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# MEDIA STUDIES AND APPLIED ETHICS

Vol. I, No 2, 2020



Niš, 2020

<https://doi.org/10.46630/msae.2.2020>



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## **CYBERBULLYING AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN<sup>3</sup>**

**Abstract.** *Modern information technologies are widely used in everyday communication among children and adults alike. In addition to the benefits that the use of modern media provides, one faces the possibilities of their abuse for the purpose of hurting others. Among students one encounters cyberbullying as a form of an inadequate use of modern media. Since the aforementioned phenomenon is of recent date and the manners of its manifestation become increasingly complex with the development of modern media one needs to understand more clearly the specificity and the manner of expressing this form of bullying. This paper aims to specify the meaning of the term cyberbullying, its manifestation forms, participants' roles in cyberbullying, as well as the consequences of such behaviour in order to understand this phenomenon more clearly for the purpose of educating the school staff to be able to suppress it.*

**Key words:** cyberbullying, forms of cyberbullying, traditional bullying, bullies, victims, bystanders.

### **1. Introduction**

The Internet, mobile phones and other modern tools have irreversibly changed the manner in which people communicate nowadays. Modern information technologies have become fully integrated into our everyday lives, and they have especially been embraced by children and the young. Nevertheless, in addition to numerous benefits which the advancement and availability of modern technology bring to everyday life, there are also possibilities of their abuse for the purpose of hurting others.

One of the manners of using modern media for negative purposes is cyberbullying which is present to a certain extent among students in primary and secondary schools. The aforementioned phenomenon is of recent date and the manners of its manifestation become increasingly complex with the development of modern media. Consequently, one needs to understand more clearly its specificities in order to secure a suitable reaction to its manifestations.

<sup>1</sup> Received February 2020 / Accepted April 2020

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<sup>3</sup> The paper is a part of the project "Enhancing professional competencies of prospective pedagogues within the framework of undergraduate academic studies of pedagogy" (360/1-16-5-01), which is carried out at the University of Nis – Faculty of Philosophy. This study was financially supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

## 2. Definition of the term cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is defined as a phenomenon “when someone repeatedly makes fun of another person online or repeatedly picks on another person through email or text message or when someone posts something online about another person that they don’t like” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, according to O’Moore, 2012: 209; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010c, according to Donegan, 2012: 35), i.e. as a “wilful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, Patchin & Hinduja, 2006, according to Hinduja & Patchin, 2010: 208). This form of inadequate behavior is also defined as intentional aggression expressed by using electronic devices (Dooley, Pyzalski & Cross, 2009, according to Morrow & Downey, 2013: 536).

Similarly to traditional bullying, cyberbullying is *wilful* (intentional), *repeated* (it represents a pattern of one’s behaviour), *it causes negative consequences for the victim* (of which the victim is fully aware), *the bully is more powerful* (in physical, social or psychological respect) than the victim, but cyberbullying also implies *the application of various technical tools* intended for communication in the digital space (which makes it different from traditional bullying) (Bilić, 2014; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Ryan & Curwen, 2013). It can build on traditional bullying, which provides the bully with the opportunity to constantly bully the victim by means of technology (Griezel, Finger, Bodkin Andrews, Craven & Seeshing Yeung, 2012; O’Moore, 2012).

Cyberbullying involves sending and posting hurtful or cruel text and/or images by means of the Internet or other devices used for digital communication, such as mobile phones, computers, tablets, etc. Messages or photos can appear on personal web pages or they can be sent by email or shared on social networks by means of chat rooms, Messenger, Internet forums, mobile phones, etc (Bilić, 2014; Ercegovac Reić, 2016; Feinberg & Robey, 2009; Griezel et al., 2012; Hase, Goldberg, Smith, Stuck & Campaign, 2015; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Jose, Kljakovic, Scheib & Notte, 2011; Ryan & Curwen, 2013; Twemlow & Sacco, 2008). Similarly to traditional bullying, cyberbullying can also include disregard, disrespect, teasing or some other form of aggressive behavior towards the victim, as well as spreading rumours about someone, stalking or posing physical threats by using various means of digital communication (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). It can be enforced by individuals or groups (Bilić, 2014; Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell & Tippett, 2008, according to Erentaitė, Bergman & Žukauskienė, 2012: 181; Hinduja & Patchin 2009, Smith 2012, according to DePaolis & Williford, 2015: 378).

Cyberbullying most frequently occurs when children are at home, but it can also occur when they are at school (Feinberg & Robey, 2009). A major feature of cyberbullying is the fact that a child can be exposed to such abusive behaviour of others for 24 hours every day. Hence, cyberbullying can run continuously, and not merely in a child’s direct contact with peers (Donegan, 2012; Feinberg & Robey, 2009; Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016).

Another important property of this form of bullying is the anonymity of the perpetrator who can easily hide his/her identity and thus anonymously engage in



aggressive behavior against others (Bilić, 2014; Ercegovic Reić, 2016; Ryan & Curwen, 2013). It is believed that anonymity significantly encourages further engagement in cyberbullying (Bilić, 2014; Donegan, 2012). It is precisely anonymity that is considered to be the most significant factor which provides bullies with the sense of false courage, invincibility and unlimited power to behave in an unacceptable manner. It appears that anonymity decreases self-awareness and self-control and facilitates this sort of aggressive behavior. On the other hand, it is believed that the computer monitor is an obstacle which disables a bully to see a victim's reaction and thus contributes to the increased cruelty and decreased responsibility in a bully. Due to anonymity the bully more easily attacks the victim, whereby the victim is not capable of physical retaliation. The distancing effect which technology has on the youth nowadays frequently allows them to say or do more ruthless things in comparison to what is typical for face-to-face bullying. Since cyberbullying can be enforced at any time of the day and from different locations, whereby the victim is constantly available, it is believed that this contributes to the sense of power in the perpetrator. For the same reasons victims have an intense feeling of insecurity because they cannot protect themselves, there is no safe haven where they could seek protection, harmful content is visible to a large number of peers and they can witness them at any time of the day. As a result victims can have a strong feeling that bullying is ubiquitous and that they are in a helpless and hopeless situation. Furthermore, victims often have no knowledge of who the bully is, while harmful content is difficult to remove.

The cyberbully can be known to the victim, but this does not have to be the case. As we have previously stated, cyberbullies can quite often remain anonymous, which makes it difficult, even impossible to ascertain their identity. They can secretly cooperate with their friends who are inclined towards bullying behaviour, which makes it even more difficult to establish the perpetrator. Though there is no clear evidence that the young people who engage in traditional bullying also resort to cyberbullying, it does seem possible that victims of physical bullying can engage in cyberbullying as a form of retaliation against their tormentors (Feinberg & Robey, 2009).

It is believed that cyberbullying represents a form which, due to everyday use of modern communication technologies, has evolved past the traditional bullying (Barlett & Coyne, 2014; Donegan, 2012). Nevertheless, there are authors who believe that cyberbullying is a special form of bullying which has its own specific properties in comparison to traditional bullying (Barlett & Coyne, 2014; Bilić, 2014; Olweus, 2012). While traditional bullying and cyberbullying are similar with respect to their form and techniques, these forms of aggressive behavior do differ.

In the research conducted by Jose et al. (2011) the authors studied the stability and interplay between the traditional (face-to-face) bullying, traditional victimization, cyberbullying and victimization in adolescents over time. The sample consisted of around 1700 adolescents aged 11 to 16 years. The results showed that all four dynamics were moderately stable over time. It has been revealed that the following variables become increased and predictable over time: traditional bullying and traditional victimization; traditional bullying and cyberbullying; traditional bullying

and cyber victimization. The results show the connection between the bullying behaviour and victimization by means of traditional bullying and cyberbullying, but their interpersonal dynamics are not identical. It has been established that traditional victimization is more stable than cyber victimization. The authors have established a weak two-way connection between the traditional bullying and traditional victimization, while such relationship has not been established between cyberbullying and cyber victimization. Nevertheless, it has been established that cyberbullying can be a predictor of cyber victimization. Students prone to cyberbullying run the risk of being cyber-victimized later, while it is highly unlikely for the victims of cyberbullying to become cyberbullies. It has been established that there is a positive two-way relationship between the traditional bullying and cyberbullying over time, which indicates that students who resorted to traditional bullying can over time become inclined towards cyberbullying, and vice versa. Such positive two-way relationship has been established between traditional bullying and cyber victimization which indicates that one type of victimization can lead to another.

A relationship between traditional bullying and cyberbullying is indicated by the results of various related research studies. For instance, the research which comprised 660 students from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade of various USA primary schools showed that 17,7% respondents had been victims of cyberbullying (first and foremost during online gaming). The results also show that children who were victims of cyberbullying had also been both victims of traditional bullying and bullies, as well as that they had significantly more positive attitudes towards cyberbullying and negative attitudes towards defending oneself and others from cyberbullying. It is possible that children who had been victims of different forms of bullying could seek indirect manners of revenge, which makes it more probable that they would resort to cyberbullying and relational forms of aggression (DePaolis & Williford, 2015).

In a similar research conducted in Lithuania on a sample of 1667 secondary school students (58% of girls), aged from 15 to 19 years it was studied whether victimization at school could eventually grow into cyber victimization. The authors considered three forms of traditional bullying (verbal, physical and relational) and cyber victimization by means of mobile phones and computers (e-messages, text messages via phone, chats, applications and chat rooms, etc.). Likewise, the results show that 35% victims of traditional victimization were also bullied in cyberspace. Specifically, adolescents who had gone through mostly verbal and relational bullying at school were in bigger danger of victimization in cyberspace a year later, while this was not recorded in relation to traditional forms of bullying (Erentaitė, Bergman & Žukauskienė, 2012).

There are some other interesting data indicating that a large majority of students who were victims of cyberbullying were also victimized through traditional bullying. Both forms of victimization were independently connected with negative outcomes. However, when the authors investigated into traditional bullying it was established that cyberbullying did not remain a predictor of negative outcomes regarding mental health. On the contrary, when cyberbullying was scrutinised, traditional bullying

remained a significant predictor of negative outcomes to mental health. These results show that though traditional bullying and cyberbullying can be directed towards the same victims, traditional bullying is more strongly connected with negative psychological outcomes to the victims. When traditional bullying was controlled, cyberbullying was more strongly connected with psychological consequences in boys than in girls (Hase et al., 2015).

Research results indicate that traditional bullying and cyberbullying are connected with some other variables which can be significant when planning suitable intervention. For instance, the research which aimed at establishing whether there was a connection between social and psychological factors and traditional bullying and cyberbullying provided data collected on a sample of 1344 children aged 10 years. Correlating variables were bullying/victimization, depression, anxiety, coping strategies, self-respect and psychopathology. Parents provided demographic data, information regarding general health of children and presence of the ADHD syndrome. The authors studied the connection between the given variables and traditional bullying and cyberbullying of children at the age of 12. It has been established that male sex and depression are connected with both types of bullying and victimization. Living with a single parent was related to the act of traditional bullying, while more conspicuous ADHD syndrome was related to victimization. Poor academic achievement and lower self-esteem were connected with bullying and victimization through cyberbullying, and anxiety symptoms with being engaged in cyberbullying. It was established that previous bullying behaviour was connected with victimization through cyberbullying, but not with other outcomes. Higher levels of anxiety were connected with the eventual engagement in cyberbullying. It indicates that cyberbullying has different predictors in comparison to traditional bullying, which should be taken into consideration when planning intervention measures (Yang, Stewart, Kim, Kim, Shin, Dewey, Maskey & Yoon, 2013).

Likewise, it has been established that regarding morality the perpetrators of traditional bullying and cyberbullying have similar characteristics which relate to certain moral aspects such as: the lack of a sense of guilt, disobedience, malice, unreliability. Gender was not observed as a significant variable in that respect (Menesini, Nocentini & Camodeca, 2013).

As a result of different manners of defining the term cyberbullying, the established frequency rates of cyberbullying and victimization vary from one study to another. Percentages also vary depending on the population which is scrutinised (i.e. gender, age), forms of cyberbullying which are the subject of measurement, the manner of measurement used to assess occurrences of cyberbullying (von Marées & Petermann 2012, according to DePaolis & Williford, 2015: 378). The literature on cyberbullying is inconsistent regarding the gender and age differences among those who are perpetrators and victims of cyberbullying (Barlett & Coyne, 2014; Griezel, et al., 2012; Opsenica Kostić, Panić & Cakić, 2015). Accordingly, it is very difficult to provide a definitive response regarding the frequency of cyberbullying among the young (von Marées & Petermann 2012, according to DePaolis & Williford, 2015: 378).

Nevertheless, it appears that with age (in relation to primary school where research studies show that cyberbullying is less present in comparison to other forms of bullying) the possibility of cyberbullying increases, since the research conducted on samples of secondary school students and older adolescents show a larger frequency of cyberbullying, first and foremost through the Internet (Ercegovac Reić, 2016).

A research conducted in Ireland on a sample of 3004 students – 1009 girls (33,6%) and 1995 boys (66,4%) aged 12 to 16 years it has been established that traditional bullying is more frequent than cyberbullying; that cyberbullying is more frequently encountered among girls than among boys; that the category of perpetrators includes those students who simultaneously resort to both traditional bullying and cyberbullying; that one out of 20 students stated that he/she was simultaneously a victim and a cyberbully (more frequent in girls than in boys) which indicates that cyberbullying is a two-way phenomenon (like traditional bullying). It has been observed that, when trying to overcome the problem of cyberbullying, girls are more prone to seek social support of their families and friends, which is not the case with boys. Likewise, girls react assertively to cyberbullying (they insist upon the perpetrator to stop), unlike boys who are prone to physical bullying as a reaction to cyberbullying (O'Moore, 2012).

Cyberbullying, like traditional bullying, leaves significant negative consequences on victims (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Morrow & Downey, 2013; O'Moore, 2012). It is even considered that cyberbullying leaves more devastating negative consequences than traditional bullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; O'Moore, 2012). Negative consequences of cyberbullying can be even more devastating than the consequences of traditional bullying for the following reasons: 1) the possibility of incessant reception and access to electronic messages (unlike verbal statements), because those are kept on electronic devices, sites, etc; 2) the easiness and freedom with which one sends hurtful, demeaning and threatening notes to other people; 3) difficulties in discovering inappropriate behaviour, identifying the perpetrator, proving or confirming the misdeed and sentencing the perpetrator; 4) the fact that victimization goes beyond one's school, playground, bus stop and neighbourhood due to the ever present computers, mobile phones and other devices and networked lives that adolescents lead; 5) increasing number of potential victims and bullies as a result of accepting new communication technologies, devices and mediums for mutual interaction (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010: 208-209).

### 3. Types of cyberbullying

With respect to types of cyberbullying, it is possible to distinguish between *direct* (open threats and harassment) and *indirect* cyberbullying (posting falsehoods on web pages, etc.) (Bilić, 2014; Griezel et al., 2012), while, according to the manner of presenting the hurtful content, one can distinguish between visual and text cyberbullying (Griezel et al., 2012), whereby quite frequently various forms of cyberbullying are mutually combined and repeated (Bilić, 2014).

Bilić (2014) distinguishes between the following forms of cyberbullying:

1) **harassment and intimidation** – implies sending offensive messages by means of modern communication tools. Those can occur in the following forms: *flaming* which, when repeated, can turn into online harassment while intensive online harassment which implies numerous actions such as intimidation and threats (with physical bullying) and which can result in a long-term sense of fear, is called *cyber stalking*.

2) **posting falsehood** – implies sending and posting gossips or rumours which can harm one's reputation and it is usually referred to as *cyber denigration*. *Misinformation* deals with spreading false information through email or web pages, such as posting edited photos. *Outing* involves revealing secrets, sharing sensitive, unpleasant private information and photos which have most frequently been obtained in a previous close relationship with the person in question.

3) **specific forms of cyberbullying** – such as *online exclusion*, which implies intentional exclusion from online groups or deleting one from a list of friends; *impersonation*, password theft or identity theft, sending materials to bring the victim into dangerous situations or to harm her/his reputation; *happy slapping* whereby several students most frequently physically attack the victim while one of them makes a video clip (by mobile phone or camera) and then sends the material to others or publishes everything online (there is most frequently more than one instance of such bullying in real and virtual world); *sexting*, which is described as sending, receiving and forwarding nude and partially nude photos, videos and sexually explicit text messages by using different devices, whereby those whose videos and photos are thus distributed can end up being publicly disgraced, mocked as well as blackmailed; *fraping* (a blended word combining Facebook and raping), which implies violent intrusion of a „friend“ into someone's profile in order to send unpleasant messages to others on behalf of the profile owners (Carrick-Davies, 2012, according to Bilić, 2014: 76). Other researchers identified additional forms of bullying such as *griefing* – harassing others in gaming communities and *trolling* – incessant posting of snide comments on the Internet (Slonje, Smith & Frisé, 2013, according to DePaolis & Williford, 2015: 379).

It is necessary, of course, to indicate that the aforementioned categorisation is not exhaustive and that one is expected to encounter new forms of cyberbullying with the further advent of technology and of the manners in which young people use modern information technologies for mutual communication (Bilić, 2014; DePaolis & Williford, 2015).

#### 4. Participant roles in cyberbullying

As is the case with traditional bullying, within the scope of cyberbullying one can make a distinction between students who are *bullies*, *bullies/victims* and *victims* (Feinberg & Robey, 2009; Opsenica Kostić, Panić & Cakić, 2015).

Within the category of *a bully* it is possible to distinguish between the following subtypes: *vengeful angel* – who does not perceive oneself as a bully but more as a careful person, because he/she often tries to protect friends who are victims of traditional bullying or cyberbullying; *power-hungry cyberbullies* - who wish to exercise their authority and control over others through fear, while they themselves are quite often victims of bullying. Some tend to call it *the revenge of nerds* cyberbullying because those bullies are frequently physically more weak and marked by their peers as unpopular, or they are skilled at using technology; *mean girls cyberbullying* often takes place in a group, whereby the bullies are often bored and they seek fun; *inadvertent cyberbullies* who do not have intention of imposing harm but act without thinking about the consequences of their actions (Feinberg & Robey, 2009).

Young people who are at risk of becoming *victims* of cyberbullying are characterised by the following: vulnerable, immature or socially naïve adolescents who possibly lack sufficient knowledge and skills to efficiently make decisions; young teenagers who have overprotective or naïve parents, but who probably have healthy peer relationships and a good value system; the young who have momentary problems in their relationship with parents and/or peers and are currently emotionally disturbed; the young who face major current challenges related to personal mental health and disruptions in their relationship with parents, school and/or peers (Feinberg & Robey, 2009).

As is the case with traditional bullying (Salmivalli, 1999, 2001, 2010; Salmivalli, Huttunen & Lagerspetz, 1997; Salmivalli & Isaacs, 2005; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Kaistaniemi & Lagerspetz, 1999; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen & Voeten, 2005; Salmivalli, Voeten & Poskiparta, 2011), cyberbullying also includes a special category of students signified as observers (Opsenica Kostić, Panić & Cakić, 2015). The research which our authors Opsenica Kostić, Panić and Cakić (2015) conducted on a sample of 285 students from Sremska Mitrovica (141 young men, 144 young ladies) aged 15 to 19 years, showed that around 40% of respondents do not participate in any form of cyberbullying, 14,7% of respondents bear witness to bullying while around 45% of respondents can be perceived as participants in cyberbullying either in the role of bullies (6%) or victims (13%) and bullies/victims (26%). Likewise, it has been noted that participants' roles in cyberbullying are mutually interconnected, whereby one person can have more than one role. It has been established that the bully/victim group has high scores on a scale for witness roles as well, which implies that those adolescents are both actively and passively involved in cyberbullying.

A research in Germany studied into observers' reactions to situations of traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Two possible reactions of observers were considered: providing help for the victims and encouraging bullies. The sample included 321 students (aged 12 to 18 years;  $M=14.99$ ; 44% of girls). It has been established that young people react in a similar fashion to both traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Those young people who reacted to traditional bullying by offering support to the victims reacted in the same way to cyberbullying, while those who were inclined to encourage the bullies in cases of traditional bullying exhibited



similar behaviour in the case of cyberbullying as well. Nevertheless, one should bear in mind that one does not deal here with a linear relationship. Though in some cases observers reacted by offering support to the victim of traditional/cyberbullying, it is possible that in some other situations they might have reacted differently. The authors also studied into the connection between observers' reactions and normative belief regarding verbal and cyber aggression, as well as into the levels of affective and cognitive empathy. Both types of normative beliefs (approving such behaviour) were positive predictors of the encouragement of the bully, while normative belief regarding verbal aggression also predicted support for the victims of cyberbullying. Both kinds of empathy predicted support in the event of traditional bullying, while only affective empathy predicted support in case of cyberbullying. Authors have not established the connection between affective or cognitive empathy and bully encouragement. Moreover, observers' tendencies to react by offering support to the victim or by encouraging the bully were rather consistent in both traditional bullying and cyberbullying, but there was no connection between offering support to victims and encouraging bullies (Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016).

## 5. Consequences of cyberbullying

Negative consequences of cyberbullying can occur in emotional, social and academic domain of an individual's functioning (Ryan & Curwen, 2013). *Emotional consequences* relate to strong negative emotions (shame, fear, frustrations, hopelessness, loneliness, sadness, helplessness, anxiety, and depression), low self-esteem, bad perception of oneself, etc. *Social consequences* can be reflected in being excluded by peers and avoiding others, etc, though it has been observed that research results fail to be unambiguous. *Academic consequences* relate to cutting school, imposing educational measures at school, absenteeism, underachievement at school, etc. However, it is not quite clear whether social and academic problems occur as a result of cyberbullying or as their precursor.

Emotional reactions in cyberbullying victims move from anxiety (more present in girls than in boys) to anger (more present in boys than in girls) and fear (O'Moore, 2012). In other research studies it has been established that cyberbullying causes stronger negative emotional reactions (frustration, anger, sadness) in girls more than in boys (Bannink, Broeren, von de Looij Jansen, de Waart & Raat, 2014; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009c, according to Donegan, 2012: 36).

Furthermore, it has been established that certain protective factors can mitigate the negative effects of cyberbullying. Aside from a strong connection between cyber victimization and lower self-esteem, it has been established, for instance, that cyber victimization and communication between a mother and an adolescent are significant predictors of the adolescent's level of self-esteem. Furthermore, communication between parents and adolescents appeared to be a significant connection moderator between cyber victimization and self-esteem, so much so that victimized adolescents

who have better communication with their parents also have higher self-esteem in comparison to those who have poor communication with their parents (Özdemir, 2014).

It has been established that children who were included in cyberbullying whether as bullies or victims contemplate suicide more often and there is a greater probability that they might commit suicide in comparison to those who have not been included in this form of bullying, whereby victims more often contemplate suicide in comparison to bullies (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). One should emphasise that cyberbullying most frequently does not constitute the only cause of depression and suicidal thoughts, but it certainly can increase the instability, sense of worthlessness and hopelessness, especially if it occurs frequently and if traumas are extremely malicious, which strongly influences adolescents who are an especially sensitive and vulnerable group due to their developmental characteristics (Bilić, 2014).

## 6. Conclusion

The problems of cyberbullying and that of traditional bullying represent the prioritized institutional as well as a wider social problem the solution of which requires a dedicated and systematic approach, bearing in mind long-term negative consequences for every participant. In order for the school to react properly to the phenomenon of cyberbullying it is necessary to develop suitable teaching competences in the given field. Thus, it is necessary to continually work on the development of teaching competences in the given field, but also on developing competences of the entire school staff. One should also improve general conditions and secure the necessary means, as well as improve the co-operation at an institutional level, etc.

Likewise, the phenomenon of cyberbullying should not be observed as a problem which can exclusively be solved at school and by means of school. More significant positive effects regarding the decrease in cyberbullying one can expect only if one considers and aims at removing wider social factors which can decrease the effects of previously applied preventive measures and activities at the school level and contribute to their further solidification and frequency. Furthermore, due to a large number of variables which can contribute to the frequency of cyberbullying, it is necessary to conduct further research with the aim of establishing the components of efficient prevention programmes, while simultaneously intensify the co-operation between the researchers and practitioners in the given field.

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## ELEKTRONSKO NASILJE MEĐU ŠKOLSKOM DECOM

**Apstrakt:** Savremene informaciono-komunikacione tehnologije nailaze na široku upotrebu u svakodnevnoj komunikaciji među odraslima i mladima. Pored benefita koje sa sobom nosi korišćenje savremenih medija, otvara se mogućnost njihove zloupotrebe u cilju povređivanja drugih osoba. Među učenicima je kao forma neadekvatnog korišćenja savremenih medija zastupljeno elektronsko nasilje. Kako je dati fenomen novijeg datuma, a načini njegovog ispoljavanja sa razvojem savremenih medija sve složeniji, javlja se potreba boljeg razumevanja specifičnosti i načina ispoljavanja ove vrste vršnjačkog

*nasilja. Rad ima za cilj da ukaže na značenje termina elektronsko nasilje, na oblike njegovog ispoljavanja, učesničke uloge u elektronskom nasilju, ali i na posledice takvog ponašanja, kako bi se dati fenomen bolje razumeo i kako bi školsko osoblje moglo da radi na njegovom suzbijanju.*

**Ključne reči:** *elektronsko nasilje, oblici elektronskog nasilja, klasično nasilje, nasilnici, žrtve, posmatrači*



## DIGITAL CULTURE AS A FRAMEWORK OF CIVIC ACTIVISM<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** The basic assumption of the paper is that digital culture, regardless of how much it is based on technological progress, is not determined by it, but necessarily arises from the values, ways of thinking and acting that are grounded in that technology and by it, and that have enabled its development. Thereby, the introduction will be dedicated to a critical deliberation on digital culture as a platform for the (de)construction of individual and collective identities, analysing its participative, mobilizational and subversive potential in the context of agitation and realization of social and cultural changes, civil rights and freedoms. The main purpose of this paper is to explain from the sociological point of view how digital culture has determined, shaped and transformed the paths of civic activism, especially in the last few years in Serbia. By using secondary sources of data, the paper will analyse to which extent the Internet and social networks represent important instruments of communication and mobilization of citizens for protesting and organization of various political events. A special critical emphasis will be directed towards the effects, advantages and limitations (activation or passivization) of civic engagement in the context of digital culture. The application of the comparative method in the final part of the paper will point out how much Serbian civic activism follows or differs from European movements that also rely primarily on the Internet and social networks as a medium for mobilization.

**Key words:** digital culture, civic activism, the Internet, civic identity.

### 1. Introduction

With the dominance of digital technologies in the contemporary global age, we are ever more exposed to the increased significance of interactivity, new media, the rise of the internet and social networks, as well as the digitalization of every life experience, which in turn opens new spaces for the manifestation of numerous sociocultural controversies (advantages and limitations). As a result, in the framework of sociological theories at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the process underlying the emergence of a new form of society (a post-industrial, information, computer science-related, network society), the affirmation of new

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<sup>3</sup> The paper has been prepared as part of the internal project *A step towards the professionalization of sociology 2: the analysis of the needs for the profession*, which is being realized by the Department of Sociology, the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš.

models of communities (electronic, virtual, online communities), and a new type of culture (digital, virtual culture) were analyzed and explained. With the inclusion of certain polemics pertaining to the nuances which emerged from the various analytical perspectives, theoreticians of the information, network society and digital culture (Bell, 1999; Castells, 2001; 2002; Negroponte, 1998; Gere, 2011; Jones, 2001) point out the central importance of knowledge, information, communication and creation within new and increasingly more complex forms of social organization on the web, but also off of it, presenting an entire sequence of complex conditions and numerous causes which lead to the transformation of the way of life and reconfiguration of personal and collective identities. The important potentials of new information and communication technologies (ICT) are primarily reflected in encouraging economic, social, cultural and political interaction both in cyber space and outside of it, offering the possibility for new and productive types of work and business dealings, the digital creation and reception of cultural content, as well as the realization of political and activist potential in the context of electronically mediated communication (the internet as a virtual agora, digital citizenship and democracy, twitter diplomacy, digital counter-culture, etc.). Certain controversies related to the informatization of society and the digitalization of culture are related to the tensions which refer to, among other things, the affirmation of digital social inequality, as well as the fabrication of explicit or implicit manipulative strategies, often masked by various ideological constructs. By guiding the complex transformations of the everyday life of people which take place in the fold of the contemporary information society, the aforementioned circumstances contribute to the efforts to reconfigure some old social, cultural and political questions and phenomena within the sociological discourse, and to once again critically reevaluate their new manifestations and mutual relations.

This paper will focus on a critical evaluation of digital culture as a framework for civic activism, with the aim of implementing a sociological approach to shedding light on and explaining the different ways in which digital culture has reshaped some political practices over the past few decades, that is, transformed various means of civic activism. While negating ideas pertaining to technological determinism, in the beginning of the paper we approach the determination of digital culture and its critical evaluation in the context of new interactive, communicative, productive and creative possibilities for (de)constructing personal and collective identities. Since digital networks and the “life lived on them” are a matter of public, and not only private interest, it is useful to study the potential role of digital networks as a space for political debate, the realization of digital citizenship and democracy, that is, the creation and shaping of certain segments of political culture. By applying a comparative method and analysis of secondary sources, primarily by relying on the results of research carried out in the world and locally, we will indicate just how important the internet/social networks are as a source of communication and mobilization of citizens for protests and the organization of various political events. By studying the participatory, mobilizing and subversive potential of digital culture, emphasized in the advocacy for and realization of social and cultural changes, civil

rights and freedoms, our intention in this paper is to provide a special critical analysis of the effects, advantages and limitations (the instigation to action or passivization) of civic activity in the context of digital culture.

## 2. Digital culture and the (de)construction of identity

If we were to approach culture from an analytical point of view and the most general socio-anthropological perspective, as the way of life and form of human activity in a certain location and at a certain time in history, then the concept 'digital' certainly determines a significant part of the culture of the historical time we are living in. The way of life of contemporary man in most societies today, especially the most developed ones, is determined by specific ways of communication, symbolization, a system of determination, production and expenditure whose intermediaries are digital technology and the media, especially since the development of the internet, beginning from the 1990s to date. Avoiding the traps of technological determinism which treat technology as an independent cause of social change, the sociological approach to determining digital culture is founded in the attitude that, however much it is based on technological progress, digital culture is not solely determined by it. This form of culture necessarily emerges from a broad spectrum of social needs, choices, values, ways of thinking and acting which, even though based on digital technology and mediated by it, also enabled its development and its current importance. Charlie Gere adopted the attitude that digital culture in its current form is not entirely new but is a historically conditioned occurrence, and so its development is not enabled solely by technological progress, but also by the complex needs of society. This includes the needs of 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalism and the wars dating from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also an entire sequence of heterogenous elements and socio-cultural practices such as the post-war avant-garde, counter-cultural utopianism, critical theory and philosophy, and techno-scientific discourse on information and systems. Furthermore, this author explicitly states that the world today is in a sense enchanted, bewitched, and deluded by the effects of new technologies and the media, as well as with what they offer and promise, believing at the same time that their important role as an apparatus of subjugation, control and exploitation is being overlooked (Gere, 2011: 19-20).

What is beyond doubt is that that ICT radically changed society and the living practices of individuals, with the tendency of rapidly increasing development and thus potentially deepening changes in the future. Life in the digital era means that, in addition to practices which we use to approach the physical and material world, there are also those which tie us to the virtual world.<sup>4</sup> The responsibility for actions taken in the virtual world is even greater than the one we carry in the real world, since

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<sup>4</sup> Some claim that the division into an *online* and *offline* world is no longer relevant in the world of today, considering that all experiences permeate both the *online* and *offline* space at the same time, abolishing the strict differences between them (Babović, Bajčeta, Veličković, Petrović, Stefanović, Cvejić, 2017: 4).

digital prints remain, are remembered, are rarely deleted and are always available on a planetary level. Life in the digital world allows an individual to manage their own time by spending it on numerous activities, such as providing information, getting an education, conducting business, or creative expression, communication, purchasing, socializing and entertainment, which increases the significance of various forms of digital culture in contemporary society. With new information technologies, electronic mediation of communication and numerous digital platforms based on the concept of networking and interaction, the possibilities for production, exchange and consumption of various cultural content and meaning, for the organization and promotion of numerous sociocultural activities, values and institutions, have expanded significantly.<sup>5</sup> At the same time we are faced with new opportunities and dilemmas, since the possibilities which tradition and traditional forms of authority offer us no longer guide our lives in the same way they used to. As a global communication network which enables the simultaneous dispersion and centralization of power, the internet relativizes spatial barriers by transforming the complex relations between local activities and long-distance interaction, thus enabling the reevaluation and blurring of traditional authorities, and the broadening and restructuring of existing social organization and new forms of the self (Slevin, 2000).

Considering that identity is not a given, but is instead a dynamic process of identification, a product of incessant searching, negotiation, the systematic establishing and denoting of the relations between similarities and differences between individuals and the collective (Jenkins, 2008: 18), we could say that electronic networks have affirmed themselves as a medium, and not merely a means of multiplying the possibilities of identity (de)construction. Communication mediated by digital technologies at the same time strengthens our identity, but also provides it with changeability and mobility, from which we could derive the conclusion that the internet provides a fertile environment for the growth of multiple realities and multiple identities. At the same time, online communities reproduce the existing social structures, but also undermine them and create new possibilities for resistance towards established sociocultural values and practices. On the one hand, the existing social distinctions are transferred to the digital space, implying new forms of social inequality and exclusion due to the unequal approach to digital technologies and networks which are subservient to class, education, profession, age and language. On the other hand, new emancipatory potentials of the internet are in correlation with the expansion of the possibilities for communication, social mobility and organization, contributing to the relativization of the hierarchical practice of material and symbolic production and consumption, established in real society and offline space (with the help of greater access to information, freedom of choice, anonymity, expressiveness, playing with personal identities, experimenting with artistic and innovative possibilities, new forms of cultural and political representation and

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<sup>5</sup> Digital culture includes various cultural and media content and forms, such as virtual reality, digital television, digital special effects, digital movies, electronic music, video games, the internet, etc. In addition, the term digital is also tied to numerous cultural and artistic fields of study, including net.art, digital art, digital architecture, cyberpunk novels and movies, etc.



counter-cultural resistance). So, instead of homogenization, the equation of cultural models within the larger or imposed cultural identities, “the internet has enabled numerous “marginal”, specific identities, individuals within their national cultures or majority cultural models, to find themselves partners and groups which could satisfy their interests, and develop their cultural needs” (Dragičević Šešić, 2001: 285, translated by JP and JB). These tendencies were anticipated at the end of the last century by Nicholas Negroponte, who indicated that by mutually connecting people on the web, numerous values of states-nations or national sovereignty would make room for electronic communities. It is his opinion that we will socialize in a “digital neighborhood” in which physical space will lose its importance, and time assume a different role, which is today becoming increasingly more certain (Negroponte, 1998).

Digital culture actually represents the axis of broader communities, where the mutual human relations via networks include the creation and exchange of various cultural content and lifestyles, or more widely determined cultural models or values. Furthermore, over the past few decades a specific digital subcultural style has been affirmed, which has through its symbolic, subversive and activist potential enabled the study of existing regimes of power and socio-cultural values by asking the question of possible alternatives, as well as of the development of new forms of resistance (hacking, cyberpunk, digital music, cyberfeminism etc.). Gere states that hacking as a ‘symbolic and esthetic’ form of resistance has achieved a new form of expression, especially during the 1990s when artists themselves began to use computer networks as a venue for new forms of avant-garde artistic practice and political activism (Gere, 2011: 187). In the form of online communities of rebels and protectors of civil liberties and the democratic right to openness and freedom of expression (Ross, 1991), hacker activism can also be seen as a segment of the digital counter-cultural activity though the spreading of civil disobedience on the internet in the form of a symbolic expression and deliberate injury to the legal, esthetic, moral and other limitations.<sup>6</sup>

To the extent that it provides new forms of public space and socio-cultural participation, digital culture offers us, by all accounts, the opportunity to express alternative personal and group identities, other models of opinion, organization and action. By redefining freedom of expression and discourse practices, by undermining traditional concepts of public and private space, digital culture and the global informational environment contribute to politics becoming not only an instrumental activity for achieving certain goals, but also a digitally expressive activity, a means of creative, symbolic and subversive establishment and confirmation of identity, group values, ideals and belonging within the public sphere.

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew Ross noted that “official” computer systems are often the focus of hackers’ efforts (intelligence services and defense services, the police and armed forces), which they attack in defense of civil liberties which are endangered by the centralized bureaucracy of the military-industrial complex (Ross, 1991).

### 3. Digital citizenship and democracy

One of the very important functions of a digital society, its political function or, narrowly speaking, civic participation, emphasizes the concept of citizenship as a bond between an individual, society and the state. An individual, through the status of a citizen, could be recognized as a member of the community, while outside of that status he practically does not exist for the country he lives in. In that sense, an important dimension of citizenship is status, that is, the formal-legal dimension within which membership is framed. However, in addition to that, a very important dimension of citizenship is also the activist one, that is, the one which is actualized by the participation of an individual in the community through his civic activism. In addition to citizenship conceptually being analyzed through a legal-formal and activist dimension, it can also analytically be connected to the law and obligations, which are also studied within the legal (judicial, normative), and ethical field. The importance of citizenship today is radically being transformed, since as citizens we do not only realize ourselves within territorial wholes (the national state, supranational institutions, and local levels), but also in the virtual space which within itself contains numerous (digital) communities.

Through the practices of digital activism, numerous possibilities are opening up for citizens, such as being able to follow certain social events and support a particular rally or idea, to express their opinion publicly on social media or on internet forums, to found a website which could focus on some kind of civic activism, to ask questions pertaining to social problems, to advocate topics and create a space for debate. All of the aforementioned enables an individual to participate in self-expression, that is, confirm himself as a (digital) citizen.<sup>7</sup>This, of course is not impossible in the so-called offline world; however, the possibilities there are limited. The internet has an advantage because it is more readily available, it negates physical limitations, and the activities themselves that we should like to participate in can be realized much faster. That is why we could say of ICT that it potentially makes a great contribution to the democratization of society, since it represents a facilitating mechanism which enables citizens to take part in the deliberation process and decision-making process.

The forms of civic practices are diverse, and the places in the virtual world where these practices take place are manifold. What we usually consider digital activism are those activities which take place on social networks, which certainly is not incorrect. However, what is of great importance are those practices which are based on the possibility of citizens being active on websites which were founded by national or local political entities, including directly taking part in a discussion on important national or local issues. The spectrum of activities is great, beginning from online voting, filling in questionnaires, to meetings and discussions in so-called digital assemblies. The process of deliberation includes various actors, from citizens,

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<sup>7</sup> Mark Ribble cites nine dimensions of digital citizenship, including: the digital access, digital communication and collaboration, digital commerce, digital fluency, digital etiquette, digital law, digital rights and responsibility, digital health and welfare, and digital security and privacy (<https://www.digitalcitizenship.net/nine-elements.html>).

politicians, clerks, to civil society organizations and the media, which renders the entire communication democratic and public.<sup>8</sup> Those in favor of using ICT in political communication believe that its effect is primarily positive, since it contributes to the direct inclusion of citizens in the decision-making process. In a broader sense, we could conclude that ICT creates a new formula for democracy, a digital democracy. Of course, for such management to be realized, the key issue is for the governments themselves to recognize its importance, to be of an open democratic spirit and finally to implement the mechanisms for its realization. In addition, considering that younger generations have been living with technology since birth, which is why they are referred to as digital natives, we could expect the political systems in the future to transform even more in accordance with their demands, habits and practices, which leads us to the conclusion that digital democracy is our future.

#### 4. Digital civic activism

Internet communication can have an important role in political processes, and can sometimes also take on a revolutionary dimension. Specific counter-cultures or cultures with identities of resistance to the dominant values are formed on social networks and in virtual space in general. We could say that Julian Assange and Edward Snowden belong to the group of new revolutionaries of the digital age, as do numerous social and urban social movements, such as *Occupy Wall Street* and *Anonymous*. These kinds of movements and protests, which they instigate, emerged as the expression of civic dissatisfaction, that is, armchair politics which neglect civic interests and everyday life and are concerned only with the economic interests of large corporations. The alienation of politicians and high-ranking individuals from the citizens sometimes results in anti-politics, which can assume the form of political apathy and civic passivity. However, one part of the dissatisfaction spills over into the mobilization of the public to offer resistance, which is usually and primarily something that happens precisely in the online world.

The described social context spills over from the global level into Serbian society, where for the past few years we can note an increase in political apathy and civic dissatisfaction. The research results of a public opinion poll from 2017 indicate that 37% of the respondents stated that they are not interested in politics, while 34% stated that they do not get politically involved. Only 4% of the citizens see themselves as politically active individuals. The reason for this low percentage can be found in the statements of the citizens, who claim to have lost trust in political parties and key political figures in Serbia (see Cesid, 2017). However, one part of the dissatisfied citizens started to become active in an organized form, which is indicated by the increased number of local initiatives and associations which are shifting the focus of politics towards topics pertaining to the immediate social environment, as they

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<sup>8</sup> Some of the examples cited in practice in the world include: *Regulations.gov* (United States), the *National Dialogue of Public Involvement in EPA Decisions* (United States), and *Citizen Space* (United Kingdom) (for more see Holzer, Melitski, Rho and Schwester, 2004).

are considered to be primary political environments which are most significant for the quality of life of citizens. The communication within such movements takes place primarily through social networks, since information can most quickly be disseminated and could reach a greater number of people this way.<sup>9</sup> The importance of the internet and social networks (especially Facebook) for mobilizing the public and initiating protest activities was supported by research on events such as *Protest protiv diktature* (in English: the Protest against dictatorship) from 2017. This was a protest which was initiated in April 2017 via Facebook, spontaneously and non-deliberately on the part of an individual,<sup>10</sup> and all this immediately after the presidential elections. Due to the dissatisfaction with the election process, as well as the increasing political divisions and social tensions, a Facebook page was formed, called *Protiv diktature* which rapidly began to gain more and more followers. Research shows that this was an activity of a new political generation of younger people, mostly students from urban environments, who were otherwise inactive in the traditional political space (in political parties) (Babović, Bajčeta, Veličković, Petrović, Stefanović, Cvejić, 2017). What is interesting is the finding that most of the participants of the *Protiv diktature* protest had heard of it through social networks or internet portals, whether they were younger participants (76%) (who are generally informed online), or members of older generations (60%) who are more prone to turning to traditional media for their information. More than one half of the participants who took part in these protests think that the use of the internet contributed to the increase in their interest in socio-political issues. At the same time they cite that they do not trust television stations with a national broadcasting frequency (Babović, Bajčeta, Veličković, Petrović, Stefanović, Cvejić, 2017: 20), which is not surprising, considering that one of the main reasons for the emergence of the protests was precisely the belief that the media in Serbia are not free, and that they do not reflect the current socio-political pluralism. Furthermore, the disappointment in traditional media is the result of their increasing sensationalism and superficiality, while on the internet an individual can select any content on his own and thus freely monitor the information process.

In addition to the aforementioned protest, relatively young movements in Serbia also warrant analysis, those with a primarily local character which emerges as an expression of rebellion against specific problems in the immediate environment, but which actually indicate the deeper fissures in the social system. Social networks in that sense emerge as an important, even essential channel of communication which enables the problems which the movements are focused on to reach broader groups of citizens in the country, and even wider. The research of several social movements in Serbia, including *Odbranimo reke Stare planine* (in English: Let's protect the rivers

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<sup>9</sup> Dalibor Petrović believes that social networks in Serbia predominantly use three means of political activism: activism through portals, forums and protest types of activism (Petrović, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> This finding lends support to the claim that an individual as a citizen is most powerful on the internet, sine "armed" by cyber space and new technologies, he can quickly reach a great many people and in a short time spread his political opinions, a certain piece of information, or an invitation, and potentially could draw the public in, and then maybe even mobilize it.

of Stara planina), indicate that their orientation towards social networks as a means of communication with the public emerged as a necessity, considering that they see the traditional media, both local and those with a national frequency, as unwilling to hear their side of the story (for more see Delibašić, Nikolić, Vasiljević 2019: 28). However, other forms of communication are not negligible, and so the importance of fieldwork, face-to-face communication with citizens, printing and distributing of posters and leaflets, as well as recording documentary material and movies is also promoted. This confirms the well-known thesis in the theory of social movements that, even though digital space opens vast possibilities for civic activism and the spreading ideas, action in a concrete (physical) space remains an important element for the success and duration of a social movement and the realization of its goals. Otherwise, if all the activism takes place solely online, the activities of the movements could turn into a temporary rebellion (Petrović and Petrović 2017: 422). This is what Manuel Castells, who considers social networks to be an important source of information, refers to networking and inciting emotional charges among citizens and activists; however, new social movements mostly manifest their solidarity through physically gathering at protests in real space, covering even greater spatial distances for this purpose.<sup>11</sup>

The examples which we have included in this paper confirm the thesis that new social movements in Serbia, as well as other types of protests and political organization or involvement, over the past few years primarily relied on the internet and communication through social networks in order to indicate social problems, but also to spread their own political ideas and to organize events or protests. Even though Serbia does not belong to the group of developed European countries, the digital society has taken roots in Serbia, which is supported by the data that an ever increasing percentage of citizens are using the internet,<sup>12</sup> as well as that an ever increasing number of movements and organizations are using the digital sphere as the primary space of political communication. So, we could say that in terms of the meaning of social networks for civic activism, Serbia is keeping up the global social trends. In addition to Serbia, it is worth mentioning that other countries which do not belong to the developed West are also carrying out their revolution using the internet and social networks as their primary means of disseminating information and mobilizing the public. What we are primarily referring to is the phenomenon of the Arab Spring, which included a series of political movements in a number of Arab countries. Using footage of excessive use of force against demonstrators which rapidly spread via the internet, the protests managed to spark dissent in other parts of the world, and what emerged were some new social movements (with anti-capitalist tendencies). In that sense, it is important to note the huge undisputed contribution of the digital technologies to the rising protests against political-economic elites in the

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<sup>11</sup> New social movements which primarily rely on social networks in their communication Castells sees as those which reflect the collective feeling of somewhere between rage and hope (Castells, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> The frequency of internet use by the citizens of Serbia at the end of 2019 was 77,4% (<https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/oblasti/upotreba-ikt/upotreba-ikt-pojedinci/>).

US, Spain, Mexico and Turkey (Petrović 2016: 400-401). In addition, some research indicates the special importance of social networks in bringing topics pertaining to human rights to a wider audience. The sharing of footage from events where certain stigmatized social groups are being attacked by the police caused a great surge of emotion among the citizens, which later initiated campaigns and even the formation of movements whose aim was to invoke support in people for the rights of endangered minorities and for the spreading of social justice. One of the movements which was formed as a strong reaction to the infringement of the rights of African Americans by the US police is *Black Lives Matter* (Chiappelli 2017: 94).

## Conclusion

Considering that culture is always historically and contextually determined, we could say that each epoch faces a unique epistemological challenge and a need to develop methods of cultural analysis which are suited to the specific spirit of the times. Today that refers to the need to understand and explain the most significant changes in people's way of life, which emerged as part of the digital culture, in collaboration with numerous elements such as technological innovation, new means of social organization, the transformation of cultural practices and values, new possibilities of self-expression and innovative forms of social, cultural and political/civic identification and participation. Digital culture, as a specific way of life in a network society mediated by ICT is subjected to the influences of wider social determinism, while at the same time determining the facts of socio-cultural life and certain manifestations of the individual or collective behavior on the web or off of it. This is also confirmed through the analysis of digital culture as a framework of civic activism, which indicates that the realization of civil rights and participation in public life is based on the ability to not only provide new forms of digital communication and interaction, but to also feel and assume responsibility and to actively take part both on the internet and in offline space, that is, in a broader social context. The development of the digital culture of resistance, contextualized according to the needs of the times, certain social circumstances and communities, stems from the need for a unique digital rebellion against the ruling social, cultural and political mainstream, which stems from a need for authentic expression, free communication, artistic, civic or political alternatives. In that sense, digital space can take on the function of an alternative artistic and political scene, while the internet/social networks could become a medium for the (de)construction of personal and group identities, as well as an implement used to achieve but also to negate democracy.

By summing up the offered analytical insights, it is possible to conclude that the advantages of ICT in the activities of new social movements are visible, among other things, in the fact that activism takes place almost incessantly in the digital space, while in the real world it is sporadic and occasional. Personalized forms of political activism which are present in the digital world are manifested through various types



of activities through which the individual publicly states the content which he finds politically relevant. In addition to rewarding the activities of social network users (liking the posted content for example), this also allows us to open the possibilities for the exchange of opinions, for discussions, and other forms of open communication. However, despite that, the glorification of digital activism as the determining generator of political change in the future is misguided. Some authors think that the subjective need of citizens to participate in large social events could lead to the wrong conclusion that something of the kind is actually happening. Activities in the online sphere can be very significant (primarily in terms of disseminating information and mobilizing the public), which from the aforementioned examples and findings in this paper can be verified, but need not be a deciding factor in any social-political upheaval. What this means is that despite the persistent political activism on social networks, the actual political achievements are often of a limited range and depend on a series of specific social circumstances (Andrejić, 2017; Petrović, 2016). As indicated previously, activism in the digital world is an important channel of communication, but civic participation in the real (physical) space still remains essential for achieving specific socio-political changes. The fact is that online activism can easily be transformed into clicking or so-called clicktivism, which is considered a negative social occurrence, considering that its final outcome is the passivization of citizens. Thus, we can conclude that being a citizen in contemporary society in the full sense of the word means being active both in the real and in the digital space. Digital citizenship, thus, is an important contemporary form of citizenship, but it in no way negates the importance of traditional forms of civic participation.

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## DIGITALNA KULTURA KAO OKVIR GRAĐANSKOG AKTIVIZMA

**Sažetak:** *U radu se polazi od stava da digitalna kultura, ma koliko utemeljena na tehnološkom napretku, nije njime isključivo određena, već nužno proizlazi iz vrednosti, načina mišljenja i delovanja koji su utelovljeni u toj tehnologiji i posredstvom nje, i koji su omogućili njen razvoj. Stoga će uvodni deo rada biti posvećen kritičkom promišljanju digitalne kulture kao platforme za (de)konstrukciju individualnih i kolektivnih identiteta, razmatranju njenog participativnog, mobilizatorskog i subverzivnog potencijala u kontekstu zagovaranja i ostvarivanja društvenih i kulturnih promena, građanskih prava i sloboda. Osnovni cilj rada jeste da se iz sociološke perspektive objasni kako je, i u kojoj meri, digitalna kultura odredila, oblikovala, odnosno transformisala način građanskog aktivizma, posebno tokom poslednjih nekoliko godina u Srbiji. Korišćenjem sekundarnih izvora podataka, pre svega oslanjanjem na rezultate sprovedenih istraživanja, analizovaće se koliko je internet/društvene mreže važno sredstvo u komunikaciji i mobilizaciji građana na protestno okupljanje i organizovanje raznih političkih događaja. Posebno će biti učinjen kritički osvrt na efekte, prednosti i ograničenja (pokretanje na akciju ili pasivizacija) građanskog delovanja u kontekstu digitalne kulture. Primenom komparativne metode, u završnom delu rada biće ukazano na to koliko se Srbija i srpski građanski aktivizam uklapaju ili odstupaju od evropskih pokreta kojima su takođe primarno sredstvo mobilizacije internet i društvene mreže.*

**Ključne reči:** *digitalna kultura, građanski aktivizam, Internet, građanski identitet.*



## ETHICS OF ENTERTAINING MEDIA CONTENT

**Abstract.** *Entertainment media content attracts the attention of younger as well as older audiences. The authors examine the ethical principles that apply to entertainment media content and wonder what is ethically problematic in entertaining content and where to draw the line. The paper also analyzes the codes of ethics of European countries in order to determine whether there are specific provisions for entertaining media content. In the second part of the paper, the results of a survey conducted at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš are presented with the aim of determining whether young people recognize violations of ethical principles in entertainment media contents. Also, the results reflects the attitudes of students in terms of paying attention to the unethical content of these media - whether ethical violations hurt their dignity and whether they feel deceived.*

**Key words:** *ethic principles, media, students, entertainment program, code of journalism ethics*

### 1. Introduction

Since its very beginning, the media has been misused by various entities. The ethical problems that soon arose concerned authentic reporting, censorship and objectivity. The opportunity to reach out to a large audience gave “wings” to all those whose job demanded propaganda - politicians, the military, the church, business owners, marketers. In order to secure their position, protect society and the profession itself, journalists have formed ethical associations and compiled codes of ethics.

Ethics can be considered as a higher instance of morality because it gives legitimacy to moral foundations. Professional ethics is a set of obligations that regulates certain practices and arises from morality. Journalism ethics is determined by the relationship of moral obligations that the journalist has as a citizen and as a journalist. The main difference between these two types of ethics is that in journalism ethics decision making is rational, that is, it uses arguments, while professional ethics is rather a set of written rules (Babić, 2000). The basic principle of journalism ethics is authenticity. Relevance is also one of the most important principles, in addition to fairness and objectivity.

However, when it comes to entertainment, these principles are ignored. Entertainment content is subject to ethical judgment. On the other hand,

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entertaining media content is treated differently because of its nature and easily accepted by people. However, the effects of entertaining contents are great – from influencing the formation of attitudes in young people, through inciting violence and encouraging behavior models, to dumbing down children and adults. The paper focuses on entertainment media content ethics, presenting the functions of mass media communication, then is given a brief overview of Codes of Ethics worldwide and in Serbia, it has been discussed about the ethical problem in the context of infotainment journalism and entertaining media content. Further in the paper also has been examined whether European codes of ethics contains provisions regarding the entertaining media content, and at the end it has been shown the results of a survey on the attitude of young people about the ethics of entertainment content and their recognition of unethical entertainment content.

### 1.1. Functions of mass communications

We can say that the functions of communication are one of the reasons why journalists publish irrelevant news. The notion of relevant news refers to news that is relevant to the public. Journalists are obliged to publish exactly this kind of news. In this way, they make life easier for society and individuals who are unable to obtain all the information that would make their existence easier, and one of the reasons for that is that ordinary citizens are not in that position. An ordinary citizen simply cannot verify a lot of information, hence the distrust of the media and the need for information (Bernays, 2014). On the other hand, it is the journalist who in the name of the public can get information that an ordinary individual cannot.

In addition to intrapersonal, personal and group communication taking place among people, communicologists also distinguish mass communication, which involves the press, radio, television and the Internet. Although with the advent of mass media, the mode of communication is different from face-to-face communication, the motives, intentions and goals are largely the same as in communication without the mediation of mass media. L. Manovič has shown in his papers that the Internet did not move far from television by its principle of operation, and concluded that the new media are not entirely new media (Manovič, 2001). We agree with Manovič that this is the case when we talk about the Old/New media difference. When we talk about the everyday/media communication difference, it seems that the difference is only in the mode of communication, but that the motives are the same. „Communication processes between the media and the public began to be seen as complex interactions with unpredictable effects.” (Cvetanović, 2018: 95) These unpredictable effects, among other things, relate to audience and media interactivity, an opportunity created with the emergence of new media.

Communication can be regarded as instrumental - which means that communication serves as a means of obtaining information, decision-making, or as a means of entertainment. “Instrumental communication is a strategic activity,” says Jančićjević (Jančićjević, 2006:24). The four basic functions of communication are the following:

1. informative
2. entertaining
3. instructive
4. persuasive (2006:24).

These functions of communication are also found in journalism. The goal of the journalist is to inform, entertain and instruct. Persuasion is an accompanying function used by all media with the aim of being the most watched (television, internet), most read (press, internet), or most listened to (radio). Public communication consists of different news, from political to weather forecast. Janićijević believes that the media can provide us with objective information, free of attitude. However, objectivity is difficult to achieve. As for entertainment, which is becoming more present in serious shows, but above all a faithful companion of educational shows for children and adults, we believe that this function of communication is very important. It has its positive sides: humor, profoundness, stress relief, sparking new interests, or new world views, etc. It is negative: when entertainment trivializes some social problems and situations, if it is vulgar, if it offends certain social groups, especially those vulnerable, if it incites violence, etc. Instruction involves teaching. Teaching means explanation. “There is almost no situation or informative, entertaining and persuasive communication that does not have an educational value for a person seeking knowledge or some skill,” said Janićijević (2006: 27). Persuading is considered the most complex function.

Today, the commercial media is full of fake photos and false news, especially about public figures. There is a thin line between falsehood and sensationalism, but both are unethical ways of reporting on people. The consequences of this kind of reporting are generally bad. A public figure being subject to falsehood may suffer, as well as their family, and the public is usually subject to deceit. Misinformation is one of the most widespread ways to deceive the public. It can often be found on news portals or social networks, either in the form of fake news or fake commenters such as bots or fake sources. Theorists distinguish several types of fake news: Satirical news; Parodies; Fabricated news; Visual manipulations; Propaganda Content; Advertising content (Baraković, 2019:62).

## **2. Review of first principles of Journalism Ethics**

The first principles of journalism ethics are found in the French newspaper *Gazzete De France* of 1631. It was founded by Theophrast Renaudot, who wrote the following in the preface: “... prevents the spread of many false rumors that often serve as tinder for negative development and discord in the country,” (Corney, 1999). However, normative ethics in the form of professional rules began to emerge only in the nineteenth century, also in France, where professional associations emerged and the freedom of the press was discussed. The first codes were created in the XX century: in Sweden in 1923, in Finland in 1924, in Norway in 1936, in Great Britain in 1938, in Italy in 1928, in America in 1923, in Serbia after World War II, etc.

The first codes and commissions against the exploitation of violence, sex and bloodshed were established in Hollywood under the pressure of Protestants and conservatives, between the 1930s and 1960s. This code applied to movies, and a movie could hardly be distributed unless it had the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America) seal confirming the compliance with the Code. The contents of the Hays Code were very conservative and restrictive. The Hays Code prohibited the display of nudity, even silhouettes, couples of different races, childbirth scenes, and the mention of sexually transmitted diseases. The display of violence, killing, torture or anything that would cause horror was prohibited. Television must not develop an interest in gambling, and ridicule the law; crime must not be justified or presented as profitable; criminal techniques will not be portrayed as instructive (Bertrand, 2007: 68).

The second Code is the Code of Good Conduct adopted in 1929. Since this Code was found to violate antitrust laws, it was replaced by the Declaration of Principles in 1990. This Code has made a major impact on large networks and the behavior of the entertainment industry. This Code prescribes the pursuit of creativity and change, as well as positive effect on morality. It is very important to encourage social and cultural diversity.

The third code is the internal code of the CBS network.

The Hutchins Commission is known in the United States, under the chairmanship of Robert Maynard Hutchins (a former rector of the University of Chicago), which in 1947 submitted a report attributing special responsibility to the media as organizations.

It should be noted that “ethical issues are not entirely reducible to what occurs in and through screened program. They also extend to, or wholly emerge from, what lies behind and what comes with or after distribution, promotion, and transmission, thus exhibiting extra/and intertextual dimension.” (Mast, 2016:2181).

In Europe, the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Court of Honor in 1916, Code in 1923), Finland (Freedom of the Press Act in 1919, Code in 1924), Norway (Code in 1936) were first to get their codes. In Serbia, in 1881, at the founding assembly of the Serbian Journalists’ Association, the request was “to protect the reputation and interests of journalism by assembling a jury of honor for each member who would compromise the freedom of the press in Serbia by misusing the public word.” After the Second World War, the Serbian Journalists’ Association improved its normative acts and the Journalists’ Code of Ethics.

### **3. Ethical problems of entertaining media content**

Contemporary journalism is colored by sensational reporting and tabloid approach to information. The media has been particularly criticized for content that is inappropriate for young people, children, and the elderly; then for content that undermines cultural values and trivializes reality. The ethical problems behind these criticisms are: terrifying content (massacres, murders, fights, etc.), obscene content (sex, etc.), religious programs

(verbal and physical violence, disrespect for human dignity) etc. Sensationalism is also present in serious journalism; however, the media that cross the line are at risk of becoming semi-tabloids or tabloids. The topic of this research is the ethics of entertainment media contents. By entertainment media contents we mean commercial media content, but also the content of the public service intended to entertain the audience.

We can say that each medium has its own entertainment program, and that it often instrumentalizes entertainment to gain a growing audience. For example, William Hearst, the owner of Sunday, the first tabloid newspaper, realized that it was very useful for a newspaper to include a comic (The Yellow Kid); the television program is becoming vulgarly entertaining and unified, the radio uses modern technologies and posts photos that accompany the news on social media, online media use interesting headlines to influence the audience to click on them and to make them more profitable. The entertaining role of the media, explains Bertrand (2007) also has its therapeutic function because pure reality is harsh.

Commercial program is omnipresent in the media, and profit has become the main goal of media organizations. Editors' favorite imperatives are the following: Be the first! Be original! Be different! Be the most present and most wanted! And lastly, be favorite! This is often in conflict with professionalism and ethics; therefore, violations of codes of ethics are very common.

Entertainment media ethics is different from informative media ethics. It is certain that it cannot be the same for both sectors; for example, fictional characters, advocating a stand, and fictional dialogues correspond to some historical drama but not news. (Bertrand, 2007: 65)

Bertrand (2007) notes that there are no codes drawn up by people from show business, which is strange because public relations companies, as well as advertisers, and many other professions have professional codes. Diversity of content is cited as the reason for the lack of codes in show business. Much content, e.g. sports, can be classified as both entertaining and informative. People watch sports as a hobby, out of curiosity or as a professional duty. Different contexts influence whether it is entertainment or something else. If it is a hobby, sport is undoubtedly entertainment, but neither curiosity nor professional duty exclude entertainment. Also, shows like knowledge quizzes are educational and entertaining, and television channels such as National Geographic, Animal Planet and others are almost always entertaining.

Commercial media are characterized by aesthetic mediocrity. They rarely promote creativity in the fields of fine arts, classical music, literature, philosophy, etc. Huge production brings big profit to media owners, but it hinders social development, notes Bertrand (2007). Another accusation against the media is that they do not stimulate thinking. Thus, the media audience is often referred to as passive. The media bombard us with information; information comes so fast that it is impossible to think twice about the same thing; plus plenty of manipulation techniques that make most of what the media provide seem accurate, correct and truthful. Second, we often use the media in moments of boredom and leisure, so it seems to us that there is no need to be bothered with problems of ethics and similar.

The ethical problem of the media is often associated with the question: what values do the media provide? Good people in movies, TV series, and reality shows have stopped being winners a long time ago. The media create new heroes: selfish, mean, conservative or eccentric. A real hero has all anti-values - intolerant, greedy, addicted to material things, and a raw representative of their nation.

The media are pushing the trend of irrational buying and consumption, which should be continuous and represents a kind of shopping research in which buyers or consumers observe, collect and systematize their products, and then by the "like/dislike" method reject some and predict the trend for next season for the remaining products. (Gonsalo, 2012).

Moderation and measures are long gone as the values of the world represented by the media. Violence, speed, noise, bloodshed - these are the values of the virtual world in which the minority that believes in true values and presents them is swallowed up.

#### **4. Infotainment and ethics**

Employees of modern media systems more than ever use the entertainment function of the media to achieve win in every segment of the audience. In the era of digital journalism, in which the media market is flooded by informations, while media channels are saturated with an abundance of information, it is "necessary" to attract the attention of the audience and insinuate to them by giving finely wrapped informations in "infotainment<sup>3</sup> cellophane".

„If so many commercial and political interests invest so much money in media advertising, it is absurd to believe that the media has no influence on our behavior. Otherwise, billions of dollars were wasted by advertisers.” (Dej, 2008: 230)

An entertaining TV program can often be in function of the Agenda setting theory, while the broadcasting of an entertaining program is in the function of diverting attention from essential problems. Contemporary media rely on technical-discursive elements of the program (broadcast graphics, graphical logo, visual elements), as well as the sitting arrangement in the studio, while paying attention to the furniture and the entire studio mise-en-scène, in order to create an image for the viewers of more informal, relaxed and natural way of chatting about important topics. Almost as if these TV program is being played in the viewer's living room. Graphical-visual elements are also accompanied by the substantively-structural way in which the news is processed and presented to the audience. Thus, news broadcasts have evolved into informative talk shows (eg. "150 minuta" or "Jutro sa Jovanom i Srđanom" on Prva TV in Serbia), in which the news program is based on interesting television reports, while the interviewees from the TV reports are often guests in the studio. The principles that apply to tabloid journalism in the press apply with slight convergence modifications onto television journalism.

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<sup>3</sup> Infotainment journalism is a term coined from the English words "information" and "entertainment" and means an information program designed according to the principles applicable to entertainment and commercial broadcasts.



„The basic distinction between quality print media and tabloids rests on a different approach to information material (information), which in reputable journalism is expected to respond to three basic requirements: actuality, relevance-importance and interestingness. (...) In the tabloid editorial approach, the topic selection process is reversed: it rests on the third form of information.” (Todorović, 2006: 22)

The dominant media ideology of the 21st century is the ideology of market capitalism, in which news are treated as a commodity and the audience as an interest and target group. According to the process of globalization, media conglomerates are imposing new trends, while “few large companies have power over production, distribution and exposure globally, which accelerates the homogenization of world society in the interest of commercialism” (Tjurou, 2012: 314). Observing the dominant discourse of television expression, one concludes that age of consumerism imposed by the industrial age of the media has led to the marginalization of real, investigative journalism. Quality journalism retreats in the face of trivialization of public sphere. The taste of the audience „must be” satisfied at any costs, starting with the viewers need to replace the gloomy picture of everyday life with cheerful and spiritually empty programs, in which consumers will give their conscience under concession to editors and journalists. In this regard are Neda Todorovic’s words about consequences of consuming tabloid news, which reflects on the formation of the reader’s image of the world, on the processes of creating public opinion, on the encouragement and maintenance of unhealthy voyeurism that replaces reality with false, virtual reality. (Todorović, 2006: 29). An eclectic example of the stated is TV show, „Paparazzo lov“, which airs on Serbian television „Pink“, in which journalists and camera crew follow celebrities in their daily lives, and often make vulgar comments, while the audience is pleased by normality of untouchable TV stars.

The popularity of entertainment media content stems from moments of leisure, in which the average TV viewer simply wants to relax, while the mesmerizing power of television easily draws him into his fictitious world, where is a thin line between entertainment and disrespect of the Code of ethics. A good illustration for stated is that the reality show “Zadruga” received its special TV channels (Zadruga 1, Zadruga 2, Zadruga 3) on the IPTV operator of Telekom Srbija. As misleading as it may be, it may be that the separation of entertainment and entertainment programs can be a solution for further media perspective, and that is broadcasting such and similar programs on separate TV channels, thus, the status of national television stations - which have undeservedly received this frequency - will be resolved. In this regard, Stanko Crnobrnja points out that in the world of commercial television, with its status as a popular (populist) entertainment, there is indeed an unwritten rule that television programs should not be researched as “serious” (critical) analysis, because this program is so simple as it is, namely simplified, that there is literally nothing in it that should be analyzed in this serious way. (Crnobrnja, 2010: 15)

One of the main challenges facing REM is the fair distribution of television ether on state and commercial-private channels. Precisely, because media is not

ethically and meaningfully distributed, we have a current situation where, in prime time period, national televisions broadcast and propagate an obscure and vulgar program through a reality show program culture. Easy entertainment in the form of reality shows and soap operas certainly does not contribute to the television audience's spiritualization, although media, and above all, television technology, has incredible potential for cultivating audience. That is why it is especially important for the audience to be able to recognize the influence of the media, but also to ask why a particular media program is broadcasted at a certain time, at a time of social crisis or an important political decision<sup>4</sup>. In order to be able to „read” the behind-the-scenes intentions, it is important that critical thinking is always sharp, and that “through the set of viewpoints we actively apply in the use of the media, in order to interpret the meaning of the messages we receive” (Potter, 2011: 47), so we can tend and recognize the principles of media literacy.

#### 4.1. Current Codes of Ethics in context of entertaining contents

Researching the ethical codes of journalism in European countries, based on data from a specialized website dealing with media ethics (accountablejournalism.org), it has been found that there are currently over 30 national codes of ethics which are in use in Europe. The number of ethical codes is higher than the number of media associations that exist, since in the last six years special codes of ethics have also been adopted concerning the regulation of the online sphere. Most journalists' codes of ethics in Europe were established and enacted in the early 1990s. For the purpose of this paper, and to determine whether there are provisions in the European code relating to entertaining media content, following codes of ethics were analyzed: German, Italian, Dutch, Finnish, Danish, Norwegian and Greek.

With regard to the codes of ethics in the field of journalism in Western European countries, there is a chapter 11 (Ziffer 11 - Sensationsberichterstattung, Jugendschutz<sup>5</sup>) in the German code of ethics relating to sensationalist reporting. However, there are no specific provisions in this code concerning regulating entertaining media content. Unlike the German Code of Ethics, the Italian Code of Ethics for Journalists (Carta de Doveri<sup>6</sup>) is significantly poorer. This Code is not precisely categorized and contains only 4 chapters (Introduction, Principles, Duties Sources). None of these chapters mention ethics of entertaining media content. Everything is determined in accordance with writing in the public interest and states accordingly: A journalist has to respect, cultivate and defend the right of information for all people; for these

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<sup>4</sup> For domestic media theorists, the question of the decision of the City of Nis leadership to give the „Konstantin Veliki“ airport in Nis to the state of Serbia, at the moment of holding the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, at no charge was left opened. Although the citizens of Nis have been outraged and protesting for months about this decision, the Nis Airport Handover Agreement was concluded almost "overnight", at a time when national fever was prevailing around the World Cup in time when Serbia played a key match with Switzerland in advance to pass to further stage of the Competition.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.presserat.de/pressekodex.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://accountablejournalism.org/ethics-codes/italy-national-federation-of-the-italian-press-and-national-council-order-o>

reasons he researches and diffuses every piece of information that he considers of public interest in observance of truth and accuracy.

Nor is the Dutch Code of Ethics for Journalists particularly engaging in entertaining media content, although the introduction clearly states the following: The starting point of the Guidelines is that anyone engaged in journalism must take responsibilities for the information he or she distributes and the manner in which he or she operates<sup>7</sup>.

When it comes to Scandinavian countries, the treatment of entertaining media content is not specifically specified in the Finnish and Danish codes of ethics of journalists. The Norwegian Code of Ethics in one part deals with how to treat published information, however, only in the indications. So in Section 4, Section 4.1 states: Make a point of fairness and thoughtfulness in contents and presentation<sup>8</sup>.

Among all the ethical codes of journalists analyzed in European countries, the “poorest” is the Greek code of ethics for journalists. This code has not been amended since its inception in 1988, and contains only 10 items, which generally describe the “mission” of journalists.

## **5. Results of the survey on students’ attitudes about the ethics of entertainment media contents**

The research on the ethics of entertainment media contents was conducted on a corpus of 98 undergraduate third year students of the Department of Journalism and Communication Studies (90), master students of Communication Science (5) and PhD students at the Department of “Media and Society” (3), Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš. The gender structure of the sample is composed of 63% female and 37% male respondents. The age included in this survey ranges from 1979 to 1998 year of birth. The time period for conducting the survey was two weeks. The survey is of a combined type with specially designed statements and questions concerning the given research subject, with questions involving independent variables, such as: gender, study program and age. The answers were constructed according to the Likert-type scaling technique.

In Serbia, there is no codified distinction between the ethics of entertainment and informative media; it is universal. However, most of the students partially agree with the following hypothesis: The ethics of entertainment media contents is different from the ethics of informative media (46%), while 43% of respondents completely agreed with this hypothesis. (Table 1)

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<sup>7</sup> <https://accountablejournalism.org/ethics-codes/code-of-ethics-netherlands-press-council>

<sup>8</sup> <https://accountablejournalism.org/ethics-codes/Norway-Press>

**Table 1** Ethics of entertainment media contents

The ethics of entertainment media contents is different from the ethics of informative media	I completely agree	I partially agree	I am not sure	I partially disagree	I completely disagree
	43%	46%	1%	9%	1%

Considering that the aim of entertainment media content and entertainment shows is entertainment and amusement, we wanted to ask future communication scientists, journalists and PhD students in this field what is their position regarding the ethical treatment of entertainment content. Does it need to be subject to the principles laid down in the Code or is this content exempt from the Code regulations. The hypothesis regarding this was the following: *Entertainment content is not subject to ethical assessment because of its nature*. The largest number of respondents (41%) completely disagreed, while 40% of respondents partially disagreed. (Table 2)

**Table 2** Entertaining contents

Entertainment content is not subject to ethical assessment because of its nature	I completely agree	I partially agree	I am not sure	I partially disagree	I completely disagree
	3%	12%	4%	40%	41%

The psychological and persuasive effect of the media was related to the third hypothesis in the survey. To the hypothesis: *Entertainment content can be a bad influence on young people in terms of their behavior, creation of false idols, etc.* the highest percentage of respondents answered that they partially agreed (57%). Twenty six percent (26%) of respondents completely agreed, while 16% of respondents partially disagreed. (Table 3)

**Table 3** Entertainment media content influence

Entertainment content can be a bad influence on young people in terms of their behavior, creation of false idols, etc.	I completely agree	I partially agree	I am not sure	I partially disagree	I completely disagree
	26%	57%	1%	16%	0%

The hypothesis with which we wanted to examine whether the warning about possible insults and contempt of public figures from the world of entertainment and political establishment makes sense, that is, to what extent young people differentiate the actual (informative) program from the creative (entertaining) one, was the following: *Young people recognize themselves what is real and what is not in the entertainment media content, and it is not necessary to state that at the beginning, during or at the end of the show*. In this regard, the answers were opposing, i.e. partly contradictory and different. Forty one percent (41%) of respondents partially agreed

with this hypothesis while 43% of respondents partially disagreed. (Table 4)

**Table 4** Young people and entertaining media contents

Young people recognize themselves what is real and what is not in the entertainment media content, and it is not necessary to state that at the beginning, during or at the end of the show	I completely agree	I partially agree	I am not sure	I partially disagree	I completely disagree
	3%	41%	5%	43%	8%

The hypothesis included in the analysis of the Serbian Journalists' Code of Ethics and the AOM Code in the first part of the research regarding the broadcasting time of reality shows was presented to the respondents in the survey. The absolute majority of respondents (95%) completely agreed with the following statement: *Reality show programs should be broadcast late in the evening when children are asleep.* (Table 5)

**Table 5** Broadcast of reality show program

Reality show programs should be broadcasted late in the evening when children are asleep	I completely agree	I partially agree	I am not sure	I partially disagree	I completely disagree
	95%	5%	0%	0%	0%

The statement with which we wanted to examine how much the respondents pay attention to the violation of ethics when reading or watching entertainment content was the following: *We often use entertainment media content in moments of boredom and leisure, and we find it unnecessary to be burdened with ethical issues.* Surprisingly or not, the largest number of respondents (54%) partially disagreed with this statement. However, 24% of respondents partially agreed with this statement. (Table 6)

**Table 6** Use of entertaining media contents

We often use entertainment media content in moments of boredom and leisure, and we find it unnecessary to be burdened with ethical issues	I completely agree	I partially agree	I am not sure	I partially disagree	I completely disagree
	3%	24%	5%	54%	14%

To what extent the compatibility of the Code of Ethics with the Public Information Act is useful and how coherent they should be, that is, whether their compliance would contribute to less ethical principles being violated, was touched upon in the following statement: *Penalties for violations of ethical principles that are identical with the legal requirements should be increased so that offenses are not repeated.* The largest number of respondents (94%) completely agreed with the above statement. (Table 7)

**Table 7 Ethical principles and legal requirements**

Penalties for violations of ethical principles that are identical with the legal requirements should be increased so that offenses are not repeated	I completely agree	I partially agree	I am not sure	I partially disagree	I completely disagree
	94%	6%	0%	0%	0%

Another question regarding the persuasive effects of entertaining media contents was the following: *Have you ever felt deceived after watching an entertainment show or reading entertainment content?* Most respondents (64%) said yes, while 33% said no. (Table 8)

**Table 8 Feelings about entertainment content**

Have you ever felt deceived after watching an entertainment show or reading entertainment content?	Yes	No	I am not sure
	64%	33%	3%

What respondents think is prevalent in the program schedules of TV channels and in newspaper columns – kitsch and triviality or quality entertainment content, such as TV drama, spoof, sketch or feuilleton – was covered in the statement: *I think that there is more trivial entertainment content and kitsch in the media than quality entertainment.* Most respondents (93%) completely agreed. (Table 9)

**Table 9 Attitudes about trivial and kitsch entertainment content**

I think that there is more trivial entertainment content and kitsch in the media than quality entertainment	I completely agree	I partially agree	I am not sure	I partially disagree	I completely disagree
	93%	6%	1%	0%	0%

The question which examined what ethical categories are most threatened by the kitsch entertainment content was the following: *In your opinion, what ethical values or problems, are most threatened by the kitsch entertainment program?* The largest number of respondents (79%) stated that such programs contribute to the collapse of moral values. (Table 10)

**Table 10 Ethical values**

In your opinion, what ethical values or problems are most threatened by the kitsch entertainment program?	Dignity	Truth	Privacy	Collapse of moral values
	6%	5%	10%	79%

## 6. Concluding Remarks

Entertainment media content floods the media, so its impact on the audience is great. We used a survey to examine whether young people pay attention to the



ethics of such content. It was found by means of the survey that a large percentage (81%) of the target group paid attention to the violation of ethical principles in the entertainment program.

Regarding the persuasive and psychological impact of the entertainment program, which also reflects the suggestive function of the media, the majority of respondents (83%) were of the opinion that the media with this type of program could have a bad influence on the behavior of young people, the identification with the stars of that program, and on the creation of false idols. One of the questions concerning the persuasive and psychological impact was about deception, or manipulation by means of entertainment content. This applies in particular to pseudo-satirical shows that are opposed to the real satire ("24 Minutes with Zoran Kesic" versus the pro-government satire "Kontravizija"). Sixty four percent (64%) of respondents answered that they felt deceived and manipulated by watching entertainment shows.

When it comes to media literacy and whether young people themselves recognize what is true and what is false in entertainment media contents, the answers of the target group were ambivalent. Forty four percent (44%) of respondents said that they completely or partially agree that young people distinguish the true picture of reality from the fictitious one, while 51% of respondents said that they did not agree with the above statement. The control question for this hypothesis was the following: *We often use entertainment media content in moments of boredom and leisure, and we find it unnecessary to be burdened with ethical issues.* The respondents' answers were consistent with the answers to the first question concerning this segment, as 68% of respondents completely and partially disagreed with the hypothesis.

As for the "least intelligent" entertainment, the reality show programs and at what time they should be broadcast, the absolute majority of respondents (100%) completely and partially agreed that this type of program should be broadcast late in the evening when children are asleep.

Almost one hundred percent (99%) of the respondents agreed that kitsch and trash prevail over quality entertainment content within the entertainment program, which may also include experimental as well as documentary entertainment shows.

The absolute majority of the surveyed target group also agreed on the compatibility of the principles of ethics with the provisions of the Public Information Act. Thus, 100% of respondents agreed with the hypothesis that the penalties for violations of ethical principles in certain provisions (violation of privacy, violation of honor, respect of authorship, etc.) should be increased by the Public Information Act in order to make the Code of Ethics more effective.

What respondents rated as "most dangerous" in terms of broadcasting a kitsch entertainment program is the collapse of moral values (79%), which is not surprising given that in Serbia, nationally broadcast television stations broadcast reality show programs that promote easy money, vulgar vocabulary and "plastic" and unhealthy appearance among women day and night.

Finally, the Serbian audience has somewhat become "immune" to obscene scenes and immoral entertainment. The problem is also psychological in nature,

which can be described by the term *media habituation*<sup>9</sup>. Following the example of psychological habituation, we talk about media habituation when the audience is sensitized due to excessive exposure to trivial and tabloid content, so that eventually kitsch, immoral program and media content begin to be taken for granted, without any critical examination or questioning their compliance with ethical principles.

The solution may be the compliance of the Serbian Journalists' Code of Ethics with the Public Information Act, as well as the amendment of certain chapters of the Code; for example, Chapter IV, "Journalists' Responsibilities", where the guidelines should prescribe the time of broadcast of reality shows and unambiguously determine what type of media should include such a program in its program schedule.

It is important to note that the responsibility of journalists in the constant race to survive in the media market has made the journalist's responsibility meaningless and has only become declarative. In such a constellation of forces, where quality media content retreats in the face of a sensationalist style of content processing and infotainment principles, the journalistic profession, like journalists, loses its integrity.

It is of particular importance to understand the opinion of Louis Alvin Dey (Dej, 2008) that the media must share moral responsibility for the destruction of democratic values to the extent that the public has given up serious content in exchange for banality. Having in mind the analyzed codes of conduct of European countries, perhaps a victory over banal content can be helped by upgrading the ethical codes of journalism in the section dealing with entertaining media content, by defining and drawing the line between tasty (cultural) and tasteless (non-cultural) entertaining media content.

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<sup>9</sup> The term habituation originally comes from psychology. It is referred to as sensitization under the constant influence of some external factor. For example, people who live next to the railroad will after a while stop being bothered by the noise of the rails or the siren of the train. Due to the constant exposure to that noise, they become "immune" and it stops bothering them.



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### Website

<https://accountablejournalism.org/>

<https://www.presserat.de/>

## ETIČNOST ZABAVNOG MEDIJSKOG SADRŽAJA

**Rezime.** Zabavni medijski sadržaji privlače pažnju mlađe, ali i starije publike. U radu se istražuju etički principi koji se odnose na zabavni medijski sadržaj, sa osvrtom na etički problematične zabavne sadržaje, kao i gde treba povući granicu. U radu je urađena i analiza etičkih kodeksa evropskih zemalja sa ciljem da se ustanovi da li postoje posebne odredbe za zabavni medijski sadržaj. Drugi deo rada prikazuje rezultate ankete sprovedene na Filozofskom fakultetu u Nišu sa ciljem da se ustanovi da li mladi ljudi prepoznaju prekršaje etičkih principa u zabavnom medijskom sadržaju. Takođe, rezultati prikazuju i stavove studenata po pitanju obraćanja pažnje na neetičan sadržaj ovih medija - da li etički prekršaji vređaju njihovo dostojanstvo i da li se osećaju obmanutim.

**Ključne reči:** etički principi, mediji, studenti, zabavni program, etički kodeks novinara



## “NARODNE NOVINE”: GENRE, THEMATIC AND VISUAL TRANSFORMATION 1949-2019

**Abstract.** *The importance of local media is indisputable for media theorists and media practitioners, despite the widespread globalization. Although electronic media has the largest audience, while online media is constantly expanding, the traditional print media is still surviving and they influence the political and social life of local communities. “Narodne novine” [English: The People’s Newspaper] are a daily news and political newspaper with the longest publication time in south-eastern Serbia. By using the quantitative and qualitative content analysis, as well as the comparative and synthetic research method, the authors investigate how this newspaper has transformed in relation to genre, and in thematic and visual terms during the two socially and historically different periods - in the socialist and transitional period. The research corpus consists of 63 articles from two editions of “Narodne novine” – the newspapers published on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1949 (28 articles) and 70 years later, on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 (35 articles).*

**Key words:** *local media, publishing, “Narodne novine”, Socialism, transition*

### 1. Introduction

The fear that the development and expansion of new media, will cause the old media disappear, was refuted by the reality, which is evidenced by the fact that the emergence and improvement of new media has actually led not to the disappearance of the old media, but rather to their transformation and adaptation, both to the new media features and to the needs of the audience. It is always necessary to analyse and observe media transformation in the broader social context possible, as well as to keep in mind that the media and the social community are two closely connected and inseparable categories that constantly influence one another. Even though electronic media has the largest audience, while online media is constantly expanding, the traditional print media are still being published and they influence the political and social life of local communities. Their importance is beyond question, because in addition to informing the audience on local issues and monitoring local decision-makers, local media should continuously initiate civic awareness decentralization and contribute to the well-being of communities through the public interest activities. That is why it is very important that the local media do not serve the holders of

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political or economic capital, which happens very frequently in Serbia due to their poor economic status.

The question that bothers both media theorists and practitioners is - how can local print media survive in the market. It is actually the search for the answer to this question that is the catalyst for the transformation of a print media in order to improve the competitiveness in the digital environment and in the local media market. When analysing local print media in Serbia, it is important to emphasize that the Serbian media system is characterized by a great media dependence on the State and by an underdeveloped media market, even though due to the need for the State to withdraw from ownership in media<sup>3</sup>, the 2014 Law on Public Information and Media required that all state-owned media must be privatized in 2015. Media privatization in Serbia officially ended on October 31 of that year, which caused many local stations to shut down. An important step in the media transition is to adopt a set of media laws<sup>4</sup>. However, such laws are very rarely implemented in practice, as evidenced by the May 2019 European Commission Progress Report on Serbia<sup>5</sup>. There is no complete freedom of speech in Serbia, there are still threats to and violence against journalists, independent regulatory agencies are not doing their job, and there is a lack of transparency in ownership structures and in media funding from State funds, especially at the local level.

The global media situation is becoming increasingly complex due to the development of new media technologies which make the audience require new types of content that bring brief information and instant gratification.

However, after the “slow” print media has realized that they cannot win the battle against the Internet, they began to search for their own characteristics which would give them a comparative advantage over the new media.

In this paper, the authors investigate journalistic practices in the “Narodne novine” newspaper during the two socially and historically different periods - the socialist and transitional period, in order to point to the characteristics and specifics of the transformation of local print media. The goal is to investigate how the “Narodne novine” newspaper has transformed itself in relation to genre, and in thematic and visual terms.

The first chapter of the paper is called The Importance of Local Media, and it highlights the importance of local print media for community development and its

<sup>3</sup> The 2002 Broadcasting Law required the withdrawal of the state from the media ownership, that is, asked for their capital to be sold throughout Serbia at public auctions.

<sup>4</sup> Some of the laws governing the media are: the Law on Public Information and Media, available at: <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/cir/pdf/zakoni/2014/2511-14.pdf>, The Law on Electronic Media, available at: <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/cir/pdf/zakoni/2014/2512-14.pdf>, The Law on Public Service Broadcasting, available at: <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/cir/pdf/zakoni/2014/2513-14.pdf>, The Law on Advertising, available at: [http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon\\_o\\_oglasavanju.html](http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_oglasavanju.html), Copyright and Related Rights Act, available at: [http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon\\_o\\_autorskom\\_i\\_srodnim\\_pravima.html](http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_autorskom_i_srodnim_pravima.html) (Accessed August 20, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Available at: [http://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu\\_dokumenta/godisnji\\_izvestaji\\_ek\\_o\\_napretku/20190529-serbia-report\\_SR\\_-\\_REVIDIRANO.pdf](http://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/godisnji_izvestaji_ek_o_napretku/20190529-serbia-report_SR_-_REVIDIRANO.pdf) (Accessed August 20, 2019).

democracy; the next chapter is “Narodne novine” and Socialism, which describes the historical development of this newspaper in the post-war period, followed by the chapter “Narodne novine” and the Transition Period giving an overview of this newspaper in the aftermath of democratic changes; the next chapter is called the Methodological Framework, followed by the Results of the Research and Discussion, and finally, the Conclusion, which draws attention to and expands the social significance of the research conducted.

## **2. The importance of local media**

Local media are an indispensable participant of citizens’ social and political life, as they represent the primary source of information from local communities and significantly affect the judgment and decision-making by individuals. “Local media are an element of a pluralistic society, they are the key institutions of the micro public sphere and often play the role of the local government controller,” says Mihajlov-Prokopovic (2014:1), adding that their importance in modern democratic society is confirmed by the principles of European media policy which requires the countries to promote pluralism as well as to prevent unlawful media concentration. Beside this, “these media have an important role to play in promoting the quality of public life in local communities” (Milivojevic and Mihajlovic, 2005: 11). Not only are the local media important, but they are also more important than the “big” media, because the information they provide is more concrete, closer to citizens and their everyday problems.

Studies dealing with the local media are scarce. One of them was conducted in the Netherlands, researching a local television audience. The results have shown that people expect the local media to do seven things: (1) provide relatively diverse, reliable, timely and unbiased background information on local community events; (2) promote social integration by helping people to be present in their local community; (3) inspire people and be an example to others; (4) ensure representation of different groups in the community; (5) increase the understanding of local communities for different groups; (6) be a form of local memory or a chronicle of local events; and, (7) contribute to social cohesion, to a sense of belonging to the locale (Costera Meijer, 2010 according to Nielsen, 2015:11).

Local print media are not the most widely read today, but they have the longest tradition and a significant influence. “From small rural communities covered by weekly newspapers to larger cities covered by their daily newspapers, the newspapers in general are an integral part of local life, with their journalists who document both the everyday events from and the monumental ones, who publish local discussions and more or less closely follow those in positions of power” (Nielsen, 2015:1). Nilsen believes that the biggest issues that local media, especially print media are facing are the decrease in print readers, decrease in advertising and general revenue, as the digital growth cannot yet make up for what has been lost on the print media

side. In Serbia, commercial local media are also faced with problems. The financially unenviable position of local media is influenced by a number of factors, including the shift of advertisers to both national channels and the online sphere, as well as the insufficient economic power of local advertisers. Therefore, “The local media in the transition countries are barely surviving. The markets in these countries are mostly underdeveloped and the scarce advertising goes to large broadcasters” (Mihajlov-Prokopović, 2014: 3). This issue is made even worse by the possible association of advertisers with certain political structures, which in this way may indirectly influence editorial policy, and make the role of local stations pointless<sup>6</sup>. Radojkovic claims that “... the mass media in Serbia are below the level considered average by the European Union. In addition to this, among the underdeveloped mass media, the local media are the most underdeveloped” (Radojković, 2007: 49). Several features of the local mass media are highlighted by the author: technical and production-based inferiority, low readership (Serbia has one of the lowest daily newspaper readership indices in Europe, especially regarding local newspapers), the economic unsustainability of the mass media, media piracy, disregard for legal norms, lack of foreign investment (Radojković, 2007: 49-51).

Under such economic and political circumstances, the local media, although crucial for the cohesion of the community, barely survive since they are financially unsustainable and are forced to apply for co-financing<sup>7</sup> using the funds from the local or state budget, or from some foreign donors. However, this model of co-financing also does not guarantee that there will not be another (potential) source of funding, and has been widely abused in practice. The biggest issues are incomplete legislation, insufficient transparency of the process, insufficient expert committees, lack of evaluation of approved projects and the process itself, undefined minimum of funds that should be allocated from the budget, lack of sanctions for lapses in procedures and committees’ work<sup>8</sup>. Southern and Eastern Serbia region is especially at risk, since being the poorest and most underdeveloped region of the country<sup>9</sup>.

Numerous socio-economic issues hamper the development of the region, which is why the role and importance of local media must be greater. Because, “Modern

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<sup>6</sup> For more details please see the 2011 document by the Anti-Corruption Council of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, entitled *The Report on Pressures and Control over the Media in Serbia*.

<sup>7</sup> The possibility for the media to be funded from the republic, provincial or local budgets was provided by the Law on Public Information and Media of 2014, which defined the public media project co-financing in order to preserve the public interest in the media.

<sup>8</sup> These conclusions were outlined in the White Paper of the Competitive Co-Financing of Public Interest in the Sphere of Public Information, published on the basis of a one-year study (April 2015-April 2016) conducted by the The Coalition of Media and Journalists’ Associations. Available at: <http://www.ndnv.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/BelaKnjigaWEB.pdf> (Accessed August 20, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Based on the data provided by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia presented in the publication *Regions in the Republic of Serbia in 2017*, the region of South and Eastern Serbia has the lowest share in the gross domestic product of the Republic of Serbia, the lowest percentage of employed population and the highest percentage of the unemployed and inactive population, according to <http://www.stat.gov.rs/media/3698/g201826001.pdf> (Accessed August 20, 2019).

society seeks to make local media better and thus enable public debate on the most important issues of a particular community, that is, make its citizens capable and competent to participate in or influence the decisions to be made” (Veljanovski, 2017: 9). The role of local media is to spread democracy and promote social responsibility, in addition to informing citizens. “Narodne novine” in Nis has been trying to do this for seven decades.

### **3. “Narodne novine” and Socialism**

The post-war period is a turning point in the history of Nis’s print media. Socialism can be considered the golden age of the print media in Nis.

“From October 16, 1944, when the first newspaper was printed in Nis, and until the end of 1971, the print press in Nis had expanded on an unprecedented scale. Under those new socialist conditions, almost thirty years after the liberation, a great number of newspapers and magazines were published in Nis. It was during this period when the print media and journalism in general flourished, that numerous newspapers, magazines, school and factory papers, newsletters and publications by professional associations and institutions were published.” (Mirčetić, 1972:107).

“Narodne novine”, which was then called “Glas slobodnog Nisa” [English: The Voice of the Free Nis] was launched in the then Democratic Federal Yugoslavia in October 1944<sup>10</sup>. According to Dragoljub Mircetic (1972), after the liberation of Nis in World War II on October 14 1944, the printing company was immediately returned to Nis and became fully operational in two days when the printing started. The fact that it was the printing company, along with the brick factory “Laf”, that was the first commercial enterprise to start working after the liberation, proves that local media was very important at that time. At that time, 25 workers were employed at this printing office. As early as October 18, 1944, the first issue of the “Glas slobodnog Nisa” was published<sup>11</sup>, only two pages. After four issues, and after the “confiscation and nationalization, the printing press turns into a printing company “Narodni list” [English: “People’s Daily”] (Mircetic, 1972: 107), thus the following newspaper issue in the free and socialist Nis was published under the name “Narodni list”. The first such issue was published on October 21, 1944, and was being printed until May 1<sup>st</sup> 1949. According to the information obtained from the “Nis Press – from 1871 to 1971”, this newspaper was the Body for the District Committee of the National Liberation Front of the Nis District, and numerous experienced journalists worked there from the very beginning. One of the issues that stood out was the issue number

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<sup>10</sup> The Democratic Federal Yugoslavia was established at the Second Session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) in 1943. In 1945, the country changed its name to the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, and since the adoption of the Constitution in 1963 it had been called the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, until 1991 when its dissolution began.

<sup>11</sup> Source: <https://www.juznevesti.com/Drushtvo/69-rodjendan-Narodnih-novina.sr.html> (Accessed August 20, 2019).



8 of November 7, 1944, which was dedicated to the 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution,” says Mircetic (1972: 108).

Although the first issues of the “Narodni list” did not specify the names of the editors, it was possible to find out that until September 1945 the following editors were in charge: Stojiljko Stojiljković, Slobodan Ivanović, Branislav Ćirić and Svetozar Ljubenić. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1947, “Narodni list” became the Body of the City Committee of the Nis National Front (Mirčetić, 1972: 107).

As of May 1<sup>st</sup> 1949, this newspaper has received the name most widely known to the current readership – “Narodne novine”, and were sold at a price of 2 dinars per copy. In 1949, they were published as the Body of the Regional Committee of the People’s Front of the Nis region, which was also the publisher of the newspaper. After that, “Narodne novine” became the Body of the City Committee of the Nis People’s Front, then on September 1, 1955 the Body of the District Committee of the Socialist Union of Nis, and then the Body of the City Committee of the Socialist Alliance of Nis (Mirčetić, 1972: 107). That year was marked by the Third Plenum, when the state policy was changed, meaning that the USSR model was abandoned, and gradual liberalization in all areas of life was initiated. The influence of the West was growing, which included the development of print media. According to Janjetovic, the largest number of newspapers in socialist Yugoslavia were published in central Serbia, excluding Kosovo and Metohija and Vojvodina, but despite the large number of newspapers, Yugoslavia was in the last place in Europe regarding print media reading, with less than one hundred newspapers per one thousand people (Janjetović, 2011: 85).

As part of the “Narodne novine” publishing company, managed by Milos Bajagic at the time, “Narodne novine” began to be published as a daily from January 1, 1971. The newspaper was not published only on Sundays, while every Saturday a “Cultural Page” was published, containing two to four pages of text on Nis culture and history. The editor-in-chief of the newspaper at the time was Dragoljub Jankovic. In addition to “Narodne novine”, this publishing company also published the weekly called “The magazine of Youth 68”, and also owned the Special Issues Editorial Board. “When this newsletter first started to be published as a daily, it was under constant scrutiny of many watchful and conscientious eyes. They were often criticized, especially by senior executives,” says Slobodan Krstic (2016: 86). That is why the editor-in-chief of “Narodne novine”, Dragoljub Jankovic-Jenki “held the reins”. ”He shied away from any aphorism written by Timosenko Milosavljevic which could provoke various associations ”(Krstić, 2016: 86). Jankovic was the editor-in-chief of Pirot “Sloboda” [English: Freedom], an associate of Radio Nis, and from 1955 to 1965 a journalist for “Narodne novine”, where he began as a journalist for the cultural section. From 1965 to 1973, Janković was also the correspondent of Politika from Nis, and from 1970 to 1973 he was the editor-in-chief of “Narodne novine”. During this period, he was also the director. In his monograph on “Narodne novine” called “Newspapers and Journalists” [Serbian: *Novine i novinari*], Krstic describes him as a journalist first, then a theatre critic, a cultural worker, a writer and a cultural worker.



Djokica Jovanovic says that “Narodne novine” was a promoter of both ideological and propaganda interests and messages, as well as a defender of truth and authentic public interest, and that despite the critical attitude regarding the degree of professionalism of the journalists and editors of “Narodne novine”, one cannot be indifferent to the fact that for the last half a century, “Narodne novine” has been “the most important factor in the information system of the city and this part of Serbia” (Krstić, 2016: 11). Jovanovic confirms that everything that is characteristic of the print media was also happening in “Narodne novine”, and that journalists, under the constant pressure of the political establishment, often had to conform to the current ideological demand (Krstić, 2016: 11).

With regard to media systems in socialist countries, there were two models of information-communication systems according to Radojkovic.; the state/party model and the self-governing/socialist model, both being the part of the country establishment (Radojković, 1984). Private newspapers could not be published in socialism. One of the main features of Yugoslav socialism is media monopoly, control of the press and the public sphere. “In spite of the many freedoms enjoyed by the Yugoslav socialist society today thanks to the doctrine of self-government, there is still the continuous possibility of a return to totalitarianism [...] Because, despite the self-government, all channels of information and all permissible social organizations are under the control of the League of Communists; they are, therefore, in the Communist party’s hands. And any one-party system, no matter what else may be said about it, is a kind of subcategory of Stalinism.” (Mihajlov, 1968: 328–337 according to Dedić, 2009: 163).

#### 4. “Narodne novine” and transition

After the collapse of this system, the media became part of a dual system - commercial and public during the transition period. Public Service Broadcasting consists of the Radio and Television of Serbia and Radio and Television of Vojvodina, while all other electronic media are commercial. Print media are mostly privately owned. The first Serbian privately owned newspaper was the weekly “Nedeljni telegraf” [English: “*Weekly Telegraph*”], founded in 1994. It was founded by Slavko Ćuruvija together with Momčilo Đorgović, and two years after that, in 1996, they founded the first private daily newspaper in Serbia called “Dnevni telegraf” [English: “*Daily Telegraph*”]<sup>12</sup>. Despite the privatization of the media, the state has not completely relinquished ownership of some print media. “... The state and state institutions are co-owners of three significant publishers - Novosti (37%), Politika newspaper and magazines (50%) and Dnevnik holding (45%)” (Matić, 2012: 177).

Veljanovski calls the new media systems - media systems in transition (Veljanovski, 2009:364). In this context, the term transition means to abandon the socialist system in some European countries. Democracy, parliamentary pluralism

<sup>12</sup> Data available at: [https://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavko\\_Ćuruvija](https://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavko_Ćuruvija) (Accessed August 20, 2019).

and a capitalist-type market economy are becoming dominant. This process was generally complex and, in Serbia, exacerbated by the war in the former Yugoslavia and the sanctions.

“Narodne novine” is also a part of the media system in transition, and its tradition has been maintained to this day. After 70 years of publication under the same name, it is the only daily newspaper south of Belgrade. This daily was privatized in mid-2006, when it became part of a media conglomerate owned by the brothers Vidosav and Tomislav Radomirović. The newspaper was sold at a public auction for 16.609.000 dinars (Tomić, 2007: 66). Opinion was divided as to whether this was a successful privatization. The new owner was pleased: “The last ten years have proven that it has been a successful privatization because it has allowed the daily newspaper to run smoothly,” as stated in a 2016 article published on the Belami web portal<sup>13</sup> marking the publication anniversary of “Narodne novine”. However, the experts are dissatisfied. Slavica Stojanovic, the editor of the news desk of this newspaper talked about the most current data on the financial, social and technological status, on the relation to the public interest, capacities and plans for the online edition, and on the development strategy of “Narodne novine”<sup>14</sup>, for the needs of the scientific project Local Media of the Nisava District in the Digital Age organized by the Department of Communication and Journalism at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Nis. At that moment, “Narodne novine” had 35 employees. They are financed both from providing commercial services - advertising, and with funds received at the co-financing grant competitions for the media content of public interest. Stojanovic points out that the local advertising market for “Narodne novine” is relatively extensive, because it covers the entire region of south-eastern Serbia, thus going beyond the Nisava district area. However, the main issue is that marketing agencies own most of the market at the state level. The editor could not provide us with the information on the circulation, but she said that “Narodne novine” reaches all institutions, which has been a tradition from the time of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Namely, almost all the city institutions were subscribed to this newsletter back then, and things are similar even today. On the one hand this is good, because of the impact they are making, while on the other hand it is not, because it reduces sale at the newsstands. This means that one newspaper is read by many people, so the rating is much higher than the circulation. The website has further increased readership but also decreased sales of the print edition, Stojanovic points out. “Narodne novine”, in part, receives the funds necessary at the co-financing grant competitions at the city of Nis level, and of all the municipalities that this newspaper reports about. They are being allocated the funds from the budget of the City of Nis and city municipalities for the fourth year, ever since the media project financing began. Due to the small amount of money that the municipalities have, the newsletter always received less than the needed level

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.belami.rs/danas-je-rodendan-narodnih-novina/> (Accessed June 20, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> In-depth interview conducted by Velibor Petković, Assistant at the Department of Communication and Journalism at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Nis, November 28, 2018 at the “Narodne novine” offices in Nis.

of funding for the projects to be implemented. However, since the City of Nis has significantly larger funds for these purposes<sup>15</sup>, the newsletter mostly received the funds they asked for or a little less, but still enough for the projects to be carried out, with greater efforts and some savings. Given that “Narodne novine” is the only daily newspaper reporting on the news from this region, they are convinced that local governments should provide more funds for them. They also said that they used the funds allocated by the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia.

With regard to technical and technological capacities of “Narodne novine”, the editor said that technology is constantly advancing, and that they never have enough of everything, but they do have software editing of newspapers prior to printing, which could be even better if they had more resources for these purposes. Therefore, there are no existential crisis for the newsletter, the business results are positive, salaries are regular, but they are below the national average. However, they do have staff issues. The editor Stojanovic says: “I wouldn’t call it an issue, but we do have staff-related problems: the fact is that the quality is always better if there are more employees, primarily journalists.

“When it comes to the public interest, editor Stojanovic claims that “Narodne novine” benefit the public interest of the local community. Journalists report on all major events in the city and region and strive to report as objectively as possible, in a clear and understandable manner. She also points out that there are no topics that are not of public interest, as some polls have shown that citizens want to read about, “the ordinary topics about ordinary people, what they do, how they live, what happens to them, and not just about politics and celebrities”. This newspaper reports on topics of public importance, and it has columns that talk about politics, economy, society, but also about culture and sports, Stojanovic says. Regarding the capacity and plans for the further development of online edition, Stojanovic points out that new technologies have enabled faster and easier work, but this has also led to a reduction in the number of employees in the newspaper. “Narodne novine” do not have a separate editorial board for the online edition, and the online edition is identical to the print one. Therefore, the editor recognizes the opportunity to further improve the online edition. Technological development should bring innovation and improve communication with readers and as well as the interaction between them and the media, Stojanovic points out.

As for the development strategy, the editor Stojanovic also points out that “Narodne novine” newsletter is being able to survive, and it must keep doing that because it is absolutely necessary... This newspaper is needed on a daily basis to inform citizens, but also as archival material, because when monographs are written about certain institutions, our newsletter provides all the information necessary. Rarely does anyone have their own archive.”

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<sup>15</sup> This year, the city allocated the record amount of 79 million dinars for media projects, which is 25 million more than the previous year. Up to 15 million dinars are estimated per project. Available at: <https://www.juznevesti.com/Ekonomija/U-Nisu-i-do-15-miliona-dinara-za-medijske-projekte.sr.html> (Accessed August 20, 2019).

## 5. Methodological framework

The subject of this paper's research is journalistic practice in the "Narodne novine" newspaper in two socio-historically different periods, which further explains the transformation of local print media. The goal is to investigate how the "Narodne novine" newspaper has transformed itself in relation to genre, and in thematic and visual terms.

In this regard, the authors apply quantitative and qualitative content analysis using a comparative and synthetic research method. The research corpus consists of 63 articles from two editions of "Narodne novine" – the newspapers published on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1949 (28 articles) and 70 years later, on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 (35 articles). The corpus consists of all the contents published in these two issues.

SPSS for Windows, version 15.0 was used for data entry and analysis, while the statistical procedure used was descriptive statistics (frequency distributions and cross-tabulations).

## 6. Research results and discussion

Quantitative and qualitative content analysis, based on the code sheet, explored the following characteristics of the two issues of the daily that were the subject of the analysis.

The length of the article (text) was determined by the coverage of the newspaper page. Short articles consisted of a few sentences, medium articles covered up to one third of the page, while a long article was considered the one which covered a half of the page or more. The results of the analysis showed that the 1949 edition had more shorter articles, while the 2019 edition primarily included medium-sized articles. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1** The length of the article "Narodne novine" May 1<sup>st</sup> 1949 and May 1<sup>st</sup> 2019.

	Short article	Medium article	Long article
May 1 <sup>st</sup> 1949	19	5	4
May 1 <sup>st</sup> 2019	9	18	8

The authorship of the articles was also analysed. The results show that the 1949 edition mostly had unsigned articles. There were half the number of articles citing the author by the full name and surname, or by the first letter of the name and the surname. The least number of articles were signed by initials. This has changed in 2019: most of the texts were signed with initials. There were also many unsigned articles, which was also the case in 1949, even though this is not in line with the current Code of Serbian Journalists<sup>16</sup>. The results are shown in Table 2 in a tabular

<sup>16</sup> Available at: [http://www.savetzastampu.rs/doc/Kodeks\\_novinara\\_Srbije.pdf](http://www.savetzastampu.rs/doc/Kodeks_novinara_Srbije.pdf) (Accessed August 20, 2019).

format. One article in the 1949 edition of the “Narodne novine” newsletter was signed by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, and it is presented in the column titled *other*.

**Table 2** Authorship of the articles “Narodne novine” May 1<sup>st</sup> 1949. and May 1<sup>st</sup> 2019.

	Signed articles	Articles signed by initials	News agency articles	Unsigned articles	Other
May 1 <sup>st</sup> 1949	8	3	0	16	1
May 1 <sup>st</sup> 2019	3	19	1	12	0

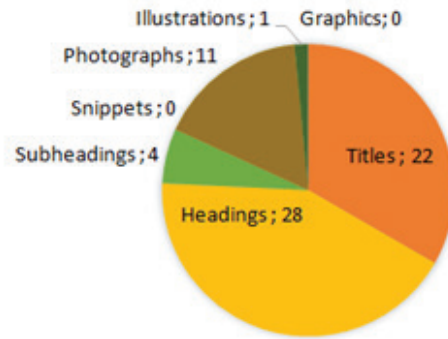
In the issue of “Narodne novine” published on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1949, there were 11 articles which talked about the south of Serbia, and not solely about Nis. Three of the published articles spoke about Prokuplje, two talked about Aleksinac, Vranje and Jelašnica each, while one article reported on Hum and one on Donja Toponica. Only one article more reported on the topics from Nis. Seventy years later, the same newspaper primarily reports on topics relating to Nis and less to other towns from the south of Serbia. Žitkovac, Doljevac, Kursumlija, Prokuplje and Svrlijig had an article each reporting on the topics from these towns. Most of the texts talk about Nis, and there are also significantly more articles reporting on national and international topics – mostly unsigned, which may suggest that they were taken over from national media. The results are shown in Table 3 in a tabular format.

**Table 3** Locality of topics of text “Narodne novine” May 1<sup>st</sup> 1949. and May 1<sup>st</sup> 2019.

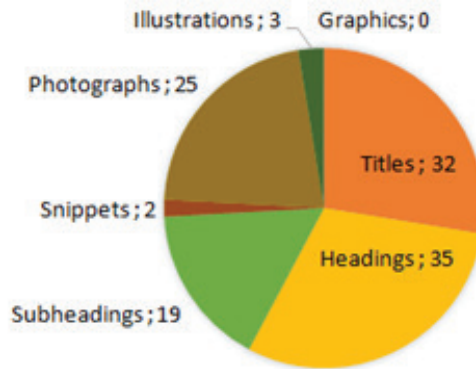
	National topics	Topics from Nis	South od Serbia	International topics	General topics
May 1 <sup>st</sup> 1949	3	12	11	2	0
May 1 <sup>st</sup> 2019	5	18	5	6	1

As for the complexity of the articles, 2019 ones are much more complex. More texts have more complete title blocks, meaning that except titles they have headings and subheadings. While in 2019 more than 70 percent of articles contained photographs, often more than one, in 1949 less than 40 percent of articles contained any photographs. There is less illustration and no snippets or graphics. Beside this, most pages of the 2019 edition are in colour, while the 1949 edition of “Narodne novine” is black and white, while red ink was used only twice - at the beginning and at the very end of the newspaper, in order to highlight the headline of the newspaper and the slogan “Long live the five-year plan - the basis of socialism in our country!”. The results are shown in Table 4 and Table 5 in a tabular format.

**Table 4** Complexity of the articles “Narodne novine” May 1<sup>st</sup> 1949.

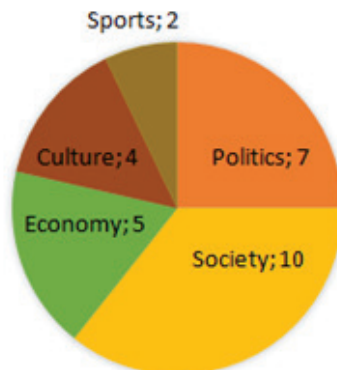


**Table 5** Complexity of the articles “Narodne novine” May 1<sup>st</sup> 2019.

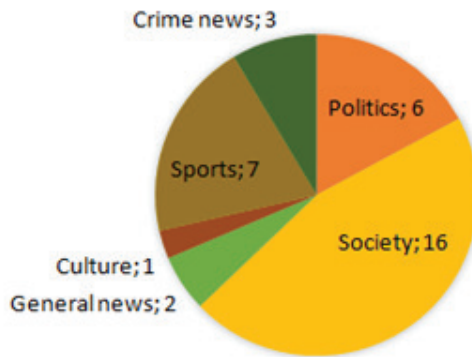


The topics that journalists covered in 1949 and 2019 are shown in Table 6 and Table 7. In both years, most topics were related to society. In 1949, the most prominent topics were related to politics, economy and culture. There was no general, region-related information, as well as no local crime news, unlike the 2019 issue. The 2019 issue includes sports articles, while economy-related topics are not addressed. It is interesting to note that there are no entertainment-related articles in any of these editions.

**Table 6** The topics that journal covered “Narodne novine” May 1<sup>st</sup> 1949.

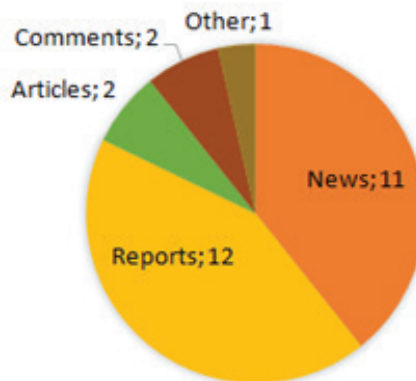


**Table 7** The topics that journal covered “Narodne novine” May 1<sup>st</sup> 2019.



The diversity of genres is shown in Table 8 and Table 9. In both of these issues analysed, the majority of articles included news and reports. Both editions have published articles and a comment. The 2019 edition of “Narodne novine” is more diverse in genre due to the published photo-report entitled Easter in Nis.

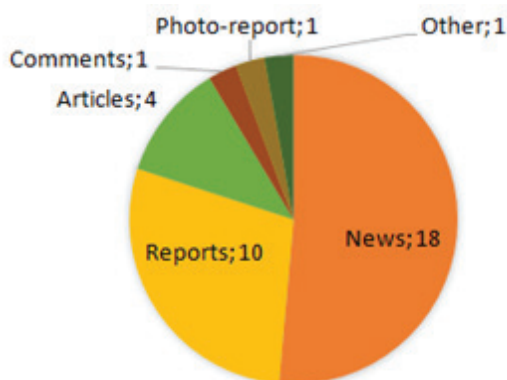
**Table 8** Genres “Narodne novine” May 1<sup>st</sup> 1949.



In addition to the genres in the analysed issue from 1949, illustrated in Table 8 there was one article which talked about the anniversary of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the form of a welcome speech, but it cannot be classified into any genre category (it is marked in the chart as “other”). Such content was also published in the 2019 issue regarding Easter customs.



**Table 9** Genres “Narodne novine” May 1<sup>st</sup> 2019.



In addition to the differences shown in the tables, the difference between the 1949 and 2019 issues is also apparent in the cover pages. The front page of the modern edition is printed in colour, has four titles, three of which contain photographs. It also contains a caricature. On the other hand, the front page of the 1949 newspaper contains a text signed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, and the only photograph on it is a portrait of Josip Broz Tito. Due to it being the holiday issue, the 2019 newsletter had several pages that included advertisements, May Day greetings from city and municipal institutions, public utility companies and trade union organizations, which were not included in the socialist period newspaper issue. Contemporary “Narodne novine” also prints small advertisements, a price list for advertising and obituaries. In addition to the legally binding impressum which the both analysed issues contain, the 2019 newspaper also includes a daily horoscope, a television guide, a guide to city services and organizations, and a weather forecast.

## 6. Conclusion

Local newspapers are a testimony to life in local communities, and they differ from other types of media because they cover specific local topics and content that are important for decision making by citizens of a certain community. In fact, to research a local newspaper means to feel the pulse of a society and its dynamics, which is also evident from the study of “Narodne novine”, a daily news and political newspaper with the longest publication time in south-eastern Serbia, which is at the same time the only daily newspaper published south of Belgrade.

The analysis of the transformation of a newsletter in relation to genre, and in thematic and visual terms during the two socially and historically different periods gives a special insight not only into the similarities and differences, as well as the characteristics of the print media in the analysed periods, but it also gives insight into the specifics of these two historical periods and their social impact on the media, and indirectly on the audience. Based on the analysis, we can conclude that the



current issues of “Narodne novine” are significantly visually richer than the first issue under this name. Moreover, the visual content of modern “Narodne novine” has a greater degree of communicability, which results from the use of colour. Due to the simplification of colour printing technology, “Narodne novine” has transformed from a newspaper that used exclusively black and red 70 years ago to colour newspapers as we know it today. Nevertheless, the title of this newspaper is still coloured red, as it was the case in the first issue, but its intensity has been increased. Colour printing was the requirement of the audience, who are becoming more visual as a result of the overall media transformation. In addition to the difference in visual richness of the newspaper, there is a slight difference in the genre structure. Compared to the first issue of this newspaper, “Narodne novine” of 2019 is more diverse in genre. Photo-reports contribute to the diversity of the genres, which supports the abovementioned statement regarding the response of the “Narodne novine” to the visual demands of their readers. However, the dominant genres found in the both analysed issues are news and reports. It is interesting to mention that no interviews were published in any of the analysed issues. The analysis thus leads to the conclusion that this printed newspaper has not embraced the genre hybridization, that is, genre blending in media, thus one can clearly identify “pure” genres in this newspaper, which was also the case in the socialist period. Furthermore, the current issues of “Narodne novine”, unlike older editions, cover national and international topics, in addition to the local ones. This result supports the fact that today it is much easier to quickly get up-to-date and verified national and international information, both due to the use of the Internet and numerous international media agencies. However, it is particularly interesting to note that the analysed number of “Narodne novine” published in 1949 contains more local stories from the south of Serbia, which are actually not focused on the largest city of this part of Serbia - Nis. Moreover, the 1949 issue not only brought more local stories, but they also come from numerous local communities. This points to the current tendency of centralization, which is not found in media only, but can also be identified in other social spheres, such as politics, economy, culture, sport.

The comparative analysis of the “Narodne novine” issue of 1949 and the issue published 70 years later, in 2019, clearly shows that this newspaper has responded to the demands of the audience, which are conditioned by the progress and development of media technologies. Visual content quality has very much improved and the newsletter has become more attractive and modern. The genre structure has slightly changed, but the focus is still on the factographic genre. The newspaper now covers more national and international news, however, there are less and less news covering topics from small towns. This observation clearly indicates that it is necessary to increase the amount of decentralized news, which would significantly improve both this local media and life in smaller communities. Without developed media, there is no development of a democratic society. Local media are a particularly important link in this process, as they can directly influence the strengthening of democracy, as well as the social and political participation of Serbian citizens.

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## „NARODNE NOVINE”: ŽANROVSKA, TEMATSKA I VIZUELNA TRANSFORMACIJA 1949-2019.

**Abstract.** Značaj lokalnih medija je neupitna za teoretičare medija i medijsku praksu, uprkos sveobuhvatnoj globalizaciji. Iako najveću publiku imaju elektronski, a trend rasta onlajn mediji, tradicionalni štampani mediji još opstaju i utiču na politički i društveni život lokalnih zajednica. „Narodne novine” su dnevni infarmativno-politički list sa najdužom tradicijom izlaženja u jugoistočnoj Srbiji. Autorke u radu, koristeći kvantitativnu i kvalitativnu analizu sadržaja, komparativni i sintetički metod, istražuju kako su se novine transformisale u žanrovskom, tematskom i vizuelnom smislu kroz dva društveno-istorijski drugačija razdoblja, u socijalističkom i tranzicijskom periodu. Korpus istraživanja čini 63 priloga iz dva izdanja „Narodnih novina“ – brojeva objavljenih 1. maja 1949. godine (njih 28) i 70 godina kasnije, 1. maja 2019. godine (35 priloga).

**Key words:** lokalni mediji, štampa, „Narodne novine”, socijalizam, tranzicija



## REVIEW OF THE LEVEL OF SEXISM IN THE SERBIAN DAILY PRESS<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract.** *In order to determine the level of sexism in the Serbian daily press, a survey was conducted on a corpus of three editions of daily newspapers. Relevant national print media, which differ in their editorial policy, are included in the research: Politika as a serious daily informative-political newspaper, Večernje novosti as a semi-tabloid, and Kurir as a tabloid newspaper. These dailies were chosen because of the difference in the quality of the content they offer, the readability, and therefore the greatest impact on the readership. The research was done by the method of quantitative-qualitative content analysis. The research period was chosen at random, which includes editions published on January 28<sup>th</sup> 2020. The paper applies a methodology based on the numerical scale offered by Butler-Paisley in 1976, which indicates that representations of sexism are not black and white. This scale provides an explanation of the level of sexism in the media, dividing the media coverage of women into five categories, which can be categorized with each other. The woman in the first level is so limited and incompetent, that she is not a complete person; the woman in the second level is competent, but only within the defined sphere of activity; a third-level woman is allowed a wider sphere, but only if traditional activities remain primary. The fourth level allows more freedom, saying that a woman is and must be equal to a man, and level five confirms that each individual should be viewed non-stereotypically, and that women and men can sometimes surpass each other. Despite legal regulations and legal acts, which certainly represent a framework for the protection of women's rights, the media still represent a woman under the burden of stereotypes, and do not give her enough space she deserves. The results of the research indicate certain shifts in the media representation of women, i.e. in most texts women are represented as equal to men, but there are still a large number of coded cases on the scale of "humiliate her" and "give her two places", in which the media remind us of the two-dimensional portrayal of women and the primacy of private roles, a sphere that must not be jeopardized by a professional role*

**Key words:** *daily newspapers, women, Butler-Paisley scale, sexism, stereotypes*

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<sup>3</sup> The paper was prepared as a part of the project Tradition, Modernization and National Identity in Serbia and the Balkans in the Process of European Integration (179074), funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, and implemented by the Center for Sociological Research at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš.

## 1. Introduction

Gender equality is a condition and measure of the progress of society and the development of democracy. Although we live in a modern time, that also assumes a modern society, in Serbia the real contribution of women is still ignored, because working at home does not have the character of socially recognized work. „Discrimination is achieved through unpaid work, but also difficult professional promotion, which again marginalizes women and contributes to their poorer socio-economic position... Such a position does not arise from some specifically female biological characteristics, but from the social role attributed to women (family responsibilities, care, household chores)” (Stjepanović - Zaharijevski, 2010: 67). The polarization of gender roles has its roots in distant history, and produces different patterns of behavior expected of men and women. Biological differences between females and males are taken as the starting point of gender stratification differences, so that women are the “other sex”, while on the other hand, we have a dominant and powerful “hegemonic masculinity” (Stjepanović - Zaharijevski, 2010).

The polarization of gender roles is clearly visible in the media as well. The woman in the media is most often portrayed in the traditional way, in one of the traditional roles. These roles include a wide range of traditional behavior expected from a woman: mother or housewife, with a place in the kitchen or bedroom, with the best possible physical appearance, because apart from household chores and personal appearance, a woman should not think about anything else, except to be a decoration. “Sexism is present in media speech, especially when it comes to portraying women in positions and decision-making positions in the political, public and economic spheres... There are few media that use gender-sensitive language and thus make women invisible to the public. The so-called “Women’s media” mainly deal with problems related to a woman’s looks and appearance, and address women as housewives.”<sup>4</sup>

The roles often vary, but each of the roles aims to represent the woman in a less valuable manner compared to the representation of the man as seen in the media. “The absence of women from public, political and informational life provokes what the first theorists of law formulated as a longing for women’s speech. Gender theory states that the dominant legal speech is male, as well as that the participants in the legal scene are mostly men. A woman still does not have an authentic voice to speak legally, nor a forum/academy where she can legally think like a woman, nor a social stage where a woman can legally act” (Mršević, 2011: 25).

It is the media that provide information, and given their wide reach, they influence the attitudes and opinions of the audience. “The media significantly influence the formation of public opinion and through them the image of both women and gender roles is reflected. Hence, in the construction of gender identity, the media are viewed as “(social) technologies of gender” and central

<sup>4</sup> National Strategy for Gender Equality for the period from 2016 to 2020 with the Action Plan for the period from 2018 to 2020, available at: <https://www.mgsi.gov.rs/lat/dokumenti/nacionalna-strategija-za-gender-equality-for-the-period-from-2016-to-2020-with-action>, visited on April 22, 2020

places where “discursive negotiations about gender take place” (Stjepanović - Zaharijevski according to Bamburać, Jusić, Isanović, 2007: 56). Each medium has three basic roles in society: to inform, educate and entertain. Due to the impossibility to understand everything around them in a direct way, people rely on the media when getting to know the world around them. It is the media that create the image of the world. In order to bring every phenomenon or event closer to as many people as possible, the media use stereotypes in their reporting. It is known that long-term exposure to similar messages and patterns results in accepting them as true, because by repeating them, even when the consumers of the messages rationally know that they are distorted, they seem true. “The media participate in shaping the dominant views of the world, defining what is good or bad, positive or negative, moral or immoral, beautiful or ugly. Media stories, images and spectacles are made up of symbols and myths that participate in shaping personal identity as well as a shared global culture. By presenting topics, events, people, the media attributes basic meaning to women and men. The media are “central places” where discursive negotiations take place around gender, and the style and the way in which the media portray women become a kind of barometer of the cultural interpretation of the role that is given to women in society” (Sever, Andraković, 2013: 6).

The media representation of women and men is not gender sensitive, and in that way it influences the strengthening of recognizable stereotypical images of women and men. “It is clear that the media can contribute to the social construction and maintenance of gender inequalities by sending messages about where a woman belongs, defining “femininity” versus “masculinity” (“act like a woman”/“act like a man”), but also defining criteria for inclusion in these frameworks - “social gender boxes”” (Stjepanović - Zaharijevski, 2010: 146). Today’s understanding of women largely depends on the media representation, which we can describe, according to Snježana Milivojević (2004), as the main media business, the process of production and exchange of meaning within a culture. The media, paraphrasing Milivojević, actually represent reality in its absence, more precisely, they recreate a certain assumption, represent an object, person or process in its/his absence. In order to recognize the general in the multitude of diversity of the phenomenal, the media reach for simplification, and so, instead of types, they offer stereotypes, instead of affirmation of diversity, they produce simplified and uncritical notions of “otherness”. This simplification also reveals the permanent discomfort of the different and the new, the need to explain “others” to “ours”, “differently” “known” (Milivojević, 2004: 12-13).

## **2. Women and stereotypes in media representation**

Despite attempts and efforts to combat gender inequality and discrimination in the media sphere, there has been no progress. “Efforts made in the past have not led to progress in gender-sensitive reporting and non-discriminatory portrayal of

women in the media... The media continue to express and encourage patriarchal cultural patterns and stereotyped gender roles of women and men.”<sup>5</sup>

The model of a woman represented by the media is, to a greater or lesser extent, a generalized representation of a woman as a mother-housewife, handsome and young, with a place in the kitchen or bedroom, where her intelligence is superfluous. “The media portray women, if at all, in the traditional way roles: housewives, mothers, and if they are employed, as clerks, or with pink collar jobs. Accordingly, there are very few, if any, descriptions of strong female personalities in responsible and authoritative positions, even at home. Similarly, women’s magazines focus on “domestic” aspirations — marriage, raising children, and the like — and do not encourage education, training, and other choices that tend to place individuals in positions of power, authority, and independence. Instead, women are generally portrayed as defined by their relationships with men — suggesting that women are ultimately dependent, unable to live their own lives without “male leadership” (Tuchman, 1978: 150). Television provides us with the information that women are most visible in afternoon culinary shows, i.e. non serious content shows. This is the case when the display exists, and an even bigger problem than this is that there is no representation where it is needed. Political topics, topics of public interest that interest the audience the most, are mostly without women as their main actors. In contrast, men dominate as interlocutors in the media, and are major actors in newspaper stories. Women are assigned less social values, reduced to physical appearance while idealizing the attributes of beauty. “The findings show that writing about women and their visual presentation, depending on the profile of the newspaper, is more or less “sexist patronage”, so that projecting ingrained stereotypes challenges the process of gender role reconstruction and “the system of discourse and practice produces misogyny”” (Stjepanović - Zaharijević, 2010: 153). Everything else, like experience, education, professional success, remains invisible, in the shadows. “Treating the female body as an object deprives it of its own identity, placing it in explicit poses and situations, reducing its functions only to instinctive and banal, is the way marketing will promote the product and attract the audience” (Lubina, Brkić Klimpak, 2014: 2016). However, the media do not only single out beauty, as a typical female value and goal, but motherhood is also advocated as the ultimate goal, without which a woman’s life would be incomplete. This combination of myths about beauty and family limits the models of successful women. Therefore, on the scale of women’s priorities, career and other social achievements are positioned in the “second place”, and not as a necessity for self-realization. The imperative is to achieve femininity, beauty, while the importance of professional success decreases, where self-esteem is causally-consequently connected exclusively with the achievement of the mentioned imperatives. “The strategy of media representation of desirable notions about gender identities in Serbia is a strategy of excluding women, which to a large extent follows the requirements of gender construction in the function of preserving gender

<sup>5</sup> National Strategy for Gender Equality for the period from 2016 to 2020 with the Action Plan for the period from 2018 to 2020, available at: <https://www.mgsi.gov.rs/lat/dokumenti/nacionalna-strategija-za-gender-equality-for-the-period-from-2016-to-2020-with-action>, visited on April 22, 2020



asymmetry, attributing and generating “closed” gender identities. Symbolic reality does not follow or does not recognize the achieved material equality of women, so that many successful, educated, publicly engaged women are still mostly invisible” (Stjepanović - Zaharijevski, 2010: 154).

Ad creators make extensive use of stereotypes, and thus have an impact on reinforcement of stereotypes. Erving Goffman, in his book *Gender Advertisements* (1979), draws attention to how women and men are portrayed in advertisements that allegedly depict scenes from “real life”, while the reality that advertisers distort is also artificial in itself. As he states: “Commercial images are mostly fully exposed, “images only”, at best “realistic”” (Goffman 1979: 27). He believes that advertisements do not necessarily describe how we behave as individuals, but how we think it is necessary to behave according to gender. It is these advertisements that aim to convince us that this is the right way for women and men to behave, and to direct us to the same behavior in different situations in our lives (Goffman, 1979). “When we look at gender representation in advertisements, we need to focus on advertiser stereotypes about gender differences - which are as important as stereotypes themselves are. It is not enough to just examine these stereotypes, what they can tell us about gender patterns that are largely prevalent in our society. We need to address, at least in part, how those who create (and pose for) images can design materials that are available in social situations to achieve their goal. Namely, by presenting a situation that makes sense and whose meaning can be understood in the blink of an eye” (Goffman, 1979: 27).

We can also “accuse” the advertisements for constructing a depiction of a housewife, whose main aphrodisiac is cooking, preparing and serving the family. The portrayal moves between women as unambitious, less capable, passive, talkative, gentle and sensitive. In contrast, we encounter a diametrically opposed view of men, moving between the active, the objective, the educated, the silent, the wise, and, inevitably, the dominant. All this has resulted in the audience gaining the impression that men are active, serious, dealing with important things that, among other things, are more understood than women. Thanks to such a view, their dominance and superiority is not difficult to imagine or achieve. “The media builds and establishes this inequality with many symbolic actions, from ignoring to various types of inappropriate representation. These strategies are revealed only when media messages are analyzed as systems of representation, when a common matrix is shown beneath the coincidences of the everyday” (Milivojević, 2004: 13). “And for of infinitely different stage configurations, a single ritual idiom can be revealed; behind a multitude of surface differences, a small number of structural forms” (Goffman, 1979: 27).

The power of the media, as well as the influence they have on people’s attitudes, does not end with advertisements. Influence is even more important in the way of representing news, content and topics that are covered in the media space, in terms in which women appear. “The most common domain of hate speech expressed on a daily basis is the media, and hate speech cannot be justified by freedom of speech and media freedom. A special problem are the so-called live shows, live panel discussions,

media campaigns that grow into media lynching of individual women, or phenomena related to women. It is an approach of disparaging denial of everything that is a profession. The message is addressed to all women: that they have no place on the public stage, because only those who have their own decorative erotica as an attribute can “pass” there. It is an attribute that the media never think of looking for in men on the political scene, much less to evaluate and compare it” (Mršević, 2011: 45).

The way women are portrayed in the media sends an important message to the public about their place, their role, life and position in society. “Modern media today, especially television and the Internet, are closely connected with the production of cultural identities. Namely, the conscious use and repetition of stereotypes in information recipients at a subtle level establishes the archetypal characteristics of men and women that are already socially constructed by the category of gender” (Lubina, Brkić Klimpak, 2014: 213).

### 3. Previous research

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) is the longest-running and most comprehensive study addressing the position of women in the media worldwide. The survey is conducted in all countries during one selected day. It is conducted every five years, starting in 1995. The last research was conducted in 2015 and covered Serbia as well<sup>6</sup>. The research sample included 18 news media. The first global media monitoring project and the last one from 2015, reveal that the world that is reported on is mostly male. Twenty years since the first GMMP, the challenges of sexism in the media, gender stereotypes, and gender prejudices persist in time, space, and content. “Women are still subjects in less than a quarter news 22 percent (21 percent in 2005, 28 percent in 2010 and 22 percent in 2015) in all traditional media, and in digital media they are the subjects in 20 percent of news, therefore, even slightly less than in conventional media. The structure of the news and the choice of main topics reveal the same gender insensitivity. Dominant news relates to political topics, topics related to government, crime and violence. They feature significantly fewer women who are closer to equal presentation in “non serious topics” such as news about celebrities, from the arts, the world of media and sports (44 per cent). The number of news items dedicated to women is very small (8 percent), while stories that challenge or criticize gender stereotypes and those that refer to gender equality issues are almost non-existent.”<sup>7</sup>

A gender-sensitive analysis of media content was conducted by Dragana Stjepanović-Zaharijevski. The Butler-Paisley scale was applied in two one-day mini-studies (2008 and 2009). The research was intended to identify different media discourses on gender by coding the representation of men and women in

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<sup>6</sup> Available at: <http://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp/gmmp-reports/gmmp-2015-reports>, accessed 22 April 2020

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <http://centarzamedije.fpn.bg.ac.rs/ko-pravi-vesti-global-media-monitoring-2015/>, accessed 22 April 2020

media content. Gender-sensitive analysis of media content reveals the symbolic marginalization of women. “The general finding is that the world of men is more present in photographs and in the text in all analyzed newspapers, which has an impact on the construction of gender identities and gender relations. Men position themselves in important content, and women in entertainment engagements. In that way, the stereotypical image of gender relations is strengthened and a message is sent about the necessary maintenance of an asymmetric division of roles and spheres of action. Men wear serious themes, while women usually decorate them with prominent bodily attributes, often without a name, without a profession and their own opinion, which is certainly their degradation” (Stjepanović - Zaharijevski, 2010: 153).

Periodic analysis of content and photographs in the daily press from 2000 to 2003 was conducted by Snježana Milivojević, with the initial assumption that modern media cultivate desired notions of gender identities and roles, contributing to symbolic gender inequality. “The analysis of the roles in which women appear when they deserve media visibility reveals that in the informative press almost the same criteria apply as in the revived press. The most important female engagement is entertaining... Entertaining roles only endanger housewives - mothers, housewives, wives, companions of successful men. Professionally successful women often appear as wives and mothers, or at least they must discover their recipe for reconciling “career and family.” The experts are most often psychologists, social workers, counselors for failed marriages, beauticians, counselors for nutrition and diet, doctors, teachers. Their expertise is adapted to the family sphere and the “natural” role of women to take care of the family... The range of social roles reveals a world full of opportunities for men and full of limitations for women” (Milivojević, 2004: 17).

Monitoring of the reporting of ten print media and 14 RTV stations entitled “*Gender Equality in and through the Media*” was conducted in 2008 in seven cities, and showed that there is discrimination against women in media reporting. The results of the research showed that women are in the central focus of the news in only 15% of cases, and the focus is mainly on celebrities and sports. Also, only one third of the news in the print media refers to women as the main subjects, and the dominant language is still stereotypical. The research showed that men appear more often, even in articles about women, that it is most often written about girls and women up to 45 years of age, and that the columns related to political events, current events, education and economy have the least news about women in all media.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. Methodological framework

The method applied in the research was quantitative-qualitative analysis of media content, and the unit of analysis was a single text. The method of content analysis, developed in the middle of the last century, is applied with the idea of observing,

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<sup>8</sup> Complete report available at: [https://arhiv.rosalux.rs/userfiles/files/Prirucnik\\_za\\_medije.pdf](https://arhiv.rosalux.rs/userfiles/files/Prirucnik_za_medije.pdf), accessed April 22, 2020

describing and mostly quantitatively expressing the manifest characteristics of a message (Kleut, Mišljenović 2016: 12). More than half a century ago, Berelson defined content analysis as a technique for an objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Berelson, 1952). The most frequently stated goals of content analysis concern conclusions about the intentions of communicators, analysis of propaganda, analysis of trends in communication, interpersonal differences in communication patterns, etc. (Popadić, Žeželj, Pavlović, 2018). The classical formula of communication “who says what, to whom, how and with what effects” best describes the aspects of the communication process that concern the conclusions drawn from the content analysis (Laswell, Lerner and Pool according to Popadić, Žeželj, Pavlović, 2018: 452). In that sense, Holsti also defines the goals of content analysis: 1) to describe the manifest characteristic of communication (what, how and to whom something was said), 2) to conclude about the antecedents of communication (why something was said) and 3) to conclude about the consequences of communication (with what effects something was said) (Holsti according to Popadić, Žeželj, Pavlović, 2018: 452).

In content analysis, the emphasis is on the surface characteristics of messages that have a higher degree of stability and are less susceptible to intersubjective variations. Therefore, reliability (stability, repeatability, accuracy) and validity are important in content analysis (Krippendorff according to Kleut and Mišljenović, 2016). Consequently, content analysis involves a sequence of clearly defined steps leading from theoretical considerations, through the development of research hypotheses or tasks, basic methodological decisions regarding the sample for material to be analyzed, the development of measurement strategies, to data collection, analysis and conclusions. which in turn answer the questions from which the analysis started (Popadić, Žeželj, Pavlović, 2018).

The analysis instrument was a code list, ie. the paper applies a methodology based on the numerical scale offered by Butler-Paisley in 1976, which indicates that representations of sexism are not black and white. This numerical scale concentrates on how women represented in the media are limited to specific roles and relationships. The results obtained using this scale should closely correspond to our intuitive expectations about the media, and should not conflict with the assumptions contained in the scale itself (Pingree, Hawkins, Butler, Paisley, 1976). According to this scale, it is possible to distinguish five different types of portrayal of women in the media:

1. “Humiliate her - women’s presentations at this level include a stupid blonde, a sexual object or a grieving victim. Women are shown in a simplified way, as a two-dimensional image. Examples of such presentations are common in men’s magazines such as Playboy, in advertisements where the female body is included as decoration, and in situations where the woman relies on others to think for her;
2. Keep her where she belongs - it can be found in all media. The traditional strengths and capabilities of women are recognized, but tradition also dictates “female” roles. Women have been shown to function well as wives, mothers, secretaries, clerks, teachers and nurses. Negative images of this level show women struggling with roles they are “not up to” (directors,

- doctors, editors, etc.) or in which they develop feminine traits;
3. Give her two places - represents the level of awareness of many “progressive” media images of women. In an entertainment program (for example a TV drama), a woman can be a lawyer or an architect, as long as dinner for her husband is on the table at six o'clock. In the report, the female director is described as a grandmother, and the interview turns in the direction of her favorite recipes. A career is something that is often seen as a “supplement”. Household chores and motherhood come first. The picture is that women can sometimes work professionally outside home, but they always work at home. It is possible to find such images in the media, although they are much less represented than the images of women in the previous two levels. An example of such a play is an advertisement with a woman who is a doctor of biochemistry who talks about what she gives her children for breakfast;
  4. She is fully equal - it is a rarity in the portrayal of women in the media... An important difference between this and the previous level, which also allows a woman to be a professional, is that pictures of this level do not remind us that housework and motherhood are implicit jobs;
  5. Non-stereotypical representation - women and men, individually, are seen as superior in their relationship in one respect, and inferior in another. The dogmatism of the fourth level (it is completely equal) is not necessary, because individuals are not evaluated on the basis of gender. The fifth level is mentioned because this scale of consciousness logically requires it, and not because level five representations can be easily found in the media” (Pingree, Hawkins, Butler, Paisley, 1976: 194-195)

Snježana Milivojević explains that the final part of the scale shows that sexism, in all types of media speech, presupposes the traditional division of labor between the sexes, and that it equally requires the portrayal of men in gender-related roles and relationships. “Mutual stereotypes preserve the patriarchal character of society and that is why their learning begins with early home TV education through popular programs. Even while memorizing simple messages from TV commercials, girls and boys receive their first lessons in media economics, but also important messages about female-male roles” (Milivojević, 2004: 21).

Relevant national print media, which differ in their editorial policy, are included in the research: *Politika*<sup>9</sup> as a serious daily information-political newspaper, *Večernje novosti*<sup>10</sup> as semitabloid and *Informer*<sup>11</sup> as a tabloid.

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<sup>9</sup> *Politika* is the oldest daily newspaper in the country, founded in 1904 and is considered a serious newspaper. Newspaper readers are older generations, middle-class and highly educated people. The ownership is mixed, the paper is published by *Politika novine* and magazines owned by the state-owned *Politika AD* and the Russian company *East Media Group*, and has national coverage. Data available at: <http://serbia.mom-rsf.org/rs/mediji/detail/outlet/politika>

<sup>10</sup> *Večernje novosti* was created in 1953 as "vecernje" and in a semi-tabloid style, reporting on news and events that appeared during the day. The paper has national coverage Data available at: <http://serbia.mom-rsf.org/rs/mediji/detail/outlet/vecernje-novosti/>

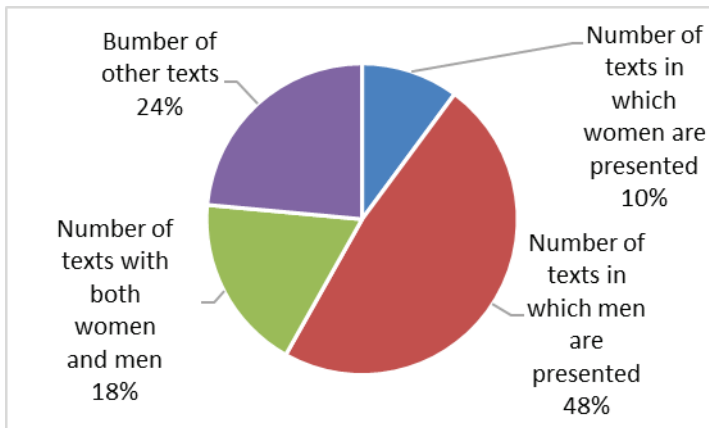
<sup>11</sup> *Informer* is a daily newspaper founded in early 2012. According to the Association of Journalists, due

These dailies were chosen because of the difference in the quality of the content they offer, the readability, and therefore the greatest impact on the readership. The research period was chosen at random, which includes editions published on January 28<sup>th</sup> 2020. A gender-sensitive analysis of media content in two one-day surveys was conducted by Dragana Stjepanović-Zaharijevski in 2008 and 2009. The Butler-Paisley scale was used in these researches, which reveals the symbolic marginalization of women. (Stjepanovic - Zaharijevski, 2010) The results of the research are expressed numerically and as a percentage.

## 5. Research results

In the reporting day, a total of 306 articles were published, 104 in Politika, 107 in Večernje novosti, and 95 in Informer. Of the total number of texts in all three observed papers, women were represented in 31 texts (10.13 percent), while men were represented in 147 texts (48.04 percent). There were 56 mixed texts (18.30 percent). Thus, men are four times more represented than women in the print media. Other texts were 72 (23.53 percent) (Table 1).

**Table 1** - Total number of published texts: number of texts in which women are presented, number of texts in which men are presented, number of texts with both women and men, and number of other texts in the dailies Politika, Večernje novosti and Infomer



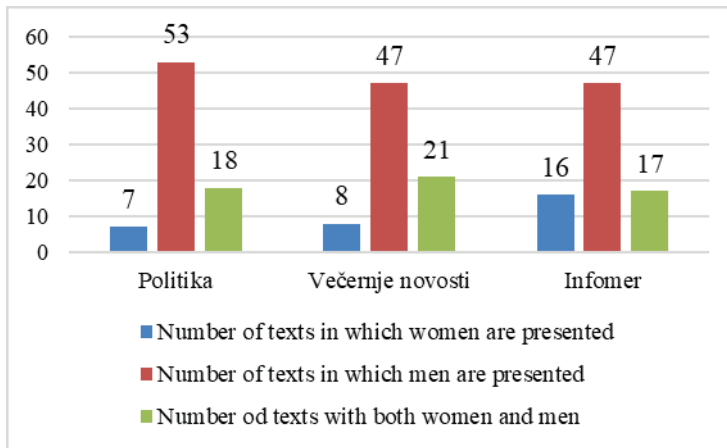
Each of the newspapers regarded individually, out of a total 104 texts in Politika, women were presented in 7 texts (6.73 percent). In the daily newspaper Večernje

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to the sensationalist and tabloid type of content, it is considered one of the most unprofessional media, with the largest number of violations of the journalistic code of conduct. Ownership is private, the paper is owned by Insider Team Ltd., and has national coverage. Data available at: <http://serbia.mom-rsf.org/rs/mediji/detail/outlet/informer/>

novosti, out of a total of 107 articles, women were presented in 8 articles (7.48 percent). In the daily Informer, out of a total of 95 articles, women were presented in 16 articles (16.84 percent). In terms of percentage, women are the most presented in the daily Informer. In Politika, men were presented in 53 articles (50.96 percent), in Večernje novosti in 47 articles (43.93 percent), and in Infomer in 47 articles (49.47 percent) (Table 2). According to these results, we can conclude that men are more present in all of the three newspapers.

**Table 2** - number of articles presenting women, men and mixed articles in the dailies Politika, Večernje novosti and Infomer



The front page of the analyzed newspaper Politika did not give place to women. On the inner pages of this paper, we have identified 25 texts, in which, using the Butler-Paisley scale, the appearance of some of the female roles were noticed. Nineteen texts were in the spirit of the representation of women as completely equal, in four texts the woman was represented completely non-stereotypically, two texts represented the woman in the category „humiliate her“. „Keep her where she belongs“, as well as „give her two places“ are categories that are not identified in this paper.

The representation of women as completely equal to men is a rare occurrence in the media, but considering that this is a serious press, then that is to be expected. The category „she is completely equal“ was applied throughout the paper to texts in which women appear in their professional roles, without the necessary reminder of their domestic and maternal roles. Coded cases of „complete equality“ were found in the sections related to the world, the region, the event of the day, politics, society, culture, which is a good step towards non-stereotypical media representation of women. Some of the roles discussed are the Venezuelan vice president, MP, president, German chancellor, line minister, municipal assembly member, prime minister, director, actress, editor of an art publication, and ballet school coordinator.

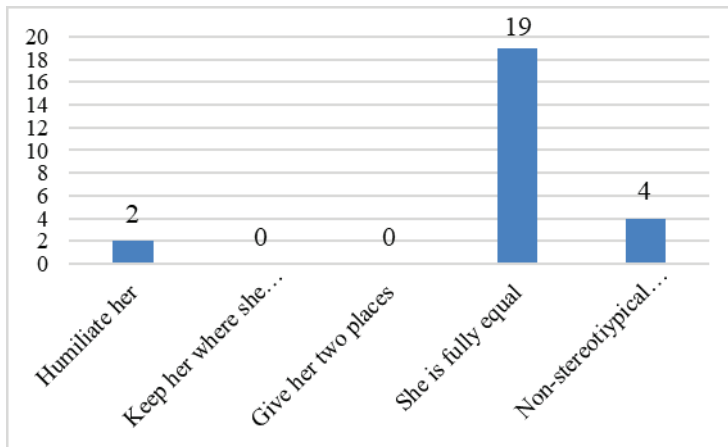
The non-stereotypical representation of women was noticed in four texts, in the sections Serbia and feuilleton. According to the authors of the Butler-Paisley scale,



this category is characterized by the emphasis personal qualities of women, regardless of gender, so the emphasis is on individual presentation, in contrast to the dogmatic reading of the obligation „a woman must be equal to a man“. The most impressive example of a non-stereotypical representation is the „Monument to the war youth by the young sculptor Natasha“ (picture 1). The texts „Elena Simionesco as the prima donna of the opera in Bucharest“ and „Mira Banjac, an actress from Novi Sad, who will soon present herself to the audience as a director“ are also texts in which women are represented non-stereotypically. However, these texts can be found in the part of the newspaper „Reading Politika, January 28<sup>th</sup> 1970.“

The Butler-Paisley numerical scale showed two examples of the category „humiliate her“; that is, two representations of women as bereaved victims, in the section of chronicles, given that this is a serious press, these are positive results, as well as the fact that there were no examples in which women are portrayed in a two-dimensional, simplified image, as a sexual object.

Table 3 – Daily Politika



Picture 1 – January 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, Politika, page 18.

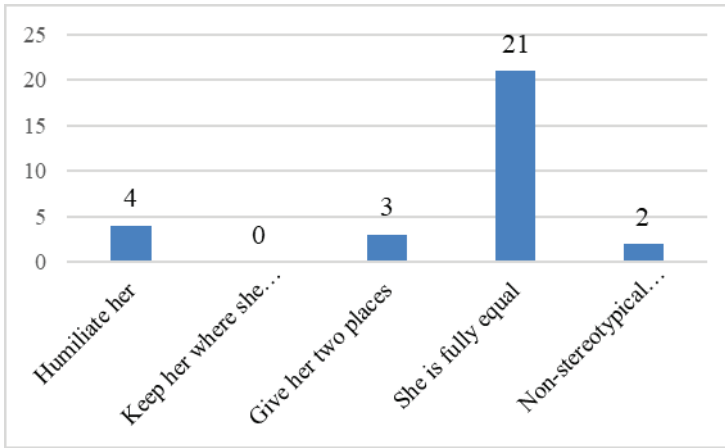
In most coded cases, the newspaper Večernje novosti sends information about a woman as completely equal to a man. Namely, out of a total of 30 texts in which certain roles were noticed, the woman is shown as equal to the man in 21 texts. Four texts represented women in the category „humiliate her“, in three texts women were „given two places“, and there were non-stereotypical representations of women in two examples. „Keep her where she belongs“ is a category not identified in this paper. There was also no display of the woman on the front page in this paper.

In the category „women as fully equal to men“, the professional qualities of women were emphasized, in the sections politics, society, world, chronicle, reportage, and culture. At this level of the scale, women are represented as Deputy Prime Minister, Prime Minister, Director of Stonogica Primary School, Primary School Teacher, Head of Child Health, US Central Command Spokeswoman, High Court Judge, Teacher, Actress, Writer, Director of the Support Sector in representing and protecting the interests of members of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce, Secretary of the Association for Forestry, Wood Processing and Furniture and Paper Industry PKS.

In the second place, the cases are coded on the scale „humiliate her“ in the sections reflector and chronicle, in four cases - most often as bereaved victims of double rape and in connection with scandals. In the text „*She aimed at Filip, but she hit Milan*“ (January 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, Večernje novosti, page 28), our well known folk singer Zorica Marković is shown as insane because she „*took a plate from the table and threw it at him*“.

This is followed by contents that cover up the professional success of women, as it is suppressed by information about the private life of these women by emphasizing gender roles - the category „give her two places“, in the section spotlight (3 texts). In the text „*We are still trying in a natural way*“, (January 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, Večernje novosti, page 28), pop singer Jelena Tomašević and actor Ivan Bosiljčić talk about how they want to become parents once again. Jelena Tomašević is a well-known Serbian pop singer, but the fact should not hinder her in motherhood and household. Although she is successful professionally, her private, parental life should not suffer.

The non-stereotypical representation of women was noticed in two examples, in sections reflector and Serbia: it is about the text „*Charter of prof. Dr. Grujicic. Gratitude for the contribution to Serbia and the establishment of „Together for Youth*““ (January 28, 2020, Vecernje Novosti, page 26). Another example is the dominance of pop star Billy Ailish at the traditional Grammy Music Awards in Los Angeles. She was awarded as the best new singer in 2019, as well as for the song and album of the year – „*Domination of Billy Ailish*“ (January 28, 2020, Vecernje Novosti, page 29).

**Table 4** – Večernje novosti

There were a total of 33 texts in the analyzed newspaper Infomer. The woman was „humiliated“ already on the front page of this paper. In relation to the analyzed newspapers, this paper identifies the largest number of coded cases on the scale „humiliate her“ (15). Six texts were in the spirit of the representation of women as fully equal, five texts each belonged to the categories „give her two places“ and non-stereotypical representation of women, while in two examples women were „kept where they belong“.

Examples in which a woman is „humiliated“ are mostly examples of women whose roles are limited to sexual objects, grieving victims („*Raped a woman in front of her boyfriend*“), stupid blondes: in a word, all those contexts in which women are „humiliated“. The largest number of coded cases on the „humiliate her“ scale is in the headlines, news and showtime, with women being dominant as sexual objects in the showtime section (7). The woman is already „humiliated“ on the third page, both with the text „*Jovo, you are a dangerous type*“ and with the explicit photo that accompanies the text. The announcement from the front page „*Aleksandra enters the Cooperative again to take revenge on Ana and David*“, as well as the text indicate that the woman is „humiliated“ by being shown as financially dependent on the man, which is confirmed by the sentence „*Alexandra does not return to the Cooperative, but she ran out of money, and she doesn't want to be financed by her boyfriend anymore*“, as well as her explicit photo (picture 2).

In relation to other newspapers, the newspaper Informer in most cases „keeps the woman where she belongs“, i.e. in traditional roles, in the columns showtime and entertainment. In these examples (2 examples) traditional “female” values, qualities and roles are recognized: women as housewives or mothers. „*Knitting is better than meditation and yoga*“ (picture 3) tells all women that they will feel happier, more satisfied and more successful if they practice knitting at least three times a week. This text leads us to the conclusion that the main female aphrodisiac is knitting, which „directs“ them to their primary role as housewives.

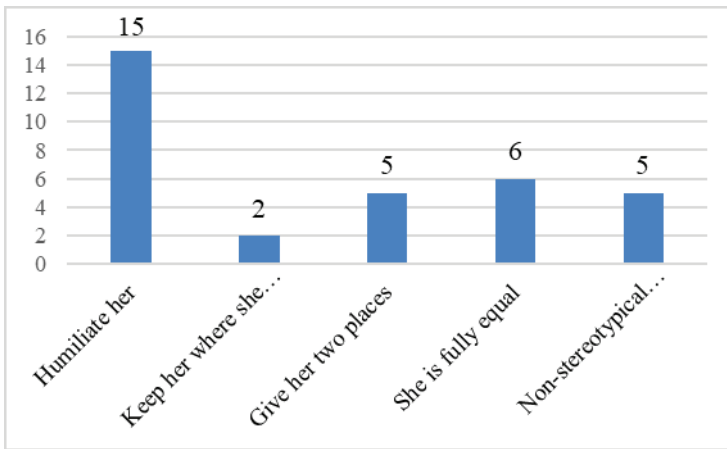
Infomer „gave the woman two places“ in the showtime section, in five cases. In these examples, the media remind us that it is not important to be successful only

professionally, but also in the household, i.e. the „basics of function“ are of great importance and should not be neglected (picture 4).

The category „she is fully equal“ was noticed in six examples, in the sections of breaking news, news and entertainment. Although this category is a rarity in the media, there have been texts in which women are represented in their professional roles, without any recollection of their domestic and maternal roles: Prime Minister, Minister for European Integration, member of the PSG presidency, general practice specialist, German chancellor.

The non-stereotypical portrayal of women was noticed in six examples, in the sections of news, showtime and entertainment. „The first programmer was a woman“ (picture 5) is an example that best describes this level of scale, as well as the identified roles of directors, and „Billy Ailish picked up almost all the awards“ (picture 6).

Table 5 -Infomer



Picture 2 – January 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, Informer, page 16-17.





Picture 3 – January 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, Infomer, page 22.



Picture 4 – January 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, Infomer, page 17.



Picture 5 – January 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, Informer, page 15.



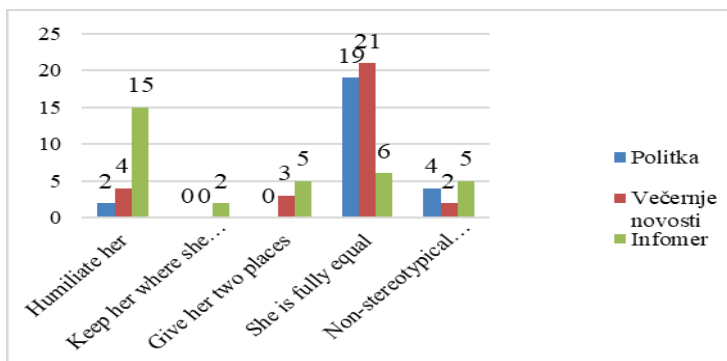
Picture 6 – January 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, Infomer, page 18.

In the newspaper Politika, which belongs to the serious daily press, we have identified certain roles of women. Politika, in relation to the analyzed newspapers, has the largest number of coded cases (19) about women as fully equal to men. In four cases, the woman was portrayed non-stereotypically, while in two cases she was „humiliated“. The categories „keep her where she belongs“ and „give her two places“ are not registered in this daily.

In Večernji novosti, a woman is also, in most cases (21), represented as „fully equal to a man“. In second place there are four cases coded on the scale as “humiliate her“. Women were „given two places“ in three texts, while there was a „non-stereotypical presentation“ in two texts. The category „keep her where she belongs“, as in the case of Politika, was not registered in this daily.

The newspaper Informer, in relation to the analyzed newspapers, has the largest number of coded cases on the scale „humiliate her“. In this paper, women were portrayed as „fully equal“ in six cases, the category of „non-stereotypical portrayal“ and „give her two places“ was in five cases, and the woman was „kept where she belongs“ in two cases.

Table 6 - Social roles of women in the dailies Politika, Večernje novosti and Infomer



## 6. Concluding considerations

With this research, we identified that out of the total number of all published texts, it is the number 306, the representation of women was 10.13 percent, while the representation of men was 48.04 percent. Each paper individually regarded, in *Politika* out of 104 texts in total, women were presented in 6.73 percent, men in 50.96 percent; in *Vecernji novosti*, women were presented in 7.48 percent, men in 43.93 percent; in *Informer*, women were presented in 16.84 percent, while men were presented in 49.47 percent. These results suggest that men are more presented in all three newspapers.

The results of the gender analysis indicate that in most cases, women were identified as „fully equal“, in 46 texts (15.03 percent). In second place is the result of women as „humiliated“, in 21 texts (6.86 percent). It could be wrongly concluded, based on the number of coded cases „she is fully equal“, that this is the dominant portrayal of women in the Serbian daily press. If we ignore the data on the total number of posts in the analyzed day, we could conclude so. However, coded cases of women as “fully equal“ constitute only 15.03 percent of the total number of texts in the analyzed day. The results indicate that the world of men is more dominant in the analyzed press. It is this result that strengthens the stereotypical image and influences the maintenance of asymmetry between gender relations. Consequently, we still cannot talk about the existence of gender equality in Serbian dailies.

Although the coded cases of women as „fully equal“ were found partly in the headlines, news, politics, most of the texts were found in the columns near the end of the list, dedicated to entertainment content such as showtime, entertainment and culture. So, in these cases, gender equality is read from the pages that are nearing the end, dedicated to entertainment content.

The media, as creators of public opinion and a mirror of society, can also be considered responsible for defining gender roles in society. Given their great influence, they should contribute to breaking down stereotypes and forming a new social matrix.

The corpus of analyzed texts is not enough to talk about the general state of media representation of female roles. We cannot interpret these results as a definitive answer. We can only assume that a larger number of copies of this newspaper would show the same or a similar result over a longer period of time.

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## DOMINANTAN PROFIL ŽENA U SRPSKOJ ŠTAMPI

**Sažetak.** Da bismo utvrdili nivo seksizma u srpskoj dnevnoj štampi, sprovedeno je istraživanje na korpusu od tri izdanja dnevnih novina. Relevantni nacionalni štampani mediji, koji se razlikuju po urađivačkoj politici uključeni su u istraživanje: *Politika* kao ozbiljan dnevni informativno-politički list, *Večernje novosti* kao polutabloid, i *Kurir* kao tabloidni list. Ovi dnevni listovi odabrani su zbog razlike u kvalitetu sadržaja koji nude, čitarnosti, samim tim i najvećim uticajem na čitalačku publiku. Istraživanje je

uradjeno metodom kvantitativno-kvalitativne analize sadržaja. Period istraživanja je odabran nasumično, u kojem su uključena izdanja objavljena 28.01.2020. godine. U radu se primenjuje metodologija zasnovana na numeričkoj skali koju su 1976. godine ponudile Batler-Pejlsli (Butler-Paisley), a koja ukazuje da predstave seksizma nisu crno-bele. Ova skala daje objašnjenje nivoa seksizma u medijima, deleći medijsko prikazivanje žena u pet kategorija, koje se mogu međusobno kategorisati. Žena u prvom nivou je toliko ograničena i nekompetentna, da nije kompletna osoba; žena u drugom nivou je kompetentna, ali samo u okviru zacrtane sfere aktivnosti; ženi trećeg nivoa dozvoljena je šira sfera, ali samo ako tradicionalne aktivnosti ostaju primarne. Četvrti nivo dozvoljava više slobode, govoreći da žena jeste i mora biti jednaka muškarcu, i nivo pet potvrđuje da svaki pojedinac treba da se posmatra nestereotipno, i da se žene i muškarcu mogu ponekad i međusobno nadmašiti. Uprkos zakonskim propisima i pravnim aktima, koji zasigurno predstavljaju okvir za zaštitu prava žena, mediji i dalje predstavljaju ženu pod balastom stereotipa, i ne daju joj dovoljno prostora koji zaslužuje. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na izvesne pomake u medijskoj reprezentaciji žena, tj. u najvećem broju tekstova, žena je reprezenotvana kao jednaka muškarcu, međutim još uvek je veliki broj kodiranih slučajeva na skali “ponizi je” i “daj joj dva mesta”, u kojima nas mediji podsećaju na dvodimenzinalan prikaz žena, i na primat uloge u privatnoj sferi koja ne sme biti ugrožena profesionalnom ulogom.

**Ključne reči:** dnevne novine, žene, skala Batler-Pejlsli, seksizam, stereotipi

## PRESENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IN THE SERBIAN PRESS

**Abstract:** *One's attention is directed to the events, phenomena, personalities and social groups present in the media. How they are perceived depends on media presentation and representation, which implies media representations of events, phenomena, identities, social groups. Through them, the media can shape public opinion, refer to or restrict stereotypical and discriminatory attitudes in society. One of the fundamental conditions for combating discrimination is equal participation of women in the media world, i.e. the equal presence of women and men in the media. The paper investigates the presence of women in the following daily newspapers: Politika, Danas, Blic, and Večernje novosti on International Women's Day, with special reference to the method of reporting on this holiday. The theoretical part of the paper includes a chapter on the social status of women throughout history, outlining some of the factors for the inferior position of women that contributed to the creation of stereotypes about women. Then, attention is paid to stereotypes about women, dominant patterns of reporting on women in the media, as well as the importance of the holiday and its historical origin. The interpretation of previous research in published scientific papers can also be found in the theoretical part. The second part of the paper includes the quantitative and qualitative research results. Finally, the results are summarized, which leads to the conclusion.*

**Key words:** *media, International Women's Day, marginalization, stereotypes, media representation*

### 1. Introduction

With the gradual development of the media, their power of influence on society developed too. Media content, which initially targeted a selected and small audience, is created today for the purpose of reproduction for mass audiences. Radovic and associates point out that they are journalists interpreters of reality, guardians of the public interest and, since the beginning of mass communication, a kind of the conscience of society (Radović et al., 2014: 80). The media encourage and influence thinking about and forming opinions on the topics covered by them. „The media are potentially powerful agents that can affect behaviour and attitudes, whether intentionally or not, giving rise to claims of harm“ (McQuail, 2005: 242). By selecting topics (agenda setting<sup>3</sup>) which are the subject of

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<sup>3</sup> " Agenda setting is a mass media theory that is based on the premise that mass media have a great influence on the audience by choosing what to publish and how much space to give to selected events, occurrences, or figures" (Price, 2011: 69).

media coverage, the attention of the audience is directed to certain events, ideas, and often to propaganda messages. Media texts do not give equal importance to all social groups, thus marginalizing certain groups. Vujović and associates claim that media texts testify to the distribution of power, differences and position of social and other groups, and about their invisibility and marginalization (Vujović et al., 2014: 107, 108).

Media coverage, especially in tabloids, is often not based on one of the basic principles of journalism - the principle of objectivity. Instead of objective fact-based reporting, the media shape the information and produce meaning. Briggs and Copley state that the manner in which the media present things is not only their "reflection", but also the assignment of meaning to these things, and is considered "the cause of our social relations" (Briggs, Copley, 2005: 470). The power of the media is such that they can also be defined as creators of reality. Višnjić points out that power relations within different social communities also reflect the "media distortion of reality", which means the "media distortion of either 'real' gender or the 'real' meaning of gender that exists 'out there'" (Višnjić, 2016: 13). Media representation can also be discussed. Stuart Hall points out that media representation implies the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping. It does not imply the transmitting of an already existing meaning, but the more active labour of making things mean. It was a practice, a production, of meaning, what subsequently came to be defined as a 'signifying practice', and that power of the media should be taken seriously (Hall, 1982: 60). Instead of presenting reality, the media shape it according to their own interests or in accordance with the interests of dominant groups and powerful people, thus fabricating reality. In the scientific paper "Visual Representation of Women in the Women's Press", Vujović points out that representation always implies the existence of ideas, interests, intentions and ideology (Vujović and Milovanović: 2014: 123). The media represent certain identities, and the manner in which they do that influences the creation of a positive or negative image of certain social categories. "Why is it important how the media represent certain identities? First of all, because the process of representation cannot be considered separately from reality, since thanks to it, our experience and the whole cognitive world make sense (Slavnić, 2011: 16). The representation of women's identity in the media is often stereotypical and discriminatory compared to men's identity. Vujović and associates point out that numerous studies show that the media marginalized women and stereotypically report on them (Vujović et al., 2014: 108).

The number of media texts about women, the manner in which they are presented to the public, as well as the choice of topics point to two facts: the status of women in society, and the creation of a certain opinion about women, that is, encouraging society to think about women in a certain way. "The media represent public life, mainly through debate and dialogue, and show what is currently happening in society. If you are not in the media, you do not exist. It is therefore important from the perspective of equal rights that women and men can "occupy" the media space on the same terms" (Višnjić, Miroslavljević, 2008: 248).

Women's rights have been suppressed throughout history, which is why women's resistance emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the celebration of *International*

*Women's Day*. Given the power of the media in society, the manner in which it is reported on the holiday traditionally celebrated on the eighth of March is of great importance. Based on the research that will be conducted in relation to the holiday, the model of reporting on International Women's Day in the Serbian daily press will be determined.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. Social Status of Women Throughout History**

Gender inequality has been present for centuries throughout social history. The position of women today is conditioned by the cultural and traditional patterns spread over time, thereby repeating and continuing the subordination of women. The perception of women as inferior beings is a result of historical events, regulations, laws and patriarchy, which still influence the denial of women's rights. "A woman labeled as the pillar of the family is naturally predisposed to the role of mother, wife, housewife, while being culturally conditioned to inferiority" (Vujović et al., 2014: 110). The characteristics of the patriarchal society are noticeable even today, despite the progress of civilization, the realization of some of women's rights, and the ever increasing social aspirations for gender equality.

Throughout history, the political inequality of women compared to men was also prominent, which is exactly why the first International Women's Day was celebrated. Political passivity and complete voting discrimination against women remained in the world until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to author Šinko, women are first time obtained the right to vote in New Zealand in 1893 (Šinko, 2007: 72). Balkovec wrote about the position of women and their political rights in Yugoslavia. He points out that after the First World War, women became politically recognized entities, which national radicals strongly opposed, believing that it was first necessary for women to fight for other rights, such as equal salary compared to men. The author further states that women were considered incapable of independent reasoning and subjected to different influences. Family disintegration was feared and warned of (Balkovec, 2016: 200, 201). This, once again, illustrates the role of women as pillars of the family. In some countries, women's suffrage was exercised much later. In Switzerland, this happened only in 1971, and Vuković states that women were often apathetic in the 1990s when it came to interest in politics, both in terms of participation in the elections, and participation in political discussions. Vuković points out that all this did not contribute to women's significant political activism and to their broader interest in politics (Vuković, 2009: 26-27).

Immediately after the exercise of women's suffrage in Yugoslavia, the role of women as "workers" emerged. However, it was the role of women as unskilled workers, doing jobs that could not contribute to improving the social position of women. Zaharijevski according to Pilić states that in the period between 1920 and 1925, the number of employed men increased by only 9%, while the number of

employed women increased by 95%. The industry relied on the exploitation of cheap women's labour, and the agrarian nature of the economy and the limited conditions of industrialization contributed to a far worse position of women in our country at that time than in the commodity and industrial production in European countries (Pilić according to Stjepanović-Zaharijević, 1999: 103). Even today, the working environment is unfavorable for women. Melki and Farah write about the unfavorable work environment for women journalists. They state that gender discrimination and sexual harassment remain overlooked taboos, especially in the news media workplace. They point out that strong social and institutional factors prevent many women from entering journalism and the media field, discourage them from enduring in this career and prevent them from advancing in their positions. For the unequal position of a woman, the authors point out lack of laws, codes of professional conduct and enforcement mechanisms to protect and empower women. Possible solutions to combating gender discrimination, according to Melki and Farah, are: including critical media literacy and gender studies in the curriculum; working toward developing and enforcing institutional policies that discourage gender discrimination and sexual harassment and provide a work environment more conducive to women; working toward developing legal codes that specifically criminalise gender discrimination and sexual harassment and adding explicit language in the codes of professional conduct championed by press and media syndicates that address these matters; forming a professional group devoted to promoting and advancing gender equity in newsrooms (Melki, Farah, 2014: 75-77). The lack of the law, which would regulate some of women's rights, is also written by author Vasiljević. Author points out that laws governing the work of the media do not oblige the media for non-sexist reporting and for the balanced representation of men and women, nor do they stipulate equal participation of women and men in decision-making places in the media (Vasiljević, 2009: 35).

The aforementioned gender inequalities throughout history reflect the inferior position of women, which has partly persisted in today's society. They are also the basis for the creation of stereotypes about women, while they are spread and strengthened through the media.

## 2.2. Stereotypes About Women

According to Milošević, the concept of stereotype was introduced into science by Walter Lippmann in 1922 (Milošević, 2004: 96). Stereotypes are often generalized, simplified and distorted mental images of a particular social group. Hall points out that stereotyping reduces people to a few, simple, essential characteristics, which are represented as fixed by nature. Stereotypes get hold of the few vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characteristics about a person, reduce everything about the person to those traits, exaggerate and simplify them, and fix them without change. Secondly, as Hall states, stereotyping deploys a strategy of splitting. It divides the normal and the acceptable from the abnormal and the unacceptable and excludes or expels everything which does not fit, which is different (Hall, 2001: 257, 258). Stereotypes can also be positive, though they are mostly negative, arising among

other things, from culturally based patterns of behaviour towards a particular social category. “Cultural barriers ‘petrified’ in stereotypes are a huge problem that prevents full inclusion” (Petrović according to Petrović, 2012). They are based on unfounded facts and claims, and often arise from ignorance. They can also be defined as beliefs that label certain social groups. Lippmann states that stereotype patterns are not neutral. A stereotype is a projection of our sense of our value, of our position and our rights, into the world. According to Lippmann, stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with feelings that accompany them, and they represent the fortress of our tradition (Lippmann, 1956: 96). A more precise definition of stereotype is given by Kuzmanović, who implies under a stereotype a schematic and rigid representation of the personality and behavioural patterns of a member of some group, which is rigidly spread and used as a pre-created image of almost any individual in that group (Kuzmanović according to Milošević, 2004: 96).

Stereotypes related to male and female gender are called gender stereotypes, and the authors define them as follows: “Gender stereotypes are beliefs about typical psychological characteristics and behaviour of women and men. Therefore, it is not just the male-female label/categorization, but the assumptions about the characteristics and behaviour of members of a particular gender” (Penezić, Šunjić, 2013:79).

The media are involved in spreading gender stereotypes with such representation of women that promotes archaic division of roles and archaic values for women. The authors point out that the media today strongly reflect, represent, and construct stereotypical roles and identities defined by conservative patriarchal ideology. The portrayal of women, as the authors state, has always been one of the most common stereotypes, and these are well-known stereotypes – a woman is weak, absent, unable to make decisions, but beautiful and able to serve (Juka, Bilaver, 2013: 24). Some of the most common stereotypes about women are the following: noticeable sensitivity and weakness in women, bad executives, unskilled drivers, obsessed with their appearance, not good enough in politics, the stereotype of blond women, of women as “gossipers”, not capable or independent enough, not doing “male” jobs well enough, etc. Montiel states that media content reproduces sexist stereotypes that associate male identity with domination, independence, power, while women are depicted as emotional, vulnerable, sensitive and dependent upon male actions (Montiel, 2014: 17). The traditionally based division into “male” and “female” jobs has produced a special type of stereotype that is reflected in almost all societies. Throughout history, household chores were intended for women, and hence the social attitude that a woman’s place is at home. Zaharijevski writes about the civic stereotype, which implies that the right place for women is home, it was determined by nature for the woman. In terms of existence in the family, a woman is satisfied in the roles of a diligent housewife, a devoted wife and a hard working mother (Zaharijevski, 1999: 105).



## Kakva ste domaćica? Devicama kuća blista, a kod Vodolija vlada kaos!

25.04.2017. 11:15



Zodijak ima odgovor na sve, pa i na pitanje kakva ste domaćica. Šta mislite, da li su zvezde pogrešile?

Zodijak ima odgovor na sve, pa i na pitanje kakva ste domaćica. Šta mislite, da li su zvezde pogrešile?



Example of stereotyped headline from *Blic Žena*

Example of stereotyped photo from same article

The general opinion is that women voluntarily accept and even enjoy the aforementioned roles, which could be labelled as another stereotype in the already existing stereotype. Thus, there is a stereotype about roles, but also a stereotype about enjoying them. “It will be said, the rule of men over women differs from all these others in not being a rule of force: it is accepted voluntarily; women make no complaint, and are consenting parties to it” (Stuart Mill, 2000: 24). Such views have long been historically grounded. Various interpretations and definitions were a prerequisite for creating a subordinate position of women. The creation of the stereotype of women as housewives was influenced by the separation of private and public spheres. According to Zaharijevski, the traditionalist civic theory sharply separates private and public, placing women in the sphere of private, where she performs only feminine roles and thus contributes to the stability of the family. A woman as a public being does not exist, the civic formula for women is “Church-Children-Kitchen” (Zaharijevski, 1999: 105).

Social and historical events have played a major role in establishing the position of women, but also in creating stereotypes. It depends on the media culture how much these stereotypes will be present in society. In a world surrounded by the media, the manner of reporting on stereotyped groups is of great importance.

### 2.3. Image of women in the media

One’s attention is directed to the events, phenomena, personalities and social groups present in the media. How they are perceived depends on media presentation and representation, which implies media representations of events, phenomena, identities, social groups. Through them, the media can shape public opinion, refer to or restrict stereotypical and discriminatory attitudes in society. Some of the conclusions of Denis McQuail, in a paper entitled „The influence and effects of mass

media“; are: mass media do have important consequences for individuals, society and culture, and are a strong instrument of social power; the media can attract and direct attention to problems, solutions or people in ways which can favour those with power and divert attention from rival individuals or groups; the media can help to bring certain kinds of publics into being and maintain them; the mass media can confer status and confirm legitimacy (McQuail, 1977). One of the fundamental conditions for combating gender discrimination is equal participation of women in the media world, i.e. the equal presence of women and men in the media. The media should be a forum for the equal visibility of both genders. The authors point out that the mass media in the world are still indicators of male domination, although there is confirmation that women gradually are conquering the media space and professions (Višnjić, Mirosavljević, 2008: 248). The presence of women in the media does not correspond to the real picture – the fact that women make up half the population. Montiel states that only 24% of news subjects are women, 76% are men. Representation of gender in news is associated with relations of domination and subordination. Men are represented as sportsmen, politicians and businessmen, women are represented as *vox populi*, and characterized by a lack of status and power (Montiel, 2014: 17). The absence of women in the media also confirms the research conducted by Vujović and associates, who analyzed the Serbian daily press. The results of the analysis showed alarming state of invisibility of women in serious columns, as well as invisibility in general (Vujović et al., 2014: 113). Data and percentages provided indicate that the media does not consider equal agenda setting (agenda setting theory) when it comes to male and female gender. By interpreting the definition of the agenda setting theory, which indicates that the media has a great influence on the audience by choosing the topics, personalities or social groups they report, it can be concluded that the media marginalization of women adversely affects the formation of social awareness of the position and status of women. Therefore, it is necessary to point out to the media the importance they have in society when drawing up a daily schedule.

However, in addition to their presence, the representation of women in the media is especially important, as well as the context of reporting on women. When it comes to serious political and economic topics, women are marginalized. According to Begović, Baćanović points out that the media have a major, almost crucial role in the recognition and visibility of women in politics. The media influence the quantitative presence and qualitative representation of women in politics. They can affect change in the attitude of voters, rejection of stereotypes and positive promotion of women as equal participants in political processes (Baćanović according to Begović: 2016: 65). Thus, the media could encourage society to think about women in a different way, and contribute to the rejection of stereotypes about women. Still, women appear more in entertainment columns, as objects that attract attention in an inappropriate manner, with elements of sensationalist reporting. “Even today, women are reduced to objects, and this can easily be concluded by looking at the Serbian print media” (Torlak, 2011: 39). The portrayal of a woman as an object in the media indicates that she is not a protagonist, the creator of a media text, but only the object of reporting.

In this way, her role is passive in that the content does not come from the opinion or will of the woman, but rather the story is shaped and built around her as an object. Sarikakis states that in everyday media the female body continues to be a revenue source and appears in entertainment roles (soft news, fashion etc.), and the role of men is as an experts (e.g. politics, science). That present a established practice and that is hard to change. (Sarikakis, 2014: 67).

Vujović and associates wrote about women portrayed as sexual objects in the press, and they state that the woman was portrayed in the media as a young, thin, naked, almost perfect and idealized. This creates a media image of women that does not correspond to reality, but is a kind of simulacrum that suggests to the male audience that only such a woman is a beautiful woman (Vujović et al., 2014, 110, 111).

The image is a screenshot of a news article. On the left, there is a headline in Croatian: "Pronašli smo savršenu ženu: Rijanin stomak, oči Mile Kunis, a grudi...". Below it is a date "05.06.2017. 11:41" and social media icons. The main image shows a woman in a red bikini top and blue skirt, with various body parts labeled with names of celebrities: OČI (Mila Kunis), GRUDI (Sofija Vergara), TORZO (Rijana), KOSA (Keri Anderson), OSMEH (Džesika Alba), RUKE (Gabriela Junion), and NOGE (Blejk Lajvli). On the right, there is another headline: "SAVRŠENA ŽENA: Lice Čehinje, grudi Dankinje - ali joj fali jedna VAŽNA stvar koju imaju samo SPRKINJE". Below it is a sub-headline: "Žene su pod stalnim pritiskom da ispune određene ideale lepote - ali najnovije istraživanje otkrilo je šta muškarci zaista žele". At the bottom right, there are social media icons and a comment count "11 0 <".

A model of the ideal look imposed on women by the media  
(First photo source *zena.blic.rs* ; Second photo source *telegraf.rs*)

In addition to the media's portrayal of women as objects and their marginalization in the politics and economy sections, the media also influence the spread of misogynist<sup>4</sup> attitudes. Juka and Bilaver state that the misogynistic elements and attitudes, inherited from the matrix of society, can be found in the media. In the media, women are conveyers of other people opinions rather than protagonists of events (Juka, Bilaver, 2013: 25). The *ambivalent* state of affairs in the media

<sup>4</sup> "Misogyny is defined as hatred or animosity towards women. The misogynistic sentiment, misogyny, certainly belongs to the pathology of animosity towards women" (Berković, 2009: 309).

caused by such reporting on women can also be discussed – on the one hand, the woman is portrayed as beautiful, young, thin, “almost perfect”, and on the other, misogynistically portrayed as a perpetrator of a crime, condemned and criticized. In her Ph.D. dissertation, Vujović cites the results of the research conducted by “Ženski Indok Centar”<sup>5</sup>, which confirm the ambivalent attitude of the media towards women. Vujović points out that the results obtained by this organization, among other things, show that women are the least represented in politics and economy, and most in the subculture. Women are portrayed as beautiful, white, heterosexual, urban, and on the other hand, attached to family and tradition; a good girl or mother of several children and a perfect wife. There appears the greatest number of articles about women when they are involved in an affair or murder, harshly condemned and criticized, while praise and rewards remain on the margins, reduced to two to three sentences. Women are mentioned or written about in only 31% of published articles in the print media (Vujović, 2016: 216).

Marginalizing women, spreading misogynistic attitudes, and portraying women as objects are indicators of the direction of the print media in Serbia when it comes to reporting on women. In the research study of the selected Serbian daily newspapers, the current state of affairs when it comes to the presence of women will be determined. The issues of the daily newspapers prepared for March 8<sup>th</sup> (*International Women’s Day*) will be analyzed, with special emphasis on the holiday.

#### 2.4. March 8<sup>th</sup> – International Women’s Day

“The idea of celebrating March 8<sup>th</sup> (February 23<sup>rd</sup>, according to the old calendar) as International Women’s Day came from the activist of the German Social Democratic Party – Clara Zetkin, who brought it up at the International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen in 1910. Initially, the holiday was supposed to reflect the fight of women for equal rights, in the first place - for the right to vote” (Bačević, 2007: 80). Before that, back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the rebellion of female workers at a textile factory in New York over low wages and inhumane working conditions, March 8, 1857, was a precursor to the holiday International Women’s Day. Their protest was quickly stifled, but it encouraged the formation of the first women’s union at a time when union movements were extremely critical of women’s equal representation and demands (Zaharijević, Lončarević, 2011: 3). However, the original idea behind the holiday has become neglected over time. Its importance, reflected in the fight of women for equal rights, has been suppressed by the patriarchal patterns, according to which the role of a housewife “belongs” to women. The author states that during the 1960s and 1970s, International Women’s Day lose its combative and ideological connotation. Instead, gender roles are celebrated that were considered most valuable in the patriarchal system - the role of a wife or spouse, and mother. (Bačević, 2007:

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<sup>5</sup> According to the author, “Ženski Indok Centar” is an organization that has been monitoring the print media for ten years. It monitors several of the most circulated daily and weekly newspapers, and in its research, it annually processes over five thousand articles reporting on women in all spheres (Vujović, 2016: 216).

81). Thus, the deeply rooted power of patriarchy has prevented women from fighting for gender equality. According to Baćević, Malešević points out that women are beginning to return to their traditional roles of the 1960s. With the withdrawal of women from public life, the return to home and the roles that emerge from that environment, the Eighth of March has gradually moved away from its original orientation and changed its meaning and content. In place of the former “fighting” day, it transformed in the sixties into the Mother’s Day, a holiday of the parent and educator (Malešević according to Baćević, 2007: 81). The celebration of International Women’s Day continued in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but not with the original idea - the fight for equal rights. The authors point out that at the beginning of the 21st century in Serbia, Women’s Day in the public and media sphere becomes a holiday of secondary importance, whose “celebration” a large number of women reject. Women’s Day is perceived as Mother’s Day. The day is celebrated with gifts and talks about women as employed or unemployed mothers, caring wives and carers. Such a view becomes desirable and acceptable in the public and media spheres, and no topics are discussed on the economic and political situation of women in Serbia (Zaharijević, Lončarević, 2011: 7, 8). Although in many countries women obtained the right to vote, gender equality has not been fully achieved. Nonetheless, the holiday has been given a new symbolism, which does not include the idea of “fight”. Baćević points out that this holiday reproduces stereotypical conceptions of gender roles, and she distinguishes the following customs and symbolism at the “celebratory level” of this holiday: giving flowers, organizing women-only trips or excursions, as well as celebrating the Eighth of March with festive dinners or lunches, in the presence of colleagues from work or family (Baćević, 2007: 81). In this way, the initial efforts for gender equality have been replaced by celebration and apparent affection towards women, which can be defined as the ‘tacit’ ignorance of social issues. Colović defines the holiday metaphorically: “The streets are crowded with cavaliers and ladies, flowers - a symbol of their affective, festive attitude. This is, according to the convenient formula found this year, a day for “men’s niceness”. (...) The close association between petals and skin appears as a giant sign of International Women’s Day, its basic tone, the main feature. Newspapers unmistakably found the most comprehensive definition of this holiday: “International Women’s Day - Flower Day” (Colović, 1972: 895).

The idea of this paper is to examine whether the print media in their issues published on the day of the holiday indicate to the public the original significance of International Women’s Day or portray the holiday at the “celebratory level”, according to Baćević.

### **3. Methodological Framework**

The subject of this research is articles of different genres published in the Serbian daily press on International Women’s Day, and the frequency of reporting on women on the said holiday.

The main objectives of this paper are to determine the frequency of articles about International Women's Day, the manner of reporting on the holiday, as well as the general presence of women in daily newspapers on the day of the holiday.

The research methodology is based on specific operational method, quantitative content analysis of four selected Serbian daily newspapers – *Politika*, *Danas*, *Blic*, *Večernje novosti*. The analyzed daily newspapers differ in their editorial policy. *Politika* and *Danas* belong to the category of informative daily newspapers, while *Blic* and *Večernje novosti* are semi-tabloids. The selection covers different editorial policies in order to show potential differences among them.

Given that the subject of the analysis is International Women's Day, the issues of the above-mentioned daily newspapers prepared for March 8<sup>th</sup> (the day of the celebration of the holiday), 2019 were analyzed.

A unit of analysis is every signed or unsigned newspaper article with a headline, regardless of its length and genre. Advertisements, announcements and classifieds were not considered as units of analysis, but were taken into account. It is important to note that a number of news items under a common headline were considered to be one article (such as "Tema dana" (eng. Top news) or "Tvitmosfera" (eng. Twitter sphere), "Oko planete" (eng. Around the globe) in *Blic*; or "Među nama" (eng. Between us) and "Ukratko" (eng. In brief), which are the series of news items in *Politika*). An exception was made if there were different authors for each of the short articles. In this case, they were considered to be separate articles.

#### 4. Research Results

A total of 333 articles were published in the four analyzed daily newspapers, 19 (and 3 advertisements) of which about International Women's Day, which is 5.71% of the total number of articles. Ninety-four articles (28.23% of the total number) were about women.

A total of 62 articles were published in *Politika*. Five articles (and one advertisement) in this newspaper were about the holiday, which is 8.06% of the total number of articles in *Politika*. In this issue, 13 (20.97%) articles about women were published.

A total of 83 articles were published in *Danas*, 11 (13.25%) of which were about the holiday. In this issue, *Danas* published 22 (26.51%) articles about women.

A total of 65 articles were published in *Blic*. No article indicated that the idea behind writing it was the holiday. In this issue of *Blic*, 29 (44.62%) articles about women were written.

A total of 123 articles were published in *Večernje novosti*. Three articles (and two advertisements) were about the holiday, which is 2.44%. In this issue of *Večernje novosti*, 30 (24.39%) articles were written about women.



**Table 1** Representation of articles about Women's Day

Newspaper name	The total number of published articles	Number of articles about Women's Day	Percentage of articles published about Women's Day
<i>Politika</i>	62	5	8%
<i>Danas</i>	83	11	13.2%
<i>Blic</i>	65	0	0%
<i>Večernje novosti</i>	123	3	2.4%

**Table 2** Representation of women in articles

Newspaper name	The total number of published articles	Number of published articles about women	Percentage of articles published about women
<i>Politika</i>	62	13	21%
<i>Danas</i>	83	22	26.5%
<i>Blic</i>	65	29	44.6%
<i>Večernje novosti</i>	123	30	24.4%

One of the initial assumptions was that *Politika* reported on the holiday in the manner that emphasized the fight for equality of women's rights, which was the idea behind the first celebration of the holiday in the world. On the front page of *Politika*, there was the following headline related to the holiday: *Best for Women in Parliament, and Hardest at Home*. In the *Society* section *Društvo*, the whole page was given to the article with the above headline and the following survey on gender equality: *Emancipation Made Their Position More Difficult*. The article *Best for Women in Parliament, and Hardest at Home* deals with gender (in)equality, outlining the statistical data that indicate the dominant status of men compared to women. The article also announced a protest organized on March 8<sup>th</sup> - *If women stop, the whole world stops; we don't want flowers, but a more just world*, in order to draw attention to the unequal position of women, as written in the article. Five women's views on gender equality were presented in the survey. In the *Region* section, there was another article about the holiday under the following headline: *International Women's Day Could Become a National Holiday in Slovenia*, which also covered women's fight for equality in society.

The *Feuilleton* section featured the following headline: *Browsing Politika*. The article refers to the article published in *Politika* back in 1969 on International Women's Day. The article is about the exhibition *Women-creators* held at the Museum of Applied Arts on the occasion of International Women's Day. The aim of the exhibition was the desire to ensure a free and creative life for all people, according to *Politika*. This article from 1969 also demonstrates the long tradition of this newspaper, characterized by a serious approach to topics of social importance.



The article *Reading on the Eighth of March* was published in the *Culture* section in the form of an announcement of a meeting of the same name organized by the *Serbian Literary Society* on the occasion of International Women's Day.

Advertisements and classifieds were not considered as units of analysis in quantifying the general presence of women in the daily newspapers on the day of the holiday. However, the advertisements and classifieds about the holiday were considered. The headline *All Episodes of "Mrs. Wilson" for International Women's Day* was published in the form of an advertisement in the *TV programme* section.

No article about the holiday in *Politika* was published following the "celebratory level" model. However, when it comes to the general presence of women on the day of the holiday, *Politika* devoted only 21% to articles about women, suggesting that women are marginalized in *Politika*.

In the daily newspaper *Danas*, as many as 11 articles were about the holiday, as well as a special column *Women's Day* on pages 14 and 15, which contained 4 articles. *Danas* also gave space to International Women's Day on its front page with the following headline: *Purple Aprons on the Monuments of Outstanding Persons* (and the heading: *Feminist Activities on International Women's Day*). The article discusses the protest of feminists and their intention to draw attention to the *invisibility* of women's rights, in science, among other things. On the same page, in the *Women's Day* section, there was a *personal stance* of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, with the headline: *Gender Equality Is a Core Value*. Two other headlines in the *Women's Day* section were the following: *Diversity Has Always Been the Strength of the Balkans* and *Resistance of Women Means Change*. Other headlines of the articles about the holiday were the following: in the *Chronicle* section, the article *Festival of Women's Creativity in Pirot*; in the *Novi Sad / Sport* section, the articles *Discussion on the Position of Women* and *Children Take Moms to Exhibitions*; in the *Politics* section, the article *What Is Your Next Move*; in the *Society* section, the article *UN: One in Two Women Experienced Psychological Abuse*; in the *Economy* section, the article *Car Go Postponed Protest Because of March 8th*; and in the *Dialogue plus* section, the article *March 8th in Real Life*. In the last mentioned article, the author's opinion is emphasized in the text box, which reads: *In real life, the Eighth of March is the complete opposite of what it is supposed to represent. It can hardly be called a day of celebration of women's rights, but rather the day of women - second-class human beings. Its whole essence comes down to flowers in cellophane and all kinds of business celebrations, which many women look forward to as one of the few days when they go out at all*. The article especially criticizes the idea of the holiday that is currently dominant, based on apparent affection for women. It is pointed out that the purpose of the holiday is not buying gifts, but "fighting for women's rights".

The analysis of all of the aforementioned articles in *Danas* shows that there are no elements of reporting on the holiday which follow the "celebratory level" model. However, the figure of 26.51% of the general presence of women shows that they are marginalized in *Danas* too.

The articles about the holiday in the daily newspapers *Politika* and *Danas* indicate to the public the original character of International Women's Day, as well as

gender *inequality*. Selecting topics and emphasizing them on front pages, publishing statistics, creating content and headlines, emphasizing the views of experts and journalists, as well as announcing protests and events related to the holiday express the tendency of *Politika* and *Danas* to present the holiday with its original idea – women’s fight for equal rights.

There were no articles in the daily newspaper *Blic* indicating that the reason for writing them was International Women’s Day. However, in this issue, *Blic* added nine articles with the common headline *Successful Women* that cannot be found in other issues, which is why they are assumed to have been included because of the holiday. The articles are in the form of interviews, each occupying half a page and being visually separated from the others. They are in different sections (World, Society, Economy, Entertainment, Culture, Sport), always on the right half of the right page. On the front page of *Blic*, space is given to the headline *Blic Presents Successful Women*. Nine articles feature nine successful women in marketing, economics, business, etc. Although in none of the articles the holiday was mentioned as the reason for writing them, in one of the interviews, with the President of IO *ProCredit*, there was the following heading: *ProCredit Bank Offers Everyone Equal Opportunities*. It is assumed that the heading was written with the aim to point to inequality between men and women, in terms of (un)equal opportunities.

Another headline of a two-page article in *Blic* is the following: *Magnificent Women Changing the World*. The article begins with the sentence: *The “Blic zena” magazine has been giving awards to the best women in different fields for 12 years*. The article presents ten women with outstanding achievements. The opinions and messages of all the award-winning women are given: *pianist, teacher, doctor of neurosurgery, forensic doctor, etc.*

Given that no article is about the holiday, it is not possible to interpret reporting from the aspect of the “celebratory level” or the “fight for equality of rights”. Although the presentation of 19 successful women in *Blic* indicates a positive representation of women in this issue, this cannot justify the failure to report on the holiday and its importance. However, writing about successful women in leadership positions, which are more often attributed to men, can be distinguished as a positive fact.

In this issue, *Blic* had 29 articles about women, or 44.62%, which is a significantly higher percentage compared to 20.97%, or 26.51% in *Politika* and *Danas*. However, one should consider the additional section of *Successful Women* in *Blic*, which is not normally found in other issues, so the assumption is that in other issues, the percentage of articles about women is lower than in the issue published on March 8<sup>th</sup>.

In *Večernje novosti*, there are three articles (one classified advertisement and one advertisement) related to the holiday. The front page features the headline related to the holiday: *Gifts as Down Payment for Better Grade*. There is also a separate section called *Women’s Day* in *Večernje novosti*, with 2 articles. The article with the aforementioned headline criticizes the practice of children and their parents buying expensive gifts for educators. On the other half of the page, in the *Women’s Day* section, *Večernje novosti* has the article about the holiday which discusses the history

of the holiday and its basic idea. In this article, the headline *Voucher Instead of Flower* and the heading *The tradition of celebrating International Women's Day began 110 years ago* show the main motivation behind the holiday - *fight for gender equality - which is still ongoing*. However, in the *Advertisement* section, a whole page was given to the advertisement with the following title: *Give your love most beautiful book about love on March 8<sup>th</sup>*. In this advertisement we find the elements of reporting on the holiday which suggest buying gifts and understanding the holiday on the basis of the "celebratory level" model. In the *Spotlight* section, there is an article titled *For Ladies and Gentlemen* with the heading *Spectacle by Dragana Mirković tonight on Jahorina for March 8*. The article announced the concert of the above-mentioned singer, without any elements of interpretation of the holiday. The headline *Power of the Fairer Sex* with the heading *Films and TV shows on International Women's Day* represents an advertisement in *Večernje novosti*, which begins with the following sentence: *On International Women's Day, through documentaries and feature films, we will remind ourselves of the icons of female power and fight...* Although the text is in the form of an advertisement, the holiday is here associated with *female power and fight*, which can be interpreted as positive from the aspect of representation of the holiday.

There were 30 articles about women in *Večernje novosti*, which represents, in relation to the total number of articles (123), the approximate percentage (24.39%) of their frequency as in *Politika* and *Danas*.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

Gender inequality has been a major social problem in the world throughout history. Therefore, the idea of fighting for women's rights is especially important, which is also the idea behind the first celebration of International Women's Day in the world. The task of the media, as the guardian of the public interest, is to indicate the importance of the original idea of the holiday, with the aim of raising social awareness of the main motivation behind International Women's Day. The manner of the representation of the holiday in the media and the frequency of reporting on women may affect their position in society.

The research showed that the print media analyzed reported on the holiday in a manner that addresses the idea behind the first celebration of the holiday in the world - *fight for women's rights*. However, by comparing the informative daily newspapers (*Politika* and *Danas*) and the semi-tabloids (*Blic* and *Večernje novosti*), differences in reporting were observed. In *Politika* and *Danas*, there was the greatest number of articles about the holiday. In these newspapers, all articles were thoughtfully written, from a socially relevant point of view, with no elements of reporting that promote the *new symbolism* assigned to the holiday. On the other hand, *Večernje novosti* had the elements of reporting in which the meaning of the holiday was associated with buying gifts. However, it is important to conclude that in *Večernje novosti*, a critical attitude towards the "celebratory level" of the holiday also prevails, and that in the special section *Women's Day*, there are articles that refer exclusively to the critique of

gender inequality. It was not stated in any article in *Blic* that the reason for writing them was the holiday. Presenting nineteen successful women can be understood as positive, but neglecting to write about the importance of the holiday alludes to the social as well as professional irresponsibility of *Blic*.

When it comes to the frequency of articles about women, women are marginalized in all analyzed newspapers. The results of the research show that their presence, at the level of all analyzed print media, is less than one third (28.23%) compared to the total number of articles. A disturbing fact is that the marginalization of women in the media continues, despite studies that show and criticize the low presence of women in articles in the media. Therefore, it is necessary to constantly point out to the low presence of women in the media in order to increase their quantitative presence. The qualitative presence of women in the media is especially important, since the choice of topics and the manner of reporting may restrict stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes. In this way, the media would contribute to the *women's fight for equal rights* that started in 1910 in Copenhagen.

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## PREDSTAVLJANJE MEĐUNARODNOG DANA ŽENA U SRPSKOJ ŠTAMPI

**Apstrakt:** Čovekova pažnja usmerena je na događaje, pojave, ličnosti i društvene grupe zastupljene u medijima. Način njihove percepcije zavisi od medijske prezentacije, odnosno reprezentacije koja podrazumeva medijske predstave događaja, pojava, identiteta, društvenih grupa. Mogućnosti medija su da posredstvom njih oblikuju javno mnjenje, upućuju na stereotipne i diskriminatorne stavove u društvu, ili ih ograničavaju. Jedan od osnovnih uslova suzbijanja diskriminacije je ravnopravno sudelovanje žena u medijskom svetu, odnosno podjednaka zastupljenost žena i muškaraca u medijima. U radu istražujemo zastupljenost žena u dnevnim novinama *Politika*, *Danas*, *Blic* i *Večernje novosti* na praznik Međunarodni dan žena, sa posebnim osvrtom na način izveštavanja o prazniku. Teorijski deo rada obuhvata poglavlje o društvenom statusu

žene kroz istoriju, u kome su predstavljeni neki od činilaca inferiornog položaja žene, koji su uticali na stvaranje stereotipa o ženi. Zatim je pažnja posvećena stereotipima o ženi, dominantnim medijskim obrascima izveštavanja o ženskom rodu, kao i značaju i istoriji nastanka praznika. U teorijskom delu su predstavljena i tumačenja prethodnih istraživanja iz objavljenih naučnih radova. Drugi deo rada obuhvata kvantitativni i kvalitativni prikaz rezultata istraživanja. Na kraju su sumirani rezultati na osnovu kojih je izveden zaključak.

**Ključne reči:** mediji, Međunarodni dan žena, marginalizacija, stereotipi, medijska reprezentacija





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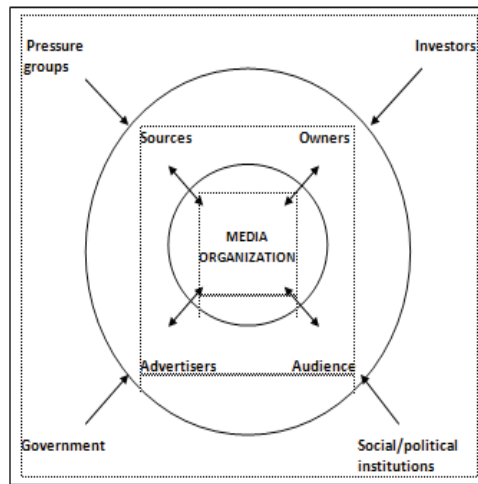
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**Fig. 1** The media environment: source of demand and constraint (McQuail, 1992: 82)

**Tables**

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**Table 2** Press freedom (McQuail, 1992: 102)

	<i>Whose freedom?</i>	<i>From what?</i>	<i>To do what?</i>
Level of structure	Proprietor	Censorship; unfair taxes;	Publish/sell news and views; not to publish; start a new publication
Level of conduct	Editor	State; proprietorial and outside interference (advertisers, sponsors, etc.)	Print news and views; gather information; not to print; advocate views; criticize
Level of performance	Public	Lack of choice; bias in news and views	Hear news and views; express own views

**Citation:**

The original material in the text should be given in the parenthesis naming: the authors last names, the years of publication of cited literature, the number of pages, if citation is used.

E.g. (McQuail, 1992: 34).

In the case of two authors, both last names should be written in parentheses.  
E.g. (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

If there are more than two, but less than six authors, when the reference appeared in the text it needed to name the last names of all authors, and every next time only the last name of the first author and abbreviation: et al.

E.g. (Deibert, Palfrey, Rohozinski, Zittrain & Stein, 2008) – first time  
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### **Journal article**

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*Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on a new notion of media*. Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 21 September 2011 at the 1121st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies. Available on: [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805cc2c0](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805cc2c0)

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**MEDIA STUDIES AND APPLIED ETHICS**

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš

Niš, I/2 (2020)

*Published by*

FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY  
UNIVERSITY OF NIŠ

*Publisher*

Natalija Jovanović, full profesor, Dean, Faculty of Philosophy

*Proofreading*

Authors

*Journal cover*

Darko Jovanović

*Prepress*

Milan D. Randelović

*Format*

17 x 24 cm

*Press*

SCERO PRINT

*Print run*

50

Niš, 2020

ISSN 2683-5355

CIP - Каталогизacija y publikaciji  
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

316.77

MEDIA studies and applied ethics / editor-in  
chief Marija Vujović. - Vol. I, No 1 (2020)- .  
- Niš : Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš,  
2020- (Niš : Scero print). - 24 cm

Polugodišnje.

ISSN 2683-5355 = Media studies and applied  
ethics

COBISS.SR-ID 283297804