



Social Sciences

Volume 2 / Issue 1



E-ISSN: 2744-2454

mapub.org/mapss



Social Sciences



JOURNAL

MAP Social Sciences

Volume 2 / Issue 1

PUBLISHER

MAP – Multidisciplinary Academic Publishing

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Vildana Dubravac, PhD, International Burch University, Bosnia and Herzegovina

EDITORIAL BOARD

Seid Masnica, PhD, University Džemal Bijedić, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Irena Zavrl, PhD, University of Applied Sciences, FH Burgenland, Austria

Ešref Kenan Rašidagić, PhD, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Adis Maksić, PhD, International Burch University, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Violeta Janusheva, PhD, University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Bitola, North Macedonia

Manal Sabbah, PhD, Gulf University for Science and Technology, Kuwait

Mladen Mrdalj, PhD, Webster University

Adisa Imamović, PhD, University of Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Rita Brdar-Szabó, PhD, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

Mario Brdar, PhD, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University, Croatia

Davorka Topić Stipić, PhD, University of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Esad Oruč, PhD, International Burch University, Bosnia and Herzegovina

E-MAIL

mapss@mapub.org



Volume 2 / **Issue 1**



E-ISSN: 2744-2454

CONTENTS

- 1 **THE EFFECTS OF AGE FACTOR ON LEARNING ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY OF LEARNING ENGLISH IN AN ONLINE CHINESE SCHOOL**
Ana Kusic
- 9 **TEACHER AND STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN ONLINE CLASSES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SERBIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND CROATIA**
Amila Dautbašić and Senad Bećirović
- 18 **ADAPTING DATA COLLECTION TOOLS FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN TIMES OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC**
Neha Jain and Katarina Brockova
- 28 **ELECTORAL PREFERENCES OF YOUTH VOTERS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**
Sara Arslanagić and Marina Mitrović

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

THE EFFECTS OF AGE FACTOR ON LEARNING ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY OF LEARNING ENGLISH IN AN ONLINE CHINESE SCHOOL

Ana Kusić 

International Burch University, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ana Kusić, International Burch University, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. E-mail: ana13kusic@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of age on EFL learning in an Online English school based in China for the students of Chinese nationality. The importance of the early start is larger especially when the structure and the origin of their native language greatly differs from the foreign language they aim to learn. The populations of the study are primary and middle school Chinese students and English language teachers of different background and nations. This study found that the age factor has an important effect on the learner's acquisition. The results confirm that the early start of learning L2/FL intensifies the process of developing the learner's language skills. The aim of this study is to encourage parents and students to start learning English, or other foreign language, as early as possible, as this will enhance their chances of high level of fluency and proficiency in the target language.

Keywords: Age factor, Age effect, Learning, Young learner



MAP SOCIAL SCIENCES

Volume 2 / Issue 1

ISSN: 2744-2454/ © 2021 The Authors.
Published by MAP – Multidisciplinary Academic Publishing.

Article Submitted: 04 January 2022
Article Accepted: 19 January 2022
Article Published: 21 January 2022



Publisher's Note: MAP stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

<https://doi.org/10.53880/2744-2454.2022.2.1>



HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Kusić A. (2022). **The Effects of Age Factor on Learning English: A Case Study of Learning English in an Online Chinese School**. MAP Social Sciences, 2(1), 1-8.
doi: <https://doi.org/10.53880/2744-2454.2022.2.1>



© The Author(s). 2021 **Open Access Article**
Creative Commons CC BY: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.



1. Introduction

Language is a system of symbols that individuals use to describe the outer, real world around them, as well as their inner world, but the interrelation between these worlds, too. Even though it is not the only mean of communication, it is the main, most important and most complex one, by which we meet the thoughts of others. This is why the language is not researched by linguists only, but by pedagogists, sociologists, and psychologists. Analyzing the characteristics of different languages, linguists are trying to investigate it from many different perspectives, but also to find the most effective way to learn a language.

Besides the age, there are many other agents that affect learning like motivation, individual differences, learner's personality, opportunities for learning outside of the classroom etc (Dervić & Bećirović, 2020). All of these are essential and they directly determine the success of learning. Many linguists consider the age factor as the most important one in the acquisition of a foreign language. In this research filed one of the most important notions to mention is the Critical Period Hypothesis (Penfield, Roberts, 1960). It is a claim that there is a biological age span, the first few years of life, that are crucial for an individual to be exposed to and acquire the first language and after that period, it may be impossible to develop or achieve a full command of language. When it is about L2, if there was no exposition and acquisition in the early life, the development and results of L2 acquisition are fundamentally and irreversibly changed and the full competence may never be possible to achieve. There are many studies that show that foreign-sounding accents are more likely to develop when the L2 is first learned later in life.

Many different international research projects, studies and papers have multiply confirmed that the learners who started learning a foreign language at an early age have much better performance and attain higher level of proficiency than the learners who start later e.g. at late teen or adult years (Yaman & Bećirović, 2016). Zhang (2009) and Munoz et al. (2010) claim that children demonstrate better performance in pronunciation than adults do, specifically they have higher chances to achieve native-like accent. Petkovic (2012) also proved that young learners gain better results at the level of acquisition of phonetic rules,

while older learners master syntactic and semantic language rules more easily.

Apart from this, when it is about the speed of learning, it is known that the older learners are faster at early stages of second language development. They also acquire the vocabulary and meaning in an easier way as their world and life knowledge is much wider and better developed than it is at the young learners. But it is proven that the young learners are better learners on the long run. They easily catch up and their brains are more flexible to adjust especially, if they are exposed to L2 on a daily basis. One common situation that makes these statements less bright is that we can assume that most of the L2 learners learn the language at school for 1 or 2 classes a week which is a very short time of exposure to usually one person, the teacher, commonly of non-native background, and that might lessen their biological age predisposition and advantage. Also, scarce affective stability and cognitive abilities may restrain children from understanding early language learning instructions (Vygotsky, 1986). Young children, usually don't even have English classes at school by the age 6-9, unless they take a special course.

As we mentioned before, there are many similar studies related to our research field, so we decided to actually write a replication study to the paper 'The Effects of Age Factor on Learning English: A Case Study of Learning English in Saudi Schools, Saudi Arabia' by Elsadiq Mohamed Khalifa Gawi (2011), as the structure of this work is well applicable to the aim of our study. The research question that guided this study was is there a significant difference in performance and the speed of improvement between the younger and the older students?

2. Literature review

Bećirović and Hurić-Bećirović (2017) investigated motivation and achievement of students learning English across different age in Bosnia and Herzegovina. 210 students participated, divided into three age groups: ten, fourteen, and eighteen years-olds. The data was collected via questionnaire and the results showed that there is a significant relationship between age and the motivation of the learners. The research showed that the youngest learners had the highest motivation, while the oldest students had the lowest motivation to learn English. Correspondingly, the youngest gained the highest achievement, and the oldest gained the lowest achievement.

Another Bećirović's (2017) research paper dealt with the relationship between gender, motivation and achievement in learning English as a foreign language. 185 students participated parted in the age groups: ten, fourteen, and eighteen. Once again, ten-year-old students exhibited the highest motivation for learning English, and, expectedly, the eighteen-year-old students exhibited the lowest motivation. This study also investigated how gender influences motivation and achievement in learning English as a foreign language, and showed that female students are more successful than male students at each age group.

Krashen, Long & Scarcella (1979) conducted a significant research project proving that adults certainly learn faster than the younger students, especially at some early stages of acquisition, but students who begin natural exposure to a foreign language during their early years generally achieve higher language proficiency than those who begun as adults. In his paper, Krashen discussed the claim "younger is better" and reminded that there are studies that claim that the older students are better students, but eventually, all scholars agree that child second language acquirers will finally be superior in terms of ultimate attainment, that is, on the long run. And then, we shouldn't not forget the fact that, after all, younger starters had more time of life to perfect their language skills.

Ozfidan and Burlbaw (2019) consider age as a crucial factor in second language acquisition. In their study, to research the age factor, they examined three different age groups; children, adolescents, and adults, considering Critical Period Hypothesis. The outcome of this study proves that children learn a language in a much easier way than adolescents and adults do, especially in terms of pronunciation and morphosyntax. Adolescents showed to exceed in syntax and listening skills, while adults were the best at reading and writing activities. The authors also remind that different types of learners at different developmental stages require a diversity of instructional methods. Even though age plays a vital role in language learning, other factors such as motivation, the capabilities of a learner, socioeconomic status (Bećirović & Akbarov, 2015), ample exposure to target language, interaction with the physical world and social environment, time available for learning, and linguistic and cultural backgrounds are seen to be more influential in some cases. As a result, late starters may gain great progress in language learning, as

well as early starters (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). Based on presented literature review we hypothesized that students who start learning English at an earlier age attain higher level of proficiency than those who start learning English later.

3. Methodology

The general research approach was experimental investigated and examined one independent variable which is the age. The methodology used in this study is quantitative and qualitative research. The data was collected, analyzed and presented in the section 'results'.

3.1 Participants

The population of this study from which subjects were drawn can be divided into two categories: students from China (24) and English teachers of various nationalities (30 teachers).

The students are also subdivided in two age groups; younger and older. Out of total 24, 12 younger students range from age 4 to 5, while 12 older students range from 10 to 12 years old. All of the students are learning at the same level in our school – basic. It is important to mention that all of the students are learning English language at their regular schools too, they enroll in BetaKid Online English school for additional classes. At the beginning, all of the students need to do a few tests after which they are allotted to the corresponding level. The levels in our school are; Starter, Basic, Intermediate, Advanced, and Master. In this study, we are going to test the students of the Basic level students only. The students are surrounded by their native Chinese environment and they are taught both by native and non-native English teachers at the BetaKid Online school. The number of the classes per week one student attends varies from 1 to 6, according to their wishes and needs. One class lasts for 25 minutes and it is face-to-face type, that is one student–one teacher. The classes are mainly based on communication and story-telling, with listening, speaking, reading and writing exercises, while explicit learning of grammar rules is excluded.

The English teachers lecture lessons and materials provides by the school. All of the teachers were required to have one or more years of experience and teaching as well as a university degree, preferably, in order to get employed. Teachers of many different nationalities and backgrounds

teach from their home, native or chosen country of living. Teachers are instructed to base the classes mainly on communication.

3.2 Tools of Data Collection

The questionnaire is an instrument used to collect data from the teachers and it is composed of 7 general questions regarding the students' overall performance, their grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, but also the teachers' broad opinions, attitudes and preferences considering the learner's age. The questionnaire was created in the form of a poll where the teachers could choose just one of the two options; Younger or Older students for each question.

Test for students comprises of 12 different exercises and the types are; circle the correct answer, underline one or more words, and match the words. The exercises were adequately created for the learners of the Basic level of English, that is, internationally accepted as A2 to B level. The test consists of the grammar part (7 exercises) and the vocabulary part (5 exercises). The Grammar exercises test the learner's understanding of verbs (simple present, present continuous, past simple), articles, nouns, adjectives, and prepositions. The Vocabulary exercises test the learner's understanding of the meaning of the given words and sentences. The complete test carries the total of 20 points (Grammar; 7, Vocabulary 13.). The available time the students had to complete it was about 10 minutes.

3.3 Students' results

In order to test the research hypothesis, the analyses required comparison of younger students' performance with older students' performance.

As we can see in the *Chart 1*, the group of Younger students gained a total of 191 points out of 240 possible which makes their average score 15,91 out of 20 possible points per test, that is the finally **79,55%**. The group of the Older students gained the total of 190 points out of 240 possible, which makes their average score 15,83 out of 20 possible points per test, that is **79,14%**.

As expected, the Younger students scored better overall, although the difference is slight.

Figure 1.
Total test results

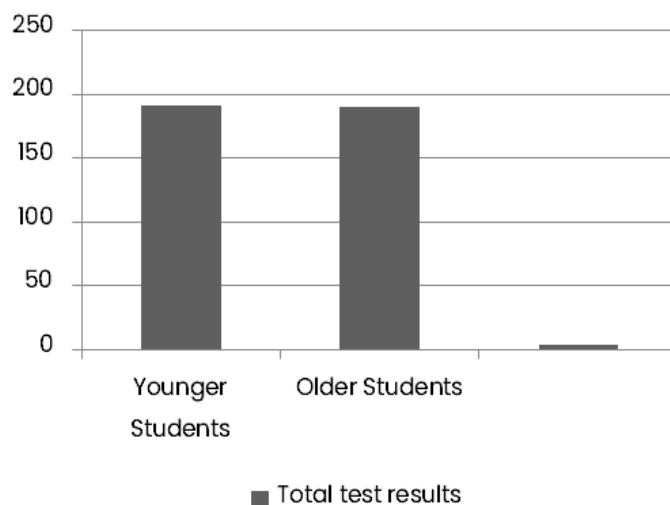
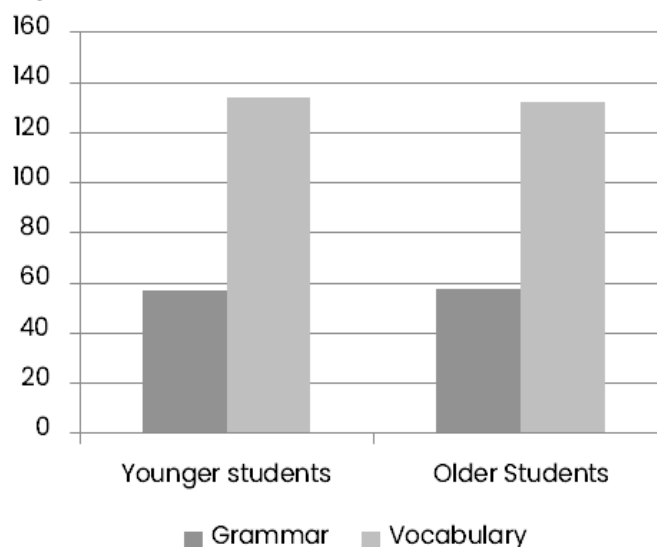


Figure 2.



As we can see in the *Chart 2*, Younger students gained the total of 57 points out of 84 possible, which makes their average score 4,75 out of 7 points for the Grammar exercises only, that is **67,85%**. For the Vocabulary exercises, they gained total of 134 points out of 156, that is **85,89%** so their average score is 11,16 out of 13.

The Older students gained a total of 58 points in the Grammar exercises, which makes their average score 4,83, that is **69%**, while they gained 132 points in Vocabulary exercises, that is **84, 61%** and their average score is 11 out of 13.

We can see that the Older students did slightly better in Grammar exercises, while the Younger students did better in Vocabulary exercises, just as some previous similar studies claimed before.

3.4 Teachers' results

Figure 3.

Teachers' questionnaire results

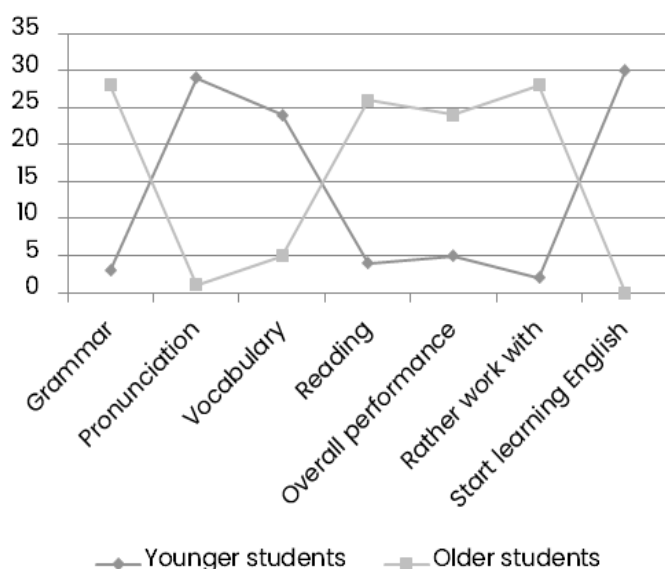


Table 1.

	Younger	Older
1. Who is better at grammar?	3	28
2. Who has better pronunciation?	29	1
3. Who is better at acquiring vocabulary?	24	5
4. Who has better reading skills?	4	26
5. Who has better performance overall?	5	24
6. If you could, you would rather choose?	2	28
7. At what age is it better to start learning English?	30	0

The teachers' questionnaire was completely left to be answered on the basis of their personal impressions and opinions. About 30 teachers participated. The interesting part of the results is that almost all of the teachers admitted they rather work with Older students, but they all agreed that the children should start learning English at an early age.

4. Discussion

There is difference in performance between younger and older students, although it is not significant, being as high as only 1 or 2 points. The researcher accredits the slight difference to the fact that all of the students are learning the English language in their regular schools too, therefore, older students have a privilege of learning the higher levels of English and probably on more often basis in comparison to the younger students who are still learning the lower levels of English or nothing at all at their pre-schools or kindergartens. Also, their world and life knowledge are still shallow,

which lessens their understanding and language awareness.

Still, the study confirms the hypothesis; the younger students they are, the better they will learn English. Although, as we mentioned before, there are some studies that claim that the older students

are better students, all of the scholars agree on one; young students are better on the long run. Just as the results of our teachers' questionnaire show, we can suppose that most of the teachers widely rather choose, if they can, to work with older students as they can have a wider range of topics to talk about in the class, but they are also all well aware of the benefits of the early start of learning the second or foreign language. The fact is that the younger students have more flexible brains and they can easily adjust to the mentality of the language, they can learn even to think in the target language, as their motivation is high, as proven before (Mašić et al., 2020). A slow beginning followed by a high level of success in the end characterize the learning progress of children (Hyland, 2019). Regarding the physical aspect, younger students will adapt much better to the accent and pronunciation of the foreign language as their speech organs are still developing. Older students usually already have their attitudes and character formed which might sometimes oppose to the mentality of the new language so this might be defective on their language progress. Again, physical factors and low motivation do not contribute to their easy and quick way on reaching high proficiency. Older learners show a great progress in the beginning of learning, but, eventually, they slow down (Slabakova et al., 2019).

Some previous research projects proved that the younger learners are better at acquiring vocabulary and adapting to the native-like pronunciation (Bećirović, 2021), while adolescents or adults are better at syntax. It was interesting to find that the results of our study also show that the children, although slightly, are better at vocabulary part of the test and, expectedly, older students somewhat exceeded in grammar exercises. It is also said before that adults prefer and benefit from explicit grammar rules learning (Andrews, 2017), which conforms to our results, too. Also, late learners can sometimes, under certain conditions and factors, achieve native-like perfection in the second language, too (Ioup et al., 1994).

5. Conclusion

In the light of the previous findings, one can rely on the assertion that age does affect EFL learning, because early exposure to language instructions is constantly resulting in better performance.

In this field, established studies show that the earlier the first language learning, the better

the second language general fluency (Snow, 1993; Taylor, 1990). Clearly, the findings of this study supported the established studies. It concluded that the performance of foreign language was better in students who started learning English at an earlier age (4-5) and that their skills developed in a way of better quality, than they did at early adolescents (10-12). Considering the different ways of how the two age groups of learners acquire the language, it is also important to remember that the teacher has to have a different and special approach, style of teaching, and instructional methods for these two groups. Children require variety in the classes and more picturesque presentation, while older students might require somewhat serious approach and more discussions, as they are cognitively mature. Although young learners have certain superiority over teenagers or adults, their achievements may be weakened in a formal learning environment. Children greatly prosper from an authentic target language environment, sensorimotor activities and colorful instructional materials. The essential point at this period is vocabulary growth (Andrews, 2017). Older students gain from formal settings with clear instruction methods and explicit rules (Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Delić & Bećirović, 2018).

The research results can help and be beneficial for teachers, schools, parents, and students in finding the most effective approach to learning and teaching English as a second or foreign language.

Certainly, there are some other factors that influence motivation and achievement in learning English as a foreign language, too. The research into such factors could be recommended for further investigation. The effects like the personality traits, teaching strategies, socioeconomic status of family, the number of family members, etc. might have a significant influence on motivation and achievement in learning English as a foreign language.

6. References

Andrews, K. (2017). *Culture, curriculum, and identity in education* [Book Review]. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 4(2), 99-101.

Bećirović, S., Polz, E. (2021). *Fostering Giftedness: Challenges and Opportunities*, Nova Science Publishers, New York.

Bećirović S., Hurić - Bećirović, R., (2017), The role of age in students' motivation and achieve-

ment in learning English as a second language, *JoLIE – Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education*, 10(1), 23–36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29302/jolie.2017.10.1.2>

Bećirović, S. (2017). The Relationship between Gender, Motivation and Achievement in Learning English as a Foreign Language. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 6(2), 210–220. DOI: [10.13187/ejced.2017.2.210](https://doi.org/10.13187/ejced.2017.2.210)

Bećirović, S., & Akbarov A. (2015). Impact of social changes on teacher's role and responsibilities in the educational system. *JoLIE – Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education*, 8, 21–35. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29302/jolie.2015.8.2>

Delić, H., & Bećirović, S., (2018). The influence of Grade Point Average and Socioeconomic Status on Learning Strategies, *Journal of Education and Humanities*, 1(2), 53–64, <http://dx.doi.org/10.14706/jeh2018123>

Dervić, M., & Bećirović, S. (2020). Prerogative of the Lexical Approach in Communicative Language Teaching, *European Journal of Education Studies*, 7(3), 1–13. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.3748039

Hyland, K., & Hyland, F. (Eds.). (2019). *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues*. Cambridge University Press.

Ioup, G., Boustagui, E., El Tigi, M., & Moselle, M. (1994). *Reexamining the critical period hypothesis: A case study of successful adult SLA in a naturalistic environment*. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 16, 73–98.

Khalifa Gawi, E. M. (2011). *The effects of age factor on learning English: A case study of learning English in Saudi schools, Saudi Arabia*. The Applied Medical College, Shaqra University, Saudi Arabia.

Krashen, S. D., Long, M. A., Scarcella, R. C. (1979). *Age, rate and eventual attainment in second language acquisition*. *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4. 573–582.

Mašić, A., Polz, E. & Bećirović, S., (2020) The Relationship between Learning Styles, GPA, School Level and Gender. *European Researcher. Series A*, 11(1), 51–60. doi: 10.13187/er.2020.1.51

Munoz, C. (2010). *On how age affects foreign language learning*. *Advances in Research on Language Acquisition and Teaching: Selected Papers*, Gala, University of Barcelona.

Ortega, L. (2013). *Understanding second language acquisition*. New York: Routledge.

Ozfidan, B., & Burlbaw, L.M. (2019). *A literature-based approach on age factors in second language acquisition: children, adolescents, and adults*. *International Education Studies*; Vol. 12, No. 10. 27–36.

Penfield, W., & Roberts L. (1967). *Speech and brain mechanism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Petković, A. (2012). *Motivation as one of the influential factors of quality in foreign language learning at the tertiary level*. *Zbornik radova*. Niš: Univerzitet u Nišu.

Slabakova, R., Corbet, J., Domínguez, L., Dudley, A., & Wallington, A. (Eds.). (2019). *Explorations in Second Language Acquisition and Processing*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Snow, C. E. (1993). *Bilingualism & second language acquisition*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Taylor, I., & Taylor, M. (1990). *Psycholinguistic: learning and using language*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. MA: Newbury House.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language* (A. Kozulin, Trans. & Ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Zhang, C. (2009). *A study of age influence in L2 acquisition*. *Asian Social Science*, 5(5), 133–137. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v5n5p133>.

Yaman, A. & Bećirović, S. (2016). Learning English and Media Literacy. *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research (IJIR)*, 2(6), 660–663.

7. Appendix

7.1 The students' test

1. Do you like to eat paper?

- a) No, I doesn't.
- b) No, I not like.
- c) No, I don't.

2. Did you swim today?

- a) No, I don't.
- b) No, I didn't.
- c) No, not swim.

3. Yesterday, I _____ to school.

- a) go
- b) going
- c) went

4. This is _____ pencil.

- a) a
- b) and
- c) an

5. I live _____ China.

- a) in
- b) with
- c) go

6. A house is _____ than a chair.

- a) biggest
- b) big
- c) bigger

7. There are 8 _____.

- a) childs
- b) children
- c) childrens

8. I am _____ a book.

- a) reading
- b) asking
- c) cooking

9. I like to _____ soccer.

- a) eat
- b) drive
- c) play

10. Circle water surfaces.

sea, table, pond, river, ground

11. Circle places.

park, table, paint, store, library

12. Match the words.

pet	jump
move	windy
vegetable	firefighter
weather	dog
job	potato

REVIEW PAPER

TEACHER AND STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN ONLINE CLASSES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SERBIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND CROATIA

¹Amila Dautbašić , ²Senad Bećirović 

¹International Burch University, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

²International Burch University, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Amila Dautbašić, International Burch University, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. E-mail: amila.dautbasic@stu.ibu.edu.ba and Senad Bećirović, International Burch University, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. E-mail: senad.becirovic@ibu.edu.ba

ABSTRACT

In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared the COVID pandemic, which caused interruptions and delays in many activities, but most importantly, it led to some huge changes in education. Online teaching will prove to be the most commonly used method that should compensate for the inability to work in the classroom and allow the educational process to continue. Of course, this teaching method was not created in 2020, but it was only presented and implemented in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia with the beginning of the pandemic. In this paper, we see how these countries have faced abrupt changes in teaching, and how this change has affected students. Online teaching cannot be a mere transfer of analog content to digital; a different approach is needed in the implementation of teaching as required and offered by the digital medium, but at the same time it is necessary to preserve the basic principles of the lecturer and the curriculum. It is a call, both for teachers and students. Since this is a current and universal problem, we hope that the conclusions presented are useful.

Keywords: online education, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, COVID19, teaching



MAP SOCIAL SCIENCES

Volume 2 / Issue 1

ISSN: 2744-2454 / © 2021 The Authors.
Published by MAP – Multidisciplinary Academic Publishing.

Article Submitted: 10 January 2022
Article Accepted: 18 January 2022
Article Published: 21 January 2022



Publisher's Note: MAP stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

<https://doi.org/10.53880/2744-2454.2022.2.1.9>



HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Dautbašić A., Bećirović S. (2022). **Teacher and Student Experiences in Online Classes During COVID-19 Pandemic in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia**. MAP Social Sciences, 2(1), 9-17. doi: <https://doi.org/10.53880/2744-2454.2022.2.1.9>



© The Author(s). 2021 **Open Access Article**
Creative Commons CC BY: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.



INTRODUCTION

Online classes were mainly organized by language schools and individuals who used to teach independently until the COVID-19 pandemic started in early 2020. This type of classes was most suitable for students who were unable to physically come to live classes for a variety of reasons (Dautbašić & Saračević, 2019). Online classes were generally arranged by unofficial educational institutions since there were courses or individual classes where teachers and students applied from different countries for a certain period of time. All the technical support and infrastructure was believed to be in function, and was supposed to be well distributed to support online classes, but as it would turn out later, it was unfortunately not good enough. When it comes to online learning assets and apps for communication and social networks, it was needed to develop specific educational online tools and to use them on a much wider scale (Code et al., 2020).

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, there has been a growing number of studies revealing how teachers have encountered significant challenges in this compulsory and online education, for all (Karsenti et al., 2020), in particular regarding the adoption of this new mode of teaching which did not always correspond to their teaching practices in the classroom (Mahmood, 2020, Yaman & Bećirović, 2016). In fact, much of the research in education has focused on the challenges faced by teachers, as well as the various strategies to overcome them. Many researchers have also been devoted to the fatigue inherent in online teaching, which several refer to as "Zoom Fatigue" (Lee, 2020). This is a fatigue that many teachers experience from teaching online, often for several hours a day.

The work of Nugroho (2020) has focused more particularly on the challenges faced by language teachers. The results of their exploratory study indicate large differences related to their digital use, their digital competence and the adaptation of their teaching content to online teaching. Their results reveal, among other things, large differences in the feeling of competence of teachers, and that this is often linked to their use of digital technology in teaching in general.

Research by Kaden (2020) has focused on the workload of teachers inherent in this forced shift to distance education. Their findings clearly show

that teachers, forced to teach from distance during this pandemic, have significantly increased their working hours. Finally, the work of Kim and Asbury (2020) focused more particularly on the well-being of teachers who were forced to work remotely, in the context of a health crisis. Their work details many of the challenges teachers faced, especially during the first weeks of this difficult time. The whole world faced big challenges in the time of COVID pandemic, and the aim of this research is to present the challenges that Balkan countries faced during the pandemic in terms of online learning.

ONLINE CLASSES DURING COVID PANDEMIC IN SERBIA

E-learning and distance learning have significant advantages over traditional forms of education. Above all, they provide a great flexibility in work, because students can determine the place, time and pace of learning. This increases the efficiency of education, because it affects the work satisfaction of students and encourages their creativity. Distance learning enables a large number of students to be educated in a short time, without hiring a larger number of teachers or large classrooms and areas, so this type of education is much cheaper than the classic one. In the difficult conditions of the suspension of classical classes in schools in Serbia due to the COVID 19 virus pandemic, a large number of different programs and alternative digital ways of teaching at all educational levels were organized, the most important of which was distance learning. Although before that, distance learning in Serbia was not at a very high level, the educational system in the newly created extraordinary circumstances applied a number of measures and activities that enabled continuous and uninterrupted realization of the educational process in the new conditions (Marković, 2009).

In addition to television classes, a number of platforms were available to students, which comprehensively enabled the regular end of the school year, as well as the first online testing of an entire student generation in Serbia (Krstić et al., 2021). The organization of educational content and distance learning in Serbia in the extreme conditions of the COVID 19 pandemic confirmed the great importance of this type of education and the application of modern technologies in the implementation of teaching processes. It also opened new possibilities for their further intensive development and application in education in the future. Having in mind all

the advantages, experiences and results achieved in the implementation of the distance learning process during the pandemic of the COVID 19, it is realistic to expect that this type of education will be more present in regular educational practice in the future (Marković, 2009).

The state and competent bodies and institutions contributed to that, by developing the activities started during the pandemic in the following period and creating better conditions for the development of e-education and the improvement of distance learning. And that could be achieved by providing technical preconditions, educating teachers and students for digital competencies in work and learning, as well as by creating an adequate social environment that would affirm this type of education (Dautbašić & Saračević, 2020).

Bearing in mind that the necessary transformation of educational work required a quick reaction and brought a large number of challenges, there was a fear how the leading actors in education would adapt to the changed working circumstances. The results of the research show that some teachers have successfully adapted to the different requirements that the new organization of teaching brought with it. However, a large number of teachers still face challenges in their educational work. These difficulties are reflected in the implementation of online teaching, evaluation of the teaching process and the use of digital platforms. Nearly a quarter of teachers see challenges in the organization of the educational process during the pandemic in the time load and the number of classes they teach, and over half believe that the level of administrative work that accompanies new teaching modalities is too burdensome (Stojanović, 2020).

The COVID-19 virus pandemic has undoubtedly reflected on increased fear, anxiety and the emergence of mental health problems globally. Teachers seem to have suffered a double blow from the unknown. On the one hand, like all other people, they faced a new, hitherto unknown danger, while on the other hand, they faced numerous doubts and responsibilities that their small decisions shape the long-term development outcomes of many students. Consequently, information on the challenges faced by teachers in the past is of great importance for improving the outcome of the entire educational process in a pandemic. Research findings indicate that nearly half of teachers are scared of getting infected with COVID-19 virus, but that

there are no, globally, signals of excessive concern that would disrupt the psychophysical functioning of teachers. However, 10% of teachers in Serbia also experience such difficulties (such as sleep disorders, arrhythmias, etc.) (Popović et al., 2021).

The Serbian government has been very committed to ensuring the continuity of education, by switching from traditional to online teaching. They understood the current pandemic in a way as a catalyst that highlighted the need for educational change and created more flexible models. This way of thinking is an excellent basis for preparing for a potential blockage in the future.

In addition to providing a lot of tools completely free of charge, Serbia also hired various publishing houses, which enabled the free use of various textbooks and companies that provided free courses. In addition, training of lecturers for the use of digital tools is provided, and one of the most important recommendations is continuous training of lecturers for interactive teaching, with an emphasis on constant communication with pupils and students because communication is key in distance learning (Medar, 2021).

ONLINE CLASSES DURING PANDEMIC IN CROATIA

The COVID-19 public health crisis in Croatia required a rapid change from traditional to distance learning. Digital competencies for conducting such teaching significantly affect its quality, which was evident from the results of different research where both teachers and students mostly had only basic experiences in using e-learning tools. The need for a unified model of distance learning continues to pose major challenges in the formation of any distance learning program. It is important to strive for an integrated model, while blended learning, which involves contact teaching in the presence of online content, is still considered the dominant form of online teaching, although it should only serve as a starting point for an integrated model (Picciano 2017). As Picciano concludes, the integrated model must evolve to the extent that distance education is realized because of education, and not because of the way or the distance that separates it from face-to-face teaching. Such a thing, the author predicts, will be the standard in the not-too-distant future, where every educational program should have at its core a network component, which is in itself adapted to the extent that it is invisible and does

not affect the creation of educational programs. Over the last 30 years, Croatia has faced several crisis situations, which have had a major impact on all forms of teaching. Crisis situations such as the Homeland War (1990–1995), severe natural disasters (earthquakes in 2020 and 2021) and the public health crisis COVID-19, have led to some significant changes in the characteristics of teaching activities and represent valuable experience in this area (Šušak, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis has brought to the world new problems and challenges that humanity has had and continues to face. It affected all aspects of society, including the implementation of education. By studying the relevant literature from the Croatian area, we soon realize that distance learning in Croatia is not the best developed, and that development initiatives and the offer of on-line curricula in Croatia are insufficiently expanded (Katavić et al. 2018).

The importance of adapting teaching materials in an online environment was presented almost 15 years ago in a paper by Bazić and Minić, where the importance of changing roles between teachers and students was also mentioned – where teachers are required to take an increasingly “pedagogical” approach and students are required an increasingly “independent” approach. Accordingly, teachers must be constantly technologically educated in order to, in addition to the classical evaluation of their students, become “organizers, developers, helpers and advisors”, while at the other end of the spectrum, students should become more creative and more responsible, ie more independent (Bazić & Minić, 2007, Bećirović & Akbarov, 2016; Mašić et al., 2020).

The Ministry did not have a developed plan for the implementation of distance learning, but in parallel with the transition to distance learning in July 2020, issued a document entitled Action Plan for the implementation of distance learning for the school year 2020/2021 (Akcijski plan za sprovedbu nastave na daljinu, 2020).

The first purpose of the Action Plan for the implementation of distance learning for the school year 2020/2021. was to document the most important steps and procedures carried out in the spring of 2020 in the successful implementation of distance learning in schools and universities so that similar or improved approaches can be used in the

next school and academic years and to make plans for the coming period. The Action Plan document is considered unique because it can be divided into two parts. The first part shows the stages in the implementation of the project and the manner of project implementation in the Republic of Croatia from March to September 2020, while the document was still being drafted. It is also unique because of the second part of the document, which elaborates many scenarios for future school years in order to better prepare for possible disasters around the pandemic and the best possible implementation of remote work. Croatian education, primarily teachers and students, but also all other stakeholders, has adapted relatively quickly to the new situation due to the pandemic and the inability to transfer information from school desks. The transition to the digital way of transmitting information was not a problem because Croatia started with the reform of education in 2016, and in 2017 the digital transformation was included in the reform.

Reading the above, it can be said that education in Croatia had a good basis for distance learning, which was forced due to the COVID-19 virus. COVID-19 did not initiate the digitalization of education, but only accelerated it and encouraged a major change in the educational system, which is the development and normalization of distance learning as a daily routine (Koroman, 2021).

The ability to organize distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has its advantages and disadvantages. The biggest disadvantage is time, because the pandemic came on abruptly and the education system was not ready to move at that speed with distance learning and its entire organization without any difficulties. As distance learning in the Republic of Croatia was not new and work was being done to improve e-learning on a daily basis, schools quickly realized various possibilities for organizing classes without taking them out of school. COVID-19 has only accelerated the “emergence” of distance learning as something that is everyday and “normal”. We need to accept that technology is moving forward every day. Some countries have been using this way of teaching under normal conditions for many years and our education system is lagging behind. Online learning offers us opportunities. Opportunities are the biggest advantage of distance learning, its implementation and organization. Distance learning and its possibilities will bring new challenges to the organization of teaching, and thus more creative forms of work.

ONLINE CLASSES DURING PANDEMIC IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The online teaching process in Bosnia and Herzegovina has become a novelty not only for students but also for teachers. It is only in such circumstances that most teachers began to understand that the upbringing and education of children and young people for a quality life in the 21st century must be aimed at building competencies that are necessarily different from those dominants in the past (Bećirović & Polz, 2021). The complex construct of current competencies is based on productive general and specific knowledge with which a person successfully operates and applies them outside the educational context, in everyday and professional life (Dimić, 2013). In 2005, the European Commission, as part of the Information Society and Media initiative, set out eight key competences that every European citizen should possess in order to prosper in a knowledge-based society and economy. These competencies include: the ability to communicate in native and foreign languages (Dervić & Bećirović, 2019), build core competencies in mathematics, science and technology, digital competencies, interpersonal and intercultural skills (Jarke, 2015). A significant place is occupied by information literacy skills, which became extremely important after the outbreak of the COVID virus.

It has become clear to teachers in the educational process in the schools of the Sarajevo Canton, and of course to other parts of the country, that social changes impose new obligations, roles and opportunities on the school and the teacher (Bećirović & Akbarov, 2015). It was necessary to develop a new model of school with creative-innovative foundations of paradigmatic nature, with the parallel development of pedagogical competencies of teachers (Jurčić, 2012). Therefore, a teacher in today's school needs to have developed various competencies in order to meet the requirements of today's school. Competences include knowledge, skills and personality traits, and according to Foro (2015) they are divided into key professional competencies (methodological, social and self-competence) and practical competencies and define them as combinations of knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation and personal characteristics that enable an individual to act actively and effectively in a certain (specific) situation. According to Palekčić (2005), there are content-subject competencies, diagnostic competencies, didactic competencies, competencies in classroom management and

empirical research of effectiveness that belongs to the pedagogical competencies of teachers. In the European Reference Framework, competences are defined as a combination of knowledge, practical, cognitive and social skills, and attitudes and values relevant to a particular professional and life context (European Communities, 2007).

The forced transfer of teaching to the online space in Bosnia and Herzegovina has highlighted the need for better, mostly systematic development of digital competencies of educators who in this aspect have so far been left largely to themselves. The teaching staff agrees that regular classes will not be the same as before and that computer literacy will be implied for teachers in the future. Numerous school reforms taking place in many countries around the world, which are related to the harmonization of educational systems with modern social development and building a knowledge society of the 21st century, include identifying skills needed for teachers in the information society (Bećirović & Podojak, 2017). UNESCO considers it crucial to identify information literacy indicators that should be applied in teacher education (Catts and Lau, 2008). An integral part of digital competence is digital literacy, which is defined as a basic set of skills that includes the ability to work with numbers and documents, such as word processing software and spreadsheets, web browsers, e-mail and browsers. Digital literacy refers to the ability to read and understand hypertext or multimedia texts, and includes comprehension of images, sounds, and text (Petzanet, 2019).

Not going so far into the future, this time marked by the COVID epidemic only gave an indication of what the future holds and what will be necessary to adopt a teacher to keep up with the times and continue to meet important didactic and methodological aspects of the teaching process. The era of digital media is putting new pressure on schools. Schools should prepare students and young people for qualitatively changed opportunities in society and their future roles as workers and citizens. The change in the world of work should be accompanied by a change in the content, form and structure of learning. An important feature of this fresh learning culture is that learning is changing almost on a daily basis and that it needs to ensure its own constant variability. In this sense, a 21st century teacher, in order to be a literate teacher of the digital age and competent to lead the teaching process, will need to have visual and information

skills and multicultural literacy and global awareness. Therefore, the transformation of the learning and teaching process is necessary in order to improve them and harmonize them with the current time, and even with the projected future needs (Urusa & Malik, 2013).

In primary and secondary schools in Sarajevo Canton, classes during the COVID epidemic took place through online platforms. This was preceded by the suspension of the regular teaching process in the classrooms, which is the product of an order issued in accordance with the decisions of the Government of the Federation of BiH. It is a matter of declaring a state of natural or other disaster on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and due to the danger of spreading an infectious disease caused by COVID, as well as in accordance with orders of the Federal Civil Protection Headquarters and the KS Government Decision on declaring a state of natural and other disaster. Soon, in order to implement online teaching, professional teams were formed, and by orders of the relevant ministry, recommendations were issued to all schools on new work circumstances. Thus, online classes were treated as regular classes that the students successfully completed on June 2020, and in which there was no compensation for classes (Sekulić et al., 2021).

By definition, online classes are an educational process in which teacher and student are separated and in which educational content is delivered to remote locations using information and communication technologies that include written correspondence, text and hypertext, graphics, audio and video media, direct instructions via telecommunication channels (so-called online learning), application of audio and video conferencing systems, interactive TV. Many teachers have realized that the use of the latest information and communication achievements during the educational process breaks the tradition in which teaching is a one-way process where the teacher transfers knowledge, which students passively adopt and then reproduce as learned (Dervić & Bećirović, 2020; Glazier, 2016).

However, the use of information and communication technologies has helped teachers to create a stimulating learning environment within their subject in a way that makes teaching more creative, challenging, interesting, functional and purposeful. Most primary and secondary schools

in Sarajevo Canton used the Office 365 Microsoft Teams platform, which proved to be very practical in the online teaching process. On the same platform, it is possible to form so-called "classrooms" that can have different purposes (Bećirović et al., 2019). Thus, one classroom can consist of one class with a teacher of a specific subject. Also, for the purpose of fulfilling all pedagogical and psychological obligations, classrooms can be composed exclusively of teaching and pedagogical staff, i.e. Department or Teachers' Councils. It enables visual and textual exchange of contents in order to fully realize the teaching process. It is important that the same platform enables the archive of all documents, data and communication, which can always be an excellent proof of the manner, quality and realization of the online teaching process (Martin & Tapp, 2019).

Teachers have different experiences with the use of this platform and the online teaching process in general. However, everyone agrees that this is an important step towards future modalities of the teaching process, and that for many teachers this was the first serious experience with information and communication technology in teaching (Dautbašić & Saračević, 2020).

During the analysis of online teaching, it proved imperative that it is absolutely necessary to adapt the teaching faculties to the requirements of the modern teaching process, which, in addition to direct school teaching, must also include distance learning. Therefore, it is necessary to study subjects more frequently in the study of teacher training, which will satisfactorily treat the application of IT tools and technological achievements (Song et al., 2016). This will at all times, especially the information age, put the teacher in the place he deserves, and that is to be able to educate students in the essence of the object and subject of study of their field, either through online teaching or other forms of teaching process. We should not forget that the best teachers are those whose students know best (Spahić, 2015). Through a concrete analysis of online teaching in Sarajevo Canton and educational and demographic opportunities in this canton, it is possible to identify several important things. Sarajevo Canton, due to the earlier introduction of the diary, has a clearer picture in the direction and development of online teaching process than other cantons, has the most IT-literate population, records the lowest trends in reducing the number of students in primary and secondary schools and

reducing the number of first-graders. natural increase as a very important factor in the development of education (Sekulić et al., 2021).

Regardless of what is considered the most favorable canton in these parameters, the general picture of the situation indicates lagging behind the average of developed countries in Europe, especially when it comes to general computer literacy, the highest graduation rate and readiness to accept challenges with online teaching (Vasiljević, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Understanding the student's point of view is the key to creating an effective school environment in its student-centered meaning aimed at performing learning processes at any level (Gover et al., 2019). It should not be forgotten, in fact, also from a perspective and future didactic transformation, that the school is, and should always remain, a social environment called to fulfill the primary role of training students in the pedagogical meaning of the term it holds, therefore, education is taken into account, but also the pivotal aspect of education for life. There are foundations on which a future school system must be built capable of guaranteeing an effective combination of traditional elements, devoted to the care of "student-student" and "student-teacher" relationships, and of those technologies aimed at enhancing students' digital skills and optimizing intangible resources, as well as the spatial and temporal conditions that these tools make possible to obtain (Dautbašić & Saračević, 2020). An optimal model in this direction needs time to be structured first, and then implemented, and everyone is called upon not to miss the opportunity for this unexpected and forced didactic transformation to become innovation: families, political institutions, principals, teachers, and students – they all have the moral obligation to commit themselves so that the innovations introduced are perfected and become innovative resources at the service of tradition. Unfortunately, as we still live in a time of pandemic, we are faced with various risks and uncertainties. Thus, there are no best practices or a single model for colleges and universities to follow. The education systems of countries around the world, including Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, faced various problems even before the pandemic, so they should see the COVID-19 pandemic as a chance to make radical changes to their education systems (Dervić & Bećirović, 2020).

The recommendation for future studies is to focus on encouraging the general public to establish successful strategies for dealing with current and future challenges in education, as well as raising awareness that changes in the education system are necessary, not because of COVID-19, but because of the inevitable changes the world is about to face in terms of digitalization and presumably the evolution of online education. Digitized learning should become a normal practice in regular circumstances. All educational institutions must be ready for the difficult path that will follow after the end of the pandemic, because their decisions will shape and direct the future of their students.

REFERENCES

- Akcijski plan za provedbu Nastave na Daljinu. (2020). mzo.gov.hr. Retrieved January 10, 2022, from <https://mzo.gov.hr/vijesti/akcijski-plan-za-provedbu-nastave-na-daljinu-srpanj-2020/3862>
- Atmojo, A. E. P., & Nugroho, A. (2020). EFL classes must go online! Teaching activities and challenges during COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. *Register Journal*, 13(1), 49–76.
- Bazić, J., & Minić, V. (2007). Marginalije o utjecaju informatike na promjene u obrazovanju. *Informatologia*, 40(3), 211–215.
- Bećirović, S., & Akbarov A. (2015). Impact of social changes on teacher's role and responsibilities in the educational system. *JoLIE – Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education*, 8, 21–35. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29302/jolie.2015.8.2>
- Bećirović, S., & Akbarov, A. (2016). Talent development through familial environment. *International Journal of Social and Educational Innovation (IJSEIro)*, 3(5), 7–24.
- Bećirović, S., Brdarević Čeljo, A., & Zavrl, I. (2019). Research into intercultural effectiveness in a multicultural educational milieu in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Economic research-Ekonomska istraživanja*, 32(1), 1336–1351.
- Bećirović, S., Polz, E. (2021). *Fostering Giftedness: Challenges and Opportunities*, Nova Science Publishers.

Catts, R., & Lau, J. (2008). Towards information literacy indicators.

Code, J., Ralph, R., & Forde, K. (2020). Pandemic designs for the future: perspectives of technology education teachers during COVID-19. *Information and Learning Sciences*.

Dautbašić, A., & Saračević, J. (2019). Teaching English language to students of diverse cultures. *Journal of Education and Humanities*, 2(2), 65.

Dautbašić, A., & Saračević, J. (2020). The Relationship Between Covid-19, Online Learning and Intercultural Education. *Journal of Education and Humanities*, 3(1), 53.

Dervić, M., & Bećirović, S. (2019). Native and Non-Native EFL Teachers Dichotomy: Terminological, Competitiveness and Employment Discrimination. *Journal of Language and Education*, 5(3), 114-127. <https://doi.org/10.17323/jle.2019.9746>

Dervić, M., & Bećirović, S. (2020). Prerogative of the Lexical Approach in Communicative Language Teaching, *European Journal of Education Studies*, 7(3), 1-13. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.3748039

Dimić J.V., (2013): Kompetencije učenika i nastavnika za 21. Stoljeće, *Acta Iadertina*, 10 (2013), 49-60, Zadar.

European Communities. (2007). Key competences for lifelong learning: European reference framework.

Foro, D. (2015). Profesionalne kompetencije nastavnika u suočavanju sa stresnim situacijama u školi (Doctoral dissertation).

Glazier, R. A. (2016). Building rapport to improve retention and success in online classes. *Journal of Political Science Education*, 12(4), 437-456.

Gover, A., Loukkola, T., & Peterbauer, H. (2019). Student-centred learning: approaches to quality assurance. EUA (European University Association).

Jarke, J. (2015). "Networking" a European Community: The Case of a European Commission E-government Initiative.

Jurčić, M. (2012). Pedagoške kompetencije suvremenog učitelja.

Kaden, U. (2020). COVID-19 school closure-related changes to the professional life of a K - 12 teacher. *Education Sciences*, 10 (6), 165. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/educsci10060165>

Karsenti, T., Poellhuber, B., Roy, N. and Parent, S. (2020). Digital technology and education in the time of COVID-19: between challenges and perspectives - Part 1. *International review of technologies in university pedagogy*, 17 (2), 1-4. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18162/ritpu-2020-v17n2-01>

Katavić, I., Milojević, D., & Šimunković, M. (2018). Izazovi i perspektive online obrazovanja u Republici Hrvatskoj. *Obrazovanje za poduzetništvo-E4E: znanstveno stručni časopis o obrazovanju za poduzetništvo*, 8(1), 95-107.

Kim, L. E. and Asbury, K. (2020). 'Like a rug had been pulled from under you': The impact of COVID - 19 on teachers in England during the first six weeks of the UK lockdown. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90 (4), 1062-1083. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12381>

Koroman, H. (2021). Online nastava: izazovi suvremenog obrazovanja (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pula. Faculty of Educational Sciences).

Lee, J. (2020). A neuropsychological exploration of zoom fatigue. *Psychiatric Times*. Spotted at <https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/psychological-exploration-zoom-fatigue>

Mahmood, S. (2020). Instructional strategies for online teaching in COVID - 19 pandemic. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 3 (1), 199-203. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.218>

Marković Krstić, S., & Milošević Radulović, L. (2021). Evaluating distance education in Serbia during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 79(3), 467-484. <https://doi.org/10.33225/pec/21.79.467>

Marković, M. R. (2009). Education through e-learning: Case of Serbia. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, 10(4), 313-319.

Martin, L., & Tapp, D. (2019). Teaching with Teams: An introduction to teaching an undergraduate law module using Microsoft Teams. *Innovative Practice in Higher Education*, 3(3).

Mašić, A., Polz, E. & Bećirović, S., (2020) The Relationship between Learning Styles, GPA, School Level and Gender. *European Researcher. Series A*, 11(1), 51-60. doi: 10.13187/er.2020.1.51

Medar, J., & Ratković, M. (2021). Primena informaciono-komunikacionih tehnologija u inkluzivnom obrazovnom kontekstu-iskustva nastavnika tokom pandemije COVID-19. *Vaspitanje i obrazovanje u digitalnom okruženju*, 109-113.

Palekčić, M. (2005). Utjecaj kvalitete nastave na postignuća učenika. *Pedagoški istraživanja*, 2(2), 209-233.

Picciano, A. G. (2017). Theories and Frameworks for Online Education: Seeking an Integrated Model. *Online Learning*, 21(3). Available at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1154117.pdf>

Popović-Čitić, B., Bukvić Branković, L., Kovačević-Lepojević, M., Paraušić, A., & Stojanović, M. (2021). Potrebe osnovnih škola u Srbiji tokom pandemije covid-19 u kontekstu prevencije rizičnih ponašanja učenika: perspektiva nastavnika: istraživački izveštaj.

Sekulić, D., Ostojić, D., Decelis, A., Jezdimirović, T., Drid, P., Ostojić, L., & Gilić, B. (2021). The Impact of Scholastic Factors on Physical Activity Levels during the COVID-19 Lockdown: A Prospective Study on Adolescents from Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Children*, 8(10), 877.

Song, H., Kim, J., & Luo, W. (2016). Teacher-student relationship in online classes: A role of teacher self-disclosure. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 54, 436-443.

Stojanović, D. (2020). Analiza realizacije učenja na daljinu u Srbiji za vreme pandemije virusa COVID 19.

Šušak, I. (2021). Izrada pravnih propisa u sustavu visokog obrazovanja u vrijeme pandemije COVID-19. *Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta u Splitu*, Vol. 58 No. 2, 2021. Split. Available at: <https://hr-cak.srce.hr/257293>

Urusa, S., & Malik, S. (2013). Image of an effective teacher in 21st Century Classroom. *Journal of education and Instructional. Studies in the World*, 3(4), 61-68.

Vasiljević, D. (2020). Report on ICT in Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In *Comparative Analysis of ICT in Education Between China and Central and Eastern European Countries* (pp. 45-62). Springer, Singapore.

Yaman, A. & Bećirović, S. (2016). Learning English and Media Literacy. *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research (IJIR)*, 2(6), 660-663.

REVIEW PAPER

ADAPTING DATA COLLECTION TOOLS FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN TIMES OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

¹Neha Jain , ²Katarina Brockova 

¹University of Applied Sciences Burgenland, Eisenstadt, Austria

²University of Economics, Bratislava, Slovakia

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Neha Jain, University of Applied Sciences Burgenland, Eisenstadt, Austria. E-mail: 1819001115@fh-burgenland.at

ABSTRACT

Over the last decades, qualitative research had gained increasing acceptance in studying experience of individuals and groups, events, process in phenomenon in diverse field of study like anthropology, sociology, health, and nursing, organizational and management, to name a few. Qualitative research encouraged an interaction between the researcher and the subject of study, with the researcher acting as an instrument of research and investigating the real-life experiences of the subjects under study. Qualitative data collection tools like field study, focus group interviews, observation, required a closer interaction between the researcher and the subject of study. However, in times of COVID-19 pandemic following the year 2019, several social restrictions to personal meeting, travel, and field visits were in placed internationally. Qualitative researchers were therefore required, by the needs of the time, to adapt the data collection and observation methods. Following a content analysis of the available scientific literature digitally, this study analyzed the changing landscape of qualitative data collection tools. This paper attempts to highlight how qualitative data collection tools can be adapted to the times during and post COVID-19 pandemic. With the help of tools like online video calls, asynchronous interviews, virtual reality devices and camera tours, alternatives to the conventional qualitative data collection tools could be identified. With benefits of time and cost saving offered by these alternative qualitative data collection tools, the author puts forward the relevance of these alternative tools not only in times of the COVID-19 pandemic but also in post pandemic times.

Keywords: COVID-19, Qualitative Research, Data Collection, Pandemic



MAP SOCIAL SCIENCES

Volume 2 / Issue 1

ISSN: 2744-2454/ © 2021 The Authors.
Published by MAP – Multidisciplinary Academic Publishing.

Article Submitted: 09 January 2022
Article Accepted: 30 January 2022
Article Published: 11 February 2022



Publisher's Note: MAP stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

<https://doi.org/10.53880/2744-2454.2022.2.1.18>



HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Jain N., Brockova K. (2022). **Adapting Data Collection Tools for Qualitative Research in Times of COVID-19 Pandemic**. MAP Social Sciences, 2(1), 18-27.
doi: <https://doi.org/10.53880/2744-2454.2022.2.1.18>



© The Author(s). 2021 **Open Access Article**
Creative Commons CC BY: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.



Introduction

The Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) disease, initially identified in the year 2019, and declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) to be pandemic in the year 2020, affected several spheres of the socioeconomic framework of global society. Individuals as well as organizations had to learn to adapt to working remotely, maintaining social distance, and adopting several measures to minimize the spread of the infectious disease. The field of qualitative research did not remain untouched by this pandemic. Face-to-face interaction with individuals and conducting field studies were restricted indefinitely. The qualitative researchers were left with two options, either postpone the qualitative research indefinitely or adapt the qualitative research projects to the changing times. Though a literature review of open-source publications, this paper aims to offer the challenges faced by the qualitative research in the times of COVID-19 pandemic and thereafter offers some suggestions for overcoming these challenges by adapting the data-collection tools to fit the needs of the time during and post the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background of the Study

This study was conducted in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the years 2020–2021, as a response to the social restrictions and their impact on qualitative research. The real objective of author's research at that time was to initiate a qualitative study, that involved collecting data from visits and face-to-face interviews. This required local and international travel as well as meeting research participants personally. However, when the original qualitative research was set to start, several social restrictions were in place across the globe as an attempt to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Travelling, conducting field visits, meeting people personally became difficult. The qualitative researcher at this time had two options, either to postpone the study indefinitely or to adapt the research to the changing global situation. For lack of clarity regarding when the social restrictions would end, the latter option was chosen. However, to adapt the research to the changing global scenario, a better understanding of the qualitative data collection tools was needed. The current study is an attempt to address this issue. Through this study, the author aims to highlight the diverse data collection tools that qualitative research offers, and

how some of these qualitative data collection tools can be adapted to the changing global landscape.

The scientific contribution of this study is that it reflects the needs of the times surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic when this research was conducted. Through a literature study, the author aimed at collecting the experiences and recommendations of scientific qualitative researchers, as to how qualitative research could be adapted to the changing global situation, where travel and personal contact became restricted and unpredictable. The author, a qualitative researcher, takes the findings from the scientific literature and adds own viewpoints to highlight the need for adapting the qualitative data collection and making it fit for times during and post the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was relevant at the time of conducting the research as the global community was still in the midst of the pandemic and no clear end to the social restrictions was foreseeable. By adapting the qualitative research and data collection tools to the changing times, the qualitative researchers may prevent putting their qualitative research on hold for an indefinite period of time.

Research Questions

Research questions guide the research, and same was the case with this study. This study was guided by the following two research questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by the qualitative research in times of COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How can the qualitative research be adapted to fit the times during and after COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Methodology

This paper reviews the literature from the open-source publications over the period surrounding COVID-19 pandemic, where the global community still found itself struggling with the social and economic impacts of the pandemic.

Following a literature review, the author offers an insight into the real time problem of COVID-19 pandemic, its impact on the qualitative

research methodology, especially concerning the collection of data for qualitative research. Even in the short span of one year following the identification of the COVID-19 disease, in the year 2020, several researchers brought the attention of the scientific community towards the challenges of doing qualitative research in times of COVID-19 pandemic.

Through a systematic content analysis of the open-source scientific publications as well as global organizations like International Labor Organization (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), this paper attempts to add to the pool of scientific literature in the field of qualitative research. Content analysis is used to determine patterns and trends in large volume of documents and data (Stemler, 2000). Content analysis allows for data collection across diverse sources and forms, like scientific publications, blogs, newspapers, etc. (Stemler, 2015). During the time when the data for this study was collected, the social restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic were still in place. Therefore, digital, and online data sources were the prime means of collecting data. The relevant text or key themes from the collected data were identified (Weber, 1990). Repeating ideas were identified in the key themes. These repeating ideas were then clustered into categories that formed the result of the analysis.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research aims to understand subjects and phenomena in their context specific setting (Walsh, 2015), focusing on generating insights based on real world settings (Golafshani, 2003). Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p.3.) stated that *'...qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them'*. These definition highlights the significance of the interaction between the qualitative researcher and the subject of study. Being close to the subject of study has been the essence of qualitative research.

Qualitative research differentiates itself from quantitative research in multiple ways. Where quantitative research focuses on hypothesis testing, operationalization of variables, measuring and quantifying the phenomenon at hand, qualitative

research focuses on theory building, narrative interviewing coupled with observation, to generate a theoretical explanation for the phenomenon under study (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Over the last two decades, qualitative research has gained increasing acceptance in different fields like health (Duffy, 1985), organizational management (Klenke, Martin, & Wallace, 2016), anthropology and ethnography (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), to name a few. Different approaches to qualitative research allow for addressing a variety of research concerns and research groups. Creswell and Poth (2016) highlight five approaches to qualitative research, as shown in figure 1. The selection of the qualitative approach when planning and conducting qualitative research is guided by the research issue at hand and the subject under study (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Figure 1:
Five approaches to qualitative enquiry



Source: Creswell & Poth (2016). Adapted by author to meet publication requirements.

Qualitative Data Collection Tools

'Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.3). Qualitative research allows for a wide variety of data collection tools to capture the phenomenon under study. Some of the commonly used data collection tools for qualitative research include surveys, interviews, and field studies (Babbie, 2013). Although the use

of additional data collection tools like observations, memos, photographs, and other such documents is also possible in qualitative research, a majority of contemporary qualitative research tends to use interviews and observations as primary data collection tools (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Most of the popular qualitative data collection tools involve a direct interaction between the subject of study and the researcher (Mayring, 2004). Where on one side data collection tools like surveys can be pursued remotely, face-to-face interviews and field studies require a direct contact between the researcher and the subject of the study in their natural setting (Klenke et al., 2016). Creswell & Poth (2016) highlighted some of the possible data collection tools as shown in figure 2.

Figure 2:
Qualitative data collection tools

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION TOOLS			
Interviews	Documents	Observations	Audiovisual material
> One on one interviews > Focus group interviews	> Research journal or diary > Personal documents like letters, photographs > Public documents like memos, blogs, records, archival information > Organizational documents like charts, plans, medical records > Autobiographies & biographies	> Observe as participant, or observer. Shift between observer and participant	> Record and examine photographs, videos > Examine social media data > Collect and examine sounds > Examine phone or computer-based messages > Examining possessions or rituals objects

Source: Created by author, based on Creswell & Poth (2016)

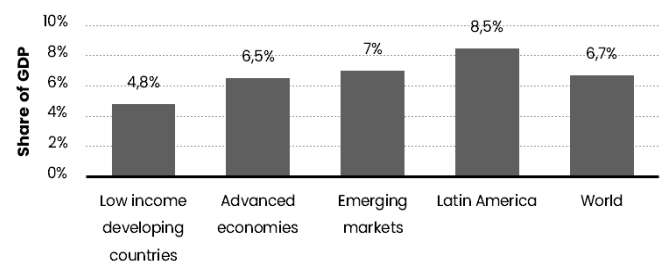
COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 is the disease caused by a new coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2) that was first identified in 2019 (WHO, 2020). As of 21st of January 2022, a total of over 340.5 million cases of infection and a over 5,5 Million deaths were reported globally (WHO, 2021). COVID-19 was declared as a public health emergency of international concern on the 30th of January 2020 and was declared to be a pandemic on the 11th of March 2020 (Clift, 2020).

From the time of identification of the COVID-19 disease, within a few months the pandemic emerged not only as a health crisis but also as a global economic and social crisis (ILO & OECD, 2020). As the economies around the world

tried to find the best possible way of reducing the infection rate and still supporting the economy, several restrictions were placed on the movement of the global population around the world (Khudik et al., 2020). In their report published in the summit of intergovernmental forum comprising of 19 countries and the European Union (G20), ILO, and OECD (2020) highlighted the negative economic aspects of the pandemic, few of them being the reduced mobility of the individuals, decline in the industrial production, the negative impact on the employment due to reduction in the number of jobs as well as the working hours. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the economies around the world suffered an unprecedented loss in the year 2020. Figure 3 shows the loss in GDP across selected geographical regions across the world (Statista, 2021). The path of global GDP recovery is faced by several challenges as the global society still grapples with the pandemic (ILO & OECD, 2020).

Figure 3:
GDP loss due to COVID-19, by economy, in the year 2020



Source: Statista (2021)

The COVID-19 pandemic not only restricted the global economic growth, but also affected various aspects of the human social life across the world. With the social restrictions in place, working and studying remotely became common (ILO & OECD, 2020). Although such measures offered protection from the disease and damped the spread of the virus, the negative side-effects of the social restriction measures also attracted the attention of the social scientists (Kuhfeld et. al, 2020; Patrick et. al, 2020; Pragholapati, 2020). The combined impact of the pandemic on the global social and economic fabric necessitated a collaborative response from diverse corners of the society to recover from the far-reaching effects that the global community was faced with.

Addressing the First Research Question – What are the challenges faced by the qualitative research in times of COVID-19 pandemic?

Qualitative research, by its very nature, involves an interaction between the researcher and the subject of the study, be it individuals or a location (Babbie, 2013; Reichardt & Rallis, 1994). Where on one side, interviews often requested a face-to-face, telephonic, or online interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, on the other side, a field study required the researcher to observe or even participate in the happening on the location of study (Babbie, 2013). With the restriction placed on the mobility of the individuals around the globe (ILO & OECD, 2020), however, this direct interaction in the qualitative research suffered an initial setback. The researchers were not able to travel, face-to-face interviews were not possible and field studies were also restricted completely or delayed indefinitely (Jowett, 2020). The content analysis of the collected data showed that several concerns for the qualitative researchers could be identified, namely:

- Identification of suitable research participants: The researchers need to reconsider the list of research participants who could contribute to the research, be willing to share information, and available for the discussion despite the restrictions caused by the pandemic (Global expansion, 2020).
- Substituting face-to-face interviews and still collecting relevant information: The key aspect of the qualitative face-to-face interviews has been for the qualitative researcher the possibility to build a rapport with the interviewee and to read between the lines, (Babbie, 2013). As this possibility was taken away due to the social restrictions, the researchers risked losing some information that could otherwise be collected in the face-to-face interviews (Global expansion, 2020).
- Absence of face-to-face focus group studies: Creating group interviews and discussions also became difficult in the times surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Getting several people in one room, exchanging their views, building on the response of the group members has been one of the key advantages of the focus groups (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). This advantage was however lost for some researchers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Global expansion, 2020).
- Time constraints due to availability of participants owing to family and work-related restrictions: The COVID-19 pandemic started as a health crisis and evolved as a socio-economic crisis affecting different aspects of human lives. People were working from home, children were studying from home, unexpected quarantines had to be gone through, health workers faced emergency longer working hours, to name a few of such changes in the lives of the global population. In some cases, this meant that the research participants were no longer available for the research due to some changes in their private or professional life. This in turn acted as a roadblock for the qualitative researchers, who had to re-evaluate their data collection and research participants (Global expansion, 2020).
- Prioritizing health of all participants and avoiding any risk of infection: COVID-19 is a contagious disease (WHO, 2020). When pursuing the qualitative research, be it going out in the field, meeting research participants or collecting data, the qualitative researcher was bound by several rules and regulations in place to ensure human safety. This on one side risked making the research cumbersome or put the research indefinitely on hold (Global expansion, 2020).
- Risking a dead end to the research (Gardner, 2020): Researchers reported having to adapt their qualitative research subject in order to avoid a dead end to the research that was enforced by the COVID-19 pandemic (Gardner, 2020). In the times of social distancing, lockdown, and quarantine during the global efforts to curtail the spread of COVID-19, some researchers were also forced to question as well as reassess the validity and relevance of their research subject at hand (Gardner, 2020; Jowett, 2020). The use of online tools gained increased acceptance. On one side the online tools offered a substitute for face-to-face meetings on the other side a complete dependence on the online tools revealed the infrastructural limitations of internet connections in some regions as well as posed some initial hurdles due to the limited training and exposure of individuals

to the online tools in some regions (Jowett, 2020).

- Ethical issues in research: An additional challenge that is faced by the qualitative research in times of COVID-19 pandemic is that of the ethical nature (Gardner, 2020). The research participants, if already under stress due to the family, health, or work-related situation during the pandemic, need to be re-considered as research subjects or at least the data collection has to be postponed to a later time (Jowett, 2020). One example to highlight this case would be to consider a health professional working extra hours in care of COVID-19 patients and thereby having little or no time or interest for participation in research. The increasing dependence of the researchers on the online sources also poses some ethical issues. When researching online, extra care is to be taken concerning the source of information and whether the selected online information may be used for the research purpose (Salmons, 2015; Jowett, 2020). Some institutions have their own set of ethical guidelines when using internet mediated research and such guidelines may not be ignored, especially in the times of socially distant research (The British Psychological Society, 2017; Jowett, 2020).

Looking at the above arguments, it could be summarized that the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the pursuit of qualitative research. However, instead of putting qualitative research projects on hold for indefinite period of time, the need of the time was to evaluate the available data collection methods and to adapt the research to the changing times. This is discussed in the next sections.

Addressing the Second Research Question - How can the qualitative research be adapted to fit the times during and after COVID-19 pandemic?

Faced by the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic, the scientific community of qualitative researchers has come together to address these challenges together. With a diversification of data collection tools and by using remote data collection methods like voice and video calls, the initial hurdle may be overcome to a certain extent (Salmons, 2020). Some open-source or also known as crowd-source documents worked upon

by several researchers coming together to share their experience recommend an initial overview of all possible tools at one's disposal before starting distant research during the pandemic (Crowd1, 2020; Crowd2, 2020). Following the content analysis and literature study, the methods listed below for data collection and for overcoming the hurdles posed by the pandemic were identified:

- Online tools: the need of socially distant research gave an impulse to the use of online tools for data collection in qualitative research. With significant information available in the form of webinars, online tutorials, podcasts, etc., it is easier than ever before to get to know these tools better, get trained in them and to use them for the purpose of research (Salmons, 2020). Online tools may lack the personal aspect of meeting the research participants face-to-face or visiting the site for field study, but they do offer few benefits as well. With the use of online tools, data collection may be done remotely, reducing the physical and mental stress associated with travel. Additionally, the costs of travel can also be reduced. These benefits are especially prominent in research projects where significant travel is involved. The same is true with online trainings, webinars, etc. These are often free of travel costs and often also available in different time-zones, thereby overcoming the geographical time-zone barrier.
- Video calls as substitute for face-to-face interviews: Platforms such as Skype (2021), Zoom (2021), Microsoft Teams (2021) to name a few, offer the possibility of having video calls with users spread across different countries and time-zones. With the use of such tools increasing during the pandemic, they have gained increasing acceptance as data collection tools, reducing travel costs, increasing flexibility between time-zones and these benefits are expected to be valid even after the pandemic. In the times surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the product offering of such tools for video calls saw an improvement and the quality of the service also improved (Felder, 2020).
- Diaries and journals may be a useful tool as a substitute for field study: If the researcher is not able to visit the site or meet the research participants physically, diaries and journals may offer an alternative (Crowd1, 2020). The

research participants at the field may be requested to keep diaries or journals, adding the relevant information on a regular basis. These documents can then be shared with the researcher at certain time intervals to evaluate the quality and relevance of the information. These data collection tools may help to a certain extent in overcoming the absence of field studies. It may be noted that the ethical issues need to be considered in detail when considering this method of data collection. When using the data in the diaries or journals, all personal information that may be used to identify the research participants should be treated with care and in accordance with the ethical policy and laws applicable for the researcher as well as the research participant.

- Asynchronous interviews: As an alternative to synchronous face-to-face interviews, asynchronous interviews over tools like email, text messages etc. offer a possibility of overcoming the limitations of availability of research participants at the place and time of interview. Care must however be taken to keep the conversation going, not dropping off the links and documenting all emails and text messages exchanged with the research participants (Debenham, 2007; Ferguson, 2009). Asynchronous interviews may sometime prove to be cumbersome as compared to focus interviews as instead of collecting the info in one focus group interview, the data collection is spread over multiple chats, emails, messages, etc.
- Using wearable cameras – This method has also been suggested as a substitute for the field studies, however care needs to be taken by considering the ethical issues before starting the data collection. In this case, research participants go around their usual day with wearable cameras that record the happenings. The recorded photos or videos can then be used by the researcher as data for the analysis. The ethical issues are critical, for example in the European Union, the General Data Protection Regulation offers a detailed set of dos and do-nots in terms of person-specific data collection (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2016) and these need to be considered before the onset of the data-collection.
- Group audio or video calls as a substitute for focus groups: This is an addition to the individual audio or video calls. Platforms such as Skype (2021), Zoom (2021), Microsoft Teams (2021) to name a few, offer the options for live group audio and video chats. With careful planning, selection of relevant questions and by moderating the online group calls to allow everyone to express their views, the researcher may even benefit from this low-cost version of the data collection tool (Stewart & Williams, 2005; Tuttas, 2015). The online tools also offer the benefit of reduced costs and stress related to travel. Additionally, the time saved by reduced travels could be further invested in data collection and analysis.
- Online videos for training and observational studies: In the absence of field studies, online tools such as Youtube (Youtube, 2021) may be used for observational studies. In the times of the COVID-19 pandemic, where the ethnographic studies have been hampered, such platforms may also help the researchers in observing different aspects of the society like protests, interest, new trends, problems, etc. (Brown & Laurier, 2017; Laurier, 2013). Youtube as data source has been used by researchers in studying diverse social issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, from health (Szmuda et. al, 2020) to education (Irawan et. al, 2020). Researchers, however, advise exercising caution regarding the source and quality of data (Li et. al, 2020).
- Using platforms on social media for research and data collection: Over the last few years, several social media platforms offer the users with a common interest to come together and share their ideas, updates, etc. The use of data collected from such platforms have seen increasing acceptance in contemporary literature in diverse fields like sports (Filo, Lock, & Karg, 2015), dietary habits (Middha, 2018), etc. Care needs to be taken to select the relevant information and to avoid fake news that may negatively affect the research results (Jordan, 2018; Kumar & Shah, 2018). Ngai, Tao & Moon (2015) and Pearce (2020) offer the conceptual framework for research using social media platforms.
- Online surveys: Surveys via online tools have been used to collect data for several

decades (Babbie, 2013). Online surveys for qualitative research have also been used earlier but their relevance has increased for reaching out to the research participants remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic (Braun et. al, 2020). The debate between the suitability of qualitative surveys and face-to-face interviews has been conducted several times in the scientific community. Especially for explorative studies, face-to-face interviews were considered suitable as they offered the possibility of asking probing questions and building a rapport with the research participants (Babbie, 2013). However, as conducting physical meetings and face-to-face interviews was hindered during the pandemic, qualitative surveys gained increasing importance in terms of data collection. Qualitative researchers highlighted the suitability of using a series of open-ended questions for qualitative online surveys in order to collect research relevant information for the analysis (Braun et. al, 2020).

Conclusion

The social restrictions faced by the global socioeconomic community have affected the scientific community in its pursuit of qualitative research. The social distancing measures aiming to reduce the spread of the infectious COVID-19 disease prevent a direct personal face-to-face interaction between the researcher and the subject or research. However, with the changing times, by reviewing the vast variety of the data-collection tools for qualitative research available currently, a researcher may find a suitable alternative. This paper aimed to offer an insight into few of such data-collection tools for qualitative research that may, when used with care and with regard to the ethical considerations, may speed up the data-collection process or may even reduce the cost of research by avoiding travel and pursuing the research via remote data collection tools.

References

- Auerbach, C. F., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative data: An introduction to coding and analysis*. New York: New York University Press.
- Babbie, E. R. (2013). *The basics of social research* (6th ed.). Andover; Belmont, California: Wadsworth.
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., Boulton, E., Davey, L., & McEvoy, C. (2020). The online survey as a qualitative research tool. *International journal of social research methodology*, pp. 1-14.
- Brown, B., & Laurier, E. (2017). The trouble with autopilots: Assisted and autonomous driving on the social road. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, pp. 416-429.
- Clift, C. (2020). Coronavirus: public health emergency or pandemic – does timing matter? https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/05/coronavirus-public-health-emergency-or-pandemic-does-timing-matter?gclid=CjwKCAiAxeX_BRASEiwAc1QdkYt0T-MyPsPxpG7xYJbqrR0R4jpEEy-C07UvmXyldhoNiiZLW74Q-XhoCji8QAvD_BwE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage.
- Crowd1. (2020). Doing fieldwork in a pandemic. Crowd sourced document, created by multiple authors. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cIGjGABB2h2qbduTgfqribHmog9B-6P0NvMgVuiHZC18/edit#heading=h.z8eug1cqk5lo>.
- Crowd2. (2020). LSE digital ethnography collective reading list shared doc – March 2020. Crowd sourced document, created by multiple authors. <https://zoeglatt.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/LSE-Digital-Ethnography-Collec-tive-Reading-List-March-2020.pdf>.
- Debenham, M. (2007). Epistolary interviews on-line: A novel addition to the researcher's palette.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The sage handbook of qualitative research*. Sage.
- Duffy, M. E. (1985). Designing nursing research: The qualitative-quantitative debate. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 10(3), pp. 225-232.
- Felder. (2020). The Rise of the Video Call: How COVID-19 has Changed the Way we Collaborate. uctoday.com/collaboration/video-conferencing/the-rise-of-the-video-call-how-covid-19-has-changed-the-way-we-collaborate/.

- Ferguson, R. M. (2009). The construction of shared knowledge through asynchronous Dialogue.
- Filo, K., Lock, D., & Karg, A. (2015). Sport and social media research: A review. *Sport management review*, 18(2), pp. 166-181.
- Gardner, B. (2020). Challenges of doing research in a pandemic: Reframing, adapting and introducing qualitative methods. *International journal of social research methodology*, 23(5).
- Global Expansion. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on qualitative research in education. <https://www.globalexansion.com/blog/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-qualitative-research-in-education>.
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The qualitative report*, 8(4), 597-607.
- ILO & OECD. (2020). *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on jobs and incomes in G20 economies*. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms_756331.pdf.
- Irawan, E., Ahmadi, A., Prianggono, A., Saputro, A. D., & Rachmadhani, M. S. (2020). Youtube channel development on education: Virtual learning solutions during the covid. *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology*, 29(4), pp. 2469-2478.
- Jordan, K. (2018). Validity, reliability, and the case for participant-centered research: Reflections on a multi-platform social media study. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 34(10), pp. 913-921.
- Jowett, A. (2020). Carrying out qualitative research under lockdown – Practical and ethical considerations. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2020/04/20/carrying-out-qualitative-research-under-lockdown-practical-and-ethical-considerations/>.
- Khudik, A., Mohaddes, K., Pesaran, M.H., Raissi, M., and Rebucci, A. (2020). Economic consequences of Covid-19: A counterfactual multi-country analysis. <https://voxeu.org/article/economic-consequences-covid-19-multi-country-analysis>.
- Klenke, K., Martin, S., & Wallace, J. R. (2016). *Qualitative research in the study of leadership* (2nd ed.). Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Kuhfeld, M., Soland, J., Tarasawa, B., Johnson, A., Ruzek, E., & Liu, J. (2020). Projecting the potential impact of COVID-19 school closures on academic achievement. *Educational Researcher*, 49(8), 549-565.
- Kumar, S., & Shah, N. (2018). False information on web and social media: A survey.
- Laurier, E. (2013). YouTube: Using third party video as research data. Unpublished research paper, University of Edinburgh. [Www.Ericlaurier.Co.Uk/Resources/Writings/Laurier_2013_Youtube_3rd_party.Pdf](http://www.Ericlaurier.Co.Uk/Resources/Writings/Laurier_2013_Youtube_3rd_party.Pdf).
- Li, H. O., Bailey, A., Huynh, D., & Chan, J. (2020). YouTube as a source of information on COVID-19: A pandemic of misinformation? *BMJ Global Health*, 5(5).
- Mayring, P. (2004). Qualitative content analysis. *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, 1, pp. 159-176.
- Middha, B. (2018). Everyday digital engagements: Using food selfies on facebook to explore eating practices. *Communication Research and Practice*, 4(3), pp. 291-306.
- Microsoft Teams. (2021). Microsoft. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>.
- Ngai, E. W., Tao, S. S., & Moon, K. K. (2015). Social media research: Theories, constructs, and conceptual frameworks. *International journal of information management*, 35(1), pp. 33-44.
- Patrick, S. W., Henkhaus, L. E., Zickafoose, J. S., Lovell, K., Halvorson, A., Loch, S., & Davis, M.M. (2020). Well-being of parents and children during the COVID-19 pandemic: A national survey. *Pediatrics*, 146(4).
- Pearce, W., Özkula, S. M., Greene, A. K., Teeling, L., Bansard, J. S., & Omena, J. J., (2020). Visual cross-platform analysis: Digital methods to research social media images. *Information, Communication & Society*, 23(2), pp. 161-180.

Pragholapati, A. (2020). COVID-19 impact on students.

Reichardt, C. S., & Rallis, S. F. (1994). The qualitative-quantitative debate: New perspectives. *New directions for program evaluation*, 61, pp. 1-98.

Salmons, J. E. (2015). *Doing qualitative research online*. Sage.

Salmons, J. (2020). When the field is online: Qualitative data collection. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swuTF7Q4gTs&t=2s>.

Skype. (2021). Microsoft. <https://www.skype.com/en/>.

Statista. (2021). Coronavirus: impact on the global economy. <https://www-1statista-1com-10018ec7i03e4.digibib.fh-burgenland.at/study/71343/economic-impact-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/>.

Stemler, S. (2000). An overview of content analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, 7(1).

Stemler, S. E. (2015). Content analysis. *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences: An Interdisciplinary, Searchable, and Linkable Resource*, pp. 1-14.

Stewart, K., & Williams, M. (2005). Researching online populations: The use of online focus groups for social research. *Qualitative research*, 5(4), pp. 395-416.

Szmuda, T., Syed, M. T., Singh, A., Ali, S., Özdemir, C., & Stoniewski, P. (2020). YouTube as a source of patient information for coronavirus disease (Covid-19): A content-quality and audience engagement analysis. *Reviews in Medical Virology*, 30(5).

The British Psychological Society. (2017). Ethics guidelines for internet-mediated research. [https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Ethics%20Guidelines%20for%20Internet-mediated%20Research%20\(2017\).pdf](https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Ethics%20Guidelines%20for%20Internet-mediated%20Research%20(2017).pdf).

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. (2016). Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation). *Official Journal of the European Union*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R0679&from=EN>.

The handbook of scholarly writing and publishing. (2012). *Journal of Chinese human resources management*, 3(2), pp. 160-163.

Tuttas, C. A. (2015). Lessons learned using web conference technology for online focus group interviews. *Qualitative health research*, 25(1), 122-133.

Weber, R. P. (1990). Basic content analysis. Sage.

Walsh, I. (2015). Using quantitative data in mixed-design grounded theory studies: An enhanced path to formal grounded theory in information systems. *European journal of information systems*, 24(5), 531-557.

WHO. (2020). Coronavirus disease.

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub>.

WHO. (2021). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Dashboard. https://covid19.who.int/?gclid=CjwK-CAiAxeX_BRASEiwAcIqdkQKTRzNLLP0fyQfDVdtGX-SeUMpw4U8I4hpPTMh79bzmNBUQ2dG3dvBoC-JVwQAvD_BwE.

Youtube. (2021). <https://www.youtube.com/>.

Zoom. (2021). Zoom video communications. <https://zoom.us/>.

MAP Social Sciences (MAPSS) is an international, multi-disciplinary, peer-reviewed journal published two times a year by **MAP – Multidisciplinary Academic Publishing**. The journal is a platform for publication of advanced academic research in the field of social sciences.

E-ISSN: 2744-2454

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

ELECTORAL PREFERENCES OF YOUTH VOTERS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

¹Sara Arslanagić , ²Marina Mitrović 

¹International Burch University, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

²International Burch University, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Sara Arslanagić, International Burch University, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. E-mail: sara.arslanagic13@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Understanding electoral decisions in voters are crucial, especially for parties that are rising and want to attract more voters. This study is focused on researching how different means of communication with political candidates as well as their education level, have a considerable impact on electoral preferences on youth voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through literature review on what determines electoral preferences of youth voters, interest group survey and analysis of the electoral indicators and official data resources, this research attempts to explain what influences youth voters to vote in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is shown that depending on what type the political campaign is and what it is trying to portray, it will have an influence on youth voters. Presidential elections and local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina take place every four years. Through this research, data from BiH 2015 presidential and 2020 local elections were used to answer the research question.

Keywords: Electoral preferences, Education level, Youth voters, turnout, Bosnia and Herzegovina elections



MAP SOCIAL SCIENCES

Volume 2 / Issue 1

ISSN: 2744-2454 / © 2021 The Authors.
Published by **MAP – Multidisciplinary Academic Publishing**.

Article Submitted: 15 February 2022
Article Accepted: 21 March 2022
Article Published: 22 March 2022



Publisher's Note: **MAP** stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Arslanagić S., Mitrović M. (2022). **Electoral Preferences of Youth Voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina**. MAP Social Sciences, 2(1), 28-37. doi: <https://doi.org/10.53880/2744-2454.2022.2.1.28>



© The Author(s). 2021 **Open Access Article**
Creative Commons CC BY: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.



INTRODUCTION

To elect and to be elected is part of any democratic process, which gives the right to citizens to decide on the future of a country, so decisions taken on the day of elections by voters are significant. Voters always have a decision to make based on a few candidates that are offered on the ballot, but where does their decision come from and what it is based on is the most important thing. Considering that we live in the 21st century, new platforms and ways of doing political campaigns are possible, and political parties are allowed to connect with potential voters throughout the world. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter give them the ability to publish everyday activities to connect with their voters as well as potential voters. Ways of communication such as Gmail and Hotmail provide them the ability to send a message with just one click creating a faster and more efficient way than sending letters by mail. Another way of communicating with voters and connecting with them is through the means of pamphlets as well as standing on the streets and directly interacting with them. This essay will analyze what best influences youth voters, meaning which way of communication influences their decisions when making electoral choices.

Presidential elections and local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina take place every four years. In 2012, during the local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 3 149 280 people had the right to vote, only 1 779 718 or 56,51% had voted. Out of the total voter turnout, only 21.73% were below the age of 30, or in other words, the youth. 1 415 832 or 78.27% of voters were above the age of 30. Out of the total number of voters, 877 088 or 49,28% were female, while 902 630 or 50,72% were male (IZBORNI POKAZATELJI 2002-2014. godina, 2015). This statistical information shows that the general turnout is low compared to other countries in Europe, but compared to the region, it is relatively the same, which indicates that only 56% of the overall population is deciding on the future of the state. Considering that over the years, more of the youth are given the ability to vote after reaching the age of 18, this can be shown through statistical results conducted by the "Centralna Izborna Komisija BiH" (Central Election Commission BiH), showing that in total there are 673,400 voters under the age of thirty and with the right to vote, whereas out of the total only 363.886 went out to vote. According to the election statistics of 2020 elections, 559.176 youth voters had the chance to vote. When we say youth voters by law this is people between the age of eighteen to thirty one. Out of the total youth voters number, a total of 287.641 of

them actually voted. That means that youth voter turnout was 51.44% which is the first time that the youth voter turnout percentage was this high (Izborni pokazatelj 2020. godina, 2021). This shows that youth voter turnout is rising, which means that political parties are using different methods to reach their voters and engage them. There is always room for improvement and this is what we will analyze.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers, throughout time, have made a correlation between education and voter turnout. The research focused on specifically youth voters have still not been conducted; therefore, the following research will allow us to understand what generally influences voters and to see if these same strategies have the same influence on youth voters, which will be the focus of this research paper. It has been shown through research that people with higher education have a higher propensity to vote than general voters (Chevalier & Doyle, 2012). This shows that through education, people's general knowledge is improved, leading to the observation that they are more aware of the political system and voting process. Education provides people with the basis for understanding the situation around them (Dautbašić & Bećirović, 2022; Mašić et al., 2020; Sinanović & Bećirović, 2016). It can be said that this makes students more politically active. The influence of education on voters has been a topic since the mid-nineteenth century, dating back to when John Stuart Mill had suggested a voting system in which voters were to be required a basic level of education in order to be eligible to vote, and that voters were grouped in order of the level of education (Bhue et al., 2014) This can be considered to be unjust and unfair what John Stuart Mill proposed because it creates a way of grouping within the society.

In India, a study was conducted to examine the effect of education on voting preferences; the study was done using voting records from the Election Commission of India (Bhue et al., 2014). The reason India was being examined is that it provides the best circumstances, first being the world's largest democracy having in total more voter turnout than in the United States, or the United Kingdom, and second, free and fair elections are held every five years (Bhue et al., 2014). The study conducted looked at various sections, do they choose better candidates, does corruption play a role as well as criminal records, does the candidates' wealth matter, does gender play a role. Their results showed that educated voters differ in choices when it spe-

cifically came to corrupt candidates and candidates that had criminal records; in those cases, educated voters did not vote for those candidates, whereas general voters did. When it came to the topic of gender, both general voters and educated preferred women candidates (Bhuc et al., 2014). When taking into account all aspects researched, the researchers proved that education does influence voter preferences.

In Denmark, a study was conducted that focused on whether political campaigns have an impact on voters (Hansen, 2008). Their results in 2007 showed that 47% of the voters decided during the three weeks of political campaigning what party they support (Hansen, 2008). In order to see the effect of political campaigns, they divided their research into six hypotheses, two that stood out are Civic Engaging and Memory Based Models, which were focused on voters in general. Their hypothesis for civic engagement is that political efficacy increases during the campaign and their hypothesis for the memory-based models is that the political campaign affects the voters as a function of their predisposition, political awareness, and political knowledge (Hansen, 2008). In their analyses, they confirmed the previous statement that education influences voter preferences. They also, with their hypothesis, show that campaigns do influence voter choices, as their statistical data showed that too. The memory-Based Model showed that when a message is portrayed by a political party, voters tend to fit in that message and allocate it in their predisposition, which still shows that a political campaign does indeed have a significant impact on voters.

Another study was done by two professors Macintosh and Tambouris (2009), in Copenhagen in 2009, and they focused their research on the use of Facebook in the Danish national election campaign in 2007. In their research, they asked two questions: What communication tools and channels do social network users use to interact with politicians, and what benefits do they expect? Does the political orientation of the candidate with whom interaction is sought to make a difference in the use of social networks by users? In order to answer their questions, they conducted an online survey that was oriented about the two candidates running for the office of Prime Minister. Two major candidates for the seat of Prime Minister in the 2007 Danish National Election were Ms. Helle Thorning-Schmidt and Mr. Anders Fogh Rasmussen. Both used Facebook as part of their campaign. In the survey, they picked 210 Facebook friends of both candidates and asked

each candidate three sets of questions:

- a. What is your relation to the knowledge of the candidate?
- b. Which digital communication do you have with the candidate?
- c. Which benefit do you expect to get from linking with the candidate? (Macintosh and Tambouris, 2009).

When it comes to the first question, from the survey results, they found out that 54% of respondents knew their candidates through a political party, 40% through Facebook only, and the rest 6% knew their candidate in another way. The second question shows that 57% of respondents digitally communicate with their candidates by Facebook, 13% of them by mail or skype, and 30% do not use digital communication to communicate with candidates. On the third question, 45% responded that they expect increased knowledge about their policy from linking with the candidate, 29% responded they expect visibility on the internet, 16% expect social prestige, and only 9% expect to influence their policy (Macintosh and Tambouris, 2009). When analyzing their research and considering that we live in a world where mass media is dominant, that the internet is available, we can see that Facebook indeed does influence voters and their opinions.

On the other hand, a study conducted in Croatia by a professor from the University of Zagreb was based on the role of television debates as a tool of campaigns for presidential elections in Croatia in 2005. In this study, he did the survey questioning 600 respondents who watched at least 2 or 3 TV debates during the campaign. In the survey, there were three questions: those questions asked simple questions such as why they watch television debates, what bothered them when they watched the candidates, and what was the impact on their choice of voting (Skoko, 2005). The results showed that generally, voters watched debates in order to increase their knowledge about those candidates and to inform themselves about their programs. The results showed that the majority were bothered by the behavior of the candidates in the studio. Whereas, when it came to the results of the impact on their choice, the majority answered that their preference and choice did not change (Skoko, 2005). This shows that political campaigns, such as television debates, do not change electoral preferences.

To conclude, according to research already conducted, political campaigns do have an impact on electoral preferences. Depending on what type the political campaign is and what it is trying to portray, they will have an influence. In cases such as Croatia, the sample questioned, watched television debates to inform themselves, yet their preference did not change, despite the dissatisfaction. In contrast, other researchers proved that education had an impact on electoral preferences, making a correlation between education and electoral choices. Unfortunately, as mentioned in the beginning, no research was conducted using youth voters specifically, but this research paper will try and research what influences youth voters to vote in BiH.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology applied in this article was both qualitative and quantitative. The literature review on what determines electoral preferences of youth voters, interest group survey with fourteen questions (62 participants) and analysis of the electoral indicators and official data mostly from Central Election Commission Bosnia and Herzegovina. The aim of our study is to understand the electoral preferences of youth voters in BiH and to further familiarize the youth about their possibilities in electoral choices and using the means of communication to connect and understand political candidates. The research question that is investigated is whether different means of communication with different political candidates and their educational level have an impact on electoral preferences among youth voters. This research hypothesizes that different means of communication with political candidates as well as their education level, have a considerable impact on electoral preferences on youth voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

To research the effectiveness of different means of direct contact on electoral preferences, it is necessary to define what and who we will measure. To begin, we must first define the critical element of this research: electoral choices, in democratic system elections, are held every four or five years for citizens to choose their representative or representatives in the government. Every citizen has a right to vote for his/her choice. Who they are going to choose is their electoral choice. When it comes to youth voters, there are few schools of thought on that subject. Some experts are claiming that youth is considered to be from the age of eighteen to the age of twenty-five, while others are stating that the youth is from the age of eighteen to the age of thirty-five, in Bosnia and Herzegovina youth voters are considered to be citizens between the ages of

eighteen, once they are of legal age, and thirty (IZ-BORNI POKAZATELJI 2002-2014. godina, 2015). If we take education as a variable, it impacts the level of understanding of a voter. There is a difference between educated voters and regular voters. Educated voters are considered to be more curious about the candidate's campaign program as they have achieved a certain level of education, such as finishing high school degrees and University. Whereas regular voters have a minimum level of education, which is a completed elementary school, as these are the cases in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federacija Bosne i Hercegovine, 2019). Therefore, we can measure the degree of education and its influence on electoral choices by collecting data of numerous choices amongst youth-educated and regular voters in order to distinguish whether or not it does correlate with electoral choices.

PARTICIPANTS

There were 62 participants of which 61,3% were female. 85,5% of the participants were in the age group of 18-30 where as the rest were 30 and above, our participants in the majority had a high school diploma and the second most frequent educational level was a bachelor's degree. Participants' descriptions can be seen in the table below.

Table 1:
Frequency Table of Participants' Descriptions

		Frequency	Percent
GENDER	Female	38	61,3
	Male	24	38,7
AGE	18-30	53	85,5
	30 and above	9	14,5
LEVEL OF EDUCATION	Bachelors	21	33,9
	Elementary school	1	1,6
	High school	32	51,6
	Master	7	11,3
	PhD	1	1,6
	Total	62	100,0

Measures

Methodology applied in this research relies on collecting and analyzing data. Through this research we used several different types of instruments for data collection like: questionnaire, structured observation and data and document content analysis. Data are defined as values, numbers and information and subsequently formed into conclusions. Further, data are collected from website of Central Electoral Commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, observing election indicators for the period covered by the research (2015 and 2020 local and presidential elections in BiH). The base of our research was a questionnaire designed to obtain participants' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, interests and opinions towards the electoral choices. We used the combination of Likert scale, semantic differential and interrogative construction method in the questionnaire. The scientific goal of the research is reflected in the analysis of how youth voters' decisions have been created.

Procedures

The survey was distributed to youth voters around Bosnia and Herzegovina. The researchers provided the participants with a brief explanation about the research as well as Likert – type questions as well as other types of questions. Participants were asked to carefully read each question and answer as truthfully as possible. It was important to highlight to the participants that their responses were anonymous and that this questionnaire was on a voluntary basis.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data gathered it was necessary to firstly screen the data. After that was done, SPSS was used to look into and create frequency tables for each question and also make correlations between variables. Data was also analyzed in a way to show the percentage of each answer to each question to show what was the most frequently chosen answer. In more detail results will be shown in the section below.

RESULTS

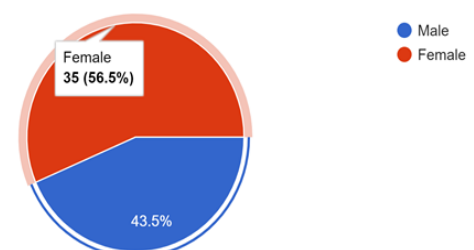
This research paper is a combination of two purposes because it is researching something that has not been researched in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is what influences youth voters to vote in Bosnia and Herzegovina, second, we are attempt-

ing to explain what influences youth voters to vote. The population and sampling in this research are all people between the ages of eighteen to thirty, with different ranges of education, both male and female, an amount ideal for this research would be fifty to a hundred people. An ideal research method would be an experiment, in which the population would be from several cities in BiH, with different backgrounds. A part of the experiment would be showing some television debates and interviews to our sample and seeing how that influences their voting. Lastly, we would create a Facebook group with a limited amount of sampled population, and post different types of posts of candidates. After all, three parts were conducted and fake elections would be organized to see how the sampled population would vote. Of course, education as one variable would be looked at when analyzing the results of the experiment. We believe that through this experiment, we could genuinely analyze what influences youth voters to vote. When it comes to unobtrusive research, we believe it is not the best way to conduct our research since we are researching something relatively new, there is no existing statistical data or historical data. Unobtrusive research is studying social behavior without affecting it (Babbie, 2014). We want to research social behavior by affecting it, which is quite the opposite. Because of the time restraint and budget restraint, we decided to conduct evaluation research, by using questionnaires to conduct our research. Through these questionnaires, the purpose is to evaluate what influences youth voters to vote in BiH. We believed that this is the best way to conduct our research, keeping our sampled population anonymous, gaining their trust, and finishing promptly.

The research consists of a questionnaire with fourteen questions. We expected to have fifty responses but managed to collect sixty two. The questions were short and easy to answer. Below you will find the questions and the data analysis. First three questions are explained under the section participants, and we will continue with:

Figure 1:
Gender preferences

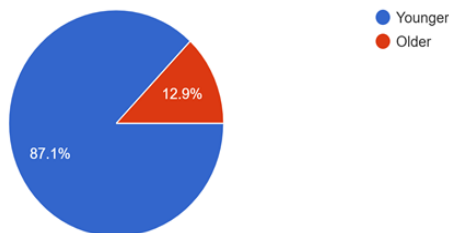
Do you prefer male or female political candidates?
62 responses



Here we tried to understand whether a male or female candidate had influence on one's choice. We can see that the majority of respondents preferred female candidates. Another mistake was not providing an option of "no preference"

Figure 2:
Age preferences

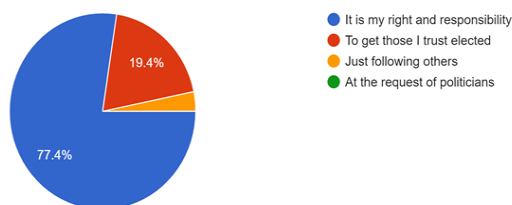
Do you prefer younger or older political candidates?
62 responses



Where as in this question, we can see that respondents preferred younger political candidates. Here we also could have provided an option "no preference" because some may not take into account one's age when deciding who to vote for.

Figure 3:
Reason for Voting

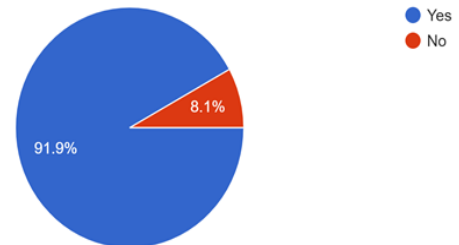
Why do you vote?
62 responses



With this question, we wanted to see the motivation of our sampled population. The majority believe that it is their right and responsibility to vote. Interestingly, no one said that it was at a request of a politician.

Figure 4:
Leader preferences

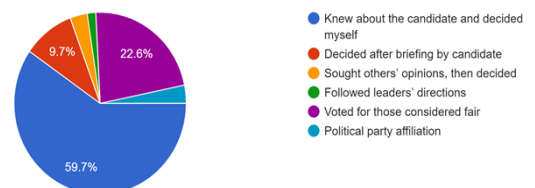
You like to see a new face as a leader?
62 responses



Here we tried to analyze whether our sampled population would rather see a new face as a leader, or do they prefer the current ones, and the majority agreed to see a new face.

Figure 5:
Decision Making

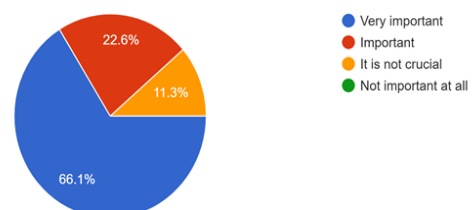
How do you decide which candidate(s) to vote for?
62 responses



Here we tried to understand what methods they use in order to decide which candidate they want to vote for. In this question, respondents were able to choose one answer. The main checked answer was that they knew the candidate and decided by themselves. The second most frequently checked answer was that they chose those ones that they considered was fair.

Figure 6:
Importance of Educational Level

How important is the educational level of the potential candidate you are voting for?
62 responses

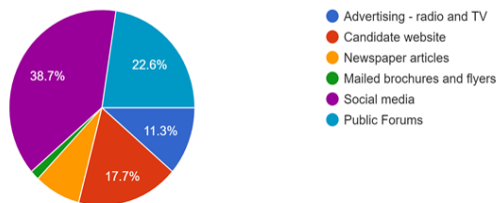


With this question, we wanted to see the respondents' opinions on the level of education of political candidates. The most frequent answer was "very important" and interestingly "not important at all" was not chosen by any respondents.

Figure 7:
Informing about a candidate

What do you feel is the best way to inform yourself about a candidate?

62 responses

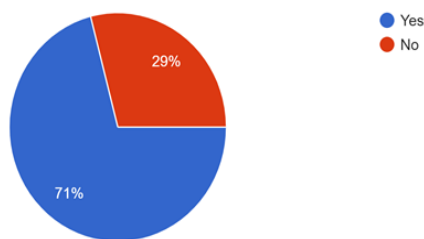


The most frequent way of informing was through social media. The second most chosen answer was going to public forums. With this question we wanted to see if the respondents directly go and inform themselves about political candidates.

Figure 8:
Importance of direct contact with candidates

Is it important to have direct contact with candidates?

62 responses

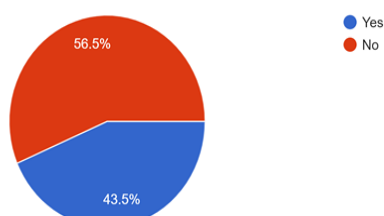


Here we can see that the majority of respondents believe that it is in fact important to have direct contact with political candidates.

Figure 9:
Public Forum

Do you go to public forums on specific topics that interest you?

62 responses

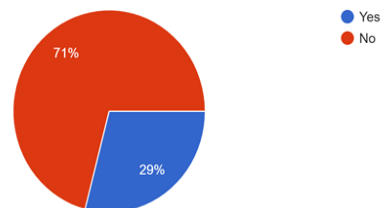


Here we can see that respondents in majority do not go to public forums on specific topics. The difference between is not drastical but still it exists.

Figure 10:
The ethnic identity

Is the ethnic identity important in deciding which candidate to vote for?

62 responses

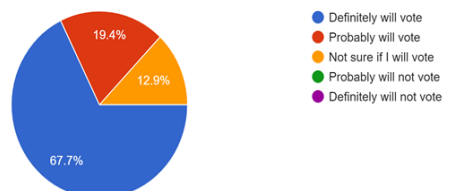


With question 13, we wanted to see whether ethnic identity had an influence on voters' choices. Here we can see that the majority said that ethnic identity was not important to them when deciding for a political candidate.

Figure 11:
Voting in the upcoming elections

How likely is it that you will vote in the upcoming elections?

62 responses



Our last question was to see whether the respondents will go and use their right to vote in the 2022 elections. Here we can conclude that the majority said they will vote and it is important to highlight that no respondent answered that they won't.

Through our SPSS analysis we concluded that 55.5% of women respondents have a high school degree. We also found that 69.8% of youth voters (18–30) will definitely vote in the upcoming elections. Another finding is that 69.8% of youth voters (18–30) responded that ethnic identity was not important to them when deciding for which candidate to vote for. What can be seen throughout the results is that the hypothesis that was set was proven to be correct. It can be noticed that participants in fact do care about whether political candi-

dates have an educational degree and which one it is. This shows that youth voters are more prone to vote for those participants with a high education degree. When it comes to different means of communication between youth voters and political candidates it can be seen that youth voters want to have some sort of communication, whether that is through public forums or through the internet, we can assume that youth voters feel noticed and represented if they can express their opinions to their political candidates and when they do so that they are more likely to vote for those candidates that provide various platforms for them to do so. Therefore we can conclude that youth voters like to have a one on one communication with their potential candidates as well as that the educational level of candidates dictates for who they will vote for to represent them and their beliefs at different levels of the political system.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Like in the previous section, where we have introduced results from different researches throughout time (from India and Denmark) and where researchers have made a correlation between education and voter turnout, this paper also has shown significant influence of the voter's education level on their decisions and electoral choices. The research conducted supports research results from previous conducted research mentioned in the literature review, which will briefly be addressed throughout the discussion. Generally, it has been shown that higher education leads to higher voter turnout and influences them by believing that their decision and opinion is important in creating a political environment. It can be concluded that higher education also leads to higher social and self awareness (Bećirović & Akbarov, 2015; Yaman & Bećirović, 2016), as well as political and social responsibility. On the other hand, during their voting decisions, young voters have shown preferences toward political candidates with higher education levels. Ethnic identity, for the very same university educated group of participants in this research questionnaire, not only is not a decisive factor but it is not a factor almost at all. Interaction with political candidates through different means of communication (social networks or open public debates) on the other hand tends to be a crucial factor for young voters. In the era of social networks, it is imposed as logical that this way of communication with candidates is the favorite of young voters, and the results proved that fact. When taking into account the research conducted in Copenhagen we can see that there is a correlation between these two types of

research done (Macintosh and Tambouris, 2009). Both respondents in BiH and Copenhagen in the majority agreed that the use of social media is a tool used to contact and learn more about the political candidate. On the other hand, it can be noted that like in the research conducted in India, education in both the respondents and in political campaigns make a big impact in electoral preferences (Bhue et al., 2014). Meaning that the higher the educational level the higher the chances are that respondents will choose a candidate with a higher education level because it is believed that they are more likely to not be involved in corrupt ideas. On the other hand, respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not engage a lot with their candidates or learn about their candidates through television. This shows that those in Croatia use television debates to learn more about their candidates' opinions and beliefs and in BiH that is not the case even though a small percentage of them do. The research conducted in Denmark shows that both education and political campaigns have an influence on electoral preferences, therefore it can be concluded that the research conducted in BiH also proves that both education and other means of communication affect electoral preferences in youth voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Hansen, 2008).

Our hypothesis stated that education and different means of direct contact with voters do have an influence on youth voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In fact, education significantly impacts willingness to communicate (Rizvić & Bećirović, 2017). We conducted two types of research, one which would show that the independent variable, which is election, has different means of direct contact with youth voters. This experiment would have been conducted in different cities of the country with visual aids, considering the time restraint and budget needed to conduct this, we did not proceed to examine the influence of this independent variable. In order to prove that the independent variable education has an influence, we made a questionnaire, which we enclosed above. The results showed that education does have great influence on youth voters and what they would preferably choose as their candidate or political party.

If we were to get the chance to develop this research further, we would fix the questionnaire and get more responses, as well as perform our experiment. A limitation in our research and suggestion for further research would be to ask in the questionnaire from where in BiH our respondents are, which we believe was one of our biggest mistakes in the overall questionnaire. If the research

were done as planned, it would have supported our overall research paper and logically supported our hypothesis, as we believe that a questionnaire and experiment were the two critical elements into truly understanding whether education and political campaigns have an influence on youth voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nevertheless, out of the respondents that answered the questions to our questionnaire, we can see that according to them, education does have an influence, that those with higher education pay attention and inform themselves about candidates and political parties. Another relationship we found during our analysis of the data was that most of our respondents that were under the age of 30, preferred to be informed through social media. This relationship might have been useful to go more in depth with and analyze whether social media was one of the factors that guide young voters' preference.

REFERENCES

- Arbuckle, J. L. (2016). *IBM SPSS Amos 24 User's Guide*. IBM Corp. and Amos Development Corp
- Atkin, C. K., & Gantz, W. (1978). Television News and Political Socialization. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 42(2), 183.
- Babbie, E. (2014). *The practice of social research*. Cengage Learning
- Bećirović, S., & Akbarov A. (2015). Impact of social changes on teacher's role and responsibilities in the educational system. *JoLIE – Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education*, 8, 21–35. <https://doi.org/10.29302/jolie.2015.8.2>
- Bhue, G., Rao, M., Subramanian, K., and Tantri, P. (2014). *Does education affect voting preferences? Evidence from voting records of Indian elections*. <https://www.isid.ac.in/~epu/acegd2014/papers/KrishnamurthyVSubramanian.pdf>
- Bond, Robert M., Fariss, Christopher J., Jones, Jason J. (2012) A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization. *Nature* 489, 295–298 <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature11421>
- Byrne, G. C., & Peuschel, J. K. (1974). But who shall I vote for county coroner? *Journal of Politics*, 36, 778–784.
- Calda, D. (2016). The voting preferences of selected voters in the city of Calapan for 2016 national and local elections: a descriptive study.
- Chevalier, A., and Doyle, O. (2012). *Schooling and Voter Turnout: Is there an American Exception?* Institute for the Study of Labor.
- David, C., & Legara, E. (2015). How voters combine candidates on the ballot: The case of the Philippine senatorial elections. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 29(3), 70–94. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edv041>
- Dautbašić, A., & Bećirović, S. (2022). Teacher and Student Experiences in Online Classes During COVID-19 Pandemic in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. *MAP Social Sciences*, 2(1), 9–17. <https://doi.org/10.53880/2744-2454.2022.2.1.9>
- Federacija Bosne i Hercegovine, V. (2019). *Osnovnoškolsko obrazovanje | GC FBiH*. Gc Fbih.gov.ba. <http://www.gcfbih.gov.ba/osnovnoskolsko-obrazovanje>
- Garzia, D., & Viotti, F. (2012). Party identification, leader effects and vote choice in Italy, 1990–2008. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270267583_Party_Identification_Leader_Effects_and_Vote_Choice_in_Italy_1990-2008
- GRBEŠA, M. (2005). *To What Extent and in What Ways do Election Campaigns Matter?*. Politicka Misao,
- Hansen, K. (2008). *The Effect of Political Campaigns – Overview of the research Online Panel of Electoral Campaigning (OPEC)*. University of Copenhagen, Department of Political Science.
- Harder, J., & Krosnick, J. A. (2008). Why Do People Vote? A Psychological Analysis of the Causes of Voter Turnout. *Journal of Social Issues*, 64(3), 525–549.
- Hazarika, B. (2015). Voting behavior in India and its determinants. IOSR-JHSS <http://www.iosr-journals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol20-issue10/Version-4/E0201042225.pdf>
- IZBORNI POKAZATELJI 2002–2014. godina. (2015). Sarajevo: Centralna Izborna Komisija.

- IZBORNI POKAZATELJI 2021. *Izborni pokazatelj 2020. godina*. Sarajevo: Centralna Izborna Komisija Bosne i Hercegovine,
- Lenz, G. (2012). Follow the Leader? How Voters Respond to Politicians' Policies and Performance. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 77, 637–640. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nft014>
- Macintosh, A. and Tambouris, E. (2009). *Electronic Participation: First International Conference*. Austria, 101–111,
- Mackie, G. (2011). Why It's Rational to Vote. *Rationality, Democracy, and Justice*, 21–49.
- Mašić, A., Polz, E. & Bećirović, S., (2020) The Relationship between Learning Styles, GPA, School Level and Gender. *European Researcher. Series A*, 11(1), 51–60. doi: 10.13187/er.2020.1.51
- Muralidharan, S., & Sung, Y. (2015). Direct and Mediating Effects of Information Efficacy on Voting Behavior: Political Socialization of Young Adults in the 2012 U.S. Presidential Election. *Communication Reports*, 29(2), 100–114.
- Popkin, S. (1994). The reasoning voter: Communication and persuasion in presidential campaigns. *Contemporary Sociology*, 21, 26–46. doi:10.2307/2075855,
- Rizvić E., & Bećirović, S., (2017). Willingness to Communicate in English as a Foreign Language in Bosnian-Herzegovinian EFL Context. *European Researcher. Series A*, 8(3), 224–235. doi: 10.13187/er.2017.3.224
- Rogers, T., Fox, C. R., & Gerber, A. S. (2012). Rethinking Why People Vote. *The Behavioral Foundations of Public Policy*, 91–107.
- Sinanović, J., & Bećirović S. (2016). The Determinants of Lifelong Learning. *European researcher. Series A*, 103(2), 107–118. doi: 10.13187/er.2016.103.107
- Skoko, B. (2005). *Uloga televizijskih sučeljanja u predizbornoj kampanji za predsjedničke izbore – hrvatska iskustva 2005*. Politicki Misao.
- family influence votes?" BBC News. 1 May 2020. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/election_2010/8622748.stm
- Zhu, Claire. (2021). *A Study for Improving Youth Voter Participation*. APSA Preprints.
- Yaman, A. & Bećirović, S. (2016). Learning English and Media Literacy. *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research (IJIR)*, 2(6), 660–663

Stamp, Gavin. "Election: How do friends and