortunately present worldwide, not only in the United States but also in the context in which we currently live and operate – in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Supported by the data of the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2022), which shows that the employment rate, representing the ratio of employed to working-age residents between the ages of 20 and 64, is 40% for women and 65% for men. The gender structure of elected mayors in Local Elections in BiH 2020: 96% men and only 4% women. In the Council of Ministers of BiH, according to 2021 data, there are 80% male ministers and 20% female ministers. An interesting fact is that women lead in the Judicial Authority of BiH, with 64% female judges compared to 36% male judges.

If such attitudes are not controlled and awareness is not raised, decision-makers will be inclined to hire a male candidate rather than a female candidate for the same position with the same qualifications. The question arises as to what to attribute these ratios that favor men. Abilities, interests, or something else? How important is the gender variable in 2023 in the (modern) labor market, from entering the market to advancement and securing managerial positions? To answer these questions, the aim of this research is to examine the presence of gender stereotypes in hiring among a sample of young people.

The methodological design is an experiment in which participants were presented with a task in which they had to make a hiring decision for three positions based on resumes: head of the anesthesia and resuscitation department in a hospital, childcare worker in a kindergarten, and automotive repair worker in an auto repair shop. Gender stereotypes were induced through experimental scenarios depicting two people with the same qualifications but different genders. The dependent variable in the experiment was the decision to hire or not hire each candidate. Additionally, the experimental scenarios manipulated stereotypical occupations, which were shown in pre-research to be typical for each profession. All details of the procedure are described in the methodology.

3. Research Results

Within the framework of this research, the following research problems were identified: the representation of hiring men or women for specific positions considering the gender of the respondents, the representation of hiring men or women in situations of congruence between stereotypical gender roles and gender stereotypes related to the occupation, and the representation of male and female students in the intention to hire for managerial positions. Accordingly, research hypotheses were defined, assuming the following: globally, male students will tend to hire men, while female students will tend to hire women; in situations of stereotypical matching of gender and work roles, the gender originally associated with the stereotype will be hired, regardless of the qualifications presented in the resume, and in line with the glass ceiling theory, a man will be more frequently chosen for a managerial position in the selection process of male and female students.

3.1. Research Problems:

Problem 1: To examine the representation of hiring men or women for specific job positions considering the gender of the respondents.

Hypothesis 1: It is assumed that globally, male students will tend to hire men, while female students will tend to hire women.

Problem 2: To examine the representation of hiring men or women in situations of congruence between stereotypical gender roles and gender stereotypes related to the occupation.

Hypothesis 2: It is assumed that in situations of stereotypical matching of gender and work roles, the gender originally associated with the stereotype will be hired, for example, a man for the position of an auto mechanic and a woman for the position of a caregiver, regardless of the qualifications presented in the resume.

Problem 3: To examine the representation of male and female students in the intention to hire for a managerial position (head of the department for anesthesiology).

Hypothesis 3: It is assumed, in line with the glass ceiling theory, that a man will be more frequently chosen for a managerial position in the selection process of male and female students.

3.2. Methodology and Sample

The research was conducted in two parts. The first part aimed to determine the stimulus material used in the main experimental part of the study. In the initial phase of the research, young participants were involved, and the sample consisted of 121 respondents collected through the snowball method. The sample distribution included 51 males (42.1%), 68 females (56.2%), and 2 individuals (1.7%) who chose not to disclose their gender. An electronic questionnaire was constructed for this research, containing demographic questions about age and gender. Additionally, a set of questions was provided listing occupations related to healthcare, automotive industry, and education. The task was to assess whether certain occupations were considered typically male, female, or neutral. The final part of the questionnaire included 11 photographs of individuals of both genders, and participants were asked to rate their attractiveness on a Likert-type scale ranging from not attractive at all to extremely attractive. The photos were used to identify the most attractive individuals and were obtained from the Adobe Stock website, which allows free and reusable use of its resources in any creative project. The site's usage policy stated that the photos were created using Photoshop and artificial intelligence to prevent confusion if respondents recognized a famous person in the resume. Based on the first part of the research, stereotypical occupations with the highest rate of being perceived as typically male, female, or neutral were selected.

Following the selection of stimulus material, an experiment was designed in which participants were presented with a PowerPoint presentation instructing them to

carefully read each resume in front of them and make decisions about hiring the candidates for the following three positions: head of the department for anesthesiology and resuscitation in the hospital, caregiver in the daycare, and automotive repair worker in the auto service. Two candidates, one male and one female, competed for each position in all three cases. Participants were tasked with choosing one person (either male or female) for each job position, and they were not allowed to hire two people for the same position. The total number of participants in the experimental study was 60. Before starting, all 60 participants received the following instructions to ensure maximum control over the experimental conditions: "Dear participants, good day, and welcome. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. Participation is voluntary and anonymous, and you can withdraw at any time. The collected data will be used for scientific purposes and analyzed at the group level. Your responses cannot be linked to your identity in any way. In front of you are two resumes for each job position. Your task is to read the resumes in front of you, decide whom you would hire for the job, and when you decide whom you would prefer to hire, write the name of that person on the sheet in front of you, next to the corresponding job position. You cannot hire both people; you must choose one. You are free to leave the room after hiring your candidates, even if the time has not expired. You have 10 minutes available. When the time expires, you will be notified. Please work quietly so as not to disturb other participants. If you have any questions, feel free to raise your hand, and everything you need will be explained. Also, if you have questions and uncertainties, you can contact the provided email. When you read the instructions, start working." The sample distribution consisted of 19 males (31.7%) and 41 females (68.3%). The age range of the participants was from 19 years (youngest) to 28 years (oldest), with an average age of 21.5 years. The resumes were fictitious but matched in terms of educational background and work experience, with the only difference being gender. They were created using internet resources, LinkedIn, and job ads from the moj.posao.hr website as a framework for employer requirements for potential employees. Additionally, resumes of specific individuals with similar occupations were gathered from the internet. The resumes were written in the standard Europass template and were verified as objectively identical in terms of qualifications by two independent researchers. All participants followed the same order of resumes, starting with those for the position of head of the department for anesthesiology and resuscitation in the hospital, followed by caregiver in the daycare, and finally, automotive repair worker in the auto service. On average, the study lasted 15 minutes for each participant.

Table 1. Gender representation and distribution in employment for three positions

Head of the Department for Anesthesiology and Resuscitation			
Sex		Frequency	Percentage (%)
M	DRAGAN HODŽIĆ	7	36,8
	EMINA KOVAČEVIĆ	12	63,2
	Total	19	100,00
F	DRAGAN HODŽIĆ	15	36,6
	EMINA KOVAČEVIĆ	26	63,4
	Total	41	100,00

Preschool teacher in a kindergarten			
Sex		Frequency	Percentage (%)
M	MILAN LUKIĆ	10	52,6
	ALEKSANDRA BAŠIĆ	9	47,4
	Total	19	100,00
F	MILAN LUKIĆ	18	43,9
	ALEKSANDRA BAŠIĆ	23	56,1
	Total	41	100,00

Car repair in X service			
Sex		Frequency	Percentage (%)
M	MARKO ALILOVIĆ	6	31,6
	ANA TOMIĆ	13	68,4
	Total	19	100,00
F	MARKO ALILOVIĆ	13	31,7
	ANA TOMIĆ	28	68,3
	Total	41	100,00

4. Work and Gender Role

Globally, female students tend to hire individuals of the same gender, while male students do not show a tendency to hire individuals of the same gender. For all three job positions, female students consistently hired women more often. On the other hand, male students predominantly hired a male for the daycare position,

contradicting the hypothesis. Regarding the other two positions, they mostly hired women. Therefore, the first hypothesis is only partially confirmed. It is important to note that the number of male and female students in the study was not equal, and it is realistic that female students hired more women since the sample included twice as many women as men. However, research confirms that female candidates have better chances of success when evaluated by a committee with more women, while male evaluators become less favorable towards female candidates as soon as a female evaluator joins the committee, leading to the hiring of more males. A recommendation for future research would be to create experimental scenarios in which a committee composed of both males and females collaboratively decides on employment.

In situations of stereotypical alignment of gender and work roles, it was assumed that the gender fundamentally associated with the stereotype would be employed, for example, a male as an automotive mechanic and a female as a caregiver, regardless of qualifications presented in the resume. The data showed that, in the case of the automotive repair position, women were employed several times, contradicting the assumed hypothesis. On the other hand, in the case of the daycare position, women were employed more frequently, as hypothesized. Accordingly, the second hypothesis is partially accepted. Zitelny and colleagues (2017) suggest that implicit stereotypes might play a more significant role than explicit stereotypes in predicting behavior and potential employment. This could explain why the current study demonstrated gender stereotypes in hiring, even when candidates of both genders were equally competent. Although the belief that women and men are not equally suitable for certain occupations can be considered a subtler and more implicit form of gender stereotypes, this preconceived idea still reflects stereotypical views of women and men. The more frequent hiring of women as caregivers can also be explained by the theory of role congruity (Eagly and Karau, 2002), which explains biases in terms of the alignment of stereotypes about gender roles and stereotypes about the requirements of a particular job. Specifically, greater gender biases occurred in participants because a conflict arose in terms of the male not fitting the stereotype people have about the daycare job. In short, when people think of daycare and childcare, they think of women. Research suggests that women and men are slowly moving towards equality in terms of their gender characteristics, but this change does not occur at the same pace for both genders (Moreno, 2010). Women are slowing down progress by adopting typically male characteristics more slowly, but men turning towards typically female characteristics indicate a positive trend in future stereotypes and gender roles. It is believed that the increasing involvement of men in family life and child-rearing, supported by modern family policies (Moreno, 2010), contributes to this change. For these reasons, it is possible to explain why women more frequently chose a female caregiver, but both genders were willing to give an opportunity to a male in 48% of cases.

On the other hand, the occupation that is also considered typically male is an automotive repair worker and was included in the list of offered positions for participants. In this case, despite the fact that the competencies of both candidates were identical, women were employed several times. Even considering the fact that there were more women in the sample, 13 out of 19 men still chose a woman for the job

in the auto service. If we take into account that the study involved part of the young, student population, it is possible that they are aware of gender issues and discrimination, and in line with that awareness, they hired a woman. Since this job was the last in the experiment, it could be assumed that participants understood what it was about and, out of fear of being perceived as discriminatory, hired a woman. On the other hand, it is possible that they hired her solely based on her physical attractiveness. If we consider why women repeatedly hired a woman for a job in the auto service, it confirms the finding that female candidates have better chances of success when evaluated by women.

It is assumed, in line with the glass ceiling theory, that a man will more often be appointed to the managerial position of the head of the department. However, the data show that in as many as 63% of cases, a woman was employed. Accordingly, the third hypothesis is completely rejected. Although it was shown in the pre-study that participants consider a job in the healthcare sector neutral, neither male nor female, when given the choice of which doctor to hire as the head of the department for anesthesiology and resuscitation, they hired a woman several times (specifically in 63% of cases). In future research, it would be desirable to introduce a position related to economics or politics, which is a greater reflection of a position of power than healthcare, which is considered neutral. This finding contradicts the glass ceiling theory, which posits that women do not reach leadership positions due to invisible barriers and prejudices they face. The reason why young people more often hired a woman in this study can be explained in two ways. Primarily, it is possible that female students in this sample, given that most are on the path to higher education, envisioned themselves in such a position and decided to hire a woman. On the other hand, the interaction of stereotypical gender roles and the job can be considered again, in which the preferences of potential patients lead to the belief that a female doctor is better, not because of her competence but because of her communication style, providing more care and attention to patients than men (Cooper–Patrick et al., 1999).

In response to the introductory question of how important the gender variable is in 2023 on the (modern) labor market, from entering the market to advancement and securing managerial positions, the potential answer could be as follows: gender stereotypes are present, but they are slowly diminishing and fading thanks to young, educated, and intelligent individuals who realize that gender is not a variable that makes a good employee. In conclusion, defending against gender stereotypes, for example, by maintaining strict rules and regulations against unprofessional actions in organizations, is a good start in the fight against gender stereotypes (Berry, 2010). Organizations could also implement education programs on gender stereotypes so that all employees learn to recognize and adopt values of respect for everyone. Finally, a very important quote from the work of du Plessis and colleagues (2015, p. 45) is, “practices that facilitate gender equality may increase costs for organizations, but in the long run, the benefits will definitely outweigh the drawbacks. The better employees are treated, the greater the profits and productivity organizations have in return, as job satisfaction is one of the most important factors for improving employee performance and the overall success of the organization.”

5. Conclusion

With the help of this paper and the experimental design, answers have been obtained regarding how gender influences the current state of the labor market, based on a sample of young people who are preparing to enter the job market. It has been concluded that, at the group level, female students support candidates of the same gender, while male responses are more variable. In situations involving stereotypical gender and work roles (e.g., daycare teacher), women are more often employed, while in contrast, for the position of an automotive service worker, women are more frequently hired. Additionally, in the case of a leadership position in the healthcare sector (head of the department for anesthesiology), women were more frequently employed. The study has several limitations, reflected in the uneven representation of male and female students in the sample. The response rate of male participants in the research is generally lower, but this fact does not diminish the data obtained from the given sample. A convenience sample of students also reduces the possibility of generalizing the data to the general population, but since it involves young people with different orientations, it serves as a good indicator of the attitudes of the new generation. To draw more reliable conclusions, it would be beneficial to conduct a similar study on a large number of young people, with an equal distribution of men and women in the sample. Further research is needed to further explore gender representation in workplaces, differences in decision-making between men and women, and the overall state of the labor market.

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Gender norms and eating disorders: a feminist perspective on psychopathologies related to the appearance of the female body

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Abstract: This paper addresses the prevalence of eating disorders, particularly among women, and their relation to socially constructed gender roles. We employ a feminist perspective to examine socio-cultural factors contributing to eating disorders, including the pressure to conform to idealized body types and the role of media in shaping these ideals. We also focus on the socio-cultural context of eating disorders, discussing the increased prevalence of these disorders, the rise in the popularity of aesthetic surgery, and the cultural pressure to conform to the ideals of a slim body. The paper explores the history and causes of anorexia nervosa and bulimia, as well as their connection to social influences and cultural ideals that are inherently gendered. This paper aims to provide an overview of critical theoretical perspectives in the field of gender studies on common eating disorders and their relationship with socially imposed rules and gender norms, offering insights into several important feminist perspectives on the emergence, causes, and consequences of eating disorders. Additionally, the paper aims to clarify the influence of external factors in the development of eating disorders among the female population and thus examine eating disorders through a sociological and cultural lens of gender construction.

Keywords: eating disorders, gender roles, and norms, culturally constructed ideals, societal beauty standards

1. Introduction

Eating disorders are associated with feeding and behavioral habits characteristic of developed Western countries (Ambrosi-Randić, 2004). This paper, through qualitative analysis of various contents, explores common eating disorders and their relationship with socially constructed rules, also providing insight into the feminist perspective on the occurrence of eating disorders. The prevalence of eating disorders is significantly higher among the female population, with an estimated prevalence of eating disorders in women around 4%, compared to 0.5% in men (Smink et al., 2012). Therefore, this paper focuses on the influence of environmental factors in the development of eating disorders among the female population. The female gender is

biologically (through reproductive roles) and culturally connected to body meanings (Grosz, 1994). Thus, it is crucial to examine eating disorders through a sociological lens of gender construction. We can say that gender is identified as a “persistent risk factor” for the development of eating disorders (Jacobi et al., 2004; Striegel-Moore and Bulik, 2007). To understand eating disorders, it is necessary to consider ecological, social, psychological, biological, and cultural factors (Silverstein et al., 1986). The goal of this paper is to present existing research in the field of gender theories and eating disorders.

The first part of the paper briefly explains the two most prominent eating disorders among the population, anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, including definitions, classifications of these disorders, and their epidemiology. The second part of the paper examines feminist insights into eating disorders in a socio-cultural context, discussing the rise of eating disorders, increased popularity of aesthetic surgery, consumption of pornography over the past decade, and cultural pressure towards a slim body as the ideal female body. This part provides a closer description of the history and cause of anorexia, its connection to social influences, and cultural ideas. Anorexia can be seen as a way of controlling the body and as a form of rebellion against social norms and expectations. Additionally, this essay describes bulimia from a cultural and feminist perspective, as well as the societal pressure to conform to a specific body ideal and restrictive eating behaviors. Authors like Margo Maine and Niva Piran have written about how cultural ideals of thinness and beauty can contribute to the development of bulimia in women.

The third part of this paper addresses the challenges and inequalities that women face in society, especially regarding body appearance and beauty standards. The post feminism narrative, which promotes the idea that women have achieved equality and that the feminist movement is no longer necessary, is criticized for ignoring these ongoing challenges. In the final, fourth part of the paper, the focus is on digital culture and unattainable beauty standards, emphasizing the discussion on the role of media in shaping and reinforcing beauty standards and how it can be harmful to individuals who do not fit into these socially constructed and culturally inherited ideals.

2. Eating Disorders: Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia

2.1. Anorexia Nervosa in the Medical-Psychiatric Discourse

According to the definition in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5, 2013), anorexia nervosa can manifest in two different ways:

- **Restrictive Type:** Individuals with the restrictive type of anorexia nervosa primarily achieve weight loss through dieting, fasting, or excessive exercise. They do not regularly engage in binge eating or purging behaviors. This subtype is more common in adolescents and is associated with a better outcome than the binge-eating/purging type (DSM-5, 2013).

- **Binge-Eating/Purging Type:** Individuals with the binge-eating/purging type of anorexia nervosa regularly engage in binge eating or purging behaviors, such as self-induced vomiting or misuse of laxatives or diuretics, in addition to restrictive eating behaviors. This subtype is more common in adults and is associated with a more severe course of the illness, higher levels of psychiatric comorbidities, and greater medical complications than the restrictive type (DSM-5, 2013).

It is important to note that these two types are not mutually exclusive, and individuals with anorexia nervosa may exhibit symptoms of both types at different times. Additionally, individuals with anorexia nervosa may transition from one subtype to another during the course of their illness.

Individuals with anorexia may severely restrict food intake, leading to significant weight loss and malnutrition. This restriction is often driven by a fear of gaining weight. According to DSM-5, a person with anorexia must have a significantly low body weight (less than 85% of the expected weight for their age and height) and persistent restriction of energy intake leading to low body weight (DSM-5, 2013). Individuals with anorexia often have a distorted perception of their body weight or shape, leading them to believe they are overweight or obese when, in fact, they are underweight. This distorted perception can intensify the fear of gaining weight and perpetuate the cycle of restrictive eating. According to DSM-5, a person with anorexia must have a disturbance in the way they perceive their body weight or shape, inappropriate influence of body weight or shape on self-evaluation, or denial of the seriousness of their low body weight (DSM-5, 2013).

Early indicators of an impending disorder include increased concern about diet and body weight, even in those who are already thin, such as most people with anorexia nervosa. Excessive concern and anxiety about weight increase as the person becomes thinner. Even when completely emaciated, the person complains of feeling fat, denies any wrongdoing, does not complain of loss of appetite or weight loss, and typically resists treatment. The individual usually does not see a doctor until family members, who are concerned, bring them in (Ivančević, Rumboldt, Bergovec, and Silobrčić 2000).

Research suggests that multiple biological factors contribute to the development of anorexia. Genetic studies indicate an increased risk among close relatives and monozygotic twins. In addition to similarities in eating disorders, close family members often have individuals with mood disorders (depression), susceptibility to addictions, especially alcohol, and type II diabetes (Augestad, Saether, and Gotestam, 1999). Based on family studies, the prevalence of anorexia among sisters is six times higher than the extreme rate observed in the general population (Vidović, 1999).

2.2. Bulimia Nervosa in the Medical-Psychiatric Discourse

Bulimia nervosa is a serious and potentially life-threatening eating disorder characterized by recurrent episodes of overeating followed by inappropriate compensatory behaviors, such as self-induced vomiting, misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or other

medications, fasting, or excessive exercise. Individuals with bulimia nervosa have a distorted body image and an intense fear of gaining weight, which can lead to feelings of shame, guilt, and disgust. Bulimia nervosa can have serious physical, emotional, and social consequences, including electrolyte imbalance, gastrointestinal problems, tooth erosion, menstrual irregularities, and other health complications. Psychological effects of bulimia nervosa may include depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and social isolation.

Individuals with bulimia often experience recurrent episodes of overeating, characterized by consuming unusually large amounts of food in a short period while feeling a loss of control over eating. According to DSM-5, a person with bulimia must have recurrent episodes of overeating, on average, at least once a week over three months (DSM-5, 2013). Individuals with bulimia often engage in purging behaviors, such as self-induced vomiting or the misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or other medications, in an attempt to compensate for the calories consumed during episodes of overeating. According to DSM-5, a person with bulimia must also engage in recurrent inappropriate compensatory behaviors, such as self-induced vomiting, misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or other medications, fasting, or excessive exercise, to prevent weight gain (DSM-5, 2013).

Individuals with bulimia often have a distorted perception of their body weight or shape, leading them to believe they have excess weight or are overweight even when they are not. This negative body image can contribute to the development of bulimia and prolong the cycle of binge-eating and purging. Research has shown that individuals with bulimia experience significant stress and impairment in their social, professional, or other important areas of functioning as a result of eating behaviors (Hay, Mond, Buttner, Darby, and Paxton, 2008). Individuals with bulimia often feel ashamed of their eating behavior and may try to hide it from others. This secrecy can make it difficult for friends and family members to recognize that the person is struggling with bulimia and may delay seeking professional help. Studies have shown that individuals with bulimia more frequently report feelings of guilt, shame, and self-blame than individuals with other types of eating disorders (Mitchell et al., 2012).

DSM-5 provides the following criteria for diagnosing bulimia nervosa:

1. Recurrent episodes of overeating: an episode of overeating characterized by eating, within a discrete period (e.g., within any 2-hour period), an amount of food that is definitely larger than most people would eat in a similar period under similar circumstances. Feeling a lack of control over eating during the episode (e.g., feeling unable to stop eating or control what or how much one is eating).
2. Recurrent inappropriate compensatory behaviors to prevent weight gain, such as self-induced vomiting, misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or other medications, fasting, or excessive exercise.
3. Binge-eating and inappropriate compensatory behaviors occur, on average, at least once a week over three months.
4. Self-evaluation is unduly influenced by body shape and weight.

5. The disturbance does not exclusively occur during episodes of anorexia nervosa.
6. Binge-eating and inappropriate compensatory behaviors cannot be attributed to the physiological effects of a substance (e.g., substance abuse) or a general medical condition (e.g., severe gastrointestinal disorders).

3. Eating Disorders in a Socio-Cultural Context – Feminist Insights

Over the past decade, women have disrupted numerous power structures; currently, eating disorders have exponentially increased, and aesthetic surgery has become the fastest-growing medical specialty. In the last five years, consumer consumption has doubled, pornography has become a major media category surpassing legitimate films and records combined, and thirty-three thousand American women told researchers that they would rather lose ten to fifteen kilograms than achieve any other goal. More and more women have more money, power, and legal recognition than ever before; yet, concerning physical satisfaction and self-criticism, perhaps, they are actually worse off than their non-liberated grandmothers. Recent research consistently shows that within most Western-controlled, attractive, successful women, there are secret “underworlds” that poison women’s freedom; imbued with beauty ideals, it is a dark vein of self-hatred, physical obsessions, the terror of aging, and the fear of losing control (Wolf, 1991).

Cultural ideals around the female body and body weight undeniably influence individual self-confidence and body image awareness, contributing to the development of eating disorders. In many Western cultures, lower body weight is a highly valued ideal of female beauty. This ideal is reinforced by media images, slender models, and celebrities, as well as social norms that label body weight or body appearance with happiness, success, and self-control.

These cultural messages contribute to the development of body dissatisfaction and increase the desire to conform to these social beauty standards, which can lead to the development of eating disorders. A study conducted by Stice et al. (1994) found that adolescent girls exposed to media images of slender models had a much higher chance of developing eating disorders compared to girls who were not exposed to such photographs. Similarly, a study by Becker et al. (2002) supports the hypothesis that cultural pressure towards a slender body—as the ideal female body—represents a significant predictor for the development of eating disorders among younger girls.

Susan Bordo (2004) suggests that the dominant cultural ideal of thinness, promoted through media and popular culture, has a tremendous impact on the development of eating disorders. This ideal imposes a certain amount of pressure and anxiety about the image of the female body, which is particularly harmful to women.

3.1 Anorexia Nervosa in a Socio-Cultural Context – Feminist Insights

Initially, anorexia was linked to hysteria and hypochondria – as “hysteria of the digestive system” (Malson, 1998). Lasegue (1873) made a breakthrough in understanding anorexia, rejecting the then-accepted theory that the cause of anorexic hysteria was related to abnormalities associated with the uterus (Latin: hystera) (Sydenham in Malson, 1998:62). Instead, he pointed to the nervous system and nervous emotions as the cause of anorexia (Malson, 1998:62). A year later, Gull published an article in which he defined anorexia as “anorexia nervosa,” a term still used today. Anorexia is an extreme form of obsession shared by most American women, who attempt to control their bodies through diet (Wolf, 1991).

The social environment sets norms and ideals, providing individuals with information about how well they fit into the context. For example, in Western culture, the ideal of thinness is celebrated as a means of achieving success and acceptance from others (Aronson, Wilson, and Akert, 2005). Field and colleagues (2001) found that internalizing the slim body appearance leads to Western culture women being dissatisfied with their appearance because they cannot attain that ideal. Family, peer, and media pressure contribute to this dissatisfaction. Anorexia has become a symbol of ultimate female self-control and resistance to cultural pressure to be beautiful (Wolf, 1991).

Susan Bordo (2004) in her book reflects on the relationship between mother and daughter and its role in the development of anorexia nervosa. Anorexia can be seen as a form of rebellion against the mother’s influence and expectations. Maternal behavior has proven to be a significant factor in the occurrence of eating disorders, with girls who had a mother on a diet and obsessed with appearance more likely to develop unhealthy weight control (Field et al., 2001). Bordo (2004) also explains the emergence of anorexia as a way for the daughter to establish her identity and ensure independence from her mother.

Anorexia can also be seen as a form of resistance to patriarchal power. It can be a way for women to regain control over their bodies and reject cultural expectations placed upon them (Wolf, 1991). Helen Malson (1998) emphasizes the complex connection between psychological factors and cultural influences in the development of anorexia. She departs from the classical assumption of anorexia as a result of individual psychological factors, suggesting that it shapes and develops as a product of cultural values and beliefs about the body, gender, and identity. Anorexia, as she says, is associated with femininity and the female body. Women are often expected to be thin, delicate, and passive, and these ideals can contribute to a sense of helplessness. Anorexia can be seen as a way to reject these ideals and take control of one’s body and life. Another cultural factor that may contribute to anorexia is the prevalence of diet culture. Diet culture emphasizes weight loss and restrictions as a means of achieving health and happiness and can create an obsession with food and body image that may trigger or sustain eating disorders. Crolla et al.’s research (2016) found a significant connection between eating habits and restrictive dietary behaviors and an increased risk of anorexia. The cultural emphasis on control and discipline is another factor contributing to the development of anorexia. Strict rules

and regulations regarding diet and exercise can act both empowering and oppressive, creating a sense of purpose for those struggling with eating disorders (Bordo, 2004).

Gender roles and expectations can also play a role in the development of anorexia. Women, in particular, may feel pressure to conform to cultural expectations of femininity and attractiveness, which can lead to disturbed eating patterns. Research by Austin and Smith (2016) showed that the pressure to be thin was a significant predictor of anorexia among young women. Gender roles are social expectations and rules about what is appropriate behavior for men and women in a given culture or society. Many cultures have strict gender norms around the body, associating slimness and a slender build with femininity and attractiveness for women. These norms can contribute to the development of anorexia nervosa, an eating disorder characterized by an obsessive fear of gaining weight, distorted body image, and extreme weight loss. Anorexia nervosa is more frequently diagnosed in women than in men, and many researchers suggest that this may be, at least in part, a result of how gender norms are constructed and reinforced in society.

The onset of the disease is most common between the ages of 14 and 18 and is often the result of a significant event, such as the onset of puberty or leaving home for studies. In over 75% of cases, the illness began between the ages of 14 and 16. According to statistical data, 1 in 200 girls in puberty develops this disease (DSM V, 2013). Girls and women are often socialized to value thinness and to see their bodies as objects for others' judgment, while boys and men may receive different messages about what is valued in terms of physical appearance. This can lead to greater susceptibility to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviors in girls and women.

3.2 Bulimia in a Socio-Cultural Context – Feminist Insights

From a cultural perspective, bulimia can be viewed as a response to societal pressures to conform to a certain physical ideal and engage in restrictive eating behaviors. Additionally, cultural values related to food and nutrition, such as guilt and shame, can contribute to the development and maintenance of bulimia.

One author who extensively wrote on the subject of bulimia and culture is Margo Maine. In her book "Body Myth: Adult Women and the Pressure to be Perfect," Maine discusses how cultural ideals of thinness and beauty can contribute to the development of bulimia in women. She suggests that bulimia can be a way for women to cope with the pressure to conform to these ideals while allowing them to indulge in the pleasure of food. Another author who wrote about bulimia and cultural factors is Niva Piran. In her book "Gender and Eating Disorders," Piran explores how cultural values and beliefs about femininity, body image, and food can contribute to the development of bulimia in women. She suggests that bulimia can be a way for women to navigate conflicting cultural expectations, such as the desire to be thin and attractive, while simultaneously enjoying food and eating. Women learn from family, friends, and the media what is considered an attractive body and how they compare to that ideal. In conveying that a thin body is ideal, all media play a role. In her article, Boskin-Ledah (1976) compares those with bulimia to Cinderella's stepsisters: they desperately want

to fit into a glass slipper that is too small for their feet, all to gain the prince's favor and social recognition. In the author's eyes, those with bulimia wanted to "fit into" the societal perception of a beautiful female body and meet others' expectations. As Boskin-Ledahl (1976) advocated a feminist perspective, she saw the pressure toward an unrealistically thin appearance as influenced by patriarchal society and women's need to please others, unable to separate individual fear of weight gain from the societal climate of idealizing thinness and objectifying the female body (Gordon, 2015).

Russell (1979) highlighted that individuals with bulimia differ from patients with anorexia in that they are more functional, mostly fulfilling their daily responsibilities and concealing their destructive behavior for years (Russell, 1979). Those with bulimia are interested in romantic relationships and are usually sexually active (Gordon, 2015), distinguishing them from most individuals with anorexia. Individuals with bulimia often have a history of slightly elevated body weight, followed by dieting, which, in some cases, evolves into an anorexic episode before entering a cycle of binge eating and purging through vomiting or laxatives/diuretics. In some cases, binge eating alternates with periods of extremely restrictive eating or fasting, sometimes accompanied by obsessive exercising (Crow and Eckert, 2016).

4. Social Meanings of the Female Beauty Ideal in the Post feminist Era

Post feminism promotes the idea that women have achieved equality and that the feminist movement is no longer necessary. However, this narrative overlooks ongoing challenges and inequalities that women face in society, especially regarding body image and beauty standards. Women are still primarily judged based on their appearance, and those who do not adhere to narrow beauty standards are often marginalized and excluded (Riley, Evans, and Robson, 2022). The ideal of thinness is so deeply ingrained in our society that it is almost invisible, and we often fail to realize how much it shapes our perception of ourselves and others. Women are bombarded with messages about the importance of body appearance from a young age, and these messages persist throughout their lives (Malson, 1998).

In many cultures, beauty standards are greatly influenced by physical characteristics such as skin color, body shape, and facial features. For example, in Western cultures, slimness and a symmetrical face are often considered desirable, while in some African and South American cultures, curves and a fuller figure are seen as more attractive. Similarly, in many Asian cultures, lighter skin is considered more beautiful, while in some African cultures, darker skin is preferred. In addition to physical characteristics, beauty standards are influenced by social norms and values. For instance, in many cultures, youth is highly valued, and aging is often stigmatized, leading to pressure to maintain a youthful appearance through cosmetic treatments or other means.

The standards promoted in Western culture are not only unattainable for most women but also oppressive and harmful to their well-being. The thin ideal is not just about physical appearance; it is also about control. Women are encouraged to control their bodies and appetites to achieve an idealized standard, reinforcing gender power dynamics and the idea that women's bodies are not their own (Malson, 1998).

The ideal of a slim woman is a key way in which society reinforces gender roles and stereotypes. Women are expected to prioritize their appearance over other aspects of their lives, and those who do not adhere to these standards are often marginalized and excluded. This can have serious consequences for women's mental health and well-being (Malson, 1998). Susan Bordo (2004) suggests that these beauty standards are used to control and regulate women's bodies and reinforce gender inequality. The obsession with thinness and beauty is a way to divert women from more critical issues, such as political and economic inequality. By focusing on their appearance and striving for an unattainable ideal, women are prevented from fully engaging in society and realizing their potential. Bordo (2004) also explores how beauty standards intersect with race, class, and sexuality, arguing that these intersections create even greater challenges and obstacles for women who do not fit the idealized standard. Susan Bordo (2004) believes that beauty standards are a product of social and cultural forces used to regulate and control women's bodies. She argues that these standards are oppressive and harmful, and by challenging and resisting them, women can regain their independence and lead more authentic and fulfilling lives.

Post feminist discourse often focuses on individual empowerment and consumer choice, but this focus can be limiting, even harmful, when it comes to body image and beauty standards. Women are encouraged to take responsibility for their own bodies and appearance, but this can lead to feelings of guilt and shame when they are unable to achieve the idealized standards promoted by the beauty industry (Riley, Evans, and Robson, 2022). The beauty industry has long relied on narrow beauty standards that are unattainable for most women, but post feminist discourse has made these standards appear natural and empowering. The idea that women can and should achieve perfection in all aspects of their lives, including appearance, has become so normalized that it is often unquestioned (Riley, Evans, and Robson, 2022). The beauty industry has a vested interest in promoting a narrow and unrealistic ideal of femininity because it creates a sense of insecurity and inadequacy that can be exploited for profit. Women are encouraged to spend enormous amounts of time, money, and energy on their appearance, often at the expense of other aspects of their lives (Malson, 1998).

Post feminism strengthens a narrow and limiting view of femininity that values traditional feminine qualities such as beauty and attractiveness over other qualities like intelligence and strength. This perspective on femininity is not only harmful to women who do not fit the idealized standard, but also reinforces gender stereotypes and limits the possibilities and potential of women (Riley, Evans, and Robson, 2022). According to Wolf (1991), beauty standards are not natural or objective; society has constructed them to maintain a power imbalance. She argues that the beauty myth creates a standard of physical perfection that is impossible for most women to achieve, leading to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and even self-harm. Wolf (1991) suggests that the beauty myth is a way to divert women from their true potential and restrict their power. By focusing on appearance and an obsession with physical beauty, women are prevented from achieving their ambitions and contributing to society in a meaningful way. Naomi Wolf (1991) believes that beauty standards are a social construct used to control and limit women, and by recognizing and challenging these standards, women can regain their power and fulfill their true potential.

5. Digital Culture and Unattainable Beauty Standards

Media play a significant role in shaping and reinforcing social beauty standards. Images and messages presented in magazines, television shows, movies, and advertisements often promote a narrow and unrealistic beauty standard that can be harmful to individuals who do not fit that mold. The constant media exposure to these images can lead to negative self-image, low self-esteem, and body dissatisfaction, especially among women and girls. Social media has become a crucial space for constructing and maintaining beauty standards, often based on a narrow and unrealistic ideal of femininity. Women are expected to portray femininity in very specific ways online, and those who do not adhere to these standards are often subject to ridicule and harassment (Dobson, 2015). The media's emphasis on physical appearance and its association with value and success can also contribute to a culture of objectification, where women are primarily seen as objects for male consumption rather than individuals with their own agency and autonomy. This can further perpetuate gender inequality and contribute to harmful power dynamics between men and women. However, there is increasing awareness and rejection of these narrow beauty standards in the media, with more diverse representations of beauty and body types being celebrated and promoted. This can lead to a more inclusive and accepting culture where individuals are valued for who they are, not just for their appearance. The beauty industry has always relied on narrow and often unattainable beauty standards, but social media has amplified the reach and impact of these standards. Women are bombarded daily with images of idealized beauty, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and even self-harm (Dobson, 2015). Sarah Riley, Adrienne Evans, and Martine Robson (2020) argue that social media platforms have both positive and negative effects on body image and beauty standards. On one hand, social media can provide a platform for various body types and beauty ideals to be celebrated and promoted, challenging traditional beauty standards and promoting body positivity. On the other hand, social media can also perpetuate unrealistic beauty standards and contribute to the pressure to conform to narrow beauty ideals. Post feminism relies on the discourse of empowerment, individualism, and choice, but this discourse is limited in addressing how beauty standards are constructed and reinforced in digital culture. Women are encouraged to make decisions about their bodies and appearance, but these choices are often constrained by narrow and unattainable beauty ideals promoted on the internet (Dobson, 2015). Digital culture often reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes, which can limit the opportunities and potential of women. Beauty standards are a key way in which these gender roles and stereotypes are maintained, as women are expected to prioritize their appearance over other aspects of their lives (Dobson, 2015).

6. Conclusion

Eating disorders are serious mental health conditions often characterized by intense fear of gaining weight, distorted body image, and obsession with food and weight. Eating disorders can affect people of all genders, but they are more common among women, and this is associated with societal beauty standards and gender norms, regulating the body in the patriarchal substrate of consumer culture around us. Beauty standards and ideals of physical attractiveness promoted by society can

also contribute to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behavior. These standards often prioritize a specific body type, skin color, and facial features, which for many individuals can be unattainable or unrealistic, especially for women of various generations. In recent decades, women have resisted patriarchal and entrenched power structures and gained more financial, legal, and social recognition than ever before. However, alongside this progress, there has been an exponential increase in eating disorders, and aesthetic surgery has become the fastest-growing medical specialty. Cultural ideals around the female body and weight have an undeniable impact on individual self-confidence and body image awareness, contributing to the development of eating disorders.

Feminist perspectives on eating disorders emphasize the social and cultural factors contributing to their development, rather than focusing solely on individual psychology or biology. These perspectives critique the ways patriarchal societies impose oppressive beauty standards on women, often using unrealistic images and messages that can lead to self-hatred and disordered eating behavior. Feminist approaches to addressing eating disorders involve changing these cultural messages, promoting body acceptance and self-love, and advocating for social changes to reduce gender inequalities and oppressive beauty standards. Ultimately, addressing the cultural and social factors contributing to the development of eating disorders requires a feminist perspective that recognizes how power and oppression shape women's experiences of their bodies and lives.

It is also crucial to recognize the impact of gender norms, eating disorders, and beauty standards and work towards promoting body positivity, self-acceptance, and inclusivity. This includes challenging harmful societal expectations, promoting diverse representations of bodies and beauty, and advocating for support and mental health treatment for those struggling with disordered eating behavior.

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Vocal fry, masculine molds, feminist perspectives

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to explore the mutual influence of language in use and gender as a set of culturally shaped attributes attributed to men or women, with a strong emphasis on the role of so-called masculine molds in situated contexts where speech and meaning are produced and interpreted. The material analyzed in this study relates to the speech phenomenon of extended and creaky voice in women in certain situations, known as the English phrase “vocal fry,” which will not be translated here due to the inability to find an adequate term in the published literature in the Croatian language. The main research question is whether the phenomenon of vocal fry is a form of women conforming to masculine molds as forms of bias that represent standards within androcentric societies, from the perspective of feminist criticism. We inquire whether women change their voice when speaking in certain situations to sound more authoritative, especially in business contexts or during employment. The approach in this paper involved a literature review in search of an answer to the research question and informational interviews with experts in the fields of phonetics, gender sociology, and language. The results provide an overview of research on gender, language, masculine molds, and the phenomenon of vocal fry, showing that this is a very recent and poorly researched phenomenon and that there is no consensus among feminist views. The paper illustrates a passionate feminist debate in which positions vary from advocating and encouraging the practice of changing women’s voices to vehemently advocating the rejection of such practices.

Keywords: vocal fry, gender, language, masculine molds, feminism, authority

1. Introduction

The epistemological assumption in this paper relies on social constructionism (Burr, 2003; Lock and Strong, 2010), treating gender as a product of social and cultural construction that changes over time and situations despite its deep and enduring structure. Gender is considered to be performed (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Goffman, 1977) on both individual and institutional levels in all practices and interactions involving members of society, with a focus here on how language is used in specific situations (Litosseliti and Sunderland, 2002) as a factor in producing fluid attributes of masculinity and femininity. Conversation is a powerful form of interaction, representing a stage where actors play roles according to pre-reflexive scenarios of sociality.

Building on these assumptions, the objectives of this paper have been formulated. The literature on the concepts of vocal fry and masculine molds is explored to establish a relationship between these phenomena. Additionally, the goal is to analyze interpretations of the vocal fry phenomenon from a feminist perspective. The research questions are formulated in line with the objectives, exploring whether vocal fry is an expression of masculine molds and what the feminist interpretation of this phenomenon is. Among other things, the study investigates the broader implications of the conclusions based on the literature review and suggests directions for further research.

This topic emerged from the author's interest in feminist views on the relatively new and increasingly prevalent phenomenon of vocal fry, characterized by a lowering of the voice to the lowest possible frequency range, featuring a soft, deep, and creaky sound (Chao and Bursten, 2021). This research focuses on sociological and feminist perspectives, linking the non-modal voice form of vocal fry to masculine molds within androcentric societies. Furthermore, the popular debate between Naomi Wolf (2015) and her critics, including Erin Riley (2015), Dabbie Cameron (2015), and Gretchen McCulloch (2015), is explored.

Empirical research on the phenomenon of vocal fry began in the 1960s (Hollien, Moore, Wendahl, Michel, 1966). Studies predominantly focus on the phonetic characteristics of this phenomenon (Abdelli-Beruh, Wolk, Slavin, 2014; Cernek et al., 2017), while sociological research on the phenomenon has only recently begun (Cheryan, Plaut, Davies, and Steele, 2009; Yuasa, 2010; Anderson, Klostad, Mayew, Venkatachalam, 2014; Chao and Bursten, 2021). Masculine molds, as a form of bias valuing behaviors associated with male gender roles (Cheryan and Markus, 2020), are analyzed to uncover the relationship between the vocal fry phenomenon and the integration of women into androcentric society.

The term "vocal fry" is not translated into Bosnian standard language in this paper because no suitable translation was found in relevant scientific sources reviewed and published in Bosnian. Advice was sought from researchers in the fields of phonetics and sociology of gender and language. The suggested term was "glotalizacija," but it was agreed that this term is conceptually limited to the articulation site and lacks terminological recognizability in literature that aims to explore the relationship between language in use and women's speech adaptations to androcentric masculine standards and molds from a sociological and feminist perspective. Therefore, it was agreed, although not typically preferable, to leave the term in italics in English.

2. Gender and Language – Approaches and Perspectives

In the section aiming to provide an overview of approaches and perspectives in the research of gender and language in use, a self-reflective comment is necessary. In this study, gender differences are explored using terms such as "female," "male," "women," and "men." However, this is done without the intention of reifying and with an awareness of the fluidity of categories, aiming to challenge existing "given" assumptions. The analysis of language, speech, discourse, and their relationships with

social identities, including gender, is approached with a qualitative orientation dedicated to understanding language and society. It is emphasized that variables such as sex and gender are not treated as essential or independent, acknowledging the empirical fact that individuals can change their voice in various ways with multiple meanings. The goal is to challenge and question pre-established social norms and “given” assumptions (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999, p. 36). Additionally, discourse as language in use involves multiple levels, from phonetic, lexical, grammatical, etc., to the level of co-text and conditions of speech and writing production and distribution, extending to broader potentially hegemonic social levels (Fairclough, 1995).

The history of research on gender and language in a feminist context is traced back to the 1970s, mentioning the classic work of Robin Lakoff (1973, p. 45), who argued that language uses us as much as we use language, emphasizing that gender differences are products of specific cultures (Giddens, 2007, p. 108). Research on gender and language in the 1970s and 1980s was predominantly feminist, with significant debates between those advocating for the study of parole, focusing on investigating gender differences in language use, and those focusing on langue, emphasizing gender bias in language (Litosseliti and Sunderland, 2002). Researchers in parole predominantly directed their focus on male dominance in language (Fishman, 1978; West, 1995), while researchers in langue, examining the abstract system, turned to studying grammatical uses that subordinated women (Spender, 1980), such as generic male pronouns (Goffman, 1977). These studies tended to represent masculinity and femininity as gender binary. It is perilous to equate gender and sex during the investigation of gender differences, and criticisms of parole and langue traditions were based on the representation of gender in binary opposition.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013) published the book “Language and Gender,” emphasizing changes in language based on gender, how gender is implemented in language, and how gender creates identity. In language in use, gender is present in jokes, humor (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013), conflicts (Tannen, 2009) where men interrupt female interlocutors and dominate discussions (Shaw, 2000), etc. Tannen (1990) studied how men and women engage in conflicts, how often, and in what ways. In her conclusions, Tannen (1990) states that gender differences are implemented in conflicts between men and women, meaning there is a difference in how women approach conflict compared to men. Women tend to avoid conflict more often and should assert their views more frequently, while Tannen (1990) advises men to listen to the other side more often. Additional research has focused on gender as interaction (West and Zimmerman, 1987), institutionalized gender manifesting in our activities, beliefs, and behaviors. Considering that gender awareness is formed in childhood (Giddens, 2007), gender is regarded as a “natural phenomenon” so deeply embedded in individual identity and socially institutionalized that beliefs about gender are considered evident truths (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013, p. 1).

Gender and language in the context of public discourse is an extremely complex narrative, where numerous content analyses have been conducted to determine the changes in the perception of male and female expression over decades. Cameron (2005) provides the example of Margaret Thatcher and the obligatory changes in her voice and speaking style to sound more authoritative. Linguistic changes required of

her included lowering the voice frequency, tone, and slowing down speech to make her words resonate more deeply with the British population. Furthermore, Sylvia Shaw (2000) explores how men and women communicate in the British Parliament (House of Commons) to get the floor and win debates. Shaw (2000) concludes that men dominate in debates, attributing this to the fact that “90 percent of all instances of illegal interruption are committed by men” (p. 416). Illegal interruption refers to interrupting a speaker from the opposing side outside the rules of turn-taking, and male parliamentarians achieve this through “interrupting, heckling, delaying, joking” (Cameron, 2005, p. 497).

Penelope Eckert (2000, cited in Cameron, 2005) emphasizes the thesis that women in mixed-gender institutions, initially male-dominated, such as politics, are considered intruders and often feel that way themselves. Taking politics and public life as an example, changes in speech that women undergo to sound more authoritative are recognized. Lakoff (1973) argues that women experience linguistic discrimination in two ways: “the way they are taught to use language and the way language treats them” (p. 46). Society does this to oppress women and create power that is a product of everyday interaction (Fishman, 1978). Returning to the example of “male-female” occupations and adding an example from Goffman’s work (1977), he mentions the term “humankind” as an instance of linguistic favoritism towards men. Today, in the English language, the term “manager,” derived from the verb “to manage,” borrowed from the Latin word “maneggiare,” where we can see the Latin “man” (man), implies male as the root of the word (Dictionary.com, n.d.).

Therefore, questions arising in understanding gender as a culturally shaped set of attributes attributed to men or women (Humm, 1989, p. 84) include: Who attributes them? How? How do recipients respond to them? Are male and female truly monolithic categories? A simple distinction between biological sex and socialized gender is inadequate if human activity and diversity are to be considered, and if language is seen as contributing to shaping gender (not just as a gender characteristic). Moving away from theoretical essentialism and gender as binary difference means seeing gender as a potential site of struggle and resistance, and gender identity as both socially and individually determined by language. Wodak (1997) emphasizes that for a discursive approach to gender research, it is important to understand how what it means to be a man or a woman changes from generation to generation and among different racial, ethnic, or class groups, which is a particularly important note for this research.

Building on this fact, it is necessary to mention that if the vocal fry phenomenon is a form of conformity to masculine molds in androcentric societies, the phenomenon does not manifest equally in all cultures. Podesva (2013) explores vocal fry in correlation with racial and ethnic independent variables and empirically demonstrates differences in the occurrence of non-modal voice forms based on these variables.

We have presented some approaches and perspectives in researching the relationship between gender and speech, and our study of the vocal fry phenomenon aligns with research on the relationship between gender and speech because vocal fry is a way of using language. We approach this phenomenon with the goal of connecting it with masculine molds.

3. Masculine Molds

3.1. What Are Masculine Molds

Cheryan and Markus (2020) have defined masculine molds (masculine defaults) as: a form of bias in which characteristics and behaviors associated with male gender roles are valued, rewarded, considered the standard [...] and an inevitable aspect of a particular culture. Masculine molds encompass ideas, values, practices, interaction styles, norms, and beliefs that fundamentally disadvantage women compared to men (p. 1024).²³

Gender stereotypes are highly prescriptive (Prentice and Carranza, 2002), and the characteristics of men and women vary depending on the societal molds imposed in a particular culture. Accordingly, masculine molds may not be the same in different cultures (Cheryan and Markus, 2020). For example, the stereotype that women are gentle and caring arises from assigned societal gender roles where they are indeed gentle and caring (Prentice and Carranza, 2002), thus bringing gender stereotypes to life and reproducing socially accepted stereotypical gender roles. Prescriptive gender stereotypes focus on “those gender roles that are necessary for fulfilling traditional gender roles” (Prentice and Carranza, 2002, p. 275). Additionally, gender roles are a powerful reinforcer of specific behavior when emphasized in culture (Deaux and Major, 1987, cited in Cheryan and Markus, 2020). Molds are predetermined conditions of life in a culture; they are imposed, preselected, and assumed to be standard (Cheryan and Markus, 2020). Molds can shape social structure as they determine “who is included and dictate how people will behave” (Cheryan and Markus, 2020, p. 1025).

How did the standardization of masculine molds come about, and why is a woman “nothing else than what a man decides about her” (de Beauvoir, 2016, p. 7)? According to Bailey, LaFrance, and Dovidio (2018), a social system organized around men is called androcentrism. Androcentrism places men at the center of societal events, creating thoughts and experiences of men as primary (Bem, 1993, cited in Bailey et al., 2018). The general tendency of androcentrism is to mark the female gender more frequently than males, even when they are equally represented (Bailey et al., 2018). Goffman (1977), a sociologist with significant influence on symbolic interactionism (Ritzer, 1997), emphasizes that gender is a social, not biological, category that arises as a result of society, social interactions, and gender differences are a common occurrence to which category actors are accustomed. In language, gender is manifested in professions that favor men, even though women are equally competent to perform those jobs, as Goffman (1977) observes the word “dentist” that contains the male gender and similarly the term “fireman.” Today, the term “firefighter” is used in English to attempt to reduce gender differences and androcentrism. In the Bosnian language, the term “medicinski tehničar” is used to avoid gender incorrectness, but the term “medicinske sestre” (nurses) is still used. Also, there are more employed “medicinske sestre” than “medicinski tehničari” (HZJZ, 2020).

²³ The quote used to define masculine molds is originally in the English language, and it has been translated into Croatian by the author of this paper.

3.2. How Masculine Molds Hinder Women's Progress

In a society colored by androcentrism, women must first adapt to male behavior molds, and even when they do, they often “will not be recognized and treated as equals to men” (Cheryan and Markus, 2020, p. 1025). Moreover, masculine molds favor men because they will quickly fit into a society made for them with their characteristics. Cheryan and Markus (2020, p. 1026) provide an example, stating that just as buildings without ramps hinder people with disabilities, masculine molds impede women's progress. Furthermore, cultures with pronounced masculine molds expose women to a greater likelihood of receiving negative reactions from society if they deviate from social norms, especially in political development. Morgenroth, Fine, Ryan, and Genat (2017) researched the likelihood of engaging in risky situations with gender as an independent variable. They concluded that the concept of risk-taking was created based on how men approach risky situations. When the approach changed, it was seen that women take risks to the same extent but under different circumstances (Morgenroth et al., 2017). The perception that women are less involved in risky situations hinders their progress in careers where risk-taking is vital (Cheryan and Markus, 2020), such as in the business and finance world.

In a study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2017, public opinion was surveyed on respondents in the U.S. regarding the perception of masculinity and femininity in society. It was concluded that society indeed believes that men and women express their emotions, physical and mental abilities, attitudes, and parenting behavior differently. However, there is no societal consensus on why and where these differences originate. The most common responses from respondents suggest that social expectations are assigned to women, and biological stereotypes are assigned to men (Parker, Horowitz, Stepler, 2017), such as physical strength and the evolutionary justification of toxic masculinity. American society believes that men face the greatest pressure in terms of financially supporting the family, while women face the pressure of emotionally caring for the family (Parker et al., 2017). The subsequent Pew Research Center study (2017) concludes that both men and women are seen as equally good corporate leaders, but gender stereotypes persist. According to the data from that study, it is considered that men are better leaders for a professional sports team or an oil derivatives company, while women are better suited for the role of a hospital manager or head of a food chain.

4. Vocal Fry

4.1. What is Vocal Fry?

Vocal fry is a phenomenon in which an individual lowers their vocal pitch to the lowest frequency within the possible vocal range, resulting in a low, creaky voice tone referred to as vocal fry (Chao and Bursten, 2021). Vocal fry occurs when the vocal cords irregularly vibrate, producing a frequency lower than the usual speech frequency, leading to a lower vocal tone (Chao and Bursten, 2021). It is associated with vowels and consonants (Cernak et al., 2017, cited in Chao and Bursten, 2021) and most commonly occurs at the end of a sentence (Abdelli-Beruh et al., 2014). Furthermore,

vocal fry is categorized as a voluntarily induced change in vocal cord anatomy. Other examples of voluntary changes include whispering, breathy voice, falsetto, modal voice, and glottalization (Chao and Bursten, 2021).

4.2. Overview of Some Research on Vocal Fry Phenomenon

Traditionally, vocal fry was classified as a clinical syndrome associated with laryngeal abnormalities, specifically vocal cord malfunction and airflow during speech (Hollien, Moore, Wendahl, Michel, 1966). Hollien et al. (1966) argue that such classification was common but, in their opinion, inaccurate because vocal fry has its specific acoustic characteristics that need to be explored. In line with more recent research, after the 1960s, vocal fry ceased to be treated as a clinical phenomenon but rather as a phenomenon worthy of empirical investigation and understanding (Catford, 1964, cited in Chao and Bursten, 2021). The article by Hollien and colleagues from 1966 is crucial for the subsequent development of research into this voice phenomenon, as the first half of the twentieth century did not pay much attention to the empirical investigation of vocal fry.

During the initial research and data collection, vocal fry was most generally defined as a phonetic phenomenon occurring at specific frequencies below the modal voice (Hollien et al., 1966). Gobl and Chasaide (2003, cited in Chao and Bursten, 2021) introduced the concept of double pulsation to describe a newly recognized characteristic of the vocal fry phenomenon. Double pulsation refers to a cycle where, during voice production, two pulses create a different wavelength, and their resonance results in a crack in the voice; vocal fry.

The main criticism directed at the vocal fry phenomenon is actually related to the critique of women using vocal fry. Critics argue that this phenomenon is exclusively associated with the female gender, emphasizing that such voice changes in women are so irritating and confusing that they cannot understand what a person meant when using vocal fry in speech (Glass, 2015, cited in Chao and Bursten, 2021). In their review article, Chao and Bursten (2021) emphasize their scientific interest in and public disapproval of vocal fry in women's speech, viewing this disapproval as limiting women's communicative autonomy.

Chao and Bursten (2021) highlight that the majority of sociolinguistic research has focused on studying speakers and their speech abilities, i.e., where vocal fry occurs in a sentence. However, in the last 10 years, there has been a more detailed investigation into the context in which vocal fry appears. For instance, Sara Loss and Elizabeth Zold (2014) conducted research that focused on the social space and textual context when vocal fry appears. Loss and Zold (2014) analyzed the TV reality show "Say Yes to the Dress." They observed that vocal fry occurs in women both under 29 and over 30 years old, as well as in women with medium and higher purchasing power. Therefore, the frequency of vocal fry here does not depend on age or purchasing power, but a difference was found in the context in which women use vocal fry. They concluded that women under 29 use vocal fry when communicating with authorities, while women over 30 use it when commenting on emotional topics.

Podesva (2013) published a review article on phonetic literature related to modal and non-modal manifestations in speech. Modal voice is the neutral voice tone against which non-modal forms (Cernak et al., 2017, cited in Chao and Bursten 2021) such as whisper, vocal fry, falsetto, and breathy voice are determined. Podesva (2013) explores the relationship between independent linguistic variables and independent social variables: gender, race, age, and the dependent variable. Frequencies show that modal voice is the most common (79%), and among non-modal forms, vocal fry is the most frequent with an occurrence of 19%. In addition to the mentioned social factors, Podesva (2013) also considers the spatial context. Thus, there are two possible reasons for the dominance of vocal fry as a non-modal form: 1) when a person communicates with someone of higher social status or authority, and 2) during the expression of their opinion on a specific topic. It has also been shown (Podesva, 2013) that age does not influence the frequency of vocal fry appearances in speech. Loss and Zold (2014) suggest that the topic is more important than age. Podesva (2013) concludes that women use vocal fry more frequently, regardless of race, and falsetto is most commonly used by African American women. The occurrence of vocal fry as a non-modal form is more common in white women than in white men, but not as significantly different as among African American women and men. White women whisper more often than white men, and in the African American population, there is no pronounced difference in the frequency of whispering between genders.²⁴

4.3 Authority and Vocal Fry

Based on research conducted on female students, Lefkowitz and Sicoli (2007) conclude that the creakiness in the voice, vocal fry, is associated with the abstract marking of the speaker's tone. Female students tend to use the vocal fry phenomenon when speaking, especially with a man, about a topic they are familiar with and knowledgeable about. By using vocal fry (Lefkowitz and Sicoli, 2007), speakers aim to sound authoritative and have authority on the discussed topic, while simultaneously distancing themselves from responsibility for that authority. Yuasa (2010) further explores the connection between vocal fry and authority. In a review article, Yuasa (2010) mentions a study from 1987 where Jeffery Pittam examined Americans and Australians about their attitude toward audio recordings with and without vocal fry, and the results suggest that vocal fry is associated with high social status. Pittam (1987, cited in Yuasa, 2010) explains these results using the theory that a creaky, deep voice tone, such as vocal fry, is associated with men, and therefore, it attributes higher social status to individuals whose speech includes vocal fry.

However, does this apply to women as well? Chao and Bursten (2021) emphasize the distinction between content-based and non-content-based responses. It is crucial to highlight this difference because Chao and Bursten (2021) believe that negative reactions are not content-based but are based on subjective feelings; women are

²⁴ In an effort to avoid political incorrectness, the political correctness of terms such as "white women," "white men," "Afro-American women," and "Afro-American men" was examined. The use of these terms is not intended to reify or reproduce these categories; they are translated this way because they are relevant to the discussion and the comparison of the vocal fry phenomenon across races.

judged based on how they sound rather than the content of what they say. Negative reactions to the vocal fry phenomenon in women are often expressed as “it’s an irritating sound” (Chao and Bursten, 2021), leading others to perceive them as less educated and competent than men.

4.4 Public Reaction to Vocal Fry

Chao and Bursten (2021) highlight that the male voice has historically been associated with power and authority. Therefore, women use vocal fry to sound more authoritative. In an attempt to understand how the world perceives women using vocal fry, Anderson et al. (2014) conducted a study involving 400 women and 400 men aged 18 to 65. Participants listened to either an audio recording of seven men or an audio recording of seven women. For each audio recording, the participant listened to two individuals and had to indicate whether person A or person B sounded educated, competent, reliable, and whether they would hire them. The results led to the conclusion that the age of the participants does not affect the perception of a person with or without vocal fry in speech. Anderson et al. (2014) primarily wanted to investigate how the occurrence of vocal fry in the speech of young women in the U.S. affects their likelihood of employment. They concluded that women want to sound more authoritative and educated, but respondents perceive them as “less capable, less educated, less reliable, less attractive” (Anderson et al., 2014; p. 5). Additionally, criticisms of women using vocal fry more often come from female respondents. Anderson et al. (2014) explain the negative reactions to vocal fry as a response to deviating from norms, as people prefer modal voice forms. Lowering the vocal tone is typical for men (Anderson et al., 2014), not women. Chao and Bursten (2021) mention the views of Emily Katz (2014, cited in Chao and Bursten, 2021) and Naomi Wolf (2015), who believe that women should not use vocal fry because it does not help them sound professional.

4.5 Feminist Perspectives on the Vocal Fry Phenomenon

While some argue that vocal fry is unexplored (Hollien et al., 1966) and needs further research before drawing conclusions (Chao and Bursten, 2021), others believe that women should stop using vocal fry (Katz, 2014, cited in Chao and Bursten, 2021) and that it is necessary to eliminate the ideology that hinders women’s progress (Wolf, 2015). The vocal fry phenomenon has sparked strong public reactions over the past 10 years, with two main streams of thought emerging—one advocating for the encouragement of vocal fry and the other suggesting it should be stopped from spreading among young women. Interestingly, most of those with pronounced opinions identify as feminists (Wolf, 2015; Riley, 2015; Cameron, 2015). Wolf (2015) advocates abandoning vocal fry pronunciation and advises young women to “reclaim their strong feminine voices.” She argues that the patriarchy is an innovative place that will devise a new ideology after women have overcome the previous ideology that oppressed them. Wolf (2015) encourages young women to nurture their natural voices rather than adopting male voices to sound educated because she believes it

does more harm than good. Wolf (2015) also mentions the issue of patriarchy and sexism, but which side of the coin can be recognized as sexism? Advocates for stopping vocal fry in speech because women should not mimic men, or those who advocate women's freedom of speech?

In an article published in *The Guardian*, Erin Riley (2015) addresses Wolf, arguing that Wolf completely missed the point of the vocal fry phenomenon. Riley writes that the irritation towards vocal fry is just an excuse for men and women to dismiss, ignore, and marginalize the voices of young women. Riley (2015) sparks a debate by stating, "Vocal fry is not the problem. It's just another excuse to dismiss, ignore, and marginalize women's speech." Before the vocal fry phenomenon, women were criticized for using the word "like" too much and uptalk (Riley, 2015).

Cameron (2015), in an article published in the journal *In These Times*, also addresses Wolf, claiming that constant surveillance of how women speak will lead to their silence. The fact that vocal fry is predominantly a female phenomenon does not mean that vocal fry is not present in men's speech (Cameron, 2015). However, male vocal fry is viewed differently because authority was traditionally associated with men who spoke in deeper voices, and vocal fry is not as prominent in their speech (Yuasa, 2010). People may argue that they "condemn women's speech, but in reality, it is the condemnation of female speakers" (Cameron, 2015) where vocal fry is present. Gretchen McCulloch (2015), a linguist who writes about pop culture, treats vocal fry as a revolutionary phonetic change in speech and uses the metaphor "young women are the Uber of language," claiming that criticizing the speech of young women is "old-fashioned sexism" (McCulloch, 2015). To support her argument, McCulloch (2015) cites the example of Shakespeare and the fact that he is celebrated for contributing to the English language vocabulary. However, while he is praised, women are considered "usurpers of language," even though women have historically been the majority in bringing about linguistic changes. In short, "old-fashioned sexism" hinders women in developing and changing language (McCulloch, 2015).

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to provide a literature review and research overview of the vocal fry phenomenon and explore its connection to masculine molds to answer the main research question: Is vocal fry a form of women fitting into masculine molds within androcentric societies? Feminist perspectives were also analyzed. The analysis revealed an interesting interplay between gender and androcentrism, along with conflicting feminist interpretations of the vocal fry phenomenon.

Masculine molds appear in androcentric societies where characteristics and behaviors associated with the male gender are valued and considered the standard. Such value patterns negatively impact the perception of women and, consequently, their employability. Therefore, a connection can be drawn that positive adjectives are attributed to the vocal fry when this voice pattern occurs in men, and negative adjectives when vocal fry occurs in women because it is standardized that men speak with a deeper voice. Scientists are not in agreement on why vocal fry occurs in women;

some argue that the occurrence of this voice pattern is influenced by age, while others disagree and claim that context and the speaker's environment are more important. Many believe that women use vocal fry to sound more authoritative and thus adapt to male standards, but society attributes adjectives of incompetence and incompetence to women with vocal fry in their voice, indicating that women are initially noticed for how they sound rather than what they say.

The question of "male standards" and the phenomenon of vocal fry emphasizes the pervasive gender biases that continue to affect women in various aspects of society. From a feminist standpoint, it is clear that these biases are deeply rooted and often go unnoticed or unchallenged. An interesting observation from this research is the vocal fry debate among feminists who point out, each with their views on vocal fry, that the fact that women are criticized for using vocal fry phrases while men boast about the same pattern reflects a broader pattern of gender discrimination in which women's behavior is underestimated or even ridiculed.

It is important to recognize that these biases not only affect individual women but also have broader societal implications. When women are discouraged from expressing themselves in certain ways or are penalized for it, it limits their opportunities and reinforces gender stereotypes. This perpetuates a cycle of inequality and discrimination that impacts women in all areas of their lives, from the workplace to social situations.

To address these issues, it is crucial to raise awareness of biases and actively work to combat them. This may involve encouraging women to use their voices in any way that feels comfortable to them, challenging gender stereotypes, and promoting a more inclusive and diverse representation of gender in the media and society as a whole. Ultimately, the goal is to create a world where all individuals, regardless of gender, can express themselves freely and fully without fear of discrimination or bias.

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THEME III “GENDER AND MIGRATION”



Discrimination of Migrant Women in the Labor Market

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“Women are the only exploited group in history that has been idealized in helplessness.”

Erica Jong

Abstract: Due to a high degree of discrimination and gender inequality, a significant gap has emerged globally between men and women in terms of employment, likely leading to disruption and injustice in the labor market. In the introduction, the author considers the concept of gender equality, then analyzes its essential elements. The central part of the paper is dedicated to the analysis of migrant women in the labor market, through a presentation of comparative legislation and an analysis of empirical research in various legal systems, as well as judicial practice. The author also seeks to identify problems specific to migrant women and their position compared to male migrants, all from the perspective of discrimination primarily based on gender.

Keywords: gender equality, prohibition of discrimination, the position of migrant women in the labor market, judicial practice

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to identify the problems faced by migrant women through an examination of their employment status in the context of gender equality and the prohibition of multiple discrimination. Through a comparative analysis of national and foreign legislation, the author focuses on finding potential solutions for their equal inclusion in the labor market. Although migration is a natural phenomenon, decision-makers and the broader public still seem to lack a complete understanding of the issues faced by these marginalized groups. When the component of gender-based discrimination is added to this review, it becomes clear that their marginalized position in society deserves more attention. In this sense, the author seeks to bring this topic closer to everyone interested, as well as to those who should be interested in their situation, through a comparative analysis of cases from judicial practice.

In the introduction, the author illustrates the gap between women and men in both national and foreign legislations. The central part of the paper provides a chronological overview of the position of migrant women in the labor market and analyzes the reasons they are “invisible in society” and unequal compared to women of the

majority population. The paper then presents ways in which international organizations and institutions, primarily, have contributed to improving the status of women migrant workers and their integration into society. Furthermore, the author showcases examples of best practices and recommendations in the Republic of Serbia, and also addresses regulations and current initiatives in the legislation of the European Union (EU), which could significantly impact the national legal system through the EU accession process.

“In terms of labor law, the principle of gender equality implies the requirement that workers of both sexes have equal opportunities to participate in the labor market, as well as the possibility to exercise rights and undertake obligations and responsibilities from employment, regardless of their gender and regardless of the social roles associated with gender membership.” (Kovačević, 2021). The principles of the prohibition of discrimination and gender equality are causally linked. “Discrimination based on gender is the cause of gender inequality, so in that regard, this should be seen as an instrument to ensure the effective implementation of the principle of gender equality.” (Kovačević, 2021). Consistent application of the principle of prohibition of gender-based discrimination guarantees the implementation of the principle of gender equality²⁵. What I question when analyzing the issues of women migrant workers is that they are unequal to men in the labor market and face gender-based discrimination daily “(ILO, 1951).

There are numerous examples from judicial practice that illustrate the pervasive presence of gender discrimination in the labor market. The author of the paper points out that as early as 1976, the European Court of Justice adopted a progressive stance on recognizing gender discrimination as an integral part of the corpus of human rights, setting a legal precedent that influenced the further development of case law in the EU. In the case of *Gabrielle Defrenne against the Belgian airline Sabena* in 1976, the court openly acknowledged that the elimination of discrimination between men and women is indeed part of the fundamental human rights protected and promoted by community law, but at that time, the Community had not explicitly assumed jurisdiction to oversee compliance with the principle of equality between men and women regarding other conditions of work and therefore could not guarantee it. Today, discrimination against women based on gender is recognized by the EU Court of Justice, but this Court has never acknowledged multiple and intersectional discrimination in general, nor has it addressed the discrimination of women migrant workers. Instead, it has viewed their position solely through the application of the rules on the free movement of workers in the EU.

The principle of gender equality is embodied in numerous international documents (CEDAW, Istanbul Convention, Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union), as well as in the

²⁵ The outdated paradigm that assumes men are the ones providing for the family, while women should take care of the household, represents an unacceptable way of thinking from the perspective of the principles of non-discrimination and gender equality, especially considering flexible forms of work, such as remote work. This allows both men and women to dedicate themselves to both work and household responsibilities, with reasonable exceptions.

constitutional traditions of European countries. The prohibition of gender-based discrimination in the labor market is defined in the EC Directives 207/76, EU/2002/73, EU 2006/54, which EU member states have implemented into national law, primarily through gender equality laws and other laws, including labor laws.²⁶ The Republic of Serbia, as a candidate for EU membership, has implemented these directives into the Labor Law, the Law on Gender Equality, and the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination. In 2009, the Republic of Serbia adopted the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination, which prohibits multiple and intersectional discrimination.²⁷ Although formal equality has been established in international law, achieving real or substantive equality remains a challenge for all European countries, particularly evident in the problems faced by women migrant workers in the labor market.

“Multidimensional discrimination is a concept that encompasses multiple, double, and intersectional discrimination, and its legal definition aims to propose amendments to and supplements to anti-discrimination norms in EU member states to enable the legal basis for a lawsuit based on multiple discrimination and fair compensation for victims of multiple discrimination.” (Vasiljević S., 2008). “Women belonging to different racial or ethnic groups and women with disabilities are the most vulnerable groups in most EU member states. Similar situations occur in cases of discrimination based on sexual orientation or some other characteristic simultaneously. Today, increasing attention is being paid to multiple or intersectional discrimination of members of the same-sex orientation, both because of orientation and other reasons, such as race or ethnic origin, age, disability, etc.” (Vasiljević S., 2008). From the above, it can be clearly concluded that the development of certain countries does not guarantee the eradication of inequality in the labor market. So even the developed countries, such as

²⁶ In April 2019, the European Parliament adopted the Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers, foreseeing a minimum of ten working days of paternity leave and two months of non-transferable parental leave paid equally to sick leave, as well as more flexible working hours (Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU). This directive establishes minimum standards regarding parental leave, leave for care purposes, flexible conditions for workers who are parents or caregivers, and legal protection for those who apply for or use family leave and flexible working conditions. In the proposal for the adoption of the directive, the European Commission emphasized that “one of the main causes of the employment gap is the unequal distribution of responsibility for childcare between women and men,” stating that “in 2015, the average employment rate of women with one child under six was 8.8% lower than the employment rate of women without young children, while in several member states, this difference was above 30%.”

²⁷ The law provides for all types of prohibition of discrimination based on race, skin color, ancestry, citizenship, national origin or ethnic background, language, religious or political beliefs, gender, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual characteristics, income level, property status, birth, genetic characteristics, health condition, disability, marital and family status, criminal record, age, appearance, membership in political, union, and other organizations, and other actual or presumed personal characteristics, etc. The comprehensive formulation mentioned prohibits all forms of discrimination. In this sense, multiple discrimination, including that related to women migrants, is explicitly prohibited in accordance with the law, even though it is not explicitly stated.

the EU, face similar, if not identical, problems as developing countries²⁸. “In addition, migrant women are often discriminated against based on their gender, becoming victims of intersectional discrimination, which is expressed when multiple personal characteristics intersect and overlap, making discrimination impossible to analyze or separate by individual personal traits” (Beker 2019, 87) (Kuzminac, 2021).

The author goes on to analyze the position of migrant women in the labor market, claiming that they are discriminated against based on gender in situations such as unequal conditions in the labor market and the marginalization of migrant women in society, although this is not sanctioned in practice.

2. Position of Migrant Women

The previous understanding of migration, in which women accompanied male partners who migrated, has been abandoned. Today, there is an understanding that women migrate independently, mainly for employment and in search of better living conditions (Kuzminac, 2021). Therefore, changes in labor market needs and immigration policies reshape the migration patterns of women.

“Although migrations and related processes have a long history, it is well known that this area has become very relevant in Europe only in the last few decades, or more precisely, in the last two decades. The intensification of migrations, marked particularly by the influx of migrants between 2015 and 2016, was parallel to increasingly numerous debates on migrations, refugees, integration, and similar issues held in various spheres of political and societal life. Aware of the fact that migrations have had and continue to have an impact on various life spheres (economic, cultural, migration represents a multidisciplinary research field, political, geographic, anthropological, historical, religious, etc.), it is clear that the phenomenon of migration represents a multidisciplinary research field” (Blagojević, 2020). However, it should not be overlooked that the system for the entry of migrants into the EU during the 2015 and 2016 waves was established “on the go,” clearly demonstrating the EU’s unpreparedness for a million influx of migrants²⁹. Neither transit countries, such as the Republic of Serbia, were adequately prepared for the waves of migrations. As there were no clear guidelines on how to proceed, interviews with migrants, both men and women, lasted exceptionally long, either due to the inability to find an adequate translator or the lengthy questions posed by state authorities, often resulting in the rejection of asylum seeker requests and placement in inadequately equipped reception centers. “The atmosphere must not be threatening, and in this situation, everything is not only unsupportive but also threatening, starting with how the criteria for who is a refugee and who is not a refugee are set, and these change from hour to hour. This

²⁸ For example, in the EU in 2015, the average employment rate for women, according to Eurostat data, was 64.3% for those aged 20 to 64, compared to 75.9% for men, resulting in a difference of 11.6%.

²⁹ The author of this paper was a participant in the legal clinic for asylum and refugee law, collaborating and interacting with high representatives of UNHCR in the Republic of Serbia, numerous civil society organizations, government authorities, as well as having direct contact with asylum seekers.

applies to the general population of people who are now traveling, including both women and men.” But there’s a difference “and the difference in how this information reaches women compared to men migrants. Generally, male migrants have this information, and the question is whether they will share it. Women migrant workers who come are less educated, have not had the opportunity to be educated; they have lived in a traditional environment where it was not allowed to communicate with others, especially if they are men. They don’t know the foreign language; they simply have to rely on whoever leads that path – it could be a smuggler, a well-intentioned person, or someone who abuses them along the way.” (Marijana Savić, 2022).

“Migrant women often face various challenges, such as not knowing the language and cultural differences in receiving countries. According to the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) of the European Commission, a special focus should be on the employment challenges that migrant women face in Europe. The EESC concluded that one of the most effective ways to integrate migrant women into society is through their inclusion in the labor market. Additionally, to improve their position in the labor market, they need support through the integration process into society. ‘Above all, migrant women must be familiar with their rights and obligations in the receiving country, enjoy individual rights, have access to training, and use their knowledge and skills to be recognized in society as contributors to the European economy and society.’” (European Economic and Social Committee, 2015). “Multiple discrimination of migrant women results in their earnings, and in this regard, there is a gap in the earnings they achieve. Furthermore, female migrant workers often experience multiple forms of discrimination, not only based on gender and sex but also based on citizenship, race, skin color, and ethnic origin, manifested, among other things, in xenophobia and racism. Discrimination based on race, ethnic origin, cultural characteristics, nationality, language, religion, or other status is expressed in gender-specific and sex-specific ways.”

(Mršević and Janković, 2019) according to the sources they have accessed claim that due to gender-based discrimination, female migrant workers often achieve lower earnings than males, and generally, they earn less than males or may not be paid at all, experience delayed payments until departure, or have their earnings deposited into accounts that are inaccessible to them. ‘Jobs performed by women are often lower paid and provide poorer legal and social protection. Specifically, there is a significant representation of younger and less educated women, as well as migrant women, in these insecure jobs.’ (Vasiljević S., 2022). ‘Compared to men, women are more often employed on fixed-term and part-time contracts, putting them in an insecure position in the labor market.’ (Vasiljević S., 2022). ‘In the EU, the most common example of multiple discrimination is found in migrant women. Both male and female migrants are present in all segments of the European market; however, migrant women are in a worse position compared to male counterparts and women belonging to the majority population. They are less paid, in lower positions, and employed in worse jobs (so-called ‘junk jobs’) such as cleaning, serving, housekeeping, health, and care.’ (Vasiljević S., 2008).

“The marginalization of migrant women, regardless of the country of origin and the destination country, results in their weak representation in the labor market, almost

none, and they are forced to perform paid work in households, engage in agricultural activities, care for the sick, as well as engage in sexual labor. This makes them invisible and primarily inactive in the labor market, depriving them of practically excluding their rights and freedoms from the legal framework. 'Homeworkers are particularly vulnerable to physical and sexual attacks, deprivation of food and sleep, and cruelty from employers. Sexual harassment of female migrant workers in other work environments, such as farms or the industrial sector, is a problem of global proportions. Also, they may lose their work permits if they report abuse or discrimination, and in such cases, they often cannot stay in that country during the duration of the judicial process if it occurs. Women who are subjects of irregular migrations are particularly susceptible to exploitation and abuse due to their irregular immigration status, exacerbating their exclusion and the risk of exploitation. They are charged with violating immigration laws and placed in detention centers, where they are exposed to sexual abuse and then deported. They often face additional risks of domestic violence by their spouses or relatives if they come from a culture that values the subordinate role of women in the family.' (CEDAW, 2009).

"The concept of homework discriminates against women, considering that it puts them in a position that devalues their abilities and portrays them as unskilled and capable only for this type of work. I believe that these are the consequences of inconsistent policies, both in EU countries and others. Still, most importantly, modern legal systems that aim to protect against discrimination must proclaim values and provide public support to migrant women, guaranteeing them legal protection. In my opinion, this is a demanding segment of public policies, where the most vulnerable groups need to be convinced that if they turn to the system's institutions due to discrimination and abuse, which constitutes a criminal offense, they will not be the ones sanctioned.' (Janković and Mršević, 2018) concluded, based on their research, that migrant women have very limited economic opportunities to earn a living, significantly less than not only women in destination countries but also from the category of earlier arriving migrant women, as their earning options are often limited to low-paid, unskilled informal work, in addition to which they also have the mandatory burden of unpaid household work. Also, I can state that women's mobility is lower compared to men, as there are cultural environments where women's mobility is unacceptable, reducing their opportunities to find dignified work, especially in the case of climate change. In the latter case, their position is particularly sensitive, as women, due to poverty, are much more dependent on natural resources affected by climate change than men. 'Migrant women seek refuge in Europe precisely due to the violation of human rights and gender inequality and violence they face in their countries. However, they encounter difficulties even in European Union countries, which affect even women of subsequent generations of migrants, making it difficult for them to access employment.' (European Economic and Social Committee, 2015)."

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims freedom of movement, prohibits discrimination, as well as the prohibition of holding individuals in a state of slavery and subjugation, bearing in mind that migrant women often find themselves in such situations.³⁰ However, it does not have the legal force of a binding source and

³⁰ "Articles 4, 7, and 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights"

prescribes rights and obligations solely on a declarative basis. On the other hand, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims freedom of movement, prohibits discrimination, and also prohibits subjecting individuals to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, keeping in mind that migrant women often find themselves in such situations. However, it does not have the legal force of a binding source and prescribes rights and obligations solely on a declarative basis. On the other hand, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which guarantees the prohibition of torture and prescribes that no one shall be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, provides effective mechanisms for protecting the rights of migrants. In addition, it is important to point out Article 1, which prescribes the obligation to respect human rights, Article 4 (prohibition of slavery and forced labor), Article 5 (right to liberty and security), Article 9 (freedom of thought, conscience, and religion), and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination).

The right to appeal against the decision on the transfer of countries, applicants generally invoked Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which guarantees the prohibition of torture. (Council of Europe, 1950). A direct example can be illustrated in the case of an applicant who submitted a petition to the European Court of Human Rights against Belgium and Greece, invoking precisely the aforementioned article. (European Court of Human Rights, 2011). The petitioner requested that Belgium not return him to Greece because he would be subjected to torture and inhuman treatment there, referring to the substandard refugee centers that were below any minimum standards and resembled prisons. Belgium attempted to use the Dublin III regulation to return the applicant to the first EU country he entered. The European Court of Human Rights made the correct decision and fined both EU member states, albeit monetarily. There are other good examples in which applicants submitted petitions to the European Court of Human Rights, invoking the articles of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, in which the Court made decisions against EU member states. For instance, the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Siliadin v. France*, dealing with the inadequacy of protection from slavery, servitude, and forced labor of a minor from Togo, who, in exchange for a paid plane ticket provided by the employer, committed to perform household chores in the employer's household until she paid the full price of the plane ticket, represents one such example. In this case, the employer had agreed with her father to take care of her education and obtain permission to stay in France. However, he did the opposite, took her passport, and required her to perform tasks in his household, after which he sent her to work for another married couple. For three years, she performed household chores and took care of their children for fifteen hours every day, without interruption, of course, without compensation. She slept in the children's room, and she was only allowed to leave the house to take the children to classes or other activities³¹. The European Court of Human Rights qualified this as forced labor, finding that the worker was in a situation equivalent to the risk of punishment because she was a minor who illegally resided

³¹ The judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Silijadan (Siliadin) v. France*, dated July 26, 2005 (Application No. 73316/01), paragraph 118.

in a foreign country. Furthermore, the court established the existence of elements of forced labor, considering that the worker had no choice but to work for her employer. In this case, the European Court of Human Rights used Article 4, the prohibition of slavery and forced labor, to sanction the perpetrators and found that her human rights were precisely violated because she was in a state of slavery and forced labor.

Another good example of the practice of the ECtHR is a case in which the applicant submitted a petition against Cyprus and the Russian Federation, whose daughter was a Russian citizen who died in unexplained circumstances after falling from the window of a private apartment in Cyprus, In March 2001, as a result of an escape attempt, she arrived in Cyprus a few days earlier with a visa for “cabaret artists” but left her job and accommodation shortly after starting, leaving a message expressing her desire to return to Russia. Although she sought assistance from Cypriot authorities, it was not provided to her in a prompt and efficient manner, resulting in a tragic event. “The applicant complained under Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8 of the Convention about the incomplete investigation into the circumstances under which his daughter passed away, the failure of the Cypriot police to provide adequate protection to his daughter, and the failure of the Cypriot authorities to take steps to punish those responsible for the death and abuse of his daughter. The applicant also complained under Articles 2 and 4 about the failure of the Russian authorities to investigate the alleged human trafficking in which his daughter was a victim, as well as her subsequent death, and to take steps to protect her from the danger of becoming a victim of human trafficking. Finally, the applicant complained under Article 6 of the Convention regarding the investigative procedure and the alleged inability to access the court in Cyprus. During the proceedings before the ECtHR in April 2009, the Cypriot authorities submitted a unilateral declaration to the Court acknowledging violations of Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the Convention and offered compensation to the applicant. The Cypriot Attorney General, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, and the U.S. Department of State published reports on the prevalence of human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Cyprus and the role of the cabaret industry and “artistic” visas facilitating such activities in the country. However, the Court found that despite the unilateral declaration recognizing Convention violations, respect for human rights required the Court to continue considering the case due to the seriousness of the complaints, the acute nature of the problem of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Cyprus, and the lack of judicial practice on the interpretation and application of Article 4 of the Convention to human trafficking. The Court concluded that the case would not be struck off the list (unanimously).” (Judicial Academy of the Republic of Serbia, 2010). According to sources (Mršević and Janković, 2019), in destination countries, upon arrival at their destination, female migrant workers may face multiple forms of de jure and de facto discrimination. In these circumstances, occupations dominated by women, especially domestic work or certain forms of entertainment, are common. In such conditions, there is often a deprivation of women of various forms of legal protection, and female migrant workers have difficulty obtaining binding contracts regulating working conditions, often leading them to work overtime without pay.

Finally, it is important to consider the serious shortage of labor in the EU, which could significantly impact the balance in the labor market, especially in sectors that

require qualified workers. “On the one hand, there are opportunities for qualified migrant women, especially in social care sectors. On the other hand, the reluctance to recognize the real labor force needs as part of a better-managed immigration policy leaves little room for migrant women in the labor market, except for informal work, especially in traditional sectors such as domestic work for others.” (Kofman, 2003). Home-based workers, the vast majority of whom are female migrant workers, are often unregistered in many EU countries and are part of the informal economy, dependent on their employers, with little or no knowledge of their rights and how to seek support. (Vasiljević S., 2022) Women also often lack specific arrangements regarding workplace safety or safe travel from their workplace to their residence. (CEDAW, 2009).³² Residence permits in the country where a woman is employed can be seriously limited, especially for female migrant workers performing domestic work when their fixed-term contract expires or when the employer decides to terminate it. If they lose migrant status, they become more vulnerable to violence by the employer or others seeking to exploit the situation. According to the (EESC), migrant women face difficulties in having their qualifications and experience recognized, which is paradoxical given that Europe needs qualified workers in many fields. Recognition of qualifications can take a long time, discouraging them and putting them in a position to work in jobs for which they are overqualified. This primarily means underutilized resources and the loss of human capital in the labor market (Vasiljević S., 2022).³³ The economic opportunities and prospects of today’s refugee women, in parallel with migrant women, need to be viewed in the light of what already exists, i.e., through the realized opportunities of previous migrant workers in the EU labor market. I believe that first-generation migrant women are in the most difficult position in the labor market, while second and subsequent generations of migrant women are in a more favorable position, mainly because they were educated in the receiving country. There is a high risk in the case of hiring migrant workers and migrant women, as they are not familiar with the conditions and legal regulations in the receiving country, responding to discriminatory behavior by employers. ³⁴(United Nations General Assembly, 2010). A study conducted by the EMN (European Migration Network) focuses on the EU Action Plan 2021–2027 for the integration and inclusion of migrant women in the fields of education, necessary training, employment, health, and housing, as this plan forms the basis for social integration into society. (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Migration Network, 2022). “Most EU member states implement policies specifically addressing the integration of migrant women in various areas. The two main areas reported by EU member states relate to the labor market and entrepreneurship; the next are policies and civil rights, followed by training and education, then policies related to health, while a smaller number of EU

³² When accommodation is provided, especially in occupations where women dominate, such as factories, farms, or domestic work, living conditions are poor. There are too many women in one place without running water or adequate sanitary conditions, along with a lack of privacy and hygiene.

³³ According to the report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on global migrations for 2020, female migrant workers constitute approximately 74% of the service industry, which includes domestic work. In most cases, they experience job insecurity.

³⁴ Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time (Official Journal L 299/9,)

member states focus on housing. What is important is that a larger number of them have adopted policies related to providing protection from violence, combating discrimination and trafficking in women, as well as their protection and the fight against racism, as well as integration through sports.” (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Migration Network, 2022). Primarily, the main challenges faced by EU member states relate mainly to the integration of migrant women into the labor market. (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Migration Network, 2022). Certainly, the discussions led by EU member states relate to ensuring access to the labor market, overcoming language barriers, gender-based markets, existing stereotypes, and the need for family care. The discussion is moving towards the contributions that highly educated migrant women can make to the EU labor market.

3. Examples of good practice and recommendations *de lege ferenda*

In this section, I will analyze examples of good practice in the case of Serbia and provide recommendations for improving the legal and political framework.

“At the conference ‘European Open Space for Analysis, Strategy, and Restoration of Rights for Refugee and Migrant Women,’ held in Brussels in 2016, a report was created on ways to improve the position of refugee and migrant women. This report provides a deeper insight into the discussion and serves as a good starting point for considering strategies to improve policies and practices faced by refugee and migrant women. It also helps identify ways in which organizations advocating for women’s rights and associations dedicated to working with refugee and migrant women can collaborate.” (Marijana Savić, 2016).

“According to the findings of Marijana Savić (2016), who was in direct communication with migrant women in the Republic of Serbia, one of the necessary improvements, not yet in force anywhere, is ensuring the continuity of services for refugee women and asylum seekers. Refugee and migrant women should be allowed to communicate with one or more officials in the asylum procedure over an extended period to establish a relationship of trust that can significantly benefit the refugee/asylum seeker. Another necessary improvement is safe houses along the route through Europe and concrete support for women in camps, as this is poorly organized in Serbia. She also emphasizes the conclusion that the voices of women must be included in the decision-making process in all procedures and programs related to refugees. Women’s organizations can play a crucial role here by assisting other stakeholders in incorporating women’s voices and a gender perspective into their work. The goal of this conference was to empower organizations and their activists dedicated to working with refugees and migrant women, to open a discussion on priority issues related to human rights issues of women in the migration, asylum, and integration processes in the host country, to develop strategies for the protection and advocacy of the rights and needs of migrant women, and to encourage these organizations to network for future joint action and collaboration. Another positive example can be highlighted in the activities of the Protector of Citizens of the Republic of Serbia, who paid special

attention to sensitive and vulnerable groups, including women considered to be more exposed to discrimination, violence, and exploitation (Pašalić, 2018). No one chooses to become a refugee, but the rest of us have the opportunity to choose how to help them (UNHCR, 2018d). For these reasons, it is entirely wrong to centralize the question 'Can Europe accept a large number of migrants?' The same should be viewed through the prism of the question 'Can Europe show humanity to save a large number of human lives?'" (Marijana Savić, 2016).

"In the conditions of mass mobility, neoliberal states worldwide have tightened border control, making it difficult for large parts of the global population to enter or stay in their countries legally. Ruthless immigration systems often aim to mechanically differentiate refugees as individuals fleeing from war violence from so-called economic migrants who cannot count on asylum or other easier and more likely means of legalizing their stay in Europe. The closure of borders, the setting up of fences and walls, and the unequal treatment of EU countries have led to 'transit countries,' which are not EU member states, experiencing so-called push-backs, or returns from illegal or legal borders, and prolonged stays in refugee camps and attempts to smuggle so-called illegal migrants, resulting in significant profits on the black market. The author of this paper proposes stricter sanctions for criminals whose goal is profit, without thinking about the consequences that may leave on migrants, especially migrant women. In the case of women, this misunderstanding goes to the extent of not recognizing or ignoring the essential feminine migratory specificity, i.e., neglecting the possibility that migrations may be conditioned by gender-based violence, often no less deadly than war violence, and that they cannot always be treated as economic migrant women. Questions of paid household work for others, care and childcare for children, the elderly, and the sick, or agricultural work and the informal economy, where the majority of the workforce is composed of women, are hardly represented in economic and social analyses of globalization." (Mršević and Janković, 2019). Social-economic analyses, as a prerequisite for the implementation of any regulatory and practical activities, must be relevant and effective to portray the true picture of the position of migrant women.

Mršević and Janković (2019) believe that a strong commitment of social workers to social justice provides evidence that social workers find answers to dilemmas they face in organizational and legislative structures regulating their practice. There is a tendency, for example, to view voluntary sectors as a space for creative and gender-differentiated practice, resulting in relatively better outcomes for asylum seekers, despite the sector being identified as seriously limited, with decades-long restricted resources. The government, through its asylum-deterrence policy, implicitly or actively seeks to exclude and marginalize key social work services, posing challenges to everyone engaged in practice. I agree that such an approach by international organizations, social workers, and civil society organizations improves the status of migrants, but the most crucial aspect is collaboration with public authorities, making it easier to address these issues. Regarding resources, they are indeed limited, primarily utilized for other purposes. Donations directed to local self-governments from foreign and domestic donors have left migrants deprived of what is intended for them, and they are placed in migrant centers under poor conditions, from which they often attempt

to escape. Even if they succeed, they are quickly apprehended by the police. For instance, newly built facilities for migrants, such as clinics, accommodations for unaccompanied minor migrants, social welfare centers, and children's homes, are mostly utilized by the local population or not used at all (BIRN, 2018).

Mršević and Janković (2019) take a position on opportunities in Serbia, suggesting that employees in refugee camps emphasize the need to recognize the needs of women, understand that their needs are different from men's, or that the needs are the same but require different ways of addressing them. There must be sensitivity to all unpleasant occurrences that happen to women on the journey they have taken to Serbia. I believe that those employed in refugee camps should be adequately trained to work with the most vulnerable, provide them with all forms of assistance and support, and suggest improvements to conditions for migrant women since they are in daily contact with them and can better understand and identify their needs. If they cannot meet such requirements, institutions and others surely can, leading to improvements in that regard. "Today, it is increasingly recognized that women have different experiences of gender discrimination in different situations. Factors such as class, caste, race, skin color, ethnic origin, religion, national origin, or disability are 'differences that make a difference.' This is especially visible in the discrimination against migrant women." (Vasiljević S., 2008). I agree with this statement and believe that society is mostly susceptible to media influence, contributing to the expansion of wrongly grounded values that easily reach a large number of uninformed citizens through electronic media. "Given the discrimination against migrant women on the internet and in the public sphere, which are particularly exposed to increasing xenophobia, hate speech, religious and ethnic discrimination, as well as the restriction of citizenship rights and family reunification." (Vasiljević S., 2022). Finally, despite the existence of a developed legal framework, discrimination against migrant women remains present in the labor market, i.e., in the sphere of employment relations (Kuzminac, 2021). "Namely, it is about migrant women being exposed to poorer treatment on several grounds, contributing to the severity or sensitivity of their position. The consequences of this are reflected in the area of earnings. In this sense, migrant women earn less due to a 'double' wage gap. Besides, migrant women who live and work 'below the radar' are not 'just' subjected to discrimination in employment and employment relations but are often victims of physical, psychological, and sexual violence." (Kuzminac, 2021). Civil societies, especially associations of migrant women, as a kind of "controller" of public policy creation, must be involved at all decision-making levels regarding the inclusion of migrant women in the labor market. The control of the decision-making process itself is not enough if control over the implementation of decisions is lacking, along with education for both the general population and decision-makers, helping migrant women to enter the labor market and adapt to society.

4. Conclusion

A comparative analysis of the position of women in the context of gender equality and paid work, as well as the persistent discrimination against migrant women workers, indicates that despite lawmakers' efforts, their position has not significantly

changed over several decades. The author believes that there are multiple factors why discriminated individuals or groups choose not to initiate proceedings aimed at protecting their rights. These factors include fear of future treatment, public attitudes towards discriminated individuals or groups, and ultimately, the efficiency of administrative and judicial protection, which has not proven decisive in addressing this problem. Another issue is that legal representatives are not easily accessible for migrant women, and they have to seek protection before courts and authorities whose legal systems, and often the language in which proceedings are conducted, are unfamiliar to them. In this regard, it seems that additional efforts should be directed towards harmonization or unification of protection mechanisms in this area. International organizations can play a crucial role in these processes.

It appears that developed countries, despite proclaimed values and principles, missed the opportunity to position themselves as leaders in protecting and promoting human rights, such as the right to dignified work and protection against discrimination. This is evident through the inadequate response of national legislation to the migrant crisis. There still seems to be a fundamental misunderstanding of the position of migrant women, both from the broader community and the authorities responsible for law enforcement in this field. In this sense, as a prerequisite for ensuring an adequate position for migrant women in the labor market, parallel efforts are needed to raise awareness and educate all relevant stakeholders, as well as to establish an appropriate legal framework providing legal protection for vulnerable groups of people.

Using the example of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination in the Republic of Serbia, it can be observed that the core of the problem lies in the inadequate prescribing of penalties for those engaging in discriminatory behavior, achieving neither special nor general prevention. Namely, the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination prescribes only fines for those engaging in discriminatory behavior, ranging from 10,000 to 500,000 dinars. In this regard, the perpetrators of these offenses mostly get off "cheaply." In this sense, it seems that the first step should be directed towards legislative reform to increase penalties for offenders, thus demotivating them and others in the labor market from repeating these actions.

A prerequisite for establishing an adequate legal framework, on the other hand, is the existence of transparent and relevant information about the effects of previous measures and a comprehensive analysis of the legal as well as socio-political framework that would provide an answer to why certain activities have not yielded expected results. Based on this, it is crucial to precisely determine in which areas increased state intervention is needed to ensure an equal position for migrant women in the labor market. Only then is it possible to proceed with the implementation of measures, ensuring that they are effective, precise, and directed towards regulating the position of the weaker party.

"We can agree that today's European society has achieved formal equality by creating a wide range of legal norms that promote equality, but real equality remains a challenge for the years to come." (Vasiljević and Vinković, 2019)

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Gender-based violence and women on the move: how the shelter situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is affecting women and girls

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Abstract: Since 2018, thousands of people on the move have been passing through B&H in order to reach Western Europe. However, years later, the country and the international organisations managing the reception centres have struggled to establish effective systems, leading to the shelter situation in B&H being widely regarded as a violation of human rights. While the mismanagement of the shelter situation affects every person on the move, it puts certain groups at an even greater risk. Women and girls on the move pose to be one of the most vulnerable groups for gender-based violence. However, there is very limited research on gender-based violence in transit countries.

This paper aims to address this research gap by examining the risk of gender-based violence faced by women and girls in reception camps and alternative accommodations, with a specific focus on Bosnia & Herzegovina as a Non-EU State and a transit country for people on the move. The study draws on scholarly works, reports from international organisations, and research conducted in other countries to establish a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Additionally, the research includes interviews conducted with stakeholders from the field.

Through the combination of existing works and insights obtained through interviews, this study aims to explore the occurrence, forms, and consequences of gender-based violence in reception camps and alternative accommodations in B&H. Moreover, it aims to identify the factors that contribute to the increased vulnerability of women and girls and to assess the efficiency of existing support structures.

Keywords: gender-based violence, GBV, people on the move, women on the move, Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. Introduction

From January 2018 to April 2023, based on the data from the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: B&H), over 120.000 people on the move³⁵ were registered to have entered the country (IOM, 2023). Nonetheless, it is almost impossible to indicate the exact number of women and girls on the move in the above number. Partial gender-disaggregated data is offered through the International Organisation for Migration's (hereinafter: IOM) bi-monthly situation reports (IOM, n.d.). However, this data is insufficient, as we cannot know how big the percentage women and girls make in the children in families, adults in families and unaccompanied minors categories presented in the IOM reports. The only gender-disaggregated data given is the percentage of single women entering B&H, which is less than 5%. In addition, the United Nations Population Fund's (hereinafter: UNFPA) monthly reports give the number of women and girls that have 'participated' in their 'empowerment activities' and the number of pregnant women that were 'supported' by the UNFPA in B&H (UNFPA, 2023).³⁶ While, women and girls, travelling in families, groups or by themselves, make up a small percentage of this number, they are considered (Keynaert et al., 2012, p. 505; Miller, 2012, p. 77), by the most prominent international organisations (hereinafter: IOs),³⁷ to be one of the most vulnerable categories.³⁸

According to a 2018 report by the Mixed Migration Centre,³⁹ nearly half of women and girls on the move face some sort of abuse or violation of their rights, in their journeys (cited in UNFPA & Grojec, 2018). Women are especially vulnerable in informal settlements in the Balkan regions and in refugee reception centres where 'overcrowding and a lack of services often underpin vulnerabilities' (Ozcurrence et al., 2018, p. 23).⁴⁰ Still, there is very little research on countries of transit and resettlement (Ozcurrence et al., 2018, p. 7; Ozcurrence et al., 2021, p. 4) in terms of gender-based violence (hereinafter: GBV). This lack of research on the topic of GBV does not skip B&H.

Therefore, this paper aims to showcase the risk GBV poses for women and girls on the move in camps and alternative accommodations while focusing on B&H as a Non-EU State and transit country. Moreover, this paper will attempt to document how state and non-state actors in B&H are combatting GBV in transit reception centres (hereinafter: TRCs), which in B&H are in majority run by IOs (i.e. IOM) and funded by the EU (European Commission, 2022; Monella & Lucchesi, 2021; Statewatch, 2021).

³⁵ This paper will be using the term people on the move and women on the move. This is used as an umbrella term for all people passing through the Balkans and who are potential asylum seekers.

³⁶ For the months of January to February 2023, 477 women and adolescent girls participated in empowerment activities and 17 pregnant women were supported by UNFPA.

³⁷ Such as UNHCR and IOM.

³⁸ See Gilodi, A., Albert, I., & Nienaber, B. (2022). Vulnerability in the context of Migration: a Critical Overview and a New Conceptual Model. *Human Arenas*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-022-00288-5> for more information on the problematisation of the notion 'vulnerability'.

³⁹ According to their website Mixed Migration Centre is a 'global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and pragmatic development on mixed migration'.

⁴⁰ Considering that the latter of the mentioned areas are led either by governments or IOs, a certain degree of security is expected, this, as will be discussed, is not realised.

2. Methodology

This paper is based on qualitative research conducted in Bosnia & Herzegovina (B&H). B&H was chosen as the research country to represent a transit state and a non-EU Member State. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining semi-structured interviews and a review of relevant literature on the topics of people on the move and gender-based violence, including academic articles and reports from international organizations (IOs).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted between March and May 2023 to gather primary data. Four key informants were selected for the interviews based on their expertise and close involvement with the camps and the women and girls residing in them. The key informants included an activist and researcher, a representative from Save the Children, a former official from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and a former official from the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). These informants were chosen for their in-depth knowledge and direct experience working with the affected group. The interviews were conducted online via audio or video calls.

Moreover, the interviews were not recorded; instead, notes were taken during the process. To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewees, all necessary measures were taken during the data collection process. Each interview was conducted in a manner that guaranteed the privacy and security of the informants. Additionally, the interviews were coded and analysed in a way that removed any identifying information.

It is important to note that attempts were made to include other relevant IOs and local NGOs in this research.⁴¹ However, despite contacting them, no response was received. Despite this limitation, the information gathered from the key informants and the extensive review of existing literature provide valuable insights into the topic of gender-based violence in reception camps and alternative accommodations.

The qualitative data collected from the interviews were analysed by identifying recurring patterns, themes, and key findings. The review of literature supported and enhanced the understanding of the primary data by giving contextual information and theoretical frameworks.

By combining interviews with key informants and a comprehensive review of relevant literature, this research aims to provide an accurate appraisal of the risk of gender-based violence faced by women and girls on the move in B&H. The use of several sources of data increases the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, resulting in a more comprehensive examination of the subject.

3. Context: B&H Shelter Situation

When IOM started opening reception centres in B&H six years ago (Ahmetašević, 2018), the country never even considered the idea of becoming a long-term home to many people on the move crossing its territory (Mešić et al., 2021, p. 7). Even years later,

⁴¹ Such as UNFPA and Žene Sa Une

when circumstances such as COVID-19 and border closure, forced people to stay behind the country's border, B&H's government still saw the migration journey as a nuisance that would quickly disappear on its own. This prediction, by the B&H's government, could not have been further from the truth, as was evident by the thousands of people that were building their homes in TRCs and unofficial camps. Nonetheless, the country's lack of preparedness resulted in years of neglect of the shelter situation.

The handful of TRCs were lacking in adequate medical assistance, heating and hot water, while the limited capacity resulted in overcrowding (*ibid.*). According to one of the interviewees IOM would lower the number in their reports of the people present at the Ušivak TRC (Former IOM official, video-chat interview, April 2023).

As these conditions were getting worse during different periods (the COVID-19 pandemic and winters) many people on the move chose to build informal settlements on the outskirts of cities, inhabit abandoned buildings and even rent rooms in hostels (Mešić et al., 2021; Ahmetašević & Mlinarević, 2018). The decisions to stay outside of TRCs were happening mainly due to the conditions in the camps as well as the location of some of the camps. Camp Lipa is located near the city of Bihać. However, its position in the middle of a forest and the lack of transport make the TRC completely removed from populated places. Moreover, the camp lacks basic infrastructure and facilities (Janjević, 2020). This is not the sole camp that was placed in a remote location. Another such camp would be Delijaš where the closest place is a gas station located 12 km from the Asylum Centre (Ahmetašević & Mlinarević, 2018, p. 19).

Throughout this crisis, any funding that was assigned to B&H was not managed by its government (Monella & Lucchesi, 2021). Rather, the EU put international organisations, vitally IOM, in charge of shelter management 'despite the State *de iure* maintaining this responsibility' (Mešić et al., 2021, p. 12). Assessment of the general conditions in B&H, particularly aspects like corruption and weak governance, served as the main driving force behind this decision (Ahmetašević & Mlinarević, 2018, p. 10). The lack of government involvement left IOM and other IOs unaccountable for poor management of TRCs and living conditions contrary to State law (Mešić et al., 2021; Ahmetašević & Mlinarević, 2018). Unfortunately, due to the State's own infringement on the rights of people on the move, it is hard to imagine that the State would be interested in holding others accountable.

Furthermore, IOM, amongst other things, is in charge of security for which they hire private security firms. However, private security companies are known to participate in the abuse of the rights of people on the move (OHCHR, 2019). This was confirmed by one of the interviewees that witnessed a security guard heavily injuring a man. The injuries sustained resulted in his death later in the hospital (Former IOM official, 2023).

It is important to note that neither the State nor the IOs running the camps provide most of the information on the situation in the camps that was gathered through the years. Instead, media reports, activists, researchers and others, report on the situation when able to take a peek into the non-transparent and secretive construct that are the TRCs in B&H.

As of 2023, there are only two TRCs intended for vulnerable categories. Those two camps are Borići and Ušivak. A previous camp, Sedra, was closed down in the summer of 2021. While Camp Lipa has an area that can be used for minors and unaccompanied children, as of yet, it has not been used as such. All of this information should be taken with a grain of salt,⁴² as neither the State nor the IOs have updated available public information regarding the individual camps. Specifically, neither IOM nor UNHCR, as one of the two main IOs charged with the management of reception centres, have updated or provided sufficient information on TRCs on their web pages. IOM's page 'Temporary Reception Centre Profiles' has last been updated in May of 2021 (IOM Bosnia & Herzegovina, n.d.). Therefore, camps such as Sedra and Miral are still on the list of open camps. On the other hand, UNHCR has an updated list of existing camps. The page lists that TRC Miral was closed down in 2022, but does not mention Camp Sedra (UNHCR Bosnia and Herzegovina, n.d.). Nevertheless, the page gives very limited information on all individual camps. This is not only a problem for researchers but also for people on the move who rely on the Internet to 'access trusted sources of information about the asylum process and its changing procedures' (UNHCR, 2016).

4. Gender-Based Violence in Camps

The mismanagement of B&H's shelter situation affects every person on the move, however, it puts certain groups at an even greater risk. Thus, it comes as no surprise that research indicates that 46% of women feel unsafe in migrant camps (Al Jazeera, 2017). Cases of GBV were reported across Europe, with special attention being focused on Greece where 'severe overcrowding and dire living conditions' were making refugee camps especially dangerous for already at-risk groups (Amnesty International, 2018). As there is very limited research on GBV in refugee camps in B&H; we can safely assume that the dangers of GBV did not circumvent B&H. As previously presented the shelter situation has been considered a 'humanitarian crisis that has been systematically mismanaged for years' (Mešić et al., 2021, p. 5). The conditions of reception centres across the country were poor and overcrowded with many people choosing to live in makeshift camps in abandoned buildings, parks, forests, and others (*ibid.*). All of these circumstances can increase the chances of GBV.

The settings in which people on the move live - TRCs and makeshift camps - can 'contribute to increasing tensions that sometimes lead to violence' (Zaatari & The Women's Refugee Commission, 2014, p. 12). Households' social isolation, extreme financial hardship, and loss of privacy as a result of overcrowding, all may exacerbate this type of violence (*ibid.*). Often camps can disrupt family and community structures (Freedman, 2015, p. 37). One of them being the roles men and women are used to in patriarchal societies, where the man is the provider and the woman is the caretaker. Men that were used to providing for their families now find themselves powerless and the women take the roles as primary caretakers. In some cases, this becomes unavoidable as women might lose their partners in war-related conflict, thus they are forced to become breadwinners in their families and communities (Ondiak & Ismail, 2009, cited in Akhter & Kusakabe, 2014, p. 229). Additionally, research showed that

⁴² Information was gathered through interviews and informal conversations with former and current officials of NGOs

the stress of poverty may cause men to resort to violence within the family to regain their sense of control and power (Hyder et al., 2007). These shifts in traditional family dynamics are considered some of the reasons for the increase in domestic violence in camps (Staton, 2016; Akhter & Kusakabe, 2014, pp. 229-230). On the other hand, camps can deepen patriarchal roles where the woman will lose economic footing and therefore might endure abuse to meet her needs (Miller, 2012, p. 77). Moreover, women may tolerate violent behaviour in families and justify it by 'citing the violence men have experienced' and their frustration with their new-found social status as a person on the move (Akhter & Kusakabe, 2014, pp. 230). Many cultural norms put GBV as a private matter (*ibid*, p. 228) that shames and/or ignores those affected by it. These are only some of the circumstances that need to be taken into account when creating policies and combatting GBV. It is important to note that people on the move are not the sole carriers of these cultural norms, unfortunately, such beliefs can be ingrained into the host communities as well. Such proves to be the case for B&H where GBV is for the majority seen as a private matter (Mušić, 2018). Consequently, the local views on GBV could have dire consequences when trying to combat GBV as some forms of abuse (i.e. verbal abuse) could be seen as minor due to the host community's own belief system.⁴³

Nonetheless, it would be false to assume that all GBV stems from intimate partners as 'there have been documented cases of humanitarian aid workers committing acts of rape and other violence against women and girls inside camps' (*ibid*).⁴⁴ So far, no information exists or was made public for cases of humanitarian aid workers committing GBV in B&H. Therefore; this can neither be claimed nor completely dismissed. A Save the Children official stated that while they cannot deny that such abuses can happen, in their experience, there have not been any such violations in the camps they worked in. Abuses where workers demand some form of payment for supplies or other aid, in their opinion, happen in camps that are more populous and where there is a shortage of supplies (Save the Children Official, video-chat interview, April 2023). Another interviewee confirmed that there was no reported GBV committed by humanitarian aid workers, but they did mention an incident where local men raped a woman on the move. This happened near the camps where the woman was staying at the time (Former DRC official, phone call interview, May 2023).

Consequently, women and girls can experience GBV from different sets of perpetrators. In families, parents-in-law can contribute to the violence against women and girls (Jensen, 2019). Moreover, residents of camps, official or makeshift, are one of the more common categories of GBV perpetrators. However, as the infrastructure of TRC is an important factor in lowering or raising the chances of GBV, this will be presented in the following part.

⁴³ These assumption is acknowledged by one of the interviewees who spoke about the un-interest some police officers showed on the issues of domestic violence when called by the humanitarian aid workers in the TRCs (Former DRC official, 2023).

⁴⁴ See: Nordby, L. (2018). *Gender-based violence in the refugee camps in Cox Bazar: A case study of Rohingya women's and girls' exposure to gender-based violence* [MA thesis]. Uppsala University. pp. 17-18, 20.

Nonetheless, with the EU's externalisation of its asylum and migration policies (Schayani & Maydell, 2023) the EU aims to 'deter asylum seekers from arriving' by creating a dangerous environment in bordering non-EU countries which would deter people on the move from coming (Bousiou, 2022, p. 4587). As such, it can be expected that human rights violations would continue and that people and families would be put in situations where putting one individual at risk can 'save' the rest of the collective. A UNHCR and Save the Children UK report brought to light situations where children in refugee camps were pressured by parents into sexually exploitative relationships to gain relief items (cited in Ferris, 2007, p. 585 and Nordby, 2018, p. 16). While this was not the case in B&H, two of the interviewees explained how parents sometimes send their children to other areas of the camp, where single men reside, to sell the excess perishable items (e.g. bread) they get in family areas (Save the Children Official, 2023; Former DRC official, 2023).

Another example was given of a family 'lending' their daughter to a single man on the move, to pose as a father of the child, which would allow him to reside in the family area of the camp (Save the Children Official, 2023).

5. Infrastructure of TRCs

Research by the Women's Refugee Commission found that failure to provide separate latrines, shower facilities and sleeping quarters puts women and girls in more vulnerable positions, risking rape, assault and other violence (Perez, 2016, p. 256). According to international guidelines, toilets in refugee camps should be 'sex-segregated, marked and lockable' (*ibid.*, p. 255). Unfortunately, this is not always enforced. Amnesty International (2018) reported that in Greek refugee camps, facilities did not have locks that made showering and going to the toilet dangerous. Additionally, poor lighting made fetching water and walking around at night 'stressful and risky' (*ibid.*). In many cases women could not leave their sleeping areas at night, even to go to the toilets. Some women had even resorted to not eat or drink as a solution (Perez, 2016, p. 256) or had even started wearing adult nappies (Boffey & Smith, 2019).

B&H seems to be no exception in terms of these circumstances. As previously mentioned, B&H had three camps where vulnerable categories were placed; Ušivak, Borići and Sedra. The said camps were the only three camps that were officially meant for the placement of women and families. However, during different periods when camps were overcrowded, TRCs like Miral and Bira were adapted for these two groups as well.

The two remaining camps meant for single women and families are Ušivak and Borići. It is impossible to discuss the current infrastructure of these two camps, as access to data is limited. Nonetheless, periods of overcrowding showed detrimental for women and girls. According to one of the interviewees when the capacity of the camp Borići reached its limits, makeshift toilets were placed outside the camps (Save the Children official, 2023).⁴⁵

⁴⁵ This fact is also acknowledged by Ahmetašević and Mlinarević (2018, p. 24) in their research.

Experiences in Greece give us enough information on how such policies can be risky for women. Thus, as pointed out by the interviewee, women would not go alone on these toilet trips – they were accompanied by men or more than one woman - or would risk not going to the bathroom during the night. In Camp Bira, which was temporarily also used for families and unaccompanied minors camp staff would encounter husbands sitting in front of the bathrooms while their wives were using them (Save the Children official, 2023).

Additionally, camp Bira, which was previously a factory, had issues such as general safety where women found it ‘completely impossible’ to go to the bathroom or toilet alone (Ahmetašević & Mlinarević, 2018, p. 28). Moreover, in Camp Sedra women’s showers were placed on the third floor right next to the common room where you could enter the latter only after passing through the shower room (Save the Children official, 2023).

With regards to camp Ušivak, the former IOM official expressed in their interview that this camp was considered a ‘vulnerable categories camp’ by name only, which was given based on the fact that the camp had private rooms. At times there was no hot water, electricity or Wi-Fi (Former IOM official, 2023). Additionally, there was no clear divide between bathrooms and toilets meant for women and girls (Ahmetašević & Mlinarević, 2018, p. 21). Consequently, it is nearly impossible to state if these conditions have changed over time as information and data on camps are significantly difficult to come by.

6. Makeshift camps and alternative accommodations

Even after B&H started opening TRCs for incoming people on the move, many of them chose alternative options. Such as bus and train stations, abandoned buildings, hostels, private accommodations, makeshift barracks and tents (Mešić et al., 2021). Reasons for choosing these options varied, with some of them being due to the remote locations of camps, housing conditions, freedoms camps cannot offer, social connections, and economic participation (Temple Obi, 2021). For some, staying outside of TRCs was never their decision, as they could not get entry into certain camps due to the lack of capacity, or due to the ‘ambiguous procedure of determining who is vulnerable’ (Ahmetašević & Mlinarević, 2018, p. 27). The people that were not accepted, which included people with disabilities, unaccompanied minors and single women, ‘were left to live in overcrowded makeshift camps, or other places that were not safe for them’ (*ibid.*). On some occasions families chose to form makeshift camps between themselves due to their previous experiences in other countries’ reception centres (Activist and researcher, video-chat interview, March 2023).

According to IOM’s last report on people outside TRCs from 2022, adult females made up 6.3% of the people on the move living outside of camps, while girls made up 2.5%. Unfortunately, not much is known regarding GBV in makeshift camps and alternative accommodations. In a rare case where GBV was identified, the under-aged pregnant girl in question was transferred to a TRC away from her mother and stepfather, the latter being the perpetrator (Save the Children official, 2023). Nonetheless,

in another instance, a UNHCR partner organisation, BH Women Initiative, put a woman at risk of GBV by placing her in a hostel room with two unknown men, while her husband was left to sleep in the streets (Ahmetašević & Mlinarević, 2018, p. 20).

As much as it can be presumed that abuse and violence do happen, the question arises of how much safer TRCs are for vulnerable groups if the infrastructure there is not sufficient to protect women, girls and others from harm.

7. Reports and detection of GBV

According to a report by UNFPA B&H, 80% of GBV against females occurred at the survivor's residence or international borders (Pezerović & UNFPA, 2022). The same report did not provide information on the rest of this percentage. Specifically, based on this research from 2020 to 2022, it is not possible to tell what percentage of GBV occurred in TRCs in B&H or other countries. However, due to the scarcity of reports on GBV regarding people on the move, reports such as this one are some of the only sources that can indicate what type of support is provided to GBV survivors, including those that survived GBV in camps.

Nonetheless, any numbers regarding GBV, whether it happened before or during the migration journey, can in reality be expected to be much bigger due to various reasons. One of them being that in B&H, people on the move, as pointed out by one of the interviewees, usually stay for a very short time in the TRCs (Activist and researcher, 2023). Per IOM's latest Situation Report, the average length of stay in Borići and Ušivak was 8 days ("Bosnia and Herzegovina Migration Response Situation Report 17 – 30 April 2023", n.d.). This period does not give time to the women and girls to create a bond with the humanitarian aid workers to disclose sensitive information, such as GBV, nor does it give time to the latter to detect any signs of possible GBV.

An additional factor that has to be taken into consideration is the fact that people on the move want to reach their destination country as soon as possible. Therefore, there is a small chance someone would be willing to come forward with a claim that might set back their journey (Activist and researcher, 2023; Save the Children official, 2023). In instances where someone comes forward and decides to begin police proceedings, their case is usually dropped because they leave the country before the proceedings are over (Save the Children official, 2023). Additionally, as stated by one of the interviewees, reports can and often do come from another person on the move that witnessed, suspected or knows about the GBV happening (Save the Children official, 2023). For example when multiple families shared rooms in a camp, a woman from one family would report her concerns regarding a woman from another family (Former DRC official, 2023).

8. Combatting GBV

Beyond State and NGO guidelines and reports on services provided to survivors of GBV,⁴⁶ not much information and data is known regarding GBV, whether it happened in TRCs or at another instance. Therefore, any information that could have been obtained through interviews was crucial. Consequently, three of the interviewees gave away very different experiences regarding the handling of GBV in camps.

In Camp Ušivak, a young Iraqi woman was transferred, per her request, from Camp Borići where she was staying with her family, due to the pressure they were putting on her to return with them to Iraq. There, per her, she would be forced to wed a significantly older man (Former IOM official, 2023).

On one hand, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, some cases of forced marriage may amount to trafficking (UNODC, n.d.). On the other, the international human rights instrument and entities have been stressing the need to take measures against forced marriages (OHCHR, n.d.). In other words, forced marriages, such as the one at hand, are either contrary to international and national B&H law or are urged by international guidelines to be stopped. Therefore, it is up to the humanitarian aid workers to help those that might fall victim to the same. Any aid in this case that was expected from IOM did not happen, according to the former official. In fact, IOM was urging the family, alongside the young woman, to return to Iraq. The interviewee further stated that the woman was offered psychosocial assistance, where she was urged to return and comply with the marriage even by the therapist. This did not stop here, as an assigned cultural mediator was also pushing the return to Iraq (Former IOM official, 2023).⁴⁷

During the other interviews conducted, the Save the Children official presented a very different experience working in TRCs in the Una-Sana Canton of B&H. In their experience if any signs of GBV arose, police and social workers were called on. This was also acknowledged by the former DRC official who specified that police were called if the survivors gave their consent. According to the Save the Children official, if a case of GBV is detected, the humanitarian aid workers try to involve as few people as possible to spare the survivor from any unnecessary trauma.⁴⁸ Moreover, the perpetrator is immediately removed after discovery and the survivor is placed in a safe location.

⁴⁶ Such as Pezerović, A. & UNFPA. (2022). *Support provided for Women and Youth at Risk in the UNFPA Humanitarian Response in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018 – 2022: Successes, lessons learned and systems built.* and *Smjernice za Sprječavanje i Zaštitu od Rodno Zasnovanog Nasilja u Kriznim Situacijama za Područje Kantona Sarajevo.* (2020). Ministarstvo za rad, socijalnu politiku, raseljena lica i izbjeglice. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://mrsri.ks.gov.ba/sites/mrsri.ks.gov.ba/files/smjernice.pdf>

⁴⁷ According to the interviewee, IOM cultural mediators did not have to be familiar with laws and rights but only with one of the languages that were needed in order to interpret between the workers and the people on the move.

⁴⁸ The DRC has, per the former DRC official, GBV officials who were the ones approaching women with concerns of GBV. The GBV official would be of the same gender as the GBV survivor. Additionally, in cases of rape women were offered to visit a doctor where they could get medical services such as a plan B pill or prevention packages for HIV and Hepatitis. Survivors would also receive, if they wished, psychosocial support.

After being asked if this location was at another area in the camp or another location, the Save the Children interviewee explained how an affiliated NGO is in charge of this part of the process and that the latter does not disclose the safe location. On the other hand, the former DRC official stated that the location of one of the safe houses was an 'open secret' among the humanitarian aid workers and the camp residents.⁴⁹ The safe locations did not offer school classes for children (as the camps did), therefore women with children in safe locations were at a disadvantage compared to the husbands who would stay behind in the camps (Former DRC official, 2023). Additionally, the interviewee called indiscretions of aid workers an anomaly, after which the worker would be reassigned and not involved in similar situations (Save the Children Official, 2023).

9. Concluding Remarks

It has been widely accepted that women flee violence, extreme hardship, only when that poses to be the only left viable option (Freedman, 2016, p. 19). This comes as a result of women having significantly fewer economic resources than men, being responsible for children, elderly people and their welfare, due to restrictions for travelling alone 'both within their own country and outside it, and fears of violence during the journey (*ibid.*). Though women and girls on the move flee their homes because of violence and other plight faced, for many of them the violence continues throughout their journey.

As discussed, one of the risks to women and girls on the move is GBV in transit and even in destination countries. Specifically for the case of B&H, conditions in TRCS and other accommodations threaten the human rights of any person on the move, but not every person on the move is affected equally. When discussing the issue of GBV in camps in B&H but also in a wider context, two connected but separate issues have to be addressed.

First, is the 'invisibility' of GBV throughout the migration journey. While GBV has been acknowledged as a risk for people on the move, not much attention has been paid to transit countries. Even though the experience of GBV is not confined to 'where the violence takes place' (Ozcurumez et al., 2021, p. 2), transit countries see themselves as a quick stop to a final destination and seem to not take GBV as seriously as needed. However, as EU migration and asylum policies are shifting towards an externalisation system, bordering non-EU countries might find themselves as long-term hosts of people on the move wishing to reach Western Europe. Therefore, stakeholders on all levels (statutory, governmental, non-governmental, international) should be involved in tackling GBV (*ibid.*). Moreover, these stakeholders need to encompass 'different spatial and territorial private and public experiences' (*ibid.*), including reception centres and informal settlements. As the consequences of GBV spill over the migration journey and leave traces across it, it is perilous for stakeholders to focus on 'the interconnectedness of past, present and future experiences' (*ibid.*). In other

⁴⁹ According to the interviewee, women put in safe houses would call their husbands (perpetrators of the GBV) and would disclose their whereabouts

words, stakeholders should not only focus on GBV happening in the present along its territory and borders.

Nevertheless, GBV visibility during the migration journey cannot be achieved without the voices of those affected.⁵⁰ So far, the main source of information on these women and girls' experiences is reported by 'various NGOs and human rights organisations' (Freedman, 2016, p. 19). Moreover, as experiences during the migration journey are shaped by gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation; these factors need to be taken into consideration for future research on GBV.

The second issue comes with the overall asylum and migration system in B&H. Reception camps, opened and managed by IOs, as discussed, are not suitable for living and have often been found inhumane. Thus, it could be seen as futile to demand better lighting, separated latrines, and privacy for women and girls, when basic necessities such as water, electricity and heat are not even met. While the importance of these elements to tackle GBV in camps remain, the overall safety and dignity of people on the move have to be met in B&H first and foremost.

⁵⁰ The former DRC official stated that camps had representatives from the on the move population where they could address their concerns,. According to the same interviewee women make 50% of the representatives. However, not much is known regarding this representation, its role and impact.

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THEME IV “GENDER AND POLITICS”



Right-wing populism: Possible impact on the right to abortion in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to illustrate the possible impact of right-wing populism on the positive legislation related to the right to abortion in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: BiH). BiH is a country that has inherited a large number of laws and other regulations in this area from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (hereinafter: SFRY). In the former SFRY, the Law on the Conditions and Procedure for Termination of Pregnancy was adopted, which was quite liberal compared to former comparative law. The question arises whether BiH will, in the near future, continue to follow the path of the former more liberal solutions or will it adopt some more conservative ideas spreading across Europe. Can the growing influence of right-wing populism worldwide, especially in the United States and Europe, negatively contribute to the withdrawal of abortion rights protected by existing legal solutions? What will be the fate of the right to decide about one's own body? These questions and possible answers constitute the core of this paper, which utilized doctrinal, historical, comparative, normative, and comparative legal methods, as well as the case study method in its preparation. In the end, the paper draws conclusions.

Keywords: Bosnia and Herzegovina, right-wing populism, the right to abortion in Bosnia and Herzegovina, correlation of right-wing populism and the right to abortion.

1. Introduction

In recent years, we have witnessed a growing rise of right-oriented political parties, including those with a fascist inclination. Populism, as emphasized by authors like Derado (Derado 2014), can seriously undermine the democratic process and destroy the possibilities for democracy recovery. It needs to be considered not solely as a “dangerous obstacle” but primarily as a serious symptom of the crisis of democracy. As Derad points out, “right-wing populist parties and movements emphasize the need to prevent external threats to the nation (Halikiopoulou, 2012) and usually try to mobilize the people based on popular images of grievances and resentment, whatever they may be in a given society.” In the context of the increasing influence of right-oriented parties in Europe, the spread of populist rhetoric and methods becomes inevitable, aiming to mobilize as many supporters as possible to become a norm in society. The recent example is in Poland, where the conservative government, with the support of certain associations like Ordo Iuris⁵¹, supported a ruling by the Constitutional Court declaring the Law on Family Planning (protection of the human fetus and conditions allowing termination of pregnancy) from 1993 unconstitutional. According to available data from the research “Countries Where Abortion Is Illegal” by the World Health Organization (WHO), aiding a doctor in the abortion process in Poland can now be punishable, as well as the doctor performing the abortion. According to this research, unlike our country where abortion is possible upon a woman’s request without the need for a specific reason, under the new law in force since 2020 in Poland, abortion is possible only in the case of protecting the woman’s physical health. Given that such legal solutions in Poland arose due to the rise of conservative parties to power and the influence of associations like Ordo Iuris that share the same worldview, as well as the increasing popularity of the “In the Name of the Family” association in Croatia, which closely collaborates with Ordo Iuris, it is entirely justified to ask: will the same happen in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the near future?

This paper will review research and works in this field, such as “Human Rights in the Field of Sexual and Reproductive Health in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” the final report of the United Nations Population Fund in BiH (hereinafter: UNFPA), the World Population Review report, research by the Sarajevo Open Center, views of individual authors on populism, the right to abortion, and the protection of reproductive rights, as well as a review of unscientific articles in domestic media on how they report on this topic.

The aim of this paper is to determine the correlation and possible impact of right-wing populism on the right to abortion in BiH. The paper will use methods inherent to the legal profession. The historical method will demonstrate the rise and characteristics of right-wing populism to the extent relevant to BiH. The dogmatic and normative methods will present *de lege lata* solutions in contemporary legislation in BiH. Using the comparative method, the paper will compare existing solutions in BiH With comparative law. Due to the scope limitations of the paper, only countries that have undergone changes in legislation related to abortion, as well as international

⁵¹ More at: <https://faktograf.hr/2018/11/28/festival-konzervativnih-ideja-od-prozivan-ja-medijskog-čopora-do-predstavljanja-obiteljaške-istanbulske/> (Accessed on 20th of April) 2023

standards and principles established in this field, will be selected as the sample. The case study method was used for the Grimmark and Steen case against Sweden. In the conclusion of the paper itself, I will address proposals de lege ferenda, i.e., how this area in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be regulated in accordance with contemporary solutions in comparative law.

2. Populism

2.1. General Characteristics of Populism

Populism, according to authors like Derado, is a relatively understudied phenomenon in this region, explored by only a few authors such as Šalaj, Zakošek, Milardović. There are still many scientific “gaps” in the analysis of this phenomenon in the domestic political context. The term “populism” is mostly used in political commentaries heard in the media and amid mutual accusations of politicians. Often, no explanation is provided for what the term actually means, or it is used as a critique of political actors for catering to the “people” with empty promises.

In scientific circles, as well as nonscientific ones, there are various definitions of populism, its characteristics, and potential societal consequences due to the use of populist rhetoric. For instance, the Encyclopedia Britannica defines populism as a “political program or movement that advocates or claims to advocate for the common person, usually in favorable contrast to a real or supposed elite or establishment.” Similarly, the European Center for Populist Studies (ECPS) defines populism in the same way, emphasizing that the presumed elite is a homogenized group accused by populists of prioritizing the goals and interests of large corporations, supranational organizations, other states, and/or migrants, instead of being guided by the interests of the majority population.

Given that left-wing populism does not aim to undermine abortion rights, the focus of this paper will be exclusively on right-wing populism, which seeks to maintain the ‘status quo’ and/or tighten measures related to the right to abortion, migrants, LGBTQ individuals, national, ethnic, religious, and racial minorities. One of the narratives used by right-wing populists is the perceived threat to Christianity, primarily from hedonism, secularism, and multiculturalism, i.e., the arrival of migrants, and along with them, Islam, in Europe. This narrative was even more pronounced among supporters of former U.S. President Donald Trump, who gained popularity by using populist rhetoric.

Regarding the connection of right-wing movements with women’s reproductive rights, authors Veljan and Čehajić-Čampara, in a publication on gender ideology, state: “Antifeminist right-wing movements (including radical religious conservatism) are not an isolated phenomenon but are, in fact, systematically connected and publicly articulated efforts aimed at excluding women from public discourse under the guise of religion, patriotism, and nationalism. All right-wing groups follow similar ideologies, embody similar negative attitudes towards women, and adhere to strict gender definitions of the nature of men and women” (Smith, Mattheis, 2019, cited in Veljan and Čehajić-Čampara).

Image 1. Trump supporters at a gathering in Washington, DC, the day after President Trump's inauguration, carrying a banner with various slogans, including STOP ABORTION.



2.2 Right Populism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

With the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina regained its independence but faced a host of new problems. The current challenges include a unique political and constitutional structure, the formation of government based on ethnicity, inefficient public administration, an ethnocentric model of governance leading to the inability to implement judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, slow progress in necessary reforms, and more. The distinctive political and legal framework, coupled with the widespread political illiteracy of a segment of the population, as well as the passivity and increasing emigration of young people to other countries, provides space for decision-makers—often the leaders of ruling parties—to use populist rhetoric and methods in their political programs and public discourse to achieve personal and party goals.

Elvis Fejzić, in the publication “Populism and Nationalism in Post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina: Right, Left, and the Abuse of the Will of the People,” states that “the political right in post-socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina often promotes anachronistic political ideas—especially when it comes to the relationship with social structure, state-building, constitutional reforms, election policies, and the formation of coalition governments” (Fejzić 2021, cited in Esad Zgodić et al. 2009).

Politicians of conservative parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, driven by the success and results of populist politics, are even willing to organize controversial referendums on current political issues and problems. In reality, they are attempting to gain the favor and support of the public through populist maneuvers. A recent example of this is the referendums led by the mayor of Zenica⁵², as well as numerous attempts by the president of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, regarding the (un)constitutionality of certain holidays, the abolition of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), autonomy, and more.⁵³

⁵² More at: <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/gradonacelnik-zenice-na-referendumu-grad-jane-zeli-pitati-treba-li-pomoci-posrnulom-preduzecu/200107049> [Accessed on the 8th of June 2023.].

⁵³ More at: <https://zurnal.info/clanak/milorad-dodik-je-30-puta-prijetio-izdvajanjem-rs-iz-bih/24191> [Accessed on the 8th of June 2023.]

One of the problems in addressing populism in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the lack of recent studies exploring this issue. Authors Nedžma Džananović and Mia Karamehić argue that the deficiency of works in this field is evident because the academic focus is oriented toward ethnic nationalism (Džananović and Karamehić 2016, cited in Ćurak, Ćekrija et al. 2009). This is due to the fact that political parties have been implementing such policies in this region since the 1990s. Characteristics of this ethnic populism can be found in several political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as SNSD, SBB, SDA, HDZ, further fueled by media reporting that often relies on exaggerating the perceived threat to a particular ethnic group.⁵⁴ In a state of existential threat to each of the three constituent nations, there is a possibility of spreading and implementing extremely regressive policies towards existing women's rights and minorities, leading to a return or establishment of a state that will inevitably undermine democratic decision-making. This situation may result in our society resembling an autocracy where, instead of one, there will be three different autocrats in power.

3. Abortion Rights

3.1. Abortion Rights - Comparative Law

The issue of abortion has been addressed by the UN Human Rights Committee, and according to the UNFPA report (2021), "laws criminalizing abortion are discriminatory and pose an obstacle to women's right to health, and states should decriminalize abortion in all circumstances." The CEDAW Committee has made it clear that states must take measures to ensure that the life and health of women take precedence over the protection of the fetus. According to the World Population Review report (2023), there are currently nine different categories of legality regarding abortion worldwide: 1. abortion on request (abortion for any reason is legal, respecting gestational limits), 2. abortion is legal only if the woman's life is in immediate danger, 3. abortion is legal when the woman's life is seriously endangered but not in mortal danger, 4. abortion is legal if the woman's mental health is at risk, 5. legal in cases of rape, 6. legal in cases of incest, 7. abortion is legal when the woman is mentally or cognitively incapacitated, 8. abortion is legal when the fetus has physical malformations and/or serious consequences such as Down syndrome, and 9. for socio-economic reasons when a woman is unable to support the child. Bosnia and Herzegovina falls into the first category of legality, as do most countries in the immediate vicinity, while some European countries such as Iceland, Cyprus, Finland, and Liechtenstein fall into the category of "permitted in case of preservation of health and/or for socio-economic reasons." Poland falls into the category of "permitted only if the physical and/or mental health of the woman is endangered," while complete abortion bans in Europe are found in four states: Andorra, Malta, San Marino, and the Vatican.

In those countries, women are not able to undergo an abortion, even if an unwanted pregnancy is a result of serious criminal acts such as rape and incest, or if their health is endangered, posing a mortal threat. In Andorra, abortion is a criminal

⁵⁴ More at: [pr.:mhttps://kamenjar.com/bosnjacka-majorizaciji-hrvata-u-bih-sve-na-jednom-mjestu/](https://kamenjar.com/bosnjacka-majorizaciji-hrvata-u-bih-sve-na-jednom-mjestu/) [Accessed on the 9th of June 2023.]

offense punishable by up to six months in prison for pregnant women, and doctors performing abortions face a sentence of three years in prison and a five-year ban on practicing medicine. As reported by France24, such legislation does not deter women from having abortions but rather contributes to abortion tourism. Andorran citizens travel to Barcelona and nearby cities to undergo the procedure.⁵⁵ A similar practice is reportedly prevalent among Polish women who seek abortions in other EU countries, often in Germany.

This prompts a valid question about the utility of existing bans when, de facto, they have no effect. Factors contributing to the status quo and the role of right-wing, Christian conservative populism are essential considerations. In microstates such as Andorra and San Marino, as well as in Malta and Poland, especially in the Vatican, the Catholic Church exerts significant influence. The Catholic Church's stance on terminating unwanted pregnancies is clear: abortion is considered the killing of an unborn child, a position shared by numerous evangelical churches in the United States.

From the aforementioned, it is evident that Polish citizens, as EU members, can obtain abortions in other EU countries. However, the situation is more complicated in Andorra. Andorra is not an EU member, and abortion tourism is only available to Andorran citizens who belong to the middle or upper class, while the poorest women are unable to travel to Barcelona and nearby cities.

Maltese women take advantage of the possibility of having abortions in international waters, traveling to countries where abortion is legal, or ordering abortion pills illegally. The potential punishment for a woman undergoing an abortion under Malta's Criminal Code is three years in prison, while a doctor performing an abortion faces four years in prison and permanent revocation of their work permit, making it more stringent compared to Andorra's law.

Existing legal regulations accompanied by abortion tourism in Andorra and Malta lead to the conclusion that abortion is a privilege for wealthy women. This is paradoxical, considering that one of the reasons for abortion in other parts of the world is precisely poor socio-economic conditions. A particular paradox is the fact that, according to a Doctors for Choice report (2022), no one has been convicted in the last twenty-five years. Recently, on June 1, 2023, a Maltese woman was brought before the court on charges of performing a medical abortion at home. She was released on conditional discharge, meaning the court did not impose a fine or imprisonment. This is additional evidence that treating abortion as a criminal offense is an anachronism and needs to be abolished.⁵⁶

It is particularly interesting to note that there are currently no prominent pro-choice politicians in Malta, despite the fact that abortion is not criminally punishable. One reason could be that politicians are unwilling to risk voter favor because, thanks to the influence of the Catholic Church, the pro-life narrative is more accepted in soci-

⁵⁵ More at: [pr.:mhttps://kamenjar.com/bosnjacka-majorizaciji-hrvata-u-bih-sve-na-jednom-mjestu/](https://kamenjar.com/bosnjacka-majorizaciji-hrvata-u-bih-sve-na-jednom-mjestu/) [Accessed on 9th of June 2023.]

⁵⁶ More at: <https://www.doctorsforchoice.mt/post/woman-prosecuted-for-having-an-abortion-in-malta-given-a-conditional-discharge> [Accessed on 5th of May 2023.]

ety. Hence, there is a reluctance to challenge widely held beliefs to secure or maintain political power.

Women who decide to travel to other EU countries to terminate their pregnancies cannot be criminally prosecuted upon their return to Malta. Advice on how to order and terminate pregnancies in Malta using abortion pills, as well as travel-related advice, is publicly available to all women through the FPAS Malta website⁵⁷, which is not prohibited in Malta or the rest of the world. Maltese authorities are well aware that a significant number of women travel to other countries to exercise their right to a safe and legal abortion. However, this does not prevent the current president, George Vella, from being one of the speakers at “pro-life” events⁵⁸ and strongly advocating for the current solutions. In today’s highly interconnected, globalized society, with the elimination of borders in the Schengen area and the possibility of travel, along with publicly available information on abortion procedures when ordered pills arrive, existing laws appear retrogressive and senseless. Such laws, still in force despite being evident that they are either not enforced or almost never put into practice in the Maltese context, embody right-wing, Christian conservative populism. Populists like G. Vella evidently prioritize form over content, advocating for the status quo of laws that are neither implemented nor practically enforceable, aligning with the prevailing popular narrative in Maltese society.

The ability to exercise the right to abortion is somewhat more complicated in Hungary, where, according to the law, women are obliged to listen to the fetal heartbeats before the abortion procedure. These changes occurred in 2020, as reported by Deutsche Welle⁵⁹. The right-wing government in Hungary issued a regulation that came into effect on September 15, 2022, requiring doctors to present vital signs of the fetus to women seeking abortion. This obligation tightens the relatively liberal abortion rules in the country. Prime Minister Viktor Orban, in power since 2010, often emphasizes his support for Christian values and advocates for a nuclear, traditional family. However, unlike the current Polish government, Orban, as the embodiment of a right-wing populist, seems aware that a more extensive abortion ban, such as in Poland, would be an extremely unpopular move in his country.

An interesting situation is currently unfolding in the Republic of Croatia, where abortion is regulated by the Law on Health Measures for the Exercise of the Right to Free Decision-Making on Childbirth, which, like the law in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), dates back to the time of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. However, just like in Poland, Andorra, and Malta, the Catholic Church and certain civil society associations, such as “In the Name of the Family” led by Željka Markić, “Vigilare” led by Vice Batarelo, and the “Center for the Renewal of Culture,” have a significant influence.

⁵⁷ More at: <https://www.fpas.mt/abortion> [Accessed on 5th of May 2023.]

⁵⁸ Aborting a presidency: George Vella and his troubled conscience, dostupno na: https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/120522/aborting_a_presidency_george_vella_and_his_troubled_conscience#.ZFY97s5BzIU [Accessed on the 5th of May 2023.]

⁵⁹ <https://federalna.ba/zene-u-madarskoj-duzne-po-zakonu-slusati-otkucaje-sr-ca-fetus-a-prije-procedure-abortusa-jtqke> [Accessed on the 5th of May 2023.]

Serious problems began as early as 2003, and Sanja Kovačević from the Platform for Reproductive Justice warns that the “conscience clause” was introduced through ethical codes in the Law on Medicine in Croatia.

The public in Croatia started showing more serious interest in this topic last year when doctors in Croatia could not perform an abortion on the pregnant woman Mirela Čvajdi, despite a tumor affecting the fetus. She was forced to travel to Slovenia to exercise her right guaranteed by law, but one that could not be implemented in practice. Analyzing media reports in Croatia gives the impression that the abortion issue is extremely ideologically charged. In one of its articles, Deutsche Welle attempts to explore the possibility that Croatia might definitively follow in the footsteps of Poland.⁶⁰ “The problem Croatia faces needs to be addressed through legislation and its practical implementation because out of 30 institutions, five did not provide abortion services due to the conscientious objection of all staff.” “Women seeking assistance from the Ombudswoman’s Office complain that they are redirected from one hospital to another to exercise their right to terminate pregnancy. The analysis also showed a high, unaffordable, and uneven cost of abortion in these 30 healthcare institutions.”

The reason why women are often referred from one hospital to another is precisely due to the use of the conscientious objection institute by all gynecologists and medical staff in those hospitals. There have also been cases where some doctors use conscientious objection in public hospitals and perform abortions in private practices. The future law in Croatia should regulate this area, establishing a specific register of doctors using conscientious objection, and controlling whether they perform abortions in their private clinics. If abortions are regularly performed in private clinics, and doctors use conscientious objection in public hospitals, it is an abuse of that institute and a gain of material benefit at the expense of reproductive rights. Encouraged by the experience of doctors using conscientious objection, midwives, nurses, dentists, as well as pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, have also started using it. According to Faktograf,⁶¹ “a pharmacy employee refused to dispense gynecologically prescribed contraceptive pills that the patient used for heavy menstrual bleeding and as a contraceptive method. The employee invoked conscientious objection because she ‘does not support, according to her beliefs, the use of contraceptive pills as a method of contraception.’” As the right to abortion is not the only one endangered but also the possibility of using contraceptive pills, it is worth considering what is next on the lists of prohibition, as well as where the end is to all increasingly unreasonable demands of right-wing associations and politicians.

In Croatia, as in Poland, “pro-life” and “pro-choice” protests are highly prevalent, unlike in our country. The Walk for Life represents “pro-life” protests organized by the association “In the Name of the Family,” and “pro-choice” protests subsequently emerge, including the performance “Silent Mass” as an artistic response to men who prayed with rosaries for the “end of abortion and the return of male authority in the family.” The actual influence of these associations is evident in the fact that

⁶⁰ More at: <https://www.dw.com/hr/pravo-na-poba%C4%8Daj-ho%C4%87e-li-hrvatska-krenuti-u-smjeru-poljske/a-55801144> [Accessed on the 5th of May 2023.]

⁶¹ More at: <https://faktograf.hr/2018/11/15/priziv-savjesti-siri-se-na-ljekarne-djevojci-odbi-li-izdati-pilule/> [Accessed on the 5th of May 2023.]

they managed to initiate a referendum on whether the definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman should be included in the constitution, despite very rigid procedural rules for initiating referendums in Croatia. Ž. Markić also lost a lawsuit against an RTL journalist who published information about how Ž. Markić's company earns money from the sale of contraceptive pills and abortifacients. Wikileaks revealed that the associations are funded by ultra-right associations HazteOir and CitizenGO, operating under the joint title the Intolerance network with headquarters in Spain⁶². The money was allocated to "mobilize like-minded individuals to prevent any progress in promoting LGBTQ rights, secularization, and the fight for reproductive rights." Considering the above, it is evident that this primarily refers to a person who exploits funds from foreign right-wing organizations while simultaneously profiting from contraception (which is also prohibited according to the teachings of the Catholic Church). In other words, as a successful populist, she advocates ideas of a particular worldview but is not willing to fully adhere to such positions herself.

3.2. Comparative law – Case before the European Court of Human Rights

Although the European Convention on Human Rights does not explicitly mention abortion, reproductive health, or health in general, previous cases related to the violation of the right to abortion have been categorized under the violation of Article 8 of the Convention. Article 8 guarantees the right to respect for private and family life, as well as the right to life (Article 1) and the prohibition of torture (Article 3). Even though the right to abortion is not explicitly mentioned in the Convention itself, the European Court of Human Rights emphasized in its previous judgments that the Convention should be interpreted in the spirit of the present time, not exclusively the time of its adoption in the 1950s (Tyrer v. the United Kingdom judgment).

The Court has rendered numerous judgments in this area, including X v. the United Kingdom in 1980 regarding medical indications in the 10th week of pregnancy, R.H. v. Norway in 1992, Boso v. Italy in 2002, Vo v. France in 2003, Tysiac v. Poland in 2005, A.B.C. v. Ireland in 2010, R.R v. Poland in 2011, P. and S. v. Poland in 2012, Amanda Jane Mellet v. Ireland in 2016, Grimmark v. Sweden in 2020, and others. Due to the limited scope of this work, the focus is on a more recent judgment from 2020 where the European Court ruled on a possible violation of Article 9 of the Convention – freedom of conscience and religion, in relation to Article 10 – freedom of expression, and Article 14 – prohibition of discrimination.

In the Grimmark and Steen v. Sweden case, the applicants turned to the European Court after exhausting all legal remedies before Swedish courts, seeking a ruling from the European Court on the violation of human rights resulting from their dismissal. The applicants, who were undergoing training for midwifery positions in hospitals, were not hired as midwives because they expressed conscientious objection to participating in abortions. They complained that they were denied employment and that violations of Articles 9, 10, and 14 of the Convention occurred. The Court affirmed

⁶² More at: <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/wikileaks-objavio-dokumente-spanjol-ski-ultradesnicari-financirali-udrugu-zeljke-markic-vicu-batarela-15094377> [Accessed on the 28th of April 2023.]

the previous decisions of Swedish courts, stating that refusing to assist in performing abortions constitutes a professional limitation in carrying out that job. The Court found that the decisions of Swedish courts were based on Swedish laws and did not constitute a violation of religious freedoms. Additionally, the decisions of Swedish courts “pursued the legitimate aim of protecting the health of women seeking an abortion” (Brzozowski, 2021).

In the case of Grimmark and Steen’s employment choices, all relevant information about the professional activity was provided to them when making that choice, and the applicants were aware of the duties of the specified profession that they refused to perform. This judgment makes it more than clear how various attempts are made to deny the exercise of the right to abortion to abortion, contributing to the increasing influence of right-wing parties in recent years in Europe, as well as certain, minor successes achieved by politicians and right-wing associations.

3.3. Right to Abortion – Bosnia and Herzegovina

In the previous chapters, we discussed (right-wing) populism and experiences from comparative law in those countries with more restrictive legislation than Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as countries that have experienced changes in this area precisely due to the rise of right-wing parties and the significant presence of right-wing associations. Whether there is a possibility of initiating an initiative to ban abortion in Bosnia and Herzegovina was explored by the domestic portal *Buka*, recognizing the link between the spread of right-wing ideas and the deprivation of reproductive rights worldwide⁶³. In an interview conducted by the *Buka* portal with the Azra Berbić, it was emphasized: “Services for intentional termination of pregnancy are not provided in healthcare institutions in Canton 10 and parts of Mostar, where exclusively medically induced terminations of pregnancy are performed. I assume that in these institutions, doctors most often rely on the so-called ‘conscientious objection.’ There is also a troublingly high number of testimonies from women that anesthesia was not used during abortion procedures.”

Considering that Canton 10 and Herzegovina-Neretva Canton represent cantons with a predominantly Croatian population, given the current state of abortion rights in Croatia, a request for data collection was sent to hospitals and clinical centers in these areas during the preparation of this work. Responses to the mentioned inquiry were completely absent.

The Sarajevo Open Centre (SOC) also submitted a request for access to information for the Orange Report,⁶⁴ but their request was only partially fulfilled, resulting

⁶³ Is there a possibility of initiating an anti-abortion initiative in Bosnia and Herzegovina? This article was also reported by ZOS Radio. Available at: <https://6yka.com/bih/postoji-li-mogucnost-pokretanja-inicijative-o-zabrani-abortusa-u-bih> [Accessed on 30th of April 2023]

⁶⁴ In the Orange Report 5 of the Sarajevo Open Centre (SOC), data was provided by 9 out of 25 secondary and tertiary healthcare clinics/hospitals. Private clinics did not provide any data at all, while for some hospitals such as the University Clinical Hospital Mostar, County Hospital “Dr. Fra Mihovil Sučić” Livno, County Hospital Orašje, and General Hospital Bugojno, the report states that they do not perform pregnancy termination procedures at all. The University Clinical Hospital Mostar only performs procedures that endanger the life of the pregnant woman.

in a lack of comprehensive data for Bosnia and Herzegovina in this area. As for other cantons with a predominantly Bosniak population, Republika Srpska, and the district, regarding politicians and associations operating in these areas, there has not been a significant call for the prohibition of abortion.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we currently have a fragmented division in this area, meaning there is no law at the state level, and existing entity laws regulate this area. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Brčko District, the Law on the Conditions for the Termination of Pregnancy is in force, which is inherited from the former state, while in the Republic of Srpska, amendments were made in 2008, and the area is regulated by the Law on the Conditions and Procedure for Abortion in the Republic of Srpska. The federal law, in Article 5, prescribes that the request for abortion submitted by a pregnant woman of legal age who possesses legal capacity, as well as a pregnant woman over 16 years old who independently earns a living through work, will be granted if: 1. the pregnancy has not exceeded 10 weeks, and 2. the abortion will not directly endanger the life or health of the pregnant woman.

If the pregnant woman is under 16 years old or if legal capacity has been taken away from her, a special commission, consisting of two doctors and a social worker, decides on the request. The federal law also specifies that abortion cannot be approved after 20 weeks, while in some countries such as the Netherlands, it is possible to approve abortion after 24 weeks in the most severe medical cases. The existing law also stipulates that the women's health care service keeps a special record of abortions, but the shortcoming is that private clinics, where abortions are often performed, do not maintain these records.

The federal law, through de lege ferenda solutions, needs to improve by regulating abortion in private clinics, prescribing the obligation to keep records, and allowing abortion after 20 weeks in special cases approved by a commission. Since there are already hospitals and clinical centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina (HNK and Canton 10) where some doctors use conscientious objection, new legal solutions should regulate this area by creating a special registry of doctors and medical staff using conscientious objection. Additionally, a special commission should be established to oversee whether doctors use conscientious objection in private practices. Future legal solutions should also establish an obligation for hospitals that, if all doctors use conscientious objection, there is the possibility of exercising that right by occasionally engaging doctors who do not use conscientious objection.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are currently two "pro-life" initiatives, specifically "Glas za život" (Voice for Life) and "Sara – mjesto za tebe" (Sara – A Place for You), which aim to respond to pregnant women seeking a legal abortion with half-truths and misinformation. They use rhetoric claiming that it is an extremely dangerous request that leaves lasting consequences on pregnant women, such as possible PTSD

Significant variations in prices between different institutions were also observed, and it was noted that the Health Insurance Institute of the Bosansko-podrinjski Canton does not cover the costs of medically induced abortion. See: Sarajevo Open Centre (SOC), ORANGE REPORT 5 Report on the Status of Women's Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period 2016 – 2019, Sarajevo 2019. Available at: soc.ba/site/wpcontent/uploads/2019/12/Narandžasti-izvještaj-2016.2019_BHS_web.pdf [Accessed on 20th of April, 2023].

and a higher risk of breast cancer, which is entirely scientifically unfounded. Both associations conduct their anti-choice activism through Facebook and Instagram pages as well as their own websites, benefiting from the general media illiteracy in the country and insufficient sanctions for fake news. At the time of writing this paper, the Facebook page “Sara – mjesto za tebe” has 735 followers, while “Glas za život” has a whopping 7.5 thousand followers, even though their Facebook posts record a negligible number of reactions. Facebook posts are largely concentrated on content found in ordinary groups and pages that discuss pregnancy and motherhood, with occasional contests and subtle persuasion of pregnant women that it is always better to give birth to a child, even if they currently do not think or want to do so. On the “Glas za život” website, a direct link to the “pro-life” website “Heartbeat International” is provided, along with information that the organization’s headquarters is located in Sarajevo at Radnička Street 3A, contact phones, and requests to contact them by phone numbers, with absolutely no information about the person to contact.

The contact number +387603030161 was attempted to be reached with the intention of gathering additional information about the association itself and its activities, as well as the need to point out extremely unethical, unprofessional, and above all false content, but the number is currently unavailable. On the mentioned website, there is also a survey with a minor number of respondents (600), in which, in response to the question, “If you were to unexpectedly become pregnant again, how would you proceed?” 86 people choose the answer “I would give birth to the baby,” while supposedly seven women choose the answer “I would have an abortion,” attempting to dissuade potential pregnant women from abortion in a suggestive manner.

4. Conclusion

The paper provides an overview of populism and right-wing populism, as well as the idea of banning the right to abortion spread through populist rhetoric, while the “pro-life” narrative increasingly influences Europe and the world. The abortion issue is one that polarizes society immensely. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the question of abortion is not yet widely represented in the media space, as is the case in Croatia, Poland, and other countries. Politicians, as well as a significant number of civil society organizations, do not speak much about this issue.

Laws regulating this area are not sufficiently enforced in practice, primarily in public institutions. Clinics and hospitals in certain areas of the country do not comply with the law, i.e., they do not provide services they are obligated to provide by law, and there have been no cases of punishing these institutions by the relevant authorities. Although existing laws obligate the provision of safe abortion healthcare services, abortion is not equally accessible throughout the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Associations that seek to promote the “pro-life” agenda and prevent women from exercising the rights prescribed by the applicable law have been operating unhindered in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2016, using false and unverified information without any criminal or misdemeanor consequences.

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Gender Biopolitics in Serbia: Evaluating Women's Lives

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Abstract: In this work, the author aims to clarify the reasons for the difference in the valuation of the lives of women and men, through various examples and theoretical frameworks. The starting point of the research will be the analysis of the discourse surrounding a specific statement from the media space regarding femicide and penalties for femicide in Serbia. This discourse explicitly points to the disproportionate valuation of male and female deaths and, consequently, life. The author seeks to explain the problem from the theoretical framework of biopolitical ideas developed by Judith Butler, Giorgio Agamben, and Jimmema Repo. Subsequently, the research contextualizes the issue with examples of violence in Serbia, as well as theoretical analyses of misogyny originating in Serbia. The paper highlights a direct connection between the organization and disciplining of society through gender roles and gender-based violence, manifested both as direct violence and as a lack of institutional reactions to violence. The author's intention is to explicitly elucidate this direct link between gender-divided society and violence.

Keywords: femicide, biopolitics, life, violence, gender

1. Introduction

In the morning program of Happy TV, discussing the topic of violence, lawyer and member of parliament Svetozar Vujačić stated: "... In my 42 years of legal practice, I have exclusively handled criminal cases, the most severe, I mean brutal murders, fathers killing sons, brothers killing brothers, and so on... I rarely defended cases where the husband kills the wife because that is an easy murder, so it is not interesting to defend it because it is easy to defend. But when a woman kills her husband, that is a difficult murder. When a husband kills his wife, it's not that difficult, it's not that difficult to defend. It is easier to defend than when a woman kills her husband. There are a million motives why he killed her, you understand, for example. I'm exaggerating a bit, but there is a lot of truth in it" (Telegraf, 2023).

In this discourse, “the most severe, brutal murders” only refer to killings related to male lives, such as father, son, and the like. When a man kills a woman, the murder is prejudged as easier; that is, the accused, in the lawyer’s opinion, receives a milder sentence and is generally easier to defend. In the case of the reverse, when a woman kills a man, the murder is treated as more severe, probably again because it involves a life marked as male. Defense is easier because many reasons are taken as justifications for the killing, which eases the situation for the accused. Later in the conversation, the lawyer mentions some classic strategies for justifying the killing of women, such as jealousy and infidelity. These justifications are not only used in legal practice but are also encountered in the media in Serbia and in everyday public opinion.

When we look at the statistics of femicides in Serbia after this statement, we see that in the last three years, the number of such murders is alarmingly high. In 2021, 30 women were killed, in 2022 only four less, and in the first four months of 2023, already 10 (Femplatz, 2022). In this sense, the problematic nature of what the lawyer is saying cannot be reduced to his personal opinion; femicides are highly prevalent in Serbia, indicating a general perception and valuation of women’s lives. Given the data, such statements must be analyzed and criticized more deeply.

In this paper, we focus on the problem of femicide through an analysis of the attitudes that can be recognized in the aforementioned statement. We use contemporary feminist and biopolitical theories. Contemporary theories of power often refer to the perspective of biopolitics, first developed by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1978) and contributed to by other important thinkers like Hannah Arendt (Arendt, 1981) and Giorgio Agamben (Agamben, 2018). However, it seems that this new understanding of power practices rarely, if at all, takes into account the gendered context⁶⁵ of contemporary society. In “The History of Sexuality,” Foucault (1978) will address how the sexual identity of individuals in society develops through practices of disciplining sexuality, but the division of society into clearly defined two genders (or sexes) remains just one aspect. In this paper, we take the gender aspect as the main framework for observing femicide and gender-based violence. We start by asking how to understand femicide and violence from the perspective of biopolitics. Do they acquire a new societal role when viewed in this way?

We approach feminist and biopolitical theories in relation to the specific context of Serbia and the Western Balkans. In this endeavor, we follow the thought of Marina Blagojević (2002, 36): “There is no doubt that one of the key feminist epistemological strategies is contextualization. There is no knowledge outside spatial and temporal frameworks, just as there are no theoretical concepts outside of context... There is a danger that what appears similar to us, we interpret using these theories as homogeneous.” Our time and space are the Republic of Serbia, one of the countries in the region we recognize as the Western Balkans, a state that has undergone post-communist transition and, in its recent history, has experienced wars based on ethnicity.

⁶⁵ In literature, various terms can be found for what is encountered in English as “gendered.” In the following work, gendered violence will refer to violence committed against individuals who are clearly gender-defined, and one of the causes is precisely this gender division. In this sense, victims of gendered violence are not only women but also all those who, in some way, deviate from the heteronormative framework imposed.

Misogyny that arises in such an environment must be specific in many ways. In this society, there is a pronounced division based on gender roles. Our goal is to demonstrate how disciplining people through gender role in Serbia leads to the most radical cases of violence, including death itself. What will be of primary interest is the connection between the gender organization of society and violence. The intersection of these two phenomena proves surprisingly suitable for analyzing domestic violence as well as the media culture of Serbia, and other phenomena such as wars and “ethnic cleansing.”

2. Ontological Differences Among Lives

Considering that we are analyzing the treatment of violence, we will attempt to utilize some of Judith Butler’s ideas. In contemporary governance, there has been a change in power structures and practices. Those who possess power can now exercise it over the population not by threatening violence or death, but by supporting only certain lives and groups in their survival. This means that death is no longer distributed through active means as punishment; instead, certain lives are allowed to disappear – death and violence are recognized as everyday potentials, of which only some are protected. This leads to the question explicitly posed by Butler (2020, 67): “What motivates any of us to aid in the survival of another’s life?” In other words, what criteria continuously enable the survival of certain lives? The question of who we are will be left for later.

The position from which Butler approaches the issue of violence helps us because gendered violence, as well as violence in general, can be viewed from a different perspective. Instead of the classic ethical-dyadic relation of violence where there is a perpetrator and a victim, and violence is an isolated act motivated by individual psychological states, we ask how it is possible that the structure in which the violent event occurred allowed it to happen. More specifically, what are the mechanisms that enable femicide to occur? What justifies the leap from an individual to a systemic perspective is the fact that the same pattern repeats both in the way violence is committed and in the way it is perceived, both publicly and institutionally. This is evident, but not only, in the case of Vujačić’s quote. In this sense, questions about the victim and self-defense, questions about the relationship between him and her, the relationship between one self and one other, will not help.

Therefore, the question we must ask, which will illuminate the biopolitical side of this problem, is the one Butler herself poses: “Who belongs to the group that is protected, and who do we mean when we speak of lives that need protection?” (2020, 67). We must note the twist introduced by biopolitics. Violence is taken here as a constant, something that can be counted on, while protection is the exception. This means that what we can expect is violence. There is no need for active action for violence to occur. In our case, a certain characteristic of the group constantly subjected to violence comes to the forefront, and that is gender. Based on the fact that certain individuals in our society are recognized as women, we can observe this structural immutability when it comes to violence. In this sense, women are often labeled as a

vulnerable group because we recognize that they need protection from the evident violence to which they are exposed. The problem with this approach is precisely that it does not question who will provide this protection and how, and why the group that is supposed to provide this protection would be understood as invulnerable in contrast to the victims.

Let's elucidate the problematic nature of this situation. Firstly, this type of labeling of the vulnerable often reproduces the same structures that originally placed these individuals in a vulnerable position. In other words, it establishes a paternalistic form of power, precisely at a moment when reciprocal social obligations are most urgently needed (Butler, 2020, 71). In the unequal distribution of power and possibilities, which we label as paternalistic, we completely overlook the fact that help, support, and solidarity are needed by everyone. This means that there are no "invulnerable" individuals. Let's remember that for life to survive, it must be supported socially, infrastructurally, and institutionally. This consequently means that those who survive already receive this support. Thus, we repeatedly neglect that it is not necessary to protect the victims because they are not passive objects but rather establish a systemic environment where neglecting certain gender-marked lives is not possible.

The problem of the discourse of "protecting the vulnerable" is seen in the reappropriation of power and agency only from those whose needs are already met – whose lives are recognized as worthy of living. We believe it is unnecessary to mention that this kind of life support also occurs in a gendered manner, and it should be noted that all those who are socially supported do so through relationships and care work – traditionally female work that is the foundation of survival in life but is often not recognized as active work.

We have already mentioned the implicit valuation of certain lives as (un)worthy of living. This is another reason why we must move from an individual perspective of victim and perpetrator to a cultural-political level. When we talk about values, we must consider the social climate and discourse in which they are formed. In this sense, femicide in Serbia is not a matter of individual relationships; it is not a private problem of spouses, nor a tragic love story, nor the consequence of the perpetrator's mental disorder. Each of these cases may be so at the phenomenal level, but we must question the conditions of possibility for gendered violence to be systematically repeated. An analysis of media discourse and public perception of these stories can help us in this regard. As we have seen, Vujačić himself reduces these cases, although he recognizes a structure of repetition in them, to situations that can be easily justified. According to him, there are many reasons why killing a woman will not be a more severe murder – in other words, why it will not be perceived as the termination of a life entirely worth living. These reasons are always of an individual nature, even though it never deals with an isolated problem.

Relativizing violence through justifications such as jealousy, tragedy, mental instability, and the like always functions as a narrative of life devaluation. Butler will recognize these devalued lives as those that will not be mourned after their death. She identifies an important characteristic of these lives: "There is a difference between someone being mourned and that person carrying the quality of mournability in their living being (grieveability). The latter involves conditionality..." (Butler, 2020, 75). In

this case, conditionality would be a condition, simply put: if a woman's life is taken, the perpetrator will be treated as the perpetrator of a more severe murder. If this does not happen, the society in which the murder occurred allowed one life to be terminated. When the murder leaves no trace, or leaves a very small trace that can be easily justified, it implicitly sends a message that the life that was taken was not worthy like other lives, did not fully live. Thus, the biopolitical distribution of power does not equally support all lives. In this way, misogyny in Serbia operates at an institutional level; it is not a natural attitude encountered in society. It reproduces the same power structures, and it is in their interest.

When discussing the issue of femicide in South American countries, Butler observes a certain characteristic of their lives: "Those who live understand themselves as still living, living despite this omnipresent threat, and they survive and breathe within an atmosphere of potential injury" (2020, 189). We can recognize a similarity in the description of the survival of these women with the situation in Serbia when we look at the banners' headlines at the protest against femicide in Belgrade held on February 25, 2023. Protesters themselves point out through messages the constant atmosphere of insecurity and danger: "Living in fear is violence," "Do you know how much fear girls grow up with?" or "I just want to walk peacefully at night." We see that violence is expected, that everyday life is colored by this possibility. These women demand that something be done in advance, that a safer atmosphere be created for all women – they recognize the problem as systemic. The fact that survival requires activity and that surrendering life means death confirms the inevitability of the biopolitical perspective. Inverted relations speak to the fact that there is a constantly possible threat, that there is continuous violence we face every day. The same can be read from various statistics.

3. Logic of Exclusion and Establishment of a System

Giorgio Agamben's research (Agamben, 2018) on the foundations of the political order as a human community points to several important points that we must consider to further illuminate the situation of femicide in Serbia. On the one hand, he deals with the structure of the law as such; that is, the conditions of possibility for power to be articulated through norms in a society. On the other hand, as the title of his book suggests, he deals with homo sacer, the sacred man, whose meaning for the political community needs to be explained so that we can understand the specific situation in which women in Serbian society find themselves. In Roman law, homo sacer exists as a person who can be killed but not sacrificed. Therefore, homo sacer was excluded from both the classical legal system and the religious order. This means that a person declared homo sacer was left to others to decide the fate of their life, and in the case of murder, they did not face the consequences that murder would otherwise entail. Thus, Agamben characterizes homo sacer: "... in a certain sense, it represents a true exception in a technical sense, an exception that would allow the killer to free himself from the charge of murder, simply by invoking the holiness of the slain" (2018, 95). To avoid confusion, we emphasize once again: here, holiness does not mean the religious character of someone's life but only the fact that this person was denied from

both the legal and religious order. As an outcast, anyone could take their life without consequences for that act.

In this sense, homo sacer can be seen as someone declared by the sovereign as unworthy of life, or interpreted differently: their lives would not be mourned if they were to end for one reason or another. These are people whose lives, for one reason or another, are not recognized as lives in the full sense. Thus, according to Agamben, an intrinsic dynamic of the political order is created, based on the fact that someone must be excluded. When a group or individual is recognized as homo sacer, it is possible to develop a legal order based on that exception. Logically viewed, this type of exception is in this sense a rule; because it is part of the system being established, just as the law is over “normal” citizens. By excluding it, it becomes part of the order. Agamben recognizes that the condition for the existence of sovereign power is this kind of exclusion: “... homo sacer would represent the original figure of life affected by sovereign exclusion, preserving the memory of the original exclusion, responsible for the creation of the political dimension... the sovereign is that area where one can be killed without being killed or sacrificed, while the sacred, i.e., exposed to murder and forbidden for sacrifice, is considered the life that finds itself within that area” (2018, 97).

When we return to the problem of femicide, we see certain parallels. In each case where the killer is not judged as if committing a serious murder, we can recognize a situation in which it is possible to kill without facing legal consequences. The reasons, as we have seen, are various. But what remains the same in each of them is that based on some reason (jealousy, mental disorder, adultery), an exception is made from the murder case. Because the exception allows justification: it is not an ordinary murder and should not be treated as such. Based on justifications, we can speak of an exceptional case, something that does not fall under the rule. The rule would, of course, be the classic judgment of murder. However, these exceptions indicate what is explicitly visible in Vujačić’s statement: trivial justifications of psychological nature are not the reason why the murder of a woman is not treated as a serious murder, but the fact that the life that was interrupted is female. In this way, each femicide case in court functions as an exception, concealing and simultaneously highlighting that it is, in fact, a misogynistic practice, based on gendered violence. It is not a family tragedy or a crime of passion – but the same repetitive event: femicide.

As difficult and unpleasant as it may be to talk about human lives and their death as “just another one of,” until we notice the pattern that repeats, we cannot elucidate the causes of this repetition or its relationship to sovereign power. This kind of justification for exceptional cases prevents, and now does so as a rule, the application of the law on paper to female life. This means that a woman is placed outside the law, in a similar way to what happens to homo sacer. It should not be forgotten that homo sacer – this original exclusion, is the other side of the symmetrical relationship to power. Biopolitical power is based on this type of structural exclusion. In this sense, a social order must constantly be re-established, with constant re-emergence of extraordinary states, i.e., exceptional cases. “In other words, founding is not an act that is finished once and for all in illo tempore, but an act that, in the form of sovereign decision, constantly takes place in civil society” (Agamben, 2018, 123). Each femicide

can then be considered as a re-establishment of Serbia's misogynistic system.

This means that femicides will not stop until something inherently changes in the system. They are this constant re-establishment of a patriarchal society. Of course, society as such is more complex than this simple relationship, but we must consider that Agamben himself notices that the way of treating homo sacer in the contemporary world has turned into a way of treating lives in general: "The fact that a precisely determined figure of homo sacer no longer exists today may also mean that we have all practically become homines sacri" (2018, 129). In other words, not only women are victims of biopolitics – we can talk about many mentioned vulnerable groups, and if we want a broader picture, we must also consider the economic situation of the population, but certainly the gendered nature of society allows one of the ways to produce these homines sacri. In this sense, when we talk about femicide, it is inevitable to consider the biopolitical dimension and the significance of this denial for the power that perpetrates it.

This normalization of homo sacer, as seen in the mentioned reflections, where the status quo is a threat of violence, its presence in everyday life, and its expectation. Only certain lives are institutionally, culturally, and, as we have seen, legally supported to live undisturbed.

4. Foundations of Gender Biopolitics

When we recognize the problem of femicide as a possible biopolitical issue, it is important to shed light on the phenomenon of biopolitics. Based on the genealogy conducted by Himena Repo (Repo, 2017), we can draw a direct connection between demographic research on population fluctuations, economic movements, and gender, specifically gender roles. She shows that the initial biopolitical theories focused on the "body of the nation." This type of concern has many faces, reflecting, for example, the prohibition of reproduction for certain populations or the encouragement of reproduction for others. It is also reflected in the "selection" and encouragement of "healthy" offspring, as well as in ensuring that the lives of certain individuals are long-term, healthy, shaped by desired habits, etc. This kind of management of population characteristics is particularly suitable for consumerism.

In this sense, the process of reproduction, which, of course, is inseparable from the act of sexuality, must be viewed as a way of controlling and shaping the practice of sexuality in a society. Since gender roles are related to gender, i.e., biological characteristics – no matter how complex the connection between the cultural and physical aspects is – they represent the way in which the discipline of sexuality for the purpose of economic control of the population is manifested in culture. This is also evident in the fact that sexuality within gender roles is often much less related to the sexual needs of individuals and much more to the positioning of power in society.

For example, various studies based on testimonies of rapists indicate a close connection between sexuality and violence, which is the practice and assertion of power. They show that there is no clear linguistic distinction between expressions,

metaphors, terms that we would label as the “Language of Sex” and expressions, metaphors, terms that we would label as the “Language of Rape” (Simić, 2011). Language permeated with misogyny is the most obvious way to recognize the widely accepted culture of misogyny. In this sense, sexuality and gender roles cannot be fundamentally thought of unless the disproportionate power relations are taken into account.

If in the previous chapters we spoke about possible mechanisms of devaluation of life based on gender, now is the time to ask why this is happening at all. As seen from the above, gender discipline in society is not accidental: it serves the production of human resources – which are a condition for profit, as well as the renewal of the population of nations. In other words, sexuality is a way to express power and thus organize society in the desired way. This organization into a desired profitable structure, more specifically the heteronormative nuclear family, is also seen in the expression of violence. In the way it appears, in its connection to sexuality, in the structure of victims, etc. Repo concludes: “...the family was a matrix produced by socially determined interests, which it reproduces reciprocally, and which shapes individual behavior within the norms of social order. It was possible to manipulate behavior – including reproductive behavior – by targeting “gender roles” formed within the family” (2017, 114).

In this sense, we can understand the case with which we started the work as a way to discipline women’s behavior through direct violence, with the aim of forming a profitable population structure. The fact that femicide is highly prevalent in Serbia, as well as the inadequate response of the judicial system to femicide cases, is not accidental. Similarly, these are not simply “natural” attitudes, not culture, nor tradition, although in them we eventually find the expression of the misogynistic structure of society. Changing the “mentality” of the people is not difficult; what is challenging is doing something that will not be in line with already established power structures – which often have their reasons, often of an economic nature. Partner violence, which is so common in our environment, can then be viewed as one of the consequences of gender roles fulfilled within the family.

5. Misogyny and Femicide

To further define the problem of valuing women’s lives in Serbia, it is necessary to examine this specific spatiotemporal framework in more detail. What do we exactly mean when we say misogyny in Serbia? In any case, it refers to a kind of hostile attitude, exclusion, oppression of those identified as women in a gendered society. Marina Blagojević notes that the definition of misogyny as a phenomenon of intolerance towards women within a system is too narrow (2002). Indeed, it proves inadequate, especially in the case of Serbia she writes about, for the simple reason that transitional Serbia cannot be understood as a system. It represented insecure ground, the collapse of institutions, devastation during the 1990s and the years after; yet, we witnessed the flourishing of a misogynistic culture. This means that misogyny appears even where we do not have homogeneous, organized, and established

social and institutional practices. As Blagojević points out: “I am inclined to argue that such a definition, implying a social, cultural, political, and economic system within which misogyny exists, becomes too narrow precisely from the perspective of the ‘post-communist’ context, in which very intensive and in many ways historically new processes of social deconstruction and restructuring take place, fundamentally redefining, recoding, and recontextualizing the relationships between women and men, gender roles, and gender identities” (2002, 32).

It seems, however, that although misogyny does not require a system to spread and reproduce in it, it itself is a system of practices and discourses. We encounter it in culture, public opinion, media, art, but also in institutions. As a system that permeates both public and private spheres, we find it in Serbia. What we can learn from Blagojević is that a new form of misogyny emerged in the period after the breakup of Yugoslavia. Like all forms of conservative thinking, misogynistic attitudes invoked the past and tradition while actually establishing new forms of social structure. In this sense, it served as both a “social consensus” and a “meeting place of the West and the East” (Blagojević, 2002, 35). What we are dealing with today, after 20 years, is obviously a mature state of what was sprouting and forming in the period of wars and after them. Here we can highlight that the state of chaos in a country corresponds quite well to biopolitical management since this new form of power does not organize centrally but through various institutions and can certainly function in a fragmentary way. In this sense, in post-war Serbia, there may not be a center of power, but it certainly appears, for example, through attempts to control the population.

One of the classic examples of post-war misogyny, whose examples can be found in the politics and theory of Western countries as well, is the so-called concern for the “body of the nation,” i.e., an attempt to control the population through the control of women’s reproductive behavior. The same occurs in Serbia. As Blagojević informs us: “Women were explicitly held accountable for the size of the nation, and abortions were referred to as lost Serbian soldiers in public debates” (2002, 44). This kind of so-called concern is a classic example of racially and misogynistically motivated biopolitics. The prototypes of biopolitical theories did focus on issues of restricting or encouraging the reproduction of a particular nation. Of course, these and similar narratives can easily slide into eugenic practices.

When we look at this basic idea of biopolitical population control, we can observe an explicit emphasis on the body of the population – both individual citizens and metaphorically as a group. Based on corporeality, population gendering often occurs: a certain appearance of the body, a certain type of performance of sexuality, appearance, jobs, and, in the most general sense, roles in society are expected. The body is also what makes us vulnerable and enables violence as such: “When the infrastructural conditions of life are endangered, life itself, since life needs infrastructure, is not only an external support but an imminent attribute of life itself... Where these conditions of bodily survival are not actualized, survival is under threat” (Butler, 2020, 198). The fact that life encounters the bodily form is the most basic fact we must deal with. On the other hand, it shows us how biopolitics is, in fact, a politics of the body: and how genderedness consequently must be taken as a key factor in valuing life.

One way to contextualize the problem of valuing women's lives in Serbia is through the issue of incest. Research conducted twenty years ago already showed an alarming frequency of this phenomenon, while the public, despite this, viewed it as a monstrous practice not carried out by "normal" citizens. However, as Mršević shows, a man committing incest is a classic man, socialized in a misogynistic society. If incest is defined as the "sexual abuse of a relationship of trust and dependence, using the perpetrator's position of power over the victim," then we see that incest has much less in common with disorders in someone's sexuality and much more with the way power is distributed in society. Moreover, the prevalence of this type of violence testifies that it cannot be bypassed when researching the value of women's lives: "It could be estimated that more than half of all adult women have experienced sexual trauma in childhood, or more conservatively estimated, two out of five women experienced sexual abuse as children by their father, stepfather, brother, uncle, or family friend" (Mršević, 2002, 560).

If we analyze the reasons for the problematic nature of incest, we will see that even the classical interpretation of this phenomenon hides a certain kind of biopolitical misogyny. Incest has been observed as an unchangeable taboo since Levi Strauss's studies, encountered in various cultures, in the form of prohibiting sexual relations between blood relatives (1971). However, when we apply this very formal understanding of incest to the case of Serbia, it is easy to overlook that it really happens in specific conditions. Consulting research reveals that incest is almost without exception a form of rape, not consensual sexual relations. In addition, the victims are mostly minors and female-identified individuals, while the perpetrators are usually adult men in a position of trust within the family.

Incest is punishable in Serbia for the same reason Levi Strauss believed it formed as a taboo: because it can lead to offspring with undesirable characteristics. Mršević emphasizes: "Understanding incest solely as a danger to the health of offspring, giving it an exclusively eugenic character, means overlooking the fact that it is, above all, violence that leaves severe consequences for the victim" (2002, 567). The reasons for condemnation are not the psychological and physical violence suffered by survivors, not their forever defined lives, and not the long-term consequences that such violence leaves. The question arises: would incest in Serbia be socially accepted if it did not lead to unwanted offspring? Whose life exactly is valued when we condemn this act? We can draw a parallel with the example of condemning abortion: in neither case is concern for the life and health of existing women in a given situation, but rather concern for the increase that can be mobilized unhindered for economic and/or war purposes.

6. Conclusion

This study has pointed out various techniques of devaluing women's lives in society and the reasons for it. This research is actually just "scratching the surface" of a much larger and more complex problem. However, even when we look at these few examples of violence practiced in Serbia, it seems that we can recognize some kind

of biopolitical motivation in each of them. The intention of this work is not to take misogyny and gender-based violence as already established practices, not to accept that we get used to them, and especially not to accept that they have been there for hundreds of years, that they belong to our tradition and culture, that we cannot do without them. The history of Balkan countries shows that such claims are not true. It seems that what must not be allowed is the acceptance of violence as inevitable and everyday. The normalization and naturalization of gender roles and the power imbalances that come with them inevitably lead to violence, but that does not mean that it cannot be prevented by restructuring society.

When we recognize profit and power motives behind already established behavioral patterns that seem natural, we can conclude that they are anything but natural. Likewise, if it was possible to form such a societal structure, then an alternative is possible. Then, a society where all lives are valuable, where life is not cared for so that it reproduces and works, but for its own sake, is possible.

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“Guardians of Patriarchy”: The Issue of Women’s Representation by Women in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia

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Abstract: This paper explores the issue of women’s representation by women representatives in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, focusing on the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. Using the methodology of theoretical analysis, the paper provides an overview of the development of women’s representation in the Serbian parliament and analyzes the behavior of individual female parliamentarians, which results in the maintenance and deepening of patriarchal values and behaviors. Despite the increased descriptive representation of women in Serbian politics, this paper demonstrates that substantive representation of women remains insufficient and unsatisfactory. The paper further examines how socio-economic and broader contextual issues facing women, combined with a lack of political will, contribute to this problem. Finally, the paper provides insights into potential solutions, including the need for effective feminization of the political space, continued implementation of gender equality mechanisms, and simultaneous strengthening of women’s movements and ties between civil society and state institutions. In conclusion, this paper emphasizes the critical importance of achieving substantive representation of women in Serbian politics and the challenges that must be overcome to achieve this.

Keywords: women, women’s representation, National Assembly, patriarchy, gender equality

1. Introduction

Based on the 2022 Global Gender Gap Report, Serbia ranks 23rd out of 146 top-rated countries regarding the political status of women in parliament. However, numbers can be deceiving. Despite the seemingly high 23rd position, the actual situation is far from ideal. Although there are 93 women in the current 13th assembly, many of them appear to fall short of fulfilling their representative function adequately. The term “Guardians of Patriarchy” used in the title characterizes the specificity of certain female parliamentarians whose actions, behaviors, or absence thereof, work against women they are supposed to represent, contributing to the preservation

of patriarchal norms, values, and partyocracy. The first part will provide a theoretical framework primarily based on texts from constructivist theories of political representation authors and a feminist approach to problem analysis. Through a retrospective overview of the development of women's representation in parliament, the author will attempt to reexamine current representation theories using the example of the Republic of Serbia and propose possible suggestions and perspectives for improving the current state.

The second part will analyze the behavior of several "guardians" during parliamentary sessions and the consequences of their actions. Additionally, it will examine the barriers to substantive representation and factors contributing to women's underrepresentation. The author will then explore the possibility of transitioning from descriptive to substantive representation and the conditions necessary to achieve this.

The paper will primarily focus on the legislative branch and representation in parliament since "legislation that meets women's needs, interests, and demands, many scholars see as a key element of substantive women's representation. Legislation, more than any other parliamentary activity, directly or indirectly affects the lives of citizens" (Celis, 2009, 97). Additionally, there will be a discussion on other non-institutional forms of representation. The paper aims to answer the question: Do the current female members of the National Assembly of Serbia adequately represent women? The author will argue that the answer to this question is negative and point out the problems and factors responsible for it.

2. Description - Essence or Fiction?

The debate between descriptive and substantive representation in politics focuses on what it truly means to represent marginalized or underrepresented groups.

Descriptive representation involves a concept in which representatives share characteristics with those they represent, such as race, gender, nationality, religious, and ethnic affiliation. The idea behind descriptive representation is that if elected officials are diverse and representative of the communities they come from and represent, they will better understand the needs and concerns of their constituents, and there is a greater likelihood that they will advocate for policies and laws that reflect those needs and interests. Research has shown that descriptive representation can have a positive impact on political outcomes, including increased voter turnout, improved representation of minority groups, and more responsible policy-making.

On the other hand, substantive (substantial) representation refers to the idea that elected officials should actively work to advance the interests of the groups they represent, regardless of their own demographic characteristics. This may involve advocating for policies or initiatives that benefit marginalized or underrepresented groups or rejecting discriminatory policies or practices. In other words, substantive representation involves more than just the existence of representatives belonging to a particular group. It means that the representative actively works to advance the interests and needs of the group and is capable of effectively articulating and advocating for them.

There is empirical evidence of a positive correlation between descriptive and substantive representation, but “it is important to note that simply increasing the number of elected women - the ‘critical mass’ - does not guarantee automatic political gains for women, considering various limitations associated with party affiliation, institutional norms, legislative inexperience, and external political environment” (Celis et al., 2008, 102). As Mršević argues, the mere increase in the number of women in institutions does not imply automatic participation in decision-making. Many women in political positions are representatives of elites who have reached these positions through their connections with male colleagues and leaders, and they do not actually represent the interests and needs of ordinary citizens (Mršević, 2011, 84).

Hana Pitkin sees one of the main weaknesses of descriptive representation in the emphasis on the structure and composition of institutions rather than on the activities and actions taken within them because representatives cannot be held accountable for who they are but for what they do (Celis et al., 2008, 100). This weakness is immediately noticeable in the Serbian parliament. Although it has a substantial number of female representatives (which will be further detailed in the following text), it is not uncommon for many of them not to vote more frequently than males for proposals and laws that would benefit women or to participate actively in lobbying for laws related to women’s rights (Čičkarić and Antonijević, 2020, 106). A current example supporting this claim is the fact that the National Assembly has not responded or taken any action regarding the 18 femicides that occurred since the beginning of 2023, despite public pressure to react.

Although there are certain groups in the Serbian parliament dealing with issues relevant to women, such as the Women’s Parliamentary Network, they unfortunately fail to achieve profound and far-reaching changes. Issues of “women’s interest” are not recognized by all women as equally relevant and do not enjoy the support of a sufficient number of female, let alone male, members. This problem is deepened by the realization that it is challenging to establish what “women’s interests” are, considering that women are not a homogeneous group, and there are no unified women’s interests that apply to all women together. Presenting women’s interests as obvious and self-evident can lead to the essentialization of women as a political group, which can later cause difficulties in articulating and representing them and insensitivity to differences among women. If substantive representation of women implies acting in line with women’s interests and in a way that resonates with them, then the inability to establish what women’s interests per se are complicates substantive representation. Professor Jonesdotir explains that what is in the interest of women is actually “inter-esse” (“being among”) or presence in the decision-making process; this relates more to control over the conditions of choice than the consequences of choice (Celis, 2009, 98). In this case, women’s interests would, broadly speaking, encompass all those that enable equal decision-making about their own destiny and unhindered participation in political life. Such a broad understanding of “women’s interests” could mitigate the mentioned problem.

Celis states that, after analyzing literature, both empirical and theoretical, regarding substantive representation of women, it can be concluded that substantive representation involves taking actions that support women. These actions may include

voting, proposing and adopting laws, advocating for women's rights, expanding political agendas to include women, articulating women's interests, incorporating gender perspectives into debates and policy content, lobbying in the government, conducting feminist policy analysis, and providing feedback on policies. These actions are directed towards addressing issues that are particularly significant for women, whether in the private or public sphere, whether aligned with feminist goals or not (Celis, 2009, 101).

Although the focus of the paper is primarily on the representation of women in the legislative branch, it is necessary to mention that effective representation does not only happen in representative bodies. In addition to achieving adequate representation in state institutions, it is equally important that it exists outside of them, in civil society organizations. Montanaro introduces the concept of "self-appointed representatives" that arises as a response to deficits in representation within institutions by representatives established through the electoral process. The concept of "self-appointed representative" is a subset of non-elected political representatives, primarily emerging in civil society and the public sphere, separate from coercive political authorities of the state (Montanaro, 2012). In Serbia, there are many civil society organizations positioning themselves as self-appointed representatives of women, such as Women in Solidarity, the Autonomous Women's Center, Women in Black, and others. They represent a crucial link in achieving substantive representation of women. However, the problem hindering this is the poor relationship between state institutions and civil society organizations in Serbia, resulting in a power imbalance between civil society and the state and a discourse that portrays them as two opposing and alienated spheres instead of interrelated parts of society that should collaborate.

So, in the case of Serbia, is "description just fiction," or does it bring us a step closer to substantive representation? The positive correlation between substantive and descriptive is less noticeable here because it seems that we are not close to substantive representation, which refers to the process of representing the interests and perspectives of a specific group of people, such as women, in a meaningful and significant way.

Considering all the above, the next chapter will be dedicated to analyzing the development of descriptive representation in Serbia and its relationship with substantive representation. Finally, the behavior of several female MPs and informal groups in previous terms will be discussed. In this way, the author will attempt to answer the question of whether female MPs in the National Assembly of Serbia substantively represent women and what obstacles stand in the way of substantive representation in Serbia.

3. Development of Participation and Representation of Women in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia

In the 1980s, in Serbia and other socialist countries of Eastern Europe, women's participation in parliament was higher (27%) than in European Union countries (12.5%). However, after the introduction of multiparty systems in 1990 in Yugoslavia,

the presence of women in the assembly drastically decreased, ushering in a period of so-called “masculinized democracy” characterized by predominantly male representatives, traditionalism, and pronounced patriarchal values. The majority electoral system did not favor women, and even the introduction of a proportional system in 1992 did not improve the situation. In the parliamentary elections for the Assembly of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in that year, the representation of women was extremely low, standing at only 2.94%. This trend continued until the early 2000s and the beginning of the democratization process, which slightly improved the situation. Although there were more female candidates than before, the issue persisted of positioning women at the bottom of party lists, preventing them from achieving proportional representation in representative bodies relative to the number of candidates. The first measures of positive discrimination were introduced in 2002 in the form of quotas for underrepresented gender on party candidate lists, based on the Law on Local Elections. The Gender Equality Committee was established the following year as a permanent working body of the National Assembly, marking the institutional implementation of affirmative measures in the gender field.

However, even after the initial implementation of measures, there was no significant improvement. Women continued to be poorly represented in representative bodies, and there were almost no women in leadership positions within parties and institutions. Only one party had a woman in a leadership position during that period – the Civic Alliance of Serbia (GSS), and only three parties had a women’s forum within the party organization (Democratic Party, League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina, and Civic Alliance of Serbia).

The second phase of implementing affirmative measures began with the establishment of the institution of the Ombudsman (2007) and the Deputy Ombudsman for Gender Equality (2008). In 2007, the government established the Gender Equality Sector within the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, which evolved into the Directorate for Gender Equality the following year. Perhaps the most significant measure contributing to the increased number of women in parliament was the introduction of a 30% quota for the underrepresented gender in 2007. Although this measure increased the presence of women in parliament, the situation in leadership positions remained unchanged. An amendment to the Law on the Election of Members of Parliament was adopted in 2011, requiring that every third place on the lists be reserved for women (Čičkarić, 2020, 11-23). The quota for the underrepresented gender was raised to 33% in 2011 and further increased to 40% on party lists in 2020, following a proposal submitted by MP Gordana Čomić, which was later accepted by the parliament.

In the latest elections on April 3, 2022, out of 97 elected women, 88 secured seats in the thirteenth convocation of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. There is still a disproportion between the total number of elected women and those who end up in representative seats. However, what distinguishes this convocation from previous ones is a noticeable increase in the number of women in executive power. Of the total 28 ministries, 10 are headed by women – Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Ministry for Environmental Protection, Ministry of Mining and Energy, Ministry of Justice, Ministry for European Integration, Ministry of Health, Ministry for Family Care and Demography, Ministry of Science,

Technological Development, and Innovation. It is interesting to note that women are now leading ministries whose areas are not traditionally considered “women’s issues.” This represents a bright spot in this convocation. Until now, women were usually at the helm of bodies primarily dealing with family, children’s rights, health, social policy, and gender issues, as these areas are perceived as “predominantly female.” It is important to note that Ana Brnabić has been at the helm of the government for two consecutive terms. The Vice President of the Government is Maja Gojković, and the Deputy Speakers of the Assembly are Sandra Božić, Elvira Kovač, and Snežana Paunović. Despite the high positioning of women and the institutional framework for promoting gender equality established through the mentioned affirmative measures and laws (especially the Gender Equality Act of 2021), the position of women in Serbia, both in politics and beyond, has not seen a drastic improvement.

As stated by Ljiljana Čičkarić, despite the implementation of quotas, there are still three issues to be addressed: insufficient party support, the fact that 30% (now 40%) of nominated women candidates may not result in a corresponding percentage of elected women, and the lack of regulations for replacing nominated women who withdraw from the race against other women (Čičkarić, 2015, 54).

She further explains that the successful implementation of gender quotas and how they are applied largely depend on the organizational structure of the political party. This is because parties have significant control over the selection of female representatives in parliament, which, in turn, determines whose voice is heard and who will serve as a role model for women participating in politics (Čičkarić, 2015, 45).

4. “Guardians of patriarchy,” factors of underrepresentation, and poor representation

In their work, Nićin and Gajić point out that “there are three groups of obstacles influencing women’s political participation. The first includes the political system, institutional and legal mechanisms; the second group focuses on socio-economic obstacles, material conditions, and the broader social context; while the third group consists of obstacles that consider patriarchal cultural patterns, traditional gender roles, ideological-psychological barriers, the ambition, and desire of women to engage in politics” (Nićin and Gajić, 2007, 328).

In the first part of this paper, the development of institutional mechanisms for achieving gender equality in Serbia was briefly outlined. As mentioned, a somewhat satisfactory level of descriptive representation has been achieved. However, there is still an insufficient number of women in executive positions with real decision-making power. Even if women hold such positions, such as the Prime Minister, for multiple reasons, they are deprived of real political and decision-making power. While barriers of the first group still exist, there has been some progress in their elimination. Regarding the problems of the second group, unfortunately, they are still pervasive. The increase in the number of women in politics has not led to the elimination of socio-economic disadvantages faced by women, especially those from marginalized groups such as Roma women, older women, or women with disabilities. Inequalities

in access to education, family and gender-based violence, poor media representation, the subordination of typically “female” professions to male ones are just some of the issues that actively affect women across Serbia. Another significant problem is the insufficient and inadequate attention given by women (and of course, men) to these issues in political institutions. The problems of the third group, patriarchal cultural patterns, and traditional gender roles, are perpetuated in the most important and dominant political organizations – the parties.

Parties are the main actors in improving the situation but also the main hindrance. Parties have a dominant role in advancing women in politics. Developing strategies for selecting candidates, parties are presented as the main drivers for achieving the quantitative presence of women in all political institutions, both at the national and regional levels, and locally (Nićin and Gajić, 2007, 336). However, parties are also a factor in maintaining an unequal, hierarchized division of power in the political sphere, which is primarily and predominantly reserved for men. Parties nurture patriarchal patterns of life, organization, and behavior. It is in their interest to maintain the status quo, so it is necessary for changes to occur in party organization, becoming more sensitive to gender and gender issues to bring about changes in other spheres of politics. The gender mainstreaming of political parties would involve incorporating gender equality issues into party programs, forming women’s forums, and increasing the presence of women in party executive boards. This process primarily involves “gendering the political elite and is carried out through actors in institutions whose programs focus on women through the institutional inclusion of gender issues in all areas” (Čičkarić, 2015, 56).

However, in the case of Serbia, in parties where women hold important executive and decision-making functions (often in ruling parties and those close to them), they mostly strive to convey and mimic patriarchal patterns of behavior and act only in line with party ideology and interests, not in line with the group or citizens they are supposed to represent. For example, a member of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and the current Deputy Speaker of the Assembly, Sandra Božić, on a session held on November 8, 2022, made sexist remarks towards opposition colleagues, stating: “I can’t help but notice that certain opposition female MPs very willingly pass through the ranks of the SNS. I don’t know if they are recommending themselves or if they just like to pass through there often” (Otvoreni parlament, 2022). With this statement, as a woman in a position of power, she derogatorily addressed opposition female colleagues. Sexist behavior by male representatives in the Serbian parliament is generally present and unfortunately, no longer surprises, but sexist statements by women addressed to other women are not such a common occurrence and are additionally jarring. This behavior confirms the theory that women, to prove themselves worthy of a position, seek to adopt stereotypically male patterns of behavior. Opposition representatives protested and invoked the Rules of Procedure, demanding that MP Božić be relieved of her function, but their request was not granted.

Similar sexist tendencies were also exhibited by MP Vjerica Radeta with the following statement: “For someone who does it for money from the CIA, Croatia, or I don’t know what, it is usual to say – a prostitute, and that is where the taunting of the SRS (Serbian Radical Party) MP Aleksandra Jerkov, calling her a Ustasha prostitute...”

(Otvoreni parlament, 2018). By saying this, she attempted to explain and justify the statements of her colleagues, automatically supporting them. The then Speaker of the Assembly, Maja Gojković, politely asked her to cease such a mode of communication without strong reprimands or warnings about inappropriate addressing of a colleague. However, on one occasion, she shouted at her chief secretary Svetisava Bulajić in a very condescending and inappropriate manner (Insajder video, 2018).

Since the prevalent opinion is that women are not well represented by men and that they portray a negative image, these examples serve to show that there are also female representatives who, unfortunately, engage in the same behavior. However, as explained by Čičkarić, the feminist movement has often inappropriately criticized that women elected as representatives become surrogate men and socialize in political parties dominated by men, making it difficult for them to distinguish themselves from their male colleagues. Moreover, there is a belief that, besides personal advancement, their work is not beneficial. While it is true that women in parliament can adopt behavioral patterns similar to those of men, this applies only to a minority of female MPs, who constitute less than 15% of the total number of MPs (Čičkarić, 2015, 55). It is fortunate that there are more female MPs advocating for women's interests and claiming to represent the citizens of this country. However, they are systematically inhibited from coming to the fore since they mostly come from the opposition and do not hold positions of power. Additionally, as emphasized earlier, the representation of women occurs not only in the parliament but also at the level of civil society, where the situation is much better than in institutions. However, in Serbia, there is no well-developed relationship between civil society and institutions, and representatives of civil society are often stigmatized by state institutions. On one occasion, the aforementioned MP Radeta referred to activists of the organization "Women in Black" as "karakondžule".⁶⁶ Civil society organizations are mostly talked about negatively in the public discourse of MPs, aiming to make citizens perceive them in the same way. However, concerning parliamentary representation, it is essential to consider that female politicians are in a challenging and conflicting situation, where they are expected to fulfill two different sets of expectations. They must demonstrate their abilities and behave similarly to their male colleagues to succeed in the "male world of politics," simultaneously retaining their uniqueness as women. Essentially, female politicians act as representatives for three different groups – the electorate, the political party, and women as a whole (Čičkarić, 2015, 47). Women in politics are additionally burdened with multiple expectations. The question arises whether all female MPs should be expected to represent all three groups (the electorate, the party, or women as a whole), and whether it is acceptable for a woman not to essentially represent women. A woman always descriptively represents women but not substantively. It often happens in Serbian politics that women predominantly and primarily represent the party and party interests, especially in ruling parties. Strong partyocratic tendencies, insufficient intra-party democracy, and a lack of sensitivity to gender equality are some of the reasons for this phenomenon. Nevertheless, some female MPs, who strive more to represent their electorate gathered around a

⁶⁶ "Karakondžula" – a ghost, witch, derogatory term for a woman.

common ideology and values that are not favorable to women, still somehow represent women who ideologically identify with them. An example of this could be Milica Đurđević Stamenkovski, the president of the Serbian Party “Zavetnici.” This party has an ultra-right-wing ideology, patriarchal, family, and traditional values, and a clearly anti-feminist narrative. However, MP Stamenkovski holds an executive position in that party, is very active in parliament, although her activity primarily revolves around topics that do not have a direct connection to women. When they do, she advocates for generally anti-feminist policies, opposing abortion and emphasizing the traditional role of women as mothers. However, we cannot say that she does not represent a certain segment of women who agree with her beliefs.

As Celis and Childs explain, feminist theories tend to overlook ideological differences among women when it comes to representation. Disregarding women’s political orientations in addressing representation deducts a crucial part of women’s identity from the equation. Gender identity is just one of the manifold identities of women that need to be taken into account in representation, so it is important to also consider political identity. Women with a right-leaning ideological spectrum more often represent right-leaning men than women of right-leaning orientation, further diminishing their representation. Women of any political orientation will be well-represented when their common perspectives, needs, and interests are embedded in laws and public policies (2020).

Although there was an assembly of female parliamentarians around common “women’s” issues that surpassed party affiliation within the Women’s Parliamentary Network (WPN), its active and effective engagement with issues was short-lived. The Women’s Parliamentary Network (WPN) is an informal group of female parliamentarians, each representing one parliamentary group in the current assembly, established in 2013. In the early years of the network’s existence, there were individual reactions from women against inappropriate behavior by colleagues, such as the 2015 case when the network condemned misogynistic comments by Minister Bratislav Gašić directed at a journalist. One of the network’s most significant achievements is considered to be the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting by the Law on the Budget of the Republic of Serbia for the year 2016. Thanks to one of the four adopted amendments by the Network, the government is obliged to submit an annual report on the progress of the gender-responsive budgeting process. Additionally, “another important result of the Network is the adoption of amendments to the Criminal Code, making Serbia the second country in Europe, after the United Kingdom, to introduce the statute of limitations for sexual offenses (previously, the offense was limited to six years)” (Todorović, 2016, p. 8). In addition, the Network organizes various activities such as conferences, educational events, seminars, and roundtable discussions aimed at the economic and political empowerment of women, promoting gender equality in all spheres of society, encouraging women to engage in politics and actively participate in public life, as well as raising awareness about the importance of women’s solidarity. However, in recent years, members of the Women’s Parliamentary Network have remained silent on numerous events in our country. As journalist Tamara Skrozza notes: “with silence and tacit approval, WPN members in recent years responded to countless attacks on politicians, activists, journalists, violence against ordinary women, and

discriminatory verbal terror that comes from TV screens every day. They remained silent even during attacks on women from their own ranks: when SRS parliamentarians, in front of the whole of Serbia, pulled women's panties to symbolically give them to Zorana Mihajlović, WPN members remained firm in their passivity, uninterested in that textbook example of primitivism, misogyny, and degradation of women as such" (Skrozza, 2023, p. 36). Since the beginning of the current thirteenth term, various disagreements have arisen within the network, and representatives of some opposition parliamentary groups have withdrawn. The reason for this is that the aforementioned parliamentarian Sandra Božić, who aspired to become the coordinator of the WPN, publicly acted as a coordinator without prior consultation with other members of the network, abusing her position. The parliamentary group Green-Left Coalition, Don't Drown Belgrade, We Must, whose representatives withdrew from the network, states that the "abuse of the WPN consists of selective and disproportionate condemnation of one violence against women and justifying and remaining silent about the other, exclusively along party lines of division" (Don't Drown Belgrade, 2022). It is acceptable to have representatives of women who are not necessarily feminists because they also represent women in some way, either descriptively, symbolically, or as part of the electorate. The problem with the guardians of patriarchy arises when female parliamentarians are not willing to step out of the party ideology and structure to unite or work independently on improving the status of women and on issues that affect every woman regardless of party affiliation. This problem is further deepened when female parliamentarians consciously or unconsciously adopt "male" behavior patterns, often manifested through misogyny and sexism. Although these parliamentarians may be fewer in number, they are more visible and active in the public eye because their male colleagues are more likely to accept them as allies since they play by "male rules of the game." Women should not cater to the established male form of power and dominance but establish their own way of expressing power in the political arena, which is equally valuable and effective. These "guardians of patriarchy" emerge as yet another obstacle to substantial women's representation.

5. Conclusion

We witness a noticeable lack of solidarity both among women in parliament and among men, with a passive role of parliamentarians who do not take responsibility in decision-making moments. Serbia is in a state of moral decline and corruption, with an increasingly pronounced party rule and a drastic decline in the quality of democracy. The author believes that there is no good and substantial representation of women in the Serbian parliament by female parliamentarians. As long as institutions and their representatives remain deaf and mute on burning issues and problems such as violence against women, economic hardship, discrimination, poor and inappropriate media representation of women, domestic violence, and other issues, there will be no substantial representation. Effective reforms need to be implemented, primarily within political parties, and the appointment of women to positions should cease to be merely an easy way to gain political points and votes to achieve substantial representation. Strengthening the Women's Parliamentary Network (WPN) and uniting female parliamentarians decisively and firmly around issues that go beyond party

interests and ideology is crucial for substantial representation. Of course, men must be equally involved and play an active role in solving these problems because women's representation is not solely the responsibility of women, and they should not bear that burden alone. However, female parliamentarians who have already achieved certain positions should keep in mind whether they are working for or against their female counterparts. To improve the situation, there must be fundamental changes in Serbian society and political culture. The focus and perception of representation in research should not be directed only at the representative body and state institutions but also at civil society organizations and individuals claiming to advocate for women. Channels of influence and collaboration between legislative bodies and the civil sector need to be facilitated to enhance substantial representation of women. There must also be a drastic change in the media narrative concerning women, especially women in politics. Additionally, we need to move away from the idea that only women should represent women and show men that women's interests are, in fact, human and societal interests. This requires gender mainstreaming and the feminization of institutions and positions of power. The situation is not at an admirable level, but it is not entirely bleak. The increased number of women in the National Assembly may not have led to good substantial representation, but it serves an important symbolic function by sending a specific message—that women are indeed welcome in politics and that it is their rightful place.

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Summary

The anthology of final papers, “Gender and Globalization in the Balkans,” is one of the outcomes of the regional Winter School “Gender and Globalization,” held from February 20 to 26, 2023, in Sarajevo. The event was organized by the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Sarajevo and the TPO Foundation. Participants in the Winter School included students from social faculties at 19 partner universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, and Serbia, participating in the UNIGEM project led by the TPO Foundation. The project aims to promote gender mainstreaming in higher education processes and foster networking between academic and student communities in these four countries.

The primary goal of the Winter School was to provide a platform for acquiring new knowledge, encouraging dialogue and experience exchange, and questioning the interdependence of gender and globalization. Throughout the seven-day school, students had the opportunity to attend lectures, participate in workshops, and learn from human rights advocates. Following the Winter School, students had the chance to write research papers on selected topics, mentored by professors from partner universities. This facilitated further networking among faculty and student communities through a joint academic project, resulting in the anthology of final papers titled “Gender and Globalization in the Balkans.” The anthology comprises 12 selected student papers organized into four thematic sections: gender and globalization, gender and society, gender and migrations, and gender and politics.

In the thematic section “Gender and Globalization,” the papers explore the impact of global processes on gender equality in various aspects of life, including the use of modern technologies and the internet, literacy, leadership, access to resources, reproductive health, as well as upbringing and education. Papers in the second thematic section, “Gender and Society,” question social norms, interpersonal relationships, and sociological phenomena arising from these relationships, significantly influencing gender roles, norms, and overall gender equality. The third thematic section, titled “Gender and Migrations,” investigates the influence of global processes on migration trends in the Western Balkans from a gender perspective, with a specific focus on the position of migrant women in the labor market and gender-based violence against migrant women in transit countries. The fourth thematic section, “Gender and Politics,” features papers analyzing the impact of right-wing political narratives and ideologies on gender equality, as well as the challenges arising from the influence of right-wing populism.

Researching the interconnection and conditioning of gender and globalization and their reflections on the regional contexts of European peripheries requires a situated and interdisciplinary approach, as well as linking diverse research paradigms. The student papers presented in this anthology are grounded in interdisciplinary perspectives and critically examine the reciprocal influences of complex social phenomena of gender and globalization. The young researchers who presented their work in this anthology have shown through their analyses that globalization is a continuous process resulting in various changes in each society individually. It is crucial to study it meticulously to understand its impacts on individuals and communities.

In line with this concept of globalization, the papers conclude that globalization has brought numerous significant changes on the social, political, and economic fronts. However, it has not succeeded in breaking down gender stereotypes in family upbringing and the education system. Although it has enabled women's participation in public life and politics, globalization has not contributed to gender sensitization of women in power and leadership positions, implicitly undermining efforts to achieve substantive equality. In post-transition contexts, it seems that globalization may contribute to reactivating gender stereotypes in selection situations such as employment, as women and men continue to show tendencies to employ individuals of the same gender, indicating the resilience of gender roles and stereotypes and the emergence of hybrid forms of femininity and masculinity.

Putting globalization into the context of contemporary media and social networks, it can negatively impact women's self-perception and psychophysical health. Under the influence of globally available media images of idealized female body shapes, women may lose confidence and health. Despite the progress achieved in the social sphere facilitated by globalization processes, divisions based on class, race, and gender are deepening. Accordingly, the feminization of poverty as a social problem escalates notably in the conditions of globalization, particularly affecting women working in precarious and low-paid jobs.

Globalization has facilitated easier exchange of capital, labor, products, and services, visibly affecting population migrations. However, the consequence of such globalizing trends is often discrimination faced by both women and men in different cultural contexts. The negative effects of migration flows resulting from political and economic changes are most acutely felt by migrant women. They lack adequate medical care in camps, often suffer unreported violence, and struggle to find employment.

Finally, when examining the political discourse and public narratives, especially on social media, globalization has contributed to the spread of the anti-gender movement. This movement, through laws and symbolic means, challenges acquired reproductive rights of women and disciplines women's bodies through various forms of violence and intimidation.

Considering the findings reached by young researchers in their papers on the implications of globalizing trends on gender, gender equality, and, more broadly, human rights, expanding and enriching the interdisciplinary body of knowledge on the interconnection of globalization and gender poses a permanent challenge. Such scientific and activist efforts are essential to approach the fight against gender inequality and human rights violations in diverse cultural conditions with scientific precision and contextualization.

“This anthology contains valuable descriptions, rational insights, and informative knowledge on how young people critically perceive liberal and conservative ideologies and their impact on politics. Through debates, reviews, and even confrontations with right-wing populism attempting to discipline the female body, researchers skillfully demonstrate the ability to recognize emancipatory/humanistic and retrograde/backward aspects in the sphere of women's rights, which are obscured by the processes of globalization. The works of male and female students are valuable reading through which we can understand biopolitical motivations, the phenomenology of violence against women, gendered violence manifested through the lack of institutional responses to femicide, and the disproportionate valorization of male and female deaths and lives.”

Prof. Nermina Mujagić PhD, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo

“The general conclusion that permeates is that globalization has a strong potential to contribute to greater gender equality through numerous changes on the social, political, and economic levels. However, without a gender perspective and consideration of existing gender differences, as well as the deconstruction of existing gender stereotypes, it is not possible to ensure equal positive outcomes of globalization for men and women and thereby contribute to greater gender equality. The anthology, through an integrated approach, provides new and comprehensive insights into the interdependence of globalization and gender equality. The diverse thematic conclusions of the works and the contemporary content guarantee that this work will serve not only students but also all other stakeholders whose actions can contribute to creating conditions for ensuring positive impacts of globalization on gender, gender equality, and human rights in a broader sense.”

Assoc. Prof. Ana Marija Sikirić Simčić PhD, Faculty of Economics, University of Rijeka



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