

COST Action CA20112

**GOOD PRACTICES AND
LESSONS LEARNED IN THE
EVALUATION OF SOCIAL
POLICIES**

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PROFEED *book 5.2*



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CA20112 - Platform OF policy
Evaluation community for
improved EU policies and
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ABOUT PROFEEDBACK

The COST Action PROFEEDBACK - Platform OF policy Evaluation community for improved EU policies and Better ACKnowledgement (CA20112, MoU 052/21) 2021-2025 aims to foster the networking of the policy evaluation community at EU-level, raise awareness on the importance of evaluation policy research and improve its impact on policy-making. The Platform, following a bottom-up and open approach, **gathers** researchers and professionals from various scientific fields and sectors to present and evaluate theories, topics, tools and methods of policy evaluation. Results of the Europe-wide assessment of good practices **provides** direct and high-quality inputs for national and EU bodies responsible for policy evaluation. Policy evaluation is a key tool in understanding, developing and modernising EU policies, thus there is a growing demand for EU-wide and high quality evaluation services.

The main challenge is the shortage of sufficient bottom-up platforms for European researchers and professionals working in policy evaluation. They have limited possibilities to discuss common problems, assess country specific practices and share their knowledge in a mutually beneficial and effective way. The PROFEEDBACK Action aims **to contribute to these discussions during its four Grant Periods, 18/10/2021 - 17/10/2025 and beyond.**

The PROFEEDBACK Action has three key objectives to achieve during the Action period 18/10/2021 - 17/10/2025 and beyond.



Foster networking and knowledge-exchange of the policy evaluation community at European level



Raise awareness on the importance of policy evaluation research and improve its impact on policy-making



Reinforce state-of-the-art research in the policy evaluation field and contribute to evaluation standards

ABOUT PROFEEDbook5.2

In the framework of the PROFEEDBACK Action, one conference every half-year is implemented. After each conference thematic deliverables are issued, the so called PROFEEDbooks (D4.1-D4.8). They summarise the main presentations and results of the conferences.

PROFEEDbooks support multidisciplinary, the systematisation of different methodologies and the exact transfer of know-how for the policy evaluation community. These also serve the interests of European and national policy-makers in developing the frameworks of the next programming periods and of a common European evaluation culture.

In addition, the PROFEEDbooks enrich the literature of public policy, aiming to develop theory, knowledge, method and tool base of European evaluation policy as well as a common understanding of the current problems and challenges. PROFEEDbooks support the Action in reaching audience beyond the Action members

The **5h PROFEEDBACK Conference** delved into **evaluating social policies** across four key areas: social inclusion, social innovation, quality of life, and public health. It emphasized integrating disadvantaged groups into public services, innovative approaches to enhance working conditions, education, and community welfare, and the implications of digitalization. Discussions covered factors affecting quality of life, including the impact of COVID-19, and the success of various public health initiatives. Overall, the conference provided a comprehensive framework to guide future policies aimed at improving social welfare, inclusivity, and health outcomes for diverse communities.

PROFEEDbook 5.1 gathers abstracts and presentations as well as bios of the authors/speakers, to provide an overview of the Conference for a wider public. **PROFEEDbook 5.2** presents full articles related to a selected number of presentations, for a more detailed insight.

The conference has taken place in **Bucharest, Romania** on the **16th of May 2024**.

The event has been organized by the **National University of Political Studies and Public Administration**.



**FULL PAPERS FOR
PROFEEDBOOK5.2**

Danijel Baturin, Jelena Matančev, Gojko Bežovan

University of Zagreb

ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT STATE AND CAPACITIES OF THE CROATIAN WELFARE STATE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

FULL PAPER

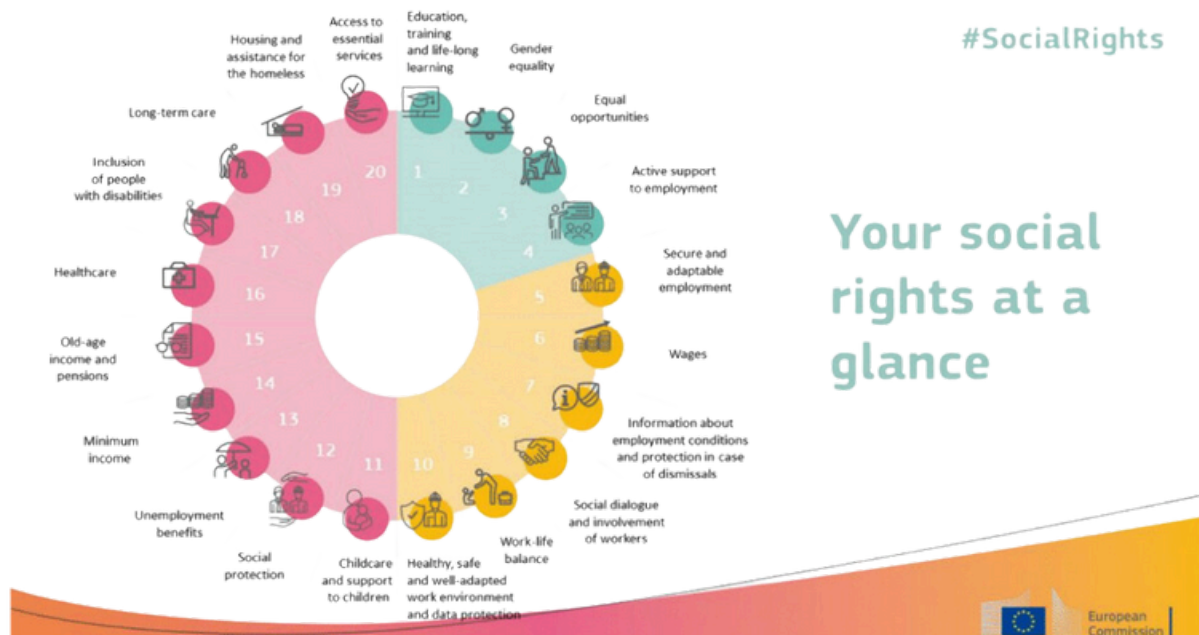
The backbone of social Europe is the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). Croatia, as a member state, has accepted the EPSR and has shown a principled commitment to its implementation. The goal of the research was to assess the characteristics and key challenges of the Croatian welfare state and the potential for the implementation of the EPSR in Croatia from the perspective of social policy experts. The research was conceived through semi-structured interviews with key experts in the field of social policy. The results of the research highlight certain challenges of the welfare state now and in the future, such as a lack of a general vision of the welfare state. The capacity of the welfare state is estimated to be limited, and although EPSR has been officially adopted, it is not on the agenda, nor is it specifically discussed or taken into account when developing policies.

Introduction:

Most (88%) of European citizens consider a social Europe to be important to them personally (European Commission, 2021.b). The new backbone of social Europe is the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). The European Parliament, the Council, and the European Commission proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights in 2017, confirming its value for European citizens (European Commission, 2017). C The Pillar could be considered a symbol of the EU's renewed commitment to protecting the social rights of its citizens (Vanhercke et al., 2018). It presents a high-profile political reaffirmation of twenty social rights and principles divided in three chapters: I. Equal opportunities and access to the labour market; II: Fair working conditions; III. Social protection and inclusion.

Introduction Most (88%) of European citizens consider a social Europe to be important to them personally (European Commission, 2021.b). The new backbone of social Europe is the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). The European Parliament, the Council, and the European Commission proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights in 2017, confirming its value for European citizens (European Commission, 2017). C The Pillar could be considered a symbol of the EU's renewed commitment to protecting the social rights of its citizens (Vanhercke et al., 2018). It presents a high-profile political reaffirmation of twenty social rights and principles divided in three chapters: I. Equal opportunities and access to the labour market; II: Fair working conditions; III. Social protection and inclusion.

PICTURE 1: THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS IN 20 PRINCIPLES



Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1606&langId=en>

Concrete measures for the application of EPSR are adopted by the EU through the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in 2021 (European Commission, 2021.a; Tomurad et al., 2023). Its implementation deploys the full EU governance framework: regulations, directives, recommendations, communications, new institutions, funding actions, and country-specific recommendations, and its nature is considered to be dynamic and fluid (Garben, 2019). Croatia, as a member state, has accepted the EPSR and has shown a principled commitment to its implementation.

The Republic of Croatia, as a welfare state defined by the Constitution, has developed a hybrid social regime that contains attributes of the continental model of social insurance, the communist legacy, and recent processes of privatisation, individualization, and clientelism (Dobrotić, 2016). Expressing those characteristics is relatively close to the hybrid' or'mixed' 'characteristics of the Central and Eastern European welfare model (Kuitto, 2016.; Stambolieva, 2016).

The earliest schemes of Bismarckian provenance and limited scope gradually extended to different social risks and categories of workers in the socialist period, when some universal rights were introduced (e.g., in education and health care). Social infrastructure was built (e.g., establishment of centres for social work and employment offices), and during that time, progressive and rather liberal reproductive rights and family policy instruments were developed (Puljiz, 2008; Dobrotić, 2016).

The current welfare state is based on relatively low social spending and constant attempts to reform (especially the pension and health system) (Bežovan et al., 2019). The retrenchment of the welfare state has been observed in the traditional" sectors of social policy, such as pensions, health, and social assistance, where cost limitation and "rationalisation" are highlighted among the priorities (Dobrotić, 2019). In general, social programs in Croatia are aimed at solving "old" social risks. Due to broad social problems and the limited capacity of the welfare state to respond to them, the social policy became divided by particular interests. Some social groups could mobilise and influence the public agenda and the redistribution of social resources (e.g., veterans, pensioners), while the problems of others (e.g., unemployed, citizens at risk of poverty) remained mostly neglected (Dobrotić, 2016; Bežovan, 2019). The welfare state relies more on passive benefits and cash transfers than on social investments in services, education, and programs that could encourage the social integration of vulnerable groups (Babić and Baturina, 2016, Bežovan, 2019). On the other hand, it is slow in modernising and recognising important EU strategic frameworks and initiatives (Bežovan, 2019).

The goal of the research was to assess the characteristics and key challenges of the Croatian welfare state and the potential for the implementation of the EPSR in Croatia from the perspective of social policy experts.

Methodology

The research was conceived through semi-structured interviews with key experts in the field of social policy. Nine experts from different sectors (policymakers, public officials, experts from the academic sector, trade unions, and civil society) 2. The research was conducted in January and February 2023. The informed consent of the participants, who are familiar with the goals and purpose of the research as well as the principles of confidentiality and anonymisation of the results, is ensured.

The obtained data were analysed using the framework analysis procedure. The framework analysis was developed in the context of research into public (social, health, etc.) and applied policies to obtain specific information that will enable insights and recommendations in a shorter period. The primary goal is to describe and interpret occurrences in a specific environment regarding specific social issues. What characterises the framework analysis are pre-defined research questions that need to be answered (a priori questions) in a short period, and therefore a deliberately selected sample that is relevant to the research questions (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002).

The research was carried out within the project: Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations in the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in Croatia, financed by the Active Citizens Fund in Croatia (with grants from Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway as part of the EEA Grants 2014–2021).

Research results

The results of the research highlight certain challenges of the welfare state now and in the future.

The lack of a general vision of social policies is something that stands out in the respondent's answers. Social planning is not adequately developed. There is no long-term direction or guideline that clearly describes what we are aiming for, so it is not surprising that they are partly seen as incoherent but also that the monitoring and evaluation of effects are insufficiently developed.

The lack of services for different groups or the inadequacy of existing policies and measures is seen as an additional challenge to social policy. It is argued that measures and services are not sufficiently targeted towards some groups, that they do not effectively solve their problems, or that they are not available. Also, some social rights are difficult to realise, which can certainly have consequences for the well-being of those who are in a disadvantageous position. In particular, the lack of preventive action in different social policy systems, which would enable "cutting problems at the root and further actions when problems have already arisen, is highlighted.

On a general level, it can be said that the ability of local communities to address problems in their areas is expected to be strengthened, according to the principle of subsidiarity. Respondents see such efforts as more positive than those that would lead to further centralization, although they note that local capacities should be further strengthened and unified.

Different groups are seen as threatened. Old social risks, related to demography and ageing of the population, are recognised as the most severe. Poverty and the economic position of individuals are the main determinants of these groups at risk, as well as some specific groups, such as children in poverty.

Some new social risks appeared in recent years and are a prominent challenge for the welfare state, which arise from economic and pandemic circumstances that have recently occurred or migration.

TABLE 1: SELECTED RESEARCH RESULTS-WELFARE STATE CHALLENGES

Thematic area- welfare state challenges / Key results	Interview quotes
Lack of a general vision of welfare state Underdeveloped social planning	<i>12 "Hmm... social policy in Croatia...I certainly think that we still do not have a good development direction in any part of the social care system, that is, where social policy should go"</i>
Lack of services for different groups or inadequacy of existing policies and measures Some social rights are difficult to realize	<i>19 "So, for example, if we talk about children and families, there is a lot of talk about; there is no accommodation capacity, many children are on waiting lists, social welfare centers are bursting at the seams because they have nowhere to place children, and no one is responding to it, and what should we do before that? What kind of</i>

	<i>set of activities, services, measures, and kind of broader policies so that we don't end up in that situation? And so for the elderly, so for people with disabilities, so for I mean housing”</i>
Strengthening the capacity of local communities to address problems in their areas	<i>11“I think the local units do not have sufficiently developed capacities, I think that the situation with them is also very diverse depending on which are you talking about and that their capacities are extremely different and that some who allocate a lot actually for social care still due to the fact that they were at the start in a worse position, they fail to secure adequate social care”</i>
Groups at risk, old social risks	<i>17“Well, I think that today there is a big imbalance between the elderly and people with disabilities, who in principle have strong associations and ultimately have a party that is a coalition partner, so they actually manage to push through some initiatives and make changes concerning the poor, who are by far the most vulnerable. And children, who are also at high risk....”</i>
Groups at risk, new social risks	<i>19“I think now in the last months, maybe actually since the pandemic, that was always a risk, so people who live as subtenants, but now, I think that we will experience an explosion of homelessness, because of what, I mean, people who don't own real estate, don't really have access to affordable housing...</i>

The capacity of the social policy system is estimated to be limited. There are many doubts about the possibilities of the system and regarding human capacities and ways of acting to find solutions that would be adequate for the challenges that different groups face.

Additionally, the social policy experts recognise civil society organisations as important stakeholders. Private social service providers and their potential role, the scientific community, and the media are mentioned as well.

Social dialogue is held to be lacking, as are any possibilities for dialogue between different actors. The character of the government is such that it does not allow a greater role for different stakeholders who may have significant proposals for the development and implementation of different social policies. Coordinated action represents a significant challenge.

The various relevant stakeholders within the system rarely cooperate adequately. The lack of coordination is a prominent problem that prevents effective action to solve social problems. Overlapping activities are common, and active networking, information exchange, and joint work are a rare phenomenon in Croatian social policy.

There are certain examples of good practice mentioned by the interviewed stakeholders that have a certain significance in showing the courses of action that may be desirable. But despite the numerous recognised challenges, real social innovations are rare, and the capacities for innovative activities seem to be lacking.

TABLE 2: RESEARCH RESULTS—CAPACITY OF THE WELFARE SYSTEM

Thematic area- Capacity of the welfare system/ Key results	Interview quotes
The capacity of the welfare state is estimated to be limited	<i>19 “Oh, yes.. Capacities. Yes. I mean that capacities are easiest to comment on through the „products”, I mean, what they put out, which are policies, some national plans, action plans that, for example, came out last year and were adopted and went through, I mean, public consultation, unscrutinised, in a positive way which, I think, are below every, below every level, that shows craft, technical skills not to mention, not to mention relevance”</i>
Capacities of other stakeholders	<i>11 “ I think that to a large extent, civil society has taken over the provision of some social services that were once provided by the state, but in some way, it was "outsourced", now civil society also through European social structural funds, and I think that to a somewhat lesser extent, actually, I would say that is still a very small number civil society organizations deal with social policies as an advocacy part of social policies”</i>
Coordinated action represents a significant challenge Lack of social dialogue	<i>12 „I think I can see that very well, how each department and each system is focused only on itself, unfortunately. So we have a system of health care, child care, and education, a system of social care, internal affairs, that is, the Ministry of the Interior, the judiciary, all of these are systems that, in working with the user, should be much more focused only on the user, but not on the system”</i>
Examples of good practice, social innovations are rare	<i>19 „There is, of course, there is, but they are dotted and they are the result of cooperation and synergy of individuals both in the system and outside the system, and first of all those who are in the system. So, where there are some, and I think there are a lot of them, I mean great and extraordinary people, who work in the system, then they cooperate with all stakeholders, encourage innovations, systems profits from these innovations, I think they are able to maintain them”</i>

The interviewed stakeholders on the effects and achievements of Europeanization. The interviewed stakeholders mostly see the modest achievements of Europeanization, which are of a more formal nature. They see Europeanization as an opportunity to stimulate positive changes, but an opportunity that has not been fully realized.

On the other hand, interviewed stakeholders recognise the advantages and benefits of using EU funds. Their role can be seen, but it is emphasised that they cannot be a substitute for more systematic policies and interventions. It is questionable whether relying mostly on EU funds can provide long-term outcomes.

A further aspect is the familiarity and embeddedness of the European Pillar of Social Rights. There is general agreement that it is poorly recognised in the Croatian context. It is not on the agenda, nor is it specifically discussed or taken into account in policy development. The EPSR and the Action Plan have the potential to be the guiding thread of

modernisation and the direction of Croatian social policy. However, the results of the research show that the European Pillar of Social Rights is poorly recognised in the Croatian context.

TABLE3: RESEARCH RESULTS-EUROPEANIZATION ACHIEVEMENTS

Thematic area- Europeanization achievements/ Key results	Interview quotes
Modest achievements of Europeanization, unrealized possibility	<i>18 "I think that if Europeanization had not had a significant impact on our social policy, in Croatia in general we know how many attempts have been made to reform social policy in Croatia, in fact, to reform the social welfare system, and from them, I do not see that anything has changed much"</i>
Available EU funds and benefits arising from them	<i>11 „And on the other hand, EU money is... Maybe not at this level, when you have some small project at the level of a civil society organization, but for some large systemic reforms, only EU money is not enough, that EU money is intended as</i>
	<i>some kind of upgrade of the existing capacity, and we into a large extent, in fact, in the absence of funds, we patch things up with EU funds“</i>
European Pillar of Social Rights, poor recognition and opportunities	<i>12 „Well, I don't think that much is said or known about the European Pillar of Social Rights...“</i> <i>18 „I think that the European pillar of social rights in Croatia will first depend on the political will of our politicians, i.e. leading people in the country, but also on the economic possibilities and capacities that we have as a country. I would be sorry if the support for the European Pillar of Social Rights, i.e. its implementation in Croatian society, remains only at some level, otherwise, it will not bring some kind of results to people who are in need, and in fact not only to those who are in need but also to a society in general in Croatia “ ...</i>

Conclusion

EPSR could be “a powerful vehicle to hold national decision-makers and EU institutions accountable for any initiatives going against the principles and rights they have endorsed at the highest political level(Vanhercke et al., 2018). To ensure effective usage of the EPSR by the social players, it is important to provide its visibility to players potentially referring to it. Also, some authors conclude that for its potential to be realised, further commitment by the Member States as well as more concrete and legally binding proposals are necessary (Alexandris Polomarkakis, 2019). That general “weak” power of EPSR does not contribute to its implementation, especially in states with weaker policy and professional capacities, such as Croatia.

In Croatia, the EPSR has been officially adopted, but it is not on the agenda, nor is it specifically discussed or taken into account when developing policies. It is seen partly as an opportunity to be a guiding thread and direct Croatian social policy but with a deficient

capacity for its implementation. Therefore, a significant effort is to be made in its actualisation and application in the Croatian context.

EPSR could be considered a rights-based social investment approach (Vanhercke et al., 2018). However, the social investment perspective in Croatia is underdeveloped (Babić and Baturina, 2016), and the development of universal social services for citizens is just a dream, not close to achievement (Opačić and Knezić, 2022). Welfare state is slow in modernising and recognising important EU strategic frameworks and initiatives (Bežovan, 2019), which also proved to be the case related to EPSR (Tomurad et al., 2023). From the research result, we can also conclude that although the EPSR and its Action Plan has the potential to be the guiding „principle” of modernisation of the welfare state, it is not considered a political priority. More highlight was put by the Croatian government on the green transition than on achieving social rights for all citizens (Government of Republic of Croatia, 2021). The open question is why it can focus on both?

The paper contributes to assessing, understanding, developing, and modernising social policies and highlighting pathways towards enhancing social cohesion and social inclusion in Croatian society, and it is the first part of the possible larger research on the nature and potentials of the Croatian welfare state.

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BRIDGING THE GAP: HOW CAN WE USE A QUALITATIVE SYNTHESIS EVALUATION TO ASSESS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING AND POLICY AND PERFORMANCE DRIVERS?

FULL PAPER

This study uses Brazil's Program for the Improvement of Access and Quality (PMAQ) to evaluate the relationship between health system strengthening and policy performance. Conducting interviews with health managers and frontline workers, we utilised NVIVO software for qualitative data analysis. The Policy Integration and Performance Framework categorised implementation and performance impact levels, which were analysed using crosstabulations and regressions. The study revealed that even low and medium policy implementation and performance levels generally led to improvements in performance drivers and strengthening. However, units with higher organisational capacity showed better outcomes. Significant relationships were identified between implementation, performance, and strengthening, with higher implementation levels correlating with improved performance and system strengthening, especially where effective management and feedback mechanisms were present.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to fill a gap identified in the literature on the analysis of public health policies that refers to disability, or in some contexts, the absence of a set of qualitative indicators that can assess the relationships between the cycle of a public policy (formulation, design, implementation, and evaluation) and the strengthening of the health system (HSS), especially in low- and middle-income countries.

Based on this gap, this paper presents a set of indicators capable of evaluating this

relationship between the cycle of a health policy and the strengthening of the public health system based on a case study: the implementation of the Program for the Improvement of Access and Quality (PMAQ), a pay-for-performance policy within the scope of primary health care of the Unified Health System (SUS) in Brazil.

There is a need for a systematic evaluation that includes the multilevel scenarios of health policy and management directly involved in formulating and implementing the PMAQ in the country, in national and local governments, and in the front line of primary health care. This also includes the governance arrangement (external evaluation) created for the PMAQ. These contextual variables will be relevant for identifying the factors contributing to different policy integration and performance levels and their strengthening.

Thus, the article develops a comparative political framework analysis exploring whether and how the PMAQ implementation process has affected performance drivers and system strengthening (leadership and workforce) in health units with diverse management arrangements and organisational capacities in six Brazilian municipalities in the states of Pernambuco and Goiás. This objective aims to produce indicators that can answer the following questions:

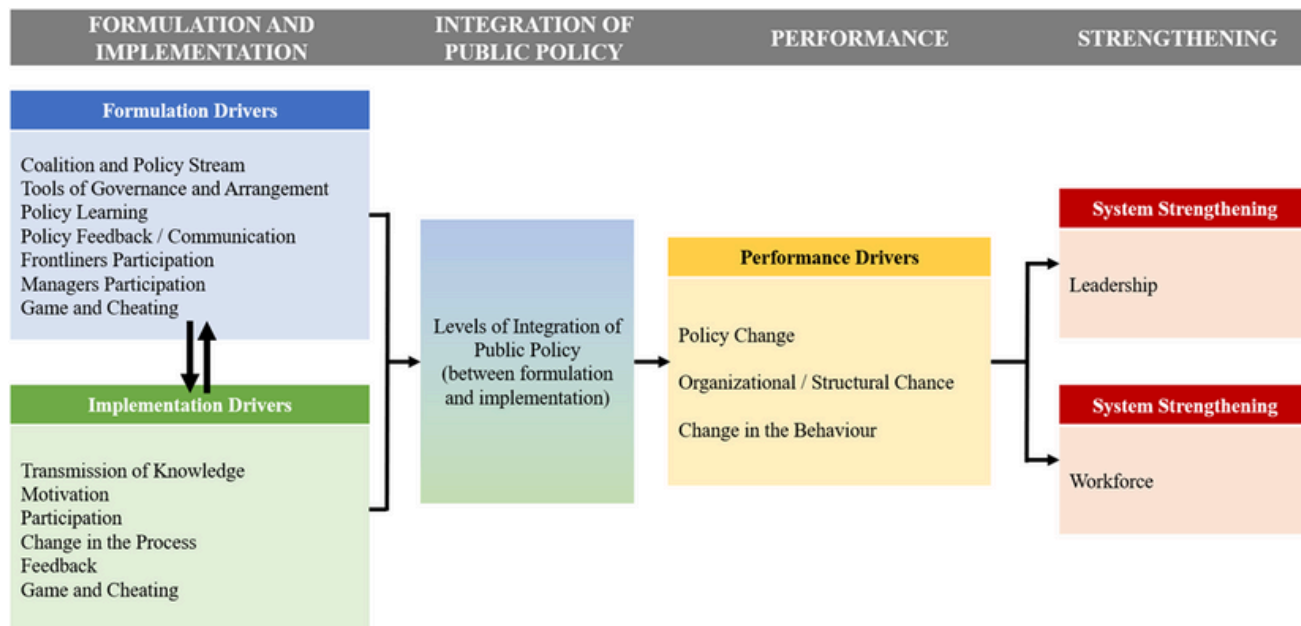
1. To what extent were frontline health workers aware of the program and participated in its implementation?
2. Whether and how have different policy dissemination and feedback types contributed to improved performance?
3. To what extent has the implementation been characterised by changes in the work process, affecting performance drivers?
4. How have performance factors (organisational, structural, behavioural) impacted leadership and the frontline workforce?

The paper is divided into three sections in addition to this introduction. The next section will present the proposed framework analysis and the methodological strategies employed. Following that, the results of this work and its main contributions will be discussed. Finally, concluding remarks will be presented, including the limitations of this analysis and potential future research directions.

Methodological Approach and Data

Based on the literature presented by Chee et al. (2013), the political framework of this work establishes relationships between implementation, performance drivers, and system-strengthening concepts. Therefore, we propose a process-tracing analysis represented by the following figure.

FIGURE 1 - POLICY INTEGRATION AND PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK (PIPF)



Source: elaborated by the authors (2024).

As presented in Table 1, using a semi-structured questionnaire, we conducted 174 interviews with municipal and frontline health managers and teams (doctors, nurses, and community health actors) in six Brazilian cities in two states: Goiás and Pernambuco. The choice for these two regions provides different configurations and levels of management, leadership and organisational capabilities for the analysis, and the chosen cities present three levels of cities: the capital of the state (Goiânia and Recife), a middle (Aparecida and Jaboatão) and a small (Senador Canedo and Paulista) city.

Table 1 - Conducted interviews by location and professionals

	GOIÁS			PERNAMBUCO			TOTAL
	Goiânia	Aparecida	Senador Canedo	Recife	Jaboatão	Paulista	
Frontline workers	18	15	13	9	10	13	78
Dentist	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Doctor	5	6	5	5	4	5	30
Manager	7	6	3	5	4	2	27
Nurse	5	5	5	8	7	7	37
TOTAL	37	32	26	27	25	27	174

Source: elaborated by the authors (2024).

Using NVIVO, interview transcripts were coded and analysed according to the framework's policy, performance drivers, and system-strengthening concepts. Combinations of policy

drivers were associated with adequate levels of implementation (Low, Medium and High) (ELIs). In contrast, combinations of performance drivers were classified as levels of perceived impact on performance (LPIPs). In the case and comparative analyses, we have explored the relationship between ELIs and LPIPs and their effects on HSS.

To verify the strength between the three variables, we have also performed crosstabulations between those three variables, transforming those qualitative synthesis indicators into categorical variables to perform regressions to verify the role of context-measurable variables. Moreover, we have established relationships between those qualitative synthesis indicators and official indicators on management and organisational capacity.

The central assumption is that High ELIs and LPIPs can enhance HSS. The framework analysis enabled us to understand better how and in what conditions (of management and organisational capacity) the implementation process (ELIs) can affect performance and strengthen the leadership and workforce.

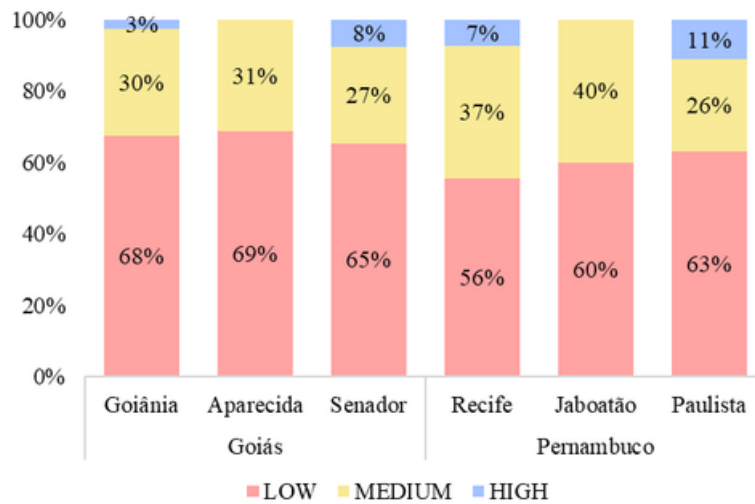
Results and Discussion

A. Formulation, Implementation and Performance drivers

Although the political scenario and policy capacity of municipalities and health units vary among the cities, the implementation of the program is generally characterised by low-middle levels of implementation drivers (policy dissemination, knowledge, motivation, participation and changes in the work process), generating low levels of changes in performance drivers and system strengthening. Exceptions occur in units with higher levels of management and organisational capacity.

In the sequence, we discuss the most important drivers revealed in the analysis. The percentages presented in the following graphs were based on the frequency observed in the qualitative analysis of interviews. Graph 1 shows that motivation is frequently low in both regions, but in Goiás, the proportion of low motivation is more evident.

GRAPH 1 - LEVEL OF FRONTLINER MOTIVATION

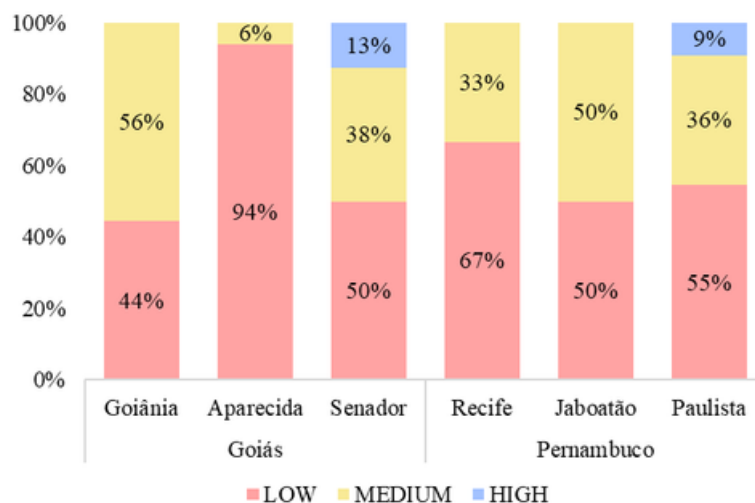


Source: elaborated by the authors (2024).

his excerpt represents this: “Not much motivated due to the work pressure. Before PMAQ, the frontline worked slowly; PMAQ made the frontline work faster; the frontline was incentivised to do all PHC work. I have to work more and don’t get support. My motorcycle broke down, and I had to pay for the travels. I already pay for the paper, pen, sunblock...” (ACS04JABU02). In summary, low motivation levels are caused by a lack of working conditions or support and an overload of work.

The second driver noticed as important was the process of feedback, and it happens more in the 2 small cities in each state. The types of feedback most appreciated were feedback from managers within the team and both positive and negative feedback. Moreover, the biggest problem in the bigger cities was incomplete feedback or when the process was presented but not discussed.

GRAPH 2 - LEVEL OF POLICY FEEDBACK

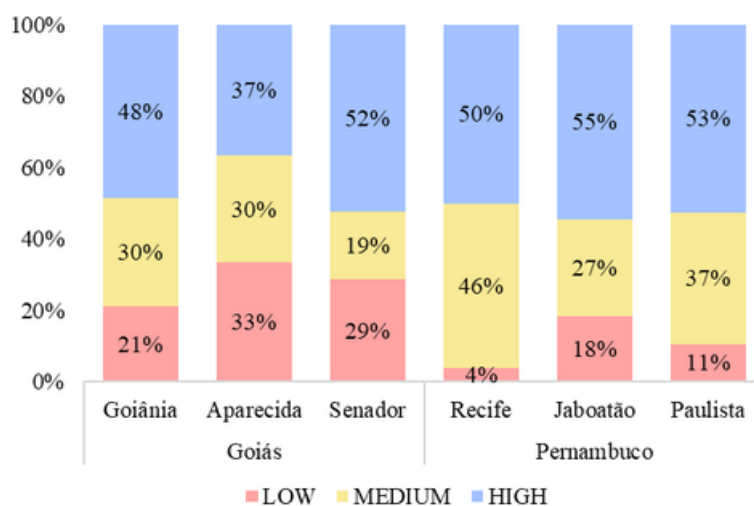


Source: elaborated by the authors (2024).

These problems were related to many frontline workers, and we can understand it from these two reports: “Feedback took too long to happen. They gave our score but didn’t discuss it with us. We want to discuss it and know how to do better. They do it all in hush for the money that comes from the government. Where can I find our data? Can you help me?” (NURSE10JABU03) and “The nurse told me the score. Moreover, that was all.” (CHW01GOIU04).

Despite these problems, as we can see in Graph 3, many respondents reported some good changes in the work process in both the workforce and leadership. The most important changes occurred in 1. reception, 2. team relationship and integration, 3. relationship with the community, 4. increased health agent visits (active search), 5. creation of books for registrations and health groups, and 7. more team meetings.

GRAPH 3 - LEVEL OF WORK CHANGE



Source: elaborated by the authors (2024).

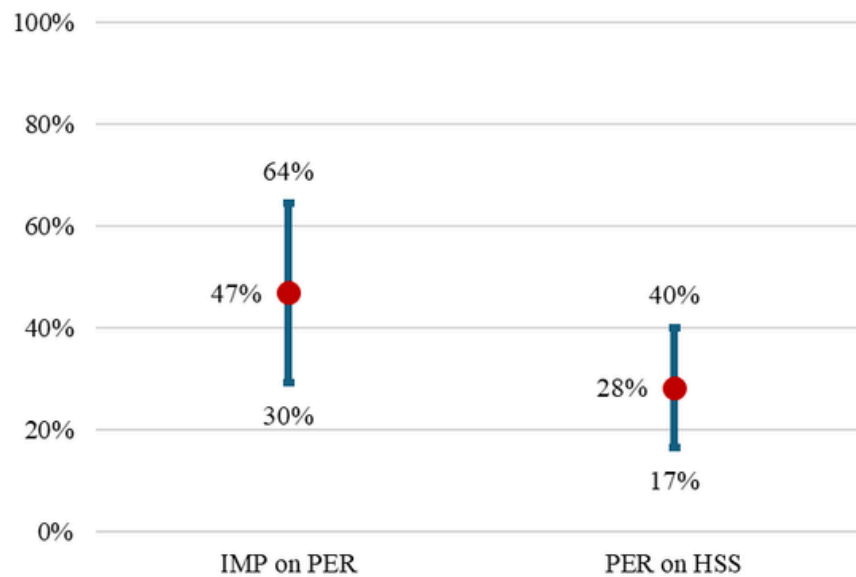
The change in the work process was more beneficial and perceived in Pernambuco and the small city of Goiás. This occurred because the processes are more organised and better structured in these places, so high levels of work change are more significant there.

B. Effects on the health system performance and strengthening

Qualitative analyses of crosstabulations and regressions show a significant relation between the three variables: implementation (IMP), performance (PER) and health system

strengthening (HSS). The tests for categorical data revealed a positive and statistically significant effect of implementation on performance and performance in strengthening the health system. The regression showed that the average effect in the first case is greater. However, the confidence intervals indicated that there was no significant difference. In fact, the result of the second indicator is more accurate.

GRAPH 4 - ESTIMATED EFFECTS BETWEEN IMP, PER AND HSS



Source: elaborated by the authors (2024).

In this way, we can see that higher levels of implementation drivers explain higher levels of performance drivers, and higher levels of performance drivers explain higher levels of systems strengthening, in both cases: workforce and leadership strengthening. Despite the mix of policy effects, managers and frontline interest/involvement explain the higher levels of system strengthening, and management, training tools, and strategies could foster sustainable development of PMAQ.

Final Considerations

This study highlights the critical role of effective policy implementation and feedback in strengthening health systems. Despite varying political and organisational capacities, in regions with better organisational structures and support, the PMAQ caused positive changes in work processes and performance, which were more evident, underscoring the importance of tailored management and training strategies.

The findings suggest that higher implementation drivers can significantly enhance performance

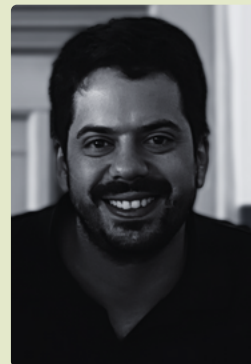
drivers, leading to stronger health systems. Effective leadership and workforce engagement are crucial for achieving these outcomes, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where resources and support structures may be limited. Policymakers should improve policy dissemination, feedback mechanisms, and organisational capacities to foster sustainable health system development.

More qualitative and policy process research is needed – there is a lack of studies focusing on the formulation. Public policy managers and implementers can use systematic qualitative evidence to learn how to improve leadership and strengthen the workforce. This would entail focusing on strategies that would improve policy drivers, such as policy knowledge and policy feedback at the front line of primary care. Research results can, therefore, be used to increase health professionals' knowledge about programs or implement a more sustainable evaluation/planning culture of their work at the front line. Future research should explore additional contextual variables and their impact on health policy outcomes, aiming to refine the indicators and methodologies used in this study. Addressing the identified limitations and expanding the scope to include other regions and health policies will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between health system strengthening and policy performance drivers.

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ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES: A CASE STUDY OF GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT IN PORTUGAL

FULL PAPER

Green public procurement involves government entities acquiring goods and services with a focus on sustainability and reducing environmental impact. This approach integrates environmental and social criteria into procurement processes, promoting responsible practices. This paper examines the evolution and implementation of green public procurement in Portugal, analyzing how government entities are incorporating environmental criteria in procurement processes. It highlights implications, challenges, and opportunities. The study analyzes current legislation and policies guiding green public procurement in Portugal, evaluating their impact on sustainability and environmental mitigation. It provides an overview of the current state and long-term sustainability implications, concluding with recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of green public procurement policies and practices in Portugal.

Introduction

Green public procurement refers to practices and policies for the acquisition of goods and services by government entities with a focus on sustainability and reducing environmental impact. This approach aims to integrate environmental and social criteria into public procurement processes, promoting more sustainable and responsible practices. Considering the importance of the topic described, this paper examines the evolution and implementation of green public procurement in Portugal in the legal context, analyzing how government entities in Portugal are integrating environmental criteria into the processes of acquiring goods and services, highlighting the implications, challenges and associated opportunities. The main elements associated with green public procurement include the integration of environmental criteria in the supplier selection and evaluation processes, considering the life cycle of products or services. Furthermore, it encourages preference for environmentally certified products and services, demonstrating the commitment to sustainable practices. Prioritizing energy efficiency when choosing products and services aims to reduce the consumption of natural resources. Green public procurement also stimulates sustainable innovation, favoring products and services with a lower environmental impact. Additionally, social responsibility is incorporated, including responsible social practices in the selection of suppliers, with special attention to working conditions and respect for human rights. We intend to analyze the current legislation and policies that guide green public procurement in Portugal, evaluating their impact on promoting sustainability and mitigating environmental impact. This study aims

“to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of green public procurement in Portugal and its implications for long-term sustainability. Finally, recommendations are presented to improve the effectiveness of green public procurement policies and practices in Portugal as a means of resolving complex political challenges.

Methodology

To conduct this research, the methodology employed uses a mixed approach that combines documentary research, content analysis, and case studies.

Documentary Research includes a Literature Review covering the search for existing academic literature on green public procurement, sustainability in public procurement, and social responsibility practices. It also involves the analysis of Legislation and Policies, where laws, regulations, and policies guiding green public procurement in Portugal were collected and examined, including government documents, official reports, and guidelines from regulatory bodies.

Content analysis was based on the evaluation of environmental and social criteria, analyzing how these criteria can be integrated into green public procurement processes in Portugal. This analysis includes the review of tender documents and procurement contracts published on the Portal Base.

Regarding case studies, this will be further explored in subsequent research. It aims to select representative cases by choosing various government entities that have implemented green public procurement practices for detailed study. In the future, interviews and questionnaires are planned to gain insights into practical implementation, challenges, and opportunities.

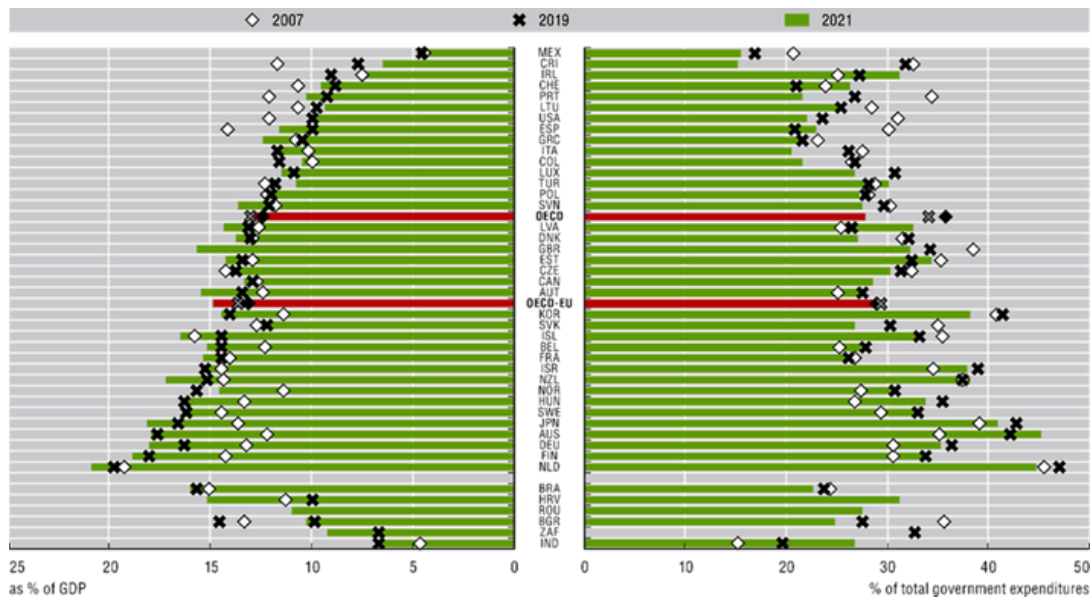
Results

The results are analyzed in 3 parts, namely: the size of public procurement, evolution of the legal framework for public procurement in Portugal, and the lowest price.

The size of public procurement

Over the past decade, public procurement spending as a percentage of GDP has risen notably across the OECD, going from 11.8% in 2007 to 12.9% in 2021. In recent years, there has been an additional increase in public procurement's GDP share. Specifically, in OECD-EU countries, it grew from 13.7% in 2019 to 14.8% in 2021, largely attributed to the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), a key element of Europe's recovery strategy that has stimulated public investment.(OCDE 2023)

FIGURE: GENERAL GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT SPENDING AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP AND TOTAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES, 2007, 2019 AND 2021



Source: OECD National Accounts Statistics (database). [StatLink https://stat.link/gq15r6](https://stat.link/gq15r6)

States and public administrations are consumer organizations of varied goods and services and they are at a European level among the entities with more purchase power. European Union (EU) estimates that public authorities expend annually about 16% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) purchasing goods and services, a situation that besides the financial costs also involves environmental costs.(Mira 2011)Reconsidering contracting authority as a means to direct that purchasing power for the acquisition of ecological products and services, which will contribute to reduce the environmental impact and to a sustainable economic development has been a major concern of the EU. Besides the general aim of reducing the environmental impact resulting from the consumption of public services, contracting authority has also an important role in the European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development.(Mira 2011)

Green public procurement is the public purchasing of products and services that are less environmentally damaging when taking into account their whole life cycle. Countries increasingly use GPP to achieve secondary policy objectives in the area of environmental protection. The OECD has been a forerunner in encouraging the development of Green public purchasing policies.(OCDE 2019)

Public procurement is used across all spending functions, from health to environmental protection, public order and economic affairs. As in previous years, Portugal spends more on Health and Economics affairs while spends only 4,3% in Environmental protection.

FIGURE: GENERAL GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT SPENDING BY FUNCTION AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PROCUREMENT SPENDING, 2021

Country	General public services	Defence	Public order and safety	Economic affairs	Environmental protection	Housing and community amenities	Health	Recreation, culture and religion	Education	Social protection
Austria	11.5	1.3	2.6	20.7	1.2	0.6	40.7	3.4	8.1	10.0
Belgium	11.8	2.1	2.1	12.8	2.9	1.1	47.6	2.6	6.5	10.5
Costa Rica	4.6	0.0	7.6	12.2	3.9	3.6	39.5	1.2	17.0	10.4
Czech Republic	7.9	3.1	4.1	22.3	5.1	3.0	36.7	4.6	9.0	4.1
Denmark	14.4	5.1	2.7	9.0	1.2	0.6	36.5	4.7	10.9	14.8
Estonia	8.8	9.7	4.2	18.9	3.0	2.6	27.5	6.3	14.3	4.7
Finland	22.2	3.8	2.0	12.2	0.6	1.4	24.7	3.6	11.3	18.2
France	7.2	5.9	2.6	12.5	4.1	3.4	41.9	4.1	5.9	12.3
Germany	11.2	3.9	3.1	9.1	1.9	1.0	42.9	3.2	6.5	17.1
Greece	15.1	8.7	1.6	15.1	4.4	1.7	38.4	3.3	7.1	4.6
Hungary	15.0	4.2	2.8	29.7	3.5	2.3	20.5	8.2	10.5	3.4
Iceland	10.0	0.5	4.0	18.8	2.6	2.2	27.0	9.0	18.0	7.8
Ireland	4.6	0.8	4.0	13.4	2.3	5.1	39.1	3.5	8.5	18.6
Israel	5.8	18.4	2.9	11.1	2.6	2.0	28.3	4.2	13.7	11.0
Italy	12.4	4.2	3.5	13.4	6.8	2.6	43.7	3.9	4.3	5.2
Japan	6.3	3.4	1.8	15.2	5.2	1.8	45.1	1.4	6.5	13.2
Korea	5.6	11.4	2.9	15.3	4.0	6.3	32.2	2.8	12.9	6.6
Latvia	6.4	12.2	4.9	20.7	2.4	5.2	26.1	4.5	13.3	4.3
Lithuania	7.0	8.4	3.5	18.3	3.5	4.3	32.1	5.6	11.5	5.9
Luxembourg	13.2	1.4	2.9	21.4	4.6	2.2	23.6	5.0	7.8	17.9
Netherlands	5.5	3.0	3.5	11.3	4.6	1.4	35.3	3.2	8.3	23.7
Norway	10.0	7.8	2.6	21.9	3.8	3.7	27.4	4.6	9.4	8.9
Poland	5.3	5.7	4.6	26.7	2.7	3.6	32.1	5.6	10.0	3.7
Portugal	11.9	2.4	3.1	20.2	4.3	4.0	37.0	4.8	8.3	4.0
Slovak Republic	9.4	4.6	3.9	23.2	4.0	2.7	39.6	3.4	7.1	2.1
Slovenia	10.0	3.2	3.3	23.3	3.1	3.5	33.7	5.0	10.4	4.7
Spain	9.7	3.5	2.8	16.1	6.4	2.8	33.7	5.1	10.9	9.0
Sweden	17.7	5.2	2.9	13.5	2.2	2.7	23.7	3.6	15.3	13.2
Switzerland	21.4	5.5	5.5	14.8	3.9	1.5	6.7	2.8	18.2	19.7
United Kingdom	3.1	9.7	6.2	11.8	3.6	2.6	37.9	2.2	9.2	13.8
United States	10.7	20.2	6.4	21.9	0.0	2.4	16.3	1.6	16.4	4.1
OECD	9.2	9.9	4.2	16.4	2.7	2.4	31.9	2.7	10.7	9.8
OECD-EU	10.2	4.2	3.1	13.7	3.6	2.2	39.0	3.9	7.6	12.5
Bulgaria	7.3	7.2	4.0	13.8	5.7	8.4	37.4	2.8	10.8	2.6
Croatia	8.9	2.5	5.2	23.5	3.7	4.5	33.5	4.7	9.8	3.7
Romania	9.1	5.3	2.6	29.5	4.3	8.3	27.5	4.0	6.1	3.4

Source: OECD National Accounts Statistics (database); Eurostat Government Finance Statistics (database). [StatLink https://stat.link/lptwg7](https://stat.link/lptwg7)

The evolution of the legal framework for public procurement in Portugal

The Portuguese initiatives are based on European Directives. It started in 2007, as a guide, until becoming mandatory criteria.

The National Strategy for Ecological Public Procurement, approved by Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 65/2007, of May 7, for the period 2008 -2010, constituted a relevant guiding instrument, with a significant impact on the national purchasing system (SNCP), in the integration of environmental criteria in framework agreements for transversal categories of goods and services and, consequently, in the contracting processes triggered by public entities.(PRESIDÊNCIA DO CONSELHO DE MINISTROS 2023)

In 2016, the National Strategy for Ecological Public Procurement 2020 (ENCPE 2020) was defined, approved by Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 38/2016, of July 29, which now has a more comprehensive and effective impact, covering a greater number of acquisition procedures and enhancing their application to entities under direct and indirect administration of the State, the State's business sector and, also, on a voluntary basis, the autonomous administration and other legal entities governed by public law.

One of the main tasks of ENCPE 2020 was the adaptation to the national context of the manuals referring to the priority products and services covered by this strategy, through the constitution of thematic and interdisciplinary working groups created for this purpose, which constituted the bases for the introduction of criteria ecological in public

acquisitions of products, services and public works contracts, operationalizing ecological public contracting (CPE) within the scope of the activity carried out by public administration.

More recently, in the amendment to the public procurement law promoted by Law no. 30/2021, of May 21, a greater and more adequate integration of environmental considerations into public procurement procedures was introduced.

Specifically, the changes envisaged in the most relevant Portuguese public procurement law ensured the provision of conditions for the execution of contracts and factors for evaluating proposals in line with the fundamental concerns of the CPE and which go further than previously established, namely in subject of:

- a) Environmental sustainability, in particular with regard to transport time and availability of the product or service, especially in the case of perishable products
- b) Energy efficiency, in particular, energy supply;
- c) Promotion of the circular economy and short distribution circuits, ensuring efficiency in the use of materials and the reduction of environmental impacts;
- d) Use of products from organic production

The lowest price

Various stages of the public procurement and the implementation procedure can become more ecological (Gomes & Caldeira, 2017) :

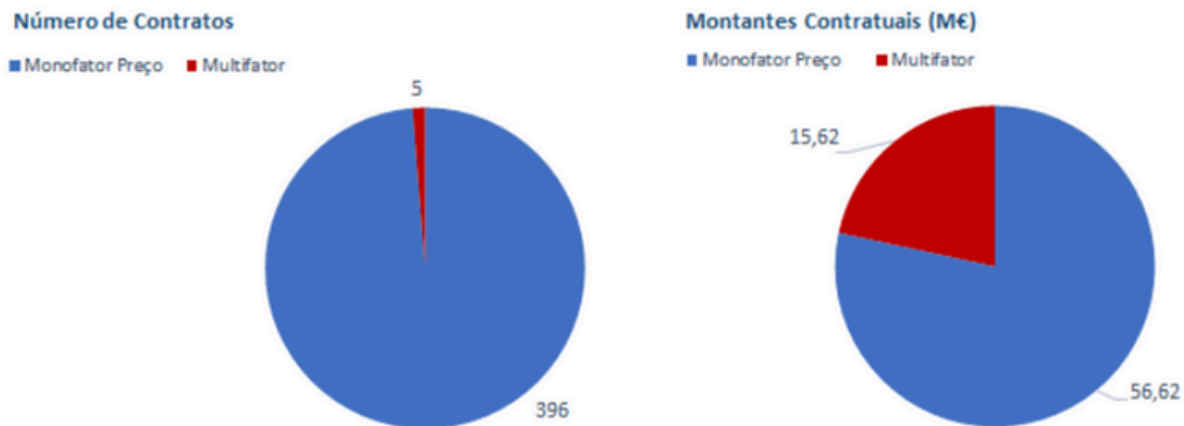
- (i) Decision to hire
- (ii) Method of contracting
- (iii) Object of the contract
- (iv) Type of pre-contractual procedure to be adopted
- (v) Characteristics of economic operators
- (vi) Technical specifications
- (vii) Analysis (and exclusion) of proposals
- (viii) Variant proposals
- (ix) Evaluation of proposals
- (x) Execution of the contract

In this article we will only emphasize the aspect of evaluating proposals. The principle “best value for money” is fundamental. This increases the competition, but the most sustainable solutions are not the cheapest. The modalities of awarding criteria are two: single-factor and multifactor. The single-factor is the lowest price.

According to the report on public procurement in Portugal in 2022 (Instituto dos Mercados Públicos 2023). In a sample of tender procedures (based on the advertisement)

and whose contracts were celebrated in 2022, it was found that 98.8% only had price as an evaluation factor in their awarding method. These contracts corresponded to 78.4% of contractual amounts.

FIGURE: TYPE OF AWARD IN OPEN PROCEDURES (PUBLIC AND LIMITED COMPETITIONS)

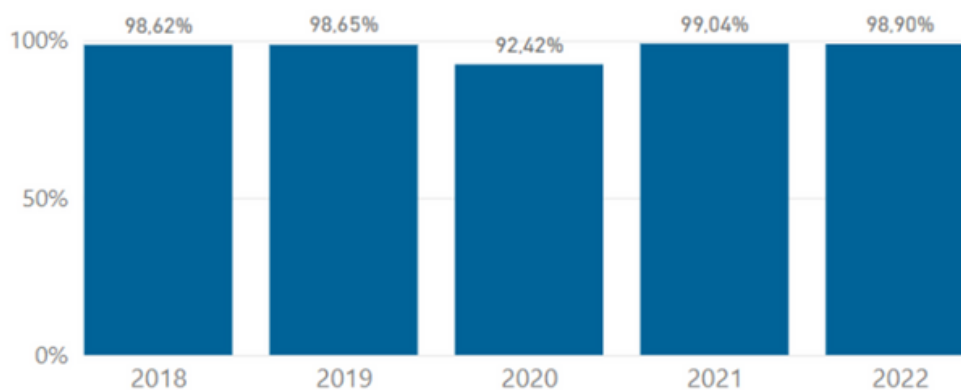


Source: Portal Base (October 2023)

In 2023, the trend observed in previous years continued, which points to timid representation in the use of the multifactor modality.

Even in a multifactor modality, the price factor is relevant. Comparing the procedures in which the proposal assessment factor was only price, with other procedures in which the price factor, was not the only assessment factor, the price represented more than half of the weighting. We conclude that in 98.9% of the tender procedures, price was the determining and majority weighting factor (Instituto dos Mercados Públicos 2023).

Figure: Percentage of the number of contracts in which the single factor price or cost had preponderance majority



Source: Portal Base (October 2023)

Conclusions

Public procurement has become strategic for governments that aim at economic efficiency and the promotion of social and environmental well-being. Public procurement has become an instrument of administrative action to satisfy collective needs, with great relevance in the national budget.

At first it was seen with suspicion, due to fears of disruption of the principles of competition and transparency in the Law of public procurement; however, the European Union's growing involvement in fighting global warming, in which public authorities should lead by example, makes the field of public procurement especially permeable to the introduction of eco-criteria in its various stages and implementation procedure.

The main obstacles that lead states not to exploit the full potential of these contracts were (Rodrigues 2014):

- Limited environmental criteria established for products/services – and when these exist, they are often insufficient for their dissemination;
- Insufficient information on calculating the cost of the entire product cycle and the relative costs of environmentally friendly products/services;
- Insufficient awareness of the benefits of environmentally friendly products and services;
- Uncertainty about the legal possibilities of including environmental criteria in specifications;
- Lack of political support and consequently limited resources for the implementation and promotion of green public procurement (especially better training);
- Lack of a coordinated exchange of best practices and information between regions and local authorities.

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BREAKING THE SILENCE: INVESTIGATING SEGREGATION AND DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION FOR MINORITY YOUTH IN ALBANIA

FULL PAPER

This qualitative study aims to investigate the educational challenges faced by minority youth in Albania, with a specific focus on the Roma and Egyptian communities. The primary objective is to understand the perceptions of youth aged 14-20 regarding discrimination and segregation within the educational system.

A qualitative approach was employed using focus group discussions as the primary data collection method. Four focus groups were conducted during March-April 2023, involving 32 participants from the Roma and Egyptian minority groups. The discussions were designed to explore these youth's lived experiences and perspectives concerning educational opportunities, discrimination, and segregation in Albania.

The findings reveal a high level of discrimination and segregation experienced by Roma and Egyptian youth within the Albanian educational system. Participants expressed concerns about unequal access to educational resources, limited opportunities for advancement, and instances of social exclusion. The themes emerging from the data shed light on systemic issues perpetuating the marginalization of these minority groups.

The study highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the pervasive discrimination and segregation faced by Roma and Egyptian minority youth in Albania.

Policymakers, educators, and community leaders should collaborate to develop inclusive policies, promote cultural sensitivity, and create equal educational opportunities for all youth, regardless of ethnic background.

Introduction

Education is often hailed as the great equalizer, providing opportunities for personal growth, socio-economic advancement, and societal integration [Gomberg,2007; AlKharouf, Reem, et al., 2024; Jung, 2024]. However, for minority youth in many parts of the world, including Albania, this promise remains elusive as they continue to face significant barriers within the educational system [Ahlbäck,& Kasper, 2023; Elbahlawan, 2023]. Among these minority groups, the Roma and Egyptian communities stand out as particularly vulnerable, grappling with discrimination and segregation that hinder their educational prospects and

perpetuate cycles of marginalization [Alexiadou, 2023]. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the need to investigate and address the unique challenges faced by minority youth in accessing quality education [Dervishi et al., 2022]. While Albania has made strides in expanding educational opportunities for its citizens, disparities persist, particularly for marginalized groups. Understanding the lived experiences and perceptions of minority youth is essential for identifying the root causes of these disparities and formulating effective interventions to promote inclusivity and equity in education [Dervishi et al., 2023].

Albania has undergone a remarkable transformation since the fall of communism, evolving from one of Europe's poorest nations to an upper-middle-income economy. However, this progress has been accompanied by persistent challenges, particularly concerning the economic situation and social dynamics within the country [Giakoumis, 2020].

Despite improvements in various sectors, including education, Albania continues to grapple with an unstable economic situation. This instability has contributed to ongoing issues such as poverty, which disproportionately affects marginalized communities, including the Roma and Egyptian minority youth [Uka et al., 2021]. Economic hardship often leads to school dropout rates among these youth, further perpetuating cycles of inequality and limiting their opportunities for socio-economic advancement [Dervishi et al., 2021].

Moreover, discrimination and marginalization remain pervasive issues faced by Roma and Egyptian minority youth in Albania. Segregation in schools, as highlighted in the European Commission's 2023 report, underscores the systemic challenges that these communities encounter within the educational system. This segregation not only limits their access to quality education but also reinforces social inequalities and hampers their integration into broader society.

The challenges faced by Roma and Egyptian minority youth are exacerbated by their status as hard-to-reach populations, which often results in reduced inclusion and participation in research and intervention efforts aimed at addressing their needs [Miconi et al., 2021]. This lack of visibility,

and engagement further compounds the existing disparities and perpetuates social and health inequalities within these communities.

Furthermore, media portrayal of minority communities, including Roma and Egyptians, often exacerbates stigma and discrimination, singling them out as sanitary threats, particularly in the context of public health crises [Della Porta, 2022]. Such negative

representations contribute to social exclusion and exacerbate pre-existing disparities, making it increasingly difficult for Roma and Egyptian minority youth to navigate and thrive within Albanian society.

In light of these challenges, concerted efforts are needed to address the systemic barriers and inequalities that hinder the socio-economic inclusion of Roma and Egyptian minority youth in Albania.

This qualitative study seeks to delve into the educational landscape for Roma and Egyptian youth in Albania, shedding light on the complex interplay of factors contributing to their marginalization within the educational system. By employing focus group discussions as the primary method of data collection, we aim to capture the voices and perspectives of these youth, providing valuable insights into their experiences of discrimination, segregation, and limited access to educational resources.

Through a nuanced exploration of the challenges faced by Roma and Egyptian youth, this study aims to inform policy and practice initiatives aimed at fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational environment in Albania. By engaging with the voices of marginalized youth, we hope to catalyze meaningful change that dismantles barriers to education and empowers all young people to realize their full potential, irrespective of their ethnic background.

Method

The study included 32 adolescents aged 14 to 20 years old, comprising 14 girls and 18 boys. Among the participants, there were 16 Roma and 16 Egyptian youth. The mean age of the participants was 14.71 years, with a standard deviation of 2.00 years. Notably, four participants were married, and two participants had children. Additionally, ten participants had dropped out of school at the time of the study.

The study employed a collaborative community-based approach, involving four community organizations located in two cities across Albania. Four focus groups were conducted, each lasting between 60 to 90 minutes. The data collection took place during March-April 2023.

Two facilitators led each focus group: one Albanian researcher/psychologist and a cultural mediator. The facilitators ensured that the discussions were conducted in a culturally sensitive and inclusive manner, allowing all participants to express their perspectives and experiences.

The data obtained from the focus group discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Qualitative thematic analysis was utilized to identify recurring

themes and patterns within the participants' narratives. This analytical approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the participants' perceptions regarding their educational experiences within Albanian schools and the ways in which school policies and practices contribute to segregation and discrimination.

Thematic analysis involved coding the transcribed data to extract meaningful themes and sub-themes, which were then organized and interpreted to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of Roma and Egyptian minority youth in Albania. By employing this methodological approach, the study aimed to uncover the nuanced complexities surrounding educational segregation and discrimination and provide a platform for amplifying the voices of marginalized youth within the Albanian educational system.

Results

Qualitative thematic analysis revealed several recurring themes and patterns within the narratives of the participants, providing insights into their perceptions of educational experiences and the systemic factors contributing to segregation and discrimination within Albanian schools.

1. Educational Opportunities

- Participants expressed profound challenges related to educational opportunities, primarily stemming from financial hardship, isolation, and uncertainty. Many described experiencing a lack of access to essentials such as food and support, which impacted their motivation and sense of belonging within the educational system. Mental health issues, including feelings of humiliation, low self-esteem, and hopelessness, were also prevalent among the participants.
- One participant highlighted the pervasive sense of hopelessness among minority youth, emphasizing the systemic barriers they face in accessing opportunities for advancement: "There are not many opportunities not only in our neighborhood but in all of Albania there is no opportunity to move forward because we are not white and no matter how much we finish and the courses and schools again 'zero with a tail' are all these things." (female, 15 years old)

2. Conflicting Issues/Discrimination and Segregation

- Discrimination and segregation emerged as significant themes within the participants' narratives, reflecting experiences of oppression, marginalization, and assimilation. Many participants described feeling undervalued and marginalized by the broader community, citing prevalent prejudices and discriminatory attitudes toward minority groups.

- Participants expressed frustration and disillusionment with the societal attitudes and lack of opportunities for social integration, with some expressing a desire to leave Albania due to perceived systemic injustices: "I will not do anything to change the society. I will not deal with it at all because it is not worth it. I want to leave Albania and never come back here. This country values no one." (male, 18 years old)
- Additionally, participants recounted instances of direct discrimination and verbal abuse, highlighting the pervasive nature of discriminatory attitudes within their communities and institutions: "They underestimate us a lot for everything, they have always told us what they thought, only white hand, there are many." (male, 17 years old); "Forgive me but why are you cursing me, I am going home in the middle of the city and you go in the middle of the village, why are you insulting me, that you have nothing more than me, you at school and I at school, I dress like you even I can dress more luxuriously than you why you are insulting me, but not worth dealing with." (female, 17 years old)

These findings underscore the complex interplay of socio-economic factors, institutional practices, and societal attitudes that contribute to the marginalization and discrimination experienced by Roma and Egyptian minority youth within the Albanian educational system.

Conclusion

The qualitative thematic analysis of the narratives provided by the participants offers profound insights into the educational experiences of Roma and Egyptian minority youth in Albania, unveiling the systemic factors perpetuating segregation and discrimination within the educational system.

The participants articulated significant challenges concerning educational opportunities, particularly highlighting financial hardship, isolation, and uncertainty. Many participants expressed a sense of hopelessness, emphasizing the systemic barriers hindering their access to opportunities for advancement. The pervasive lack of access to basic essentials such as food and support further compounded their struggles, impacting their motivation and sense of belonging within the educational environment. Mental health issues, including feelings of humiliation, low self-esteem, and hopelessness, were prevalent among the participants, reflecting the profound impact of socio-economic disparities on their educational experiences.

Discrimination and segregation emerged as central themes within the participants' narratives, illustrating experiences of oppression, marginalization, and assimilation. The

participants described feeling undervalued and marginalized by the broader community, citing prevalent prejudices and discriminatory attitudes toward minority groups. Frustration and disillusionment with societal attitudes and the lack of opportunities for social integration were evident, with some participants expressing a desire to leave Albania due to perceived systemic injustices. Instances of direct discrimination and verbal abuse were recounted, highlighting the pervasive nature of discriminatory attitudes within their communities and institutions.

These findings underscore the complex interplay of socio-economic factors, institutional practices, and societal attitudes that contribute to the marginalization and discrimination experienced by Roma and Egyptian minority youth within the Albanian educational system. The participants' narratives shed light on the profound challenges they face in accessing quality education and navigating an educational environment fraught with systemic barriers. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive interventions aimed at dismantling structural inequalities, promoting inclusivity, and fostering a culture of respect and acceptance within Albanian schools and communities by involving others structures:

Policymakers should prioritize the creation and implementation of inclusive policies that ensure equal access to educational resources for all students, regardless of their ethnic background. This includes allocating funding to improve educational infrastructure and provide necessary support services to minority communities

Educational programs should be designed to promote cultural sensitivity and awareness among students and staff. This can be achieved through professional development for teachers, inclusive curriculum design, and extracurricular activities that celebrate cultural diversity.

Efforts should be made to remove barriers to educational advancement for minority youth. This includes providing scholarships, mentorship programs, and career counseling tailored to the needs of Roma and Egyptian students. Schools should also offer additional support to students facing financial hardships to ensure they have the necessary resources to succeed.

Community leaders and organizations should work collaboratively with schools to create a supportive environment for minority students. This involves engaging with parents and families to foster a community-wide commitment to education and inclusion.

Schools and educational institutions should enforce strict anti-discrimination policies and create mechanisms for reporting and addressing incidents of discrimination and harassment. This will help to create a safe and welcoming environment for all students.

By amplifying the voices and experiences of marginalized youth and implementing these recommendations, we can work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive educational environment in Albania. This will enable all youth to thrive and fulfill their potential, irrespective of their ethnic background.

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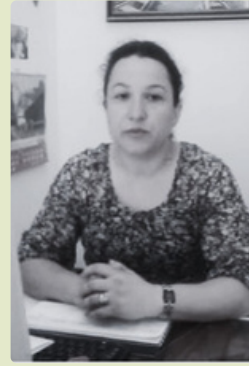
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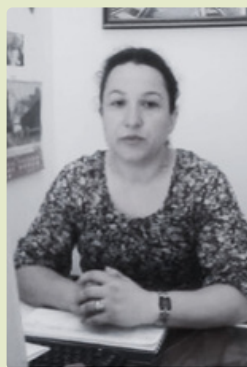


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EVALUATION AND "DOS AND DON'TS" WHEN CREATING SOCIAL COHESION INITIATIVES: THE CASE OF SOCIAL COHESION INITIATIVE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

FULL PAPER

This paper aims to contribute to existing literature on evaluation of social cohesion initiatives in respect to main limitations and lessons learned for evaluation practices of such type of initiatives. Using a case study of Final evaluation of the project: "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Enhancing social cohesion in communities hosting people on the move" implemented by International Organization for Migration (IOM) in period April 2021 to March 2023, the authors will provide guidance for general evaluation of social cohesion initiatives and projects. The paper will address theoretical background on social cohesion initiative and projects evaluation, following the presentation of main obstacles and recommendation on how to approach evaluations of social cohesion initiatives in light of OECD DAC standards and guidelines.

The author would like to acknowledge and express deep appreciation to IOM BiH mission and IOM staff working on the project "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Enhancing social cohesion in communities hosting people on the move", namely Ms. Dženana Šabić Hamidović, National Project Officer and Amra Kurbegović, Senior Project Assistant/Coordinator for providing the consent and the support in the publication of this article.

Introduction

While, there is still an academic debate on how on its definition, UNECE (2023) considers that social cohesion broadly refers to the strength of bonds or social distance between societal members. Social cohesion is often referred as the "glue" or "bond" that bring people together in society, particularly in the context of cultural diversity. It is a multi-dimensional concept, which according to OECD (2011) covers several dimensions at once: sense of belonging and active participation, trust, inequality, exclusion and mobility. It is worth to mention that promotion of social cohesion is requirement under the UN SDGs, namely SDG 5 - Achieving gender equality and empower all girls and women, SDG 10 - Reducing inequalities among and within countries, SDG 11 - Making cities and human settlement inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and SDG 16 - Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. To that end, social cohesion is highly prioritized among government and strongly supported by international organization as well as civil society sector.

Manca, A.R. (2014) defines social cohesion as a social process which aims to consolidate plurality of citizenship by reducing inequality and socioeconomic disparities and fractures in the society. Process of inclusion of minority groups in the society, especially when those minority excluded groups are migrant, asylum seekers and refugees who do not share similar cultural background can be rather complex task. To that end, initiatives needs to be properly assessed in order to improve projects focused on strengthening the social cohesion between migrant, asylum seekers and refugee's, and host communities.

The paper is two folded. First, the paper addresses theoretical background on social cohesion interventions evaluations, following the presentation of main obstacles and recommendation on how to approach evaluations of social cohesion initiatives in light of OEDC DAC standards and guidelines. Second, based on the case study, this paper will provide lessons learned and recommendation for policy makers when how to approach creating social cohesion initiatives.

This paper aims to contribute to poor existing literature on evaluation of social cohesion initiatives in respect to main limitations and lessons learned for evaluation practices of such type of initiatives following some insights in how to create successful social cohesion initiative. Using a case study of final evaluation of the project: "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Enhancing social cohesion in communities hosting people on the move" implemented by International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the author aims to provide guidance for general evaluation of social cohesion initiatives and projects and establishing sound M&E frames for monitoring implementation of initiatives.

Research methodology: methodological approach and data used

This research is using qualitative approach in addressing the research problem and it is based on the case study method combined with the literature review of the existing literature addressing the issues in social cohesion programs/projects/initiatives evaluations with specific focus on social cohesion of migrant population.

The theoretical background on social cohesion initiatives evaluation is drown from existing literature and expert opinions. The case study is used to provide in depth exploration of the particular program on social cohesion initiative implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As this a case study, the main source of data is the Final evaluation report on the project: "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Enhancing social cohesion in communities hosting people on the move" implemented by International Organization for Migration (IOM). The evaluation is complete by The Centre for Development Evaluation and Social Science Research(CREDI).

The main limitation of the proposed methodology is the fact that it is based on the case study, but it can provide some guidelines when evaluation complex initiatives with multiple donors and stakeholder.

Review on evaluation of social cohesion initiatives

The general framework for conducting evaluation of any type of interventions, such as project, programme, policy, strategy, thematic area, technical assistance, policy advice, an institution, financing mechanism, instrument, or other activity is defined in OECD/DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance[1]. OECD/DAC criteria's acts as the golden standard of evaluation, and it is usually complemented with the requirements of donors for whom the evaluation is being carried out. The two main principles governing use of OECD/DAC criterions are: (1) the need of contextualisation of the criteria's used for evaluation of particular intervention in terms identifying applicable evaluation question that fits the needs of the evaluation and the needs of the stakeholder, and (2) the need to use the criteria's depending on the purpose of the evaluation set by the donor and the resources (financial and human) dedicate to conducting evaluation. To expand on OECD/DAC criteria's, evaluator might additionally evaluate four cross-cutting themes – good governance, the environment/sustainable development, human rights and gender equality.[1]

When evaluating social cohesion interventions, one should have in mind that social cohesion initiatives/interventions are focused on integration and inclusion of different vulnerable groups into the societal mainstreams, and should be evaluated in light of the specifics of each vulnerable group. In particular the following groups are most commonly in the risk of social exclusion:

- **Children and Youth:** Social cohesion initiatives for children and youth involves creating an environment where they feel valued and have access to the same opportunities as their peers. This includes access to quality education, healthcare, and recreational activities.
- **Old people:** For the old people, social cohesion initiatives are focused on ensuring that old people are not isolated and have opportunities for social interaction, which can be achieved through community programs, accessible healthcare, and support networks.
- **People with Disabilities:** Social cohesion initiatives for people with disabilities involves removing barriers to participation in society, including physical accessibility, non-discriminatory policies, and inclusive education and employment opportunities.
- **Low-Income Individuals:** For low-income individuals, social cohesion initiatives involve

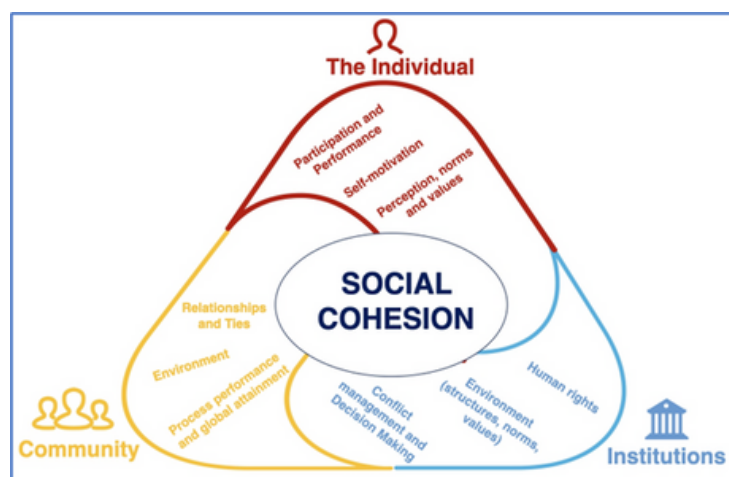
government) socio-economic measures addressing income disparities and providing equal access to resources and opportunities through social welfare programs, affordable housing initiatives, and job training programs.

- Migrant population: For migrant population, social cohesion initiatives includes different type of program of migrant assimilation into different culture.

To ensure sound social cohesion initiative(s), there has to be interconnections and relations between different societal units such as individuals, groups (community) and institutions (government and nongovernment) which is depicted in Figure 1. Cohesiveness is created from connections based on a shared sense of belonging and attachment, similar values, trust and a sense of 'social solidarity'. (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005). Understanding interconnections among different units, is key to creating social coherence interventions that works.

Furthermore, evaluating social cohesion intervention concerning social cohesion of migrant population (people on the move) needs to take into the account their specifics. Migrants often face unique challenges in achieving social cohesion due to language barriers, cultural differences, and discrimination. Some examples of achieving social cohesion for migrants can be facilitated through: language and cultural education: providing language classes and cultural education can help migrants better understand and integrate into their new society, inclusive policies: policies that promote inclusivity and equality can help ensure migrants have the same rights and opportunities as native residents, community engagement: encouraging community engagement can help migrants form social connections and feel a sense of belonging in their new community, and support services: providing support services such as legal aid, healthcare, and employment assistance can help migrants navigate their new society and overcome challenges.

FIGURE 1 SOCIAL COHESION FRAMEWORK



Source: Tropp, L. R. and L. Morhayim, 2022, p. 5

Evaluating social cohesion initiatives: Lessons learned for the case of IOM social cohesion intervention concerning people on the move in Bosnia and Herzegovina

As the migrant population is rather sensitive group when it comes to implementation of social cohesion initiatives, it is important to take in the consideration all specific issues arising when a migrant(s) are present in a community. Their presence increases tensions within the community's due to the sense of fear, distrust or unsafety and it decrees social cohesion within the community. To that end, communities hosting people on the move are in risk of decline in social cohesion that should be addressed by the local and state governments.

The context and description of the IOM social cohesion intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina

From the 2017, BiH has become one of the main transit points for refugees and migrants from northern Africa, the Middle East and Asia to reach the European Union (EU). Over 72.000 migrants was registered in BiH between 20017-2021 (see Figure 2) with an average of 6,000 to 9,000 people have been present in the country at any given time, mostly located in the Temporary Reception Centres (TRCs) in the region of Canton Sarajevo and Una-Sana Canton, which is close to the Croatian border (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 2 MIGRANT ARRIVALS RECORDED IN BIH

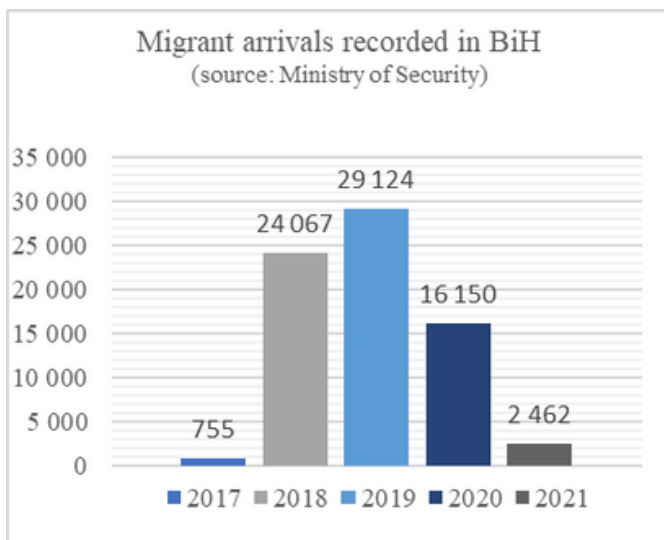


FIGURE 3 MAP OF RECEPTION CENTRES AND AREAS WITH HIGH PRESENCE OF PEOPLE ON THE MOVE OUTSIDE OFFICIAL RECEPTION FACILITIES



Source: IOM Project proposal document, 2020.

In the first years of their arrival, most of the citizens showed solidarity with the refugees since Bosnians have experienced being refugees in the past. But in the light of COVID 19 pandemic and with several security incidents in and around TRCs, the sentiment changed. Since the state authorities have initially demonstrated a very weak will and capacity to coordinate the migration response, especially when it comes to addressing the situation in the North-West of the country, the IOM and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) joined their effort to provide local government in BiH cantons hosting large communities of migrant help to cope with the increased sense of insecurity expressed among the local population. IOM implemented an intervention to respond to “the increase of tensions and anti-migrant sentiments in local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) that are hosting large numbers of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees in heavily COVID-impacted times, in particular in the areas around Sarajevo and in Una Sana Canton (USC). The Action aims to address fears of the local population and establish a dialogue between migration management actors, local community representatives, central government stakeholders, common citizens and representatives of the migrant and refugee community, with a view to finding solutions to address the main causes of these tensions (public health and safety concerns, lack of dialogue, biased media reporting, impact on local communities' budget and services)” (IOM Project proposal document, 2020).

The overall objective of IOM intervention was to contribute to enhance social cohesion in communities hosting refugees and migrants and enable a response to the migration emergency that benefits people on the move and BiH citizens alike. Under this overall objective, the project aimed to achieve three intended outcomes, which can be observed from developed comprehensive Theory-of-Change with three following outcomes:

- 1.Reduce risks to public health and safety in local communities hosting a large refugee and migrant population;
- 2.Improve citizens' perceptions and attitudes towards migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees; and
- 3.Foster a change of narrative over refugee and migrant issues in the media and public discourse.

The evaluation approach undertaken by the evaluation team

The main purpose of the final external evaluation of above mentioned IOM intervention

was to provide an impartial view of the project in terms of achieving the results, quality of performance, management of the project focusing also on a multi-partner contribution, and synergies with other similar projects. External evaluation was conducted in line with OCED DAC criteria, as requested by the donor: the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and/or sustainability of the project. The evaluation considers cross-cutting issues including gender, conflict sensitivity, and human rights.

The evaluation was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, utilizing a non-experimental design and drawing from diverse sources. The evaluation team collected quantitative and qualitative data concurrently. The evaluation team reviewed all available project documentation. The evaluation team conducted nine (9) onsite and online semi-structured interviews using the KII protocols approved as part of the Inception report. Key informant interviews were conducted with different representatives/stakeholders. The evaluation team conducted four focus group discussions with members of four communities where the project was implemented.

During the implementation of the project, IOM and implementing partners have been collecting information about attendance rate, media posts reach and engagement, success stories, PULSE survey (endline and baseline), vaccination interest survey, health institutions capacity assessment equipment. These databases were used to assess effectiveness, impact and relevance of project interventions. The online survey was designed to complement findings about the perceptions and views of key stakeholders. In collaboration with the IOM staff, the evaluation team remodeled the PULSE questionnaire (used for collecting baseline data about social cohesion in targeted communities).

Lessons Learned: Guidelines for social cohesion initiatives

Social cohesion initiatives are rather complex in nature due to the very divergent groups with different and specific needs that are to be included. In general, the UNDP Guidance Note UNDP (2020) pointed out several key limitations when creating and assessing social cohesion initiatives that should be kept in mind. Those are the following:

- Social cohesion is a complex, multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept. Social cohesion projects need to have strong contextual bases for different groups and different countries (regions). It needs to be contextualized within the (long-term) historical, cultural as well as political terms of the region. Also, it has to be taken into consideration whether the social cohesion may arise from economic exchanges and interdependence.

- No single theory of change exists for strengthening social cohesion, the peacebuilding perspective offers important insights into practice. Theories of change in social cohesion programming are linked to the peacebuilding perspective. Holistic approaches to change in social relationships, networks and institutions require a local and participatory approach that includes locally led, long-term, and both bottom-up and top-down perspectives (UNDP, 2020).

- The main challenge of measuring social cohesion is establishing a baseline and indicators. To that end, there has to be proper methodology in place. The mixed methods are often advised for

measuring social cohesion with more emphasis on qualitative research, rather than quantitative, such as perception surveys and needs assessments.

Guidelines for policy makers

The proposed guidelines for policy makers include some recommendation for development of theory of change, project design and M&E framework development, communication and stakeholders' engagement, project intervention operations, and ensuring sustainability.

Developing a Theory of Change (ToC). The starting point to develop a relevant and coherent social cohesion initiative is to draw a clear Theory-of-Change (ToC). ToC is starting point for initiative development as well as for the evaluation purposes. Moreover, due to the fact that in order to evaluate the initiative, the evaluator is first to draw the ToC of the project and verify it against the existing theoretical concepts as well as the previous expertise. According to Sullivan (2011), ToC approach begins by examining the needs and resources of a local community, identifying long-term goals that will meet these needs, specifying a range of interventions (activities, processes, projects) that will lead to these goals, articulating the rationale for each of these interventions and then prospectively specifying short-, medium- and long-term milestones on the way to goal achievement.

In order to ensure proper ToC development, IOM staff has conducted numerous community dialogs sessions in the local communities hosting people on the move to better understand the needs of local residents as well as several rounds of consultations with representatives of the local communities that are most affected by the migratory route were organized to better understand the needs and problems faced by the local communities connected with the presence of beneficiaries as well as to map the potential activities that would improve citizens' perceptions and attitudes towards beneficiaries. Overall project design enabled conception of direct project outputs after community dialogues, thus providing channel for continuous adaptation of project approach to community challenges. Community interventions were selected in a consultative manner and based on the defined criteria.

Project design and M&E framework - Project design and M&E framework is of the great importance for tracking the progress of the social cohesion initiatives, where the main focus should be on developing adequate SMART indicators for output, outcome and impact. The social cohesion dimension to measure: Trust (in other person, in institutions), Belonging (a common or shared destiny), Inclusion in economic, social and political spheres, Interdependence, or mutual reliance in economic networks or social interactions,

Human security, or perceptions of safety and satisfaction, Negative stereotypes, Intergroup anxiety, Social distance, Perceptions of social threat, Positive feeling, Cultural distance Propensity for forgiveness, Intergroup contact.

Indicators should be measurable over time. It is imperative to ensure baseline data collection. IOM intervention included collection of baseline data through survey PULSE that captured perceptions of local residents in communities where intervention was implemented, and in the control communities. This allowed evaluators to quantitatively capture the change in the perception of local residents over time.

Index-type assessment is often use to measure some overall change in aggregate manner, but “can be risky because stakeholders may use the data or analysis for political purposes”. An index approach may also be criticized as representing only an outsider’s observations. Some of the key findings and recommendations in IOM interventions in regards to M&E framework were:

- Original Results Framework has several indicators with target values set to “to be determined”. At the revision stage, targets were set for these indicators. However, these targets were significantly lower than the accomplished outputs. This could be the result of several factors but most likely incoherent budget and activity planning. In the future, targets should be set in accordance with proposed budget lines for the achievement of those outputs.

- Some indicators of change are over simplified. E.g. number of host communities that received assistance through the Action. To adequately track achievement of results, information about number of actions implemented, number of participants, opinion about implemented actions and achieved changes would validate achievement of the result at higher level.

- Description of indicators such as “Number of beneficiaries reached with health promotion programming, including testing advisory by this Action” could be additionally described to be clearer. Interim report counts number of rapid antigen testing, PCR tests, and PPR kits under this indicator, which could be listed in the indicator description to avoid ambiguities.

- For infrastructure work and provision of durable equipment (such as vehicles) the implementer could take additional effort to collect information about site/equipment usage. Information could be collected through fields visits or registries that need to be filled in by the recipient. Alternatively, even after the project end, equipment usage survey could be used to track equipment availability, scale of usage, etc.

Communication and stakeholder engagement - Adequate communication and

stakeholders' engagement should be in place. It is imperative that all stakeholders are involved in the planning phase of the social cohesion initiative. This will ensure better utilisation and allocation of dedicated resources. For the IOM Intervention, the following recommendations were given:

- In order to ensure more efficient implementation of project activities (i.e. Call center) implementing partners and all stakeholders, in general, should be more involved in the project planning phase. This will help better utilize resources (both material and human) of the implementing partners.

- Since the procedures of obtaining permits and other official documentation are rather long and interfere with the project timeline, it is important to address the risk of timely implementation and plan before planning these activities. More efficient communication among municipalities, local communities and implementing partners will help reduce the above stated risk.

- As the project engaged large number of international and national partners (civil society and governmental organizations) it is proposed to occasionally organize joint meeting with all partners so they can better understand project scope and scale and to learn from each other. This was particularly important for local NGOs in respect to engaged media outlets by the project.

Project/intervention operations – In order to create activities that would yield in significant social cohesion within the local community, the underlying obstacles towards achieving social cohesion needs to be addressed. Findings of the evaluation of IOM intervention suggested that youth and women were two groups with highest decline in feeling safe in community due to migrants' presence. Social cohesion activities should particularly target these groups and engage them with migrants in positive interactions. Furthermore, understanding values and capabilities of the people on the move should be captured. In the IOM intervention, through No Nation Fashion activity[1] beneficiaries proved to have valuable sewing skills that are recognized in the sewing industry. Multiple interlocutors reported that migrant population has skills and knowledge that can be used by our local institutions and enterprises. In that respect, the education on asylum opportunities should be continued for migrants who wish to stay in BiH and contribute to BiH society.

There are several aspects to consider when creating social cohesion activities (Tropp, L. R. and Morhayim, L. (2022).), and also confirm in IOM intervention in BiH, are the following:

- Repeated and sustained contact between groups over time. It was reported by different social cohesion initiatives, that one day events/activities are not yielding sufficient traction

for social cohesion, while repeated and sustained opportunities for interaction between groups are more effective.

-For example, active residents of TRCs who have an interest in engaging in social activities proved to be helpful with social cohesion activities within the TRCs. Through the implementation of the activities, it was evident that there are such individuals within the centers for whom such tasks represent pleasure and happiness, and they would be beneficial to all residents of TRCs, as well as, a possible active link with project activities coming from the local community. Activities related to workshops that stimulate normal everyday life in TRCs should be continued with an increased variety of activities. Furthermore, it is recommended to increase the number of activities with children since it is proven that in terms of enhancing social cohesion, children are the best mediators.

-Equal status during contact between different groups. Some differences among interacting groups can be observed but during the intervention activities, different groups should be regarded as equal. For example, members of different groups should have equal opportunities to participate, as well as equal opportunities to contribute ideas and make decisions about programme activities (Tropp and Morhayim, 2022). Mixing groups will yield in significant impact on the participants. This was confirmed in IOM intervention in BiH. As reported by the NGO representative included in the IOM intervention, workshops organized for students were interesting. At the beginning of those workshops, students would sit on one side, and migrants on the other, without any mixing and getting closer. As the workshops progressed and ended, students and migrants mingled, communicated and sought mutual interaction and cooperation.

-Active engagement toward common goals between groups needs to be encourage. Program activities should ensure that groups actively engage with each other during the activities to reach the common goals. In the IOM intervention, cooking sessions were organized among local community representatives and migrant population which helped both groups to better understand the specific cuisines. Both groups found that while there are some differences between the food is prepared, the locals share some similar dishes, which, at the end showed that are no to many differences as it was perceived prior to this event.

-Intergroup cooperation. Groups should work towards the same goal, but at the same time activities should be structured in the way to be collaborative rather than competitive. This approach minimizes that grouse act on the basis “us against them”.

-Support from community leaders and institutional authorities. It was confirmed that social cohesion initiatives need the strong support by the community leaders and institutional help as well. This complement to strengthening the community links.

Activities in schools, municipal houses, sports facilities are encouraged.

Ensuring sustainability – It is important to ensure the sustainability of the intervention, but the sustainability of migration initiatives is conditions by the nature of migrations. Some lessons learned from IOM intervention:

- Larger community visibility of intervention activities. The projects could use additional promotional approaches to disseminate information about upcoming events in the communities (posters, public presentations in schools, local radio and TV stations, social medias, etc.). Health campaigns within the TRCs should have larger community visibility for residents. All efforts regarding vaccination, testing, containment of outbreaks, providing health services to local population should be promoted to public at larger level. This information may boost the feeling of trust toward PHI and TRCs, and consequently increase social cohesion.

- Education of different stakeholders – self-pacing education trainings. Curriculum for sensibilization of journalists and public government representatives could be modified to correspond with self-learning pace and principles. Furthermore, the curriculum could be offered to Faculties for Journalism to improve sensitive reporting for disadvantaged groups.

- Social entrepreneurship as the form of sustainability. Proposed future for the NNF is to evolve in the social enterprise that would be self-sustainable. Due to the potential of the brand, further development is encouraged. Social enterprise might be the way forward in terms of commercialization of products that would benefit both to beneficiaries' population to earn income as well as to ensure sustainable financing for operation of sewing corners in TRCs.

Guidelines for evaluators

As the theory suggests the best approach to evaluation of social cohesion initiatives is to employed a mixed-method approach for data collection and verification. The evaluation team should collect quantitative and qualitative data concurrently using the following data collection methods: desk review, semi-structured interview, focus groups, and online surveys.

Qualitative approaches

encompasses desk research and review of project documentation, in-person and online interviews and focus groups. These helps to understand the narrative and nature of social cohesion through understanding perceptions and interactions. Qualitative assessments prompt users to explore questions that can help reveal the communicative or constructive

aspects of cohesion as found in narratives, symbols or expressions (UNDP, 2020). CAWI surveys seems not be appropriate for data collection, hence CATI method should be used. Participatory approaches: Evaluators might use the Outcome Harvesting Methodology (OHM) that includes the Most Significant Change (MSC) approach for analysis and storage of collected success stories. The OHM envisaging the mapping of the data sources (beneficiaries, project partners, other stakeholders) and outlining expected changes as a result of the programme in the inception phase. At the data collection phase, the evaluator is collecting/harvesting outcome stories and organizing outcome verification workshops. Some of the biases that should be aware while using OHM are:

- Bias towards success: Faveolization of positive success stories rather than negative/bad is one of the key biases of MSC. To that end, the evaluator is supposed to ask the change stories, not success stories;

- Subjectivity in the selection process: During the OHM sessions, the evaluator should pay attention to which beneficiaries are or are not represented in the panel discussions as the OHM is subjective to the expression of the values of the people on the selection panels;

- Bias towards popular views: Outcome harvest using MSC approach maintains a diversity of views rather than striving for consensus. The risk of one story type dominating is mitigated by the fact that at each selection level new MSC stories are introduced from other sources; and

- Bias towards the views of those who are good at telling stories: Evaluators tend to favor the views of the interviewee who can tell good stories. To that end, OHM seeks to get the confirmation of the more interviewees to prompt the MSC stories that are frequently being repeated.

Quantitative approaches

Quantitative approaches have proliferated in recent years, with different actors developing definitions, defined sub-dimensions, and identified data and indicators. Index approaches may be useful as a more objective approach to assessment to address politicized and socially sensitive issues in a more neutral manner. Including baseline survey prior to the implementation of an intervention is beneficial for ensuring quantitative data to assess the impact of the intervention. PULS survey conducted prior to IOM intervention in BiH is the best example of such practice.

Crosscutting issues of Human Rights, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW), Conflict Sensitivity and Environmental Sustainability should be considered as additional evaluation questions

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EHEALTH TECHNOLOGIES IN HELP TO IMPROVE PSYCHOLOGICAL QUALITY OF LIFE IN ELDERLY PEOPLE

FULL PAPER

Aging is associated with a variety of specific issues and higher rates of chronic difficulties, which usually leads to reliance on external support to maintain or improve wellbeing (Ogrin et al., 2020). eHealth technologies like remote monitoring devices, and wearable sensors enable elderly individuals to receive healthcare services and monitoring from the comfort of their homes, which reduces the need for frequent hospital visits and enhances convenience and adherence to the healthcare regimen (Laver et al., 2018).

In our study, we aim at answering whether use of eHealth technologies by elderly people increases their psychological well-being. We test the causality behind the relationship between eHealth technology use, perceived psychological and physical well-being, and their impact on overall client satisfaction.

Needs of the elderly population

As the global population ages, it is more necessary than ever to understand the needs of ageing individuals and respect their needs. By recognizing and addressing the unique and diverse needs, it is possible to create a supportive and inclusive environment for elderly population (Abdi et al., 2019). Age is associated with a variety of specific issues and higher rates of chronic conditions, which usually leads to reliance on external support to maintain or improve wellbeing (Ogrin et al., 2020). Understanding the multifaceted requirements of the elderly is crucial for providing effective support across various dimensions, including physical health and exercise, mental health, social connections, and environmental considerations that lead to enhancement of their overall well-being (Bowling, 2009; McPhee, 2016).

Maintaining physical health is considered a main priority for elderly individuals. As the body ages, there is a natural decline in muscle mass, bone density, and overall physical resilience and fitness (Langhammer et al., 2018). Decline in the physical health is often associated with feelings of shame and stigma, which can prevent the individuals from seeking medical care.

Cognitive health is another integral part of the overall well-being. Elderly individuals face challenges of cognitive decline, memory loss, or neurodegenerative diseases (Murman, 2015). Mental stimulation and activities that promote brain health and support cognitive functions are crucial for maintaining a positive mental state. Neurodegeneration and cognitive decline, together with psychosocial factors such as loneliness, inadequate social and family support, dependency on others, a lack of affection, stressful life events, or

perceived poor health, are also related to psychiatric disorders such as geriatric depression, anxiety, and psychosis, which are common in elderly populations (Brinda et al., 2016; Grover, 2015; Hossain et al., 2024). These disorders have consequences that include social isolation and deprivation, poor quality of life, increased risk for somatic disorders, suicide, and increased non-suicidal mortality (Skoog, 2011). Thus, social connections and emotional well-being play a vital role in the lives of elderly individuals (Donovan and Blazer, 2020; Fakoya, 2020). Providing opportunities for social engagement, fostering meaningful relationships, and creating supportive communities helps addressing the social and emotional needs and promote a sense of belonging.² When considering the difference across age categories, it turns out that the older ages

Studies (Huang et al., 2020; Stolz et al., 2017) show that higher age is related to significantly higher risk of financial stress; thus, financial stability becomes a significant concern for many elderly individuals.

As individuals age, their housing and environmental requirements may change, since the accessibility features become essential especially for those with mobility challenges. Safe and comfortable living environment that accommodates changing physical abilities, age-friendly urban planning and transportation options, and community accessibility increase the sense of safety, lower the daily distress and help maintaining the general well-being (Li et al, 2022; Rantanen et al., 2012).

Benefits of eHealth technologies for the elderly individuals

According to WHO (2024), eHealth technology is an umbrella term for products and their related systems and services. eHealth technologies have emerged as powerful tools, promoting independence, safety, and overall well-being. These technologies address many of the specific needs of the elderly individuals and help them maintain and enhance the quality of life. Below, the main benefits of eHealth technologies for elderly people, providing a transformative impact on their daily living, are specified.

Wearable devices and health monitoring apps allow elderly individuals and their caregivers to track vital signs, daily physical activity, and overall health trends, improving the health management. Telehealth technologies, remote monitoring devices, and wearable sensors enable elderly individuals to receive healthcare services and monitoring from the comfort of their homes, which reduces the need for frequent hospital visits and enhances convenience and adherence to the healthcare regimen (Laver et al., 2018). eHealth technologies, such as GPS tracking devices, electronic reminders, and home monitoring systems, are especially helpful in support of the elderly individuals with dementia (Hsu et

al., 2017; Wang et al., 2023). These technologies enhance safety, reduce wandering risks, and provide memory support. eHealth technologies offer also solutions for managing multiple medications such as automated pill dispensers and medication reminder apps (Reeder et al., 2013; Sivakumar et al., 2023). These tools increase the adherence of the elderly to their medication schedules, reducing the likelihood of missed doses.

Cognitive support apps contribute to mental stimulation and can delay the progression of cognitive challenges, improve memory, and promote overall mental well-being (Croteau et al., 2017; Higgins et al., 2019). These tools including cognitive games, brain training apps, and memory aids, provide necessary assistance in managing daily tasks, appointments, and important information.

Technologies like smartphones, tablets, video calling platforms or social media apps help combat social isolation and loneliness especially in individuals who cannot have regular face-to-face contact with their relatives (Hulur and McDonald, 2020; Fingerman et al., 2020; Li et al., 2022). Therefore, elderly individuals remain connected with their social support networks, which has a major impact on the emotional and overall well-being.

eHealth technologies positively influence emotional well-being not only by promoting social interactions, but also by addressing emotional needs, reducing stress, and promoting self-confidence (Chen and Schulz, 2016; Hofner and Lee, 2015; Ji et al., 2023).

One of the primary advantages of eHealth technologies for the elderly is the promotion of independence and autonomy, since they are designed to assist with daily tasks that may become challenging due to age-related limitations. Devices such as mobility aids, smart home systems, and wearable technologies empower the elderly to maintain a sense of control over their lives, reducing the reliance on others for assistance (Mehrholz et al., 2017). They alert caregivers or emergency services, which also provides a sense of reassurance and safety for both the elderly individuals and their families (Mauritzson et al., 2023). eHealth technologies such as grab bars, handrails, bathroom modifications, and fall detection systems provide support and stability, enhance home safety and accessibility, help prevent falls and minimize the risk of injuries (Crosby et al., 2023). Mobility aids such as walkers, wheelchairs, and scooters enable elderly individuals with mobility challenges to move around independently, improving their access to the community, reducing sedentary behaviour, and promoting regular physical activity (Resnik et al., 2009; Roelands et al., 2002), leading to better physical health and also proving more possibilities for social interactions.

Barriers in using eHealth technologies

While the benefits of eHealth technologies for the elderly are significant, it is essential to

acknowledge the potential risks associated with the use of eHealth technologies and navigate the fine line between benefits and risks. It is important to address these potential negatives through user-centred design, appropriate training and support, consideration of individual preferences and abilities, and ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of eHealth technologies on the well-being of elderly individuals. Lee and Coughlin (2015) described technology adoption factors specifically relevant to older adults.

One of the foremost challenges in implementing eHealth technologies for the elderly is the presence of technological barriers of the use of electronic devices (Jensen, 2014). Learning to use new eHealth technologies may require time and effort and be significantly challenging, leading to frustration, digital anxiety, and finally abandonment of the technology (Kim et al., 2023). Another problematic issue might be too complex user interfaces, small buttons on devices, and difficult setup processes, which may require additional training and support (Heart et al., 2013; Sin et al., 2014). A lack of personalization in some devices may result in suboptimal outcomes for users, leading to a lower effectiveness and increased dissatisfaction or non-compliance (Peek et al., 2016).

For some elderly individuals, eHealth technologies may present a risk of exacerbating social isolation by reducing face-to-face interactions and participation in physical communities (NASEM, 2020). This may potentially influence the emotional well-being of seniors who benefit from traditional forms of social engagement.

Access to advanced eHealth technologies can be limited by financial constraints and unequal distribution. The financial burden of acquiring or maintaining assistive devices may cause stress, financial strain, or limited access to necessary technologies (Chiu and Liu, 2017; Vaportzis et al., 2017).

Some elderly individuals may experience a sense of stigma or negative emotions associated with using eHealth technologies (Iezzoni, 2003; Luborsky, 1993). They may perceive these devices as symbols of their declining abilities or dependence, which can affect their self-esteem and emotional well-being. Also, they may feel self-conscious because of certain societal judgments, when relying on assistive devices or technologies.

Methodological approach and types of data

Data used in this analysis were collected in interviews and in surveys. We collected data from two waves of surveys of clients and patients of these organisations (206 responses) and from a survey of family members of clients and patients (67 responses). The challenging issue appeared that part of the respondents died during the project implementation and we were unable to collect post-intervention data (see the actual numbers of comparisons below). The total number of clients who responded to both

rounds of questioning is 51.

Results

We compared the situation if the clients used any of the assistive technologies and how satisfied they were (with their life in general and their psychological, and physical state). Table 1 shows that overall satisfaction decreased for seven clients but increased for eight, with the deterioration primarily in the non-technology group (five people) and the improvement evenly split between the two groups (four people each).

TABLE 1: LIFE SATISFACTION OF CLIENTS (BEGINNING AND COURSE/END OF THE PROJECT)

Change of life satisfaction		eHealth support		Total
		no	yes	
-1	N	5	2	7
	%	71,4	28,6	100,0
0	N	12	24	36
	%	33,3	66,7	100,0
1	N	4	3	7
	%	57,1	42,9	100,0
2	N	0	1	1
	%	0,0	100,0	100
Total	N	21	30	51
	%	41,2	58,8	100,0

Note: Satisfaction with life was measured on a scale of 1 to 4, with 4 being the highest satisfaction. The change in satisfaction is the difference in values before and during/at the end of the project (Pearson $\chi^2 = 4.9959$, p -value = 0.172).

This simple comparison shows that overall satisfaction was higher during the project for clients using assistive technologies (although the change is relatively small and statistically insignificant from the change in the group without support).

Mental state of clients

In all versions of the questionnaires, a question on the psychological state of the clients was used. Clients who completed both versions of the questionnaires experienced a decrease in

psychological well-being in 12 cases and an increase in 16 cases. A decrease in psychological well-being occurred in two-thirds of the clients without technology support (eight versus four with technology support). Improvements in psychological well-being were noted primarily for those with technology support (nine of 16).

TABLE 2: PSYCHOLOGICAL SATISFACTION OF CLIENTS (BEGINNING AND COURSE/END OF THE PROJECT)

Change of psychological satisfaction		eHealth support		eHealth support
		no	no	
-1	N	8	4	12
	%	66,7	33,3	100,0
0	N	7	18	25
	%	28,0	72,0	100,0
1	N	6	9	15
	%	40,0	60,0	100,0
2	N	1	0	1
	%	100,0	0,0	100
Total	N	22	31	53
	%	41,5	58,5	100,0

Note: The mental state of the clients was measured on a scale from 1 to 4, where 4 is the highest satisfaction. The change in satisfaction is the difference in values before and during/at the end of the project (Pearson $\chi^2 = 6.4305$, p -value = 0.092).

When comparing the psychological well-being of the supported and unsupported groups, it can be seen that overall, the two groups developed very similarly. However, a closer look shows that the decline is primarily in the home care groups (both supported and unsupported), while the increase is evident for clients in residential services.

In the case of the hospital care, clients reported not wanting to go home before full recovery and refusing to accept eHealth technology to be used at home. There was a time during the pandemic when even patients would be interested in testing in 2020 and spring 2021, but later willingness waned.

We explain these changes in part by clients feeling more confident that their condition is

being monitored by technologies that will help summon help if needed. The second aspect affecting the mind of clients is the improvement in the perceived quality and frequency of contacts. It is very likely that this effect was amplified during the pandemic when there was a general reduction in social contacts, so that checking through assistive technology also helped to increase social contacts (e.g. by having someone check the status of the technology and its functionality).

The impact of technology on family members

Approximately two-thirds of family members particularly valued the sense of security that technology provides them and their relatives and the ability to react quickly if a problematic situation arises (19 of 29 families).

However, similar to clients, family members appeared to have relatively little awareness of assistive technology. This is because they are usually in the 50+ age group. More than a third (12 out of 33) of family members could not answer whether assistive technology had been able to help their family members. Just under half of those responding had a positive view of technology. We also observed from the responses that people usually lack more information about what specific assistive technologies can do and what they can be used for. We have similar findings from hospital clients. Managing technology is challenging for family members as well as for the clients themselves. Clients overwhelmingly have sensory impairments, various types and degrees of dementia and other psychiatric diagnoses. For a family to begin caring for their loved one, a psychological barrier must be overcome. Loved ones are not interested in testing some additional burden to them. When the need for long-term and systematic care of a family member arises, it is a new and extremely burdensome situation for them to be forced to care for a loved one who was not previously dependent. In general, clients and family members expressed that they would use technology if it was an "already established and proven" solution. Most seniors already have a device in their home, are happy to use it, but refuse to use something different or new; it is not important to them.

At this point we also add that the distrust of external doctors in assistive technologies reduces the potential of their use. Even though the hospital staff had all the measuring devices tested, compared, some of them even had a metrological test, general practitioners refused to cooperate in the use of assistive technologies.

Conclusions

The results show that clients who use eHealth technologies are more satisfied with their

lives and are also more psychologically well (compared to clients who did not use eHealth technologies).

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A CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF THE QUALITY AND EQUITY OF ECOSYSTEMS POLICY FOR ENHANCING SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR THE FUTURE OF CHILDREN

FULL PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to make a critical discussion of the reproduction of children's future through the policy ecosystems enacted based on empirical data. The paper reports on fifteen-year-old children's emotional, and cognitive outputs about school-based and household factors to provide implications for education-related ecosystem policies via evidence-based data utilizing the PISA 2022 open data repository with 7250 students from Turkey. We focus on the need for developing equitable policies that will embrace all children based on their multiple learning and development needs and developing curricula and instructional experiences from a social justice perspective to enable a more just world for all children.

Introduction

Education has always been highlighted as a human right for all, especially for children of schooling age. From a national and a global citizenship perspective then, it can be easily claimed that all children should have access to the same quality education and benefit from the same educational opportunities to start with. Nevertheless, the resources that the children are born with, and the locations they reside may well be descriptions of the high- or low-quality education they are apt to receive. From this point of view, critical theory highlights the idea that there is social injustice not only in the world but also in the communities we live in and in the institutions, we work (Kincheloe, 2008). Thus, the resources of the schools are linked with the resources of the communities the children live in. Although schools offer the same curriculum, including educational materials, activities, and other services as a policy requirement, the process and outputs of education may not be so for children in poor neighborhoods. Thus, allocating the same resources may not per se mean providing the same educational opportunities for all children regardless of their background. Children of families with higher educational backgrounds are already at a far more advantaged level, especially with the intellectual capacity they grow with in the families they are born. Those children are subjected to books at an early age. Ultimately, they are subjected to larger amounts of vocabulary that has a tremendous impact on their cognitive development. The higher the income, the healthier their dietary habits become, which influences their physical and mental health well-being, and social skills. The school quality indicators may bring changes to the children's future regardless of families they come from. While the lack of those inputs is likely to result in school failure or social problems, and lack low efficacy beliefs about their cognitive skills. If the educational or school policies do not bring change into their implementations to meet students'

educational needs of all students, children from poor households may end up with academic failure and poor educational outputs.

Bourdieu (1998), therefore, critiques schools as institutions that reproduce the current social order and maintain unequal power relations in society. In other words, no matter what the equality policies are, the children are reproduced within the schools they attend. Thus, equality in education does not mean having equal opportunities. When delving into research from a sociopolitical, and social justice perspective, it is easy to capture that power relations in local and broader society are reproduced (Freire, 2000). The dichotomy of equality and equity is a long-debated issues, and will not change if decision-makers and practitioners take the needs of the children and the society they live into consideration. The challenges related to equity and quality were highlighted by OECD 2018 report, indicating in order to improve access to education, value, and excellence of education offerings need to be taken as key features of policy ecosystems. When policies and practices are examined from an ecosystems model, they may look promising to bring equality and quality for all children at all levels at first sight. Thus, the educational success of children of tomorrow is shaped by the early investments in children's knowledge and skills acquisition that will prepare them for their future academic and employability aspirations.

We argue that school quality or school-based factors will make a difference in the educational gains of the children regardless of the household backgrounds they are from. To explicate, the purpose of this paper is to make a critical discussion of the reproduction of children's future through the policy ecosystems enacted in Türkiye based on empirical data. In our paper, we will report on children's emotional, and cognitive outputs about school-based factors and household factors to provide implications for education-related ecosystem policies via evidence-based data utilizing the PISA 2022 open data repository. We focused on the need for developing equitable policies that will embrace all children based on their multiple learning and development needs and developing curricula and instructional experiences from a social justice perspective to enable a more just world for all children

Social Justice

Talking about social justice matters is about understanding and correcting the macro systematic power dynamics that perpetuate the conditions we live in (Bond & Chernoff, 2015). To change the power dynamics inquires the distribution of resources in society from an equitable action, where all internal school stakeholders feel physically and

psychologically safe and secure (Bell, 1997). Social justice also warns against inequitable educational opportunities and resources and limited access to highly qualified teachers. Since the highly skilled teachers are the major influential stakeholders in children's lives, it is important to see how educational policies or legislations shape equity or equality in their schooling process.

Educational Policy in the Turkish context Evidence of Equity vs equality

The Republic of Türkiye has a centralized education system, where the decision-making process is rather top-down. There are major policy documents and legislations that highlight educational policies to offer equality of opportunity to all children.

The Constitution: The primary report is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye that refers in Article 42 Chapter II. Right and Duty of Education (https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/yayinlar/2021/TC_Anayasasi_ve_TBMM_Ic_Tuzugu_Ingilizce.pdf), which reveals several rights for social justice such as inclusion of all students and special education students, and provision of financial support for those in need,

Article 42- No one shall be deprived of the right of education. The scope of the right to education shall be defined and regulated by law. ... The State shall provide scholarships and other means of assistance to enable students of merit lacking financial means to continue their education. The State shall take necessary measures to rehabilitate those in need of special education so as to render such people useful to society. ...

The Basic Education Law, Number: 1739

(<https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.1739.pdf>) is the primary legislation that regulates compulsory education from grade 1 to 12. It strongly highlights social justice by stating that no individual or group can be privileged in education. Those in financial needs will receive support by the state for reaching educational aspirations. All have the right to be educated. In addition to the role of education, the law ensures as the primary principle the following:

I - Generality and equality: Article 4 - Educational institutions shall be open to all without distinction as to language, race, sex, disability or religion. No person, family, group or class shall be privileged in education

Basic Law of Education

Regarding the Basic Law of Education, Article 8 refers to Equality of Opportunity in education that drives decisions for all equally.

V - Equality of opportunity and opportunity: Article 8 - Equality of opportunity and opportunity shall be provided to all men and women in education. Necessary assistance shall be provided in the form of free boarding, scholarships, loans and other means in order to ensure that successful students who lack financial means are educated up to the highest levels of education. Special measures shall be taken to raise children in need of special education and protection.

Systemic policies: 4+4+4 policy (2012), State Development Plans especially, the current Eleventh Development Plan (2019-2023b, [Eleventh Development Plan \(2019-2023\)](#)) indicates planning in line with the Basic Law Article 8 for Equality of Opportunity, and the well-being of students to avoid school violence, to introduce healthy nutrition in school ground. The 11th Developmental Plan includes the following policies in relation to equality of opportunity policies.

Policies and Measures

548. Access to education at all levels will be provided based on equal opportunity principle.

548.5. Access to education opportunities of persons under temporary protection will be increase

550. The disparities of success among schools will be reduced by increasing the quality and facilities of schools at all levels of education.

550.2. School lunch program will be implemented starting with the disadvantaged areas.

557.4. Physical and emotional violence towards teachers and students will be prevented, it will be flighted against drug and technology addiction, and family awareness on healthy living culture will be raised.

In addition to the legislations provided above, current educational regulations: for school-family partnership also aim at increasing social justice for school governance in 03.01.2014 Regulation 2022, <https://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/dosyalar/2191.pdf>. 4/35. However, it demands for the supervision and evaluation of healthy food in the school cafeteria, it also aims to provide financial inputs through family financial support systems, yet this is very critical as families from poor households tend to reject or complain about such inputs, and this becomes a barrier to offer equal opportunities.

Objective

The purpose of this paper is to make a critical discussion of the reproduction of children's future through the policy ecosystems enacted in Türkiye via utilizing the PISA 2022 open data repository to attempt to find answers to the following issue-specific problems:

1. To uncover children's emotional and cognitive outputs about school-based factors and household factors to provide implications for education-related ecosystem policies,
2. To identify the need for developing equitable policies we examine children from a holistic perspective
 - a. 15-year-old students' learning and development needs
 - b. 15-year-old students' curricular and instructional experiences from a social justice perspective to enable a more just world for all children

PISA-2022 Data on The State of Learning and Equity in Education

The data is sourced from the PISA 2022 open data repository, which includes responses from student questionnaires and school questionnaires. (PISA 2022 Database Volume II, Chapter 2). The hypothesis is that the student's emotional and cognitive outputs are correlated with school-based factors and household-based factors. The sample consists of 7250 students from Turkey.

The independent variables are taken as school-based factors and family-based factors. The variables that measure school-based factors are, school practices, policies, and infrastructure (PISA 2022 Context Questionnaire Framework: Balancing Trends and Innovation). School based factors are Being bullied (BULLIED); Feeling safe (FEELSAFE); Mathematics teacher support (TEACHSUP); Quality of student-teacher relationships (RELATST); School safety risks (SCHRISK); Sense of belonging (BELONG); Cognitive activation in mathematics: Foster reasoning (COGACRCO); Cognitive activation in mathematics: Encourage mathematical thinking (COGACMCO); Disciplinary climate in mathematics (DISCLIM); Exposure to formal and applied mathematics tasks (EXPOFA); Exposure to mathematical reasoning and 21st century mathematics tasks (EXPO21ST).

The variable that measures family-based factors include index of index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) derived from three variables related to family background: parents' highest level of education, parents' highest occupational status, and home possessions including books in the home (OECD Pisa 2018 Results Volume III What School Life Means for Student's Lives Annex A1 (Construction of Indices).

The dependent variables are taken as emotional output variables (Assertiveness (ASSERAGR); Cooperation (COOPAGR); Curiosity (CURIOAGR); Emotional control (EMOCOAGR); Empathy (EMPATAGR); Perseverance (PERSEVAGR); Stress resistance

STRESAGR)) and cognitive output variables (Total scores for reading, science, and mathematics achievement).

Method

We use principal component factor analysis to group and reduce the number of independent variables using varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization to ensure a clear structure of factors. Factor analysis facilitates identifying the underlying constructs represented by the school-based and family-based factors.

Following factor analysis, we then use regression analysis to investigate the relationships between the identified factors (independent variables) and emotional and cognitive outcomes (dependent variables). This approach allows us to determine the strength and direction of the associations, providing insights into how various school-based and household-based factors influence students' emotional well-being and academic performance.

Empirical Results

The principal component factor analysis reveals four factors as demonstrated in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1: ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX A

	FACTOR 1: Mathematics teacher behavior	FACTOR 2: School discipline	FACTOR 3: Exposure to mathematics tasks	FACTOR 4: Feeling of safety and belongingness to school
N = 7250				
Being bullied (WLE)	.065	-.683	-.020	-.240
Feeling safe (WLE)	.044	.108	.073	.790
Mathematics Teacher Support (WLE)	.477	.297	.258	.121
Quality of student-teacher relationships (WLE)	.415	.366	.093	.252
School safety risks (WLE)	-.010	-.791	-.057	-.010
Sense of belonging (WLE)	.091	.087	.001	.808

Cognitive activation in mathematics: Foster reasoning Version B (WLE)	.830	-.044	-.005	.007
Cognitive activation in mathematics: Encourage mathematical thinking Version B (WLE)	.843	.050	.146	.037
Disciplinary climate in mathematics (WLE)	.240	.645	-.009	.004
Exposure to Formal and Applied Mathematics Tasks (WLE)	.044	.044	.861	.033
Exposure to Mathematical Reasoning and 21st century mathematics tasks (WLE)	.189	.021	.837	.044
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.				

We use four factors and ESCS as independent variables to elicit correlation between school and family-based factors with student's emotional and cognitive outputs . The results of regression analysis are presented in Table 2 below:

TABLE 2: REGRESSION RESULTS (N=7250)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
Dependent variables:	Assertiveness	Cooperation	Curiosity	Emotional control	Empathy	Perseverance	Stress Control	Mathematics performance	Reading Performance	Science Performance
Constant	0.344 (18.433)	.010 (0.550)	0.400 (20.431)	-.134 (-7.854)	.236 (12.011)	.136 (7.340)	.018 (.989)	487.54 (23.341)	485.07 (191.23)	507.83 (200.64)
Mathematics teacher behavior	0.085 (6.416)	.176 (13.398)	0.185 (13.438)	-.003 (-0.222)	.150 (10.846)	.135 (10.464)	-.009 (-.672)	-0.44 (-0.30)	2.04 (1.43)	0.65 (0.39)
School discipline	-0.056 (-4.293)	.167 (12.803)	0.004 (0.322)	.162 (13.516)	.025 (1.852)	.045 (3.499)	.040 (3.080)	11.45 (8.40)	13.09 (10.14)	10.42 (7.31)
Exposure to mathematics tasks	0.069 (5.187)	.088 (6.644)	0.089 (6.462)	.041 (3.379)	.076 (5.496)	.107 (8.210)	.026 (1.987)	4.94 (3.96)	2.24 (1.90)	3.49 (2.63)
Feeling of safety and belongingness to school	0.187 (14.329)	.245 (18.734)	0.157 (11.500)	.116 (9.687)	.138 (10.111)	.163 (12.662)	.129 (9.981)	1.11 (0.93)	-0.48 (-0.40)	0.89 (0.65)
ESCS	0.053 (4.739)	-.064 (-5.669)	0.044 (3.764)	.006 (0.602)	.044 (3.750)	-.020 (-1.852)	.035 (3.107)	26.45 (21.30)	22.45 (17.74)	23.85 (17.37)

Parentheses denote t-values. Highlighted cells denote significance at the $\alpha \leq 0.01$ level. Regression results reveal that emotional outputs and cognitive outputs are correlated with different school characteristics. For example, Mathematics teacher behavior positively influences most non-academic outcomes (assertiveness, cooperation, curiosity, empathy, perseverance) but does not significantly affect academic performance. School discipline positively influences all outcomes except assertiveness, where it has a negative impact. Exposure to mathematics tasks positively influences all outcomes. Feeling of safety and belongingness to school positively influences most outcomes except for academic performance. ESCS positively influences all outcomes except cooperation (negative influence) and perseverance (marginal negative influence).

Discussion and Policy Recommendations

We utilized the PISA 2022 student questionnaire results to evaluate how the ecosystems influenced the fifteen-year-old students' well-being and academic performance to identify measures for social justice. We conclude that the eco-systems from a school-based policy and home-based policy offers lots of input for the well-being of the youngsters. We found that legislations underscoring social justice-related concepts may not per se results in social justice for all due to the systemic institutionalized implementations happening in the hidden curriculum of the schools.

Ecosystem Policies

In enhancing cognitive outputs and social well-being, the school-based policy implications that yielded from the findings include Curricular and Instructional policies, which are listed as follows.

- Investment in student-centered learning through cooperation among students and teachers and students
- School policy shall be cooperative not competitive as it is likely to promote school belonging and positive achievement outputs.
- Task-based policies that foster 21st skills development promote academic discipline in the school context.
- In a microsystem where the student feels emotional support, there is less bullying or misbehavior and more academic goal orientation, which promotes school belongingness.

On the other hand, home-based policies yielded establishing belongingness through strengthening the school-parent partnership.

- Households' policies: Strengthening school-parent partnerships via increasing communications are apt to develop sense of belongingness and emotional and academic outputs.

- Cooperation between schools and teachers for strengthening students' cognitive and emotional outputs matter.
- Parents' home culture may be influenced by the type of support perceived by schools, and is likely to build an academic and emotional support systems for the child. As a result, schools with low quality indicators face fewer discipline problems when the school parent support systems are better established.

In conclusion, we suggest a socially just ecosystem, where communities and institutions will enable children with opportunities to "reduce prejudice, and incorporate multiple knowledge construction processes" (Banks, 2008), and competencies so that they will be able to "share power, knowledge, and resources equitably (Bogotch, 2000, p. 2). The limitation of the study is that the analysis will use the data from Türkiye only to define an overall policy at the European level for ecosystems policies. We recommend further research is needed to explore and generalize the findings to the European Union and other OECD countries in the PISA framework, especially in the Europe space.

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