# Pomáhajúce profesie

UNIVERZITA KONŠTANTÍNA FILOZOFA V NITRE

# POMÁHAJÚCE PROFESIE

Ročník 7
Číslo 1

2024

# OBSAH

# EDITORIAL

Vážené čitateľky a vážení čitatelia,

predkladáme vám prvé tohtoročné číslo recenzovaného vedeckého časopisu Pomáhajúce profesie. Cieľom časopisu je prinášať vedecké poznatky z odborov psychológia, sociálna práca, ošetrovateľstvo a urgentná zdravotná starostlivosť, a tým podporovať rozvoj vedných disciplín a kvalitu výskumu, vzdelávania a praxe v odboroch.

Aktuálne číslo prináša štyri štúdie – dve z odboru sociálna práca a dve z odboru psychológia – ktoré reprezentujú pestrosť tém aj metodologických prístupov. V prvom článku kolektív autorov ponúka prehľad literatúry v téme kolektívne zmocnenie, ktorá u nás zatiaľ nie je dostatočne výskumne reflektovaná. V druhej štúdii prezentuje autorka výsledky kvalitatívnych interview o vnímaní rizika s participantkami so skúsenosťou neplánovaného tehotenstva v adolescentnom veku. Tretia štúdia prináša výsledky overovania vzťahov medzi kritickým myslením, digitálnou gramotnosťou a používaním sociálnych sietí u študentov. V poslednom článku sa čitatelia môžu zoznámiť s metódou reflexie sústredenej v tele, ktorá môže slúžiť nielen výskumníkom pracujúcim fenomenologickým prístupom, ale aj pomáhajúcim profesionálom v procese psychoterapie.

S aktuálnym číslom časopisu Pomáhajúce profesie otváramе už siedmy ročník jeho vydávania. Naša ambícia je stále rovnaká – dbať na kvalitu publikovaných príspevkov, ponúknuť priestor rozmanitým paradigmám, širokým témam a rozličným perspektívam, a v neposlednom rade inšpirovať dianie v pomáhajúcich profesiách.

Nitra, jún 2024                                                                 Jana Turzáková

# EMPOWERMENT – THEORY, HISTORY AND CURRENT SITUATION IN SOCIAL WORK: LITERATURE REVIEW

**Ľuboš Kminiak, Zuzana Senáriková, Miloš Candrák, Michal Kozubík**
Department of Social Work and Social Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences and Health Care, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra
zsenarikova@ukf.sk, mcandrak@ukf.sk, mkozubik@ukf.sk

*Abstract:* Empowerment, a multidimensional social process that helps people get control over their lives, has not yet been analysed in literature review studies in the Slovak Republic. The objective of the present study is to provide literature review of foreign professional literature on this concept. We used the literature sources available in the Web of Science (WoS) database. The objective was to quantitatively analyse the papers in the WoS database published from 1992 to 2023. In the defined period, 637 professional papers on "Collective Empowerment in Social Work" were published. Up to 92 papers were linked directly to social work; they were cited 1,175 times in total. Using the methods of narrative literature review and content analysis, we summed up knowledge about empowerment and collective empowerment. Another objective was to depict historical development of the concept. The literature available suggests the need for greater scientific focus on the concept. In the future, it would be beneficial to carry out literature reviews of research papers focusing on the effects of empowerment approach and examples of good practice in various countries.

*Keywords*: Empowerment. Collective empowerment. Concept history. Empowerment in practice.

## INTRODUCTION

The paper summarises the views of authors of scientific professional articles, mainly of foreign origin, on the concept of empowerment, which has not yet been analysed in literature review studies in the Slovak Republic. It is a fundamental concept that occurs directly in the definitions of social work. The lack of attention paid to the concept may be caused by the inconsistent translation of the English expression *empowerment*. It is translated differently in different cultures and languages. In the Czech literature, for example, an expression splnomocňujúci prístup can be found. In the Slovak literature, both the Slovak equivalent zmocnenie or the original English form, empowerment, are used.

In addition to individual and collective empowerment, the concept is usually found in literature in relation to economic, political, cultural, and social empowerments. These areas, however, are often intertwined in practice. Economic empowerment seeks to ensure that people acquire adequate skills, abilities, sources, and access to sustainable and safe incomes necessary for their livelihood (Luttrell et al., 2009). Political empowerment relates to groups' abilities to analyse and mobilise, which results in collective work necessary for change. The change includes an attitude towards the status of citizens, claiming their rights, and elimination of generational poverty (Piron, Watkins, 2004). Cultural empowerment is linked with defining norms and rules to recreate culture

and symbolism. Such empowerment may include focusing on minority rights using their culture as a baseline for their empowerment (Luttrell et al., 2009).

Furthermore, Martinez (2022) identifies environmental, gender and digital empowerments. Environmental empowerment focuses on education and empowerment of individuals and communities to participate in environmental protection. Levická (2022) points out the current trends towards reflecting environment in the context of social work and the role of empowerment in it. The aim of gender empowerment is to solve gender inequalities and support gender equality. It includes efforts to challenge traditional gender roles and improve access to education and health care for all the genders. With the increasing importance of technology in the digital world, digital empowerment focuses on providing access to digital resources, digital literacy, and bridging the digital gap.

More attention has been paid to the concept in foreign professional literature. The first hints can be found in the works by Freire (1970). However, empowerment appeared even earlier, in the 1960s, most likely in connection with government anti-poverty programmes (Craig, 2002). Since then, the profession has faced multiple challenges, and the concept has developed. It has always related mainly to oppressed and marginalised populations which call for social change the most.

The Office of Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society (2021) has tried to define the concept and refers to empowerment as a process aimed at increasing the abilities to act, make decisions about self, and achieve goals through social and political changes in disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Empowerment is a very complex concept; therefore, it is questionable if the definition provided is sufficient.

Analysing the professional literature, we also encountered an opinion that the exact definition of empowerment contradicts the context of empowerment itself and that empowerment can only be defined in the context of specific cases. Page and Czuba (1999), however, agree that collective empowerment is a multidimensional social process that helps people gain control over their lives.

In general, there is an opinion in professional literature that individual change is necessary for community and social change and community empowerment. Individual change becomes a bridge towards community connectedness and social change. To bring about change, change must first happen at the individual level, so that individuals can become partners in solving complex problems they face as individuals. This opinion is given also by Mayo (2000).

According to Payne and Reith-Hall (2019), social workers also need to focus on a process of change and point out the misconception that collective empowerment may sometimes be imposed as a basic building block for structural changes. Collective empowerment is a broad and very compelling positive concept that affects social work practice. An increase in the number of clients in the involvement in movements for the defence of their rights owes a lot to the ideas of empowerment. Empowerment has developed as an overarching and conceptually coherent concept for the performance of practice. It is present in many methods, from cognitive behavioural therapy to crisis intervention. The principle of empowerment has become one of the key concepts of several social work theories, especially anti-oppressive approaches, feministic theories, and ecosocial approaches (Mátel, 2017). Adams (2008) states that empowerment has different meanings in different areas. It is a dynamic concept that develops and changes according to the experiences of individuals implementing it in practice.

Practical application of acquired knowledge is always a difficult task. Due to various definitions of the concept, it is problematic to define effects empowerment has in practice. In foreign literature, there are several studies (Sjöberg et al., 2015; Li-yu Song (In Payne, Reith-Hall, 2019); Mørck, 2011; Hardina, 2006), or descriptions of practical experiences with introducing the concept of

empowerment in practice and its consequences. In general, however, the studies focus more on empowerment outcomes than on the process of empowerment itself.

The objective of the present study is to perform quantitative analysis of sources available in the Web of Science database on the said issue in the context of social work. The second objective is to introduce a theoretical framework of empowerment and its collective form. The third objective is to depict the historical development of empowerment.

## METHODS

Considering the objective of the present study, we decided to use a method of content analysis that focuses on interpretation, extraction, categorisation, and further analysis of concepts (Steinerová, 2015). Furthermore, we used a method of a narrative literature review. It is used to identify information that has already been published on the issue, and to present an overview of opinions, theories, and experiences to offer a comprehensive picture on the concepts of empowerment and collective empowerment and their history in social work.

### Sample

To meet the objectives, we used the Web of Science Internet database to search for professional literature from October 2021 to March 2022. The Web of Science is an online academic platform that has provided access to more than 10,000 professional journals, including science, social sciences, humanities, and arts supporting 256 disciplines since 1990 (Web of Science, 2023).

### Data collection

The first objective was quantitative analysis of publications on collective empowerment in social work in the Web of Science. The database offers search for documents in multiple databases, such as Web of Science Core Collection, Current Contents Connect, and others.

We searched for scientific publications using the keywords empowerment, collective empowerment, and empowerment history (in English version). Then we found and analysed primary sources of the found publications.

### Analysis and processing

Besides the said keywords, we searched for the phrase "collective empowerment in social work" in all the databases and collections. We focused on categories, year of publication, country of publication, and number of citations of the publications. The analysis results are shown in the graphs below and valid as of 1.12.2023.

## RESULTS

The findings are presented in three parts. The first part analyses publications on collective empowerment in social work in the Web of Science database. The second part focuses on summing up the findings on empowerment and collective empowerment. The third part includes the overview of the historical development of empowerment.

### Search results in the Web of Science Internet database

The first objective was to perform quantitative analysis of publications on collective empowerment. We analysed the phrase *"collective empowerment in social work"* in the Web of Science Internet database. The results were valid as of 1.12.2023. The search findings included 637 results published from 1992 to 2023. Graph 1 shows the areas with the highest frequency of publications.
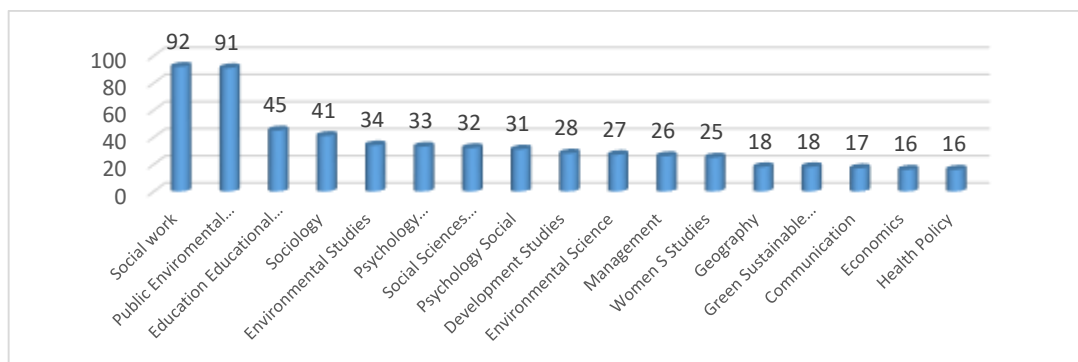
*Graph 1* Number of publications by categories (Source: Web of Science, 2023)

The search results included in the category "Social Work" were the most frequent and made up approximately 14.44 % of all the results. Graph 2 shows the number of publications by year of publication. It also shows that the results of the searched concept in social work were published from 1995 to 2023. Most of the publications (13) were published in 2019.
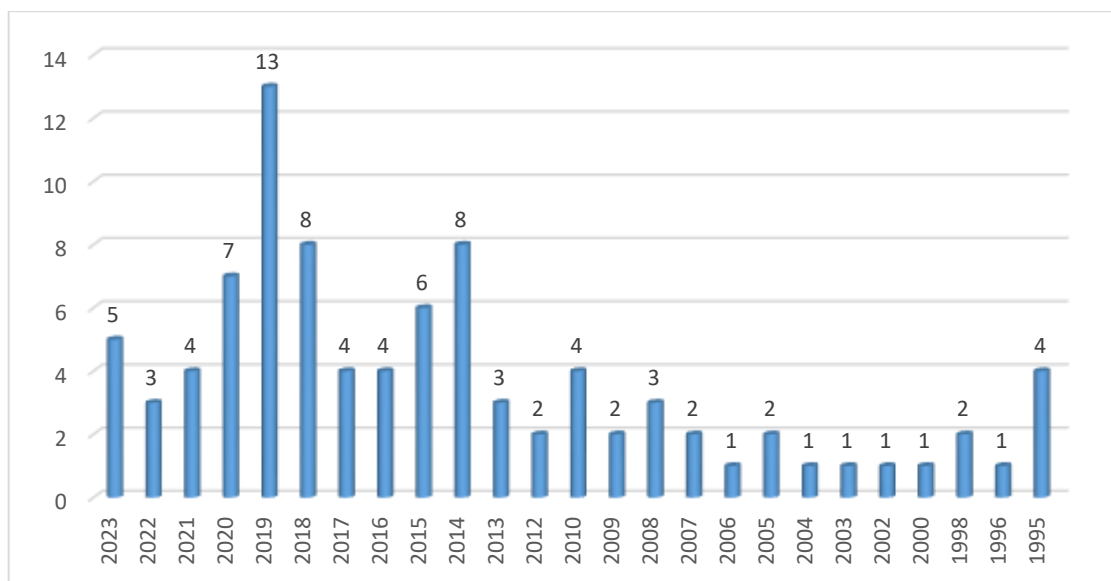


*Graph 2* Number of publications by year of publication (Source: Web of Science, 2023)

Graph 3 shows number of publications by country of publication from 1995 to 2023.
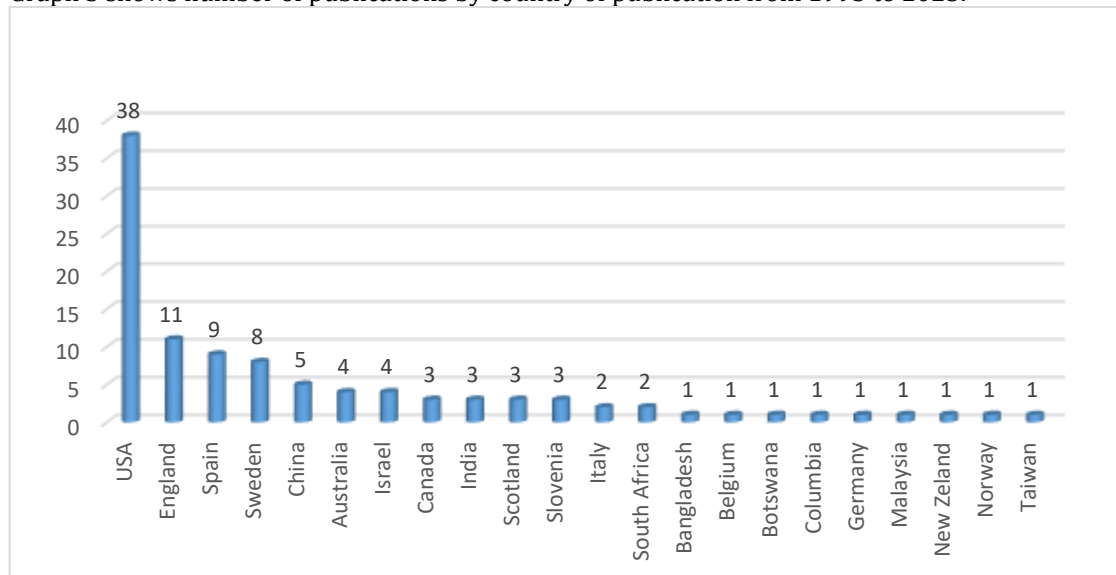


*Graph 3* Number of publications by country of publication (Source: Web of Science, 2023)

Graph 3 shows that most publications (38) were in the USA. England follows, by a relatively large margin, with 11 publications. The Web of Science database offered the result analysis according to which 90 results were articles, two were review studies, one was a chapter in a book, and one was the proceedings. According to the citation analysis offered by the database, 92 publications were cited up to 1,175 times.

**Empowerment and collective empowerment**

Empowerment is a process that promotes persons' determination to make use of their potential in their personal, community and social lives by addressing the issues they consider important (Page, Czuba, 1999).

In Slovak literature, the concept of empowerment is used to label:
- A process of changing power relationships using collective action,
- A process of collective awareness of social injustice, and
- Community and individuals' ability to demand change. Changes may occur at the levels of individuals and families, communities, or even entire political community in various areas (political, social, economic, or legal) (Úrad splnomocnenca vlády SR, 2021).

According to Dalrymple and Burke (1995), a shift from pathologizing individuals to increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power is one of the benefits of the concept of empowerment. Payne and Reith-Hall (2019) perceive empowerment as an intellectual and chaotic concept. According to them, it is a controversial concept of social transformation and change in the relationship between the rich and the poor. On the other hand, discussions about the concept of empowerment also focus on psychology of personality change. According to them, the concept may be used to interconnect socially excluded persons and oppression within the analysis of global socioeconomic development and a broader socioeconomic structure. Through empowerment, clients gain the power to make decisions about their lives and act in the three main ways:

- Eliminating social and personal barriers,
- Increasing persons' abilities and self-confidence, and
- Shifting power to the powerless.

Page and Czuba (1999) support this opinion. However, they ask a question that results from various definitions: Is empowerment a theory, a process, or something even broader that connects these two? According to them, a process of empowerment may be compared to a road that develops and widens. Martinez (2022) states that social workers implementing empowerment theory use a five-step framework:

- Problem identification,
- Defining strengths,
- Setting goals,
- Intervention implementation, and
- Evaluation.

Lee (In Page, Czuba, 1999) suggests that empowerment is neither a theory, nor a process, but rather a diversity of conceptually coherent approaches and practice-based social work. Craig (2002) defines empowerment as the creation of sustainable structures, processes, and mechanisms, over which local communities have an increased level of control and through which they have a measurable impact on the public, social and political spheres. Eyben et al. (2008) support this opinion and perceive empowerment as taking steps to change society so that a community has its own place in it which is respected and recognised by the society and lives in it according to the conditions it wants and not the conditions dictated by others.

The concept of empowerment in social work assumes that clients themselves know their situation best, and that people, even in situations of powerlessness, have the potential to change their situation. Within this spirit, empowerment in social work practice is based on nondirective reflective approaches in which the therapeutic relationship and the process of change develop through constant collaboration between the social worker and the client instead of directive dictation of orders by the social worker based on external knowledge. In the empowerment process the role of social workers is to support clients, but the process of collective empowerment itself is an autonomous process of the community (Boehm, Boehm, 2015).

Staples (1990) argues that exclusive attention on individuals or groups is insufficient. Although individual empowerment is a prerequisite for leading a group, it is not sufficient to ensure effective development of collective empowerment.

Stanton (1990) states that empowerment of social workers is necessary for empowerment of clients. He supports his statements by the study in legal and counselling centres and shelters. Šarišská and Balogová (2018) believe that supervision is one of many possibilities how to empower social workers in relation to professional or personal existence.

Furthermore, the empowerment-based approach uses the concept of social development, with the empowerment of self-awareness based on knowledge and the empowerment of group processes and offers communities knowledge and understanding of the method known as action-reflection-action. It is the most appropriate paradigm for international social work practice because this framework specifies the elements necessary for working with poor and oppressed groups worldwide (Lee, 2001).

**History of empowerment**

The origin of the concept of empowerment is attributed to the feminist theory and education of the marginalised that emphasised personal and internal dimensions of the power in individuals

and communities. With his work, Paolo Freire (1947) has influenced the development of empowerment significantly. He introduced the concept of popular education in the 1960s. In his work he focuses on the oppression of citizens by colonizers in education. According to him, for the oppressed to regain their identity, they must identify the oppressors and collaborate in the search for liberation. The next step is to understand what the oppressors' goal is (Freie, 1970).

According to Craig (2002), the concept of empowerment, most likely, has its roots in government anti-poverty programmes implemented in the 1960s. The concept of empowerment, however, appeared in the professional literature only in the mid-1970s in the attempts to involve citizens in the management of social services, referred to as citizen participation. References directly to the concept of empowerment in the provision of services to the members of marginalised groups began to appear in professional literature in social work and social psychology in the 1970s and 1980s.

Since 1980 the concept of empowerment has gained greater awareness and attention, mostly in the developing countries (Luttrell et al., 2009).

Gradual democratisation and development of pedagogy that educated the poorest inhabitants occurred in Latin America in 1990. Empowerment became a central tool of social movements to develop politics and economy in Latin American countries (Van Dam et al., 1992). Some feared that over-enthusiasm for empowerment adopted by non-governmental organisations supporting social movements would have negative effects on the consolidation of democratic institutions capable of building consensus. The view of empowerment in French literature was equally critical. Hardina (2006) states that the concept of empowerment began to apply to the field of management in the 1990s. The goal of the empowerment strategy was to increase involvement of employees in organisational decision making. The empowerment approach in this sphere was considered as a good tool for improving service quality, increasing workforce productivity, stimulating innovations, and improving interpersonal relationships between employees and superiors.

**DISCUSSION**

The objective of the present study was to quantitatively analyse the sources available in the Web of Science database, introduce the concepts of empowerment and collective empowerment, and briefly describe their history. According to Turner and Maschi (2015), the development of social workers' professional identity and identification with the profession of social work relates closely to empowerment theory. The empowerment theory emphasises the development of individual and collective identities in the context of social and gender inequalities and discriminations. We agree that individual change is necessary for collective change. We cannot expect clients to demand a change on a collective level unless there is a change in understanding on an individual level.

Collective empowerment is an ability of communities to act and, thus, transform self-perceptions. Linked to justice, and social and economic values, it should be consistent with individual empowerment. We agree with Rappaport (1984), who states that it is easy to define absence of empowerment, but it is difficult to define it in action, as it takes different forms in different persons and in different contexts. We believe that collective empowerment in social work has the potential. It can be used to link socially excluded persons and oppression in the analysis of global socioeconomic development and a broader socioeconomic structure. Even if it is not possible to give its precise definition, we believe it is necessary for social workers to understand the context of collective empowerment. Only if they can describe it and find the signs of collective empowerment in practice, can they help their clients effectively. We are convinced that collective

empowerment has the potential to solve many social issues of marginalised communities in Slovakia.

Sjöberg et al. (2015) carried out a comparative study of community work in two different worlds – in Mumbai and Stockholm. The authors found out that there were conditions for collective empowerment in both areas; however, differences were in empowerment strategies. In Stockholm, the focus was on individual empowerment, but specific strategies and practices for community empowerment were lacking. In Mumbai, on the other hand, organising marginalised groups for collective empowerment to achieve social change was crucial. Payne and Reith-Hall (2019) discuss positive effects of empowerment in the areas of support and prevention. They were also stated by Li-yu Song (In Payne, Reith-Hall, 2019), who studied the impact of empowerment strategies on protection of victims of intimate partner abuse in Taiwan. She found out that, given that most victims stayed with the perpetrators of violence, the most effective was the empowerment strategy that prevented reoccurrence of violence by ensuring victims' own safety through their better decision making.

Positive effects of empowerment were also observed in empowering Roma minority groups in Serbia and Montenegro with the aim integrating them evenly in the official education system while preserving their identity and cultural heritage. Furthermore, in Black Power movement in the USA, such effects were manifested in empowering racially segregated African Americans in political and social spheres.

The study on empowerment in a socially and ethnically diverse community in Copenhagen is another notable source that contributes to the topic of collective empowerment (Mørck, 2011). The author examined social workers' activities in marginalised groups for several years. According to him, most studies on empowerment focus on empowerment outcomes and only few on empowerment processes. We agree that for social work practice, it is more beneficial to focus on processes of how empowerment occurs and not merely on its final outcomes.

Positive effects of collective empowerment were reported in southern Asia where women's self-help groups have come to the fore in the previous three decades. The study provides evidence of positive effects on economic and political collective empowerment of women, women's control over family planning, although no evidence of positive effects on psychological empowerment was found (Kumar et l., 2021).

Successful implementation of community empowerment in Slovakia has been perceived mainly in marginalised groups and has resulted in a decrease in their feeling of alienation from the majority society. However, projects to promote empowered participation are rarely successful if they are terminated prematurely. It is caused by time-consuming processes to create structures and mechanisms that lead to empowerment of communities (Úrad splnomocnenca vlády SR..., 2021).

**Limitations and strengths**

As the issue of empowerment is rather broad, it is difficult to examine all the sources available. In the literature review, the conclusions may be distorted due to the possible unintentional omission of parts of literature or failure to challenge the validity of the statements. We perceive the paper itself to be one of the strengths – the summary of the views and knowledge on empowerment and collective empowerment, which have not been published in our literature before. Analysing various research studies, the paper may be an incentive to carry out similar studies in our conditions.

**Recommendations**

The concept of empowerment represents the potential to help various socially excluded groups of population. Considering the results of the foreign studies proving positive effects of

empowerment, we recommend that social workers use the concept in their practice when working with disadvantaged groups (marginalised communities, disabled individuals, refugees, adolescents, or single mothers). Furthermore, we believe it is important to create self-help groups. Analysing the literature sources and analysing Web of Science quantitatively, we found out that only little attention has been paid to individual and collective empowerments in both national and foreign literature. We believe that in social work it certainly has the potential and offers the clients the possibility to change social relationships and escape oppression. To bring social change, it is necessary for clients to gain control over their lives. If social workers understand the context of collective empowerment, they can help their clients. We recommend that more attention is paid to collective empowerment in education of future social workers. Furthermore, it is necessary to organize further education about effective strategies and procedures in the process of empowerment for social workers who already work directly with clients. To achieve this goal, it is necessary for students to have access to relevant sources and studies. Our country also needs to start working in this field of scientific research. The results of the studies focused on perceptions of empowerment, its process, use of methods, and identification of effects of empowerment in clients, or collective empowerment in communities may lead to valuable sources for education, or examples of good practice that can inspire social workers in their practice. Examples of good practice may be supported by overviews of ongoing and completed projects promoting empowerment and their implementation, and analysis of the methods and techniques that were used when working with individuals, groups, and communities.

**Conclusions**

Multiple studies describing practical experiences with introducing the concept of empowerment in practice followed by its positive effects support our statement that empowerment has the potential in social work. It is necessary to focus on it in the areas of theory, research, education, and working with clients.

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# SUBJEKTÍVNE VNÍMANIE RIZÍK SÚVISIACICH S TEHOTENSTVOM DOSPIEVAJÚCICH DIEVČAT

**Katarína Vanková**
Ústav romologických štúdií FSVaZ UKF Nitra
kvankova@ukf.sk

*Abstrakt:* Riziko patrí medzi neoddeliteľné súčasti nášho života, sprevádza nás po celý život. Riziko je spojené s našimi rozhodnutiami a našim konaním. Ovplyvňuje náš osobný, spoločenský i profesionálny život. Pre zvládanie rizika platí model optimalizácie vnímaného rizika, ktorý je založený na vnímavosti, vedieť zhodnotiť situáciu, rozhodnúť sa a neposlednom rade prijať zodpovednosť za vlastné konanie. Neadekvátna reakcia na riziko, nepripravenosť riešiť riziko obsiahnuté v sociálnych vzťahoch a rizikové situácie vedú k zlyhaniu. Deti a adolescenti, ako ohrozenú skupinu, nie sú dostatočne pripravení na riziká, s ktorými sa v tomto vývinovom období môžu stretnúť. Rodinná výchova sa síce na jednotlivé riziká zameriava, ale aj tak sa väčšina adolescentov učí až na vlastných chybách. Varovanie zo strany rodičov často považujú len za zastrašovanie, moralizovanie či nepochopenie dnešného života mladých nedospelých. Stať sa rodičom je veľká životná zmena, ktorá prináša nové výzvy. Pôrod v období dospievania je náročný, pretože prebieha v intenzívnej fáze duševného a fyzického vývinu, ktorá je náročná alebo si vynucuje prechod z detstva do dospelosti. Našim výskumom poukazujeme na riziká, ktoré vznikli v dôsledku neplánovaného tehotenstva nedospelých dievčat a ich nerozvážnym konaním. Použili sme metódu kvalitatívneho výskumu prostredníctvom štruktúrovaných rozhovorov, kvôli prieniku do hĺbky problému. Dôraz sme kládli na subjektívne vnímania dospievajúcich dievčat v čase otehotnenia na ekonomické, vzdelanostné, sociálne, zdravotné a emocionálne dôsledky. Zaujímavé boli výsledky s porovnaním dievčat s odstupom času v dospelosti, ich posun v skúmaných oblastiach. Riziká, ktoré sme zaznamenali sa vo väčšej miere zhodujú aj s inými podobnými výskumami, o ktorých sa podrobnejšie zmieňujeme v príspevku.

*Kľúčové slová:* Riziko. Rodičovstvo. Dospievajúca matka. Rodinná výchova. Trestný čin. Profesionálna pomoc.

## ÚVOD

Medzigeneračný konflikt v tomto vývinovom období vyhráva nad snahou a dobrými radami rodičov pripraviť dospievajúcich na to, čo im život môže priniesť. Pomáhajúci profesionáli sa obvykle stretávajú s dospievajúcimi až vtedy, keď sa im nepodarí zvládnuť riziká spojené s dospievaním a ich sociálnym životom. Je na pomáhajúcich profesiách, aby adolescentov vrátili späť do reálneho sveta, a tak im pomohli sa vysporiadať s jeho nástrahami a rizikami. Pomocnú ruku pomáhajúci profesionál môže podať len vtedy, ak porozumie obsahu jednotlivých foriem rizík vo všeobecnej rovine, ale aj v špecifickej rovine jednotlivých podôb a foriem rizika.

Globálne zostáva tehotenstvo mladistvých a maloletých dievčat problémom verejného zdravia. V celosvetovom meradle ročne porodí šestnásť miliónov dievčat počas dospievania, pričom odhadom tri milióny podstúpia nebezpečné potraty. Tehotenstvo dospievajúcich je celosvetový

fenomén s jasne známymi príčinami a vážnymi zdravotnými, sociálnymi a ekonomickými dôsledkami. Sobáše detí a sexuálne zneužívanie detí vystavujú dievčatá zvýšenému riziku otehotnenia, ktoré je často neúmyselné. Na mnohých miestach prekážky pri získavaní a užívaní antikoncepčných prostriedkov bránia dospievajúcim vyhnúť sa neúmyselnému tehotenstvu. Svetová zdravotnícka organizácia (WHO) spolupracuje s partnermi na presadzovaní pozornosti venovanej tehotenstvu dospievajúcich dievčat, na budovaní dôkazovej základne pre činnosť, na vývoji nástrojov na podporu politiky a programov, na budovaní kapacít a na podpore krajín, aby sa tehotenstvu dospievajúcich účinne venovali. Tehotenstvo dospievajúcich dievčat by malo byť jedným z hlavných problémov v každom systéme zdravotnej starostlivosti, pretože skoré tehotenstvo môže mať škodlivé riziká a dlhodobé dôsledky na fyzické, psychické, ekonomické a sociálne postavenie dievčat a je to problém z hľadiska ľudských práv aj verejného zdravia.

*Súčasný stav riešenia skúmanej problematiky*

Svetová zdravotná organizácia definuje adolescentov ako jednotlivcov vo veku 10 až 18 rokov (WHO, 2022). Každá osoba do dovŕšenia plnoletosti je považovaná za dieťa. Obdobie plnoletosti je v občianskom zákonníku vymedzené nasledovne: „Plnoletosť sa nadobúda dovŕšením osemnásteho roku. Pred dosiahnutím tohto veku sa plnoletosť nadobúda len uzavretím manželstva. Takto nadobudnutá plnoletosť sa nestráca ani zánikom manželstva ani vyhlásením manželstva za neplatné" (§ 8 Občianskeho zákonníka). Z toho vyplýva, že aj na dievčatá, ktoré otehotneli pred dovŕšením plnoletosti sa právne a spoločensky nazerá ako na deti. Komplexne má problematika adolescentného rodičovstva aj trestnoprávnu rovinu, ktorá je obsiahnutá v Trestnom zákone č. 300/2005 Z. z. Trestné činy sexuálneho násilia a zneužívania zahrnuté v § 200 až § 203 určujú trestnú zodpovednosť pre páchateľov, ktorí vykonajú súlož alebo sexuálne zneužijú osobu mladšiu ako 15 rokov, osobu mladšiu ako 18 rokov prinútia k mimomanželskej súloži, prípadne ktorí vykonajú súlož s rodinným príslušníkom. Spadajú sem aj trestné činy súvisiace s pornografiou či prostitúciou obsiahnuté v § 132, rovnako aj obchodovanie s ľuďmi či sexuálne vykorisťovanie podľa § 179 (Trestný zákon č. 300/2005 Z. z.).

Dospievanie je obdobím prechodu, rastu, skúmania a príležitostí. Počas tejto fázy života majú dospievajúci tendenciu rozvíjať zvýšený záujem o sex, so sprievodným rizikom nechcených tehotenstiev, zdravotnými rizikami spojenými s predčasným pôrodom a následkami potratov a sexuálne prenosné infekcie vrátane HIV/AIDS. Dospievajúce dievčatá, ktoré neúmyselne otehotnejú, čelia množstvu problémov, vrátane opustenia partnermi, neschopnosti dokončiť školské vzdelanie, čo v konečnom dôsledku obmedzuje ich budúce sociálne a ekonomické príležitosti a zvýšených nepriaznivých výsledkov v tehotenstve.

Neplánované tehotenstvo u dospievajúcich je bežným problémom verejného zdravia v industrializovaných krajinách so stredným alebo nízkym príjmom (WHO, 2022). Neúmyselné tehotenstvo nie je nákladné len pre dospievajúcich a ich rodiny, ale je aj veľkou finančnou záťažou pre spoločnosť. Spoločenské náklady zahŕňajú sociálnu podporu pre matky, ktoré majú finančné ťažkosti, implementáciu programov (vzdelávacie a kvalifikačné školenia) na posilnenie postavenia matiek, na získanie finančnej nezávislosti a stratené daňové príjmy vyplývajúce zo zníženej zamestnateľnosti a zárobku.

*Príčiny predčasného otehotnenia*

> *Pohŕdanie okolia.* Adolescenti sa obávajú posmechu a odmietnutia zo strany svojich rovesníkov, preto považujú sex za prostriedok, ktorý ich robí populárnymi, avšak zároveň nie sú pripravení na intímny vzťah a jeho následky.

➢ *Rodinné prostredie*. Rodičia, ktorí sú časovo zaneprázdnení môžu nedostatočne poskytovať rady a podporu svojim deťom. V niektorých rodinách sú témy týkajúce sa sexuality často tabuizované, čo môže viesť k nedostatku dôvery dieťaťa k rodičom. V rodinách, kde chýba rodinné zázemie a mužský vzor, majú dievčatá väčšiu pravdepodobnosť otehotnieť v mladom veku. Na Slovensku je výrazným problémom počet tehotenstiev u dievčat z etnických skupín s nižším sociálno-ekonomickým statusom, ktoré často začínajú so sexuálnou aktivitou skôr a preberajú rodinné vzory.

➢ *Idealizovanie tehotenstva.* Často sa stáva, že médiá idealizujú tehotenstvo v mladom veku a predstavujú ho ako niečo krásne, čo dokáže spojiť dvoch ľudí na celý život.

➢ *Nedostatok znalostí.* Nedostatok sexuálneho vzdelania medzi adolescentmi zvyšuje riziko, že sa stanú nechcenými rodičmi v mladom veku. Mnohí z nich nemajú dostatočné chápanie emocionálnych a biologických aspektov súvisiacich so sexom a svoje vedomosti o intímnom živote získavajú iba z médií.

➢ *Návykové látky*. Mnohí dospievajúci experimentujú s návykovými látkami, pričom alkohol môže znížiť schopnosť kontrolovať impulzy a prispieť tak k vysokému percentu tehotenstiev (75%) u žien vo veku 14 až 18 rokov. Z prieskumov vyplýva, že približne 91% neplnoletých tehotných uviedlo, že v čase po požití alkoholu a následnom počatí, pôvodne ani nemali v úmysle mať pohlavný styk.

➢ *Sexuálne zneužívanie alebo znásilnenie*. Dospievajúce dievčatá môžu otehotnieť v dôsledku sexuálneho násilia alebo zneužívania. Približne 5% všetkých detí pochádza z tehotenstiev spôsobených sexuálnym zneužívaním mladistvých. Podľa Trestného zákona „sa ten, kto vykoná súlož s osobou mladšou ako 15 rokov alebo kto takú osobu iným spôsobom sexuálne zneužije, sa potrestá odňatím slobody na tri až desať rokov." Ak gynekológ zistí, že je tehotné dievča, a ešte nedosiahlo vek 15 rokov, musí to nahlásiť na polícii, pretože sa to kvalifikuje ako trestný čin sexuálneho zneužívania.

➢ *Získanie sociálnych výhod*. Ide hlavne o adolescentky zo sociálne slabších rodín a s nízkym ekonomickým zázemím, ktoré využívajú sociálny systém daného štátu. (Novysedlák, 2022)

Riziká v dôsledku neplánovaného tehotenstva nedospelých dievčat sme skúmali v našom kvalitatívnom výskume prostredníctvom štruktúrovaných rozhovorov. Dôraz budeme klásť na ekonomické, vzdelanostné, sociálne, zdravotného a emocionálne dôsledky z neplánovaného tehotenstva nedospelých dievčat. Ďalej chceme zistiť, aký posun urobili v dospelosti a ich subjektívne názory na riziká v dôsledku ich nezodpovedných rozhodnutí.

**METÓDY**

Našim hlavným cieľom bolo zistiť riziká súvisiace s materstvom a rodičovstvom dospievajúcich dievčat. Z hlavného cieľa nám vyvstali čiastkové ciele:

ČC1: Zistiť, koho považovali za najväčšiu oporu v čase tehotenstva a materstva dospievajúce dievčatá.

ČC2 : Zistiť riešenie neplánovaného tehotenstva.

ČC3: Zistiť ich subjektívne vnímanie istých rizík neplánovaného tehotenstva a materstva.

ČC4: Zistiť subjektívnu predstavu o ich blízkej budúcnosti vo sfére vzťahovej, rodinnej, ekonomickej.

Z uvedených cieľov sme sformulovali prieskumné otázky:

PO1: Koho pokladali participantky za najväčšiu oporu v čase gravidity, pôrodu a materstva.

PO2: Ako a kedy začali riešiť neplánované tehotenstvo.

PO3: Uvedomovali si participantky možné riziká s neplánovaným tehotenstvom a rodičovstvom?
PO4: Aké boli ich subjektívne predstavy o budúcom živote.

Na dosiahnutie stanovených cieľov sme zvolili kvalitatívnu metódu formou štruktúrovaných rozhovorov. Pre kvalitatívnu metódu výskumu sme sa rozhodli preto, lebo práve kvalitatívny výskum sa zameriava na menšiu a úzko cielenú vzorku participantiek skúmanej témy, ktorej postojom, motiváciám a správaniu potrebujeme detailne porozumieť. Rozhovor sa vždy opieral o štandardizovanú štruktúru, kde otázky sme mali vopred pripravené, rovnako formulované a kladené celému súboru participantiek. Tieto rozhovory poskytujú priestor na veľmi detailné informácie o potrebách, motiváciách či správaní každej jednej z participantiek. Taktiež rozhovory boli intenzívne a viedli do hĺbky skúmanej problematiky. Jednotlivé rozhovory boli nahrávané. Trvanie jedného rozhovoru bolo min. 30 min. a max. 60 min. Rozhovory sme prepísali do vopred vytvorenej tabuľky, kde samotným jadrom boli kódy. V procese otvoreného kódovania sme údaje rozobrali na fragmenty, boli konceptualizované a následne zložené novým spôsobom. Vytvorili sme jednotlivé kategórie.

### *Výberový súbor*

Pri zámernom výbere vhodnej výberovej vzorky sme si určili kritériá vhodné práve pre náš výskum. Kritériom výberu bola neplnoletosť dospievajúcich dievčat v čase gravidity. Prvotné informácie sme získali rozhovormi v blízkom okolí o výskyte neplnoletého gravidného dievčaťa vhodného pre náš výskum. Zámerným účelovým výberom sme dospeli k participantkám s konkrétnou skúsenosťou – tzv. „insiders“. Následne pomocou najčastejšie používanej metódy „metóda snehovej gule“, kde základným východiskom je získanie kontaktu s prvými účastníkmi. Na základe ich odporúčaní sme oslovovali ďalšie participantky vhodné pre náš výskum. Efekt snehovej gule sa nám osvedčil a získali sme pre náš výskum 13 participantiek.

Tab. 1

| Označenie participantiek | Vek participantiek v čase začiatku gravidity | Vek participantiek v čase realizovania výskumu |
|---|---|---|
| P1 | 16 | 25 |
| P2 | 13 | 30 |
| P3 | 15 | 22 |
| P4 | 16 | 37 |
| P5 | 14 | 28 |
| P6 | 16 | 21 |
| P7 | 17 | 33 |
| P8 | 14 | 41 |
| P9 | 15 | 25 |
| P10 | 17 | 26 |
| P11 | 16 | 32 |
| P12 | 15 | 28 |
| P13 | 15 | 29 |

Zdroj: vlastné spracovanie

Najmladšia participantka v dobe otehotnenia mala 13 rokov, 14 rokov v čase otehotnenia mali dve participantky, 15 rokov mali štyri participantky, 16 rokov tiež štyri participantky a 17 rokov dve participantky nášho výskumu.

*Etika výskumu* bola zabezpečená na najvyššej úrovni. V našom výskume sme pristupovali k zásadám etiky skutočne profesionálne, predovšetkým veľmi citlivo, keďže sa jedná o citlivú tému a taktiež aj zraniteľnú cieľovú skupinu. Účasť participantov v našom výskume bola samozrejme dobrovoľná. Nikoho sme nenútili ani nepoužívali žiadnu formu nátlaku. Cieľovú skupinu sme jasne a zrozumiteľne informovali o cieľoch výskumu, ich úlohe v ňom a podmienkach, za ktorých bude prebiehať. Taktiež sme ich nezabudli informovať aj o tom, ako budú údaje spracované a publikované. Všetci súhlasili s nahrávaním rozhovorov, i keď nahrávky boli určené len pre účely spracovania kvalitatívnych dát. Výskum prebiehal tak, aby sa skúmaným osobám neublížilo ani psychicky, ani fyzicky. Všetky údaje sú anonymné, a to aj informácie o zariadeniach, v ktorých sme vykonávali výskum. Naše spracovávanie výskumu bolo v súlade s Etickým kódexom sociálneho pracovníka, ktorý zdôrazňuje dôležitosť rešpektovania ľudskej dôstojnosti a zodpovednosť voči klientom. Pri realizácii výskumu sme dodržiavali striktne etické zásady aj kvôli citlivosti skúmanej problematiky. Bola zabezpečená dobrovoľnosť a anonymita podľa zákona č.18/2018 Z. z. o ochrane osobných údajov a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov.

**VÝSLEDKY**

Deskripcia získaných informácií s následným otvoreným okódovaním a precíznou analýzou nám pomohla dospieť k vytvoreniu základných kategórií a podkategórií.

Tab. 2

| Kategória - K | Podkategória | Kódy | Čís. partic./riadok v prepise |
|---|---|---|---|
| K1: Subjektívne pocity v počiatočnom stave gravidity | Prvé pocity | panika | P2/41, P5/258, P13/791, P6/309, P9/463, |
| | | stres | P1/6,P2/45,P4/174, P8/405,P12/675,P13/791, |
| | | obavy | P2/48,P5/230,P8/406, P11/628,P12/678,P13/792, P9/464, P4/174, |
| | | smútok a beznádej | P2/49,P7/39,P8/407,P9/468, P11/635,P12/679,P2/157, P10/531, |
| | | smiech | P3/808,P7/23,P10/47, P13/162, P6/311, |
| | | pokoj | P7/364, P1/6, P11/645, |
| | Reakcia partnera | radosť | P7/365, P1/7, |
| | | dohoda o spolužití | P4/182, P7/26, P10/533, P11/652, P1/8 |
| | | nezáujem | P4/181, P9/470, P5/237 P3/828, P13/80 |
| | | ukončenie vzťahu | P2/58,P8/35, P4/186, P10/549, |
| | | nemám partnera | P12/690,P12/158, P13/834,P6/322, |

| | Reakcia rodiny | Hnev, hrozby | P2/60, P8/408, P9/477, P4/187, P6/326, |
| | | Podpora | P8/412, P9/478, P12/699, P1/8, P11/658, P7/368, |
| | | Žiadna reakcia | P13/847, P6/336, P10/557 |
| | Emocionálna opora | Opora v rodine | P5/242, P8/37, P9/488, P12/703,P1/8, P11/660. |
| | | Opora v partnerovi Opora v priateľoch | P1/10, P11/160, P7/369, P8/418,P9/488-489, P12/723, P13/858, P1/11, P11/661, |
| | | Bez akejkoľvek opory | P2/61, P4/182,P6/339, P10/560, |
| | Znalosť o možnostiach riešenia situácie | Uvažovanie o UPT Uskutočnenie UPT | P2/62, P6/340, P3/869,P12/722,P13/169, P6/341, P10/561, |
| | | Utajený pôrod Znalosť alternatívnej možností | P9/491, P8/419, P4/23, P9/492, |
| | | Rozhodnutie vzdať sa dieťaťa – adopcia Rozhodnutie ponechanie si dieťaťa | P9/495,P7/370, P2/66, P5/261, P8/421, P1/10-11, P4/188, P11/662, |
| K2 Zmeny v živote neplnoletej matky | Štúdium | Individuálny učebný plán | P5/262, P12/751, P13/869, P6/342, P11/666, |
| | | Prerušenie štúdia | P2/69, P3/135, P9/101, P1/15, P4/190, P7/372, P10/568, P8/425, P1/9, |
| | | Zanechanie štúdia | |
| | Ekonomická situácia | Finančná podpora partnera | P5/272, P8/40, P3/25, P1/16, P7/41, |
| | | Finančná podpora rodičov | P2/20, P12/762, P8/428,P9/102, P9/101, P12/765,P1/11, P7/374, |
| | | Finančná podpora rodiny | P2/72, P4/193, |
| | | Bez finančnej podpory | P6/347, P10/569 |

| | Pôrod a narodenie dieťaťa | Spontánny priebeh pôrodu | P5/273, P8/442, P1/13, |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Bežné miery dieťaťa | P5/278, P8/443, P1/16-17, P2/82-83, P4/31, P9/498, |
| | | Ťažký priebeh – sekcia | |
| | | Popôrodné zdravotné ťažkosti – transfúzia | P2/92-93, P9/502, |
| | | Popôrodné depresie | |
| | | Menšia hmotnosť dieťaťa | P9/504, P4/199, P2/102, P4/201, |
| | | Zdravotné ťažkosti dieťaťa | |
| | Reakcia na vzniknutú situáciu širšieho okolia | Ohováranie | P2/103, P5/284,P8/43, P6/348, P10/579, |
| | | Odsudzovanie | P2/103,P8/43, P6/349, |
| | | Podpora priateľov | P9/505,142,P5/24,P8/43-44, P12/767, P1/18, P4/203, P7/377, |
| | | Strata priateľov | P2/105, P9/509,P4/213, P6/350,P10/581, |
| K3 Súčasná životná situácia | Vzťahy | Uzatvorenie manželstva, dohoda partnerstva | P8/445, P1/20, P11/672, P7/383, |
| | | Rozpad vzťahu | P9/510, |
| | | Nový partner | P5/295, P8/446, P13/870, P2/115, P4/219, |
| | | Osamelá matka | |
| | | Bez partnera/priateľa | P3/139, P12/773, P6/353, P10/589, |
| | Vzdelanie | Ukončená SOŠ | P2/118, P8/451, P6/357, P9/517, P1/21,P3/148 |
| | | Prebiehajúce štúdium SOŠ | |
| | | Ukončená SŠ | P5/296, P13/881, P4/220, P7/384, |
| | | Prebiehajúce štúdium SŠ | |
| | | Prebiehajúce VŠ vzdelanie, | P12/776, P11/671, P10/597, |
| | | Ukončené VŠ vzdelanie | P8/452, |
| | Ekonomická situácia | Poberanie štátnych dávok | P5/298, P8/459, P1/26, P4/224, P11/674, P7/389, |
| | | Zárobková činnosť | P2/125, P3/37, P9/518, P13/891, P1/29, P4/224-225, P6/359, P12/777, P11/685, P7/50, P10/608, |

| | | Finančná podpora ex-partnera | |
|---|---|---|---|
| K4 Život v blízkej budúcnosti | Získanie vzdelania | Ukončiť SOŠ Ukončiť SŠ Ukončiť VŠ | P5/299, P1/25, P9/519, P1/29, P3/162, P12/778, P11/691, P10/609, |
| | Plány vo vzťahu k rodinnému životu, prípadne rozšírenia rodiny o ďalšie potomstvo | Áno s odstupom času Určite áno  Určite nie | P5/301,P3/38, P9/529, P13/922, P1/36, P11/671, P2/128, P8/461, P12/789, P7/391, P6/360, P4/244, P10/620, P3/169, |

Zdroj: vlastné spracovanie

*Legenda: K1 – Kategória č. 1, P1-participantka č.1, r- číslo riadka, UPT-umelé prerušenie tehotenstva, SOŠ-stredná odborná škola, SŠ-stredoškolské vzdelanie s maturitou, VŠ – vysokoškolské vzdelanie*

Výsledky výskumu nám priniesli veľmi veľa zistení a zaujímavých subjektívnych vyjadrení dospievajúcich dievčat vo vzťahu k rizikám vyplývajúcich z neplánovaného tehotenstva. Aké riziká zapríčinila absencia podpory a opory v najbližších či už išlo o rodinných príslušníkov, alebo blízkych priateľov a útoky z okolia, v ktorom sa dospievajúce tehotné nachádzali. Objavenia rizík v spôsobe života vo vzťahu k štúdiu, zabezpečeniu základných životných potrieb pre seba a pre potomka, ak sa dospievajúca gravidná rozhodla ponechať si dieťa. Objavili sa výrazné riziká z neznalosti alternatívnych možností, ak si nechcela ponechať dieťa alebo ak chcela ukončiť tehotenstvo a pod., taktiež rôzne zdravotné problémy počas a po pôrode nezrelých dievčat.

**DISKUSIA**

Problematika, ktorou sa zaoberal náš výskum, je v súčasnej dobe aktuálna a veľmi náročná na získanie participantiek pre náš výskum. Dizajn výskumu bol tvorený kvalitatívnymi metódami formou štruktúrovaných rozhovorov. Pestrosť odpovedí, ktoré boli tvorené z hlavného a čiastkových cieľov, sme zaznamenali, a následnou deskripciou sme ich rozdelili do jednotlivých kategórii a podkategórií, ktoré sme získali otvoreným kódovaním. Týmto spôsobom sme odhalili a identifikovali najčastejšie subjektívne problémy v počiatočnom štádiu gravidity – ich prvé pocity, reakciu partnera, rodiny, emocionálnu oporu a ich vedomosti o možnostiach alternatívneho riešenia ich problému. V ďalšej kategórii sme skúmali a identifikovali zmeny v ich živote, ktoré sa týkali štúdia, ekonomickej situácie, samotného pôrodu, odozvu širšieho okolia na ich stav. V tretej kategórii sme identifikovali ich súčasnú životnú situáciu v ktorej sa nachádzajú, kde sme sa zameriavali na vzťahy, vzdelanie, ekonomickú oblasť, a najmä čo plánujú do blízkej budúcnosti vo vzťahu k plánom ďalšieho vzdelávania, založenia si rodiny, alebo jej rozšírenia sme sa dozvedeli z výpovedí participantiek výskumu vo štvrtej nami zvolenej kategórii. Problémy maloletých a mladistvých matiek sú zložitou témou, ktorá zasahuje do mnohých aspektov ich života a života ich potomkov. Mladosť a nezrelosť môže predstavovať výzvu pre tieto mladé ženy pri zvládaní materstva. Okrem toho môžu čeliť mnohým ďalším ťažkostiam, ako sú sociálne a ekonomické obmedzenia, predsudky zo strany spoločnosti, nedostatok podpory a opory vo všetkých oblastiach ich života.

Spracovaním výsledkov výskumu sme odhalili riziká súvisiace s neplánovaným tehotenstvom nedospelých dievčat, ich subjektívne vnímanie s odstupom času, odhalil nám ich znalosti a postoje, ich rozhodnutia, niektoré vo väčšej miere ani neboli ich, veľký podiel na ďalšom konaní

a rozhodnutí, ktoré gravidné nedospelé dievčatá urobili mali ich rodičia, blízka rodina, reakcia ich partnera, alebo partner nebol známy, sexuálny útok a pod. Všetky dievčatá boli odkázané na milosť a nemilosť dospelých – či už to boli ich rodičia, vychovávatelia, príbuzní a pod. Stretli sa s nepochopením, odmietnutím, zavrhnutím u tých, od ktorých by to nikdy nečakali. Stratili priateľstvá, podporu, oporu. Zaznamenali sme zdravotné problémy. Dievčatá stratili bezstarostné dospievanie, plynulé štúdium, kultúrne vyžitie, spontánne akcie s priateľmi, stratili dôveru rodičov, vychovávateľov – zrútil sa im celý svet, ako tvrdila väčšina participantiek. Museli rýchlo dozrieť, dospieť, začať rozhodovať nielen za seba, ale už aj za možného budúceho potomka. Zodpovednosť im v tom čase bola cudzia, ale v konečnom dôsledku museli sa začať správať zodpovedne a začať si uvedomovať  následky svojho konania.

### *Odhalené riziká súvisiace s neplánovaným otehotnením dospievajúcich dievčat:*

- ➤ **Ekonomické riziká.** Nedospelé dievčatá nie je zárobkovo-činné, sú v procese štúdia. Sú plne závislé na rodičoch alebo iných dospelých, ktorí sa o nich starajú. Bez nich nedokážu zvládnuť bezproblémové tehotenstvo a novú rolu matky, aj z dôvodu nízkeho veku a nedokončeného psychického, fyzického, či sociálneho vývoja. Tehotenstvo ovplyvňuje ich školskú dochádzku a ďalšie vzdelávanie. Podľa výskumu Sysák (2018) len 40% týchto matiek dokončí školu. Tým, že získajú nižší stupeň vzdelania, majú problém so získaním zamestnania a následkom toho sú vzniknuté ekonomické problémy. Ďalšie dieťa do rodiny je vnímané skôr ako ekonomická záťaž. Neplnoleté matky do rodiny prinesú iba dávky, ktoré im prináležia podľa zákona od štátu. Naše participantky boli finančne vo väčšine podporované rodičmi a od blízkej rodiny, zaznamenali sme aj finančnú podporu od partnera (boli to prípady, ak partner bol starší a zárobkovo činný). V štúdii Govender , Naidoo , Taylor (2020) sme zaznamenali zhody v ich výsledkoch s našimi výsledkami. V tomto výskume uviedli dospievajúce matky tiež najmä finančnú podporu od rodiny.
- ➤ **Vzdelanostné riziká.** Podpora rodiny neplnoletej matky je dôležitá vo vzťahu k starostlivosti o dieťa a dokončiť si započaté vzdelanie. Dôležité je vždy rozhodnutie riaditeľa školy. Ten môže študentke z dôvodu tehotenstva alebo materstva umožniť prípravu a následne aj vykonanie skúšok v termíne, ktorý sám určí. Ak je študentka neplnoletá, je potrebný súhlas zákonného zástupcu. Podľa tohto zákona je riaditeľ školy povinný na základe žiadosti študentky/zákonného zástupcu prerušiť štúdium z dôvodu tehotenstva. Druhou možnosťou je povoliť štúdium podľa individuálneho učebného plánu. Niekoľko zistení z výskumov: pokles študijnej výkonnosti tehotných dievčat, nezvládanie učiva, držanie krok s rovesníkmi v triede, neakceptácia učiteľov, sťažené možnosti návratu do školy kvôli tomu, že si nemohli dovoliť opatrovateľku, podpora rodiny zlyhala, dvojité povinnosti, nedostatok skúseností v materstve, rozpad vzťahu s otcom dieťaťa, psychické vypätie, stresy, úzkosti, depresie (Hofferth L., 1987, Dlamini, Merwe, Ehlers, 2003, Govender, Naidoo, Taylor, 2020, Maemeko, Nkengbeza, Chokomosi, 2018, Sysák, 2018). Tieto riziká, ktoré uvádzame, sme zaznamenali aj v našom výskume.
- ➤ **Sociálne riziká.**  Sťažený pohyb v sociálnom prostredí, ktoré obklopuje nedospelú tehotnú a potom aj jej materstvo, ovplyvňuje, zanecháva isté pocity, navádza na určité správanie sa, presvieča ako je potrebné žiť, ako sa obliekať, ako tráviť voľný čas, s kým sa je potrebné stretávať sa a pod. Sociálne medziľudské vzťahy a vzájomná komunikácia sú veľmi dôležitým faktorom socializovania sa práve nedospelej tehotnej a budúcej matky. Veľmi často sa stretávajú s obmedzeným zúčastňovaním sa rovesníckych akcií v škole aj mimo školy kvôli materským povinnostiam. Majú zúžené kultúrne vyžitie, kvôli finančným prostriedkom. Niektoré výskumy potvrdzujú, že slobodné tehotné adolescentky môžu čeliť stigmatizácii a ponižujúcim komentárom, hrozbám fyzického

a psychického násilia zo strany partnera ale aj členov rodiny, taktiež sa nevyhli pohŕdaniu a diskriminácii širokého okolia (Franjić, 2018, Wycisk, 2021, Sloan-Ellis, 2014), čo zaznamenávame aj vo výskume s našimi participatkami. Zaznamenali sme tiež nedostatok sociálnej podpory zo strany rodín dospievajúcich matiek, tzv. priateľov, partnerov, komunít, cirkví, zdravotných sestier a učiteľov, ktorý prehĺbil ich problémy. Je dôležité si uvedomiť situáciu, v ktorej sa mladá žena môže ocitnúť. Pochopenie psychologických a sociálnych mechanizmov, ktoré sprostredkujú traumu s predčasným materstvom umožňuje zvoliť presné terapeutické a preventívne zásahy, ktoré pomôžu vyhnúť sa sekundárnej viktimizácii nedospelých matiek.

➢ **_Zdravotné riziká._** Z odborného a medicínskeho hľadiska považujeme tehotenstvo neplnoletých dievčat za rizikové tehotenstvo. Väčšina z nich ani nevie, že sú tehotné - nerozpoznanie príznakov v súvislosti s nedostatkom informácii o tehotenstve, strach z informovania rodičov o tehotenstve, a taktiež obavy zo zdravotníckych pracovníkov a ich postojov, prípadne nevyhľadávajú prenatálnu starostlivosť, čím chcú dosiahnuť utajenie tehotenstva. Ich samotný nezrelý organizmus alebo zanedbanie prenatálnej starostlivosti veľmi často spôsobí predčasný pôrod (môže ovplyvniť alkohol, fajčenie a drogy), alebo spontánne prídu o dieťa. Za príčiny predčasného pôrodu považujú - nezrelosť dospievajúcej, vznik infekcie, sexuálne správanie a nevhodná životospráva. Ak dospievajúce dievča otehotnie ešte skôr ako sa dokončí jej vlastný vývoj a rast, tak jej tehotenstvo bude viesť k vyčerpaniu svojho organizmu a zníženiu nutričných hodnôt medzi plodom a matkou. Dieťa môže mať nízku pôrodnú hmotnosť. Približne polovica tehotných rastie aj počas gravidity. Neukončený rast ovplyvňuje aj vývoj kostry a panvového pletenca, ktorý ak nie je vyvinutý, môže spôsobiť neúplné rozvinutie panvy pri pôrode. Anémia adolescentky, ktoré chcú zatajiť tehotenstvo a nepriberať a obmedzujú prísun potravy. Pre ich rast je veľmi dôležitý prísun minerálov a stopových prvkov, ktoré sa rýchlo vyčerpávajú. To znamená , že v tehotenstve potrebujú ešte väčší dostatok. Dôsledkom obmedzovania prísunu potravy, vitamínov, či minerálov je vznik anémie. Anémia spôsobuje predovšetkým únavu, znižuje výkonnosť a po pôrode zvyšuje riziko transfúzie krvi (Czukas, 2020, Tyrberg ,Blomberg, Kjølhede, 2013, Sysák, 2018). V neposlednom rade aj vysoký krvný tlak a popôrodná depresia, ktorá môže negatívne ovplyvniť následnú starostlivosť o novorodenca, čo sme zaznamenali aj u niektorých participantiek.

➢ **_Riziko narušenia duševného zdravia._** Tehotenstvo nedospelých dievčat a obdobie po pôrode predstavujú v ich živote a z hľadiska manifestácie duševných porúch rizikové obdobie. K najčastejšie sa vyskytujúcim poruchám patrí tokofóbia, popôrodná skleslosť, popôrodná, resp. perinatálna depresia a popôrodná psychóza. Etiologicky možno uvažovať aj o prvej manifestácii endogénnej duševnej poruchy alebo o relapse, či dekompenzácii už v minulosti sa prejavujúcej duševnej poruchy. Napriek skutočnosti, že neplnoleté gravidné v danom období pravidelne navštevuje ambulanciu lekára, psychické ťažkosti zostávajú často nediagnostikované, čo významne znižuje kvalitu života rodičky, negatívne pôsobí na ďalší priebeh poruchy a predstavuje rizikový faktor suicidálneho konania. Farmakoterapia v tehotenstve a laktácii má tiež svoje obmedzenia, vždy je potrebné posúdiť pomer benefitu a rizika, avšak nielen zo strany matky, ale aj vyvíjajúceho sa dieťaťa (Izáková, 2013). Identifikujeme naším výskumom u participantiek popôrodné depresie, narušené psychické zdravie, ktoré sa prenáša do dospelosti. Najmä, ak sa rozhodnutie týkalo utajovaného pôrodu a rozhodnutia vzdať sa dieťaťa. Utajený pôrod je legálny, ktorý sa vykonáva v zdravotníckom zariadení pod odborným dohľadom. Ponúka možnosť tehotnej nedospelej rozhodnúť sa v ťažkej

životnej situácii pre pozitívne riešenie – darovať a zachrániť život dieťaťa, a dať mu možnosť žiť v rodine adoptívnych rodičov. V neposlednom rade musíme spomenúť aj rozhodnutie participantiek o ukončení tehotenstva interupciou, ktoré tiež nesie veľké riziko narušenia duševného zdravia nedospelej tehotnej.

➢ **Emocionálne riziko.** Dospievajúce matky potrebujú podporu, pretože prichádza nová rola, zodpovednosť, rastúce náklady, či nedostatok vedomostí, čo sa im však nedostáva. Nedospelé matky očakávajú podporu od svojich manželov, druhov pri povinnostiach, ktoré sa týkajú starostlivosti o dieťa a takéto zlyhanie bolo pre nich ťažkou skúsenosťou. Dospievajúce matky očakávajú, že ich matky, ostatní členovia rodiny, priatelia alebo škola ich bude podporovať. Táto nedostatočná podpora spôsobila dospievajúcim problémy v starostlivosti pri výchove dieťaťa, nákladoch súvisiacich s dieťaťom, ďalšom vzdelávaní a komunite. Dospievajúce matky zaznamenali pocity ako strach, ľútosť a frustráciu, pocit viny a hanby, depresiu, narušenie vzťahu, prijatie zodpovednosti za materstvo a dieťa.

Výstupom z kvalitatívnych prieskumov sú dáta, ktoré sa nedajú vyjadriť číslami, práve tu vidíme limity nášho výskumu. Konštatujeme, že kvalitatívny výskum je vhodný pre vytváranie hypotéz alebo naratívov, ktoré môžeme následne potvrdiť na väčšej vzorke prostredníctvom kvantitatívneho prieskumu.

### *Odporúčania pre prax:*

✓ vo väčšej miere realizovať prevenciu pred neplánovaným tehotenstvom na základných a stredných školách,

✓ taktiež pri prevencii zamerať sa na konkrétne riziká, ktoré môžu vyvstať z neplánovaného tehotenstva nedospelých dievčat,

✓ v rámci prevencie sa zamerať na sieť poskytovaných sociálnych služieb pre neplnoleté tehotné dievčatá,

✓ v rámci prevencie upovedomiť ich na sieť zariadení, na ktoré sa môžu nedospelé tehotné obrátiť v prípade potreby, kde im bude poskytnutá odborná pomoc, tím v zariadení by mal byť zložený zo sociálneho pracovníka, psychológa, zdravotnej sestry a právnika a to:

• poskytovanie základného sociálneho poradenstva,

• poskytovanie právnických služieb, v prípadoch priznania rodičovských práv alebo uzavretia manželstva neplnoletých,

• poradenstvo v oblasti štúdia, ďalšieho vzdelávania, kariérne poradenstvo,

• posilňovanie partnerského vzťahu a následnej spoločnej starostlivosti o dieťa (vzhľadom k tomu, že v našom prieskume sa tieto vzťahy rozpadli a niektorí otcovia už na začiatku neprejavili záujem),

• nácvik starostlivosti o novorodenca (z dôvodu, že participantky z inštitucionálneho prostredia popisovali nezáujem pracovníkov pri vysvetľovaní a pomoci so starostlivosťou o dieťa )

✓ realizovať podporné skupiny neplnoletých matiek vedené psychológom,

✓ motivovať a podporovať neplnoleté matky k dokončeniu štúdia.

✓ vytvoriť viac centier pre neplnoleté matky s deťmi – jedným z dôležitých krokov by mohlo byť vytvorenie špeciálnych centier alebo zariadení určených pre maloleté matky spolu s ich deťmi. Tieto centrá by mali poskytovať komplexnú podporu vrátane ubytovania, zdravotnej starostlivosti, vzdelávania, odbornej pomoci a psychologickej podpory pre matky aj deti. Tieto centrá by mohli byť miestom, kde by našli bezpečné a podporné prostredie na zvládanie svojej rodičovskej úlohy a získavanie potrebných zručností a vedomostí pre lepšiu budúcnosť.

✓ navýšenie kapacity v reedukačných centrách – ďalším dôležitým krokom by mohlo byť zvýšenie kapacity existujúcich reedukačných centier, aby sa mohlo poskytnúť viac miest pre maloleté matky s deťmi. Tým by sa zabezpečil prístup k potrebnej podpore a starostlivosti, čo by im pomohlo lepšie zvládať ich rodičovskú úlohu.

## ZÁVER

Stať sa rodičom je veľká životná zmena, ktorá prináša nové výzvy. Pôrod v období dospievania je náročný, pretože prebieha v intenzívnej fáze duševného a fyzického vývinu, ktorá je náročná alebo si vynucuje prechod z detstva do dospelosti. Našim výskumom sme odhalili a identifikovali riziká, ktoré sprevádzali dospievajúce tehotné dievčatá v období tehotenstva, ale aj ovplyvnili ich ďalších život vo všetkých oblastiach.

*Dôležitosť prevencie spočíva najmä:*

V oblasti prevencie dospievajúcich matiek zohráva kľúčovú úlohu primárna prevencia. Jej hlavnou úlohou je predovšetkým informovať mladistvých o otázkach spojených so sexuálnym životom. V adolescencii je experimentovanie aj po sexuálnej stránke celkom prirodzené, musíme tiež spomenúť, že aj rizikové správanie je často súčasť práve adolescencie. Je však dôležité stanoviť hranice týchto experimentov, aby sa mladiství nedostali za hranicu rizikového správania.

Po primárnej prevencii nasleduje sekundárna prevencia, ktorá sa zameriava na včasné identifikovanie mladistvých s rizikovým správaním.

V prípade zlyhania primárnej i sekundárnej prevencie vstupuje do hry terciárna prevencia, ktorá sa snaží predchádzať opakovaným nechceným tehotenstvom a sústreďuje sa na matky v ťažkej životnej situácii. Cieľom tejto prevencie je zabezpečiť základné potreby matky, vrátane bývania, pomoci pri výchove dieťaťa a poskytovania špecializovanej psychologickej pomoci.

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# ADOLESCENT GIRLS' SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF PREGNANCY-RELATED RISKS

*Abstract:* Risk represents one of the inseparable aspects of our lives, accompanying us throughout our lives. Risk is associated with our decisions and our actions. It affects our personal, social, and professional life. For risk management, the model of optimization of perceived risk applies, which is based on sensitivity – being able to evaluate the situation, make a decision and, last but not least, take responsibility for one's actions. Inadequate response to risk, unpreparedness to deal with the risk inherent in social relationships, and risky situations may lead to failure. Children and adolescents, as a vulnerable group, are not sufficiently prepared for the risks they may encounter during this developmental period. Family education about these risk factors focuses on individual risks, but most adolescents only learn from their mistakes. They often consider warnings from parents as just intimidation, moralizing, or misunderstanding of the lives of young people today. Becoming a parent is a big life change that brings new challenges. Childbirth during adolescence is challenging because it takes place during an intense phase of mental and physical development that is difficult or forces the transition from childhood to adulthood. This research aims to point out the risks that arose as a result of the unplanned pregnancy of underage girls and their actions. We used the qualitative research method of structured interviews to explore the depth of the problem. We focused on the subjective perceptions of adolescent girls at the time of pregnancy on the economic, educational, social, health, and emotional consequences. The comparison of results over time in adulthood provides a perspective of their shift in the investigated areas. The risks we have noted coincide to a greater extent with other similar research studies, which we mention in more detail in the paper.

*Keywords:* Risk. Parenthood. Teenage mother. Family education. Crime. Professional help.

# SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND CRITICAL THINKING OF ADOLESCENTS

**Gabriela Šeboková, Kiara Udvardyová, Lucia Ráczová**
Department of Psychological Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences and Health Care,
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra
gsebokova@ukf.sk

*Abstract:* Social media is an important source of information for adolescents. The aim of our research was to analyze the relationships between general critical thinking and components of media literacy. Our 64 participants were 1st year students of Psychology of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. They completed self-report and objective measures, e.g. Perception about social media personalized news algorithms (Ku et al., 2019); Digital Literacy scale (Rodríguez de Dios et al., 2016); Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (Watson & Glaser, 2000); 2 forms of Cognitive Reflection test (Frederick, 2005, Sirota et al., 2021). The results differ from our formulated hypothesis. We assume, for adolescents it is a rather demanding task to evaluate their level of media literacy, transfer their general critical thinking to a specific domain of social media.

*Keywords:* critical thinking; analytical thinking; adolescence; media literacy

## INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies and social media have become crucial parts of people´s lives all around the world (Rodríguez de Dios et al., 2016). Thanks to them many users can easily access information about any topic they are interested in. 84% of adolescents are regular users of social media as well (Ec Europa, 2023), within their environment they are exposed to an information overload. Skills such as critical thinking and media literacy can be useful when trying not to get overwhelmed by such amount of data (Potter, 2010). Despite the fact that adolescents´, 15-22 years old youngsters´, cognitive skills are reaching their peak (Langmeier & Krejčířová, 2006) and the fact that they belong to the category of digital natives, most of them do not possess highly developed skills of critical thinking and media literacy (Lessenski, 2022).

Therefore, we have decided to investigate the relationships between adolescents´ general critical thinking and their use of social media, i.e. components of media literacy. In our research, we looked at critical thinking from several perspectives. We described critical thinking as a skill, combination of several subskills when a person uses more complicated operations and also in terms of using a quality of thinking, slow, analytical thinking and its two types, numerical and verbal analytical thinking. Among the components of media literacy, we included attitude towards personalized algorithms and digital literacy.

### Critical thinking

The term critical thinking (CT) can be derived from Greek words kriterion (norm, rule) and kriticos (able to discriminate). It can be defined as making inferences/judgements based on certain rules (Paul & Elder, 2003).

Watson and Glaser (2000) define CT as a combination of skills, knowledge and attitudes. They focused on several subskills that are involved in CT:

1. making inferences, i.e. the ability to distinguish between false and true conclusions that were made from the given information;
2. recognition of assumptions, reflecting the skill to differentiate between facts and opinions;
3. deduction, the ability to decide whether a conclusion was logically derived from the given information;
4. interpretation, the ability to evaluate proofs, facts, relevance of conclusions;
5. evaluation of arguments, their strength, relevance, validity in relation to a given problem (Watson & Glaser, 2000).

CT can be viewed in terms of the existence of two systems of human mind, system 1 and system 2 as well. System 1 is usually characterized as more intuitive, fast, automatic, emotional, focusing on the whole and operating without intentional control. System 2 engages more profound reasoning, focuses attention, operates in a slowly way, follows several rules, evidence, processes abstract concepts, makes plans, considers several options when solving a problem. It creates bases for CT, is often called as a controller, slow, analytical, or reflective thinking (Kahneman, 2011). According to Frederick (2005) it can suppress the automatic, intuitive responses of the mind, system 1.

We can distinguish between numerical and verbal analytical thinking. Numerical analytical thinking requires the use of mathematical operations while solving a certain problem (Sinayev & Peters, 2015). Verbal analytical thinking is connected to solving verbal problems that do not require the use of mathematical operations, nor the manipulation with numbers (Sirota et al., 2021).

It is possible to learn how to analyze, reflect our own judgements and suppress the intuitive responses (Kahneman, 2011). One can benefit from such quality of thinking, for example, while using social media, when trying to become a media-literate individual.

**Media literacy**

Media literacy is a skill thanks to which a person gains access to different types of media. A media-literate person is able to search, analyse, understand the way of their functioning, think critically about several aspects of media, create his/her own content, opinions and attitudes, understand the environment that contributes to the creation of the view of the world (Nutil, 2018). Attitude towards personalized algorithms and digital literacy are key components of media literacy (Tímár, 2019).

Algorithms are mechanisms, sequences of procedures through which certain data are processed and then form new information. They function as filters (Bozdag, 2013) that select which information will be displayed to the users of social media. This way they create content that perfectly matches the users´ interests. Their existence brings several advantages and disadvantages. Information can be selected from reliable sources, this way the users can widen their knowledge in a certain area or avoid content that is not interesting to them. On the other hand, users may not be informed about events, news, opinions that do not fall within the created algorithm (Bozdag, 2013).

Digital literacy is a broader concept than media literacy, is described as the ability to read, understand hypertextual or multimedia content (Rodríguez de Dios et al., 2016). There was created a 5-dimensional model that focuses on components of digital literacy (Rodríguez de Dios & Iguarta, 2016):

1.  technical skills, i.e. the ability to use digital tools effectively;
2.  communication skills, i.e. the ability to communicate through digital means;
3.  information skills, i.e. the ability to search for, find, gain access, evaluate a certain information;
4.  critical skills, i.e. the ability to critically analyze the gained information;
5.  safe use skills, i.e. the ability to use digital communication, technology without putting oneself at risk.

## Critical thinking and media literacy

The main aim of our research was to investigate whether adolescents 'general CT is related to their way of use of social media. Therefore, we have decided to investigate the relationships between adolescents´ CT (skill- subskills- making inferences, recognition of assumptions, deduction, interpretation, evaluation of arguments; numerical analytical thinking; verbal analytical thinking) and the way of use of social media, i.e. components of media literacy (attitude towards personalized algorithms; digital literacy).

Previous research has demonstrated that participants with negative attitude towards personalized algorithms had a significantly higher level of CT than participants with positive attitude towards personalized algorithms (Ku et al., 2019). Therefore, we expected:

Positive relationship between adolescents´ CT (H1: skill- subskills- H1a: making inferences, H1b: recognition of assumptions, H1c: deduction, H1d: interpretation, H1e: evaluation of arguments;

H2: numerical analytical thinking; H3: verbal analytical thinking) and negative attitude towards personalized algorithms on social media.

Research investigating the connections between CT and digital literacy pointed out statistically significant relationships (Haryanto et al., 2022; Ku et al., 2019). Therefore, we expected:

Positive relationship between adolescents´ CT (H4: skill- subskills- H4a: making inferences, H4b: recognition of assumptions, H4c: deduction, H4d: interpretation, H4e: evaluation of arguments; H5: numerical analytical thinking; H6: verbal analytical thinking) and digital literacy.

## METHODS

### Participants

The research sample consisted of 64 Psychology students of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Faculty of Social Sciences, and Health Care, attending first grade. Four participants from the original sample of 68 students were excluded due to incomplete research battery. The selection of participants was non-representative. Respondents were aged 19-22 (M = 19,92; SD = 0,72), 56 women (87,5%), 8 men. More than half of the participants (n = 35; 54.7%) spend between 1 and 3 hours per day on social media. The most frequently used social networks by participants are shown in Chart 1. All 64 participants were aware that social networks use personalized algorithms to select information for their users.
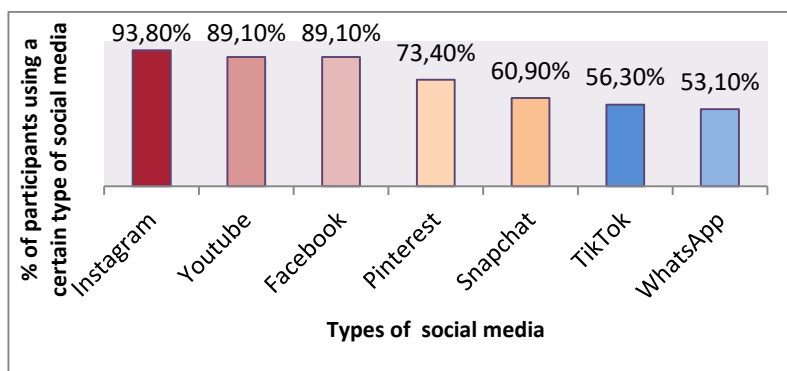
*Graph 1: Participants´ most frequently used social media*

**Research design**

Our research design was correlational, quantitative, non-experimental, and cross-sectional. Data collection was conducted in person, in early June 2023, during a Cognitive psychology course. Participants completed the chosen pencil-and-paper measurement instruments at a time interval of approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes. To anonymise them, they were assigned an identification number. All participants agreed to the use of their results for the purpose of our work.

**Measures**

To measure CT and the components of media literacy, we chose several measurement tools. We also collected basic information regarding gender, age, type of school attended, social networking sites used, and the average time spent daily using social networking sites by our participants.

To measure CT as a skill, we used the Watson-Glaser CT Assessment, Form C (T-185) (hereafter W-GCTA). Form C was developed in 1991 and is available in Slovakia but has not been standardized for the Slovak population (Watson & Glaser, 2000). It is a test of specific abilities that measures a unidimensional aspect of CT. It consists of 80 items that are divided into 5 subtests, each subtest consisting of 16 items. The subtests are related to reasoning, recognition of assumptions, deduction, interpretation, and argument evaluation (see Fig. 1). Some items are multiple choice, others are dichotomous. It is also possible to obtain a subscore for each subtest. Higher raw scores are indicative of higher CT ability. Acceptable split-half reliability ($\alpha$= 0.88) has been demonstrated (Watson & Glaser, 2000).

*Second Type – Recognition of Assumptions*

**Statement:** "Those companies that are especially vulnerable to high levels of cyberattacks should invest more in data security, either internally or by bringing in external experts."

**Proposed Assumption – Companies that are especially vulnerable to high levels of cyberattacks do not invest in data security.**

- Assumption made

- Assumption not made

Picture 1: Example of an item from W-GCTA, subskill recognition of assumptions

We used the Cognitive Reflection Test to measure slow, analytical thinking. Two different forms were used, i.e., the Verbal Cognitive Reflection Test (hereafter CRT-V) (Sirota et al., 2021) and the Numerical Cognitive Reflection Test (hereafter CRT-N) (Frederick, 2005). Neither of these has been standardized on a Slovak population. The CRT-N consists of 3 items, for each of which a correct and intuitive answer was offered. Higher raw scores are indicative of a higher level of numerical analytical thinking. Due to the lower number of items, it is a measurement tool with lower reliability, internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.33$). For example: *Coffee and milk together cost €1.20. Coffee costs €1.00 more than milk. How much does milk cost? 10 cents; 20 cents*

The CRT-V measurement tool was created to measure analytical thinking skills without the use of mathematical tasks that may induce anxiety, restlessness (Sirota et al., 2021). It consists of 10 items where an intuitive response and a correct, rational answer are given. In our research, we did not administer response options to participants. The maximum attainable raw score is 10 points; the internal consistency coefficient was acceptable in our study ($\alpha = 0.8$). A higher attainable raw score is indicative of a higher level of verbal analytical thinking. For example: *Laura's father has 5 daughters, no sons. Four of them are named Nana, Nene, Nini, Nono. What is the likely name of the fifth daughter?*

To measure attitudes toward personalized algorithms, we used a self-report questionnaire by Ku et al. (2019), which was pilot tested by the authors. The questionnaire consisted of 2 parts. Part 1 focused on awareness of the existence of personalized algorithms, part 2 on attitudes towards them in social networking environments. 3 items were related to negative, 3 to positive attitudes towards personalized algorithms. Each statement was scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1-completely disagree, 5- completely agree) (see Fig. 2). Items related to positive attitude were recoded. A higher achieved gross score is indicative of a more negative attitude, while a lower achieved gross score is indicative of a more positive attitude towards personalized algorithms. In our study, the internal consistency coefficient was satisfactory ($\alpha=0.61$). For example: *It appears to me as privacy violation*.

The digital literacy measurement tool was part of a self-report questionnaire by Rodríguez de Dios et al. (2016), focusing on the ability to critically evaluate the information received. It is based on the model of the 5 dimensions of digital literacy that we described in the introductory section. It consisted of 5 statements scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1-completely disagree, 5-completely agree) (see Fig. 3). A higher achieved raw score is indicative of a higher level of digital literacy. Acceptable reliability of the selected part of the questionnaire has been demonstrated ($\alpha=0.75$)

(Rodríguez de Dios et al., 2016), the internal consistency coefficient was acceptable in our study($\alpha$=0.68). For example: *I know how to compare different sources to decide if information is true*.

**Data analysis**

The data obtained were evaluated using IBM SPSS Statistics 20 (IBM Corp. Released 2011). We focused on the descriptive characteristics of the variables under study. Subsequently, we used parametric Pearson's and nonparametric Spearman's correlation coefficients to detect relationships between variables when the normality condition was not met.

**RESULTS**

First, descriptive statistics of the studied variables were calculated. Results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive characteristics of CT and components of media literacy

| **Critical thinking** | N | M | Mdn | SD | Min- Max | Skew | Kurt |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Making inferences | 64 | 7,67 | 7,00 | 2,23 | 3-13 | ,322 | -,640 |
| Recognition of assumptions | 64 | 10,98 | 11,00 | 1,79 | 6-15 | -,304 | ,375 |
| Deduction | 64 | 8,66 | 9,00 | 2,01 | 2-14 | -,406 | ,299 |
| Interpretation | 64 | 9,98 | 10,00 | 1,92 | 6-16 | ,286 | ,575 |
| Evaluation of arguments | 64 | 11,38 | 11,00 | 1,96 | 5-15 | -,547 | ,674 |
| Numerical analytical thinking | 64 | 2,45 | 3,00 | 0,754 | 0-3 | -1, 438 | 1,942 |
| Verbal analytical thinking | 64 | 6,70 | 7,00 | 2,63 | 1-10 | -,651 | -,656 |
| **Media literacy** | | | | | | | |
| Negative attitude towards personalized algorithms | 64 | 18,63 | 18,00 | 3,43 | 12-29 | ,615 | ,714 |
| Digital literacy | 64 | 19,61 | 19,00 | 2,83 | 11-25 | ,031 | ,558 |

 n = sample size, M = mean, Mdn = median, SD = standard deviation, Min – Max = minimum-maximum, Skew = skewness, Kurt = kurtosis

Then we calculated correlations between CT variables and negative attitudes towards personalized algorithms on social networking sites among adolescents (Table 2). We also analysed the correlations between CT and digital literacy in adolescents (Table 2).

Table 2: Relationships between CT and components of media literacy

| Media literacy | Negative attitude towards personalized algorithms | Digital literacy |
|---|---|---|
| **Critical thinking** | | |
| Making inferences | ,058 | -,063 |
| Recognition of assumptions | ,054 | ,036 |
| Deduction | ,170 | -,035 |
| Interpretation | ,098 | ,048 |
| Evaluation of arguments | -,028 | -,247* |
| Numerical analytical thinking | ,001 | ,136 |
| Verbal analytical thinking | -,039 | ,758 |

* $p < .05$

After performing statistical analysis for H1, H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d, H1e, H2 and H3, we can conclude that the results do not indicate a statistically significant relationship between CT (ability, sub-skills; numerical and verbal analytical thinking) and negative attitudes towards personalized algorithms on social networking sites among adolescents. Because of this, we reject the hypotheses.

After conducting statistical analysis for H4, H4a, H4b, H4c, H4d, H4e, H5 and H6, we can conclude that the results almost in no case indicate a statistically significant relationship between CT (ability sub-skills; numerical and verbal analytical thinking) and digital literacy in adolescents. In the case of the link between the sub-skill of argument evaluation and digital literacy, we identified a statistically significant negative relationship, which we had not originally predicted. Because of this, we reject the hypotheses.

**DISCUSSION**

The main aim of our research was to investigate whether adolescents´ general CT is related to their way of use of social media. Therefore, we have decided to investigate the relationships between adolescents´ CT (making inferences, recognition of assumptions, deduction, interpretation, evaluation of arguments; numerical analytical thinking; verbal analytical thinking) and the way of use of social media, i.e. components of media literacy (attitude towards personalized algorithms; digital literacy). The results differ from our formulated hypothesis.

**Critical thinking and media literacy**

We hypothesized that there would be a positive association between CT (ability, numerical, and verbal analytical thinking) and negative attitudes towards personalized algorithms on social networking sites among adolescents (H1a-e; H2; H3). Our findings did not support these

hypotheses. The findings did not indicate that adolescents who possess higher levels of CT tend to hold more negative attitudes towards personalized algorithms on social networks.

We also hypothesized a positive association between CT (ability, numerical, and verbal analytical thinking) and digital literacy in adolescents (H4a-e; H5; H6). It has not been demonstrated that adolescents with higher levels of CT achieve a higher level of digital literacy. We aimed to determine if adolescents who have attained a certain level of general CT can transfer it to another, much more specific area of social networking. However, previous findings on the transferability of CT to other specific domains do not provide a clear answer (Dumitru, 2013; Tiruneh et al., 2018). We believe that the unclear outcome regarding the transfer of CT to specific content is associated with our results. Each individual should reach the stage of formal operations in their cognitive development (Langmeier & Krejčířová, 2006), acquire some knowledge (Ennis, 1989) about CT, how social networks function, and then correctly identify situations requiring CT involvement. Meeting these conditions is not easy. Most of the time, individuals are guided to acquire general CT in a formal educational setting, and rarely is the possibility of connecting acquired knowledge with everyday life (Ennis, 1989; Tiruneh et al., 2018), such as social networking environments, highlighted. In this way, it is more challenging to transfer CT to the more distant realm of the negative aspects of social networks, such as the potential consequences for users brought about by personalized algorithms. It is more challenging to ensure that adolescents' general CT contributes to digital literacy. While our participants were introduced to ways of thinking and the mistakes people make in thinking during the cognitive psychology course, they also learned about the basic characteristics of CT. However, the specific area of media literacy was not addressed during the mentioned courses.

In our study, different perspectives on CT were investigated using objective measurement tools. The expression of the extent of negative attitudes towards personalized algorithms on social networks and digital literacy were examined using self-report questionnaires. Research indicates that adolescents tend to overestimate their abilities, knowledge, and to present their opinions and attitudes in a desirable manner (Gabbard & Romanelli, 2021; León et al., 2023). There is often a lack of consistency between adolescents' subjective and objective assessments of the knowledge and skills acquired during different subjects and years of study (Gabbard & Romanelli, 2021; Vraga et al., 2016). Although adolescents belonging to the group of digital natives are in contact with digital technologies from an early age, they may not objectively assess their knowledge of the digital space and social networks. As Vraga et al. (2016) point out, individuals may have difficulty objectively assessing their own abilities and knowledge regarding media. Daily use of social media does not reflect the depth of knowledge regarding the use of different technologies and social networks. We hypothesized that scores on objective tests mapping CT domains did not correlate with expressions of self-reported levels of negative attitudes toward personalized algorithms on social media, thus failing to demonstrate an association between the variables examined.

We also believe that our participants may have overestimated their own abilities and knowledge regarding social networking, which subsequently were not consistent with objective measurement tools examining CT domains, thus failing to demonstrate associations between CT and digital literacy.

In the case of the association between argument evaluation subskills and digital literacy, we identified a weak negative statistically significant relationship. The aforementioned result could be due to our participants' overestimation of their level of digital literacy, which did not correspond with their level of argument evaluation, i.e., CT subskill.

**Limitation and suggestions for further research**

We consider one limitation to be the chosen CT measurement instrument, the W-GCTA Form C (Watson & Glaser, 2000), which our participants reported was lengthy and laborious to complete. We recommend that future researchers choose a less time-consuming measurement instrument focusing on CT as a higher-order skill domain, or create a shortened version of the W-GCTA Form C. The CRT-N showed lower reliability; because of this, we recommend using other item types or a longer form of the measurement instrument to explore the area of numerical analytic thinking.

The characteristics of our cohort may also be a limitation, as these are first-year, single-discipline psychology students, and the results cannot be clearly generalized to a broader, less specific population of adolescents. We encourage future researchers to involve other fields of study or focus on changes in the aforementioned domains that may occur across adolescence and development.

The fact that we did not use a combination of self-report and objective measurement instruments when measuring all variables may also be a limitation. In this way, it would have been possible to determine whether adolescents always tend to overestimate their knowledge and abilities on self-report measurement instruments. If we suspect that there is no agreement in participants' subjective and objective ratings, we recommend that future researchers apply both types of measurement instruments to all domains under study.

**CONCLUSION**

CT and media literacy are key skills when trying to navigate the complex world of social networking, even for adolescents, who are the largest user group. Because of this, we focused on exploring the association between general CT and media literacy in adolescents. Our results yielded remarkable findings. They prompted us to reflect on the possibility that general CT may be difficult to transfer to the specific space of social networking, or that adolescents may be limited in their assessment of how they use social networking sites. Our chosen area requires further detailed investigation. Until we reach firm conclusions, we can participate in the development of CT and media literacy in adolescents and observe how the aforementioned abilities change across development. Perhaps this is the way that will help us in elucidating the links between general CT and media literacy.

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**Acknowledgments**

# ´EMBODIED REFLECTION´
# - A PHASE OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL HEURISTIC RESEARCH
# A process-oriented study to introduce a method of reflection centered in the body

**Roberta Legros Štěpánková**[1]**, Ivo Čermák**[1,2]

[1] Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno
[2] Faculty of Arts and Letters, Catholic University, Ružomberok
robi.stepankova@gmail.com

*Abstract:* This article aims to shed some light on the importance of embodiment and an embodied attitude towards data analysis, within the framework of a heuristic phenomenological inquiry. It is a process-oriented study, by which the authors want to point out that it is a partial/temporal interception of a larger body of research. It presents embodied reflection (ER), through the original concepts it stems from – embodiment and reflective practices, as a step/phase in the phenomenological analysis of experience. Thus it is proposed to the reader as a systematically described, newly designed tool, which can serve psychologists and psychotherapists in practice, qualitative researchers, or social workers in research and practice, to reach a fuller understanding of the researched/experienced phenomenon. ER is also presented as part of the data analysis procedure in a concrete research inquiry centered in the essence of improvisation in dance and body-oriented psychotherapy contexts. An added value of this tool and/or a contribution to any kind of phenomenological or psychotherapeutic qualitative study is discussed in relation to the existing literature. Some further possible ways of employing this method are proposed

*Keywords:* embodied reflection, embodiment, improvisation, heuristic phenomenology

## INTRODUCTION

> Writing needs to breathe and move.
> Lamott

### The context

This article presents a part of a long-lasting heuristic phenomenological study (spanning from 2018 till 2024) of the experience with improvisation in two contexts: 1/ dance and 2/ psychotherapy*. The aim of the original research is to understand the essence of improvisation as a "way of doing/working" both in dance and psychotherapy that includes the body as a valued source of information and a locus where the process happens.

The aim of this paper is to share a specific method called "Embodied reflection" (ER) especially designed for data analysis in heuristic phenomenological research design proposed by Moustakas

(1990). This procedure is proposed and systematically described by the author as she uses it within the framework of her PhD. research.

We propose that embodied reflection helps the phenomenological researcher to empathize in a deeper and fuller way with the participants of the research and with the data itself. Embodied reflection shows itself as *a way of living and dealing with what wants to be known* in a conscious way, and it includes and acknowledges the knowledge of our moving body.

We would like to briefly introduce three subjects/contexts – improvisation, dance and body-oriented psychotherapy – improvisation being the central phenomenon under study, and the latter two being the contexts/domains in which improvisation is investigated.

## IMPROVISATION

> Each element is pre-existing, but the way improvisers can combine them
> is a unique creation of the present moment.
> Coste et al.

> Improvisation implies a deep connection
> between the personal and the communal, self and world.
> Rob Wallace

In psychology, improvisation is typically conceived as a creative process without a script or anticipated preparation (Gueugnon et al., 2016 a, b in Coste et al. 2019).

Coste states that improvisation is central in many fields, including performing arts (e.g. music, theatre or dance) and everyday life (e.g. improvising a dinner, a speech or actions in sports), and is conceived to be shaped by the lifetime history of the individuals, especially via their past (bodily) experiences and training (Chaleraiu et al., 2002 in Coste et al., 2019).

Most of the books that have been written about movement improvisation have contained very limited discussion on how it really works (De Spain, p.4, 2014). In fact, there has been almost no qualitative research carried out on the experience of improvisation. We claim that in general, the research in this field is focused on the necessity to either quantify the improvisational products in some way or to measure the neurological processes awakened in improvisation.

Improvisation is an essential part of any creative research process, and according to the anthropologists Elisabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold, even 'the way we work' generally (Cools, 2015). They see three distinctive qualities or characteristics of improvisation: 1) It is generative; 2) It is relational; 3) It is temporal (Cools, 2015).

According to Van Imschoot (1997, p.23 in Cools, 2015) improvisation itself improvises along the way and through different generations of practitioners. Their needs and questions, their seriousness and playfulness, will redefine its content continuously. On the other hand, de Spain (2014, p. 8) dares to confront us with two things that are quickly encountered when engaging in improvisation: the limitlessness of possibilities and the limitations of "self" – your ways of thinking, your style of problem solving, the boundaries of your physicality. He further asks himself creatively: Where does improvisation reside? He answers by saying that it is as much about mind as movement. Improvisation, to him, means coming into contact with the mind of movement and movement of mind (2014, p. 53).

Improvisation in everyday speech carries a temporal dimension, as in acting "on the spur of the moment" or as in performing "from the materials and sources available without previous planning" ("Improvisation" in *Collins Dictionary*). Meanwhile in art, improvisation is referenced as a special form of artistic production (Douglas, 2012).

From the French language of the 17th century, the verb ´improviser´ meant to "compose or say extemporaneously". From Latin, *´improviso´* meant "unforeseen, not studied or prepared beforehand," from the assimilated form of *in-* "not, opposite of" + *provisus* "foreseen" (etymological dictionary). From the Italian '*improvvisare',* derived from *improvviso* – "that which happens unexpectedly, with no preparation" (Lippi, 2016).

It is possible to see improvisation as a semi-transparent, multi-staged, multi-leveled process through which we sense, perceive, think and decide in real time (Fischlin & Porter, 2012). Thus, we may see improvisation as a multi-layered process involving many (if not all) of the known basic psychological processes.

We agree deeply with the following stance of the ´Improvisation, Community and Social Practice Institute´ that *"Improvisation must be considered not simply as a musical form, but as a complex social phenomenon that mediates transcultural inter-artistic (and inter-disciplinary) exchanges that produce new conceptions of identity, community, history, and the body* (ICASP, 2017).

Improvisation, due to its spontaneous, immediate and elusive nature, is often seen as an omnipresent activity. While we agree that the technique of (dance) improvisation may be seen as a dynamic set of skills that one may train in order to evolve mastery of improvisation, there are theoreticians that consider improvisation as an action present in our lives. For example, Fischlin and Porter (2016) consider improvisation as a necessary experimentation with the context, but also a specific practice, an awareness of playing the potential and possibility of any moment with the tools at hand. On the other hand, Lippi (2016) affirms that improvisation concerns any human practice that invites us into the (realm of) creation, regardless of the area in question.Engel and Keller (2011) state that despite noteworthy attempts to elucidate the cognitive underpinnings of improvisation, the precise nature of the processes that enable a performer to invent melodic material in real-time remain "shrouded in mystery" (Ashley, 2009 in Engel and Keller, 2011).

## BODY ORIENTED PSYCHOTHERAPY & DANCE

The rationale for bringing together two, seemingly qualitatively and formally different contexts - that of body-oriented psychotherapy and dance, is actually very simple.  Roberta Legros, one of the authors this paper, is a psychologist and body-oriented psychotherapist at the same time working as a dancer. According to the *inner frame of reference*, one of the basic heuristic research concepts defined by Moustakas (1990), the two experiences – the psychotherapeutic work and dancing – have met inside of herself over the course of fifteen years, and have both been essential parts of her work and practice. In spite of the imagined distance between these domains in our practical life, we notice that there is a tendency in certain groups of personal growth practitioners to incline towards dance, movement and body therapy studies. These two fields resemble and overlap most obviously if one searches for the embodied approach to human and soul, or if a movement practitioner looks for a deeper understanding of the psychological and spiritual layers of the self.

## BODY ORIENTED PSYCHOTHERAPY [1]

Rohricht describes Body oriented psychotherapy (BOP) (Rohricht, 2009) as a heterogenous field which presents itself as rather disorganized. In 2009, Rohricht stated that there was not a coherent systematic definition of BOP. Body oriented psychotherapy is an umbrella term for therapies that are oriented on the corporal experience, movement, and dance as expression of one´s feeling, and therefore also encompasses dance-movement therapy.

In BOP, therapeutic process spans across the domains of cognitive reconstruction, insight oriented processes and uniquely modulated emotional processing, affect regulation, movement behavior, and bodily self-awareness (Rohricht, 2009).

## DANCE MOVEMENT PSYCHOTHERAPY

> The mind-body interaction is extremely important in dance/movement therapy.
> Pericelous

Dance movement therapy (DMT) as a psychotherapeutic approach was developed from the 1950s simultaneously on both coasts of the United States. The western pioneer was Mary Whitehouse, and on the east it was Marian Chace.

Dance Movement Therapy is the use of expressive movement and dance as a vehicle through which an individual can engage in the process of personal integration and growth. It is founded on the principle that there is a relationship between motion and emotion, and that by exploring a more varied vocabulary of movement, people experience the possibility of becoming more securely balanced yet increasingly spontaneous and adaptable. The dance movement therapist creates a holding environment in which such feelings can be safely expressed, acknowledged and communicated (Payne 1992).

The American Dance Movement Therapy Association (**ADMT**) currently defines dance movement therapy as the psychotherapeutic use of movement to **promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration** of the individual, for the **purpose of improving health and well-being.**

### DANCE

**As Mackrell (2024) states in her article defining dance as an impulse and artistic expression, dance is a** movement of the body in a rhythmic way, usually to music and within a given space, for the purpose of expressing an idea or emotion, releasing energy, or simply taking delight in the movement itself.

Dance is a powerful impulse, but the art of dance is that impulse channeled by skillful performers into something that becomes intensely expressive, and that may delight spectators who feel no wish to dance themselves.

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[1] *Note of the author: One of the authors – Roberta Legros Štěpánková – completed a masters degree in Dance Movement Therapy (M DaT) at CODARTS, the University for the Arts in Rotterdam, in 2015. Following from the way her psychotherapeutic practice has been evolving during the past seven years, she describes herself as a „body oriented psychotherapist", in spite of the qualification reached in „dance movement therapy". Being a dancer and choreographer and at the same time a psychotherapist, she focuses mainly on the importance of body awareness, consciousness of our bodily experiences, and of movement. Presenting herself as a body oriented psychotherapist, she aims to more precisely explain at first view that her primary instrument in a therapeutic session is not dance, but the moving body.*

## EMBODIED REFLECTION THE BODY

> I propose a new form of courage of the body: the use of the body not for the development of muscles, but for the cultivation of sensitivity. This will mean the development of the capacity to listen with the body. It will be, as Nietzsche remarked, learning to think with the body. It will be the valuing the body as the means of empathy with others, as expression of the self as a thing of beauty and as a rich source of pleasure.
> Rollo May

> There is more wisdom in your body than in your deepest philosophy.
> Friedrich Nietzsche

The body is an entity which actively rises towards and gets to know its surroundings (Merleau-Ponty 1962 in Rumble 2012). The body as lived is the medium for what existential philosophy refers to as ´being-in-the-world´ (Merleau-Ponty 1962 in Rumble 2012). The body discloses the world just as the world discloses itself through the body (Finlay, 2006)

The body is the vehicle of being in the world, as Merleau-Ponty states (1945/62 in Finlay, 2006). He saw the body as a horizon latent in all our experience…and anterior to every determining thought. He proposed the body as the place, the locus through which we understand ourselves and the world.

We learn through the body.

To support this, we might follow Douglas & Coessens (2011), delineating movement as simultaneously continuous and discrete, emerging out of our physiology as bipedal beings capable of moving through time by orientating ourselves in space. This for the authors acts as a metaphor for how we develop knowledge in the world through different levels of expression, translation and trans-mediation.

The body is shaped and shapes itself as the very presence of self, better *the selving of presence*. It is the revelation of self to the other, to itself, an articulation of its being. The original disclosure of self is rooted in bodily expression. The mind and body are not two separate substances, but different articulations of a singleness of being that is itself neither mental nor material (Desmond, 1990, 66).

Merleau-Ponty calls the lived unity of the mind–body-world system ''the lived body''. The body understood as a lived body is necessarily ambiguous, since it is both material and self-conscious. It is physiological and psychological, but Merleau-Ponty asserts that these terms are not as dichotomous as one would imagine. There is mind in the body and body in the mind (Bullington, 2013). Desmond (1990, 69) considers the body as an abundance of presence, as the appearing of mind in sensuous immediacy, in terms of what we may call functional, aesthetic, and expressive form.

## EMBODIMENT

Embodiment is an ongoing process of bringing conscious self-awareness to and about the body (Leigh & Bailey, 2013). It is often synonymized with self-awareness, mindfulness, or sense of embodiment, and it is suggested that it allows the reflective practitioner to be conscious of her own thoughts, the environment in which she finds herself, and the reactions that she has (164, in Leigh & Bailey, 2013).

Lakoff and Johnson present three foundational principles: 1) the mind is inherently embodied, 2) thought is mostly unconscious, 3) abstract concepts are largely metaphorical (in Pahofer & Payne, 2011, p. 218). Knowing does therefore happen in and through the body, in an unconscious or preconscious way, and in a non-languaged, metaphorical manner (Panhofer and Payne, 2011, p. 219).

Thorburn (2008), as cited in Leigh & Bailey (2013, p. 163), states that "the essence of an experience is its intentionality: the meaning of events, the meaning of embodied action including kinaesthetic awareness of one´s movements, and the importance of sensations as they are experience by the body".

"Embodied cognition" and the "embodied mind" have recently been proposed by philosophers believing that the nature of the human mind is largely determined by the form of the human body. Gallagher (2005) investigates the influence of the body on self-consciousness, perception, language and social cognition, claiming that the body shapes the mind at a fundamental level, contributing to a prior kind of knowledge which is unavailable to introspective consciousness, a knowledge which remains "behind the scenes" (Gallagher, 2005, p.141).

Damasio calls this knowledge from "behind the scenes" our "nonverbal narrative of knowing" (Damasio, 1999, p 186). This nonverbal narrative creates consciousness that, according to him, is the foundation of consciousness.

> The rich sense of embodied experience is the locus of meaning and knowledge.
> M. Johnson

Human beings have bodies that are the locus of their complex interactions with their environment thus embodiment has a crucial role in understanding, reasoning and knowing. If knowing is a mode of practical activity, and if the locus of that practice is our embodied being in the world, then *we know* that the world must surely include the patterns of our bodily experience (Johnson, 1989).

**METHOD**

> We are in the world through our body, and the basis of knowledge lies
> in the sensorimotor experience, the most intimate mode of knowing.
> Ruth Foster

This paper shares an extract of an extended phenomenological study centered in experience with improvisation (as a process and outcome) in two related yet distinct contexts: 1/dance and 2/body oriented psychotherapy. A group of dancers whose practice and performance work essentially centers on improvisation and a group of psychotherapists within the field of body-oriented psychotherapies have been interviewed, and were analysed along with the data originating directly from the experience of the researcher.

The researcher adopted a double role: "me-as-researcher", initiating and proceeding with the study, and "me-as-participant", interviewing herself about her own experience with improvisation in both contexts. The researcher then deals with the constant oscillation between the roles and related processes of data-creation, data-analysis and deeper understanding of the essence of experience.

This paper is designed as a presentation of a specific method of analysis called embodied reflection, the potential of which we aim to illuminate in the scope of this article. The details of the

original heuristic phenomenological study are therefore omitted. Due to the methodological richness and volume of the original study, here we aim exclusively to:

1. briefly explain the focus of the original research, especially its methodology, which is less known and applied in our qualitative research context
2. introduce the embodied reflection as a methodological tool while sharing the theoretical underpinnings that give it grounding
3. suggest and propose embodied reflection as part of the analysis of the heuristic phenomenological method through sharing some examples of it in practice

## PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH

*The source of all activity is quality,*
*if there was only quantity, everything would be calm.*
Josef Nadj

Linda Finlay advocates for research that teaches her something new, and ideally moves her in some way. One of the main purposes the author is striving for with this paper, next to finding out in more detail about the process and essence of the improvisational act, is to provide psychology and psychotherapy with more practice and knowledge concerning the embodied experience of a therapist and researcher, the embodied ways of reflection, and thus proposing the body as one of the main "instruments" we do use and need to use/navigate consciously as we work in research and psychotherapeutic practice.

For me, *phenomenology* has become more than a research methodology.
It *is a way of being.*
Linda Finlay

The empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions, which provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience. The approach "seeks to disclose and elucidate the phenomena of behavior as they manifest themselves in their perceived immediacy" (van Kaam 1966 in Moustakas 1994, p 13).

The aim of phenomenology is to describe the lived world of everyday experience (Finlay, 2011). Phenomenological research into individual experience gives insight into, and understanding of, the human condition. Sometimes it articulates the things we already know tacitly but have not articulated in depth (Finlay, 2011).

Phenomenological research is potentially transformative for both researcher and participant (or in the case of heuristic phenomenology: for the researcher AS the participant). It offers individuals the opportunity to be witnessed in their experience and allows them to "give voice" to what they are going through. It also opens new possibilities for the researcher and researched to make sense of the experience in focus (Finlay, 2011).

Phenomenological research aims to capture lived experience by connecting to it immediately (Finlay, 2011). The immediacy is inherent to the improvisational attitude and in fact to the natural bodily being – where the immediacy is embedded in its flesh and tissue and an always present condition of being-in the world and in/with itself.

Finlay (2011) proposed a list of 6 facets that every phenomenological project should include, which we consider as significant in grasping the essence of what it means to elaborate phenomenological science. Subsequently, we will discuss only some of the facets in more detail.

1/ A focus on **lived experience and meanings**
2/ The use of **rigorous, rich and resonant description**
3/ A concern with **existential issues**
4/ The assumption that **body and world are intertwined**
5/ The application of the **"phenomenological attitude"**
6/ A potentially **transformative relational approach**

The assumption that **body and world are intertwined** captures the essence of the presented procedure´s focus. The paper endeavors to shed more light on the embodied experience of improvisation itself - through the *interviews*, where the participants reflect verbally about the meaning of improvisation, and in an *embodied reflection*, which is a method of movement reflection followed by verbal reflection conducted by the researcher herself, in order to channel qualitatively different data clarifying the improvisational nature of being/inter-acting in dance making and psychotherapy.

### HEURISTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY (Moustakas, 1990)

> Heuristic research came into my life when I was searching for a word that would
> meaningfully encompass the process that I believed to be essential
> in investigations of human experience.
> Clark Moustakas

Heuristic phenomenological inquiry is a reflexive version of descriptive phenomenology that diverges from the empirical, descriptive attitude in its implicit hermeneutic shift and focus on researcher self-search and transformation (Finlay, 2011). Heuristic research is a way of engaging in scientific search using processes aimed at discovery through dialogue and self-inquiry to find underlying meanings of experience (Finlay, 2009, p. 163). The reason we briefly present this method is to provide the reader with a framework and paradigm of the original study. The phases of a heuristic phenomenological research were designed by Moustakas (1990) as follows (Table 1).

**Table 1 Phases of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990)**

| 1. | initial engagement | wakening an intense interest and passion in the research subject/phenomenon |
|---|---|---|
| 2. | immersion | the researcher begins to live, sleep, breath the research question to intimately appreciate its effects |
| 3. | incubation | engaging intuition awaiting tacit knowing to percolate to consciousness |
| 4. | illumination | reviewing all the data in order to identify implicit, essential meanings |
| 5. | explication | familiarizing oneself more deeply with the data, unfolding the layers of the meanings and pulling the key themes together |
| 6. | creative synthesis | forming a depiction of the findings through a creative, artistic process towards a work of art |

**EMBODIED REFLECTION**

There is a resonance between embodied self-awareness and phenomenology.
Leigh & Bailey

The reason why we present and put emphasis on the potential of embodied reflection is that far too often the researcher´s presence – let alone their bodily presence – is sanitized out of research accounts (Burn, 2002 in Finlay, 2006). Through her own experience, the author has recognized the potential of the body as a source of information in the process of understanding the own self and the other. It is through the lived body (Merleau-Ponty, 1908-1961 in Bullington, 2013) that we are in the world and the world is in us, thus only by involving the body as an essential aspect in the process of knowing and understanding, can we reach the essence of experience more comprehensively.

Finlay (2006), a phenomenological researcher advocating the role of the researcher's bodily experience, states: "*If embodiment is a pervasive fundamental presence in the lifeworld, it surely behoves phenomenological researchers to engage with it in a serious and sustained way*".

To take embodiment seriously is to take seriously how one speaks and how one listens to self and other ... being an involved researcher – an observer that is being affected by and is affecting what is taking place. Being a researcher requires that one becomes fully and thoughtfully involved, as if one is being engaged in a dance of moving forward and back as an embodied being (Halling and Goldfarb, 1991 in Finlay, 2006).

**Embodied reflection as a methodological tool**

Embodied reflection (further ER) is a way of reflecting on our experience and even on the experience of others, by looking into bodily experiences. We propose it as a systematic and - to the human being - natural way of "thinking through the moving body" about the meanings of our experience. As Smears (2009 in Leigh & Bailey, 2013, p. 164) states, embodiment and embodied awareness can be an integral part of a reflective process.

Stella and Taggart (2020) write about the phenomenologically-based embodied reflection as a reflection strategy of recalling a memory of a (supervision) session, while reflecting on how that experience felt in the body, exploring the sensations, emotions, images,and feelings.

Based on their research, they state that the embodied reflective process results in a direct, unmediated, and visceral knowing of the other, eventually affording both client and analyst a way to further recognize and understand the dissociated self-narratives and relational patterns, and integrate them into a more reflective and cohesive self (Stella and Taggart, 2020).

ER is neither mystical nor exclusively experienced by artists or experts. Camille Buttingsrud (2015) believes that „we all have the capacity to reflect emotionally and bodily; it is the universal human experience of being profoundly focused through the non-conceptual aspect of the self. *"We agree with this, and add that we might have lost, mainly due to the development of technology in recent decades, the trust in listening to our own subtle bodily signals. There is now the opportunity to regain it by conscious practice."*

One of the aims of focusing on the ER as a methodological tool is its potential, when executed in a disciplined, conscious and systematic way, to capture the "un-thought" or pre-reflective information that is present in the layers of the body, but is not yet present in the consciousness of the researcher. This part of our experience is often even pre-verbal. This procedure is designed to support and deepen the researcher´s ability to pay attention to the embodied level of awareness,

and grasp these physiological events first through experience of them (sensations, feelings, corporeal images,…), and then in words, on the lexical level.

Buttingsrud (2015) designates this the *embodied reflective self-consciousness*; a reflective process experienced through and with the embodied and emotional self. To her, this self-consciousness seems to have its own distinct structure that is not reducible to reflectivity and pre-reflectivity.

Although ER is quite often mentioned by phenomenological and arts-based researchers, it usually stays on the theoretical plane. Hereby, based on the aforementioned concepts, we aim to describe it systematically as we have designed it and also share some concrete examples from the process of applying it.

The process of ER as we employ it has the following steps:
1. ***Contacting***: We employ ER *right after the lived experience with the phenomenon or with the data* (in our case after having contacted the data/text describing the experience with improvisation in a psychotherapist and dancer)
2. ***Responding***: The researcher allows their body to *respond* to the experience in an environment of tranquility and safety. *Responding* can happen by moving or staying still while imagining movement and/or noticing any sensations, inner movements, feelings or images. (The time for this phase can eventually be set by an alarm clock, which may bring the clarity of a time frame to the researcher. We often like to work in a time frame of 3 minutes.)
3. ***Transposing***: The last step is to transpose the movement and/or bodily experience onto a verbal level by writing, as concretely as stays in the memory of the mover, what happened, what was perceived, what was felt or imagined, or simply what movements were initiated. *In writing, we invite the mover to stay with the essence of the movement experience.*

The step of transposing the movement/bodily material onto a lexical level can have crucial repercussions as to what information is gained. Therefore, we would like to place emphasis on the following points:

*- **being simple and precise*** in writing. Try to avoid writing too much unnecessary text, but rather stick to the essence of the experience and use just the amount of text you need.

*- **allowing oneself to "tune back"*** into the movement experience if you need it, or feel you have forgotten it. You can re-live a movement or revisit a position in order to come closer to the experience.

*- **keeping a clear time frame*** for the movement and also writing phases can be very useful. We advise keeping it under 5 minutes, otherwise, there is an abundance of information that is difficult to track.

**„SHARING THE PROCESS"**

In phenomenological research, the process is often more important than the findings or the outcomes. The process of understanding, of getting closer to the essence of the phenomenon, has a specific vibration that cannot be overlooked by seeing only the outcomes of the phenomenological study. Therefore, we decided to share some excerpts from the analysis process and from the embodied reflection in the following table (Table 2, 3) with some comments ensuing from the practice.

We invite the reader to approach these excerpts imagining:
1/ the original interview was conducted between the researcher, who is a dancer and body oriented psychotherapist, and  A/ a dancer + B/ a psychotherapist
2/ the reflective process on both levels is conducted by the researcher

3/ the main intention is to understand the essence of the experience with improvisation in the context of A/ dance and B/ psychotherapy.

**Table 2 Embodied reflection in the process of analysis of the dancer´s experience with improvisation**

| (A) Excerpts from an interview with a dancer | Researcher´s reflections Level I. | Embodied reflection Level II. |
|---|---|---|
| *"I love living my life following my nose, following life as it asks me to…"* | Living life following our nose… what a freedom and having contact with that...actually there is a lot of responsibility in the listening, in knowing that now I am listening, and now I am available to follow any change, the change can happen at any moment…the flow of life. | I feel a relief. There is nothing – no inner information - that I need to recall, remember, hold onto in mind, **all that I can listen to and follow is HERE** – if I open my senses. **There is an infinite ease, freedom in a sense of no need to hold onto anything, retain anything, but be guided by the now into my next movement or stillness.** |
| *"I feel that I dedicate my life to improvisation. Or improvisation invites me to live in a certain way that I feel alive, again…."* | She dedicates her life to improvisation. Do I? How do I do that? …I feel it in her work and being, I recognize it, from how I have been following and knowing her for the last 10 years. It feels like once we fall in love with improvisation, it asks everything, the whole life dedication or it is everywhere. | … this kind of a sensation, a soft recollection of my subtle energetic (?) body into a vertically flowing inner motion. It is a soft, fluid and straight….of a straight direction down-upwards…it feels slightly upwards pulling… It also makes my hand move in front of the torso, up and down, sliding. **I don t need to understand, to sense is enough here.** It gives a sense of a simple orientation, attunement and slight flow. |
| *"that aliveness and alertness are crucial to me…It asks the most of me it´s very demanding but in the way that I love it. So I have to be very present. And get out of the way."* | H6/I feel as if there was a contradiction in this: to BE PRESENT and at the same time GET OUT OF THE WAY. / I need to let go of my own wishes..be present for „what needs to be done". It feels like letting something higher intervene – but of course it is me fully, as well. – it is almost a spiritual practice in this sense...? | I move. And I realize that **it has to do with dropping something, dropping my usual, everyday life self-actions, attitudes… it is letting go of my "normal" (habitual) ways of moving, being ready and open to being moved in a new way,**… |

**Table 3 Embodied reflection in the process of analysis of the psychotherapist´s experience with improvisation**

| (B) Excerpts from an interview with a psychotherapist | Researcher´s reflections Level I. | Embodied reflection Level II. |
|---|---|---|
| *"it's something like letting myself be guided, in my work or even in my life, by something...something deeper than just my ideas that come from my mind...."* | I recognized that feeling that „**something is guiding me**", **and this something is eually of the inner and the outer space**, it cannot be separate or clearly known where it comes from.<br><br>She also says that she does that at work but/and also in life, suggesting that this improvisational process is adopted in both contexts. | ...**it is about being moved rather than moving**...). I wait for a move and then **I am moved**. I try to recognize where this impulse is coming from. ...but **actually I cannot know whether it is not coming from the outside space too...?** Or from the energetic layers of the body... most probably both.<br>...I know every single movement I am doing and it is concrete, but **the place where it is coming from is not so clear...maybe a deeper body memory saved in every single cell and how it coordinates together?**<br>one other thing appears... sometimes I feel a pull in the body, an image of a form that pulls me to make that move...is this **the body imagining all the time its moves?** |
| *"some kind of inspiration - that I know that this is the way to go, this is the way to go, this is the way to go and it's right and I don't have to justify it very much."* | She suggests that inspiration is a certain kind of knowledge, as if inspiration was knowing a direction. This is very similar to intuition. Almost as if inspiration was a fruit of intuition...hmmm maybe i am just trying to get things clear from a theoretical point of view? | ....I just lay down and see what happens when I focus on this one – the inspiration coming as a direction -  1/**I am constantly being informed** – direction, possible movement,..., 2/**the information depends on what thing is in the foreground of my attention** (if a back, the move wants to go back, if face, the move is in-formed by the sensation in the face, etc...), 3/ **it is happening very quickly** – I had many signals in 2 |

| | | minutes of laying, I did not move all of them. |
|---|---|---|
| *"there's such a flow, such a flow in that there's nothing stopping me."* | It sounds familiar...it is going... there is not much tension, the paths/channels are open, and we can be going/doing/proceeding....further | ...immediately, I realize there is **breath moving, flowing in and out even when I am still**. And also, the flow is a dance for me actually, it is constant movement of the body in space but **also a movement inside of the body,** breath or sensations navigating through the body as the blood in the veins or liquids of the body constantly moving... |

**Some reflections on embodied reflection**

Embodied reflection contributes to the original data with a new perspective. Having the information pass through the body, we reach qualitatively new kinds of information and thus understanding, even though it is finally presented in text. Nevertheless, it awakens new layers of our attention and awareness. Also, it propels the inclusiveness and proactive nature of the researcher´s experience. Even though the information coming from embodied reflection may be surprising and at first glance distant from the original data, it has (energetic) resonances with the original data, and echoes them on a qualitatively different level through our whole proactive being. Now, there is an opportunity to use our whole body, not separate from our minds, as reflective instruments/tools. As Merleau-Ponty believes, the body is in a constant dialogue with the world. Lastly, embodied reflection enables us to elaborate further on something we have resonated with in the original data, and therefore facilitates the hermeneutic spiraling in a more complex way.

Rennie and Fergus (2006) claim, combining the concepts and actualities of embodiment and phenomenology, that any further engagement in the hermeneutic circle, or the interpretation of part of the text in terms of the meaning of the whole of the text, is a progressive circling of understanding and may lead to broadening the comprehensiveness of the articulated understanding once symbolized (worded). They further argue that embodied categorization is an approach to interpretation in which subjectivity is drawn on productively. It begins by interpreting text as openly as possible, to facilitate receptivity to its nuances of meaning. While attempting to understand the text, the analyst feels its meaning in their body. This embodiment is accompanied by memories, images, associations, and words phrases that form a reservoir into which the analyst dips.

**DISCUSSION**

> We know more than we can tell.
> M. Polanyi

The situation as experienced is embodied as a *felt sense*, that is, "feelings as felt complexity". In embodied reflection, we activate what Gendlin described as *felt sense* of the situation. The given felt meaning acts as arbiter of the symbols (words) we use (Gendlin, 1973 in Rennie & Fergus, 2006).

In the hermeneutic process of approaching deeper understanding of the essence of the studied phenomenon, the interpreter is engaged in *Verstehen*, or the activity of understanding. The interpreter works back and forth between how the given concept seems to fit with their own experience of the phenomenon, and the sense of its fit with the participant´s account of the experience of it (Rennie & Fergus, 2006). For this, we need to take into account that this process of gaining knowledge is experiential, it is happening through our whole being, and not exclusively in our (thinking) minds. As Leigh and Bailey (2013) state, embodiment is an on-going process of bringing conscious self-awareness to and about the body, which is the main focus of embodied reflection.

Important research has been done about imagination as a way of knowing, and therefore as a function of the whole dynamic and proactive organism. Shaul´s (1994) findings on the relationship between the activation of our imagination as a bodily process have reverberations and consequences to our sense of hearing the other and being heard. Shaul (1994 in Rennie and Fergus, 2006) found that clients felt more understood immediately after their therapists had experienced imagery about what their clients said, whether the therapists had disclosed the imagery or not, and thus concluded that the imagery acts as an empathic lens. When therapists (and researchers) focus on their imagery, it helps them to see (understand) the other person´s experience more clearly (Rennie & Fergus, 2006, p.16). This study directly advocates for the place of embodied reflection in a deeper and fuller understanding of the experiential data. Furthermore, it suggests a direct relationship between imagining, which is a whole body process, and empathy and intersubjective understanding.

Attention to embodied experience when conceptualizing the meanings of passages of text can result in imaginative, abstract meanings, that go to the heart of the phenomenon under study (Rennie & Fergus 2006, p. 16).

We became aware of the meanings hidden in the participant´s outspoken experience in a powerful and radically enriched way through embodied reflection, through moving from the written, moving from the symbolic into the concrete reality of the body. This may be supported by Finlay's repeated advocating for the embodied presence of the researcher to the participant and to the data. She holds that, being able to tune into the movement of the other, she can understand their experience. Through Toombs (1993 in Finlay, 2006) she continues affirming that listening well involves close observation of the other´s embodied presence, and based on that we dare to claim that there is no reason why this process would not work similarly for our own embodied presence and experience of understanding. Rather than inferring, this embodied understanding involves experiencing the whole (Finlay, 2006).

Finlay, as a recognized embodied phenomenological researcher, emphasizes in various places the importance of noticing the participants´ bodily movements and expressions. She also brings focus to the embodied self-awareness of the researcher as probing our own embodied responses as researchers, and she claims that even though at risk, it can open up rich understanding (Finlay, 2006).

This paper aims to emphasize the need for us as (phenomenological) researchers to notice our own embodied situation and demeanor (our sensations, feeling, our movements or movement tendencies…) when relating to the other (participant) and to the data. We constantly perceive and communicate in such an embodied way anyway, on a subconscious level. However, bringing this sensual and bodied level of being and perceiving into our awareness has a potential to understand in new and more complex way and thus make us "a holistically reflective researcher".

Within the concept of reflective embodied empathy, Finlay (2006) suggests that an intersubjective corporeal commonality, or in other words the common sense of being a "lived" body with other bodies and the world, enables that kind of empathy which enables both understanding of the other and self-understanding. Then we could speak about empathy to the other and to oneself is a deeper embodied understanding of the flow of experience in the intersubjective field.

Merleau-Ponty (1964/68 in Finlay, 2006) describes the intertwining of the body and the world as two sides, as a reflection of each other. He asserts that the experience of my own body (researcher) and the experience of the other (researched) are themselves the two sides of one same Being.

As Finlay (2013:5) states, describing the phenomenological attitude of the Lifeworld approach, here the embodied reflection proposes adopting an "open discovering way of being" and developing the "capacity to be surprised and sensitive to the unpredicted and unexpected" (Finlay, 2013:5).

In terms of the practical application of the method of embodied empathy, there is support in Panhofer and Payne (2011), who concluded that shifting from writing to moving and back to writing highlighted how the embodied experience often reduces the embodied word. We resonate with the fact that not all bodily sensations can be transcribed onto the lexical level. Putting the embodied experience into words seems to have its limitations, since so much more seems to be stored in the body which cannot be worded at all. On the other hand, Antilla (2003) affirms that verbal translation allows for an extended consciousness and the expansion of the autobiographical self.

Based on their study about wording the embodied experience, Panhofer & Payne (2011) state that some possible ways of communicating the embodied experience may be through specific ways of using the words: metaphors, images, poetry. They emphasize that non-linguistic ways of knowing need to be emphasized and taken into account. Equally, Rennie and Fergus (2006) agree that attention to embodied experience when conceptualizing the meaning of passages of text can result in imaginative, abstract categories that go to the heart of the phenomenon under study.

Neuro-scientifically, it has been established that through phenomenologically-based embodied reflections, integration of sub-cortical features occurs by shifting attention between sensations and emotions, images or movements. Then, connections with higher cortical processes take place, by understanding relationship patterns, integrating hidden parts, and birthing a more vibrant sense of self (Stanley 2016 in Stella and Taggart, 2020).

**CONCLUSION**

In much phenomenological research, the focus is on words from transcripts and protocols – the body is strangely absent (Finlay, 2006). In her consistent and expanding body of research, Finlay has been claiming the importance for the researchers to attend reflexively to the expressive bodies of both participant and researcher in order to gain an enriched phenomenological account of the researched.

In Douglas and Coessens (2011), we are familiarized with the artistic way of knowing, which in this context very much resembles the embodied way of knowing in the attitude of the one who gains the knowledge. Being momentarily destabilized by the wonder, the knower reenters knowledge in a deeper way, by actively coordinating responses, physical, mental, and emotional, to incoming impulses. Just like when we read the text grasping the experience of a participant and then let ourselves be moved by it, we let physical responses resound through the active vessel of our "thinking body". The artist embodies those impulses in the development of new actions that are judged to be right in the moment (in Douglas and Coessens, 2011).

Our initial aim was to share with the reader the theoretical underpinnings of the presented concept - embodied reflection. We could further evolve our experience-based knowledge of ER as a potential way of understanding others´ through our own experience, as our own being and subjectivity in the shared bodily commonality is the utmost instrument of understanding the world. As the heuristic phenomenological method proposes, especially through our own experience with a phenomenon we can more comprehensively understand others´ experience with it. Herewith, we propose an analysis enriched by embodied understanding to the essence.

## Embodied reflection in heuristic phenomenology as a bridge between analysis and creative synthesis

Furthermore, we have found out that embodied reflection serves within the heuristic phenomenological research process as a bridge between the systematic analysis, comprising the reflections, explication and illumination (Moustakas, 1990) and more free and spontaneous creative synthesis, which the creator of this method considered to be Clark Moustakas (1990), as the climax of the analysis.

Once the researcher has mastered knowledge of the material that illuminates and explains the question, the researcher is challenged to put the components and core themes into creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990). Creative synthesis is carrying out a creative act, which means an opportunity to embody the experience and let it be more freely formed by attending to the pre-expressive, intuitive, tacit streams (Štěpánková, 2015).

> I have sought to find a way to give voice to bodily experience.
> How might I listen to body´s language and listen to its innate wisdom?
> Linda Finlay

## Embodied reflection in other contexts

We have come to realize the potential of embodied reflection for reflective practitioners such as psychologists, psychotherapists, or social workers, outside the framework of the heuristic phenomenological approach. Anybody who feels the need to understand the process that is happening in the intersubjective fields they are involved in, can employ, playfully or seriously, a reflection including their own body. Listening to their own body and to what it has to say is a significant step towards a deeper awareness and acceptance of the occurring process.

Now, it is important to confess that the extent of practice, working with one's own body and listening to one's own body, plays a role in this. However, we all already have experience with our own bodies. Therefore, if we become silent (Kiara, 2024) in order to begin listening to our bodies in relation to concrete elements of the process at hand, and with the best intention, which is "to hear" or "to understand", we may notice the valuable information that *is already present here and now*. In every moment, this carries the potential to transmit new knowledge, and may slightly or radically change the perspective applied until now in relation to the lived world.

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