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RESILIENCE AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN CAREGIVER STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH IN HEALTHCARE WORKERS

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Abstract

Healthcare workers (HCWs) represent a category of employees facing numerous challenges that have a significant impact on their quality of life. This cross-sectional study explored the relationship between caregiver stress, resilience, and mental health (anxiety and depression) among 305 HCWs (Mean age=44.65; SD=9.58) using an online survey conducted between December 2022 and February 2023. Participants completed the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), the Kingston Caregiver Stress Scale (adapted for formal caregiving) (KCSS), and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales 21-R (DASS21-R). The results revealed a positive correlation between caregiver stress and both anxiety and depression, whereas resilience was negatively associated with caregiver stress. Mediation analysis, using macro-PROCESS, demonstrated that resilience partially mediates the relationship between caregiver stress and mental health. Specifically, caregiver stress negatively predicted resilience ($\beta=-0.37$), which in turn contributed to reduced anxiety ($\beta=-0.31$) and depression ($\beta=-0.31$). These findings suggest that interventions targeting both stress reduction and resilience enhancement could be effective strategies for improving HCWs' mental well-being and overall quality of life.

Cuvinte-cheie: profesioniști din sănătate, reziliență, anxietate, depresie, persoane cu dizabilități.

Keywords: healthcare workers, resilience, anxiety, depression, persons with disabilities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Scientific literature on the healthcare environment has highlighted its high global demand and significant challenges faced by healthcare workers (HCWs) (Chidi *et al.*, 2024). Among the most frequently identified difficulties are intense stress, diminished social esteem due to public criticism or lack of recognition, and burnout, which, in many cases, lead to severe mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression (Kang *et al.*, 2020; Akova *et al.*, 2022; Zheng *et al.*, 2024). HCWs stressors are numerous, ranging from the emotional toll of complex patient cases and the high workload, which requires both considerable mental effort and significant physical exertion (Smith *et al.*, 2022; Wei *et al.*, 2022). These stressors

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contribute to burnout (a reaction to ongoing interpersonal and emotional strains at work – Maslach *et al.*, 2001), which in turn increases the risk of mental health disorders like anxiety and depression. Additionally, these factors negatively impact quality of life, leading to role conflicts and job dissatisfaction. Continuous exposure to a high-stress work environment exacerbates these issues, ultimately contributing to a decline in the overall well-being of healthcare professionals (Pérez-Valdecantos *et al.*, 2022).

A key concern in occupational health research is the increasing burden of caregiver stress among HCWs, particularly those working with vulnerable populations. Caregiver stress is a specific form of occupational stress arising from the prolonged and emotionally intensive nature of caregiving duties (Dehghan *et al.*, 2017). Because comorbidities, neuropsychiatric manifestations, clinical diagnoses, or illness stages may interact, factors pertaining to caregiver stress may be complicated (Chang *et al.*, 2023). Unlike general workplace stress, caregiver stress involves emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, and physical, intellectual and social stress caused by sustained exposure to patient suffering and high job demands (Dehghan *et al.*, 2017; Lunskey *et al.*, 2021). Caregiving stress for HCWs can include sleep deprivation and fatigue from heavy daily work, including transporting and repositioning patients, routine of caring jobs (Dehghan *et al.*, 2017). As a result, physical pain (Sun *et al.*, 2024) and anxiety and depressive symptoms (Cong *et al.*, 2021) are present.

This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in HCWs working in residential centers for individuals with disabilities, where professionals must maintain long-term relationships with residents, manage chronic conditions, and provide both medical care and psychosocial support (Pappa *et al.*, 2020; Pappa *et al.*, 2021). Consequently, symptoms such as anxiety, exhaustion, fears related to aggression and infections, and post-traumatic stress have frequently been reported (Sheerin *et al.*, 2022; Zhang *et al.*, 2024). An aggravating factor is the prolonged work schedule – shifts exceeding 12 hours or more than 40 hours per week – which has been associated with an increase in adverse events and medical errors, thereby affecting the quality of patient care and reducing attention to patient safety (Magerøy and Wiig, 2023). In certain instances, low pay, a lack of managerial assistance, and a lack of organizational resources make HCWs' stress levels even worse (Foster *et al.*, 2018; Sántha *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, the efficacy of patient treatments is impacted by the decrease in HCWs' work productivity, which directly affects the standard of medical care (Franklin and Gkiouleka, 2021).

2. THE JOB DEMANDS-RESOURCES MODEL (JD-R)

To better understand the impact of stress on HCWs, we adopt the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Bakker *et al.*, 2023). This model posits that workplace characteristics can be classified into job

demands – factors requiring sustained effort that contribute to stress – and job resources – factors that help buffer stress and promote well-being. The JD-R model serves as a valuable framework for assessing the determinants of work-related stress.

Job demands, whether physical, psychological, or social, require specific skills or exertion, making them integral to the work environment. The JD-R model conceptualizes workplace dynamics as a balance, wherein adequate job resources help mitigate the detrimental effects of high job demands. This paradigm is particularly relevant in high-demand settings, such as healthcare, where employees face continuous stressors (Bakker *et al.*, 2023). By integrating personal demands (e.g., caregiver stress) and personal resources (e.g., resilience), the JD-R model allows for a comprehensive analysis of how external work-related factors interact with internal characteristics and experiences, ultimately influencing HCWs' ability to cope with challenges and perform effectively (Granziera *et al.*, 2022). Thus, the JD-R model provides a framework for examining the factors that shape HCWs' capacity to manage workplace demands and enhance resilience.

Caregiver stress is a significant job demand that can negatively affect mental health unless counterbalanced by job resources such as managerial support, autonomy, and personal resilience. In this study, we proposed that resilience functions as a personal resource that helps mitigate the adverse effects of job demands. Resilience is defined as the ability to adapt, recover, and thrive in the face of adversity (Smith *et al.*, 2023). The ability of HCWs to effectively adjust to work-related pressures, prevent psychological injury, and carry on delivering high-quality patient care is known as HCWs resilience (Cooper *et al.*, 2020). In the case of HCWs, resilience reflects their capacity to endure and adapt during challenging periods, serving as a protective factor against psychological stress (Setiawati *et al.*, 2021).

Studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic have identified a direct correlation between resilience, stress, and anxiety among HCWs (Mosheva *et al.*, 2020; Yöyen *et al.*, 2024). For example, research on HCWs during the pandemic revealed a significant negative correlation between resilience and anxiety/depression ($r > 0.30$; Roberts *et al.*, 2021; Wu *et al.*, 2022), as well as a moderate negative correlation ($r > 0.59$; Setiawati *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, resilience has been recognized as a protective factor against high levels of depression (Song *et al.*, 2020), with evidence showing that Japanese nurses with higher resilience are less likely to develop depression (Awano *et al.*, 2020).

Further studies suggest that resilience mediates the relationship between stress, anxiety, and depression among nurses (Lara-Cabrera *et al.*, 2021) and plays a crucial role in adaptation to stressful situations, such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Zager Kocjan *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, research conducted on nursing students indicated that resilience buffers the relationship between stress caused by clinical practice and symptoms of depression and anxiety (Devi *et al.*, 2021).

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

Although studies have explored the role of resilience in mitigating workplace stress, limited research has examined its specific function in caregiver stress among HCWs working in vulnerable populations (Chiang *et al.*, 2021). Existing evidence suggests that perceived stress does not directly influence depression but rather impacts resilience levels, which then indirectly affect depression (Chen *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, resilience has been found to fully mediate the relationship between physical fatigue and psychological distress and partially mediate the relationship between mental/emotional fatigue and psychological distress (Fekih *et al.*, 2024). It was also observed that in the case of 400 nurse practitioners, the associations between depressive symptoms and emotional labor were partially mediated by resilience (Jung and Baek, 2020).

Based on these findings, our study aims to:

1. Examine the relationship between caregiver stress and mental health (anxiety and depression) among HCWs working in residential centers.
2. Investigate whether resilience mediates the relationship between caregiver stress and mental health outcomes, following the JD-R model framework.
3. Explore the implications of these relationships for interventions aimed at improving the well-being of HCWs in high-stress caregiving environments.

By tackling these goals, our study advances knowledge of the psychological processes that underlie caregiver stress and provides factual support for the protective function of resilience in medical environments.

4. METHOD

4.1. PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The study population comprised healthcare workers (HCWs) employed in residential centers for individuals with disabilities. A convenience sampling method was employed for participant selection. Inclusion criteria stipulated that participants be full-time employees of the specified centers, residing in Romania, and fluent in Romanian. Employees with fixed-term contracts were excluded.

The online survey, developed using Google Forms®, incorporated validated items. The survey link was disseminated through two channels: (1) direct email distribution to residential center staff and (2) distribution to supervisors within the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection (GDSACP), who were requested to forward it to healthcare professionals in the residential centers. Training and clarification regarding the survey were provided to the designated

personnel responsible for link distribution. The survey required approximately 10–12 minutes to complete. Informal consent was obtained from participants prior to completion of the online questionnaire.

4.2. INSTRUMENTS

1. *The Brief Resilience Scale* – BRS (Smith *et al.*, 2008; Smith *et al.*, 2023) assesses resilience using six items – three positively and three negatively worded – rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. All items pertain to negative experiences, such as hardships, unpleasant situations, and setbacks. An example item is *I have a hard time making it through stressful events*. To calculate the BRS total score, items 2, 4, and 6 are reverse-coded, and the average of all six items is computed. Based on a meta-analytical review of 121 studies, Smith *et al.* (2023) proposed the following resilience level cutoffs based on average scores: very low (1.00–1.82), low (1.83–2.66), medium-low (2.67–3.16), medium (3.17–3.66), medium-high (3.67–3.99), high (4.00–4.66), and very high (4.67–5.00). For the present study, confirmatory factor analysis reveals the following indices: $\chi^2/df=2.26$; CFI=0.97; TLI=0.96; RMSEA=0.064 [0.027–0.102]; SRMR=0.062; $p=0.017$.

2. *Kingston Caregiver Stress Scale* – KCSS (Kilik and Hopkins, 2006) is a 10-item self-report scale that measures caregiver stress for individuals with disabilities on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – no stress to 5 – extreme stress. In this study, only seven items from the KCSS were selected, specifically those addressing caregiving-related challenges. Items related to financial concerns and caregiving provided by family members were excluded. The selected items were adapted to evaluate stress among employees responsible for patient care in formal settings. These items were adapted to assess stress among employees providing care to patients in formal settings. An example item is: *Do you feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of the patient care process?* Higher scores indicate greater stress for caregivers. The scale was validated on the Romanian population and provided evidence supporting the intercultural validity of the instrument (Iacob *et al.*, 2021). The goodness-of-fit indices for the selected items in this study were as follows: $\chi^2/df=1.91$; CFI=0.99; TLI=0.98; RMSEA=0.057 [0.016–0.093]; SRMR=0.023; $p=0.032$.

3. *Depression Anxiety Stress Scales* – DASS21-R (Lovibond and Lovibond, 1995) contains 21 items assessed on a continuum from 0 – not at all in my case to 3 – most of the time in my case. The scale includes 3 factors: depression (e.g.: *I felt there was no pleasant emotion*), anxiety (e.g.: *I was in situations which made me so anxious that I was very relieved when it was over*), and stress-tension (e.g.: *I had the tendency to overreact to situations*). The study used the adapted Romanian version which demonstrated high psychometric properties (Albu, 2011). The scale

was applied in its entirety, only the anxiety and depression subscales were required for the present study. The goodness-of-fit indices were: $\chi^2/df=3.43$; CFI=0.93; TLI=0.91; RMSEA=0.081 [0.078–0.097]; SRMR=0.049; $p<0.001$.

4. *Supplementary inquiries* collected information about the primary diagnoses of the individuals with disabilities under the care of HCWs. Participants were asked to check the primary diagnosis for each individual in their care from a list that included intellectual disabilities (e.g., intellectual handicap), sensory disabilities (e.g., hearing, visual impairment), neurological disorders (e.g., stroke, paralysis), genetic disorders (e.g., Down syndrome), and other disorders (e.g., cardiovascular disorders).

4.3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study was conducted in full accordance with ethical principles, including the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki from 1975 as revised in 2013. The study was approved by the body responsible for research ethics of the Polytechnic University of Bucharest (Reg. No. 686/22.02.2022).

4.4. HYPOTHESIS

The following hypothesis were established:

H1. Caregiving stress levels are positively correlated with symptoms of anxiety and depression.

H2. Resilience is negatively correlated with caregiving stress, anxiety, and depression.

H3: Resilience mediates the relationship among caregiving stress, anxiety, and depression.

4.5. DATA ANALYSIS

The descriptive statistics used considered the analysis of data normality and the internal consistency of the verified scales through skewness and kurtosis indicators, and through the Shapiro-Wilk (S-W) test and, respectively, through the values of the alpha and omega coefficients. Mediation effects were examined through macro-PROCESS based on structural equation modelling for model estimation. A 95% confidence interval and bootstrapping with 5.000 resamples were employed to assess the mediating model's relevance (Hayes, 2022). The chosen estimation method was Maximum Likelihood. A p-value <0.001 signified statistical significance. All the data were analysed with JASP 0.19.1.0 (Amsterdam University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands) programs.

5. RESULTS

5.1. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC AND WORK CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

A summary of the study participants' characteristics is provided in Table no 1. The data are displayed as percentages. The 305 HCWs in the final sample were

Table no 1
Description of the sample of employees

Variables		N=305
Age	Mean age (<i>SD</i>)	44.65 (9.58)
Gender	Males	24.30
	Females	75.70
Work experience (years)	0.1–5	8.50
	5–10	12.80
	10–15	13.10
	15–20	15.10
	20–25	20.30
	>25	30.20
Workplace	Urban	70.20
	Rural	29.80
Education	Secondary school	15.73
	High school	72.45
	University studies	11.80
Labour sector	Public	89.20
	Private	10.80
Diagnosis of medically assisted patients	Autistic disorders	6.60
	Genetic disorders	3.00
	Neurological disorders	22.70
	Intellectual disabilities	38.70
	Sensorial disabilities	1.30
	Others	17.80
Marital status	Married	67.50
	Unmarried	18.20
	Divorced	14.20
Types of HCWs	Nurses	74.09
	Direct care staff	15.73
	Therapists	10.18
Geographical region	North-West	22.30
	North-East	18.00
	Capital	13.80
	Center	15.70
	South-East	4.30
	South-West	9.50
	West	3.60

35% males ($\text{Mean}_{\text{age}}=41.41$; $SD=10.67$) and 65% females ($\text{Mean}_{\text{age}}= 45.78$; $SD=8.94$). The group as a whole has an average age of $M=44.65$ ($SD=9.58$). Of them, 38.70% care for adults with intellectual disabilities, 22.70% for neurological illnesses, 1.40% for sensory disabilities, 3.00% for genetic disorders, and 6.60% for patients with autism.

5.2. THE DESCRIPTIVE AND CORRELATIONAL ANALYSIS

Caregiver stress was negatively correlated with resilience ($r=-0.49$) and positively correlated with anxiety ($r=0.50$) and depression ($r=0.43$).

Resilience was negatively correlated with anxiety ($r=-0.43$) and depression ($r=-0.48$). Anxiety was positively correlated with depression ($r=0.84$) (all at $p<0.001$) (Table no 2). The data follow a non-normal distribution, as the Z-scores fall outside the range of -3.29 to 3.29, corresponding to a normal distribution for samples of 50–300 subjects (Kim, 2013). Additionally, the Shapiro-Wilk test (S-W) confirmed deviation from normality with values range between 0.78 and 0.97 ($p<0.001$ for all variables), indicating that the variables were not normally distributed.

Table no 2

Descriptive and correlational statistics

Measures	Variables	1	2	3	4
BRS	Resilience	–			
KCSS	Caregiver stress	-0.49***	–		
	Depression	-0.43***	0.44***	–	
DASS21-R	Anxiety	-0.48***	0.50***	0.84***	–
	Means	3.49	2.03	4.08	3.10
	Skewness	-0.07	0.52	1.33	1.56
	Kurtosis	0.55	-0.69	1.56	1.94
	α	0.65	0.91	0.86	0.89
	ω	0.65	0.91	0.90	0.90

*** $p<0.01$

The robust value of over 0.90 for the coefficients obtained in the case of KCSS and DAS21-R confirms the internal consistency of the instruments and supports their reliability (Table no 2). In the case of BRS, the alpha and omega coefficients exceed 0.60, which is above the value considered adequate for the coefficients (Pallant, 2010). The correlations obtained confirm the proposed hypotheses.

5.3. ANALYSIS OF MEDIATION EFFECTS

In the measurement model, caregiver stress was the independent variable and anxiety and depression as indicators of mental health were used as dependent variables. It was observed that all confidence intervals do not include 0, which means that all effects are statistically significant ($p<0.001$) (Table no 3). The results highlight that caregiver stress has a direct predictive effect on anxiety

($\beta=0.24$; 95%CI [0.162, 0.323]) and depression ($\beta=0.24$; 95%CI [0.145, 0.339]) indicating that higher levels of caregiver stress were associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression. At the same time, caregiver stress negatively influences resilience ($\beta=-0.37$; 95%CI [-0.450, -0.296]) which indicates that a high level of stress negatively affects a person's ability to be resilient. In turn, resilience has a negative effect on anxiety ($\beta=-0.31$; 95%CI [-0.418, -0.206]) and depression ($\beta=-0.31$; 95%CI [-0.447, -0.191]), thus indicating that less resilient people are, the higher the levels of anxiety and depression (Figure no. 1).

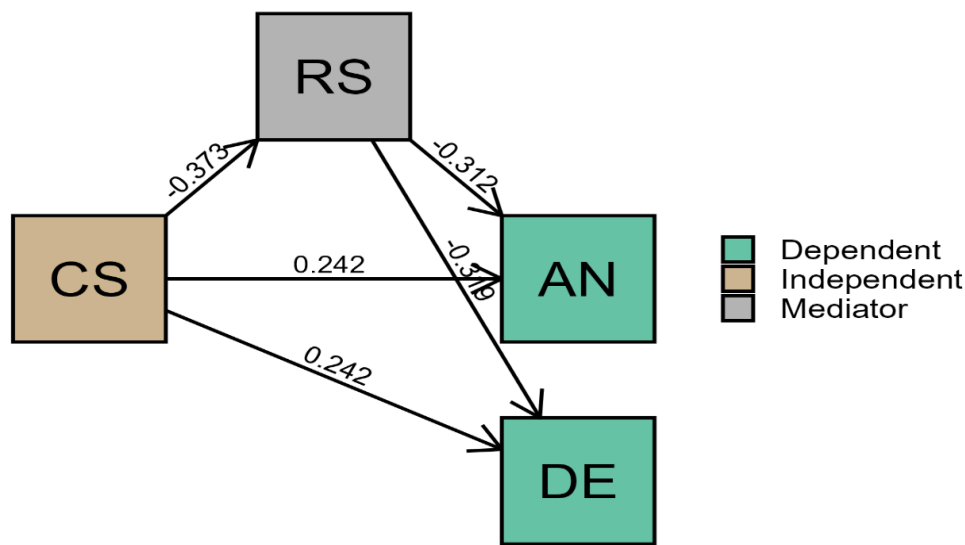


Figure 1. The mediating effect of resilience in the relationship between caregiver stress and anxiety and depression

Note: CS-Caregiver stress; RS-resilience; AN-anxiety; DE-depression

The bootstrap confidence interval method, which assesses the importance of mediation effects, was employed to examine the indirect effects. It estimates the true value of the mediation effect by continually resampling the sample data to provide confidence ranges. Caregiver stress has an indirect predictive effect on anxiety and depression *via* resilience with an indirect effect value of 0.11 for both anxiety (95%CI [0.070,0.163]) and depression (95%CI [0.065,0.173]).

Due to the fact that p is significant (<0.001) it can be stated that resilience partially mediates the mentioned relationship. The R^2 value for resilience is 0.24, and for anxiety and depression it is 0.32 and 0.25, respectively. Hypothesis 3, according to which resilience will mediate the relationship between caregiver stress and anxiety/depression, is confirmed.

Table no 3

The mediation effects of resilience

Direct and indirect effects	Parameter Estimates	SE	95%CI	p
Caregiver Stress→ Resilience	-0.37	0.03	-0.450,-0.296	0.001
Resilience→ Anxiety	-0.31	0.05	-0.418,-0.206	0.001
Resilience →Depression	-0.31	0.06	-0.447,-0.191	0.001
Caregiver Stress →Anxiety	0.24	0.04	0.162,0.323	0.001
Caregiver Stress →Depression	0.24	0.06	0.145,0.339	0.001
Caregiver Stress → Resilience →Anxiety	0.11	0.02	0.070,0.163	0.001
Caregiver Stress →Resilience →Depression	0.11	0.02	0.065,0.173	0.001
Total effect				
Caregiver Stress →Anxiety	0.35	0.04	0.285,0.433	0.001
Caregiver Stress →Depression	0.36	0.05	0.273,0.449	0.001

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to investigate the role of resilience as a mediator in the relationship between caregiving stress and the mental health of healthcare workers (HCWs) who provide care for individuals with disabilities. The findings confirm that caregiving stress has direct effects on anxiety and depression, reinforcing the notion that HCWs working in this field are particularly vulnerable to mental health deterioration. These results contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying caregiving stress and provide empirical evidence on the protective role of resilience in healthcare settings.

Furthermore, mediation analysis demonstrated that resilience partially mediates the relationship between stress and both anxiety and depression. This suggests that, while resilience serves as a psychological buffer, mitigating the negative effects of stress, it does not fully eliminate them. HCWs with high resilience levels exhibited lower anxiety and depression, whereas those with lower resilience were more susceptible to mental health impairments. These findings reinforce the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model by illustrating how resilience functions as a key personal resource that buffers the impact of caregiving stress.

A comparison with other studies highlights the consistency of these results across different populations. For example, research on adolescents found that resilience partially mediated the relationship between stress and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Specifically, stress was negatively associated with resilience and positively correlated with anxiety and depression symptoms (Anyan and Hjemdal, 2016). Similarly, previous studies (Lara-Cabrera *et al.*, 2021) have identified within three series of partial mediation that resilience as a mediating variable in the relationship between stress and anxiety, depression and mental distress. The present study extends these findings to a population that has been less examined compared to hospital medical staff.

Notably, our results diverge from prior research (Chen *et al.*, 2023), which suggested that perceived stress did not have a direct effect on depression. This discrepancy may be attributed to the unique stressors faced by HCWs in residential care settings, such as prolonged exposure to patients with chronic conditions and the necessity of forming long-term emotional connections with those under their care.

The practical implications of these findings are significant. Given the mediating role of resilience, healthcare institutions should prioritize strategies that foster this capacity. For example, programs focused on increasing job satisfaction (Askaripoor *et al.*, 2024) and improved work-life balance (Meekes *et al.*, 2021), could directly address the stressors impacting resilience. Furthermore, incorporating mentorship programs for HCWs could enhance empathetic communication skills, a key component of resilience in caregiving roles (Julià-Mora *et al.*, 2025). Building on the demonstrated effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral techniques in improving coping strategies (Chidi *et al.*, 2024), resilience-focused interventions could equip HCWs with practical skills to manage stress and enhance their overall mental health. The study suggests the need for resilience-building training specifically designed for HCWs in disability care. These programs should focus on practical strategies for managing the emotional demands of caregiving. The study also highlights the impact of caregiving stress on mental health. Therefore, organizations should ensure sufficient staffing to reduce workload and prevent burnout; at the same time, facilitate counseling services for employees who are exhausted. Although the study focuses on HCWs in disability care, it could be extended to other caregiving environments such as palliative care.

Study limitations and future research directions

As with any research, the present study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, there was a gender imbalance within the sample, as HCWs in residential centers for individuals with disabilities were predominantly females. Therefore, the findings may be more applicable to this demographic group. Second, the reliance on self-report measures introduces potential bias due to social desirability effects. Third, the use of a convenience sampling method may have led to selection bias, as supervisors might have forwarded the survey primarily to HCWs perceived as highly engaged or less stressed, potentially underestimating the true levels of caregiving stress and mental health challenges in this population.

Future research should address these limitations and should employ more robust sampling strategies and longitudinal designs to better understand the complex interplay between stress, resilience, and mental health in HCWs caring for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, future studies should examine factors such as the duration of caregiving experience in residential centers to provide a more nuanced perspective on occupational stress. Expanding sample sizes would allow for cluster analyses to identify profiles of employees most vulnerable to stress in residential

care settings. A particularly valuable direction for future research would be to compare HCWs across different types of healthcare environments – such as acute, long-term, intensive, and palliative care – to identify setting-specific stressors and protective factors.

In conclusion, our findings emphasize the critical role of resilience as a psychological resource that helps HCWs manage caregiving stress and protect their mental health. In order to improve the resilience of HCWs, psychologists employed by Romania's General Directorates of Social Assistance and Protection of the Child shall conduct psychological assistance and counseling sessions. By fostering resilience through structured programs, health care institutions can contribute to the overall well-being of professionals working in high-stress caregiving environments, ultimately improving both worker satisfaction and patient care quality.

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REZUMAT

Profesioniștii din domeniul medical reprezintă o categorie de angajați care se confruntă cu numeroase provocări cu impact semnificativ asupra calității vieții lor. Acest studiu transversal a explorat relația dintre stresul îngrijitorului, reziliența și sănătatea mintală (anxietate/depresie) în rândul a 305 angajați din domeniul medical (Media vârstă=44.65; AS=9.58) folosind un sondaj online realizat în perioada decembrie 2022-februarie 2023. Participanții au completat următoarele instrumente: Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), Kingston Caregiver Stress Scale (adaptată pentru îngrijirea în mediul formal) (KCSS) și Depression and Anxiety Stress Scale 21-R (DASS21-R). Rezultatele au arătat o corelație pozitivă între stresul îngrijitorului și anxietate și depresie, în timp ce reziliența a fost asociată negativ cu stresul îngrijitorului. Analiza medierii, cu ajutorul macro-PROCESS, a demonstrat că reziliența mediază parțial relația dintre stresul îngrijitorului și sănătatea mintală. Mai exact, stresul îngrijitorului a prezis negativ reziliența, care, la rândul său, a contribuit la reducerea anxietății și a depresiei. Aceste constatări sugerează că intervențiile direcționate atât către reducerea stresului, cât și către dezvoltarea rezilienței ar putea contribui la îmbunătățirea sănătății mentale și a calității vieții personalului medical.

COGNITIVE ARCHITECTURES OF RITUAL LAMENTATION: ANALYZING *ZORILE* SONGS USING IMAGE SCHEMAS

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Abstract

The current study analyzes the process by which individuals psychologically, socially, and culturally process the phenomenon of death through the analysis of the ritualistic “Songs of Dawn” (*Zorile*). In this research, the focus was on Image Schemas, cognitive and social processing, and the interactions of elements from Terror Management Theory (mortality salience, self-esteem, and cultural worldviews). The research encompassed four variants of the “Outdoor Dawn Songs” (*Zorile de afară*) present in the work *Cântecul zorilor și bradului* (Kahane & Georgescu-Stănculeanu, 1988), collected between 1934 and 1950, utilizing a Corpus Linguistics methodology in RStudio. In the analysis, the schemas CONTAINMENT, PATH, FORCE, VERTICALITY, BALANCE, and CENTER-PERIPHERY were identified and quantified, as were the dimensions of TMT and social relations. The results revealed a predominance of the CONTAINMENT schema ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 2.22$), denoting a constant preoccupation with the existential space of the deceased. The analysis of social relations revealed the dominance of the Family category (52.94%) compared to the Spiritual dimension (17.65%). A non-uniform distribution of the schemas was also observed ($\chi^2 = 36.2$, $p < .001$), as well as a decrease in scores after 1939, possibly influenced by the socio-historical context of the onset of World War II. Cognitive processes highlighted the predominance of causality (35.14%), thus indicating a focus on understanding and rationalizing death within the traditional community. The present study contributes to understanding how traditional communities process and integrate the experience of death through ritualistic practices, emphasizing the importance of the cognitive and social dimensions in managing grief through the development of a collective imaginary.

Cuvinte-cheie: Scheme imagistice, Teoria Managementului Terorii, Căntece ritual, Procesarea morții, Imaginar colectiv.

Keywords: Image Schemas, Terror Management Theory, Ritual Songs, Death Processing, Collective Imaginary.

1. INTRODUCTION

In attempting to understand how the inhabitants of a geographic area or historical period understood and psychologically and socially processed significant moments in their personal lives or the life of their community, we discover that cultural products constitute one of the few available sources of information about

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these civilizations. When seeking in literature an answer to the question: “What are the major moments in an individual's life?”, these are often identified, in the following order: birth, betrothal, and death (Gennep, 2019). While these moments are typically presented as fundamental to human existence, others may be added depending on individual economic and social characteristics, or specific circumstances. Acknowledging these milestones in the lives of both individuals and communities, it becomes apparent that the event of death, or the funeral ritual, belongs to an entirely different register. Death and life are often considered equal, or as equivalent dimensions, precisely because of the dual character of the end of life in popular consciousness and belief – a finality and a transition to another form of existence.

For the purpose of this study, the work *Cântecul zorilor și bradul* (Kahane & Georgescu-Stănculeanu, 1988) was reviewed. In this manual, *bocete* (laments), or *cântecele zorilor* (songs of dawn), are presented as the most archaic and rudimentary folklore structures of popular song, which are still preserved and practiced today. These ritualistic songs possess a unique character in Europe and are capable of encompassing the most important folklore genres. In their thematic analysis, the authors emphasized that *Zorile* (Dawn) does not precisely signify a moment of the day, but through a semantic shift, the word *Zori* is equivalent to the word *Zâne* (Fairies) (Lorinț & Kahane, 1968). Analyzing this observation, and having studied the texts of the *bocete* (laments), one can observe the presence of a series of cognitions attributed to supernatural or magical beliefs that are characteristic of the funerary process of individuals.

The “Songs of Dawn” frequently referred to as *bocete*, are representative creations for the period of the deceased's final day of wake, prior to burial. The “Outdoor Dawn Song” (*Zorile de afară*) is the most well-known form of these songs and is often sung by women in the courtyard of the deceased's family home. The song is addressed to the *Zori* fairies, asking them to travel to the personified Sun and implore it to delay its sunrise, as the soul of the deceased is not yet prepared for departure and still has several tasks to complete (Poruciuc, 2011). Elements characteristic of the pre-Christian period found in the texts include the personification of the Sun and the Dawns, but especially the presence of the evil fairy, the death figure, *Sima Samodiva* (Konach, 2014). In other variants, the emergence and subsequent presence of religious phenomena in the form of Christianity brought modifications to the texts, with Jesus Christ appearing as a character. This transition can also be observed in the evolution of beliefs. In pre-modern cultures, in the collective consciousness, death appeared as a phenomenon provoked by deities to avenge themselves on humans for their petty deeds, but with the passage of time and the evolution of societies, these sets of cognitions took the form of the belief that God is manifesting His will (Oesterdiekhoff, 2016).

The recognition of death is a central element in these folklore products. This recognitions typically involves emotional reactivity and cognitive modifications such as avoidance and rigidification of processes, as well as increased uncertainty, according to the mortality salience component created within Terror Management

Theory (Vahle & Tomasik, 2022). To cope with the anxiety generated by the awareness of death or confrontation with it, people have developed beliefs in symbolic immortality, referring to the values created by the deceased and left to the community, and literal immortality, referring to the continuation of life after physical death (Dechesne *et al.*, 2003). Manifestations of both can be observed in the texts of the *Zorile*. Other psychological dimensions that interact with the phenomena generated by the recognition of death are self-esteem and worldview, both of which explain the process of evaluating oneself, or, in the case of the *Zorile* songs, the deceased, and his fulfillment of the standards of the internalized community vision of life and the world, as well as his merit in having a spiritual afterlife (Lifshin *et al.*, 2021). Because the morphology and syntax of the laments contain many motor elements or suggestions of spiritual and social mobility, and of the family system, they can be framed or delimited as condensed representations of perceptual experiences (Oakley, 2010). These distillates are called Image Schemas, defined as preconceptual structures that arise from our bodily interaction with the environment, being outlines of sensorimotor experiences. They also represent continuous and analogous patterns, having at the same time a strongly sedimented but also flexible internal structure (Hampe & Grady, 2005). The initial schemes developed by Johnson (1987) and Lakoff (1990) are: CONTAINMENT/CONTAINER, which represents critical elements in structuring human perception, denoting the character of objects or persons to contain or to be contained, in the case of the analyzed texts, evoking the character of the dead person to belong or not to a world; PATH/SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, which suggests the orientation of objects or persons in motion, from an initial point A to a final point B, and making it possible to observe cognitions about the passage into other spiritual worlds; the LINK schema makes possible the perception of similarities and connectivity in understanding the world through logical entities (predicates or propositions), which can be connected by logical relations such as: “and”, “but”, “or”, “if-then”. PART-WHOLE compresses the delimitation of a space from a whole; more precisely, it is a composite schema, formed of different parts, and the creation of links between them generates a connotative meaning (Sáenz, 2002). CENTER-PERIPHERY expresses the “experiential space” created around a central point, as we can observe in the texts, an example of such a point being that of leaving the earth, or social points, according to which relationships are built and distances are defined from the external world of man. BALANCE summarizes force vectors or “weights” and equilibrium points or axes, suggesting the constant balance in which the elements of life are found or may represent, in this case, the idea of judging the value of life.

Focusing primarily on the detection of Image Schemas, and subsequently on the evolutionary and anthropological elements of TMT (Terror Management Theory), as well as the social dimension, a need emerges to refine the analyses in order to observe specifically the dimension of cognitions expressed in the *Zorile de*

afară (Outdoor Dawn Songs), and, more comprehensively, the ethnological phenomenon of the *bocet* (lament) as a historical entity preserving beliefs of the collective imagination.

2. METHOD

The major objectives of the present study are to analyze the psychological, social, and cultural processes involved in the grieving in archaic communities; to identify and quantify Image Schemas in order to understand the structures involved in the conceptualization of death; and to investigate the phenomenon of existential anxiety. A further objective is to observe social connections and cognitive processes within the experience of death, as well as their modification in traumatic socio-historical contexts (World-War II).

2.1. DATA COLLECTION

The data is represented by the *Zorile de afară* songs for which 4 variants were chosen. In choosing the variants, care was taken that they do not repeat in a very large quantity because many versions were identical or similar, that they be of significant dimensions, and that they not all be from the same village or locality. The texts in their primary written form followed the linguistic norms of the 20th century or their writing was phonetic. In constituting the database, these were written following current orthographic and orthoepic norms to make their analysis possible.

Because the songs have a high degree of similarity, the following were chosen:

Song number 46 from Rasovița village, Gorj county on 30.9.1934

Ro: Zorilor, zorilor, să nu zoriți, Să mi-l pribegiți, Pe cel de-a pribegit, Cu numele Ion, Ce are să treacă, în țara cu dor, în cea fără dor, din țara cu milă, în cea fără milă....;

Eng: Zorilor, zorilor, do not hasten, Do not make him wander, The one who has wandered, With the name Ion, Who has to pass, to the land of longing, to the one without longing, from the land with mercy, to the one without mercy...;

Song number 165 from Seliște village, Mehedinți. Păuna Popescu on 25.8.1950

Ro: Cokoșei negri cântară. Zorile se revărsară. Zorilor, surorilor, nu pripiti a zori. Soare, soare frățioare, ia ceața pământului și pulberea drumului!...;

Eng: Black roosters sang. The Zori poured forth. Zori, sisters, do not rush to dawn. Sun, sun little brother, take the mist of the earth and the dust of the road!...;

Song 168 from Peștișani village, Gorj on 5.5.1935

Ro: Stai soare, nu răsării, până și-o găsi, să-și găsească un logofăt, logofătul să scrie, carte neagră slove verzi, să trimită în toate părțile, pe la străini, pe la vecini,

pe la frați pe la surori, la dragii de verișori, că el este călător, dintr-o lume într-altă lume...

Eng: Stay sun, don't rise, until he finds, let him find a clerk, the clerk/ chancellor to write, black paper green letters, to send in all directions, to strangers, to neighbors, to brothers to sisters, to dear cousins, that he is a traveler, from one world to another world...

Song 171 from Pocruia village – Gorj on 22.9.1938:

Ro: Zorilor surorilor, nu pripeții a zori până s-o găti! Voi, voi, voi nevestelor, nu vă rugați de noi, vă rugați de Sfântul soare, nu pripească a răsări, până s-o găti, s-o despărți, iar de mamă și de tată, și de frați și de surori încă și de verișori...

Eng: Zori sisters, don't rush to dawn until he's ready! You, you, you wives, don't pray to us, pray to the Holy sun, not to rush to rise, until he's ready, he'll part, from mother and father, and from brothers and sisters and even from cousins...

Songs extracted from the work “Cântecul zorilor și bradului” (Kahane & Georgescu-Stănculeanu, 1988)

2.2. ANALYSIS

To facilitate a rigorous and replicable analysis of the linguistic data, each of the four song corpora was imported into the R environment in its updated form. The coding process was carried out by three external collaborators with expertise in psychology and anthropology, selected based on their familiarity with the relevant theoretical frameworks and their ability to implement a standardized coding strategy. Prior to the commencement of coding, the collaborators received detailed instructions regarding the theories involved – Image Schemas, Terror Management Theory (TMT), dimensions of social relations, cognitive anchors, System 1 and System 2, and the cognitive and conceptual metaphors. They were also instructed on how to identify and evaluate cognitive processes. The units of analysis were defined as individual paragraphs within the body of the texts. To guide the coding process, evaluators were provided with, in addition to the complete texts, sheets containing vectorized words, which they were instructed to associate with domains of Image Schemas. This approach facilitated the consistent assignment of text segments to specific categories within the image schemas. The evaluators also used predefined codes to mark text segments relevant to the domain of social relations (community, family, spirituality), the components of TMT (culture, self-esteem, mortality), cognitive anchors (spatial, temporal, personal, social), System 1 and System 2 (Pherson *et al.*, 2024), and the four cognitive and conceptual metaphors (Life is a Journey; Death is a Transition or Change; Time is an Entity; Emotion is like a Container). The evaluators were required to pay particular attention to the cognitive processes present in the text, being responsible for identifying and classifying examples of causality, abstraction, temporality, spatiality, and personification (Jonassen & Ionas, 2008; Wang, 2005; Liberman & Trope, 2008; Schneider, 2023;

Sakamoto & Hamasaki, 2015). This stage required careful interpretation of the text and consistent application of the operational definitions of the cognitive processes. To ensure the validity and reliability of the coding process, inter-rater agreement was calculated using Fleiss' Kappa coefficient. The resulting value, Kappa = 0.88 ($p < .001$), indicates excellent inter-rater agreement, suggesting a remarkable consistency among the three evaluators and a high degree of consistency in applying the coding scheme.

The complete code can be found in the supplementary materials: <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/M3DZP>.

Part I

1. Image Schema Identification: Image schemas were identified using the *analyze_image_schemas()* function. This function incorporates the UDPipe natural language processing model (Straka & Straková, 2017) to identify and quantify the schemas CONTAINMENT, PATH, FORCE, VERTICALITY, BALANCE, and CENTER-PERIPHERY within the texts based on patterns of semantic significance.

2. Semantic Group Definition and Analysis: Semantic groups were defined according to the expert evaluators. These groups were then analyzed according to concepts contributing to Terror Management Theory. To conduct this analysis, the *analyze_tmt()* function was created, containing the lists "mortality salience," "cultural worldview" and "self-esteem". The results were then interpreted within the coping paradigm concerning existential anxiety.

3. Social Relations Analysis: The *analyze_social_relations()* function was created and implemented, containing the *social_patterns* object and the lists family, community, and spiritual to analyze the social dimension attributed to the funerary event.

Part II

This section comprises functions and methods for visualizing the results, including distribution plots for image schemas, social relations, and elements of Terror Management Theory. Further methods performed include conducting the chi-square test, followed by a graph of the temporal evolution of the schemas.

Part III

This section details a series of statistical procedures performed for the adjacent examination of cognitive dimensions and residual emotions that may be present. An analysis of cognitive processes was conducted using the *analyze_cognitive_processes* function, which contains the lists: causality, abstraction, temporality, spatiality, and personification. By observing the interactions, we can discern the expression and structuring of cognitions within the songs. The subsequent analysis involved cognitive complexity, using the *analyze_cognitive_complexity* function, which utilizes TTR (type/token ratio) for calculating the index of semantic diversity, lexical density, and average sentence length. Another function: *analyze_emotional_cognitive_profile*,

was implemented to visualize the ratio between affective and cognitive indices, followed by the *analyze_dual_processing* function to observe the factors influencing the emergence of cognitions, specifically in evaluating the ratio between implicit or explicit processing (Barrouillet, 2011). The final function, *analyze_cognitive_anchors*, analyzes cognitive anchors using lists of spatial, temporal, personal, and social dimensions.

3. FINDINGS

Following the analyses, it can be observed that the CONTAINMENT/CONTAINER schema has the highest mean ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 2.22$), suggesting a high frequency of this schema across the four texts. In other studies, the dominance of the CONTAINMENT schema suggests a feeling of being overwhelmed by the grief caused by the death of a loved one (Gibbs, 2008). The second most prevalent schema is VERTICALITY ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.71$). The schema with the third highest mean is FORCE ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.50$). The PATH and BALANCE schemas both have means of ($M = 1.50$), but the standard deviations differ, with the former having ($SD = 1.00$) and the latter having ($SD = 0.58$). The schema with the lowest mean is CENTER-PERIPHERY ($M = 1.25$, $SD = 0.50$). To evaluate the distribution of the schemas, a chi-square test was conducted ($\chi^2 = 36.2$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$). The results indicate that the schemas are not uniformly distributed, suggesting peculiarities within each included song. The distribution of these schemas can be observed in Figure 1. The presence of such an imbalanced pattern between schemas and their active dynamics constitutes key elements in grief management, demonstrating the tendency of communities to process the phenomenon of death and maintain a connection with the deceased beyond physical disappearance (Pearce & Komaromy, 2022). In other research, such a non-uniform arrangement of Image Schemas provides a cognitive structure for the expression of grief through metaphorical thinking (Reventlow *et al.*, 2008).

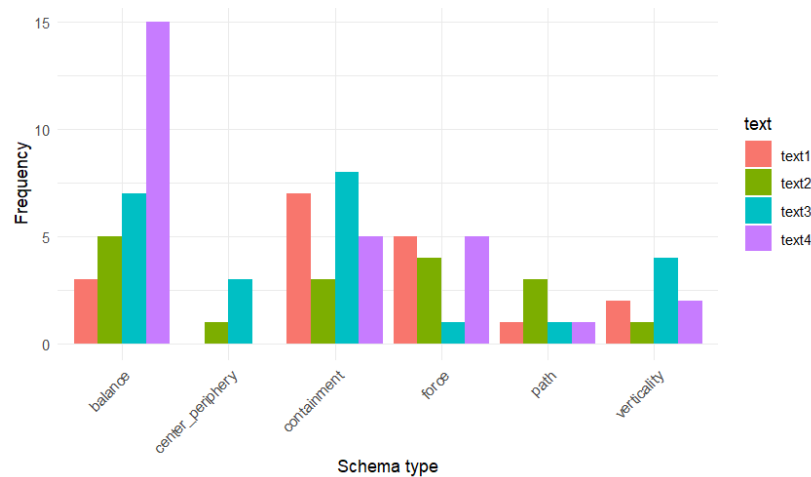


Figure no. 1. The distribution of image schemas in texts

Between the periods when the song texts were collected, a number of political, social, and economic changes took place, a major event being the onset of World War II. Until 1938, it can be observed that the schemas intersect and exhibit dynamism, but around 1939 towards 1950, they have a linear trajectory toward lower scores. The visualization of these shifts can be observed in Figure 2. In the correlation analysis of Image Schemas, Containment correlates negatively with Path (-0.82), as does Force with Center-Periphery (-0.99). Conversely, the Containment and Verticality schemas have a strong positive correlation (0.86), as does the Verticality schema with the Center-Periphery schema (0.74), as detailed in Table no.1. This phenomenon is presented as the Threat-Rigidity Hypothesis, which posits that during conflagrations, conflicts, or social crises, individuals experiencing these events become less flexible in their thinking and interpersonal relationships, creativity experiences a sharp decline, their perspectives on life and interests narrow dramatically, and magical thinking also diminishes significantly (De Dreu & Nijstad, 2008).

Table no. 1
Images Schema correlations

	containment	path	force	verticality	balance	Cen-Per
containment	1.00	-0.82	-0.49	0.86	-0.15	0.42
path	-0.82	1.00	0.08	-0.66	-0.31	0.00
force	-0.49	0.08	1.00	-0.80	0.15	-0.99
verticality	0.86	-0.66	-0.80	1.00	0.07	0.74
balance	-0.1572	-0.31	0.15	0.07	1.00	-0.17
Cen-Per	0.42	0.00	-0.99	0.74	-0.17	1.00

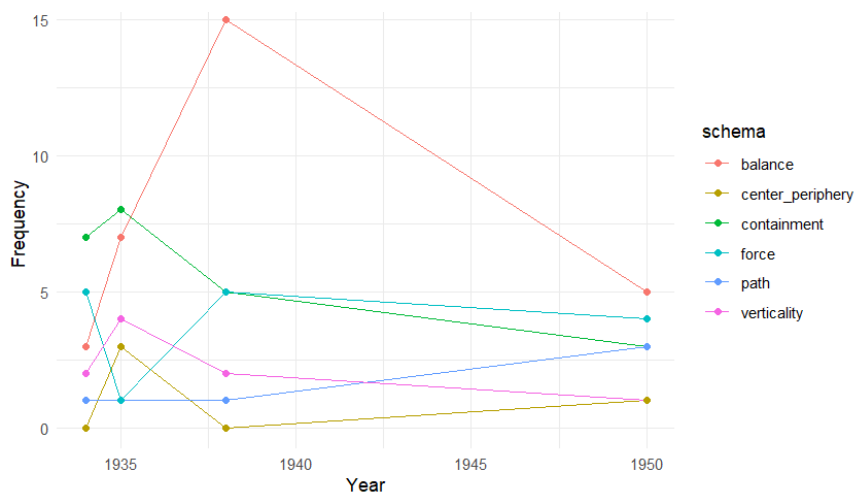


Figure no. 2. Temporal evolution of Image Schemas

The concepts underpinning TMT (Terror Management Theory) are present in relatively equal proportions. Specifically, the variables Culture and Self-Esteem each account for 35.71%, and Mortality accounts for 28.57%. At a particular level of influence, culture provides individuals with meaning, value, and permanence (Miller, 2024), while self-esteem reinforces the sense of personal worth (Schmeichel *et al.*, 2009), and mortality compels adaptive behavioral changes (Routledge *et al.*, 2010). However, the analysis of social relations establishes a clear ranking of its categories within the song corpus. Family accounts for 52.94%, Community 29.41%, and Spiritual, an unexpectedly small percentage of 17.65%.

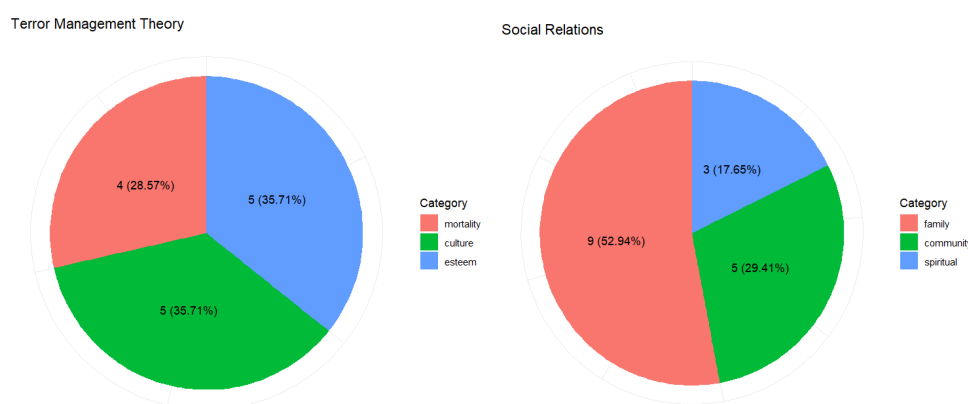


Figure no. 3. TMT and Social relationships analysis

According to the cognitive complexity analysis, song number 165 from the village of Seliște, Mehedinți exhibits the highest score for cognitive complexity (CC = 0.877). The remaining songs, originating from Gorj (46 – Rasovița and 171 – Procuia), have a score of 0.634, and song number 168 from Petrișani scores 0.659. The second song also exhibits the highest score for emotional intensity, 0.7, followed by the third song with a score of 0.5, and then the first song with a score of 0.1. The developed model did not detect a value for emotional intensity for the first song. In Systems 1 and 2 thinking processes, the ratio between song 2 and 4 has a value of 2, suggesting a processing more directed towards intuition and affective implications (Bellini-Leite, 2013). Spatial anchors are the most present in the third song, with a frequency of 10, followed by the second and third songs, which have a frequency of 4, and the last with a frequency of 1. The analysis of cognitive processes revealed a very high proportion of causality (35.14%), followed by personification and temporality (18.92%), which represents the ability of people to perceive, estimate, and measure time (Brooks & DeNigris, 2019), abstraction (13.51%), and spatial cognition (10.81%).

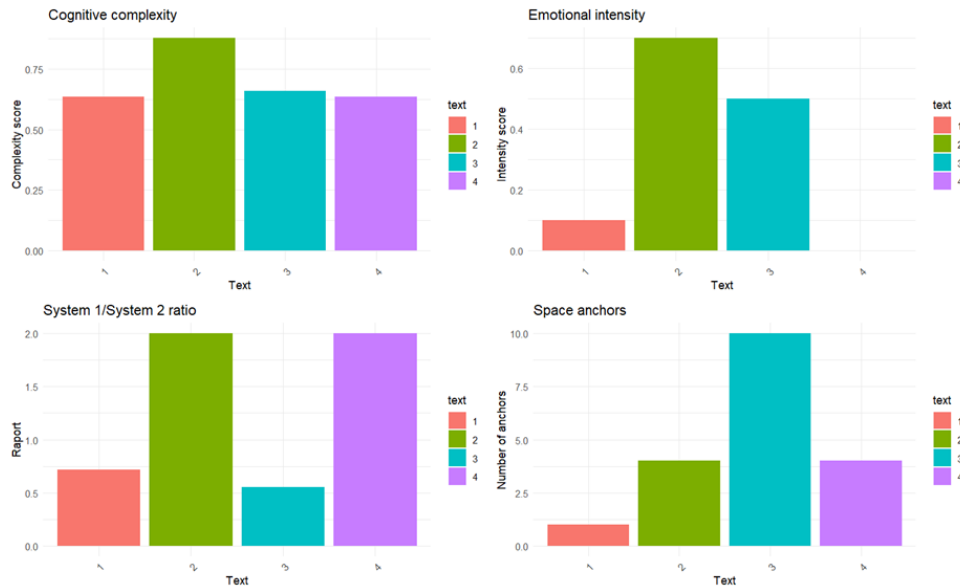


Figure no. 4. Primary cognitive analysis

Further analyses (Figure no. 5) involved examining cognitive anchors and conceptual metaphors. The personal anchor, representing the identification of individuals, is the most frequent, peaking in the first text (17 instances) and reaching its lowest count in song 3, with only 5 instances. Social anchors fluctuate between 4 and 11, with the first song containing the highest number (11), indicating the strongest social representation. Spatial anchors are distributed as follows across the texts: 1, 4, 10, and 4, in sequential order of the songs, with text 3 demonstrating the most spatially delimited focus. An increased frequency of social and personal anchors suggests the triggering of reconstruction of assumptions about the self and the world following the loss (Matthews & Marwit, 2004). Temporal anchors show low consistency, ranging from 1 to a maximum of 3, indicating a weak mental representation of time, a phenomenon resulting from the disconnection between the phenomenological experience of time and the external world (Hughes, 2022). The cognitive metaphor representing emotional processing, or containing emotions, is the most prominent, particularly in the first text with a frequency of 15 and in the fourth, with a frequency of 14, thus demonstrating the capacity of these structures to facilitate the psychological processes involved in meaning-making related to the loss of the deceased (Tay & Neimeyer, 2021). The other metaphors are less represented; the metaphor for conceptualizing the entity of temporality appears twice in the first three texts and four times in the last text, while the metaphor for the character of life as permanent change or travel is most prominent in text 1. The metaphor for death as a transition is the least frequent, detected only in texts 3 (1 instance) and 4 (2 instances).

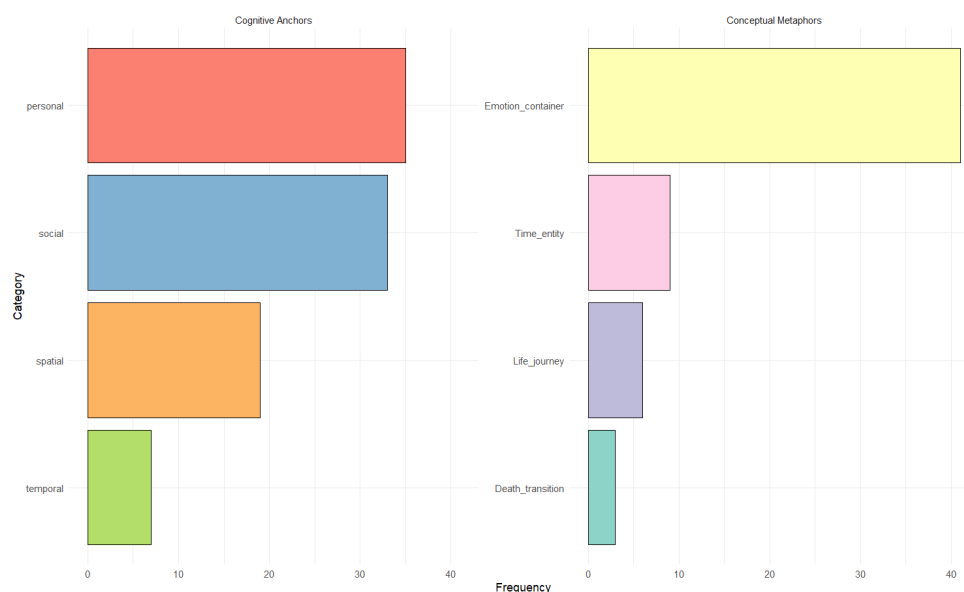


Figure no. 5. Cognitive anchors an conceptual analysis

4. DISCUSSION

From the obtained results, the CONTAINER/CONTAINMENT schema emerges as the most frequent in the text corpora, suggesting a persistent preoccupation, concern, and anxiety among the living regarding the location of the deceased's existence. This mirrors findings in Ronderos *et al.* (2021), where specific CONTAINMENT schemas were used to exemplify the difficulties or restrictions generating psychological distress. Our results also indicate a desire to maintain a connection to the physical world for as long as possible, until the deceased is prepared according to customs for their imagined journey to other realms. These findings support the well-established phenomenon that concern for the afterlife is directly related to belief in judgment and the subsequent receipt of rewards (Rose & O'Sullivan, 2002). This observation further reinforces the presence of a belief within the traditional collective mentality in the duality of human existence and the valorization of the imaginary in mitigating the negative effects of grief and fostering resilience. This aligns with a socio-ecological approach that emphasizes the interaction between individual and social adaptive systems (Kuldas & Foody, 2022). Our results further support the theses advanced by Hodge (2011), which posit that acceptance of the afterlife is an imaginative process already internalized within the personal system, and that this acceptance demonstrably represents social cognition oriented towards others. This phenomenon is observed in the social analyses of the texts, specifically through the dominance of the Family category (52.94%) compared to the Spiritual dimension (17.65%) in the analysis of social

relations. Finally, and also supported by this work, Hodge proposes that the deceased retains a body or a form of human existence after death and continues their obligations towards the new world or community they will join. To fulfill these tasks, the physical form of the deceased requires preparation and a postponement of departure, a factor also reflected in the prominence of the Container schema. The observed decrease in Schema scores coinciding with the onset of World War II may indicate a transformation of the collective mental state resulting from the adoption of various stress reduction strategies or the avoidance of stressors due to anxiety generated by war, extremist policies, or socio-economic and political uncertainties (Zmigrod, 2020). Analyzing the component dimensions of Terror Management Theory suggests a balance among its core strategies. Roughly equal scores for existential anxiety, cultural worldview, and self-esteem, followed by mortality salience, imply that this balanced interaction potentially promotes defensive behavioral activation against threats while simultaneously fostering prosocial values (Burke *et al.*, 2022). These phenomena observed in this study are further supported by the high prevalence of causality (35.14%) within cognitive processes, suggesting a greater preoccupation with explaining, understanding, and rationalizing the phenomenon of death within the traditional community than outside it. This is also reflected in the weak representation of the death-transition cognitive metaphor. Conversely, metaphors related to emotional processing indicate a greater concentration within the social group involved in the funeral act on managing and processing the emotional aspects of loss, and in managing cognitions characterized by uncertainty about the dynamics of life after death. This phenomenon is also observed in other cultures where emotionality served to honor the deceased and offer solace to their relatives (Afreh & Ofosu, 2024). The perception and reinforcement of self-identity and relational identity are prioritized over the delimitation of temporality, reflecting the disturbances arising from the intrusion of death within the restricted social or family framework. Following this emergent imbalance, a process of restructuring personal meaning and social relations implicitly arises, emphasizing the vital role of social connections in coping with grief and preserving self-identity in as healthy a manner as possible (Handsley, 2001).

While this qualitative study offers valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations inherent to text analysis research. These limitations include the potential for inadequate coverage of all relevant constructs, challenges in ensuring the validity of computational social science measurements, potential influences of genre-specific text characteristics, and the ongoing effort required to comprehensively capture contextual nuances and mitigate potential biases within the analyzed texts. Future research requires the inclusion of a larger corpus of Zori songs, categorized by the specific moments of the funeral ritual, geographical region, and historical period.

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REZUMAT

Studiul actual analizează procesul prin care oamenii procesează psihologic, social și cultural fenomenul morții prin analiza cântecelor ritualice ale Zorilor. În această cercetare, concentrarea s-a realizat asupra Images Schemas, a procesării cognitive și sociale, precum și a interacțiunilor elementelor din Terror Management Theory (*mortality salience*, *self-esteem* și *cultural worldviews*). Cercetarea a cuprins patru variante ale cântecelor Zorile de afară prezente în lucrarea „Cântecul zorilor și bradului” (Kahane & Georgescu-Stănculeanu, 1988), culese între anii 1934–1950, utilizând metodologia de tip Corpus linguistic în RStudio. În analiză au fost identificate și cuantificate schemele CONTAINMENT (înconjurare/conținere), PATH (cale), FORCE (forță), VERTICALITY (verticalitate), BALANCE (balans/echilibru) și CENTER-PERIPHERY (centru-periferie), dar și dimensiunile TMT, cât și cele ale relaționării sociale. Rezultatele au arătat o predominanță a schemei CONTAINMENT (înconjurare/conținere) ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 2.22$), denotând o preocupare constantă pentru spațiul existențial al decedatului. Analiza relațiilor sociale a relevat dominanța categoriei Familie (52.94%) față de dimensiunea Spirituală (17.65%). S-a observat și o distribuție neuniformă a schemelor ($\chi^2 = 36.2$, $p < .001$) și o scădere a scorurilor după 1939, posibil influențată de contextul social-istoric al debutului celui de-Al Doilea Război Mondial. Procesele cognitive au evidențiat predominanța cauzalității (35.14%), indicând astfel o focalizare pe înțelegerea și raționalizarea morții în cadrul comunității tradiționale. Studiul prezent contribuie la înțelegerea modului în care comunitățile tradiționale procesează și integrează experiența morții prin practici ritualice, subliniind importanța dimensiunii cognitive și sociale în gestionarea doliului prin dezvoltarea unui imaginar colectiv.

REVISITING THE ORIENTATIONS TO HAPPINESS MODEL: ARE PLEASURE, ENGAGEMENT, AND MEANING PROTECTIVE FACTORS AGAINST PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS?

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Abstract

While orientations to happiness (OTH) have been extensively studied in relation to well-being, their role in psychological distress remains less understood. This study examined whether the three orientations – pleasure, engagement, and meaning – predict depression, anxiety, and stress. Data were collected from 476 Romanian adults ($M = 32.85$, $SD = 11.87$) and analyzed using structural equation modeling to assess the predictive role of each orientation in psychological distress, operationalized as depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms. Pleasure orientation significantly predicted higher levels of depressive symptoms ($\beta = .12$, $p = .039$), anxiety ($\beta = .17$, $p = .002$), and stress ($\beta = .15$, $p = .002$). In contrast, meaning orientation negatively predicted depressive symptoms ($\beta = -.17$, $p = .002$) and stress ($\beta = -.11$, $p = .039$), supporting its protective role. Engagement orientation did not significantly predict any dimension of psychological distress. This study extends the OTH model beyond its traditional focus on well-being to examine its relationship with psychological distress, demonstrating that happiness orientations have both benefits and potential drawbacks. By highlighting the protective role of meaning and the risks associated with pleasure orientation, these findings emphasize the need for a more nuanced understanding of happiness orientations. Future research should explore the mechanisms underlying these associations and investigate their longitudinal effects.

Cuvinte-cheie: orientări către fericire, distres psihologic, depresie, anxietate, stres.

Keywords: orientations to happiness, psychological distress, depression, anxiety, stress.

1. INTRODUCTION

Exploring the primary factors that shape psychological well-being has represented a core theme within the field of positive psychology (e.g., David *et al.*, 2012). A notable contribution to this field is Peterson, Park, and Seligman's (2005) Orientations to Happiness (OTH) model, which identifies three distinct happiness-seeking strategies: pleasure (i.e., hedonic enjoyment), engagement (i.e., being fully absorbed and challenged by tasks), and meaning (i.e., purposeful living aimed at contributing to something larger than oneself). Each orientation captures a unique approach to achieving happiness.

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The concept of OTH has attracted considerable scholarly attention, especially regarding its links with key indicators of well-being, including life satisfaction and positive affect. Numerous studies have found positive correlations in this regard (e.g., Park *et al.*, 2009).

However, in more recent work, scholars have turned their attention to how these orientations relate to negative affect (e.g., Swart & Rothmann, 2012; Vella-Brodrick *et al.*, 2008). Among the three orientations, the relationship between pleasure orientation and negative affect has been relatively consistent across studies, with most reporting no significant association (e.g., Pollock *et al.*, 2015; Vella-Brodrick *et al.*, 2008), although a few exceptions have been noted (e.g., Schueller & Seligman, 2010; Swart & Rothman, 2012).

In contrast, individuals high in engagement often report lower levels of negative affect. Although some studies failed to identify significant links (e.g., Chan, 2013), others have highlighted substantial negative correlations, revealing that deep involvement in activities that foster engagement may serve as a buffer against negative emotional states (e.g., Chan, 2009; Swart & Rothmann, 2012).

Turning to the third dimension, the meaning orientation has generally shown an inverse relationship with negative affect, indicating that individuals who orient their lives around purpose may be less prone to experiencing negative emotional states (e.g., Pollock *et al.*, 2015; Swart & Rothmann, 2012). This pattern aligns with theoretical perspectives proposing that a strong sense of purpose may enhance psychological resilience and provide a buffer against distress (e.g., Park, 2005).

Despite the considerable body of evidence highlighting the beneficial impact of both engagement and meaning pathways, studies assessing the predictive relationships between these orientations and distress correlates – such as depression, anxiety, and stress – are still relatively scarce (e.g., Schueller & Seligman, 2010). Given these considerations, the current study aims to examine whether engagement and meaning orientations negatively predict psychological distress. Accordingly, we proposed the following hypotheses: H1: Engagement orientation will negatively predict psychological distress – specifically, depression (H1a), anxiety (H1b), and stress (H1c); H2: Meaning orientation will negatively predict psychological distress – specifically, depression (H2a), anxiety (H2b), and stress (H2c).

Given the ambiguous and inconsistent findings concerning the pleasure orientation (e.g., Pollock *et al.*, 2015; Schueller & Seligman, 2010), we will explore its relationship with psychological distress without explicitly hypothesizing a directional outcome. This exploratory approach will provide insights into potential contexts in which pleasure orientation may have protective, neutral, or even detrimental effects on psychological distress.

2. METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The sample consisted of 476 Romanian adults, with an average age of 32.85 years ($SD = 11.87$). Most participants were female (94.5%), held higher education degrees (77.9%), were unmarried (70.4%), and resided in urban areas (87.2%).

PROCEDURE

The study received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of Babeş-Bolyai University. Participants were recruited online via Facebook announcements, posted on groups and shared through personal networks. Data were collected via Google Forms. Respondents provided informed consent before participation, ensuring anonymity and the right to withdraw. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete and included the Orientations to Happiness Scale (Peterson *et al.*, 2005) followed by the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). For their participation, participants were compensated with either personal development workshops or course credit, the latter being available to students from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at Babeş-Bolyai University.

MEASURES

The Orientations to Happiness Scale (OTH; Peterson *et al.*, 2005) is a self-report measure of individuals' pursuit of happiness through three pathways: pleasure, engagement, and meaning. It contains 18 items (six per dimension) rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (does not describe me at all) to 5 (describes me very well). The Pleasure subscale emphasizes hedonic enjoyment (e.g., "For me, the good life is the pleasurable life"), the Engagement subscale captures deep involvement associated with flow (e.g., "Regardless of what I am doing, time passes very quickly"), and the Meaning subscale addresses purposeful living (e.g., "What I do matters to society"). The original scale demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties, with Cronbach's α coefficients of .82 for Pleasure, .72 for Engagement, and .82 for Meaning. In this investigation, the OTH demonstrated good internal consistency for the Pleasure ($\alpha = .78$) and Meaning ($\alpha = .74$) subscales, whereas the Engagement subscale showed questionable reliability ($\alpha = .62$), consistent with prior research (e.g., Ruch *et al.*, 2010). Although the Cronbach's alpha value falls below the conventional threshold of .70, it can be considered acceptable given the small number of items (e.g., Kline, 2000; Nunnally, 1978).

Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) is a self-report instrument assessing three core dimensions of psychological distress: depression, anxiety, and stress. In its 21-item version, each dimension includes seven statements evaluated using a 4-point Likert-type format, from 0

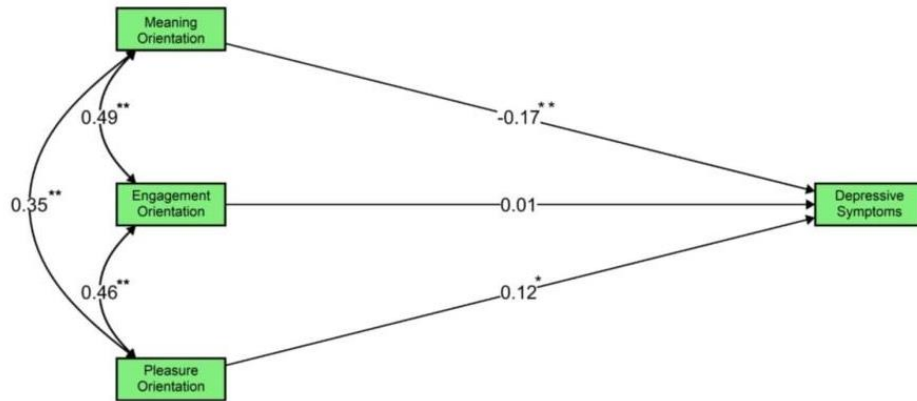
(did not apply to me at all) to 3 (applied to me very much or most of the time). The Depression subscale covers symptoms of low mood and hopelessness (e.g., “I felt that life was meaningless”), the Anxiety subscale captures excessive worry and physiological arousal (e.g., “I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion”), and the Stress subscale reflects tension and irritability (e.g., “I found it hard to wind down”). In the present study, the DASS-21 demonstrated good internal consistency for the Depression ($\alpha = .87$), Anxiety ($\alpha = .86$), and Stress ($\alpha = .88$) subscales.

3. RESULTS

To assess univariate normality, skewness and kurtosis values were examined across all measured variables. Skewness ranged from -0.34 (i.e., meaning orientation) to 1.04 (i.e., depressive symptoms), while kurtosis ranged from -0.77 (i.e., stress) to 0.39 (i.e., depressive symptoms), suggesting minor deviations from normality. Given that both skewness and kurtosis values fall within the commonly accepted range of ± 2 for skewness and ± 7 for kurtosis (e.g., West *et al.*, 1995), the data can be considered approximately normally distributed at the univariate level. Additionally, Henze-Zirkler’s multivariate normality test yielded a statistically significant result ($HZ = 1.029$, $p < .001$), suggesting that the data did not meet the assumption of multivariate normality.

The mean scores for the orientations to happiness (OTH) indicated that participants reported the highest levels for meaning orientation ($M = 21.68$, $SD = 4.39$), followed by pleasure orientation ($M = 20.04$, $SD = 4.68$) and engagement orientation ($M = 16.18$, $SD = 3.36$). The average scores for distress indicators were 5.39 ($SD = 5.10$) for depressive symptoms, 5.56 ($SD = 5.06$) for anxiety, and 7.93 ($SD = 5.51$) for stress. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the associations between OTH and distress indicators. Pleasure orientation was positively associated with anxiety ($r = .19$, $p < .01$) and stress ($r = .15$, $p < .05$). Meaning orientation was negatively correlated with depressive symptoms ($r = -.13$, $p < .01$). Engagement orientation showed small but significant positive correlations with anxiety ($r = .15$, $p < .01$) and stress ($r = .10$, $p < .05$). The three subscales of DASS-21 were strongly intercorrelated ($r = .63$ to $.70$, all $ps < .01$).

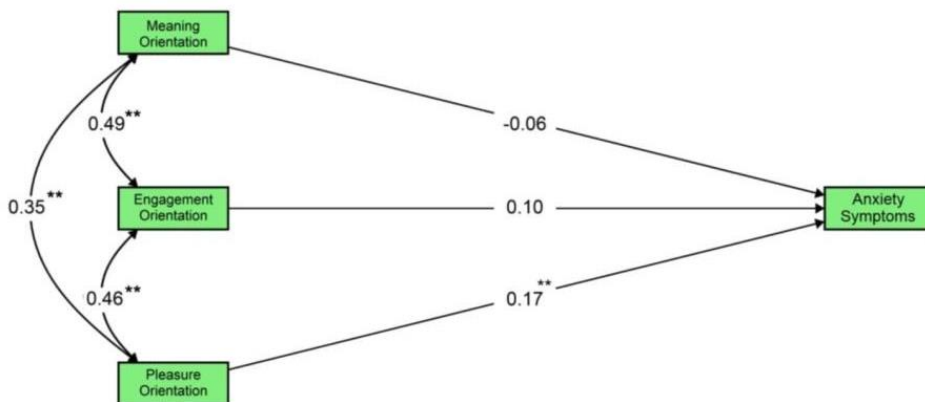
Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted to examine the predictive role of the three OTH on distress, as measured by the DASS-21. The first model predicting depressive symptoms explained 2.9% of the variance ($R^2 = .029$). As shown in Figure 1, pleasure orientation emerged as a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .12$, $p = .039$); meaning orientation was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.17$, $p = .002$); engagement orientation did not significantly predict depressive symptoms ($\beta = .01$, $p = .894$).



Note: Standardized regression coefficients (β) are displayed on the paths. Correlation coefficients are shown between the predictor variables. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Figure no. 1. SEM Examining the Relationship between OTH and Depressive Symptoms

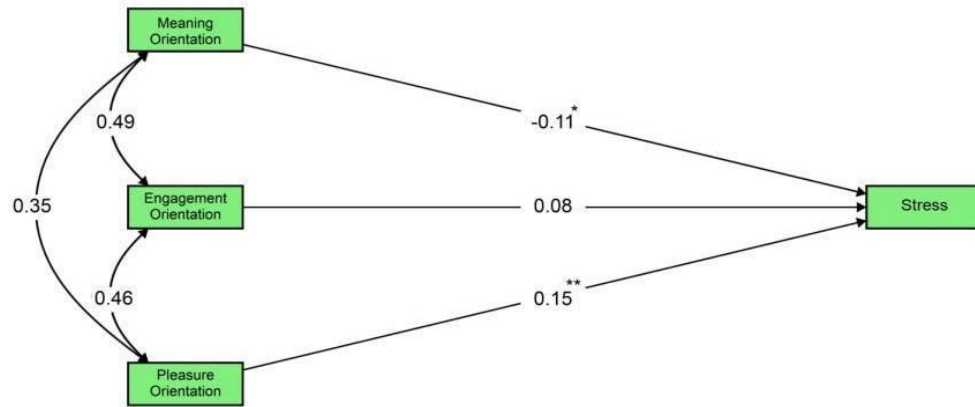
For anxiety symptoms, the second model explained 4.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .043$). Pleasure orientation was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .17$, $p = .002$); engagement orientation did not significantly predict anxiety ($\beta = .10$, $p = .098$), nor did meaning orientation ($\beta = -.06$, $p = .274$).



Note: Standardized regression coefficients (β) are displayed on the paths. Correlation coefficients are shown between the predictor variables. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Figure no. 2. SEM Examining the Relationship between OTH and Anxiety Symptoms

The third model explained 3.3% of the variance in stress ($R^2 = .033$); pleasure orientation positively predicted stress ($\beta = .15$, $p = .002$), meaning orientation negatively predicted stress ($\beta = -.11$, $p = .039$), and engagement orientation was not a significant predictor ($\beta = .08$, $p = .158$).



Note. Standardized regression coefficients (β) are displayed on the paths. Correlation coefficients are shown between the predictor variables. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Figure no. 3. SEM Examining the Relationship between OTH and Stress

4. DISCUSSIONS

The current research explored the predictive value of three happiness-seeking strategies – pleasure, engagement, and meaning – in relation to psychological distress, defined as symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.

Given the mixed findings in previous studies, the relationship between pleasure orientation and psychological distress was explored without a specific hypothesis (e.g., Pollock *et al.*, 2015; Schueller & Seligman, 2010). Our findings indicate that pleasure orientation positively predicts psychological distress across all three dimensions. This means that individuals who prioritize the pursuit of pleasurable experiences are more likely to report symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. It is possible that, for some individuals, the preference for seeking happiness through pleasure may function as a maladaptive strategy of emotional avoidance, potentially preventing them from confronting the root causes of their psychological distress. Consistent with this perspective, findings from a parallel line of research on coping suggest that distractive refocusing operates adaptively only when combined with active acceptance; when instead paired with avoidance, distraction is associated with higher negative affect (e.g., Wolgast & Lundh, 2017).

Another explanation concerns the possible dual nature of behaviors elicited by pleasure orientation. For example, Yang *et al.* (2016) found that pleasure orientation was associated with both positive and negative outcomes: it predicted greater prosocial behavior, which in turn enhanced subjective well-being, but also higher levels of Internet addictive behavior, which was linked to lower subjective well-being. Moreover, prioritizing pleasure may also reduce investment in other important domains, such as meaningful relationships and purposeful pursuits, both

of which have been linked to lower psychological distress (e.g., Harandi *et al.*, 2017; Schnell & Krampe, 2020).

Unlike pleasure orientation, which positively predicted psychological distress, engagement orientation was not a significant predictor of any distress dimension. This contradicts Hypothesis 1, which stated that engagement would negatively predict depression (H1a), anxiety (H1b), and stress (H1c). These results suggest that engagement orientation does not function as a protective factor against psychological distress. Because most previous research has examined links between engagement and negative affect rather than discrete distress symptoms (e.g., Chan, 2013; Vella-Brodrick *et al.*, 2008), direct comparisons with the current findings are limited. A notable exception is Schueller and Seligman's (2010) study, in which they found that engagement negatively predicted depressive symptoms. However, because their study examined only depressive symptoms (i.e., not anxiety or stress), our comparison is necessarily limited to this single dimension of distress. As previously noted, engagement orientation was not a significant predictor of depressive symptoms in our sample, thereby challenging the findings of Schueller and Seligman (2010).

A possible explanation for this null finding is that engagement may enhance momentary positive emotions without directly buffering against depressive symptoms (e.g., Pallavicini & Pepe, 2019). In other words, while deep absorption and intrinsic motivation characteristic of engagement can improve short-term well-being, they do not necessarily target the cognitive-emotional processes – such as rumination or low self-compassion – that underlie depression (e.g., Lopez *et al.*, 2018; Nolen-Hoeksema *et al.*, 2008). Similarly, engagement orientation did not predict stress, perhaps because flow experiences – while promoting immersion and enjoyment – do not directly reduce the physiological arousal or perceived demands that characterize stress in general (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Regarding anxiety, prior research has found negative associations between flow experiences and anxiety; however, such studies have typically examined anxiety in specific contexts, such as concerns about academic performance (e.g., Rankin *et al.*, 2019). In contrast, the present study measured a broader form of anxiety using the DASS-21 (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995), which captures a more general manifestation of anxiety. This suggests that engagement alone may not be sufficient to alleviate these manifestations of anxiety without targeting additional cognitive-behavioral strategies (e.g., Barlow, 2004; Beck & Clark, 1997).

Moreover, because the engagement subscale measures only general absorption – without distinguishing healthy, goal-directed flow from excessive, compulsive “dark flow” or identifying the context of that absorption – our results may obscure opposing effects. In other words, adaptive engagement in meaningful tasks might buffer against distress, while maladaptive immersion (e.g., obsessive work or gaming) could increase it. By conflating these into a single score, we potentially underestimate any protective effect of healthy engagement and fail to detect harmful effects of “dark flow” (Dixon *et al.*, 2019; Partington *et al.*, 2009).

Hypothesis 2 was partially supported, as meaning orientation negatively predicted depressive symptoms (H2a) and stress symptoms (H2c), but not anxiety (H2b). In other words, individuals who seek happiness through meaning are generally less likely to experience depression and stress, although this orientation does not appear to buffer against anxiety.

Specifically, and consistent with previous research (e.g., Schueller & Seligman, 2010), our results indicate that a stronger orientation toward meaning predicts lower levels of depressive symptoms. Individuals oriented toward meaning may often perceive their lives as purposeful, thus buffering against depressive symptoms through enhanced existential fulfillment and positive cognitive appraisals of their circumstances (e.g., Harandi *et al.*, 2017; Schnell & Krampe, 2020). Similarly, the meaning orientation predicted lower stress, possibly through its role in fostering a sense of purpose and resilience when facing life's challenges (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Park, 2010; Schnell & Krampe, 2020).

By contrast, meaning orientation was not a significant predictor of anxiety levels. A plausible explanation is that anxiety, particularly as measured in broad distress scales, reflects heightened sensitivity to uncertainty, perceived lack of control, and anticipatory threat (e.g., Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). While a meaningful life orientation may provide existential direction and a sense of purpose, it might not entirely address these cognitive processes typically associated with anxiety (e.g., Barlow, 2004; Beck & Clark, 1997). Another plausible explanation is that merely endorsing a sense of meaning – without translating it into consistent behaviors and coping strategies – may not effectively counter the underlying mechanisms of anxiety. In this line, prior research on meaning-making has shown anxiety reduction when specific cognitive reappraisals targeting uncertainty and coping with adverse life events are engaged (e.g., Park, 2010).

In sum, the present study offers both theoretical and practical insights into the relationship between OTH and psychological distress. While previous research has predominantly emphasized the beneficial aspects of these orientations (e.g., Park *et al.*, 2009), our findings extend this body of knowledge by investigating how OTH predict different facets of psychological distress, an area that has been less explored in earlier studies. Notably, the results reveal that while seeking happiness through meaning may offer protection against symptoms of depression and stress, a stronger orientation toward pleasure predicts higher levels of distress. These findings suggest that OTH may have both positive and negative psychological consequences, underscoring the need for a more nuanced understanding of how different approaches to pursuing well-being impact mental health.

Practically, these findings highlight the need for a balanced approach to well-being in coaching, counseling, and psychotherapy. While pleasure-seeking can enhance positive emotions, relying on it as an avoidance strategy may, for some individuals, increase psychological distress. Although speculative, this interpretation is consistent with previous research on maladaptive coping and emotional avoidance

(e.g., Wolgast & Lundh, 2017), highlighting the need for future studies to clarify the mechanisms by which pleasure orientation may contribute to psychological distress. Moreover, it is important that the pursuit of happiness does not rely solely on hedonic strategies, but is complemented by other orientations, especially meaning. The protective role of meaning orientation suggests that helping individuals cultivate purpose and coherence in life may be an effective therapeutic pathway for reducing symptoms of depression and stress.

This study also has several limitations. First, its cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions about the link between orientations to happiness and psychological distress. Longitudinal research is needed to clarify the dynamics between these variables. Second, the sample's generalizability is limited, as most participants were women, highly educated, and urban residents. Future studies should include more diverse samples to enhance external validity. Third, reliance on self-report measures introduces social desirability and recall biases, potentially distorting how participants report engaging in hedonic, meaningful, or absorbing activities or their distress symptoms. Future research could integrate behavioral measures or ecological momentary assessments for greater accuracy. Another limitation concerns the measurement of engagement, which may partly explain its non-significant association with distress. As previously discussed, the OTH engagement subscale does not differentiate between adaptive and maladaptive forms of absorption. Without accounting for context or intent, the measure may obscure meaningful variations in how engagement relates to psychological outcomes (Dixon *et al.*, 2019; Partington *et al.*, 2009). Future research should refine this distinction to better capture the dual nature of engagement.

Overall, this research adds to the current understanding by extending the OTH model beyond its traditional focus on well-being to its relationship with psychological distress. By examining how pleasure, engagement, and meaning relate to depression, anxiety, and stress, the study highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of happiness orientations, considering both their benefits and potential drawbacks.

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REZUMAT

Deși orientările către fericire (OTH) au fost studiate pe larg în relație cu bunăstarea, rolul lor în distresul psihologic rămâne mai puțin înțeles. Acest studiu a investigat dacă cele trei orientări – plăcere, angajament și sens – prezic depresia, anxietatea și stresul. Datele au fost colectate de la 476 de adulți români ($M = 32,85$, $SD = 11,87$) și au fost analizate folosind modelarea ecuațiilor structurale pentru a evalua rolul predictiv al fiecărei orientări asupra distresului psihologic, operaționalizat ca simptome de depresie, anxietate și stres. Orientarea prin plăcere a prezis semnificativ niveluri mai ridicate ale simptomelor depresive ($\beta = .12$, $p = .039$), ale anxietății ($\beta = .17$, $p = .002$) și ale stresului ($\beta = .15$, $p = .002$). În contrast, orientarea prin sens a prezis negativ simptomele depresive ($\beta = -.17$, $p = .002$) și stresul ($\beta = -.11$, $p = .039$), susținând rolul său protector. Orientarea prin angajament nu a prezis semnificativ nicio dimensiune a distresului psihologic. Acest studiu extinde modelul OTH dincolo de accentul său tradițional pe bunăstare, examinând relația sa cu distresul psihologic și demonstrând că orientările către fericire pot avea atât beneficii, cât și potențiale riscuri. Prin evidențierea rolului protector al sensului și a riscurilor asociate cu orientarea prin plăcere, aceste rezultate subliniază necesitatea unei înțelegeri mai nuanțate a orientărilor către fericire. Cercetări viitoare ar trebui să exploreze mecanismele care stau la baza acestor asocieri și să investigheze efectele lor longitudinale.

RELAȚIA DINTRE MOTIVAȚIA PENTRU ÎNVĂȚARE ȘI PERFORMANȚA LA BACALAUREAT LA PROBA *LIMBA ȘI LITERATURA ROMÂNĂ*

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Abstract

Any behavioral change requires a particular type of motivation. According to Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, there are four dimensions of extrinsic motivation in addition to intrinsic motivation for learning, namely external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated motivation. The literature reveals their impact on student academic performance. The study investigates the relationship between learning motivation and the students' grades in the Romanian language national exam at the end of high-school. The research includes 12th-grade students enrolled in a traditional school in Cluj-Napoca, Romania (N=64). All participants completed an online survey evaluating students' learning motivation regarding the Romanian language national exam. Data were collected one year after the end of the pandemic in May 2022, and the exam grades were gathered from the school's database. Results show that extrinsic learning motivation negatively predicts the grade obtained in the Romanian language national exam. The study's outcome also reveals that introjected regulation positively predicts students' grades in the Romanian language national exam. The hypothesis according to which identified regulation and intrinsic motivation are predictive of the baccalaureate degree in the Romanian language and literature test did not receive empirical support.

Cuvinte-cheie: motivație pentru învățare, teoria autodeterminării, performanță școlară, motivație intrinsecă.

Keywords: learning motivation, self-determination theory, academic performance, intrinsic motivation.

1. INTRODUCERE

Succesul în sistemul de învățământ preuniversitar românesc, nivelurile gimnazial și liceal, este cuantificat prin notele obținute de elevi la examene, evaluări sau olimpiade. Literatura de specialitate indică faptul că potențialul elevilor pentru atingerea succesului academic este influențat de motivația intrinsecă pentru învățare (Gorghiu *et al.*, 2024, Robu *et al.*, 2023), statutul socio-economic al părinților, autoeficacitatea și alte aspecte (Muola, 2010). Stimularea motivației interne de

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învățare prezice performanța academică a elevilor, duce la o creștere a stării de bine și la persistența acestora în sarcină (Howard *et al.*, 2021). Aceste premise au stimulat interesul pentru studierea relației dintre motivația pentru învățare a elevilor și performanța lor școlară.

2. TEORIA AUTODETERMINĂRII

Conform Teoriei Autodeterminării a lui Ryan și Deci (2000), dorința de satisfacere a celor trei nevoi psihologice de bază (i.e., autonomia, competența și relaționarea) duce la apariția motivației intrinseci în realizarea unui anumit comportament. Pentru ca o anumită nevoie să fie de bază, aceasta trebuie să aducă plus valoare sănătății mentale, iar deprivarea de aceasta să ducă la apariția frustrării.

Autonomia reprezintă capacitatea unei persoane de a decide ceea ce vrea să facă, fără a acționa în urma unor presiuni externe, așa cum un elev poate decide când e momentul potrivit pentru a studia. *Competența* se referă la capacitatea unei persoane de a realiza o anumită sarcină. *Relaționarea* se referă la capacitatea unei persoane de a se conecta și de a primi suport emoțional, fiind satisfăcut sentimentul de apartenență în acea relație (Ryan și Deci, 2000).

Multiple studii au scos în evidență legătura pozitivă dintre satisfacerea acestor trei nevoi psihologice de bază cu apariția motivației intrinseci și a emoțiilor pozitive în realizarea anumitor sarcini (Pulyaeva și Nevryuev, 2020, Ryan și Deci, 2020, Walker *et al.*, 2020). Teoria Autodeterminării a început să fie aplicată în contexte educaționale în vederea identificării predictorilor și criteriilor motivației intrinseci atunci când un anumit obiectiv este atins cu succes. Pe măsură ce aceste nevoi psihologice de bază sunt satisfăcute, își face apariția motivația autonomă, însă, dacă un comportament este susținut de factori externi, există probabilitatea apariției unei motivații controlate (Vergara-Morales și Del Valle, 2021).

Conform Teoriei Autodeterminării, taxonomia motivației poate fi explicată pe un continuum pornind de la demotivare înspre motivația pur controlată de factori externi (i.e., motivația externă, reglarea introiectivă), ajungând până la motivația autodeterminată (i.e., reglarea identificată, reglarea integrată), respectiv motivația intrinsecă, aceasta ducând la realizarea de sarcini din pură plăcere (Ryan și Moller, 2018 apud Elliot *et al.*, 2018).

În cadrul Teoriei Autodeterminării (Ryan și Deci, 2020), autorii au propus împărțirea motivației extrinseci în patru subcategorii: reglarea externă, introiecția, reglarea identificată și reglarea integrată. *Reglarea externă* constă în realizarea sarcinilor doar pentru a primi anumite recompense sau pentru a evita anumite pedepse, fiind ghidată de factori externi persoanei (de ex.: „Îmi doresc să fiu medic pentru a câștiga mulți bani”). *Introiecția* constă în realizarea sarcinilor în vederea satisfacerii egoului, focusul fiind pe aprobarea primită din partea celorlalți (de ex.: „Îmi doresc să ajung medic pentru a avea un statut ridicat în societate”). *Reglarea introiectivă*, fiind controlată de factori interni, vine cu conflicte și pedepse

autoadministrate. O variantă cu un nivel superior de autoreglare a motivației externe este *reglarea identificată*; aceasta pune accentul pe realizarea unui anumit comportament în vederea atingerii valorilor personale (de ex.: „Îmi doresc să fiu un medic implicat și bun”). *Reglarea integrată* reprezintă atingerea obiectivelor congruente cu un ideal interiorizat (de ex.: „Îmi doresc să ajung medic pentru a ajuta oamenii”). Cu toate că nivelul reglării integrate este autoreglat, nu este similar cu motivația intrinsecă, deoarece lipsește plăcerea internă de a savura procesul desfășurării acțiunii.

Fiecare persoană poate fi motivată intern în diferite activități. Cele două dintre criteriile importante și necesare pentru a putea discuta despre apariția motivației intrinseci sunt aspectele ce țin de cât e de plăcută și de interesantă sarcina ce trebuie finalizată, *motivația intrinsecă* constând în realizarea unei sarcini de dragul de a o realiza fără a avea nicio altă miză. Joaca și explorarea sunt sarcini intern motivante, nefiind ghidate de atingerea unui anumit obiectiv. În concluzie, satisfacerea celor trei nevoi psihologice de bază duce la apariția motivației intrinseci în realizarea unui anumit comportament (Vergara-Morales și Del Valle, 2021).

În mediul școlar, satisfacerea celor trei nevoi psihologice de bază duce la apariția motivației intrinseci pentru învățare (Mendoza *et al.*, 2023), iar motivația intrinsecă susține angajamentul și persistența într-o sarcină (Karlen *et al.* 2019), corelând negativ cu procrastinarea (Jin și Kim, 2017 apud Holzer *et al.*, 2021; Codina *et al.*, 2018) și anxietatea (Istrate, 2021).

Literatura de specialitate relevă faptul că tipurile de motivații cu un nivel mai înalt de autonomie, cum ar fi *reglarea identificată*, *reglarea integrată* respectiv *motivația intrinsecă* (care este complet autodeterminată), se asociază pozitiv cu apariția emoțiilor funcționale pozitive, rezultatele sunt mai creative, iar procesarea informației este mult mai profundă și de durată (Mohamedhosein și Crul, 2018). Pe de altă parte, motivațiile controlate (*reglarea externă* și *introiecția*) corelează pozitiv cu emoțiile negative, cu procesarea de suprafață a informației și cu apariția *burnout*-ului (Elliot *et al.*, 2018).

3. DESIGNUL STUDIULUI

3.1. SCOP ȘI IPOTEZE

În timpul pandemiei de COVID-19, multe dintre școli au fost nevoite să mute procesul educațional în mediul online, iar după încetarea pandemiei, câteva școli și-au desfășurat orele în modul hibrid (fizic și online). Nevoia psihologică de bază care face referire la relaționarea interumană a fost cea mai afectată pe perioada pandemiei din cauza interacțiunilor fizice scăzute dintre elevi. Avantajul învățământului online și a învățării la distanță a constat în faptul că elevii puteau învăța în ritmul lor propriu (Oliveira și Pereira, 2018), însă presiunea a avut un impact asupra capacității lor de autoreglare în desfășurarea activităților școlare (Valenzuela *et al.*, 2020).

Pornind de la contextul pandemiei, ne-am propus a studia legătura dintre motivația de învățare și performanța școlară în rândul elevilor de clasa a 12-a, cercetarea realizându-se la un an de la diminuarea efectelor pandemiei asupra populației.

Acest studiu corelațional a avut ca obiectiv investigarea relației dintre motivația pentru învățare și performanța școlară la proba *limba și literatura română* din cadrul examenului de bacalaureat din luna iulie 2022.

Ipotezele de cercetare au fost:

Ip.1: Motivația extrinsecă (1a) și reglarea introiectivă (1b) vor prezice negativ nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română*.

Ip.2: Reglarea identificată (2a) și motivația intrinsecă (2b) vor prezice pozitiv nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română*.

3.2. PARTICIPANȚI

Participanții din această cercetare au fost 64 de elevi din clasele a 12-a de la un liceu din sistemul tradițional de învățământ din municipiul Cluj-Napoca (România), media vârstei acestora fiind 18.25 ani. Privind distribuția participanților în funcție de gen, 43 au fost fete și 21 băieți. Dintre participanți, 54 de elevi locuiesc în mediul urban și 10 elevi locuiesc în mediul rural. Participanții la acest studiu sunt elevi într-un liceu de elită din județul Cluj, acest liceu fiind pe primul loc în România la promovabilitatea de 100% a examenului de bacalaureat. A se vedea mai jos Tabelul nr. 1 cu datele demografice ale participanților.

Tabelul nr. 1

Date demografice

Variabile	N = 64	SD
Gen		
Fete	43	
Băieți	21	
Vârsta medie	18.25	.47
Zona		
Urbană	54	
Rurală	10	

3.3. PROCEDURĂ

Elevii din clasele a 12-a de la liceul din învățământul tradițional au participat voluntar la studiul desfășurat, completarea chestionarelor având loc în lunile aprilie – mai 2022. Acordul parental a fost obținut înainte de la părinții tuturor elevilor, iar conducerea școlii a aprobat derularea cercetării. Anonimitatea și confidențialitatea datelor participanților a fost garantată de echipa de cercetare.

Elevii au completat un chestionar online în afara orarului de la școală, completarea acestuia durând aproximativ 20 de minute. Un sfert din anul școlar 2021–2022 orele de la școală s-au predat în online. Întrebările din chestionare se refereau la informații privind orele de limba și literatura română de pe parcursul anului, iar notele obținute de elevi la examenul național de bacalaureat au fost preluate din baza de date a instituției școlare. Corespondența între răspunsurile din chestionar și nota obținută de elevi la examenul de bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română* s-a realizat în baza numărului matricol al fiecărui elev.

3.4. METODOLOGIE

Metoda folosită în cadrul acestei cercetări a fost metoda anchetei pe bază de chestionar. Instrumentul utilizat a fost ales pe baza măsurării cât mai acurate a variabilei studiate, și anume *motivația pentru învățare*, acesta fiind prezentat în rândurile de mai jos.

Instrument

Chestionarul Autoreglării Academice (*Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire*)

Versiunea românească a instrumentului utilizat a fost tradusă de autori după versiunea originală a SRQ-A a lui Ryan și Connell (1989), cei 32 de itemi fiind adaptați pentru materia școlară *Limba și literatura română*. Transpunerea itemilor din limba engleză în limba română s-a realizat prin metoda traducerii și retroversiunii (*back-translation*). Răspunsurile pentru toți itemii variază pe o scală Likert de 4 puncte, unde 4 înseamnă *Foarte adevărat*, iar 1 *Total neadevărat*. Chestionarul Autoreglării Academice este format din 4 subdiviziuni: *motivația externă* („Îmi fac temele pentru că este ceea ce trebuie să fac”) și *reglarea introiectivă* („Îmi fac temele pentru că vreau ca profesorul să creadă că sunt un/o elev/ă bun/ă”) au câte 9 itemi fiecare, *reglarea identificată* („Îmi fac temele pentru că vreau să înțeleg subiectul”) și *motivația intrinsecă* („Îmi place să îmi fac temele”) având câte 7 itemi fiecare. Autorii scalei originale au decis să nu includă itemi din categoria *reglării identificate* datorită faptului că nu se pot observa comportamente total integrate în rândul copiilor și adolescenților.

În studiul prezent, instrumentul utilizat în format chestionar a avut valori corecte pentru aplicare, respectiv coeficientul Alpha Cronbach este de .80 pentru motivația extrinsecă, .87 pentru reglarea introiectivă, .88 pentru reglarea identificată și .90 pentru motivația intrinsecă.

4. REZULTATE

4.1. ANALIZA CANTITATIVĂ A DATELOR BRUTE

Datele au fost analizate cu SPSS V26. Analiza descriptivă a datelor o prezentăm în Tabelul nr. 2, unde am inclus mediile, abaterile standard și coeficienții corelațiilor dintre variabilele analizate. În vederea testării ipotezelor, a fost utilizată o analiză de regresie multiplă cu patru predictorii (motivația extrinsecă, reglarea introiectivă, reglarea identificată și motivația intrinsecă).

Tabelul nr. 2

Statistică descriptivă

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Motivație extrinsecă	2.05	.57	1				
2. Reglare introiectivă	2.19	.67	.71**	1			
3. Reglare identificată	2.74	.82	.47**	.74**	1		
4. Motivație intrinsecă	2.15	.82	.34**	.63**	.79**	1	
5. Nota la bacalaureat la proba <i>limba și lit. română</i> (2022)	8.93	.90	-.12	.20	.19	.21	1

Notă: ** $p < .01$, M = media, SD = abaterea standard

Rezultatele regresiei pot fi analizate în Tabelul nr. 3. Modelul cu cei patru predictorii explică 18.1% din varianța notei la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română* ($F(4, 59) = 3.26$, $p = .02$).

Conform primei ipoteze, motivația extrinsecă (1a) și reglarea introiectivă (1b) prezic negativ nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română*.

Rezultatele cercetării susțin parțial ipoteza asumată. Motivația extrinsecă într-adevăr prezice negativ nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română* ($B = -.82$, $SE = .27$, $p = .003$, 95% CI $[-1.35; -.28]$). Contrar ipotezei noastre, reglarea introiectivă prezice pozitiv nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română* ($B = .72$, $SE = .30$, $p = .02$, 95% CI $[.13; 1.31]$).

Conform celei de-a doua ipoteze, reglarea identificată (2a) și motivația intrinsecă (2b) prezic pozitiv nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română*. Rezultatele empirice analizate nu oferă suport pentru această ipoteză.

Tabelul nr. 3

Rezultatele analizei regresiei multiple

Variabile	B	SE	t	95% CI
Constant	8.93	.44	20.22***	8.04; 9/81
Motivația extrinsecă	-.82	.27	-3.05**	-1.35; -.28
Reglarea introiectivă	.72	.30	2.43*	.17; 1.31
Reglarea identificată	-.01	.24	-.06	-.50; .47
Motivația intrinsecă	.06	.21	.29	-.36; .49

Notă: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; B = coeficient de regresie nestandardizat, SE = eroarea standard, 95% CI = interval de încredere

4.2. INTERPRETAREA PSIHOPEDAGOGICĂ A REZULTATELOR

Rezultatele cercetării prezente au evidențiat faptul că motivația extrinsecă prezice negativ nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română*, iar reglarea introiectivă prezice pozitiv performanța școlară.

Motivația extrinsecă are o relație negativă cu nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română*, aspect ce este consonant cu rezultatele altor cercetări din domeniu educațional (Liu *et al.*, 2022). Derularea unor activități doar pentru a evita o notă mică sau pentru a obține recompense externe nu i-a motivat pe elevi să fie mai performanți la examenul de *limba și literatura română*.

Reglarea introiectivă are o relație pozitivă cu nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română*. Acest aspect poate fi explicat pe baza faptului că liceul selectat pentru acest studiu este unul de elită în oraș, existând posibilitatea ca accentul să fie pus mai mult pe câștigarea unor diplome, epatarea în rândul celorlalte licee cu rezultatele obținute, creșterea stimei de sine a elevilor în urma reușitelor lor și încurajarea acestora de a participa la diverse competiții școlare.

Reglarea identificată și motivația intrinsecă nu sunt predictive pentru nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română*, fapt pentru care este posibil ca elevii să învețe pentru acest examen doar din necesitate (de ex.: pentru admiterea la facultate) și nu din plăcerea autentică de a studia pentru această materie. Ei ating un nivel de performanță întrucât sunt conștienți că nota obținută la această probă îi poate apropia mai mult de obiectivul lor intern și real (de ex.: trecerea examenului de admitere de la facultatea care îi pasionează, obținerea unei burse educaționale etc.).

Astfel, putem concluziona pentru fiecare dintre cele două ipoteze faptul că motivația pentru învățare a elevilor poate fi diferită în situația necesității absolvirii unui examen considerat a fi foarte important (cum este examenul de bacalaureat), față de un examen de final de modul sau a trecerii unui examen de la o materie percepută a fi interesantă (unde sunt stimulate motivațiile identificată și internă). Sentimentele de vinovăție, rușine sau aprobare socială stimulează motivația introiectivă în vederea absolvirii examenului de bacalaureat, față de motivația externă care nu a rezultat a avea efect direct asupra performanței școlare, chiar și într-o situație percepută ca fiind importantă pentru traseul școlar al elevilor.

Elevii sunt motivați să învețe în funcție de propriile lor interese, abilități, recompense sau pedepse percepute. Identificând mecanismele motivaționale putem potența învățarea (chiar și vis-a-vis de un examen cu materii fixe, cum este bacalaureatul).

5. LIMITE ALE STUDIULUI ȘI DIRECȚII VIITOARE

O primă limită constată o reprezintă dimensiunea redusă a lotului de participanți. În studii viitoare ar trebui incluși elevii din clasele terminale de la mai multe licee pentru a crește puterea statistică a rezultatelor și pentru a decela în ce măsură apartenența la un liceu prestigios explică anumite legături între variabile.

A doua limită poate fi dată de profilul liceului inclus în cercetare. În România, clasele de liceu au diverse profile (de ex: real, uman, tehnic, artistic etc.) cu diverse specializări (de ex: filologie, științele naturii, matematică-informatică etc.). Liceul implicat în studiu are patru clase de a 12-a cu profil real, două cu

specializarea *științele naturii* și două cu specializarea *matematică-informatică*. Creșterea diversității din punct de vedere al liceelor, profilelor și specializărilor liceelor ar permite derularea unor cercetări cu un grad mai înalt de generalizare. Notele obținute la examenul de bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română* pot varia destul de mult dacă ținem cont de profilul școlii, deoarece, în general, mulți dintre elevii de la profilul uman manifestă un interes mai crescut pentru materiile din specializările filologie (de ex.: limbi străine) și științele sociale (de ex.: psihologie, sociologie, istorie etc.) decât cei de la profilele reale sau tehnice.

A treia limită este dată de faptul că performanța la examenul de bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română* este influențată și de alți factori, care nu au fost controlați în cercetarea prezentă. Acești factori ar putea fi nivelul de inteligență, autoeficacitatea percepută la această materie, nivelul anxietății și al depresiei elevilor (Zhen *et al.*, 2017), interesul pentru materie, importanța notei pentru atingerea următorului scop din carieră (de exemplu, importanța mediei finale a examenului de bacalaureat pentru admiterea la o anumită facultate). Astfel, relația motivației cu performanța este în mod cert moderată și mediată și de alți factori ce ar trebui incluși în cercetări viitoare. Diferențele privind motivația pentru învățare a elevilor pot apărea datorită stilului de predare al dascălului (Vermote *et al.*, 2020), entuziasmul cu care își desfășoară orele, modul în care reușește în interacțiunea cu elevii să le satisfacă nevoile psihologice de bază (de autonomie, competență și relaționare) etc. Unele studii relevă faptul că stilul de predare al profesorului poate modera relația dintre diferitele tipuri de motivație și performanță (Azany, 2024), aspect ce merită inclus în cercetările viitoare.

A patra limită ar putea fi posibilitatea de a avea erori de măsurare din cauza faptului că s-au completat chestionarele în mediul online, în afara orelor de școală. Nu a fost controlat contextul și momentul completării, acesta variind în rândul participanților.

Direcții viitoare de cercetare pot viza compararea notelor obținute de elevi din clase diferite, de la licee cu profile mai variate pentru a putea observa relația dintre tipologia motivației și performanța școlară a participanților. De asemenea, s-ar putea studia dacă predarea în mediul online a afectat negativ sau a ajutat la îmbunătățirea performanței școlare în rândul elevilor din țară și din străinătate, în funcție de diferite variabile.

6. DISCUȚII ȘI CONCLUZII

Cercetarea prezentă a avut ca obiectiv analizarea relației dintre tipurile de motivație pentru învățare și performanța școlară a elevilor din clasele a 12-a.

În primul rând, rezultatele au relevat faptul că motivația extrinsecă are o relație negativă cu nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română*, aspect ce este consonant cu rezultatele altor studii din domeniul educațional (Liu *et al.*, 2022). Elevii se confruntă cu un nivel înalt de presiune (prin așteptările părinților, respectiv pregătirea intensă de la ore și de la meditații) de a lua o notă mare la

examenul de bacalaureat, fapt ce are o relație negativă cu performanța (Sunu și Baidoo-Anu, 2024). Realizarea unor sarcini doar pentru a evita o notă mică sau pentru a obține recompense externe nu i-a motivat pe elevi să fie mai performanți la proba *limba și literatura română*.

În al doilea rând, un rezultat interesant și opus ipotezei noastre este faptul că reglarea introiectivă are o relație pozitivă cu nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română*. Acest aspect poate fi explicat pe baza faptului că liceul implicat în studiu este unul de elită în oraș, existând posibilitatea ca accentul să fie pus mai mult pe obținerea de diplome, epatarea în rândul celorlalte licee cu rezultatele obținute, creșterea stimei de sine a elevilor în urma reușitelor lor și încurajarea acestora de a participa la diverse competiții și olimpiade pe parcursul anilor de liceu. Stimularea prea intensă a motivației introiective poate duce la intensificarea unui nivel mai ridicat al anxietății (Ryan și Moller, 2018 apud Elliot *et al.*, 2018), însă habituarea elevilor de a performa în astfel de condiții îi face pe aceștia să fie performanți chiar și în context de stres intens datorat unei mize importante (de ex.: obținerea unor medii cât mai mari la examenul de bacalaureat pentru a intra la facultăți de prestigiu). Având în vedere că, în conformitate cu teoria, motivația introiectivă poate fi susținută de nevoia de a primi aprobare și de a-și satisface egoul (Vergara-Morales și Del Valle, 2021), putem specula cu privire la profilul elevului. Este posibil ca tocmai alegerea de a se înscrie la un liceu de prestigiu în urmă cu 4 ani să reflecte nevoia puternică de a primi aprobare, fapt ce poate continua apoi în manifestarea motivației introiective cu privire la performanță.

În al treilea rând, ipoteza conform căreia reglarea identificată și motivația intrinsecă sunt predictive pentru nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română* nu s-a confirmat. O posibilă explicație pentru acest rezultat ar putea fi faptul că elevilor le pot fi stimulate mult mai ușor motivațiile pentru învățare controlate de factori externi (presiunea părinților, bursele primite din partea școlii, pedepsele date de profesori pentru rezultatele slabe etc.) sau factori controlați intern (satisfacerea egoului, prestigiul școlii etc.). Performanțele obținute nu corelează cu motivațiile autodeterminate de învățare (i.e., reglarea identificată, motivația intrinsecă). Pe de altă parte, este posibil ca motivația elevilor pentru participarea la probele examenului de bacalaureat să nu fie în mod obligatoriu corelată cu obiectivele prospective, reale ale elevilor. Cu alte cuvinte, dacă elevii nu sunt în mod special pasionați de materia *limba și literatura română* (fapt destul de probabil în cadrul eșantionului nostru care implică elevi de la un liceu cu profil real, și nu uman), nu vor învăța din plăcere și va fi mai greu să fie motivați intrinsec. Ei obțin totuși performanță întrucât sunt conștienți că nota obținută la această probă îi poate aduce mai aproape de obiectivul real intern (facultatea/domeniul care îi pasionează, obținerea unei burse educaționale etc.).

Rezultatele cercetării de față au evidențiat faptul că motivația extrinsecă prezice negativ nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română*, iar reglarea introiectivă prezice pozitiv performanța. O posibilă explicație a corelației pozitive dintre reglarea introiectivă și nota obținută de elevi ar putea fi importanța crescută

a feedbackului oferit de profesori (iar în unele cazuri și de cel din partea părinților), aceștia punând focus pe întărirea egoului elevilor.

Aceste rezultate susțin faptul că există o relație strânsă între tipologia motivației pentru învățare și performanța școlară a elevilor care dau examenul de bacalaureat. Cu toate că rezultatele școlare pot fi foarte bune, elevii fiind motivați extern să învețe (în cazul de față corelația pozitivă fiind între performanță și reglare introiectivă), studiile de specialitate arată faptul că entuziasmul și interesul pentru învățare nu sunt prezente în astfel de situații, iar demersul procesului de învățare nu este autodeterminat și ghidat de o motivație intrinsecă (Ryan și Moller, 2018 apud Elliot *et al.*, 2018). Pe de altă parte, este firesc ca motivația intrinsecă să se regăsească mai puțin în sarcini obligatorii care sunt stricte (de exemplu, într-o probă de evaluare națională unde materia este în totalitate impusă prin programa școlară) și de care depind scopurile viitoare de carieră.

În concluzie, rezultatele cercetării noastre evidențiază importanța interiorizării ideii în rândul elevilor, dar și a profesorilor, cu privire la necesitatea absolvirii examenului de bacalaureat, fără ca mobilizarea acestora în procesul de învățare să se facă prin intermediul notelor, pedepselor sau a altor recompense (din partea profesorilor, părinților etc.). Creșterea calității actului de predare și a implicării active a elevilor, inclusiv la materiile obligatorii din anii terminali, poate stimula motivațiile determinate mai mult intern (reglarea identificată și cea intrinsecă), acestea asigurând nu doar o performanță școlară mai ridicată, dar și o stare de bine datorată procesului de învățare în sine. Îmbinarea plăcerii de a învăța cu conștientizarea utilității acestui demers, inclusiv în situația absolvirii unui examen obligatoriu pentru ca elevii să aibă posibilitatea de a se înscrie ulterior la facultate, reprezintă o strategie eficientă pentru îmbunătățirea demersului educațional în România.

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REZUMAT

Orice schimbare comportamentală are la bază un anumit tip de motivație. Conform Teoriei Autodeterminării a lui Ryan și Deci (2000), există patru dimensiuni ale motivației extrinseci, pe lângă motivația intrinsecă pentru învățare, și anume reglarea externă, reglarea introiectivă, reglarea identificată și reglarea integrată. Literatura de specialitate a evidențiat impactul major pe care oricare dintre aceste motivații îl are asupra performanței academice. Studiul de față investighează relația dintre motivația pentru învățare și performanța elevilor la examenul de bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română*, performanță măsurată prin nota obținută. În cadrul cercetării au participat elevii claselor a 12-a dintr-un liceu din sistemul tradițional de învățământ din municipiul Cluj-Napoca, județul Cluj (N=64). Toți participanții au completat online un chestionar anonim privind motivația lor de învățare pentru proba *limba și literatura română* din cadrul examenului de bacalaureat. Datele au fost colectate la un an de la finalizarea pandemiei de COVID-19 în luna mai a anului 2022, iar notele de la examenul de bacalaureat au fost obținute din baza de date a liceului. Corespondența între răspunsurile din chestionar și nota obținută de elevi la examenul de bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română* s-a realizat în baza numărului matricol al fiecărui elev. Rezultatele arată faptul că motivația extrinsecă prezice negativ notele obținute la proba de bacalaureat de la proba *limba și literatura română*. În plus, reglarea introiectivă prezice pozitiv notele elevilor obținute la proba de bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română*. Ipoteza conform căreia reglarea identificată și motivația intrinsecă sunt predictive pentru nota la bacalaureat la proba *limba și literatura română* nu a primit suport empiric.

THE LINK BETWEEN ATTACHMENT STYLES AND SHAME PRONENESS: THE ROLE OF CULTURAL FACTORS. A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Abstract

Considering the dynamics of human emotions and relationships, this research explored the interaction between attachment styles and shame proneness in different cultural contexts by reviewing 19 studies following PRISMA guidelines. Although the role of cultural factors could provide new and valuable insights, the majority of studies focused on the strong relationship between attachment style, shame proneness, and shame management styles. Both anxious and avoidant attachment styles have significant indirect effects on psychological distress through shame proneness. Specifically, an anxious attachment style seems to influence psychological distress through a self-attacking shame management style. In contrast, an avoidant attachment style does so through an avoidance style of managing shame. These findings suggest that how individuals attach to others can influence how they experience and manage shame, affecting their overall psychological health. This examination sets the stage for understanding the nuances of shame proneness related to various attachment styles, highlighting the universality and variation of these experiences across different cultures.

Cuvinte-cheie: stiluri de atașament, predispoziție la rușine, cultura, review.

Keywords: attachment styles, shame proneness, culture, review.

1. INTRODUCTION

Attachment theory, initially developed by John Bowlby (1980), explains the significant impact of early interactions between infants and caregivers on subsequent emotional and social development (Akbag and Imamoglu, 2010). This foundational theory asserts that the nature of the bonding process between infants and their primary caregivers lays the groundwork for future interpersonal relationships (Akbag and Imamoglu, 2010; Sroufe and Siegel, 2011).

The reason infants form attachments to their caregivers is not because they are provided with food, but because these caregivers activate their innate tendency to seek proximity to someone who can offer protection (Sroufe and Siegel, 2011). The ideas proposed by Bowlby (1969) regarding the importance of attachment are considered universally applicable.

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The relationship between attachment and emotions has been analyzed in numerous previous studies (Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Kobak and Sceery, 1988; Mikulincer and Orbach, 1995). Attachment theory assumes that the attachment figure not only provides a secure base but also encourages exploration of oneself and the environment in which the individual develops (Ainsworth *et al.*, 1978; Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Bowlby, 1980). Researchers who have studied this issue have observed that different attachment styles are associated with distinct emotional profiles (Consedine and Magai, 2003). Generally, secure attachment is linked to positive emotions, while anxious attachment is linked to negative emotions. Individuals with a secure attachment style are less prone to depression, anger, and hostility than those with anxious attachment (Mikulincer and Orbach, 1995).

Like other negative emotions, shame can arise from early relationships (Leary *et al.*, 2007). Shame is experienced in response to the perception (or inference) of devaluation by others (Tangney and Dearing, 2002). Malatesta-Magai and Dorval (1992) argued that shame forms in a child through the experience of defeat and parental attitudes; if parental reactions against the child's desire to explore are negative, the child internalizes these attitudes and may experience feelings of rejection and weakness.

Shame proneness refers to an individual's dispositional tendency to experience or feel shame in a variety of situations (Park and Shields, 2023). The tendency to feel shame is significantly linked to a wide range of mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and substance abuse. Attachment theory and interpersonal neurobiology suggest that a secure attachment style protects against shame proneness, while an insecure/anxious attachment style contributes to shame proneness (Park and Shields, 2023). Research indicates a strong relationship between shame proneness and shame management styles. Both anxious and avoidant attachment styles have significant indirect effects on psychological distress through shame proneness. Specifically, the anxious attachment style influences psychological distress through a self-attacking shame management style, while the avoidant style does so through an avoidance style of managing shame (Remondi *et al.*, 2023). These findings suggest that the way individuals attach to others can influence how they experience and manage shame, which, in turn, affects their overall psychological health (Remondi *et al.*, 2023).

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON ATTACHMENT AND SHAME

The caregiver-child bond is a universal element in society, but the details of this relationship can vary significantly from one culture to another. In Western cultures, the concept of attachment often emphasizes a single primary bond between mother and child, often referred to as a monotropic bond (Akbag and Imamoglu, 2010). In contrast, in many non-Western cultures, a system of multiple caregivers is common. For example, among the Efé people in the Democratic Republic of Congo, infants are cared for by several women in the community, spending more time with other caregivers than with their biological mothers until the age of six weeks (Akbag and Imamoglu, 2010).

Cultural differences also extend to the development of attachment styles. Research has shown that the distribution of attachment styles within a culture can be approximately one and a half times greater than the variations observed between different cultures (Atkins, 2016; Remondi *et al.*, 2023). This indicates that while cultural factors can influence, individual differences within a single culture can be even more significant. Factors contributing to these variations include the presence of multiple caregivers and different cultural perceptions of what constitutes a stranger danger (Remondi *et al.*, 2023; Atkins, 2016).

The methodology used in attachment research, such as the Strange Situation procedure, may not accurately reflect attachment patterns in diverse cultures. The behaviors infants display in these research settings and the interpretations of these behaviors by researchers are often influenced by cultural norms (Akbag and Imamoglu, 2010). Moreover, caregiver sensitivity, relatively stable over time in different societies, can significantly vary in how caregivers respond to their infants' needs, potentially affecting the accuracy of research findings on cultural variations in attachment (Akbag and Imamoglu, 2010).

The Strange Situation is a standardized procedure designed by Mary Ainsworth in the 1970s to observe attachment security in children within caregiver relationships. It is applied to infants aged 9 to 18 months. The experiment included eight episodes of 3 minutes each in which a mother, a child, and a stranger are introduced, separated, and reunited. Mary Ainsworth developed the Strange Situation Classification (SSC) to observe how attachment styles vary between children. The SSC was developed by Ainsworth and Wittig (1969) and was based on Ainsworth's earlier studies in Uganda (1967) and later in Baltimore (Ainsworth *et al.*, 1971, 1978). Ainsworth (1970) identified three main attachment styles: secure (type B), insecure avoidant (type A), and ambivalent/resistant insecure (type C). She concluded that these attachment styles result from early interactions with the mother. Later, a fourth attachment style, disorganized, was introduced (Main and Solomon, 1990). Ainsworth's (1971, 1978) findings provided the first empirical evidence for Bowlby's (1969) internal working models of attachment relationships.

Securely attached children develop a positive working model of themselves and have mental representations of others as helpful while seeing themselves as worthy of respect (Jacobsen and Hoffman, 1997). Avoidant children consider themselves unworthy and unacceptable, caused by a primary caregiver who rejects them (Larose and Bernier, 2001). Ambivalent children have a negative self-image and exaggerate their emotional responses as a way to attract attention (Kobak *et al.*, 1993). Therefore, insecure attachment styles are associated with an increased risk of social and emotional behavioral problems through the internal working model.

Madigan *et al.* (2023) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of 285 studies involving over 20,000 infant-caregiver pairs to estimate the global distribution of attachment classifications derived from SSP: secure (51.6%), avoidant (14.7%), resistant (10.2%), and disorganized (23.5%). The meta-analysis found no differences in attachment distribution by the child's age or gender. Additionally, there was no difference between mothers and fathers in the rates of secure, avoidant, resistant, or

disorganized attachment. However, attachment distributions differed according to other moderators. One notable finding was a temporal trend indicating a decrease in avoidant attachment over time, possibly reflecting changes in parenting styles or measurement methods. Additionally, regional differences were identified – Asia, Africa, and South America showed deviations from the North American distribution (Madigan *et al.*, 2023). The meta-analysis provides a definitive estimate of the prevalence of secure attachment between infants and parents globally (51.6%). However, more research is needed regarding cultural differences in attachment and the validity of the SSP within diverse groups.

2. METHOD

2.1 AIMS OF THE CURRENT STUDY

The primary aim of the current study was to analyze the existing research, particularly studies published in the last five years (2021–2024), focused on the relationship between attachment styles and shame proneness, with a focus on how culture influences this relationship. Thus, this systematic literature review aimed to identify the current state of research, potential gaps, and future research directions.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

Given that the present study is a theoretical review, it was conducted through a systematic approach to reviewing the existing literature in this research domain. The method focused on identifying, synthesizing, and summarizing previous research to uncover the connections between attachment styles, proneness to shame, and the influence of cultural factors on this relationship.

2.3 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The protocol used for this systematic review follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis Protocols – Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR). The review included works that collected data on attachment styles and proneness to shame, emphasizing how culture influences this relationship. The research focused only on studies written in English. A specific time frame was selected, including all research written on this subject in the last 5 years (2019–2024). Articles were excluded if they did not analyze attachment style and/or shame and/or culture. Qualitative research and grey literature were also excluded. Qualitative research focuses on personal narratives and subjective interpretations, making it difficult to establish consistent, generalizable patterns across different cultural contexts (Singh and Patel, 2023). Since the review aimed to identify statistical correlations between attachment styles and shame proneness, qualitative data would not provide measurable outcomes needed for systematic comparisons (Huang and Kim, 2023). The exclusion ensured that findings were based on empirical, replicable data rather than individual case studies or anecdotal evidence (Rodriguez *et al.*, 2023). Further, measuring cross-cultural differences in shame

and attachment requires standardized metrics that allow for direct comparisons (Mehta and Saito, 2023). Quantitative studies provide scalable, structured data, whereas qualitative research often varies in methodology and scope, making cross-cultural synthesis difficult (Martinez *et al.*, 2023).

2.4 ARTICLE SEARCH

To identify potentially relevant documents, we searched the National University of Singapore Library website (<https://nus.summon.serialssolutions.com/>). The search was conducted in March and April 2024. The search strategy was refined by the three authors of the current review. After completing the search, relevant articles were exported to Google Sheets, and duplicates were removed. After extensive design and discussions, the authors developed and implemented the research strategy. We examined 12 publications and used the keywords found in the literature to refine a search strategy. The following keywords were searched in the NUS Library (<https://shorturl.at/dfxY6>): “attachment” OR “attachment style” AND “shame” AND “shame proneness” OR “negative emotions” AND “culture” OR “cross-cultural”. While “negative emotions” is broad and may introduce irrelevant results, it is still a valuable search keyword in our systematic review for capturing a wide range of relevant studies. Negative emotions, including shame, guilt, anxiety, sadness, and fear, are interrelated in emotional processing and psychological distress (Johnson and Lee, 2023). Using a broad term helps identify studies that may not explicitly mention “shame” but still discuss emotions that contribute to it (Wang *et al.*, 2022). Some studies may not use “shame-proneness” as a primary keyword but still explore shame-related constructs within the spectrum of negative emotions (Martinez *et al.*, 2023). Researchers often use umbrella terms like “negative affect” or “emotional dysregulation”, making it important to include general terms in the search strategy (Gomez and Carter, 2023). Also, cultures may conceptualize shame differently, often grouping it under “negative emotions” or “self-conscious emotions” (Huang and Kim, 2023). Using a broad term ensures inclusion of studies that explore cultural variations in emotional processing (Rodriguez *et al.*, 2023).

The search strategy was then applied to the mentioned database, and the authors evaluated titles, abstracts, and full articles for relevant publications according to the eligibility criteria. Disputes regarding the selection of publications were resolved through discussions and consensus.

2.5. DATABASES USED

The selection of articles from the NUS Library database generated a total of 929 publications in the last 5 years. Screening was based on refining keywords, focusing on articles published in specialty journals, resulting in 422 articles corresponding to the authors’ research. We used the advanced search filter and selected areas of interest (i.e., applied sciences, biology, education, occupational therapy & rehabilitation, psychology, sciences, sciences – general, social science, social sciences, social sciences – general, social welfare & social work, sociology

and social history, statistics, women's studies). Duplicates were also removed. Thus, 275 articles were used for abstract screening. After this process, 217 were eliminated. A total of 58 articles were used for full screening. We eliminated 217 articles for the following reasons: a) 84 articles were eliminated because the study subjects were patients with mental disorders; b) 35 articles were eliminated because they did not meet the eligibility criteria (participants' age); c) 12 studies were eliminated because they were qualitative studies; d) 2 studies were eliminated because they were meta-analyses; e) 70 studies were eliminated because our variables were not analyzed; f) 6 studies were eliminated because they were intervention studies; g) 3 studies were eliminated – they were scale reviews; h) 5 studies were eliminated because they analyzed social policies and ethics. After the final screening, a total of 19 articles were found to be eligible for the present study (see Fig. 1).

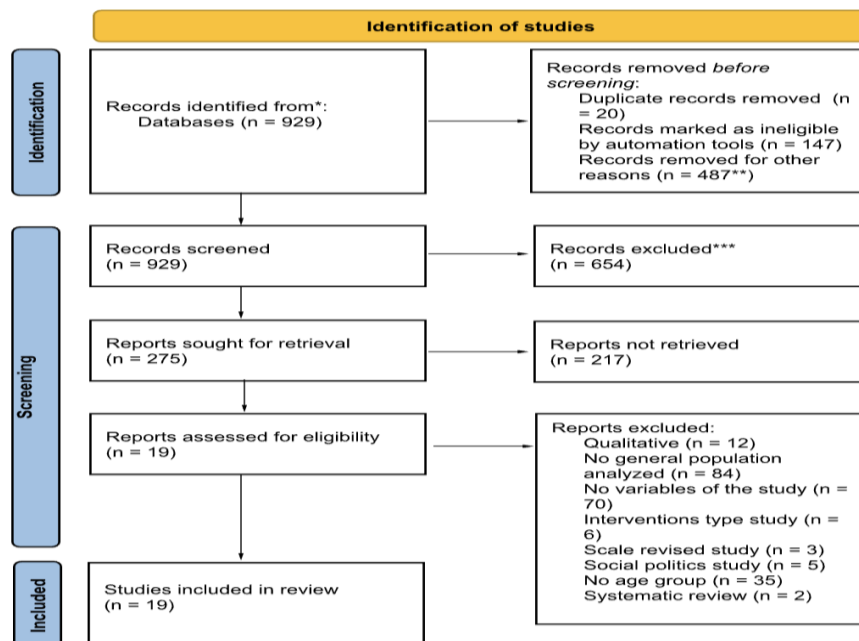


Figure no. 1. PRISMA flowchart selection process

2.6. DATA PROCESSING

We used a data processing form to determine which variables could be extracted from the existing publications. Each author independently conducted the scoring process. The results of each independent search were then discussed and combined, while the data scoring forms were regularly updated. The extracted data from the articles included the following: demographic information (age, nationality, gender), attachment styles (secure, anxious, avoidant, disorganized), shame proneness (shame, negative emotions), and cultural factors (nationality). The studies were

grouped based on their objectives and then summarized according to the type of data collected. We did not find other systematic reviews to compare the articles they indicated with our findings.

3. RESULTS

As shown in Table no.1, the majority of the studies focused on attachment styles ($n = 18$); similarly, a majority of studies focused on shame in general ($n = 10$). Only one study examined the impact of cultural factors. Three studies specifically addressed shame proneness. Most of the studies were conducted in the USA, with only four studies conducted among European samples. The information in Table 1 was used for a descriptive analysis of the studies. Data were summarized based on one or more of the following topics: 1) attachment style; 2) shame.

The data were extracted, summarized, and recorded by one of the authors. Due to the variety of research designs encountered, we did not use a standardized method for data extraction.

Table no. 1
Characteristics of the sample of studies

Study characteristics		Total (n)	Studies Reference
Country	USA	9	Farr et al. (2021); Zhu et al. (2021); van Schie et al. (2021); Burrow (2022); Tatum et al. (2023); Park & Shields (2023); Gross et al. (2023); Frediani & Migerode (2024); Lewis (2021)
	China	1	Zhu et al. (2021)
	UK	1	Sedighimornani et al. (2021)
	Canada	2	Sedighimornani et al. (2021); Laforte et al. (2023)
	Italy	2	Remondi et al. (2023); Veneziani et al. (2024)
	Iran	1	Asgarizadeh et al. (2023)
	India	2	Ang & Sin (2021); Rathore & Nishat (2024);
	China	2	Tang et al. (2021); Ang & Sin (2021)
	Malay	1	Ang & Sin (2021)
	Spain	1	Delgado et al. (2023)
	*others	2	Sedighimornani et al. (2021); Ang & Sin (2021)
Year	2021	8	Farr et al. (2021); Zhu et al. (2021); Calderon (2021); Sedighimornani et al. (2021); van Schie et al. (2021); Tang et al. (2021); Lewis (2021); Ang & Sin (2021)
	2022	1	Burrow (2022)
	2023	7	Tatum et al. (2023); Remondi et al. (2023); Park & Shields (2023); Asgarizadeh et al. (2023); Gross et al. (2023); Laforte et al. (2023); Delgado et al. (2023)
	2024	3	Rathore & Nishat (2024); Frediani & Migerode (2024); Veneziani et al. (2024)
Attachment Style		18	Zhu et al. (2021); Sedighimornani et al. (2021); Tang et al. (2021); van Schie et al. (2021); Lewis (2021); Calderon (2021); Ang & Sin (2021); Burrow (2022); Tatum et al. (2023); Remondi et al. (2023); Park & Shields (2023); Asgarizadeh et al. (2023); Rathore & Nishat (2024); Gross et al. (2023); Laforte et al. (2023); Delgado et al. (2023); Frediani & Migerode (2024); Veneziani et al. (2024)
Shame - general		10	Farr et al. (2021); Sedighimornani et al. (2021); van Schie et al. (2021); Lewis (2021); Calderon (2021); Burrow (2022); Tatum et al. (2023); Asgarizadeh et al. (2023); Frediani & Migerode (2024); Veneziani et al. (2024)
Shame proneness		3	Tatum et al. (2023); Park & Shields (2023); Rathore & Nishat (2024)
Dispositional shame		1	Remondi et al. (2023)
Negative emotions		2	Tang et al. (2021); Ang & Sin (2021)
Cultural factors		1	Zhu et al. (2021)

Note: The participants were from the United Kingdom (25.8%), the United States (41.3%), Canada (2.9%), **and other countries (29.6%)** (Sedighimornani *et al.*, 2021); All participants were considered to be native Asians.

The age of our sample ranged from 18 to 40 years ($M = 28.03$, $SD = 3.98$). In terms of ethnicity, 129 participants were Chinese (73.3%), 23 were Indian (13.1%), 20 were Malay (11.4%), and **4 were other (2.3%)** (Ang & Sin, 2021).

3.1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTACHMENT STYLE AND SHAME

A total of 12 studies examined the relationship between attachment style and shame. Consistent with previous studies (Gross and Hansen, 2000), researchers concluded that individuals with a secure attachment style had lower levels of shame, while shame was positively and significantly associated with anxious attachment styles. Results also suggested a significant difference in shame scores between the secure attachment group and the insecure attachment group (Lewis, 2021; Park and Shield, 2002; Rathore and Nishat, 2024). Both anxiety-related and avoidance-related characteristics of insecure attachment were identified as significant predictors of shame. The observed data suggested that as levels of avoidance and/or anxiety increase, so do levels of internalized shame. Therefore, anxiety and avoidance levels, components of an insecure attachment style, seem to predict internalized shame (Lewis, 2021) significantly. Internalized shame refers to a deep-seated, pervasive sense of self-condemnation in which individuals internalize negative evaluations from others, leading to a stable and enduring feeling of being flawed or unworthy (Mills *et al.*, 2022). Internalized shame is deeply ingrained in one's self-concept and often associated with early attachment experiences and social conditioning (Kim *et al.*, 2023).

Regarding dispositional shame, anxiety and avoidance in attachment were also significantly associated with higher dispositional shame (Remondi *et al.*, 2023). This is an individual's general tendency to experience shame across different situations. Dispositional shame reflects a stable personality trait influencing how a person interprets failures or social interactions (Tang and Park, 2023). Individuals with high dispositional shame are more likely to exhibit avoidance behaviors, rumination, and self-criticism, which can contribute to mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety (Zhang *et al.*, 2023). This result aligns with previous studies suggesting that negative self-assessments arise from interpersonal rejection experiences with caregivers and continue to operate internally (Gilbert and Irons, 2008). Consequently, individuals with insecure attachment have lower self-esteem and/or confidence, which can be associated with a greater tendency to experience shame (Fossum *et al.*, 1989; Gross and Hansen, 2000; Passanisi *et al.*, 2015; Sedighimornani *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, individuals with avoidant attachment tend to base their self-esteem on personal competencies rather than on social approval, making them less prone to feelings of shame than those with anxious attachment, potentially explaining the differing effects in the research data (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2016).

However, one study showed different results regarding avoidant attachment style. More specifically, multiple regression analyses revealed that certain insecure attachment styles, particularly anxious and disorganized, were significantly related to shame proneness, while avoidant attachment styles were not (Park and Shields, 2023). Moreover, shame proneness was positively correlated with insecure attachment dimensions in an analysis of offline and online attachment dimensions (Veneziani *et al.*, 2024).

3.2 OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL INFLUENCE

Regarding the role of cultural factors, the examined studies did not include this variable in analyzing the relationship between attachment style and shame proneness. However, one study in this review investigated potential cultural differences in adult attachment, sacrifice, and emotional well-being among couples using an intercultural sample (115 couples in the USA and 99 couples in China). The results indicated that avoidant attachment style was associated with fewer negative emotions in the American sample but was not significant in the Chinese sample (Zhu *et al.*, 2021). Attachment theory predicts that individuals with avoidant attachment use emotional disconnection strategies when facing potentially anxiety-inducing situations (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2003), explaining the finding that American respondents with high avoidant attachment reported fewer negative emotions. The insignificant correlation found in the Chinese sample is inconsistent with the analysis theory predictions, and cultural norms may contribute to this finding (Zhu *et al.*, 2021). For example, researchers in adult attachment across different cultures have argued that some interpersonal norms prevalent in many Eastern societies (e.g., suppression of personal needs, reluctance to seek help) share behavioral characteristics typically considered indicators of avoidant attachment (Wang and Mallinckrodt, 2006). High avoidant attachment scores reported by Chinese participants might align with cultural norms and may not engage in disconnection strategies similar to those of the American sample (Zhu *et al.*, 2021).

Further, the effect of attachment anxiety on sacrifice emerged only in the US sample. The positive impact of sacrifice on the emotional well-being of the individual and the partner was observed in all cultures, although this impact seemed stronger in the Chinese sample. This could be due to the Chinese culture's emphasis on connectivity and a sense of involvement (Zhu *et al.*, 2021). Besides the hypothesized links, the results also indicated that when one partner is more anxiously attached in the American sample, the other partner tends to be more avoidantly attached. These tendencies reinforce each other's patterns; for example, one partner's need for space may attract the other to move closer, and vice versa. However, this pattern was not observed in the Chinese sample, indicating the need for caution when applying attachment theory across cultures (Zhu *et al.*, 2021).

Although the role of cultural factors could provide new and valuable insights, the majority of studies focused on the strong relationship between attachment style,

shame proneness, and shame management styles. Both anxious and avoidant attachment styles have significant indirect effects on psychological distress through shame proneness. Specifically, an anxious attachment style seems to influence psychological distress through a self-attacking shame management style, whereas an avoidant attachment style does so through an avoidance style of managing shame (Remondi *et al.*, 2023). These findings suggest how individuals attached to others can influence how they experience and manage shame, affecting their overall psychological health (Remondi *et al.*, 2023).

Understanding cultural nuances in attachment and shame is vital for clinical practice, especially in psychotherapy. Therapists must consider these cultural variations to effectively address and treat the psychological distress associated with attachment and shame issues (Atkins, 2016). This approach helps in tailoring interventions that are culturally sensitive and more likely to be effective for diverse client populations. Therapists can tailor attachment-based interventions to different cultural environments by considering variations in emotional expression due to attachment styles and shame-related coping mechanisms. Some cultures discourage open emotional disclosure, which may require therapists to incorporate creative therapeutic approaches, such as art therapy or mindfulness techniques, to help clients process shame and attachment distress (Okada and Yamada, 2023). Knowing the nuances of collectivist and individualist dynamics is also important. In collectivist cultures, where social harmony is emphasized, interventions should integrate family-based therapy and culturally relevant support systems to reduce shame (Lee and Chen, 2022). In individualist cultures, interventions may focus more on self-exploration and boundary-setting to enhance personal autonomy and secure attachment (Martinez and Carter, 2023). Furthermore, therapists should adapt language and metaphors to align with cultural values. For example, in some East Asian cultures, discussing “family honor” may be more effective in addressing shame than focusing on individual self-worth (Huang and Kim, 2023).

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REZUMAT

Având în vedere dinamica emoțiilor și relațiilor umane, această cercetare a explorat interacțiunea dintre stilurile de atașament și predispoziția pentru rușine în diferite contexte culturale, prin analizarea a 19 studii conform ghidurilor PRISMA. Deși factorii culturali ar putea oferi perspective noi și valoroase, majoritatea studiilor s-au concentrat asupra relației puternice dintre stilul de atașament, predispoziția pentru rușine și strategiile de gestionare a rușinii. Atât stilul de atașament

anxios cât și cel evitant au efecte indirecte semnificative asupra distresului psihologic prin intermediul predispoziției pentru rușine. Mai exact, un stil de atașament anxios pare să influențeze distresul psihologic printr-o strategie de gestionare a rușinii bazată pe auto-critică. În contrast, un stil de atașament evitant afectează distresul psihologic printr-o strategie de evitare a rușinii. Aceste descoperiri sugerează că modul în care indivizii dezvoltă atașamente influențează felul în care experimentează și gestionează rușinea, având un impact asupra sănătății lor psihologice generale. Această analiză deschide calea către o mai bună înțelegere a nuanțelor predispoziției pentru rușine în funcție de stilurile de atașament, evidențiind atât universalitatea, cât și variațiile acestor experiențe în diferite culturi.