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INTERNATIONAL LABOUR LAW. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OF YOUTH AND CHILDREN¹

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Abstract *The evolution of human rights, a process closely linked to human emancipation, is reflected, among other things, in the protection of workers by International Labour Law. In this case, any failure to respect it is also a failure to ensure the protection of human rights. In this paper, the protection of children and young people is the main topic addressed and is analysed from a legal and practical perspective, at international and national level, in the context of the exploitation of their labour. In this regard, when discussing about Labour Law, we must start from the terminological analysis of the term "work", with the development of the law in the late 19th and early 20th century, leading to the analysis of the legal framework. Thus, the exploitation of children at work is closely linked to other challenges that the society to which they belong is facing, such as poverty, high birth rate, poor access to education and health etc., and their exploitation impacts on the development and future of children and youth. Therefore, this paper analyses the main challenges and issues that International Labour Law faces, in the context of the protection of children and young people.*

Keywords: *International Labour Law, transnational labour law, child protection, human rights, child labour exploitation*

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1. Introductory Aspects in International Labour Law

Derived from the Slavic language (monka), the term "work" translates to "suffering" (Popescu, 2022). In Romanian, it has acquired different meanings. On the one hand, it refers to productive activity, and on the other hand, to the result of this activity (what is obtained as a result of the work) (Țiclea, 2013). The concept of work has changed throughout history in response to changes in living conditions, moral and religious norms, education, and traditions. In ancient times, work was often seen as shameful, especially physical labour. However, the Greeks and Romans made a distinction between the work of the lower classes and the activities of the privileged. The renowned figure Hesiod once said, "It is not shameful to work; only laziness is a disgrace" (Gidro, 2013).

With the evolution of humanity, the desire for professional development, the possession of a set of rights, and fair working conditions, we can discuss about the branch of labour law. A comprehensive definition of it would be as follows: "Labour law represents that branch of the Romanian legal system, given by the set of legal norms with a specific character, governing individual or collective labour relations, as well as those related to these relations, arising between the employee and the employing unit during the performance of lucrative activities, based on an individual employment contract or another legal instrument assimilated to it" (Cernat, 2014).

Taken as a whole, International Labour Law does not only encompass adults, individuals with consent, but especially protects young people and children, often representing a vulnerable group subject to exploitation, forced labour, discrimination, etc. The protection of youth and children in labour law has a long history, dating back to the 19th century. In the early 1900s, child labour was common, and many children were forced to work in hazardous and unhealthy conditions (U.S Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2017). In response, various laws were adopted to protect children from exploitation and forced labour and to regulate the conditions under which they could work. Over time, these laws have become stricter and more comprehensive, and today, most countries have laws specifically protecting young people and children from being exploited



or forced to work. Additionally, these laws generally prohibit discrimination against young people and children in the workplace. Other events that influenced the evolution of Labour Law were represented by colonization, with colonial powers of major empires such as Great Britain and France becoming permanent members of the International Labour Law Steering Council. This led, on the one hand, to the adaptation of labour forms to Western practices, such as industrial wage labour, while the agriculture sector, which formed the basis of most colonial economies in Africa, was neglected. On the other hand, contradictions arose in ILO practices, promoting both international labour and human rights standards and workers' rights, as well as the implementation of labour exploitation policies in their colonies (Hepburn, 2022).

In today's world, the legal framework of International Labour Law is shaped, on one hand, by regional and interregional cross-border labour standards; however, some argue that modern conditions also create additional cross-border legislation, while others do not see the possibility of a stronger evolution in this regard (Lushnikov A. et al. , 2016).

2. An analysis of the current legal framework

The legal framework for International Labour Law traces its roots back to the 19th and early 20th centuries when the industrial revolution brought significant changes to the organization and conduct of work (History, 2020). Thus, the idea of regulating children's rights legislation and protecting children evolved with the emergence in 1884 of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), an organization inspired by the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NUSPCC) (Hanson, 2016). At the end of the 19th century in the United States, a separate system of justice was established, namely juvenile courts, protecting children from abuse, violence, exploitation, violation of their fundamental rights, and sometimes even protecting them from their legal guardians, their parents. Obviously, this stage was also met with opposition, with criticisms including the absence of legal guarantees, the interference of state agents in the lives of poor families and children, and the combination of delinquency and neglect (Hanson, 2016).

One key development in the history of International Labour Law was the adoption of the Constitution of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1919, establishing the



fundamental rights of workers to fair and favourable working conditions, as well as the principle of freedom of association, allowing workers to organize and negotiate collectively. This was consolidated through the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, and in 1946, it became the first specialized agency of the United Nations, distinguished by its impressive structure based on the principle of tripartism: representatives of governments, employers' associations, and, last but not least, trade unions (De Stefano, 2021). Another significant stage in the development of International Labour Law was the adoption of the Declaration of Philadelphia in 1944. This declaration, adopted at the International Labour Conference, reaffirmed the principles of the ILO Constitution and added new rights, including the right to fair remuneration, the right to social security, and the right to form and join trade unions.

In addition to the ILO Constitution and the Declaration of Philadelphia, there are several other international conventions, treaties, and legal instruments that address the protection of youth and children in the workplace. These include Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, and Convention No. 182 concerning the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Immediate Action for their Elimination.

At the Council of Europe level, the Revised European Social Charter, through Article 7, establishes a series of provisions regarding the protection of youth and children in the workplace, minimum age of employment, the right to fair remuneration, the right to a suitable working schedule for their development, and more. To date, it has been ratified by 47 member states. At the European Union level, the current regulations include Directive 94/33/EC on the protection of young people at work, amended by Directive 2007/30/EC, establishing a series of rights and protections for young workers in the EU. The Directive defines, for the first time in a European act, the young worker as a person up to 18 years old, the adolescent as a person aged between 15 and 18 years old, and the child as a person under 15 years old. The Directive sets specific rules and regulations regarding the types of work young people are allowed to perform, including restrictions on the number of hours and the work schedule.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the period between childhood and adulthood is seen as an opportunity for these young individuals to acquire essential skills for the future economic efforts of households.



Children are often viewed as a form of insurance for a decent living rather than dependent beings under the care of their parents. In many rural communities in Sub-Saharan Africa, child labour is considered a natural and legitimate practice (Gatsinz & Hilson, 2022). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), in Africa, in 2016, 72,113 children and adolescents were working, with 31,538 individuals working in inappropriate conditions (ILO, 2017).

In Asia, in Vietnam in 2012, the National Child Labour Survey reported that 1.75 million out of 18.3 million children in Vietnam were working, mostly in rural areas and usually starting work at the age of 12 (ILO, 2014). For example, the exploitation of children in gold mines in Uganda poses a significant challenge regarding the violation of fundamental children's rights (Njieassam, 2023). UNICEF reports indicate that approximately 51% of children are forced to work in gold mines, ranging in age from 5 to 17 years old. Despite Uganda having ratified the ILO Convention 138 of 1973, the ILO Convention 182 of 1999, being a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, it still faces various challenges concerning child labour. Regarding India, according to the 2011 census, 10.1 million children aged 5 to 14 were working in India (ILO, 2017). However, starting from 2020, the ILO and UNICEF estimate that 5.8 million children aged 5 to 17 are working in India (UNICEF, 2021). Most working children in India come from rural areas and are due to the size of families, belonging to socially disadvantaged communities, lack of education, and the inability to attend educational institutions (Barsa, 2021). As for the People's Republic of China, it is illegal for both the public and private sectors to employ children under 16, and those who violate this law can be fined 5000 Chinese yuan per month for each child worker by labour protection authorities (as stipulated in the Regulation Prohibiting Child Labour, Article 6) (Tang & Zhao, 2022) (Regulations Banning Child Labour, 2002). However, child labour remains a significant issue in China; in 2010, approximately 7.74% of children aged 10 to 15 were employed. These children worked an average of 6.75 hours per day and had less than 6.42 hours available for study compared to those who did not work (Tang et al, 2018).

According to the ILO, in 2020, it was estimated that approximately 160 million children worldwide were subjected to child labour (ILO, 2020). One in three of these children was in the



Asia-Pacific region, with 70% of them working in the agricultural sector, particularly in large palm oil plantations.

Therefore, Wahab et al., examine how child labour is measured through palm oil production in Malaysia, specifically in Sabah (Wahab et al., 2023). This study reveals that since Malaysia is the second-largest palm oil producer and a major global exporter, the majority of workers are Indonesian and Filipino immigrants. They are allowed to involve their children as unofficial workers. Due to this unofficial status, in addition to the exploitation they face, these children work in unsafe environments without proper equipment, exposing them to risks such as insect bites, snake bites, and exposure to chemicals. In this study, a survey was conducted from January 21, 2019, to January 23, 2020, involving 43 children aged between 12 and 17 from various villages in Sabah. Fifteen of them admitted assisting their parents in palm oil agricultural work for less than 2 hours a day, while 15 of them reported being subjected to work and spending between 7 and 8 hours a day on it, and 13 of them stated that they were not involved in such activities (Wahab et al., 2023). The activities carried out can be analyzed in *Table 1*.



Table 1. Source: Survey example from: Wahab et al., Measuring Child Labour in Oil Palm Production in Sabah, Malaysia – Survey from 21 January 2019 to 23 January 2020

Social lens	Children assisting parents	Working children
Gender		
Male	Collecting loose fruits; slashing; manuring	Slashing; manuring; harvesting; FFB loading; spraying; stacking palm fronds
Female	Collecting loose fruits; bringing and serving food to parents while working	Collecting loose fruits; recording and counting of collected fruits; filling polybags; weeding at nursery; spraying
Age		
12–14 years	Collecting loose fruits; bringing and serving food to parents while working	Collecting loose fruits; recording and counting collected fruits; filling polybags; weeding at nursery
15–17 years	Collecting loose fruits; slashing; manuring	Collecting loose fruits; slashing; manuring; harvesting; FFB loading; spraying; stacking palm frond; spraying
Identity		
Citizen	Collecting loose fruits; bringing and serving food to parents while working;	Collecting loose fruits; recording and counting of collected fruits; filling polybags; weeding at nursery; stacking palm fronds, spraying, slashing; manuring; harvesting; FFB loading; Note: No significant difference between citizen and non-citizen children, according to identity.
Non-citizen (Indonesian)	Collecting loose fruits; slashing; manuring	
Education		
Enrolled in formal education	Collecting loose fruits; bringing and serving food to parents while working; taking care of younger siblings on site, slashing and manuring	Collecting loose fruits; slashing; manuring; harvesting; FFB loading; spraying; stacking palm fronds; recording and counting of collected fruits; filling polybags; weeding at nursery; spraying
Not enrolled in formal education		Note: No significant difference between citizen and non-citizen children, according to education.

In the United Mexican States, child labour is a significant issue, with many children subjected to hazardous work in agriculture and commercial sexual exploitation, and involvement in illegal activities (U.S Department of Labour, 2022). A national survey showed that 3.1 million children in Mexico are employed, not attending school, and some of them perform hazardous work (U.S Department of Labour, 2022). In 2021, the Mexican government made some progress in



addressing the issue by increasing labour inspections and introducing a voluntary reporting system for problems (U.S Department of Labour, 2022).

3. Case Study: N. and V. v. France

On October 10, 2011, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that France violated Article 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits slavery and forced labour, in connection with a case involving two orphaned sisters from Burundi who were subjected to servitude and forced labour by their aunt and uncle (*Affaire C.N. ET V. c. France*, 2012). The Court found that the state did not have sufficient legislative and administrative measures to effectively combat servitude and forced labour. The first sister, CN, was subjected to forced labour, and the failure to comply with the task would have resulted in her being sent back to Burundi. In the case of the second complainant, V., no violation of Article 4 was found. The Court also decided that France had not fulfilled its obligations under Article 4 of the Convention to combat forced labour. The case was brought to the attention of the authorities in 1995, but no action was taken until the sisters fled from their aunt and uncle's home in 1999. The Court found that the authorities did not conduct an effective investigation in this case.

All things considered, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of understanding the situation the two orphaned sisters went through as a serious violation of their human rights and, more importantly, their human dignity, especially considering that forced labour is a severe crime that can have strong effects on the development and future of the victims.

Furthermore, it should be highlighted that from a legal standpoint, authorities need to have and implement effective measures for preventing and combating these crimes, as well as efficient tools for addressing labour rights violations.

In the context of the case of the two sisters, it appears that the authorities did not intervene adequately to protect the two sisters and hold those responsible for violating the victims' rights accountable. However, to prevent the recurrence of such cases, various measures can be taken, such as planning and implementing effective legislative frameworks and public policies to combat forced labour; establishing specialized commissions for data collection, strategy



development, and continuous improvement recommendations; supporting education and awareness campaigns; implementing measures to protect and support victims of forced labour; and, last but not least, collaborating with international organizations to address the issue globally and exchange best practices.

4. Conclusions

Regarding International Labour Law, this work emphasizes its crucial role in safeguarding workers' rights and ensuring fair and decent conditions globally. Among other things, a legal framework establishes aspects such as work standards, conditions, working hours, and remuneration, with violations subject to sanctions. However, the existence of abuses cannot be overlooked, especially in economically weak states where poverty rates and demographics are high, leading to the exploitation of child and youth labour.

Therefore, this work aimed to address the challenge of child and youth labour exploitation, analysing existing legal frameworks from international levels, such as ILO Convention 138 of 1973, the ILO Convention 182 of 1999, to European levels like Directive 2007/30/EC, down to national legal frameworks and specific situations in countries like Malaysia, Vietnam, India, China, and so on. Additionally, this work sought to examine the correlation between the legal framework and the effects of labour on children's development, concluding that their exploitation hinders their development.

Lastly, this work intended to analyse a case study involving two orphaned sisters from Burundi suing France for violating Article 4 of the Human Rights Convention. This case was examined by the European Court of Human Rights but did not lead to concrete solutions or assistance for the two sisters.

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ELEMENTS OF CRITICAL THINKING USED IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESS BY ROMANIAN MEDIA CONSUMERS¹

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Abstract: This paper try to reveal the potential impact of critical thinking skills on Romanian media consumers. Nowadays, individuals are constantly exposed to large amounts of information through media, so it is essential to have the ability to critically evaluate and make informed decisions about the content they consume. This paper aims to explore the relationship between critical thinking skills, media consumption and decision-making processes. The objectives of this paper are to assess perceptions of critical thinking skills among media consumers by determining how they evaluate content . Second, the paper investigates the correlations between critical thinking skills, trust in media and decision-making processes, exploring how these factors are interrelated. Lastly, the research also considers the influence of demographic factors, such as education level, gender and age, on critical thinking skills in the context of media consumption. The results of the research reveal several significant findings. It was found that respondents generally perceive personal critical thinking skills as important in the effective use of media, and those who are in the habit of critically evaluating content are more likely to exhibit this behavior consistently.

Keywords: critical thinking, key skills, media consumers, decision making, cognitive processes.

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1. Introduction

The impact of critical thinking skills on media consumers has become an increasingly relevant and intriguing topic of study in recent years. With the rapid advances in technology and the widespread availability of media content, individuals are constantly bombarded with information from a variety of sources, and they need to acquire the skills to critically evaluate, analyse and interpret this information. This paper aims to deepen the relationship between critical thinking skills and media consumption, exploring the implications and significance of this connection.

The choice to explore the impact of critical thinking skills on media consumers stems from a recognition of the pervasive influence of media in today's society. Media has the power to shape opinions, influence decision-making and shape individuals' perceptions of reality. However, with the rise of fake news, misinformation and media bias, the need for individuals to critically evaluate and navigate the media space has become more urgent than ever.

Benslay et al. (2015) defined critical thinking as the ability to analyze information, evaluate its applicability, accuracy, and reach informed conclusions, with the existing literature providing valuable insights into the relationship between critical thinking skills and media consumption. Numerous studies have explored the cognitive processes involved in media consumption, such as information processing, source evaluation and media literacy. For example, research has highlighted the importance of media literacy in equipping individuals with the skills necessary to critically evaluate media content (Buckingham, 2019; Livingstone, 2020). In addition, studies have examined the influence of various factors, such as education level, gender, and age, on individuals' critical thinking skills in the context of media consumption (Mihaila & Stan, 2018; Vanacker et al., 2021).

However, while previous research has highlighted the general importance of critical thinking skills in media consumption, there is still a need for a deeper understanding of the specific cognitive processes and factors that contribute to effective media use. In addition, the current literature often lacks a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between critical thinking skills, trust in media, and the impact on individuals' decision-making processes. This study aims



to reduce these gaps and contribute in a more detailed way to existing knowledge by examining these issues.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the relationship between critical thinking skills, media consumption and their impact on individuals' decision-making processes. By exploring the cognitive processes involved in critically evaluating media content, this study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the role of critical thinking skills in effective media use. In addition, this research aims to investigate the correlations between critical thinking skills, trust in media, and individuals' decision-making processes, thus highlighting the broader implications of critical thinking in media consumption.

The main objective, already mentioned above, is to investigate the impact of critical thinking skills on media consumers. Through a completely holistic approach, this paper captures various aspects of media consumption, for example the evaluation of individuals' personal critical thinking skills, as well as the assessment of media content, taking into account its accuracy, fairness and truthfulness.

In order to achieve the proposed objectives, an opinion questionnaire was developed and sent to a diverse sample of media consumers in order to collect first of all relevant data on consumers' perceptions in the use of personal critical thinking skills, trust in the media, ability to identify the essence of the news transmitted in the media, etc. The collected data were previously analysed in SPSS software, thus identifying strong correlations confirming or refuting the research hypotheses.

This study provides an insight into the impact of critical thinking skills on media consumers. By analysing data, especially strong correlations based on consumer responses, it explores their perceptions and how they decide to use these skills by thinking and reflecting critically about media content.



2. A theoretical approach to the use of elements of critical thinking in media decision making

2.1 Some relevant defining elements of critical thinking

Critical thinking is a cognitive process in which information is actively analysed, evaluated and synthesised to form reasoned judgements and make decisions. It is a widely recognized and valued skill in a variety of fields, including education, business, and healthcare (Facione, 2015). Critical thinking is not just about having an opinion, it involves a systematic approach to evidence-based thinking and reasoning (Moore & Parker, 2017).

Critical thinking is a sophisticated and complex skill that requires individuals to exercise independent judgment, question assumptions and evaluate sources. Critical thinking, in the words of Ennis (1985), involves "reasonable reflective thinking that is centered on the choice to believe or do". Critical thinking is similarly described by Facione (1990) as "intentional, self-regulating judgement that results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation and inference". The value of critical thinking is significant because it enables people to resolve difficult situations and make wise judgements. Critical thinking skills are essential for success in many facets of life, especially since we live in a fast-paced and complex environment today. This is especially true in professions such as medicine, law, and engineering, where choices can have a big impact (Halpern, 2014). Because it helps people evaluate information and arguments more accurately and explain their thoughts more clearly, critical thinking is also crucial for effective communication (Van Gelder, 2005).

Critical thinking skills can be taught and developed in a variety of ways. Direct instruction in critical thinking is promoted by some researchers, while others argue that inquiry-based learning and problem-based strategies are the best ways to build critical thinking (Ennis R. H., 2011). Regardless of the strategy, research indicates that critical thinking skills can be developed through practice and exposure to a variety of viewpoints and sources of information (Ku et al., 2013). There is a strong correlation between critical thinking skills and success, for example, research by Bissell and Lemons (2006) indicated that in a sample of students, there is indeed a link between critical thinking knowledge, outcomes and academic success. Another study by Ku



et al. (2013) showed a pattern of job performance of health care employees that was favorably related to their critical thinking skills.

Critical thinking is a sophisticated cognitive process that requires active analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information to reach informed conclusions and take action. It is a highly valued skill that is necessary for achievement in many spheres of life. Developing new critical thinking skills requires practice, exposure to many points of view and the use of methodical thinking processes. Over time there will be more and more studies indicating the value of critical thinking as interest in it grows significantly in various fields and situations.

Critical thinking skills refer to a set of cognitive abilities that enable individuals to analyze and evaluate information, identify underlying assumptions and biases, and draw rational and reasoned conclusions (Paul & Elder, 2019). They, according to Facione and Gittens (2016), are necessary for effective communication, collaboration and decision-making in complicated and unpredictable contexts. People with good critical thinking skills are better able to analyse risks, evaluate alternatives and make sound judgements.

According to research, improving critical thinking skills could also boost cognitive growth and academic achievement. According to Abrami et al. (2015), students who received training to develop critical thinking skills scored better academically than those who did not receive training.

Critical thinking skills are necessary for cognitive development, effective communication, and decision-making. Individuals with these skills can successfully analyze, evaluate and interpret information to make informed judgments. In order to build a culture of sound judgment and critical inquiry, critical thinking skills need to be developed through practice, reflection and continuous learning.

A vital skill that is often associated with business or management is certainly critical thinking. However, it has other uses than those mentioned, particularly in the medical field. Technically speaking, the practical skills of critical thinking are strictly reflected in clinical reasoning and decision making among healthcare professionals and is crucial for advancing diagnosis and patient care with accuracy. For example, the 2020 article (Teaching Clinical Reasoning and



Critical Thinking: From Cognitive Theory to Practical Application) by Richards, Hayes, and Schwartzstein provides a perceptive discussion of the real-world uses of critical thinking in clinical reasoning, helping healthcare professionals make wise decisions, solve problems, and make accurate diagnoses. The article (2020) also highlights the use of case-based learning by presenting students with real-life scenarios, forcing them to use their critical thinking skills to identify and diagnose clinical problems.

People who interact with various forms of media, such as television, newspapers, online platforms and social networks, are referred to as media consumers. They actively consume media content of all kinds, such as news, entertainment and advertising, to be informed, entertained and connected to the world around them.

The relationship between media consumers and media is dynamic and present on different levels depending on users' taste, influenced to a large extent by technological factors and critical thinking skills. My dissertation explores this complex interplay between the two, focusing on preferred media consumption patterns, the importance of critical thinking skills, the fairness and accuracy of media sources, offering new insights into the evolution of media consumption and its implications for individuals and society.

Media consumption patterns have undergone significant transformations in recent years, shaped by the proliferation of digital media platforms and changing user preferences. With the emergence of social networks and online streaming services, individuals have gained unprecedented control over their media consumption choices (Sørensen, 2021). Users now have access to a wide range of content tailored to specific interests, resulting in personalised media experiences.

In addition, the rise of mobile devices has facilitated on-the-go media consumption, allowing people to access news, entertainment and social media platforms anytime and anywhere (Kim & Chock, 2021). However, increased flexibility and personalization of media consumption has also given rise to concerns about filter bubbles and echo chambers, where individuals are exposed to information that reinforces their existing beliefs, limiting their exposure to diverse perspectives (Bode & Vraga, 2020).



Social media platforms encourage content generation for users and facilitate real-time information dissemination (Purcell et al., 2019). The freedom to create media content, however, has also given rise to challenges related to misinformation and the spread of fake news (Guess et al., 2019). Media consumers must critically navigate this digital space, relying on critical thinking skills and the ability to discern credible from unreliable sources.

Critical thinking skills are essential for media consumers in evaluating information, identifying biases, and distinguishing credible sources (Pennycook & Rand, 2020). Individuals with strong critical thinking skills are more likely to approach media content with skepticism, seek multiple perspectives, and critically evaluate the authenticity of formulations (Jones & Estes, 2021).

2.2 Critical thinking theoretical concepts and the public sphere

In today's digital age, the media is essential in shaping public opinion and disseminating information. Media consumers are exposed to a diverse range of content from numerous sources, making critical thinking skills essential to properly navigate this rather complicated and complex media landscape. This theory section attempts to identify critical thinking skills and media consumers, examine significant paradigms and theories in the literature, offer contrasting views, and explain previous scholarly research that serves as a reference for the current study.

Critical thinking is the core from which other types of thinking derive (creative thinking, parallel thinking, constructive thinking, etc.), and there are important correlations between them. In a recent study, (Akcaoglu et al., 2023) sought to assess the function of metacognitive awareness as a moderator in the link between self-regulation and critical thinking. These dimensions were found to be highly connected to each other, and metacognitive awareness was found to be a partial mediating variable between self-regulation and critical thinking. It is reasonable to consider that these notions should be taken into account to improve individuals' critical thinking skills. There is a substantial literature on the impact of critical thinking skills on media consumers. Cognitive psychology: this school of thought looks at how people take in information, develop opinions and solve problems. It can be used to examine how media users process and evaluate the information provided to them.



John R. Anderson's (2018) book *Cognitive Psychology and Its Implications* introduces the discipline of cognitive psychology. According to the author, cognition refers to the mental processes that underlie perception, attention, memory, and decision-making. He also discusses the history of cognitive psychology, including the evolution of information processing models and the birth of cognitive neuroscience. The author also elaborates on several key concepts in cognitive psychology, such as the concept of the mind as an information processing system, the significance of examining individual variation, and the function of context in influencing cognitive processes.

Media literacy - this paradigm emphasises the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and generate media material. It can be used to measure consumer understanding and engagement with media messages. In their paper, Renee Hobbs and Paul Mihailidis (2018) stress the importance of establishing media literacy skills that are relevant to the needs and interests of different communities. In their paper, the authors suggest a not-too-distant future in which society will have media literacy as a strategic goal for its citizens, with all the challenges and risks that come with it. At the same time, the authors examine other current and future societal trends and concerns in their paper, such as digital inequality, algorithmic bias and fake news.

The writers stress the importance of a participatory and critical approach to media literacy training. They argue that this should not only teach people how to consume and generate material, but ultimately enable them to participate in civic and social action. The authors point out the potential of media literacy to promote social justice and democratic engagement, urging educators and politicians to invest in media literacy training.

Critical theory - this method seeks to expose and challenge systems of power as well as cultural conventions, providing a critical examination of society with a particular focus on power relations and social inequalities. This theory emerged in the early 20th century in the German school of thought in Frankfurt, Germany, attempting to provide a comprehensive view of society that goes beyond the facades of society and reveals the underlying processes that are defined by domination and exploitation, which proves social connections (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972).



It can be used to investigate how media messages reinforce or undermine existing power structures and ideologies. This theory also stresses the importance of social transformation and advocates the establishment of a more just and equitable society. From the critical theory, a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach emerges to analyse and critique the social, cultural and political institutions that create and sustain injustice and oppression.

Cultivation theory - investigates how media content influences viewers' perception of reality over time. At the same time, this theory can be used to investigate how media consumers' critical thinking skills alter their perception of the material they read. The cultivation theory proposed by George Gerbner in the 1960s argues that people's ideas about reality are changed by their exposure to media. According to this hypothesis, television provides a distorted view of reality, leading viewers to develop ideas and attitudes that are compatible with the content of television shows (Gerbner, 1998). Because they are exposed to more intense images of violence on television, frequent viewers are more likely to see the world as evil and dangerous than casual viewers (Gerbner, 1998; Gerbner et al., 2001). According to this theory, this cultivation effect is cumulative and long-term, because people who watch more television over time are more likely to be convinced of their own fears.

Shah et al's (2020) study investigates the association between exposure to media violence and altruistic actions. Fear of victimization, the authors argue, decreases the likelihood of participating in altruistic activities. This paper defends cultivation theory by demonstrating that exposure to violent media content has a detrimental influence on individuals' charitable actions, and also highlights the need for more research on the complex interactions between media content and human behaviour.

Agenda-setting theory assumes that the media has the power to influence public opinion by selectively highlighting certain issues, thereby setting the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The critical thinking skills of media consumers can play a significant role in analysing and evaluating the information presented, allowing them to question the media agenda and form independent perspectives.



Social cognitive theory emphasises the role of observational learning and cognitive processes in shaping individuals' behaviour (Bandura, 1986). In the context of media consumption, critical thinking skills enable consumers to assess the credibility of sources, evaluate the potential influence of media messages on their beliefs and behaviours, and make informed decisions about the information they encounter.

There are different perspectives on the impact of critical thinking skills on media consumers. Some argue that people with well-developed critical thinking skills are more likely to critically evaluate media content, identify misinformation, and make informed decisions (Pennycook & Rand, 2019). However, others argue that cognitive biases and confirmation biases can impede critical thinking, causing individuals to selectively consume media that aligns with their existing beliefs (Pennycook et al., 2020).

Previous scientific research provides insights into the relationship between critical thinking skills and media consumption. While the results of the present study will contribute to the impact of critical thinking skills on media consumers, it is essential to consider the latest existing research as a reference. For example, a study by Jones and Estes (2021) examined the relationship between critical thinking skills and media literacy among students. The findings revealed a positive correlation between higher levels of critical thinking skills and media literacy, suggesting that individuals with stronger critical thinking skills are more likely to engage in critical analysis of media content.

3. Case study

This section of the theory defined the key concepts of critical thinking skills and media consumers. It examined paradigms and theories such as agenda-setting theory and social cognitive theory, providing a theoretical basis for research. It presented divergent views on the impact of critical thinking skills on media consumers. In addition, previous scientific research findings were discussed, providing valuable reference points for the present study. The following sections of this paper will present the methodology, results and discussion based on the research conducted on the impact of critical thinking skills on media consumers.



3.1. Defining the purpose of the empirical approach and the research questions

The research undertaken in this article aims to explore the impact of critical thinking skills on the decisions made by Romanian media consumers. In particular, the applied research is carried out in the form of a quantitative sociological survey, which investigates how the subjects participating in the survey evaluate media content, using and evaluating their own acquired critical thinking skills.

In order to identify relevant aspects for the qualitative approaches of the applied research, a number of three research questions were defined, focusing on the use of critical thinking skills of the survey participants on the evaluation of the analysed media content.

The research questions proposed in this sociological research are:

Q1. To what extent can media consumers evaluate their personal critical thinking skills?

Q2. What are the main methods used by Romanian media consumers to evaluate content?

Q3. What is the importance given to critical thinking elements and skills in the media content evaluation decision-making process by Romanian media consumers?

3.2 Methodological elements of sociological research

The sociological research undertaken in the application part of this study is quantitative, with the research instrument centred on a questionnaire. The sample that was the basis of the sociological analysis consists of 103 people (both genders, from rural and urban social backgrounds, with different levels of education and training).

The sampling methodology used in the present study was a simple, random, non-probability sampling. The period of the sociological survey was 17.04.2023 -14.05.2023.

For the selected quantitative research method, sociological questionnaire was used as the research instrument, which consists of 27 questions comprising the following thematic categories:



- Socio-demographic profile (age, occupation, residence, etc.);
- Frequency of use of media content and its quality;
- Use of critical thinking in analysing media content;
- Analysis of news centred on criteria of reference data, statistics, legislation, level of credibility;
- Correctness and accuracy of media content;
- Trustworthiness of information transmitted by TV stations and public news websites in Romania;
- Types of information transmitted through social media networks in Romania;
- Typologies of reactions to media content testing beliefs ;
- The role and responsibility of the media in promoting critical thinking skills among media consumers;
- Typologies of critical thinking skills identified among media consumers.

3.2.1 Defining sociological assumptions

For the analysis and interpretation of the sociological survey data, a number of three research hypotheses have been defined, which are proposed to be tested in order to validate or invalidate them:

Hypothesis 1: The greater the habit of critically evaluating media content, the greater the perceived impact of personal critical thinking skills on media content use.

Hypothesis 2: The greater the impact of personal critical thinking skills on the effective use of media content, the more respondents are accustomed to critically evaluate media content.



Hypothesis 3: The greater the inclination in the media to centre information on reference data, (statistics, legislation, etc.), the greater the tendency to analyse information content from more than one information source.

3.3 Analysis and interpretation of statistical survey data

Following the collection, processing and interpretation of the survey data, the following centrally obtained information could be highlighted:

Of the total statistical population participating in the survey, consisting of 103 persons, the "male" gender accounted for 41.7% , while the "female" gender accounted for 58.3%. Regarding the variable "background" of the survey participants, 67% of them were from "urban" backgrounds, while 33% declared that they were from "rural" backgrounds.

In terms of the "age" variable, most of the participants in the survey were young people aged between 18 and 24 (35.9% of them), while 27% were aged between 25 and 34, 25% between 35 and 44, 11% between 45 and 54 and only 2% over 55.

Regarding the variable "level of education", the majority of the survey participants are graduates: 31% of respondents have a bachelor's degree, 39% a master's degree and 5% a doctoral degree.

Regarding the response given by survey participants under the variable "employability", the majority of respondents (41% of the total population surveyed) stated that they are employed full-time, 17% are employed part-time, 32% of participants are students, while others (8%) are not employed.

In the background questions of the questionnaire, consideration was given to identifying the typology of media content used by the survey participants, as well as relating to them with elements of criticism of that content.

In question no. 6 of the questionnaire, regarding the "frequency of consumption of media content" of the survey participants, most respondents (39% of the total survey population analysed) prefer to consume media content a few times a week, 29% of respondents say they consume daily, 27% consume once a week, while only 7% are concerned about media content



rarely in the context of the comparative analysis based on residence environment, it could be seen that the average response rate of subjects in urban areas (2.91) is not significantly higher than the average response rate of those in rural areas (2.82).

In other words, the preference of survey participants to be informed on the basis of media content is high, not significantly differentiated by criteria related to the environment of residence.

When asked specifically in question 7 of the survey "How do you rate the quality of media content?", 71% of respondents answered based on "relevance and accuracy", 68% based on "tone and style of content", 62% based on "source of content", 39% based on "exclusivity of content", 12% based on "how readable and commented on the content", and the remaining 1% focusing on "objectivity, credibility of source, whether ethical standards are met, whether the source is trustworthy, ethics of the material". It is interesting to note here that "relevance and accuracy" as well as "tone and content" of the information are considered very important by the survey participants, but only in the context of the validity of the "source of the content".

Following on from the relevance of critical thinking to one's own decision making, question 8 of the survey asked respondents "How important do you think critical thinking is when using media content?". Analysing the responses recorded, it emerged that only 35.5% of respondents rated critical thinking as very important in their decision-making process when analysing media content, while 54.4% of respondents rated this characteristic as moderately important to them.

Survey participants broadly appreciate the role and usefulness of critical thinking in analysing media content, but most give it a moderate importance rather than a very important one.

Analysing the mean response values by area of residence, respondents in urban areas (mean response = 3.49) place greater importance on critical thinking than those in rural areas (mean response = 3.24). However, the difference between the mean responses is not sociologically significant.

When survey participants were asked to self-assess their personal critical thinking skills when using media content in question 9 "How would you rate your personal critical thinking skills when using media content?", they were asked to rate their own critical thinking skills. ", an



analysis of the recorded responses concluded that the majority of respondents (representing 97% of the total survey population) rated their critical thinking skills when using media content as "very good" (59%) or "moderate" (37%). This indicates that a significant proportion of respondents have a strongly positive perception of their critical thinking skills when interacting with media. In terms of the 'profile wings' of the statistical data distribution, only a smaller percentage of the survey population (3% of respondents) rated their critical thinking skills as 'excellent', while only 1% of respondents rated their critical thinking skills as 'poor'.

Overall, the majority of respondents perceive their critical thinking skills in using media content as 'very good' or 'moderate', suggesting a relatively positive assessment of their skills in this area. Only a minority of respondents have a very favourable view of their own critical thinking skills in the context of media use. Another interesting perspective of the study undertaken in this article is testing the perceived importance of survey participants' perceptions of the impact of critical thinking on media content evaluation. Thus, in survey question 10 "How do you perceive the impact of personal critical thinking skills on the effective use of media content?", based on the analysis of the survey data, it was found that 53.4% of respondents believe that critical thinking skills have a "significant impact" on the effective use of media content. This suggests that a substantial proportion of participants recognise the importance of critical thinking skills in evaluating and engaging with media content in a meaningful way. A significant proportion of respondents, representing 41.7%, believe that critical thinking skills have a "moderate impact" on the effective use of media content. This indicates that a considerable number of participants recognise the relevance of critical thinking skills, but may not attribute as much weight to their influence as those in the 'significant impact' category. A small percentage of respondents, 2.9% and 1.9% respectively, consider critical thinking skills to have a 'slight impact' and a 'highly significant impact' on the effective use of media content. Another area explored in this study was the "habit of critically evaluating media content" in the current decision-making process of survey participants.

Thus, in survey question 12 "How used are you in general to critically evaluating the media content you use?", the majority of respondents (52.4%) stated that they are very used to critically evaluating media content. A significant proportion (38.8%) indicated that they are somewhat



accustomed to critically evaluating media content as usual. A smaller percentage considered it unusual (4.9%) or extremely common (3.9%) to critically evaluate media content.

A first correlation analyzed is the one identified at the level of questions 10. and 11. It is about the correlation between the perception of the impact of using critical thinking skills on effective media use and the level using the critical thinking tools for media consume. The data are presented in Fig. 1:

Fig 1. Correlation relationship between the impact of personal critical thinking skills on effective media use and critical evaluation of media content used.

			10. How do you perceive the impact of personal critical thinking skills on effective media use?	11. How often are you generally using the critical thinking tools for media consume?
Spearman's rho	10. How do you perceive the impact of personal critical thinking skills on effective media use?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.667**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	103	103
	11. How often are you generally using the critical thinking tools for media consume?	Correlation Coefficient	.667**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	103	103
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

The correlation between the perceived impact of personal critical thinking skills on the effective use of media content and the habit of critically evaluating the media content used is 0.667**. This indicates a positive correlation between the perceived impact of personal critical thinking skills and the habit of critically evaluating the media content used. A correlation coefficient of 0.667** suggests a strong positive relationship.

This strong positive correlation suggests a strong and direct relationship between personal critical thinking skills, effective use of media content and the habit of critically evaluating media content. This implies that individuals who perceive their personal critical thinking skills as impactful are more likely to use media content effectively, and those who routinely critically evaluate media



content are more likely to perceive the impact of personal critical thinking skills on effective media use.

A second set of correlation relationships studied within the present analysis of statistical data is centered on the confidence that subjects have about the information provided by the main public news websites and social media in Romania. Also, in the correlation panel there are envisaged the way how the media industry values the critical thinking skills of their employees, as it could be observed in Fig.2:

Fig. 2 Various types of correlations centred on confidence in the information conveyed and appreciation of critical thinking skills

		20. How much confidence do you have in the information provided by the main public news websites in Romania?	21. How much trust do you have in information transmitted via social media in Romania?	22. How much do you think the media industry values the critical thinking skills of their employees?
20. How much confidence do you have in the information provided by the main public news websites in Romania?	Pearson Correlation	1	.628**	.500**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	103	103	103
21. How much trust do you have in information transmitted via social media in Romania?	Pearson Correlation	.628**	1	.523**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	103	103	103
22. How much do you think the media industry values the critical thinking skills of their employees?	Pearson Correlation	.500**	.523**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	103	103	103
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				



The results suggest that respondents in Romania generally have a moderate to high level of trust in the information provided by public news websites. Trust levels vary by education, gender and location. In addition, there are positive correlations between trust in public news sites and trust in TV stations, social media networks and the perceived value of critical thinking skills in the media industry.

Recall that the main objective of the paper was to explore the impact of critical thinking skills on media consumers and how individuals evaluate content. In guiding the research, the three hypotheses were proposed. Hypothesis 1 suggested the following: the more individuals typically evaluate media content critically, the more they perceive the impact of their personal critical thinking skills on media use. This hypothesis assumes a positive relationship between frequency of critical evaluation and recognition of the influence of personal critical thinking skills on media consumption. Hypothesis 2 refers to the stronger the impact of personal critical thinking skills on effective media use, the more likely respondents are to engage in critical evaluation of media content.

This hypothesis assumes a positive relationship between the effectiveness of critical thinking skills in media use and the inclination to critically evaluate media content. Hypothesis 3 proposes that as the media tends to focus on reference data, such as statistics and legislation, the tendency to analyse information content from multiple sources also changes. This hypothesis assumes that media users adapt their analytical approach when media sources rely primarily on reference data.

From the analysis of the survey data in correlations between several variables related to trust in the information conveyed by TV stations, public news sites and social media networks in Romania, as well as the perceived value of critical thinking skills in the media industry. Significance levels indicate the strength and reliability of the observed correlations. Doing a very brief micro-analysis, we observe that the correlation data and implications for the research objectives and hypotheses are confirmed:

Trust in national TV stations and trust in public news websites

- The correlation coefficient is 0.749**;



- Significance level is $p < 0.01$;

1. Trust in public news websites and trust in social networks

- Correlation coefficient is 0.628^{**} ;

- Level of significance is $p < 0.01$;

2. Trust in public news sites, trust in social media networks and perceived value of critical thinking skills in the media industry

- The correlation between trust in public news sites and perceived value of critical thinking skills is 0.500^{**} ;

- The correlation between trust in social media networks and perceived value of critical thinking skills is 0.523^{**} ;

- Significance level is $p < 0.01$.

The data demonstrates the relationship between trust in different media sources such as TV stations, public news sites and social media networks. There is a significant positive correlation between trust in TV stations with national coverage and trust in public news sites. It is also indicated that people who trust public news sites also tend to trust information delivered via social media.

The data support Hypothesis 1, which proposes that the habit of critically evaluating media content is related to the perceived impact of personal critical thinking skills on media use. The strong positive correlation between trust in media sources indicates that people who trust media content are more likely to perceive the influence of their critical thinking skills on media use.

Also from the analysis of sociological survey data, hypothesis 2 is confirmed, which suggests that the impact of personal critical thinking skills on effective media use is related to the propensity to critically evaluate content. Positive correlations between trust in media sources and perceived value of critical thinking skills indicate that individuals who trust media content are more likely to value critical thinking skills.



The survey data analysed also confirms Hypothesis 3, which focuses on the tendency to analyse information content from multiple sources using critical thinking skills (which provide relevant insights into trust in different media sources). Significant positive correlations between trust in public news sites and social media networks suggest that individuals may adapt their analytical approach based on trust in different media sources.

Overall, the sociological survey data analyzed through the SPSS framework supports the research objectives by demonstrating relationships based on trust in different media sources.

4. Conclusion and recommendation

In conclusion, the sociological research undertaken in this article has examined the impact of critical thinking skills on media consumers, seeking to answer some relevant (related) research questions. For example, the extent to which critical thinking skills influence consumers' performance in identifying and resisting manipulation of media content, or how these same skills help consumers to discern the accuracy and credibility of sources, has been examined. Through analysis of responses from both male and female participants, it was found that critical thinking is considered moderately or very important when using media. The majority of respondents perceived their critical thinking skills when using media as 'very good' or 'moderate', indicating an overall positive assessment in this area.

One noteworthy finding is that respondents living in rural areas tended to have slightly higher mean scores for personal critical thinking skills when using media content than those in urban areas. This suggests that individuals from rural backgrounds may exhibit a slightly stronger inclination towards critical thinking in the context of media consumption. In addition, participants with a high school education were found to have higher scores for personal critical thinking skills compared to those with higher education.

The overall perception of personal critical thinking skills among respondents was positive, with a significant proportion rating their skills as 'Very good'. This finding suggests that media users are generally confident in their ability to think critically while using media. In addition, the data



indicate that personal critical thinking skills have a significant impact on effective media use, with higher education, female and younger age groups perceiving this impact more strongly.

From the strong correlations presented, the first hypothesis is confirmed, the more the habit of critically evaluating media content, the greater the perceived impact of personal critical thinking skills on media content use.

Furthermore, the research identified positive correlations between the appreciation of fact-based information and the goal of identifying the essence of news. This suggests that people who value factual facts, statistics, law, and credibility in the media are more likely to engage in multi-source content analysis. It was also found that individuals generally have a moderate level of willingness to analyze information content from multiple sources. Factors such as level of education and appreciation of reference data, statistics, legislation and media credibility positively influence this behaviour. In addition, a positive correlation was observed between the goal of identifying the essence of news and the willingness to analyse information from multiple sources. These data actually confirm hypotheses two and three of the paper.

Further, the study revealed a strong positive correlation between trust in the information provided by TV stations with national coverage and trust in the information provided by the main public news websites in Romania. Respondents generally demonstrated moderate to high levels of trust in information on public news websites, with levels varying by education, gender and location. In addition, positive correlations were found between trust in public news sites and trust in TV stations, social media networks and the perceived value of critical thinking skills in the media industry.

While these findings provide valuable insights into the impact of critical thinking skills on media consumers, it is important to recognize the limitations of the research. The study focused on a specific population in Romania and may not be fully representative of other contexts or cultures. Future research should aim to overcome these limitations by conducting cross-cultural studies and using objective measures of critical thinking skills and media consumption behaviours.



Following the findings of the study, some recommendations for future research on this topic can be made. First, further investigations could explore specific cognitive processes involved in critical thinking during media consumption, such as evaluating information, source checking, and bias identification. Furthermore, comparative studies from different countries and cultures would provide a broader understanding of the impact of critical thinking skills on media consumers around the world.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the existing literature by bringing out the importance of critical thinking skills in the context of media consumption. Findings suggest that individuals who possess strong critical thinking skills are more likely to engage in the habit of critically evaluating media content and exhibit higher levels of trust in information from various sources. The results also highlight the role of education, gender and age in influencing perceptions of personal critical thinking skills and their impact on effective media use. Recognising these factors and their correlations, policy makers and teachers can develop interventions to improve critical thinking skills among media consumers, thereby promoting quality and responsible media content in an increasingly information-saturated society.

In drawing a broad conclusion about the relationship between trust in media sources, critical thinking skills and consumption, the data demonstrate significant positive correlations between trust in national TV stations, trust in public news sites and trust in social media networks. These correlations indicate that people who trust one media source are more likely to trust others. In addition, the data support the hypotheses that the habit of critically evaluating media content and the impact of personal critical thinking skills on effective media use are positively associated with trust in media sources. Individuals who trust media content are more likely to perceive the influence of their critical thinking skills on media use and value the importance of critical thinking skills. Indirectly it shows that individuals can adapt their analytical approach based on their trust in various media platforms. The findings clearly highlight the importance of trust in media sources, the role of critical thinking skills in evaluating content and their impact on media consumption.



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A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE ON THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS - EQUAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN¹

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Abstract: *The present paper aims to analyse the right to participate in public affairs from a human rights perspective, a right that paves the way for other human rights, with a focus on women's participation, at EU level, in the context of ensuring gender equality and non-discrimination. This article is qualitative research, starting from the documentary and legislative analysis of this right, as it is perceived at the level of international organizations, going up to a comparative approach of statistical data on women's participation in political life in the European Union, in the last legislature (2019-2024), with a focus on the situation in Romania. The question of the article is whether the right to participate in public affairs, an essential human right, manages to contribute to the exercise of other human rights, such as freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly, the right to equality and non-discrimination etc., influencing them and guaranteeing their effective contribution to ensuring democracy and the rule of law in the European Union. It is concluded that the protection, respect and implementation of the right to participate in public affair and other related rights, which are mutually reinforcing, ultimately succeed in achieving this result, even if there are still challenges to be faced, continuing to be as current the need to strengthen confidence in participation in political life and public affairs.*

Keywords: *the right to participate in public affairs, human rights, gender equality, European Union, women political participation.*

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1. Introduction

Respecting and promoting human rights as widely as possible is a priority both for Romania and for the international community (international, regional or continental organizations, states, etc.), becoming a certainty that, only in this way, the challenges (peace and security, economic and social development, etc.), which contemporary society faces, can identify appropriate solutions that benefit everyone. If we refer to the fact that in a political regime established on the principle of rule of law, democratic values and principles are regulated in a rigorous legal framework, aligned with international treaties and conventions, it can be stated that human dignity, the rights and freedoms of citizens, equality and political pluralism represent some of the ultimate values, being duly guaranteed (Raiu, 2021, pp. 116-117).

To begin with, it must be emphasized that according to the UN (2022, p.15), participation represents "a right that paves the way for the realization of all human rights", consequently, it's imperative to make sure "legal recognition of the right to participate in public affairs and of related rights", considering that "the mere formal legal recognition of the right to participate in public affairs is, however, insufficient for people to exercise this right and enjoy it". It is up to states to implement legal obligations and political commitments (Raiu, 2021, p. 96), and "decision-making processes that affect people's lives should be guided by international human rights law and ensure transparency, access to information and participation at local, national and international" UN (2022, p.15).

The right to participate in public affairs has raised a number of challenges over time, especially in terms of its implementation, in order to ensure equal political participation in political and public affairs. Participation in public life is relevant at the local, regional, national and international levels, and within international organizations (UN, 2015, p.10), the focus has been constantly placed on ensuring and promoting this right, the benefits offered by participation processes public being obvious, adding to them "an improved quality of political and legislative decisions that reflect real needs", experience, expertise, an increased potential "and, finally, an increased trust of the public in state institutions". Thus, perhaps one of the most followed processes that highlight participation in political life and public affairs is found at the level of the European Union and



consists in the manner in which the citizens of the EU member states directly elect their representatives in the European Parliament, complemented by the monitoring at the national level of the compliance and implementation of the legislation on gender equality in the EU, which attracts the same benchmarks at the level of the member states. About this aspect, we will make more clarifications in the second part of this article, considering the fact that through its treaties (Lisbon, in particular), the European Union guarantees the right of every citizen to take part "in the democratic life of the Union".

2. International legal framework (United Nations, Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, European Union)

Starting from the fact that there are states that enshrine, in their own national law (Constitution, national legislation, etc.), principles and rights that guarantee the proper execution of the right to participate in public affairs, in the following we will exhaustively analyze some of international regulations, with reference to the UN, the Council of Europe (with small references to the OSCE) and the European Union.

.Article 21 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights - "a milestone document in the history of human rights" stipulates on the entitlement to political and public participation that "everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. [...] The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; [...]". In this context, Morsink (1999) appreciates that the drafting of this article represents "a revolution within a revolution", and it is considered that "the rights of the individual are equal and inalienable in relation to his state", establishing that "the authority of the government must be based on the will of the people" and on "a system of democratic participation with equal political rights for every citizen". We are therefore discussing the citizen, since the individual can only enjoy political rights as a citizen of a state, political rights of "citizens, as members of a certain political community", their rights - political rights and civil liberties, which, together with article 2 of the Declaration, regarding the prohibition of discrimination based on political opinion, mark the implicit need for a multiparty system. According to Hurst Hannum (1995) "despite the arguments of some that a "right to democracy" may be emerging as a norm of international



customary law, it is apparent that many states have not accepted article 21's guarantee of the right to participate in the political life of one's country".

UN (2015, p. 3) appreciates that "participation is a distinctive sign of democracy", that it legitimizes the exercise of state power, and to respond to the challenges, "examples of good practices and experiences" are needed, which they offer, of otherwise, also formulating recommendations. This right is considered to be "a prerequisite of democracy", insufficient however, which requires processes from which it follows that society has a say in establishing the decision-making process (UN, 2013, p.7). As seen from the standpoint of the human rights approach, it is also important to remember the UN Report (2014) on the factors that prevent equal political participation and ways to overcome these challenges, which examines "the human rights framework and the jurisprudence of the UN human rights mechanisms in related to participation in public affairs".

Next, as a legal framework there is also article 25 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that stipulates that every citizen will have the following rights and opportunities, lacking any of the restrictions or differentiations outlined in article 2:

"(a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country."

Compared to other civil and political rights, exercising one's right to take part in public affairs can be analyzed by observing how well social, economic, and cultural rights are upheld and safeguarded (Raiu, Mina-Raiu, 2022). This article, the content of which can be visibly structured into two delimited parts (one detailing the right to vote - granting and exercising it, as well as some details regarding the organization of elections, including the right to participate in public affairs, and another which concerns ensuring equality in accessing the public service), comes to regulate, recognize and protect each citizen's right to vote, to participate in the administration of public affairs, and to have access to the public service, imposing on the states the adoption of



legislative measures in order to effectively ensure these rights to citizens. It is about individual rights, granted to every citizen, regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, politics or others, the eventual conditioning of the exercise of these rights being subject to objective and reasonable criteria (UN, 1996). As for "the management of public affairs, referred to in letter (a), it is a broad concept that refers to the exercise of political power, especially the exercise of legislative, executive and administrative powers. It covers all aspects of public administration, as well as policy formulation and implementation at international, national, regional and local levels. The allocation of powers and the means by which individual citizens exercise their right to participate in the conduct of public affairs protected by Article 25 should be determined by the constitution and other laws" (UN, 1996). As a result, direct participation in the management of public affairs is achieved when they exercise power as members of legislative bodies or hold executive positions, "when they elect or change their constitution or decide public issues, or when they participate in the management of public affairs through freely elected representatives" (UN, 1996).

Paragraph 1 of Article 25 of the ICCPR emphasizes the significance of nondiscriminatory behavior in relation to the right to participate in public affairs, which implies on the part of the state the fulfillment of the condition to refrain from discrimination, to prevent and to take measures for the full participation of citizens, to proactively encourage this participation.

Article 25 lays out particular guidelines for citizens' participation in public affairs management as candidates or voters, with the obligation of states to take the necessary measures in order to utilize one's right to vote, with respect for freedom of expression, assembly and association, including freedom of choice and the right to stand for election.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women's Articles 7 and 8 specifies that all the necessary measures will be picked up by the states party to the Convention, in order to eliminate discrimination against women in both, political and public life of the country, but above all, to ensure them equal conditions with men, including representing their country's government internationally and participating in the activities of international organizations. Thus, the Convention states in letter a) that they have the right to vote in all public



elections and referendums and to be elected in all publicly eligible bodies; b) the right to participate in the development of state policy and its implementation, to hold public positions and exercise all public functions at all echelons of government; c) the right to take part in groups and non-governmental organizations that are involved in the nation's public and political life.

Article 5(c) of International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination declare that in line with the essential duties outlined in the article "States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of the following rights: [...] Political rights, in particular the right to participate in elections - to vote and to stand for election - on the basis of universal and equal suffrage, to take part in the Government as well as in the conduct of public affairs at any level and to have equal access to public service".

Article 29 of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) regards participation in public affairs for all disabled individuals who have this right too.

The right to participate in public affairs is closely related to the complete fulfillment of the right to access information, which implies for states to pursue its guarantee and effective application, including in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development emphasizing this.

Regarding the restrictions on the right to participate in public affairs, it is appreciated that "although they are allowed, they must be objective, reasonable, non-discriminatory and provided for by law" (UN, 1999, p.6). Therefore, limitations must be regarded as exceptional, be necessary and proportionate (UN, 1999, p.6). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the measures taken (sometimes disproportionate) also affected full, equal and significant participation in public affairs, and in the "lack of predetermined, inclusive and significant participatory mechanisms" (UN, 1999, p.6), made it even more difficult to "participate, especially for women, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, people living in poverty, minorities and other marginalized groups"(UN, 1999, p.6).



In addition to the regulatory framework provided by the UN, considering the circumstances provided by the Council of Europe, the ECHR's articles 10 and 11 regarding freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association also have an impact on the right to participate in public affairs, as well as Protocol No. 1 of the ECHR, Article 3, that imposes the obligation "to organize, at reasonable intervals, free elections with secret ballot, under conditions that ensure the free expression of the people's opinion regarding the election of the legislative body". According to the ECHR (2018), this article involves subjective rights (the right to vote - "active" aspect; and the right to run for elections - "passive" aspect), and the content "differs from the other provisions of the Convention and its protocols in that it guarantees certain rights in the sense that they oblige the member states to organize elections under conditions that ensure the free expression of the people's opinion, not a certain right or a certain freedom". At the same time, to these are added a series of regulations that concern certain categories (e.g. persons with disabilities, national minorities, women, etc.) as well as Article E (non-discrimination) of the European Social Charter. Regarding the above-mentioned categories, specifically national minorities, people with disabilities and women, it should also be mentioned that at the level of the Organization for Security and European Cooperation, various documents (OSCE) have been adopted regarding the right to participate.

Finally, arriving at the level of the European Union, where under the section "Provisions on democratic principles" of the Lisbon Treaty (art. 9-11) it is mentioned that The European Union upholds the principle of citizen equality, that the principles of representative democracy, citizens' direct representation in the European Parliament, and everyone's right to take part in the EU's democratic life form the foundation of the EU's functioning, thereby including the right to take part in public affairs, where choices are made as transparently and as near to the citizen as possible. As stipulated in Article 6, the European Union acknowledges the freedoms, rights, and principles outlined in the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights. Additionally, the EU recognizes fundamental rights, which form the cornerstone of EU law and are protected by the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as fundamental freedoms, Convention to which the EU proposed to accede. Articles 39 and 40 of the Charter concern the right to vote and to be elected in the European Parliament and the right to vote and to be elected in local elections, from



their content it emerges that under the same circumstances as state citizen, "any citizen of the Union has the right to vote and be elected in the elections for the European Parliament, in the Member State in which he resides", by direct, free and secret universal suffrage or to vote and be elected in the local elections in the Member State where he resides.

3. Participation in public affairs – women's participation

Elections represent the most common and efficient way of citizens' participation in public affairs, which is why there is a need for priority regulation of the right to vote and electoral rights and, in parallel, a strong legal foundation for its implementation. In this regard, the features of election systems have a major impact on participation in public affairs, the facilitation of participation being among the goals that each state pursues, through alternative voting methods, based on a solid legal basis.

Political will is one of the fundamental factors that contribute to "the creation of a favorable environment that encourages participation" (UN, 2022, p.15), for the most effective and visible results, this will need "to be accompanied by openness, inclusion, transparency and accountability on the part of public authorities" (UN, 2022, p.15), including recognition of the legitimate and vital role of civil society.

Of course, an increasingly important role in ensuring the exercise of this right is played by information and communication technologies (ICT), which offer new "tools for participation, which expand the space for civic engagement and have the potential to promote more responsible and more responsible" (UN, 2018, p. 11), encouraging the promotion of a "greater and more diversified participation of civil society actors at the international level" (UN, 2018, p.11), an aspect highlighted especially during the COVID- 19. As a result of COVID-19 pandemic, "restrictions were imposed on rights, such as the rights to freedom of movement, freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, which need to be guaranteed for the exercise of the right to participate in public affairs. Often, the restrictions imposed did not meet the requirements of necessity and proportionality (Raiu, 2022), had a negative impact on the enjoyment of the right to participate in public affairs, shrank the civic space and had additional gender-specific impacts, especially on women and girls"(UN, 2021, p. 7).



Gender equality (Moroianu Zlătescu & Marinică, 2020, pp.61-67), a fundamental value of the European Union, governed by Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union ("... the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women"), encourages the promotion of gender equality, including "achieving an equal Europe between women and men where gender-based violence, sexual discrimination and structural inequality between women and men are a thing of the past" (EU Strategy on gender equality).

Part of this discussion may also be equal participation in society and its leadership, the participation of women in political and public affairs, on which "states reported that they encouraged political parties to adopt effective measures to ensure that women are placed in the first positions on candidate lists, so that they have a better chance of being elected, as well as being fully represented in leadership positions in party structures" (UN, 2015, p. 17). Gender equality cannot be fully ensured if the right of women to participate in public affairs under equal conditions with men is not taken into account, so states must take concrete measures in this regard. Therefore, the greater the share of women in the decision-making process, the more the hypothesis of the adoption and implementation of legislation that promotes gender equality increases. Women's equal participation in political and public life are essential also to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, until now women are underrepresented worldwide.

A democratic governance cannot be implemented without ensuring the participation of women in the decision-making process (Raiu, Mina-Raiu, 2023); despite this aspect, the minority presence of women continues to be found in decision-making processes, which confirms the lack of equal representation in positions of power and leadership. Promoting the full and equal participation of women in decision-making and leadership positions, from local to national level, also contributes to the need to ensure quotas or various other measures whose role is to balance the proportion between the sexes and reduce gender discrimination, for a better future.

The existence of quotas, their regulation and role, highlight the importance of this instrument in supporting and increasing women's participation, an instrument that can only prove to be effective if its application is also concrete, in the sense that the simple provision of quotas, but in ineligible positions, causes the regulation to remain without the intended effect. It is essential to



make greater and more consistent efforts for equal representation and participation of women in decision-making, by understanding the political, social and cultural factors that influence and determine women's resistance to participating in public affairs. As an example, in Romania, it is aimed that 30% of the candidates must be women, there are legislative proposals regarding the establishment of a representation quota of at least 30% in local/parliamentary elections, with or without the conditioning of their eligible position or not on lists. A possible lack of eligibility could be confirmed by the small number of women on the lists, who reach the Parliament, in Romania being registered a percentage of 18% female presence in the Parliament, out of a total of 466 senators and deputies, only 88 they are women. Compared to the other states in the European Union, Romania is at the bottom of the ranking, compared to Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Belgium.

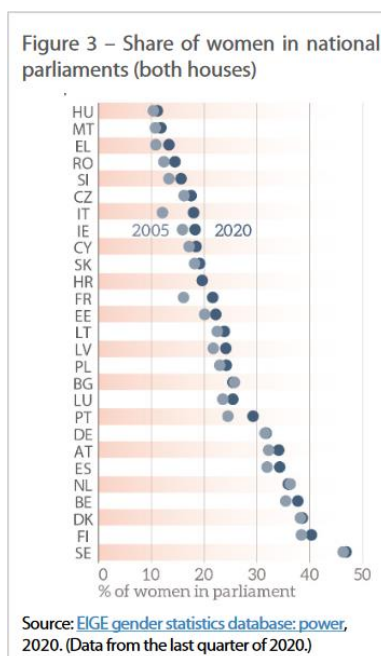
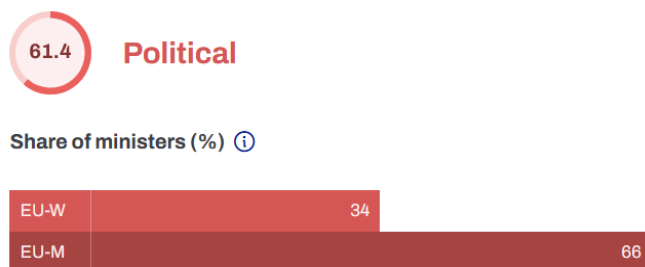


Fig.1: The presence of women in national parliaments (source: Shreeves & Boland, 2021, p.3)

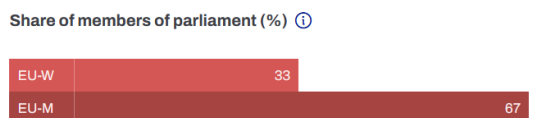
When it comes to the European Union, statistics confirm that women are still underrepresented in the political decision-making process, the gender gap being visible, in the graphs below you can find the proportions offered through the Index created by the European Institute for Gender Equality between the representation at the level of the European Union of women in the political field compared to Romania (the last graph), at the level of 2023.



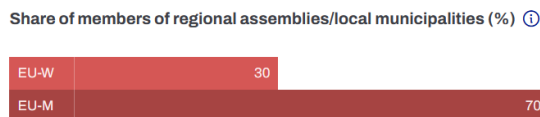
Fig.2: The presence of women at the level of central public administration (ministries) in the member states (source: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/domain/power>)



Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID, 2nd quarter 2023. EIGE's calculation.



Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID, 2nd quarter 2023. EIGE's calculation.



Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID, 2023. BG, EE, IE, CY, LT, LU, MT, SI: Local municipalities, 2022. EIGE's calculation.

Fig.3: The presence of women at the level of national parliaments and local public administration in the member states (source: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/domain/power>)



Fig.4: The presence of women in the field of political decision-making in the European Union and Romania (source: Comparing Power / Political scores in 2023: EU level and Romania available at <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/domain/power>)

At the European Parliament level, for the 2019-2024 legislature, the percentage of men and women is 39.3%, the representation of Romania is weak, at the bottom of the ranking (5 women/28 men, out of a total number of 33 mandates), alongside countries such as Slovakia (3 women/11 men, out of a total of 14 mandates) and Greece (5 women/16 men, out of a total of 21



mandates), as a whole, at the opposite pole being Sweden (12 women/9 men, out of a total of 21 mandates), Slovenia (4 women/4 men, out of a total of 8 mandates), France (39 women/40 men, out of -a total of 79 mandates) with women representing less than a quarter of MEPs, which demonstrates that there is still a large gender gap.

Following an analysis carried out for the year 2014, it was discovered that "women had been popular with the electorate and, where voters could express a preference for individual candidates, they appeared more likely to select women. In countries with a low proportion of female Members elected to the European Parliament, one key reason was the low share of women in the candidate base" (Shreeves & Boland, 2021, p.3). These appreciations, we believe, also hold for the current state of women's presence in the sphere of participation in political life.

4. Conclusions

The right to participate in public affairs is an essential human right and, at the same time, an "instrument of exercising other human rights" (UN) protected also at international and national level (e.g. freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly, the right to equality and non-discrimination, etc.), which continues to face a series of challenges determined both by the evolution of society and by some "unreasonable and discriminatory restrictions, whether they are based on race, color, sex, disability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, wealth, birth or other status"(UN) and which "illegitimately limits the exercise of this right"(UN).

The challenges this right faces (e.g. "insufficient political will to allow full public participation, legal or practical measures to discourage participation and limit the democratic space" (UN), discrimination, etc.) make that for its exercise special attention is paid to transparency, access to information, equal access to the public service and openness to the element of novelty, induced by the current new forms of participation, "such as citizens' initiatives and electronic government, as well as through the use of information and communication technologies" (UN).

Ensuring gender equality improves the government function, the executive power becomes more responsive and responsible towards the public interest, and the public administration is inclusive



and responsible, so that policies need to be gender-responsive and recognize women's right to be decision makers.

Following the events of recent years (the COVID-19 pandemic), it can be appreciated that there is a need to strengthen confidence in participation in political life and public affairs by strengthening the rule of law, creating a favorable environment for improved responses to these challenges, to ensure effective participation in public affairs, efficient judicial systems, ensuring access to justice and strengthening the role of civil society. We appreciate that, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the representation and equal participation of women in the decision-making process, decisions regarding responses to COVID-19, is fundamental to meeting the needs and demands of society.

Concluding, throughout this article, some clarifications have been provided regarding some essential aspects regarding the regulation of the right to participate in public affairs, its correlation with other human rights, how its content can be interpreted, reported to non-discrimination, insisting on women's participation in political life in the European Union, but also on the need to adopt and encourage new forms of participation in the democratic life of society.

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Does the taxation of motor vehicles work? Evidence from Eastern European Countries¹

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Abstract: *Taxation represents a unique opportunity for governments to solve multiple problems, economic, social, or environmental. Motor vehicle taxation intends to solve all those problems by incentivizing the taxpayers to make the best decisions for the environment and to use the collected funds to implement multiple policies to solve its intended purpose. Eastern Europe is a special case study because it falls behind compared to Western countries in terms of greenhouse gases and the average state of their motor vehicles.*

Keywords: *taxation, public policy,*

JEL CODE: D04, H71, H83

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1. Introduction

Motor vehicle taxation stands at the intersection of economic policies, environmental sustainability, and public finance strategies, influencing and reflecting the complex dynamics of nations. In Eastern European Countries, where economic transitions and unique policy landscapes prevail, the effectiveness of motor vehicle taxation becomes a critical area of exploration. This study aims to analyze the impact of such taxation policies, offering evidence-based insights into their economic, environmental, and social consequences.

The significance of motor vehicle taxation extends beyond revenue generation, intertwining with concerns related to environmental sustainability, urban planning, and public health. Understanding the nuanced relationship between taxation policies and their intended outcomes is essential, particularly in the distinctive socio-economic and geopolitical context of Eastern European Countries.

The primary objective of this research is to assess the impact and effectiveness of motor vehicle taxation in Eastern European Countries. Through empirical analysis and case studies, the study seeks to discern patterns, variations, and potential areas for improvement within existing taxation policies.

In the European Union, policymakers have come up with new solutions to maintain air quality at normal levels. A significant factor in air quality is road transportation, so, the policymakers have to come up with strategies so the motor vehicles that are being used pollute as little as possible.

The subsequent chapters will unfold the intricacies of motor vehicle taxation policies in Europe and delve into case studies from Eastern European Countries. Through this investigation, we strive to contribute valuable insights that can inform policy decisions and foster sustainable development in the region.

2. Public policy in the European Union

Public policy in the European Union (EU) constitutes a comprehensive approach aimed at addressing a myriad of problematic situations. The EU's policymaking endeavors encompass a



spectrum of challenges, incorporating socio-economic, environmental, and other dimensions. The collaborative nature of EU institutions, as outlined by Peterson and Shackleton (2012), facilitates a holistic response to issues that span national borders. Policies are designed not only to foster economic growth but also to ensure social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and the well-being of its citizens. This integrated approach aligns with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, emphasizing that decisions are made at the level most effective for tackling the specific challenges at hand (Peterson & Shackleton, 2012). The EU's commitment to multifaceted public policies reflects a recognition that societal issues are inherently interconnected and require comprehensive solutions.

As Wiener et al. (2018) highlight, the EU's approach to policymaking is characterized by multi-level governance, allowing for the incorporation of diverse perspectives and expertise. This collaborative governance model involves not only the European Commission, Parliament, and Council but also engages regional and local authorities, fostering a more inclusive decision-making process. Public policies within the EU strive not only to resolve immediate issues but also to align with long-term objectives, as emphasized by Checkel (2005). This forward-looking perspective is crucial for addressing complex challenges, including those related to climate change, economic inequality, and social justice.

To have a complete process, policymakers must keep in mind an important aspect of policy making, the evaluation stage. As Miroiu (2001) states, "Policy evaluation represents the objective and systematic empirical examination, with the help of social research methods, of public policies, in terms of the objectives proposed by them", we must use these evaluations to improve the quality of a program or helping to correctly inform a decision-maker.

Policies within the EU are not only crafted to resolve immediate issues but are also aligned with long-term objectives, a principle echoed by Checkel (2005). This forward-looking perspective is essential for tackling persistent challenges such as climate change, economic inequality, and social justice.



3. Motor vehicle taxation in the European Union

Taxation represents a complex instrument used by policymakers that can shape the market's guidelines. According to Schneider and Ingram (1993), taxation not only serves as a revenue-generation tool but also as a means of shaping societal behaviors. Tax policies, whether focused on motor vehicles or other domains, play a pivotal role in influencing economic decisions, promoting environmental sustainability, and achieving social objectives. By recognizing taxation as an integral component of broader public policies, the EU positions itself strategically in addressing challenges at both national and supranational levels. Understanding the interplay between taxation policies and overarching public strategies becomes imperative for comprehending the holistic nature of governance in the European Union.

Transitioning to the realm of taxation as a form of public policy, diverse viewpoints contribute to a nuanced understanding of this critical instrument. Building on contemporary perspectives, Chetty et al. (2009) assert that taxation is not solely a revenue-generation tool but a mechanism that influences individual behavior and societal outcomes. This behavioral economics lens, introduced by Chetty et al. (2009), emphasizes the importance of designing tax policies, including those targeting motor vehicles, with insights from behavioral economics to promote desirable economic and environmental outcomes.

Additionally, Acemoglu et al. (2012) delve into the role of institutions in shaping effective taxation policies. Their work underscores the dynamic relationship between political institutions and the design of tax systems, shedding light on how institutional structures can impact the success of taxation as a tool for economic and social objectives. Understanding the intricate interplay between institutional design and taxation policies becomes crucial for comprehending the strategic positioning of the EU in addressing challenges at both national and supranational levels.



4. Taxation of motor vehicles in Eastern Europe

Taxation of motor vehicles is a comprehensive method that aims to solve more problems at the same time. However, two dimensions emerge with particular significance: environmental considerations and economic significance.

Revenue generation stands as a fundamental economic function of motor vehicle taxation for EU member states. This perspective is reinforced by Sijbren (2016), who underscores the pivotal role of motor vehicle taxation in contributing substantial funds to national budgets. Taxes levied on the acquisition, ownership, and use of vehicles serve as critical financial instruments, facilitating investments in public infrastructure, healthcare, education, and other essential services. Registration taxes, typically imposed at the point of vehicle purchase, emerge as a noteworthy one-time revenue source.

Environmental considerations constitute a cornerstone in the taxation framework applied to motor vehicles within the European Union. This perspective is underscored by Hintermann et al. (2014), emphasizing the profound link between motor vehicle taxation and the EU's commitment to environmental sustainability. EU has been a vanguard in implementing policies aimed at curbing the environmental footprint of the automotive sector, with a specific focus on carbon emissions reduction. Hintermann et al.'s (2017) research further accentuates the significance of taxation strategies in fostering environmental objectives. This symbiotic relationship between motor vehicle taxation and environmental considerations highlights the EU's proactive role in addressing environmental challenges within the automotive domain, showcasing its dedication to a sustainable and eco-friendly future.

For this case study, we will focus mainly on Romania, and its effort to use the taxation of motor vehicles to generate revenue and to reduce the emissions of CO₂. At the moment, Romania faces a significant problem, it has the second oldest average age for its registered cars in the European Union (the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, 2022). To combat this problem, the only policy applied is a CO₂-based scrapping scheme, bringing incentives for scrapping an older vehicle and replacing them with a new, low-emission, or a zero-emission vehicle.

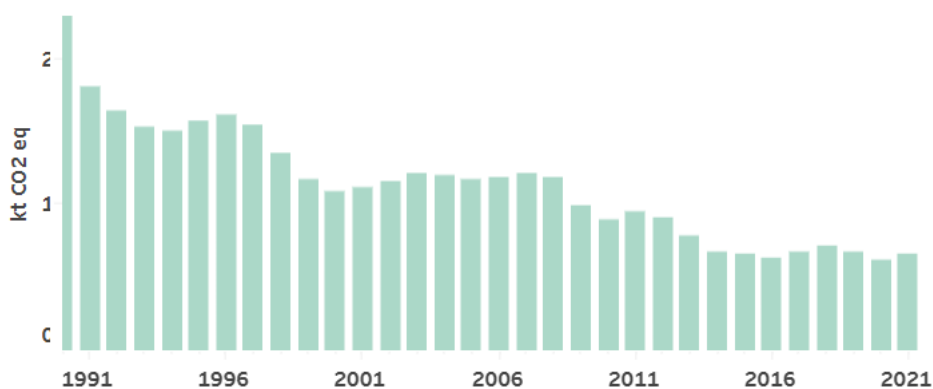


Romania had until 2017 when law no. 1/2017 eliminated multiple taxes, an “environmental tax for motor vehicles” that taxed each motor vehicle upon registration based on multiple factors, such as the age of the vehicle, the vehicle's emissions standard, and the CO₂ emissions. According to the European Environment Agency, from 1990 until 2016 total greenhouse gases were reduced by 72,54%, followed by two years in which there was a heavy import of old cars that increased the greenhouse gases by 13,19%. Based on a report from the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA), from 6,427,322 total motor vehicles in 2016, Romania had 7,521,031 in 2018, a 17% increase in just two years. Even though Romania since 2017 has had the smallest number of vehicles per 1,000 EU inhabitants, the environmental significance of the emissions caused by motor vehicles has to represent a key aspect that the government and policymakers have reglementate so the macro objectives of the European Union will come to fruition.

Fig.1

Emissions in Romania

Hover over the bars to see emissions



From a policy point of view, this case of a motor vehicle tax represents a failure of the government to reach its intended purpose. The money collected from 2007, when this tax had been introduced to 2017, had been returned to the taxpayers, so the government couldn't use the funds to bring significant improvements to the environment. Also, from an environmental point of view, the removal of this tax had the exact opposite effect, increasing the total amount of



greenhouse gases by removing the incentive that gave new cars the upper hand, and allowing a sudden influx of old, polluting cars.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of motor vehicle taxation in Eastern European countries, with a focus on Romania reveals a complex interplay between economic imperatives and environmental sustainability.

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Unveiling the impact of incentives on public sector employee performance: a comparative exploration of african and european systems¹

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Abstract: *In addressing the imperative to enhance productivity among public sector employees, the global consensus emphasizes the essentiality of this endeavour. Leaders worldwide are driven by the anticipated economic advantages and associated prestige. Despite the prevailing inclination toward privatization, widely regarded as a precarious pursuit, there exists a compelling demand for a novel and efficacious solution. Recent research endeavours turn their attention to incentives as a potential remedy, leveraging the enduring appeal of financial rewards in the pursuit of contemporary efficiency. However, a meticulous comparative analysis focusing on continents poised to benefit significantly—Europe and Africa—yields unexpected insights. While monetary incentives have demonstrated effectiveness in fostering productivity within the private sector, the altruistic motivations inherent in public service roles appear to wield greater influence, at times even countering the intended effects of incentives. Consequently, future research must direct its focus toward a formidable alternative rooted in internal motivations and unwavering commitment, acknowledging the limitations of monetary inducements in the public sector.*

Keywords: *Public Sector Employees, Productivity, Europe, Africa, Incentives, Comparative Analysis.*

JEL: H83, J18, J45, Z18

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1. Introductory Aspects

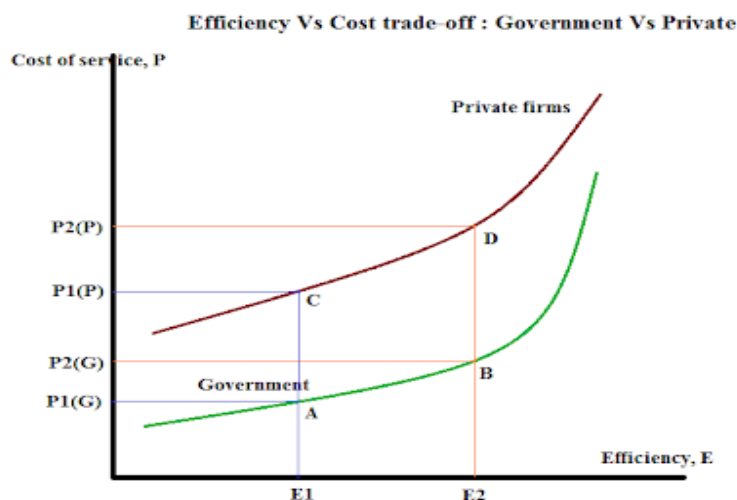
The Public Sector, often criticised for its bureaucratic tendencies, has faced persistent mockery due to perceived incompetence, indiscipline, and indifference among its workforce. Such negative perceptions have fuelled a global quest for solutions to rectify the image of an inefficient public sector. Consequently, nations and continents worldwide have turned to the private sector, seeking assistance in various forms. The surge of globalization, the expanding influence of privatization, and heightened commercialisation have rendered this approach seemingly more feasible, particularly when accounting for cost considerations. In this context, the quest for effective strategies to enhance the efficiency of the public sector has become a pivotal concern for nations grappling with public scepticism and seeking alternative governance models.

However, scores of international literature, studies and reviews encompassing a variety of industries and services refute these claims (Hall, 2014). So much so that in its conclusion of a thorough review conducted, published, and later updated by the Danish Institute AKF, it was decisively said that “there is no general evidence here to say that private actors deliver the services cheaper or with a higher quality than the public sector itself does” (Ole Helby Petersen, 2012). This finding by the Danish Institute AKF was further expanded and agreed to by Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz in union with several other authors in a comprehensive cross-country empirical study titled “Ownership change, institutional development and performance” (Anzhela Knyazevaa, 2013). In this study, they similarly concluded that “...privatization did not lead to improved performance”.

Furthermore, if we were to plot a more realistic yet instinctive cost-efficiency curve for a basic market for public service delivery it would resemble what is shown below:



Fig.1: Assumed cost-efficiency curve: Government vs Private.



(Gulzar, 2011)

From Figure 0.1 above, we can easily observe that at an equal efficiency, a greater cost is incurred by the private sector than by the public sector. Thus, completely erasing the theory that the private sector and a greater hastening of privatization can help solve the problem of perceived inefficiency in the public sector. Now, how then do we revive and improve the productivity of one of the most important sectors in the world today? Well, the answer is within the sector itself, particularly with the employees.

In the public sector today, there are more than 450 million persons employed by different entities. Entities that include the national and subnational government, local government units and regulatory bodies that are tasked with performing a wide variety of activities (Accountants, 2010). Activities that range from the delivery of public services like justice to the distribution of social benefits like pensions (OECD, 2020). Due to this wide scope of functions, we see that in the public sector there is no standard format for who is public sector employee is. Nevertheless, if we look at this class of employees compared to those of the private sector, we find that public sector employees do share some unifying characteristics. These include:

⇒ They are all employed by an organization (an entity) governed by laws and directives, owned, and funded by the public (Johnson, 2020)



⇒ They all have a higher desire to serve public interests i.e., they all have strong altruistic motives (Lyons, 2006)

⇒ They all have relatively permanent job security and place an increased value on a stable work-life balance.

Based on these features, we can say that whatever measures are formulated to boost the productivity of the public sector employees in one industry or region will be able to boost the productivity of all.

Consequently, in searching for a universally applicable remedy, many researchers look towards the influence of external motivations, such as incentives. This is because they understand that as humans most of our actions are either in pursuit of or as a product of a desire to attain money. Whether or not these reasons are selfless, we find that money is often at the centre of everything in a man's life. This need and/or want of money has grown even more fervent in recent years as the world becomes more and more materialistic. Therefore, for researchers, focusing their studies on the role of financial incentives in boosting public service employees' productivity was a clear and logical choice.

Although this concept seems a lot like common sense, a wealth of literature exists on the subject. The use of incentives to improve public sector employees' productivity has been met with mixed reactions from the international community. In certain nations, this course of action is openly accepted and thrives while in others, it diminishes in preference of another. In this regard, two key industry players who are often at the forefront when it comes to this subject are Europe and Africa. This is because many constituent nations of these continents depend on the efficiency of their public sectors to drive economic development.

More than this, we find that concerning one another, the African and European Continent share several common grounds in terms of history, geopolitics, and culture. So, you wouldn't be wrong to assume that these two continents should equally have the same if not similar views on the part incentives play in the productivity of public sector employees. However, this assumption differs from reality because, on one hand, we have Europe which recognizes the importance of incentives and is willing to use them as a tool in improving public sector employees' productivity. This they do by implementing policy reforms and organizational readjustments. On



the other, you have Africa which recognizes the importance of incentives, yet chooses to mostly adopt indifference in respect to active implementation. Instead, it emphasizes a need for the reinforcement of internal motivations mainly commitment to empowering public sector employees.

In response to these differences, two main research questions were formulated:

- A. *What is the true role of incentives in the productivity of public sector employees?*
- B. *Does the European view on this matter contradict and correct the African ideology?*

Subsequently, this paper aims at dissecting and providing reasonable answers to these questions. To achieve this, it recognizes the respective economic, political, and social contexts of both opinions must be considered to properly weigh their merits and demerits. Thus, a suitable research design needed to be chosen for analysis. This paper, therefore, chose to use a mixed research design approach that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative content analysis was chosen to enable the gathering of all relevant numerical data whereas, the qualitative technique allowed for the appraisal of unquantifiable elements such as opinions and behaviours. All in all, these two techniques were placed within the umbrella of a comparative analysis study which is often the preferred choice for political issues with economic implications (Stafford, 2013).

In line with these questions, this paper will proceed by providing a reasonable framework and background of discussion by offering a clear description of public sector employees in these continents.

2. Public sector employees

As highlighted earlier though public sector employees share similar universal characteristics, they vary based on several factors such as their functions, the entity wherein they're employed and the services they provide. Aside from these factors, another important distinguishing element of public sector employees is their origin.



Therefore, in this chapter, we will be looking at the characteristics of public sector employees and public opinion about public sector employees in the context of the continent they originate from. After this, we will go further using the context of origin to review how the productivity of public sector employees is evaluated.

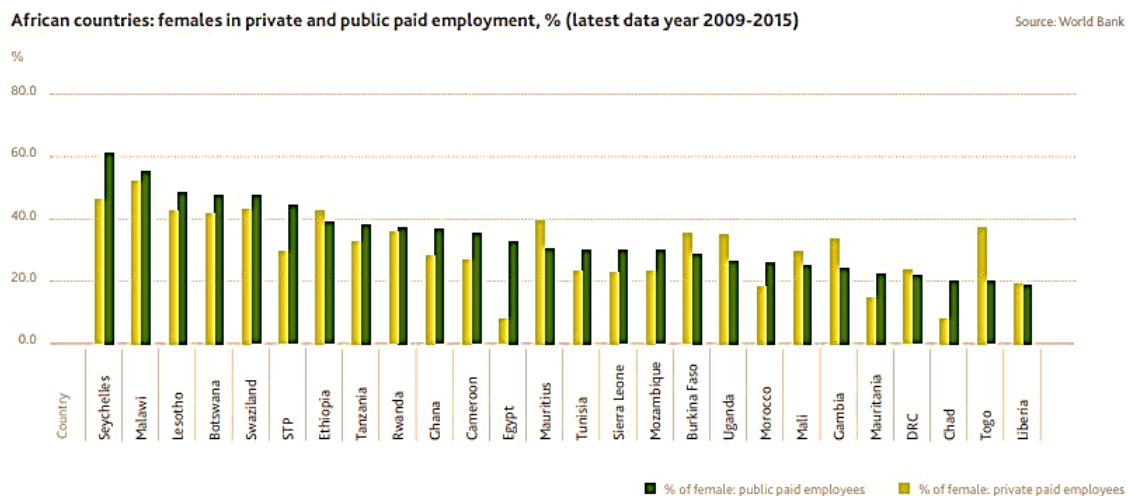
2.1. *Attributes of public sector employees in Africa.*

As it was when public sector employees were investigated globally, we can also find some similar shared characteristics amongst public sector employees in a particular region, in this case in Africa. Some of these are.

⇒ **A higher percentage of the total workforce:** In the African continent, where we have a lot of lower-middle to low-income countries, public sector employees and employment by the public sector can represent up to 50% of formal employment in the region, clearly superseding that of the private sector (Saget & Yao, 2011).

⇒ **Gender inclusion:** As gender goes, we find that this dominance of the public sector over the private sector continues as there are notably more African women in the public sector than in the private sector as shown in Figure 2 below:

Fig. 2 African women in the public sector compared to the public sector.



(Foundation, 2018)



⇒ **High levels of literacy:** Similarly, we see this continued trend showing itself once again regarding the degree of employee literacy. African public sector employees have recorded values of attaining tertiary education > 3 times than those of the private sector employees. This is even though generally speaking African public employees are older.

⇒ **Insufficient quantity in vital sectors:** Conversely, it is sad to note that although there are large numbers of public service employees in the nation, this value doesn't translate to every sector of the economy. Sadly, the two most deprived sectors of the continent when it comes to the workforce are the healthcare and the education sector, with the domestic security force not far behind. In healthcare, we observe that if the population of each country was separated into groups of 1000 people each, only 3 nations in the whole continent can say they can provide a doctor for each group of persons. Likewise in education, we see that in most primary schools for every teacher, there are more than two times as many pupils.

⇒ **Poorly managed:** Aside from these glaring statistics, when we take a close look at the human resource management of these public sector employees, we find that it is oftentimes represented by a single officer, or a small group of workforce managers tasked with recruitment, discipline, and documentation.

⇒ **Mainly centralized:** In line with this model, we can also glaringly recognize a partiality towards centralization in the public sector. This results in the arrangement of officers in the same way tasks are delegated i.e., according to rank, and hierarchy with strict directives concerning the rights and authority of each class.

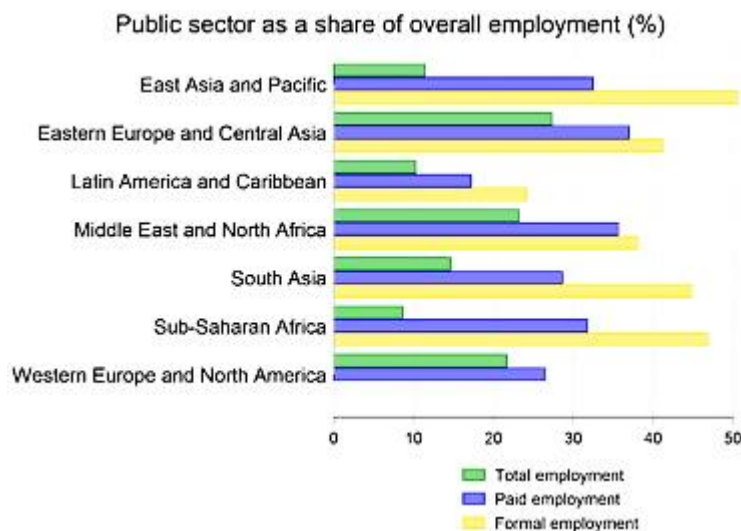
2.2. *Features of the European public sector employees*

In Europe, we find that the common features of public sector employees include:

⇒ **Lower Percentage of Workforce:** In contrast, we recognize that although the percentage of public sector employees in formal employment is marginally like those of Africa for the Eastern European region. When this value is placed in union with those of Western Europe and averaged, we find that it accounts for far less than half of formal employment as we can see in Figure 3 below:



Fig. 3: Percentage of Employment in the public sector



(Gindling, et al., 2020)

⇒ **Closely associated with private-sector employees:** More than this we find that the distinction between the public and private sector employees in Europe is not clear-cut as in other regions. This is because, in many European nations, the presence of public agents who can be defined loosely as ‘public sector contract workers’ has become more and more rampant. These agents oftentimes resemble true public sector employees known as statutory civil servants but do not enjoy the same benefits of lifelong job security (Cédric Hugrée, 2015).

⇒ **Subject to the same laws:** Another key difference between these two groups of subtypes of public service employees is that the former i.e., public agents are governed by civil law like private sector employees. The latter i.e., statutory civil servants follow the rules stipulated by public law (Thijs, et al., 2017).

⇒ **Mostly career-based system of service:** Nevertheless, we find that in many European nations despite these subtle distinctions between the types of public service employees, there is an overwhelming preference for a career-based system of civil service. Consequently, we find that many civil servants are found in the public sector due to a closed recruitment policy with



promotions often being a result of seniority. Be that as it may, this is not to say that the position-based system of civil service is not slowly increasing in relevance in this continent as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: **Career-Based vs Position-Based Civil Service in 28 EU nations.**

<i>Career Based</i>	Dual	Position Based
<i>AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, CYPRUS, GERMANY, DENMARK, GREECE, SPAIN, FRANCE, CROATIA, ITALY, LUXEMBOURG, LITHUANIA, PORTUGAL</i>	BULGARIA, CZECH REPUBLIC*, IRELAND, MALTA, POLAND, ROMANIA	ESTONIA, FINLAND, HUNGARY, LATVIA**, NETHERLANDS***, SWEDEN, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, UK

*Gradually going towards position-based, ** Excluding the police, military, and judiciary, *** Excluding the police, military, judiciary, and foreign office

⇒ **Mixed systems for management and training:** More than this, we find that the human resource management for public service employees of European nations often employs a mix of a centralized organization/body and a decentralized model of regulating these principles. Not only this but certain member states like Romania also take this decentralized mode of regulation a step further by having completely distinct national institutes for the training of civil servants e.g., Institutul Național de Administrație (CHRISTIAN, 2016), which results in the formation of well-equipped & knowledgeable civil servants.

2.3. *African public sector employees in the eyes of its people.*

Now that we've understood who African public sector employees are, we need to comprehend how the people they serve view them. We do this to better understand the importance of improving their productivity before investigating ways this can be done.

In this regard, the value of African Public Sector Employees has changed over the years. We find that in early literature published around the time of independence for many African nations, an opinion and concept of superiority and affluence was often used in the description of public service employees (Development, 2020). To the extent that certain academics believed that these



elite public sector employees would cause the private sector to lag weakly behind (Diamond, 1987) and lead to a regression of the continent's economic growth (Fanon, 2007). As a result, we find that civil servants in that era were held in the highest esteem because of the weight of their income.

However, many years later, this situation and public opinion seemed to dwindle. Increased economic instability, recession and high inflation led to drastic retrenchments of > 2.5 million public service employees (Kiggundu, 1997). Those who didn't lose their jobs found themselves left with less than half of their initial salaries (Simson, 2019), and subsequently, with this massive drop in earnings capacity, the civil servant esteem also deteriorated. We find that in many African nations, this was followed by a slow yet evident shift towards the private sector especially evident in Tanzania where fewer than 50% of higher institution graduates move on to become public sector employees as shown below.

Table 2 The educational level of public service employees in Tanzania

Tanzania		Share working in the public environment			
		1980	1993	2000/1	2011/12
All educational levels			6%	3%	3%
Secondary education (Form IV or above)		~90%	46%	33%	21%
Tertiary education (university or college)		>90%		45%	46%

In present-day Africa, we meet a divided popular opinion of public service employees in line with these two historical periods. Some view public service employees with clear anger and disguise whereas, others pity them for their lack, yet neither faction aspires to be them. On the part of those who champion a rich public service, this privileged view is often reserved for higher-ranking officials who are often believed to embezzle funding. Whereas the party that views public service employees with pity often reserve this judgment for lower-ranking



employees. This party are often the family or friends of retrenched officers who understand the difficulty faced by their loved ones in adapting to a current Public Service despite the effort of redeployment orientation. They are those individuals who are equally aware of the great marginalization that exists in the sector.

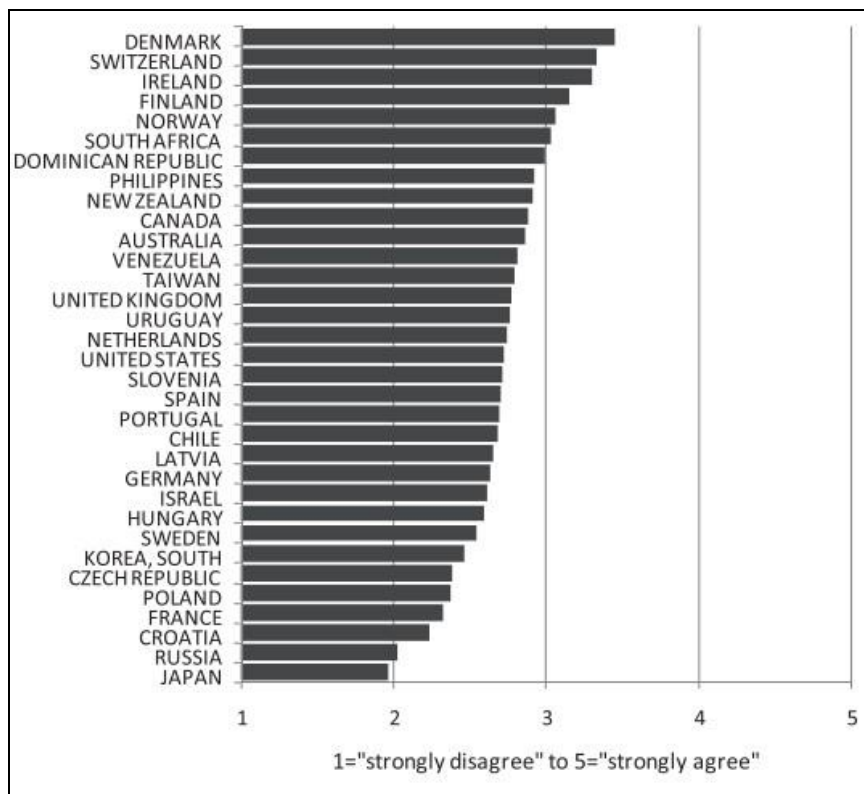
Regardless of the opinion, there is no denying that the strong presence of public service employees' ripples throughout the whole African continent. This is because higher rates of unionisation after the 2000s have caused public sector employees to have a stronger voice on the national and continental scales (Haroon Bhorat, 2016). Sadly, this newfound power often finds itself being manifested in the form of strikes. On a local, state, national, regional, and continental level, we find the strike culture being used as a tool to bring greater recognition to public service employees beyond already established opinions by the government and by the people it serves.

2.4. Europeans take on public sector employees.

In the eyes of European citizens different from their African Counterparts, civil servants have varying degrees of trust and popular esteem according to their region. In the Western parts, we observe a more positive outlook in contrast to the Eastern parts of the continent as shown in Figure 4 below:



Fig. 4 Varying responses to “Most Civil servants can be trusted to do what is best for the country?”



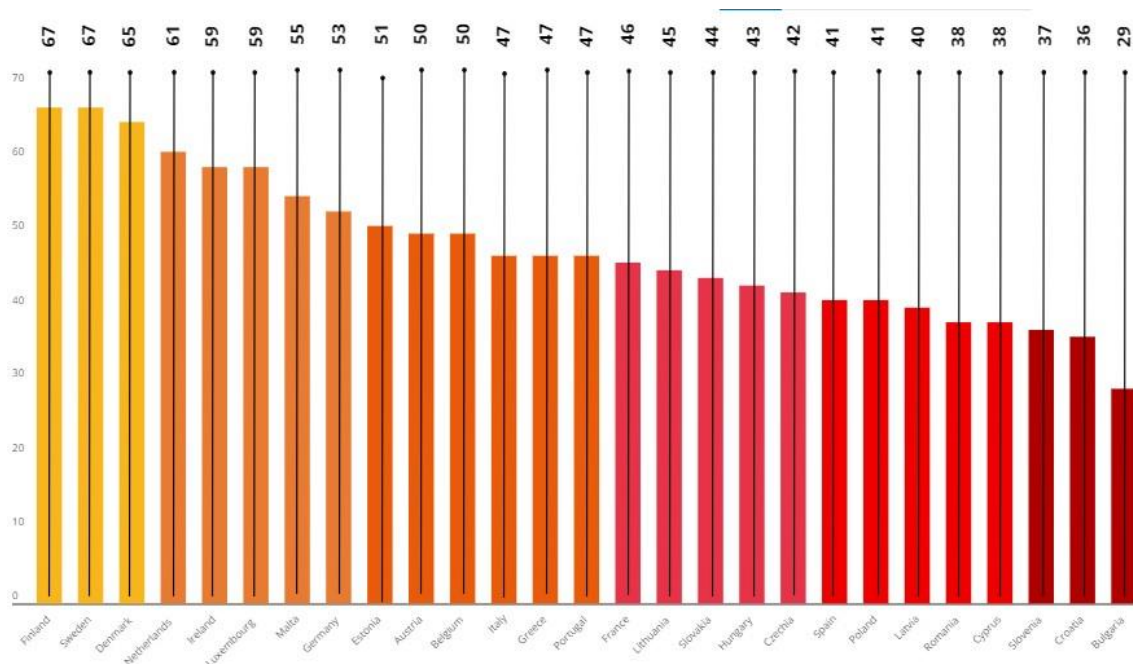
(Ryzin, 2011)

Be that as it may, when we look at a complete analysis of the situation, we find that civil servants, in general, are regarded with high levels of distrust (Van de Walle, 2008). In Europe, we see that this perception of civil servants is because of the government process itself not just on the products of the public sector.

Subsequently, it is not surprising to see that this distrust goes hand in hand with low perception scores of political integrities in the continent as shown below:



Fig.5 Popular views of political integrity, scores per country



(International, 2021)

In general, we find that “people feel more comfortable in areas where they see the entire process from the registration of needs through the preparation of regulations to experience the results” (OECD, 1998)

3. Evaluating productivity in public sector employees’

With such a weak opinion in the eyes of the people, it is committed to serving, what then is the need to evaluate the productivity of public sector employees to improve it? The answer lies in the question itself because though there is an overwhelming and universal cry for political transparency, the issue of satisfaction and experience with public services remains a point of contention.

This productivity of the public sector and its employees is commonly characterized by the rate at which inputs are processed into useful output.



3.1. Parameters for the evaluation of public sector employees' productivity: the African story.

Sadly, we find that in the African continent, there is a lack of continentally approved criteria for measuring the productivity of public sector employees. Nevertheless, when we place several African nations side by side a pattern emerges. Africa generally prefers to adopt the use of performance management systems (Dzimbiri, 2008). These systems rely heavily on performance reviews i.e., surveys. In addition to this, they view outputs in terms of $\frac{\text{received performance}}{\text{expectations}}$, which is then translated into qualifiable elements like:

- ⇒ Objectives
- ⇒ Targets
- ⇒ Standards

This does not negate the use of quantifiable parameters as well such as:

- ⇒ Performance Indicators that include service delivery rates.
- ⇒ Financial Information that includes return on investment and returns on assets.

Aside from these, it is common to see the use and implementation of international strategies like the Balanced Scorecard (Fatile, 2014).

3.2. Parameters for the evaluation of public sector employees' productivity: the European tale.

Unlike other regions, we find that in Europe despite the existence of national variances when it comes to measuring the productivity of public sector employees, there seems to be a unified approach. This approach spearheaded by the UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS) advocates the adjusted measurement of quantifiable outputs in terms of quality (East, n.d.). As a result, we find that many nations in the EU mandatorily take account of and detail their non-market services.



These strategies above, however, do not completely erase the use of traditional parameters of evaluation such as:

- ⇒ Survey Data.
- ⇒ Direct Output Volume Measurement etc (Schultz, 2017).

3.3. **Factors that influence productivity**

Although, Europe and Africa differ in terms of how they measure productivity. As earlier stated, public sector employees are such that in many cases a particular factor affecting one would affect all. This statement is especially true in the case of factors that influence their productivity. Furthermore, we observe that these factors can be classified as follows (Ali, et al., 2021):

- a) External Factors
 - i. Financial incentives e.g., Salary & Bonuses
 - ii. Structural incentives e.g., Promotion, leisure benefits, and training.
- b) Internal Factors
 - i. Commitment
 - ii. Job Satisfaction
- iii. Behavioural Patterns e.g., Leadership styles, Management Techniques, Human Resource Practices
- c) Cognitive Factors
 - i. Perception
 - ii. Psychological bias

Since the emphasis of this paper lies within the external factors only a rudimentary description of other factors will be provided.

Public service employees' productivity is significantly influenced by intrinsic factors, particularly internal motivations driven by their high altruistic beliefs. Successful plans to enhance productivity must consider these motivations, acknowledging their dual nature that affects employees on both a superficial and deeper innate level. The three main concepts associated with internal factors—commitment, job satisfaction, and behavioural patterns—play a crucial role in



this influence. For example, improvements in Human Resources Practices can positively impact productivity by making employees feel recognized and valuable through an effective HRM strategy.

Cognitive factors, at times mistakenly categorized beneath intrinsic factors, possess subtle distinctions. First, while the principles outlined by cognitive factors apply to public service employees, perceptual errors and psychological biases are commonly encountered by both employees and employers concurrently. Second, unlike intrinsic motivations, which manifest as personal values, cognitive factors exert a direct influence on the conduct of public service employees. To illustrate, if a public service employee harbours an unnoticed perceptual error, such as stereotyping, they might exhibit reluctance to collaborate with a colleague of a diverse ethnic background, resulting in a decline in productivity. Similarly, if a manager overseeing these employees displays bias in decision-making, particularly regarding task delegation, it could erode productivity. In such instances, employees may perceive that their efforts yield no genuine benefits.

4. Public sector employees' productivity: the role of incentives

Although there are several types of incentives, as shown in the previous chapter, this paper will primarily focus on the role of financial/monetary incentives in the productivity of public sector employees. This is because when the subject matter is narrowed and given such strict definitions it helps improve the ability of this paper to be easily actualized. In addition to this, we find that one of the closest word associations for incentives especially in the context of employee productivity is monetary gain. Therefore, moving forward, the word 'incentives' would be used interchangeably with 'financial incentives' and 'monetary incentives' to mean the same thing.

4.1. The Use of Incentives

In both continents, we find that the use of incentives is not a new initiative. In fact, since the beginning of public sector reforms in the 1970s and 1980s for Europe (Ponta, 2020) and Africa



respectively (TANZANIA, 2010), the use of incentives to boost productivity has been a topic of discussion in many national governments.

However, since the 2000s, we see that for many European countries, the use of incentives has left the realm of discussion and has moved into implementation and active use. This use can be found in many forms in Europe such as:

a) Performance Related Pay (PRP) schemes

One of the foremost means by which financial incentives are introduced in Europe is using PRP schemes. As the name indicates these schemes are built on the idea that a person or in this case a public service employee should receive additional or different wages based on the quality of his performance. They aim to discourage the laziness public servants are known for by eliminating the comfort of a fixed salary in exchange for the competitiveness of the private sector.

They also seek to push the public sector into a more open mindset when it comes to flexible pay and distinctiveness (OECD, 2002). Subsequently, this means of incentive introduction has had widespread acceptance and is commonly used in many European states. However, it is worth mentioning that the application of this system happens in varying degrees across the continent. Nevertheless, we observe as with many other concepts that are applied in Europe, there emerges a prevalent course which is:

- ⇒ PRP schemes are not only reserved for management but include all other staff.
- ⇒ PRP bonuses are generally < 10% of public service employees' base salaries for non-managerial employees and 20% of base salaries for managerial employees.
- ⇒ PRP policies are not only applied nationwide in ministers but it is used as group performance systems within an organization.

b) Pay according to workload.

One of the major reasons we find for low public sector employees' productivity and the increasing outflow of these employees to the private sector is the increasing workload. Thus, the idea of creating payment schemes that match the workload of public service employees' is



brilliant. However, this concept is still very new and is not as widespread because of the high levels of Pre-job evaluators involved.

On the other hand, in the African region, we find that the main instrument used in implementing financial incentives is the performance-related pay scheme. However, unlike in the European region where we have widespread acceptance of this initiative, there is a mixed reception amongst different parts of Africa. Mainly we see that in the sub-Saharan regions, little efforts are being made to properly include PRP policies in national guidelines. However, this does not mean we should be so quick to dismiss the efforts of a handful of nations in the Northern regions and Southern areas actively trying and, in some cases, succeeding to develop well-structured incentive and pay systems ((Editor), 2003)

4.2. **The Effect of Incentives**

The impact to which the effects of incentives are felt in a continent should be proportional to the degree to which they are being implemented. This is true for the African Region where we see that as they struggle to stabilize their payment systems, it is harder for them to fully implement PRP systems (Ayee, 2008). Thus, incentives do not reap many rewards for this region despite evidence of improved pre-natal and post-natal services for health care public sector employees in Rwanda who were given PRP policies. More than this, we see that in this region there seems to be a reversed effect of the expected use of incentives. Rather than achieving the destined outcomes, incentives can lead to the exact opposite of what it was intended to achieve. For example, we have decreased performance in the Nigerian Civil Service (Oriana Bandiera, 2017) and reduced efficiency in public sector employees in the Ghanaian Civil Service because of incentive use.

What remains strange however is that in European Nations where we expect large trade-offs and increased productivity due to more rampant use of PRP policies, we observe seemingly contradicting empirical evidence. On one hand, we find literature that corroborates what is assumed to be true and asserts that monetary incentives are indeed valid stimuli that lead to peak performances (Marsden, 2002). Then on the other, we find articles that seem to conclude on the matter by stating incentives have little effect (Burgess, et al., 2017) on the productivity of public



sector employees (Foundation, 2014). However, both camps do agree that public service employees are influenced by monetary incentives.

5. Conclusion

From our observations and findings above we can conclude that the role of incentives in public sector employee's productivity is generally one that yields positive results towards boosting productivity. However, these results are not large enough to cause a complete foundational restructuring of most civil service systems. Furthermore, we find that normally in comparative studies modelled after these two nations the idea that Europe will always correctly contradict Africa is a bias that most researchers always end up proving as a fact. However, in this case, the evidence gathered sets up an argument against Europe in favour of Africa. Utilizing the more cost-effective internal motivator, commitment is a smart move being adopted by many African states and should be emulated by Europe. Yet, as with everything in life, a balance must be found, Africa should not ignore incentives and cling to this singular motivator to reform their workforce. With other political hindrances such as corruption in the way, a combination of these two motivators must be applied to yield the best results in both continents. Subsequently, I recommend that further research be conducted.

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