

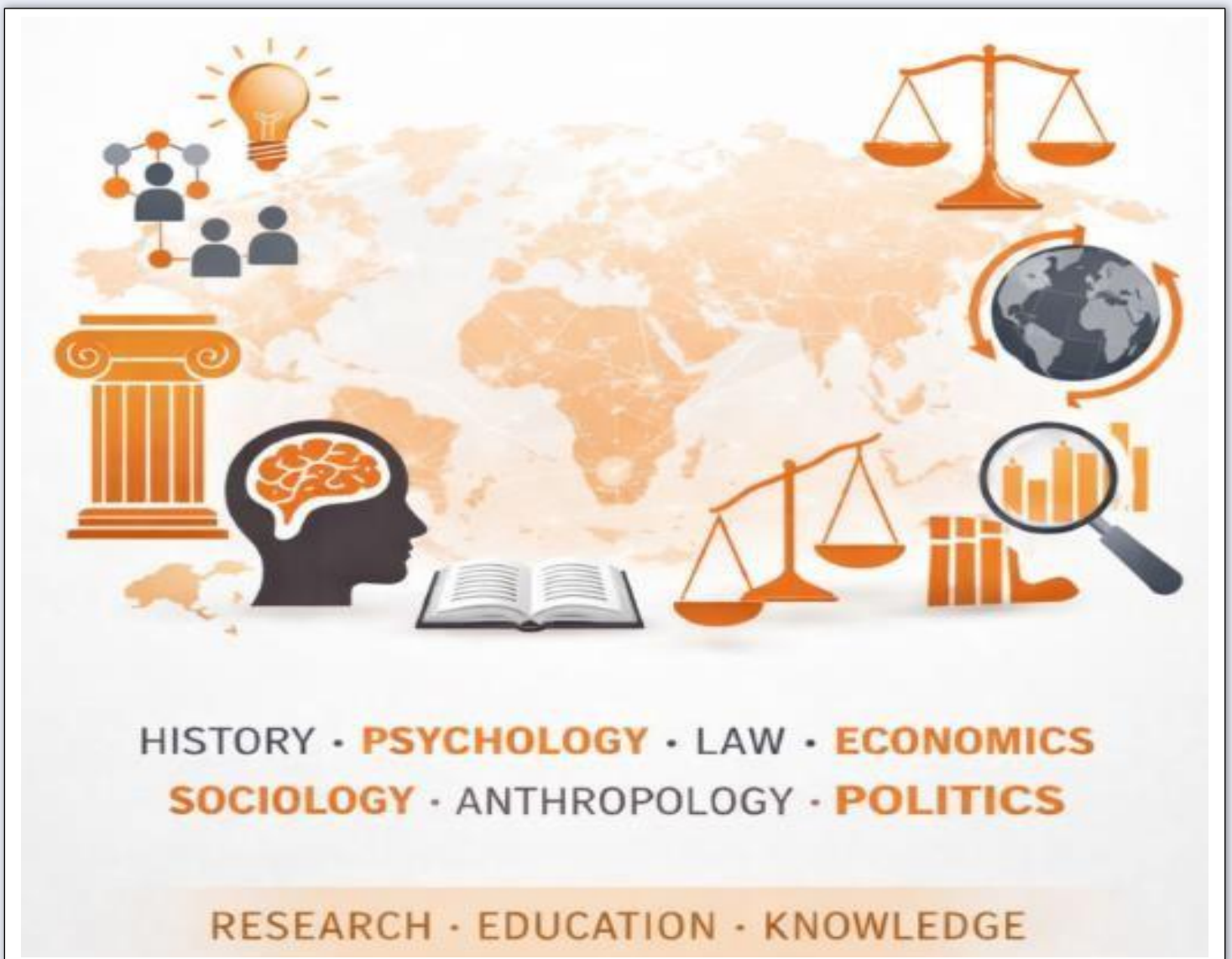
# JMTSS

## Journal of Modern Trends in Social Sciences

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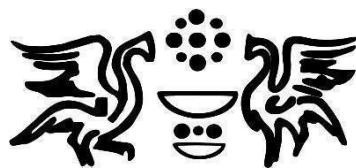
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## Editorial Foreword

**Prof. Dr. Sani Demiri**

**Editor in Chief**

Dear Readers, Authors and Collaborators,

Mother Teresa University in Skopje is pleased to present **Volume 1 (2026)** of the *Journal of Modern Trends in Social Sciences (JMTSS)*. This edition builds on the momentum generated by the **TSD 2025** conference and features a selection of rigorously peer-reviewed papers addressing key sustainable development challenges in the Western Balkans and beyond.

The volume showcases advances in social sciences from multidisciplinary perspective aiming to bring novelties **in times of globalization and AI-driven solutions, and in search of sustainability**. Its scope spans research on the study of society and social behavior, analysis of political systems and political behavior, individual and group dynamics, culture, social policy and wellbeing. Under the leadership of **Editor-in-Chief Sani Demiri, PhD**, the contributions in this issue are closely aligned with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and propose practical, evidence-based pathways for regional development and long-term resilience.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the authors, reviewers, and institutional partners whose commitment and expertise made this volume possible. We invite the academic and professional community to engage with these works, contribute new research, and collaborate with us in future editions to further amplify their impact.

Sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Sani Demiri, PhD

Editor in Chief

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## **DETERMINANTS OF PARTY PROFILING AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF ALBANIANS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA**

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### **Abstract**

This paper addresses the main determinants that influence the party profiling of Albanians in the Republic of North Macedonia by analyzing the political, social, and cultural factors that shape the partisan orientation and electoral behavior of this community. Within the framework of democratic developments and political pluralism in the country, the Albanian community has played an important role in political and institutional processes, contributing to the formation of the party system and political culture.

Considering that the most credible research fields often emerge from everyday socio-political challenges, the central objective of this research is to examine the stability and dynamics of political activism and political engagement among Albanians in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The political profiling of Albanians has traditionally been treated through various typological classifications of political parties. However, the aim of this research is to explore another dimension of the issue: the real determinants of individual attitudes and the level of individual participation in political activities, either to influence or to be influenced by governmental decision-making. In this context, an important question arises: whether the significant ideological shifts that occur among individuals within the political culture of North Macedonia represent undefined beliefs or rather categorizations of politics as a social, ethnic (demos–ethnos), religious, or communal mechanism.

**Keywords:** Party profiling, political participation, political culture, ethnic identity

## Introduction

Political processes in multiethnic societies are often characterized by a complex interaction between ethnic, social, and institutional factors, which directly influence the political orientation of citizens and the formation of their party preferences. In this context, the analysis of the determinants of party profiling represents an important dimension of research in the fields of Political Science and Political Sociology, as it helps to understand the factors that influence electoral behavior and political mobilization among different social groups. Within the framework of the development of political pluralism and the consolidation of democratic institutions in the Republic of North Macedonia, the Albanian community has played a significant role in the political life of the country. Albanians constitute one of the largest ethnic communities, and their participation in political processes has been reflected through representation in institutions, within the party system, and in electoral processes.

In this regard, the political orientation and party profiling of Albanian voters have been influenced by a series of factors related to ethnic identity, historical developments, socio-economic interests, and the dynamics of political competition. The study of the determinants of party profiling among Albanians is important for understanding how political preferences are formed and how the electorate is mobilized in a political context where identity-based and institutional factors continuously interact.

In this framework, the analysis focuses on identifying the key factors influencing the party orientation of Albanian voters, including elements such as ethnic identity, level of education, socio-economic status, the influence of political elites, as well as the role of the media and political discourse.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the determinant factors that influence the party orientation of Albanian voters, such as ethnic identity, socio-economic background, level of education, the influence of political elites, the role of the media, and historical and institutional factors. In this context, the paper relies on theoretical approaches from Political Science and Political Sociology, using analytical and comparative methods to understand the dynamics of the political behavior of Albanians in the country.

Importance of the Study Based on Research Trends:

- \* To what extent is political culture determined by the ideological orientation of the individual as a political mechanism through social and political culture?
- \* Is the orientation of political culture a matter of mindset, mentality, or political conviction of the individual, with a particular focus on North Macedonia?
- \* How much does political culture influence the social stratification of the individual in determining political orientation, particularly in the context of North Macedonia?

- \* Is the individual connected to political parties primarily on ideological grounds?
- \* To what extent do Albanians in North Macedonia possess knowledge and perception of the ideological foundations of political parties operating in the country?
- \* Do political parties possess ideological platforms that contribute to shaping the ideological perception and political culture of individuals in North Macedonia?

The results of the study aim to provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that influence party profiling and to highlight the role of identity-based, institutional, and socio-economic factors in shaping political preferences. At the same time, the study contributes to the scientific literature on political participation and electoral behavior in multiethnic societies by offering a specific perspective on the analysis of political processes in the Western Balkans.

Therefore, the typology of the thesis has a systematic nature, focusing on what motivates individuals in North Macedonia, and more broadly, to become politically profiled and to participate in politics. It also seeks to define the cultural and political dimensions that make this political profiling stable or unstable, which I believe is currently facing a crisis of definition in North Macedonia. In this context, some actors engage in partisan maneuvering, others consolidate their positions firmly, while a considerable number may still lack clearly defined political orientations.

### **Continuity of the Conceptual Approach**

It is already well known that the study of ideological divisions among political parties in various regional and global contexts, including our country, has been conducted over the years both in theoretical-chronological forms and through comparative methodological approaches between different political systems.

Political culture is a highly abstract philosophical concept, which, in my view, should be understood as an active political mentality in the Republic of North Macedonia, based on the principle of power-sharing between those who make policy and those who are governed by it. The continuity of this approach lies in defining the individual mindset of individuals, which is intertwined with character formation and the creation of a broader social mentality. This mentality initially develops through social experiences and participation in everyday life, influenced by numerous factors and life challenges, and later resonates as a political conviction. At the same time, one cannot overlook the social stratification of individuals in relation to the broader community. In the multiethnic and multicultural society of North Macedonia, ethnic, religious, cultural, social, demographic, and territorial-regional connections represent important competitive elements in shaping the political dignity of individuals as the foundation of political culture.

For this reason, the crucial focus of this research remains the political activism of individuals and their party political orientation, with a particular emphasis on Albanians in North Macedonia. The study seeks to determine whether there should be specific criteria for political profiling and, if so, what mechanisms enable individuals to incorporate themselves into political and party structures within the country.

Furthermore, it is important not to overlook the mindset and the real political participation of individuals in the country, where we often encounter their direct contributions within local communities. However, at the same time, we also observe hesitation in forms such as protests, public debates, civic engagement, and other forms of political participation. Major ideological shifts among individuals within the political culture of North Macedonia raise important questions: are these changes the result of undefined beliefs, particularly among Albanians in the country, and what are the levels of their political incorporation? The distribution of responsibility often depends on individuals' ideas, mindsets, and everyday experiences, which later become reflected as public opinion.

However, such approaches remain insufficiently explored both in research and in political practice within the political landscape of North Macedonia. This is especially evident when considering individual forms of political participation, such as lobbying, protest movements, or engagement in various political and party interests, which sometimes appear as manipulative forms of citizen involvement in the country.

Another important issue concerns the individual preferential choices of Albanians in North Macedonia regarding their political orientation. Do they possess a clear ideological understanding before adopting a party position? Does Albanian society possess sufficient individual participatory capacity in shaping different public policies?

At the same time, the influence of media discourse and political communication should not be overlooked, as they significantly shape the formation of political perceptions and the political mindset of Albanians in North Macedonia. Consequently, this research aims to examine the extent to which Albanians individually possess the responsibility and awareness necessary for political profiling, reaction, and participation based on key theoretical criteria of political science, such as ideology, party structuring, social classes, different models of democracy, leadership, governance, and everyday political narratives.

### **Political Culture of Albanians and the Citizen–Leader Relationship as a Factor of Party Profiling in the Republic of North Macedonia**

In contemporary democratic societies, the relationship between citizens and political leadership represents a key element in shaping political culture. In the Republic of North Macedonia, where Albanians constitute a considerable part of the population, the processes of building civic awareness and political representation have developed within specific historical, ethnic, and institutional contexts. The Albanian political culture in North Macedonia is characterized by

ideological fragmentation, a strong influence of political leaders, and the absence of clearly defined ideological profiles among political parties.

Political culture, according to Almond and Verba (1963), represents the set of attitudes and values that orient political behavior. In the case of Albanians in North Macedonia, political culture has been shaped by the democratic transition, the Ohrid Framework Agreement (2001), and the fragmentation of the party system. <sup>1</sup>Political leadership has often taken precedence over ideology, creating a political model in which individuals are influenced more by the personality of the leader than by programmatic political beliefs.

The Albanian political culture is the product of a complex historical development in which the tensions between tradition, modernity, and democratic transition have directly influenced the political behavior of both citizens and political elites. It reflects how Albanian society perceives power, authority, and political participation. The roots of Albanian political culture in North Macedonia can be found in traditional structures of social organization such as kinship ties, the concept of *besa*, and the authority of leadership. These elements have historically shaped a political culture with vertical and personalist characteristics. During the Yugoslav communist period, this culture was transformed within an authoritarian political system that promoted submission to power and limited political pluralism.

Nevertheless, the emergence of political pluralism and the gradual formation of an Albanian political elite in North Macedonia has contributed to the development of political culture over time, particularly through generational changes within political party structures. <sup>2</sup>Political culture remains a crucial and challenging element in understanding how Albanian voters perceive their political elites in the Republic of North Macedonia. A higher level of political culture involves the organization of social structures, the harmonization of laws, and effective governance within a social group. In the context of post-modern electoral politics, political culture is closely connected with national values and discourse as a premise of political consciousness. This phenomenon is also present among Albanians in North Macedonia.

Therefore, the relationship between leadership and citizens, particularly among Albanians in North Macedonia, is closely linked to the concept of national political culture. National political culture can be defined as the manifestation of a nation's collective creativity within its worldview, activities, and social behavior, evolving from hypothetical and abstract dimensions into concrete political practice.

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<sup>1</sup> The political organization of Albanians in Macedonia, Etem Aziri, Logos A, Skopje, 2004, page 127

<sup>2</sup> Albanian MYTH AND PHILOSOPHY, Rizvan Sulejmani, Alma, Skopje, 2020, pg222

## **Ethnic Identity and Nationalism as Determinants of Party Profiling among Albanians in the Republic of North Macedonia**

Identity and its definition are particularly important, especially in the context of international relations, where identity often appears as both a problematic and attractive phenomenon—either as a crisis, a doubt, or a source of pride and protection. The term identity itself raises an interesting question: if the word can be linguistically modified, does that mean identity itself can also be changed according to circumstances?

Although such a question may appear metaphorical, it reflects contemporary debates regarding the nature and status of identity as a concept. Traditional fixed identities increasingly belong to the past, while modern societies are characterized by more fluid and fragmented forms of identity construction. Identity has often been perceived as a stable and strong category related to class, gender, ethnicity, race, and other social characteristics that provide individuals with a sense of belonging and security within society. From an etymological perspective, the word identity derives from the Latin term *idem*, meaning “the same” or “identical.”<sup>3</sup> It refers to the formation or construction of something in relation to someone or something else and appears in most modern Western languages.

Identity is a concept with a wide analytical scope and has therefore been defined in different ways across various academic disciplines. In general terms, identity refers to how individuals and groups perceive themselves, what kind of people they believe they are, and how they relate to others within their social environment.<sup>4</sup> It involves the ways individuals and collectivities distinguish themselves from others within social relations. Identity also represents the basis upon which groups of people identify themselves with national symbols and internalize elements of national belonging. Identities tend to be relatively stable structures of expectations, recognition, and collective understanding, reflecting the relationship between individuals and their social and historical context.

As such, identity can be understood as a multifaceted mosaic that varies depending on how it is interpreted within scientific frameworks or social practices. In this regard, the ideas of Steven Grosby are particularly relevant. According to Grosby, the nation and national identity represent a territorial connection of collective consciousness linking the present with an imagined future. In other words, identity addresses the fundamental question: Who are we, and why should we recognize ourselves as a collective political community? This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding the development of political consciousness among Albanians in the Republic of North Macedonia, as identity often functions as a motivating factor for political mobilization and participation.

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<sup>3</sup> Identity and citizenship, Martin Berishaj, Victory College, Prishtina, 2010, page 31

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.scribd.com/doc/8714281/Bekim-Baliqi-Historia-Dhe-Identiteti>, pg 4

Scholars frequently argue that identity has a dual character: it can function both as a relational model and as a categorical model. On the one hand, identity may emerge from social relationships between individuals and groups, including kinship, marriage, or social networks. On the other hand, individuals may identify themselves—or be identified by others—through participation in a particular social group that shares certain categorical attributes such as gender, language, race, citizenship, ethnicity, or nationality.

The period following the Second World War represents an important historical turning point for many nations around the world. Albanians and their territories were also part of the major global transformations of that time due to their geostrategic significance. This was particularly evident in the case of Albanians in Macedonia who remained within the boundaries of the Macedonian state.<sup>5</sup>

In 1991, the Republic of Macedonia declared independence from Yugoslavia peacefully and without major conflict. The first president of the country, Kiro Gligorov, assured both citizens and the international community that Macedonia aspired to function as a multiethnic state committed to regional stability and constructive relations with neighboring countries. He also emphasized the importance of building a constructive partnership with Albanians as equal citizens of the state, reflecting pro-Western values aimed at accelerating integration into the European Union. However, during the early years of state consolidation, the political elite in Macedonia did not fully demonstrate the inclusive national policies that had been promised. Over time, it became evident that these commitments were often superficial. Within approximately twenty-five years of independence, nationalist tendencies increasingly appeared within state policies and governance, particularly in relation to Albanians and the protection of their vital interests.

These developments ultimately contributed to the interethnic conflict of 2001, which ended with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, a compromise that introduced constitutional changes aimed at guaranteeing the rights of Albanians that had been denied since the creation of the state.

Despite these developments, nationalist rhetoric and policies continued to influence political life. This was particularly evident during the period of Gruevism, especially in relation to the dispute with Greece over the country's name. The persistence of rigid nationalist policies delayed consensus on resolving the dispute and consequently hindered the country's integration into the European Union.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, Albanian political elites and the Albanian population consistently expressed strong support for European Union membership, advocating political moderation and rational dialogue as a way to overcome the name dispute and advance the country's Euro-Atlantic integration.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_39428-1522-2-30.pdf?141106124716](http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_39428-1522-2-30.pdf?141106124716), fq 7

<sup>6</sup> Albanians of Macedonia November 1943-December 1944, Fati Iseni, Institute of the Spiritual and Cultural Heritage of Albanians, Skopje, 2012, pg. 7

The nationalist policies of certain political actors also manifested themselves in symbolic and urban projects such as “Skopje 2014,” which sought to reshape the capital through a monumental narrative of ancient history. According to many European diplomats, this project was neither necessary nor beneficial for the country’s citizens or for its broader political development. As a consequence of these political dynamics, North Macedonia has experienced periods of deep political crisis that have weakened state functionality and slowed the process of European integration, contributing to perceptions of political instability and isolation within the region. The stronger the dynamics of interethnic conflict became, the more intense the need for national identification and collective belonging also became. Just as individual identity cannot exist without the presence of the Other, collective identity also requires the existence of others in order to construct self-awareness and political unity.<sup>7</sup>

### **Conclusion**

- Political leadership in North Macedonia, as in most transitional countries, has been built more on the cult of the leader than on the institutionalization of ideology and public accountability. In the Albanian context, this leadership has played a dual role - as an ethnic and communal representative and as a manager of political and party interests.
- Albanian political culture in North Macedonia is in the process of consolidation.
- An informed citizen and a responsible leader are essential.
- Citizen trust is the key to democratic development.
- Albanians in North Macedonia do not have a clearly defined political-ideological positioning, as a consequence of the lack of clear ideological and party-political profiling among the respective parties in the country.
- The priority perceptions of the individual's ideological profiling in North Macedonia are strongly influenced by the general political climate, which makes individual positions unstable.
- The cult of the leader is more decisive than party-political ideology in shaping the individual's political orientation in North Macedonia.
- The level of individual political culture in North Macedonia, as political awareness and ideological mindset, remains low in terms of party-political activation.

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<sup>7</sup> Power, Identity and Space - A Sociological-Political Study on the Skopje 2014 Project, Murat Aliu, Logos A, Skopje, 2024, pg. 55

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## **THE SOCIAL ISSUE OF MODERN SOCIETY CHALLENGES THE KEY TO NORTH MACEDONIA: FOCUS ON UNEMPLOYMENT, MENTAL HEALTH, AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

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### **Abstract**

We find ourselves in a time characterized by significant progress in technology, commerce, and healthcare, all aimed at eliminating poverty and fostering equality. However, in spite of these advancements, a complicated set of social challenges—unfavorable circumstances that adversely impact individuals or groups within society—continues to jeopardize global stability, and North Macedonia is no exception.

Recent employment data indicates a slight decrease in the unemployment rate to 12.5%, while youth unemployment remains notably high at 26.9%, contributing to a "brain drain." This migration undermines economic growth, intensifying the issues related to an aging demographic. There are considerable economic disparities between men and women, particularly in both urban and rural settings. Women frequently encounter obstacles to employment, particularly in rural areas, where traditional societal norms prevail. Cities such as Skopje benefit from relatively favorable economic conditions, in contrast to rural regions that struggle with limited job opportunities, fewer resources, and lower income levels.

Mental health concerns, particularly among younger populations, have become increasingly evident, demonstrating rising levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. These challenges are compounded by stigma and a lack of awareness, alongside a shortage of qualified professionals and insufficient funding, which restrict access to mental health care, especially in rural areas where medical services are often lacking. This situation extends the healthcare inequalities. Moreover, the aging population exerts pressure on both the economy and the healthcare system, highlighting a growing need for elderly care that current infrastructures are ill-equipped to manage.

Community stability is further challenged by violence, with domestic abuse representing a critical social issue in North Macedonia. Many incidents remain unreported due to feelings of shame, resource scarcity, and traditional views on gender roles. Although initiatives to assist victims are underway, obstacles, particularly in rural areas, continue to hinder progress.

Addressing these issues and their potential societal repercussions is essential. By raising awareness of these social challenges, we can encourage a deeper understanding of global issues and motivate efforts toward building a more equitable and just world

**Keywords:** society, unemployment, mental health, violence, equity

## Introduction

Located in the Balkans, with a diverse population of about 2 million people (State Statistical Office 2021), North Macedonia serves as a cultural and geographic bridge between Europe and Asia, with a history molded by influences from the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman Empires. In broader terms, although small, being strategically positioned "on the crossroads of the Balkans," North Macedonia is an essential player in fostering regional stability and cooperation, security, and economic growth. However, while its unique heritage and evolving regional role contribute significantly to the Balkan landscape, these parameters also create complex social dynamics.

Social issues represent significant challenges, arising from a complex interplay of historical, economic, and cultural influences, impacting large segments of the population, and often resulting in disparities, conflicts, and structural inequalities. These issues tend to intensify with rapid societal changes as individuals, communities, and governments strive to adapt to evolving realities while managing competing demands and limited resources.

Globalization, EU integration, and the creation of trading blocs and common markets inevitably affect the economic landscape of North Macedonia, directly affecting the economic growth and development opportunities, with the development component further reflective of education, health, financial stability, and equity in the distribution of income parameters.

Recent employment data indicates a slight decrease in the unemployment rate to 12.5% (Trading Economics), while youth unemployment remains notably high at 26.9% (International Labor Office), contributing to a "brain drain." This migration undermines economic growth, intensifying the issues related to an aging demographic. There are considerable economic disparities between men and women, particularly in both urban and rural settings. Women frequently encounter obstacles to employment, particularly in rural areas, where traditional societal norms prevail. Cities such as Skopje benefit from relatively favorable economic conditions, in contrast to rural regions that struggle with limited job opportunities, fewer resources, and lower income levels.

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shame, resource scarcity, and traditional views on gender roles. Although initiatives to assist victims are underway, obstacles, particularly in rural areas, continue to hinder progress. Addressing these issues and their potential societal repercussions is essential. By raising awareness of these social challenges, we can encourage a deeper understanding of global issues and motivate efforts toward building a more equitable and just world.

### **Methodology**

Researching social issues in North Macedonia is essential for crafting policies that promote social cohesion, economic opportunity, and regional stability. By addressing these challenges, North Macedonia can create a more prosperous and harmonious society that supports its growth and integration into the European community.

The research is based on the analysis of the available secondary data, published by the Public Health Institute, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Ministry of Health, World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), World Bank, International Labor Organization, and other relevant institutions. The collected information includes statistics from 2022 and 2023 reflecting economic, social, health, equity, and personal safety and security aspects that are considered in the identification of the modern society challenges in North Macedonia.

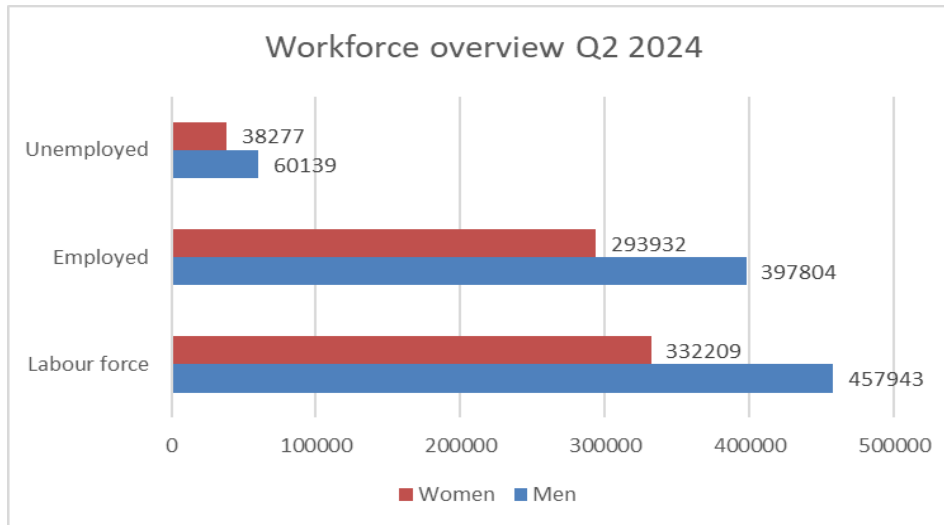
The data was collected over several months in 2024, by approaching the above-mentioned institutions and researching their publications databases and official reports.

Data processing included statistical trend and representation analysis, as well as cross-referencing of the information to arrive at a conclusion that would allow for a better understanding of the explored issues and the establishment of a baseline to be used in further creation of policies to address the issues and offer solutions to the socio-economic challenges.

### **Findings**

#### *Unemployment*

North Macedonia experienced record low unemployment in Q2 of 2024 with only 12.5% (Trading Economics), marking a significant decline from the highest level of 38.7% in 2005 (Trading Economics), as shown in Figure 1 below. These changes were enabled by significant economic growth, fostered by strengthening the business climate and stimulating foreign investments. In addition to increased job opportunities, significant achievements were made concerning the accuracy of the statistics of part-time workers, unregistered employees, as well as discouraged workers who were previously considered among the active workforce population.



**Figure 1: Workforce statistics, Q2 2024;**

**Source: MakStat Database (State Statistical Office)**

Within the entire timeline, as well as with the most recent data, it is evident that women are outnumbered by men, although both genders are almost equally represented in the population pyramid (Statistic Times). Women do not necessarily follow the same career path as men and are often, due to adherence to traditional values or fewer employment opportunities, opting out of active participation in the workforce, although significant research and respective data in terms of gender income inequality are still very scarce. According to *Salary Upon Agreement: Analysis and Recommendations* publication of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, “the gender gap in salaries in RN Macedonia in 2017 was 15 percent, and this gap increases to 17.3 percent if components like education, work experience, age, and job profile are taken into consideration” (Macedonian Helsinki Committee) Following another survey, “the gender gap is 28 percent if people who only completed primary school are taken into consideration” (Macedonian Helsinki Committee).

With respect to the age structure, youth unemployment, although showing the same downward trend, is still at alarmingly high levels of (depending on the source) 26.9%–28.57% (Statista, 2023), as shown in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2: Youth unemployment in North Macedonia;**

**Source: Statista**

This decline is partially due to the decline in the younger population overall, both in terms of population pyramid and brain drain, but also due to increased university education opportunities and enrollment numbers that temporarily remove the youth from the workforce statistics.

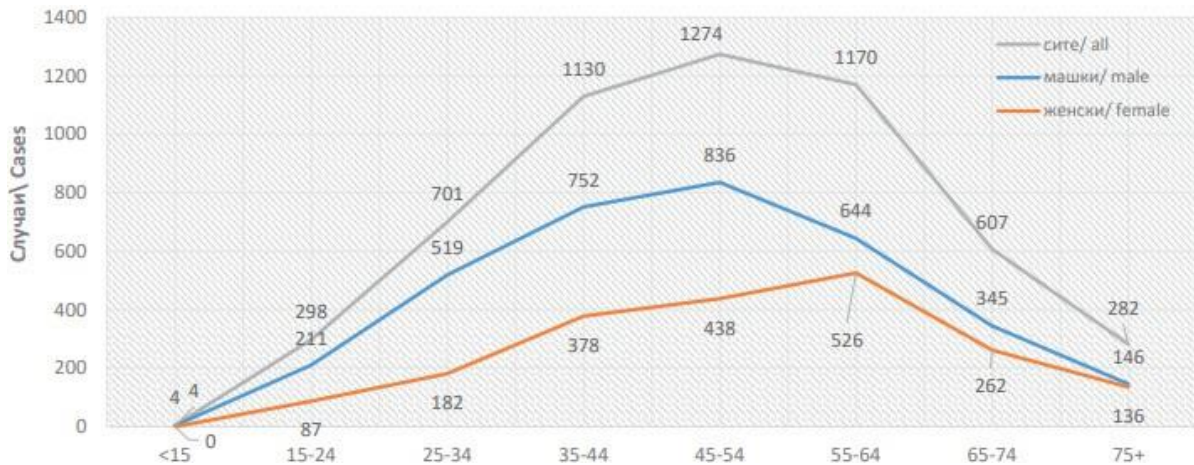
Lack of employment opportunities pushes educated individuals abroad to seek work that matches their qualifications, especially in EU countries where wages and job security are higher. The brain drain of 10% in the last two decades (Li and Gade, 2023) resulting from this emigration affects the country's capacity to innovate and hinders productivity, contributing to economic stagnation.

This has an adverse impact on the domestic economy, both in firms that close and those that survive. The industrial sector may experience a more severe shortage of skilled labor due to emigration than the other sectors. This shortage not only leads to a decline in the number of firms but may also hinder capital investment in the surviving firms. The lack of skilled workers can cause project delays, leading managers to hesitate in building construction or purchasing new machinery and equipment. This uncertainty in business operations also acts as a discouragement for investors, including foreign investors (Li and Gade, 2023).

### *Mental health*

The findings in the mental health area are based on the publication „Register for psychosis in the Republic of North Macedonia, 2023," prepared by the Department of Health Statistics at the Institute of Public Health of the Republic of North Macedonia. Psychotic disorders are characterized by disorders in social, emotional, and/or cognitive function, including behavior that

is inappropriate for the situation, sleep problems, social withdrawal, lack of motivation, anxiety, depression, and difficulty performing daily activities. The register provides an insight into the number of patients and hospital days on mental disorders in North Macedonia, also allowing for gender comparisons, as given in Figure 3 below:



**Figure 3: Mental disorder prevalence by age and gender;**

**Source: Public Health Institute, Psychosis Registry 2023**

It is worth mentioning that many of the patients facing mental health challenges do not always seek assistance. There are many reasons for this, including but not limited to social stigma for those attending psychiatric offices, lack of practicing professionals in the vicinity, or poor availability and long waiting times to schedule an appointment with those few professionals. Often, while mental health requires longer treatments, there are instances where patients do not return to the doctor’s office or just don’t persist with the treatments long enough. As not all diagnosed cases end up being treated further or receiving hospital treatment, the options for hospitalization are limited, undermining the timeliness and adequacy of the intervention. Figure 4 below reflects the hospitalization data by gender for the patients treated for mental disorders, regardless of the specific diagnosis.



**Figure 4: Mental disorder hospitalization data per year, by gender;**

**Source: Public Health Institute, Psychosis Registry 2023**

In comparison to these numbers is the data on the specialist services and professionals offering diagnostics and support for mental health. The Public Health Institute, in its overview of the professional services, lists a total of 19 doctors in neuropsychiatry. 40 in psychiatry and 47 in neurology, as well as 25, 42, and 40 supporting health workers in each area, respectively. According to the same source, these professionals have met 38,011 patients in neuropsychiatric offices, 135,612 in psychiatry, and 179,039 in neurology, of which 27,374 attended the neuropsychiatric office for the first time in 2023, as well as 97,999 in psychiatry and 146,168 in neurology, respectively (Public Health Institute).

In addition, patients could also seek assistance from licensed psychologists, or visit the Center for Mental Health, or the Institution for Mental Health Center, which in 2023 assisted 433, 240, and 2,305 patients, respectively (Public Health Institute).

All these data reflect the overall poor state of the health sector, with high patient-to-doctor ratios and limited access to support for the prevention and treatment of mental health issues, especially in smaller cities and rural areas where there is often only one professional in each of these areas, though there are cities (for example, Sveti Nikole) with no access to neurologist, psychiatric, or neuropsychiatric services, nor is there a mental health center or a similar support institution.

This has large implications for further quality of life and represents a potential threat with respect to social relations and possible domestic violence, as well as an impact on the workforce and overall economic trends.

### *Domestic Violence*

"Violence against women is a significantly widespread phenomenon in the Republic of North Macedonia. Three out of five (60%) women consider violence against women to be common, whereas three out of ten consider it to be frequent. Almost one out of five women (17%) knows personally someone in their family and among their friends that has suffered a form of domestic violence" (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy MLSP, 2023).

North Macedonia ratified the Istanbul Convention on 23 March 2018. The convention entered into force in respect of North Macedonia on 1 July 2018. The Istanbul Convention is the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle violence against women and domestic violence. It covers new ground by asking that root causes of violence against women (such as gender stereotyping, traditions harmful to women, and general manifestations of gender inequality) be addressed (Council of Europe, 2022).

Based on the records of the Centers for Social Work in North Macedonia and the comparative analysis for the period 2020-2023, there has been an increase in the reported cases of domestic violence, with the official data for 2023 reflecting 1605 cases, of which the dominant majority were women (1,124) and children, both male and female (120 and 117, respectively). In the same period, 244 men reported being domestic violence victims, marking a declining trend compared to 2021, when 271 men sought help and support at the Centers for Social Work (Office for Social Work, MLSP, 2024).

In addition, there has been an upward trend of domestic violence being reported by employed women (from 645 in 2020 to 773 in 2023) and the elderly (153 in 2020 to 176 in 2023), as opposed to unemployed women, where those numbers are declining (from 742 in 2020 to 656 in 2023). The same trend contrast is evident in the urban vs. rural area data, with an increased number of victims in the cities (from 1179 to 1325) and a declining trend in the villages (from 361 to 280) reflecting data for 2020 and 2023, respectively. The majority of the victims reported physical abuse, followed by psychological abuse, and lower numbers of sexual and economic abuse. Unfortunately, there is a significant deterioration in the support services, with the number of centers extending their assistance to the victims decreasing from 71 in 2020 to only 30 in 2023, including the Centers for Social Work in Skopje and Kumanovo and the NGO Hera Skopje (Domestic Violence Report).

The number of abusers who were subject to intervention and assistance by the Centers for Social Work doubled over the 4 years, marking 68 abusers in 2020 as opposed to 139 in 2023 (Office for Social Work). While the strengthened intervention with the abusers is necessary and adhered to, it is alarming that the victims are put in a disadvantageous position with insufficient support and follow-up. Similar findings were identified in the "GREVIO's (Baseline) Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

(Istanbul Convention) NORTH MACEDONIA”, where red flags were raised concerning the urgent needs for increasing the number of professionals and the funding for the Centers for Social Work. In addition, the Report states that “This fact, paired with the shortage of shelter spaces and the unavailability of emergency barring orders, leaves many women victims of violence without the protection they need. Many of these women currently have no other option than staying with their abusers” (GREVIO).

In North Macedonia, there are three SOS lines in operation, whose effectiveness was assessed in 2023 in cooperation between the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, UNFPA, UK Aid, and the British Embassy in North Macedonia (United Nations Population Fund). It was confirmed that all 3 lines are available 24/7, across the year, with highly skilled professionals handling approximately 2,700 calls per year. The SOS lines are operated by 3 separate initiatives: Women’s Organization of the City of Skopje (OZS), National Council for Gender Equality (NSRR), and Crisis Center “Nadezh” (Hope). Within each initiative, different ranges of further assistance and options are available:

- The OZS offers support to victims of domestic violence and manages a shelter for long-term accommodation (up to one year)
- NSRR is the only free mobile line and offers support for all forms of violence against women, in Macedonian, Albanian, Romani, and English. Offers psychosocial counseling.
- Hope offers online support to victims of domestic violence and manages shelter for intervention accommodation of victims (up to 48 hours).

The Publication / Assessment of the SOS lines states: “The victims who call the SOS helpline are mostly women, and the perpetrators are usually men, their husbands, partners, or ex-partners. Elderly people who are mistreated by their sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, due to inheritance, and victims of peer violence in schools occasionally call the line as victims. In most cases, the victims are unemployed and financially dependent on the abuser, who abuses and constantly harasses the victim, psychologically and economically, and often the children of the victims also suffer. Unemployment, the difficult economic situation of the victims, lack of opportunity for financial independence, etc. are the main reasons for not reporting the violence. More than 80% of victims require personal contact with a counselor-psychologist and a lawyer and often come directly to the premises of this SOS helpline” (United Nations Population Fund).

However, the availability and location of the shelters also accentuate the necessity of extending these services to victims in other cities since the service and such support are available only in Skopje, which poses logistics/transport challenges for the victims, who are often financially dependent and not able to reach the centers for social care or shelters without help. Such lack of support infrastructure, alongside the tendency (of the environment, especially in the rural areas) to blame the victim, the shame of the victims, the fear of repeated violence, helplessness, and

lack of trust in institutions, hinder the proper identification of the scope of the issue since many cases of domestic violence go unreported and unaccounted for.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, North Macedonia faces a complex set of social challenges that persist despite recent advancements in the employment and healthcare sectors. While unemployment has decreased, especially among the general population, youth unemployment remains critically high, contributing to an ongoing “brain drain” that undermines the country’s potential for sustained economic growth and innovation. This trend of skilled workers emigrating in search of better opportunities limits North Macedonia's industrial development, creates skill gaps in key sectors, and dissuades foreign investment, which further hinders economic progress.

Moreover, gender disparities in economic opportunities, particularly in rural areas where traditional norms prevail, mean that women continue to face substantial barriers to employment, resulting in economic imbalances that disadvantage both individuals and the broader economy. Efforts to close this gender gap are essential, not only to ensure equity but also to fully harness the talent and productivity of the entire workforce.

Mental health issues have also emerged as a growing concern, especially among younger populations who face rising levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Limited resources, a shortage of qualified mental health professionals, and the prevailing stigma surrounding mental health conditions contribute to significant gaps in care. Access to mental health services is particularly challenging in rural areas, where medical infrastructure is often lacking and individuals are less likely to seek help. This scarcity of support exacerbates health inequalities and impacts quality of life, social stability, and economic productivity.

Domestic violence remains a critical issue, with numerous cases going unreported due to shame, fear, and limited access to support services. Although urban areas have seen improvements in support initiatives for victims, rural communities remain significantly underserved, with few centers for assistance and safe shelters. The limited infrastructure for domestic violence support, particularly in non-urban areas, places victims in highly vulnerable situations, often leaving them with no option but to stay with their abusers.

To address these pressing social challenges, North Macedonia will need a multi-faceted, long-term approach that includes increased investment in social services, targeted resource allocation to underserved areas, and robust policies that address the underlying inequalities. Addressing youth unemployment through skill development programs, entrepreneurship initiatives, and incentives to retain skilled workers is crucial. Expanding mental health services by training more healthcare providers, raising awareness, and reducing stigma can improve overall societal well-being. Additionally, enhancing the infrastructure and reach of domestic violence support

systems, particularly in rural areas, will be vital for providing safety and stability to those affected.

A comprehensive approach that combines expanded employment opportunities, equitable access to healthcare, strong protections against violence, and policies to empower marginalized groups is essential to foster a stable, equitable, and prosperous society in North Macedonia. Such an approach will not only improve individual lives but will also contribute to regional stability and strengthen North Macedonia's role as a key player in the Balkans.

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## ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LIFE SATISFACTION IN ADOLESCENTS FROM NORTH MACEDONIA

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### Abstract:

This cross-sectional study examined the association between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction among adolescents in North Macedonia. The sample comprised 359 secondary school students drawn from different educational tracks. Emotional intelligence was assessed using the Emotional Intelligence Scale, while life satisfaction was measured with the Satisfaction With Life Scale. Reliability analysis indicated acceptable internal consistency for the instruments (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .72$ ). Descriptive analyses revealed greater variability in life satisfaction scores, whereas emotional intelligence appeared relatively stable across the sample. Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated a weak negative relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction, which was not statistically significant. Gender-based analyses showed that male students reported higher levels of life satisfaction, while female students exhibited higher emotional intelligence. Additional group comparisons indicated that differences related to school type, place of residence, and perceived economic status were primarily associated with life satisfaction rather than emotional intelligence. No significant differences were observed across academic year for either variable. Overall, the findings suggest that emotional intelligence and life satisfaction operate as largely independent constructs during adolescence within this context. These results contribute to the limited empirical evidence from North Macedonia and underscore the importance of considering demographic and contextual factors when examining adolescent well-being.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, adolescents, gender differences, socioeconomic status

## Introduction

Adolescence represents a critical developmental period characterized by pronounced emotional, cognitive, and social changes with lasting implications for psychological well-being. Within this context, emotional intelligence (EI)—commonly defined as the capacity to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions—has received increasing attention as a factor contributing to adaptive functioning and social competence during youth.<sup>8</sup> Life satisfaction, reflecting individuals' cognitive evaluation of their overall quality of life, serves as a key indicator of subjective well-being in adolescence.<sup>9</sup> Prior research has explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction; however, findings remain mixed, ranging from positive to weak or non-significant associations.<sup>10,11</sup> These inconsistencies suggest that the relationship may be influenced by developmental, contextual, and demographic factors.<sup>12</sup> Despite a growing body of international research on emotional intelligence and adolescent well-being, empirical investigations within the North Macedonian context remain limited,<sup>13</sup> and the extent to which existing findings generalize to local adolescent populations has not been sufficiently established. In light of this limited region-specific evidence and the variability observed in prior findings, further empirical investigation is warranted. The present study addresses this gap by examining the association between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction among secondary school students in North Macedonia, while also considering differences across key demographic characteristics.

## Purpose of the Study

This study aims to advance empirical understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and life satisfaction during adolescence, a developmental phase marked by emotional variability and identity formation. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the association between EI and life satisfaction;
2. Evaluate the predictive role of EI in relation to subjective well-being; and
3. Investigate demographic differences across gender, academic track, socioeconomic status, place of residence, and academic year.

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By addressing limited region-specific evidence, the study contributes to empirical knowledge regarding adolescent well-being in North Macedonia.

Hypotheses:

1. H1: There is a correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and life satisfaction among adolescents.
2. H2: Gender differences exist in emotional intelligence and life satisfaction, with females expected to score higher in EI and males expected to report higher life satisfaction.
3. H3: Demographic factors, including socioeconomic status, place of residence, and academic year, influence adolescents' life satisfaction and emotional intelligence.

## Methodology

A quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational design was employed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and life satisfaction among adolescents. Data were collected in September 2024 using a convenience sampling method from students enrolled in Gymnasium, Economics, and Medical secondary programs in North Macedonia, ensuring both academic and socio-demographic diversity. Participants (aged 14–19 years) completed the Emotional Intelligence Scale and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) during regular class sessions. To minimize potential distractions and maximize attention, questionnaires were administered at the beginning of the lesson. Participants were fully informed about the study aims and procedures and were given opportunities to clarify any questions prior to participation. Potential confounding variables, including socioeconomic status, place of residence, and academic year, were recorded and controlled in subsequent analyses. Ethical standards were strictly observed, ensuring anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Data were analyzed using SPSS, including descriptive statistics, reliability testing (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ), normality assessments, Pearson correlation, independent-samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and regression analysis, with significance set at  $p < .05$ . This methodological framework provides a rigorous, transparent, and context-sensitive approach to examining the interplay between EI, life satisfaction, and demographic factors among adolescents.

## Findings and Results

Pearson correlation revealed a weak, non-significant negative relationship between EI and life satisfaction ( $r = -0.036$ ,  $p = 0.494$ ), indicating H1 was not supported. Females showed slightly higher EI ( $M = 53.60$ ,  $SD = 6.47$ ) than males ( $M = 52.74$ ), while males reported higher life satisfaction ( $M = 83.50$ ,  $SD = 11.37$ ), supporting H2. EI differed across fields of study ( $F(2,356) = 4.48$ ,  $p = .01$ ), with medical students scoring higher; life satisfaction did not differ significantly ( $F(2,356) = 1.14$ ,  $p = .321$ ). Socioeconomic status affected life satisfaction ( $F(3,355) = 10.576$ ,  $p < .001$ ) but not EI ( $F(3,355) = 0.543$ ,  $p = .653$ ). Place of residence influenced life satisfaction ( $F(1,357) = 7.130$ ,  $p = .005$ ), with rural students scoring higher; no effect on EI ( $F(1,357) =$

0.591,  $p = .442$ ). Academic year showed no significant effects on EI or life satisfaction. Descriptive statistics indicated higher variability in life satisfaction ( $M = 81.40$ ,  $SD = 12.261$ ) than EI ( $M = 53.23$ ,  $SD = 6.831$ ). EI scale reliability was acceptable (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.720$ ).

**Table 1. Reliability Statistics (Cronbach's Alpha)**

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.720	3

Reliability analysis indicated satisfactory internal consistency for the emotional intelligence scale, with Cronbach's alpha of  $\alpha = .720$ , suggesting acceptable internal coherence among the questionnaire items.

**Table 2. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test for Study Variables in the Adolescent Population**

The results indicate that most of the primary variables were approximately normally distributed, with  $p$ -values  $> .05$  for Emotional Intelligence, Emotion Appraisal and Expression, Use of Emotions, and Life Satisfaction. Conversely, the Regulation and Management of Emotions component exhibited a  $p$ -value  $< .05$ , suggesting a deviation from normality.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables in the Adolescent Population**

Descriptive Statistics			
Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Life Satisfaction (SWLS)	81.40	12.261	359
Emotional Intelligence	53.23	6.831	359

Adolescents in the study reported generally high levels of Life Satisfaction ( $M = 81.40$ ) with considerable variability among individuals ( $SD = 12.261$ ). Meanwhile, Emotional Intelligence showed a lower mean ( $M = 53.23$ ) and smaller variability ( $SD = 6.831$ ), indicating more consistent responses. Life Satisfaction values are more widely distributed, whereas Emotional Intelligence scores are relatively stable among participants.

**Table 4. Pearson Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction**

Correlations			
		Life Satisfaction	Emotional Intelligence
Life Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	-.036
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.494
	N	359	359

Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	-.036	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.494	
	N	359	359

The analysis revealed a weak and non-significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and life satisfaction ( $r = -0.036$ ,  $p = 0.494$ ), indicating that EI did not significantly predict subjective well-being in the present sample.

**Table 5. Gender Differences in Life Satisfaction and Emotional Intelligence**

Females exhibited a slightly higher level of emotional intelligence ( $M = 53.60$ ,  $SD = 6.47$ ) compared to males ( $M = 52.74$ ), whereas males reported a higher mean level of life satisfaction ( $M = 83.50$ ,  $SD = 11.37$ ) compared to females ( $M = 79.83$ ). Although the differences are modest, they indicate a clear trend: females show a slight advantage in emotional intelligence, while males report higher subjective well-being.

**Table 6. ANOVA Test for Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction in Adolescents**

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Life Satisfaction	Between Groups	342.548	2	171.274	1.140	.321
	Within Groups	53477.285	356	150.217		
	Total	53819.833	358			
Emotional Intelligence	Between Groups	410.274	2	205.137	4.482	.001
	Within Groups	16293.537	356	45.768		
	Total	16703.811	358			

Descriptive analyses indicated variability across study fields; however, ANOVA results demonstrated that these differences were statistically significant only for Emotional Intelligence ( $F(2,356) = 4.48$ ,  $p = .01$ ), whereas no significant differences were detected for Life Satisfaction ( $F(2,356) = 1.14$ ,  $p = .321$ ). This pattern suggests that academic program is associated with modest variation in emotional intelligence but not with subjective well-being among adolescents.

**Table 7. ANOVA Test for the Impact of Economic Status on Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction in Adolescents**

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Life Satisfaction	Between Groups	4415.650	3	1471.883	10.576	.000
	Within Groups	49404.183	355	139.167		

	Total	53819.833	358			
Emotional Intelligence	Between Groups	76.239	3	25.413	.543	.653
	Within Groups	16627.571	355	46.838		
	Total	16703.811	358			

ANOVA analyses indicated a statistically significant effect of economic status on Life Satisfaction ( $F(3,355) = 10.576, p < 0.001$ ), with adolescents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds reporting greater subjective well-being. In contrast, Emotional Intelligence did not vary significantly across economic groups ( $F(3,355) = 0.543, p = 0.653$ ), suggesting relative stability of EI irrespective of financial background.

**Table 8. ANOVA for the Impact of Place of Residence on Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction in Adolescents**

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Life Satisfaction	Between Groups	1053.847	1	1053.847	7.130	.005
	Within Groups	52765.986	357	147.804		
	Total	53819.833	358			
Emotional Intelligence	Between Groups	27.614	1	27.614	.591	.442
	Within Groups	16676.197	357	46.712		
	Total	16703.811	358			

ANOVA results indicated a statistically significant effect of place of residence on Life Satisfaction ( $F(1,357) = 7.130, p = .005$ ), with adolescents residing in rural areas reporting higher subjective well-being ( $M = 83.95$ ) than their urban peers ( $M = 78.51$ ). No significant differences were observed for Emotional Intelligence across residential settings ( $F(1,357) = 0.591, p = .442$ ), suggesting relative stability of EI irrespective of urban or rural residence.

**Table 9. ANOVA for the Impact of Academic Year (Age) on Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction in Adolescents**

ANOVA results revealed no statistically significant differences in Life Satisfaction ( $F(5,353) = 2.185, p = .055$ ) or Emotional Intelligence ( $F(5,353) = 0.514, p = .766$ ) across academic years, indicating that variations in age/grade level did not meaningfully affect either construct in this sample. Consequently, Hypothesis 3 regarding the influence of academic year is not supported.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

The present study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and life satisfaction (LS) in adolescents, considering demographic variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, place of residence, and academic year.[1][1]**Error! Reference source not f**

**ound.** Pearson correlation analysis revealed a weak, negative, and non-significant association between EI and LS ( $r = -0.036$ ,  $p = 0.494$ ), indicating that EI does not directly predict adolescent subjective well-being. Gender, socioeconomic status, and residential context influenced LS, whereas EI remained relatively stable.**Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.** These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the contextual dependence of life satisfaction, where environmental and demographic factors often exert stronger effects than individual emotional competencies.[1]**Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.** Although EI is conceptually central to emotional regulation and adaptive functioning, its direct effect on life satisfaction appears limited in this sample, echoing evidence suggesting that mediating psychosocial factors—such as perceived stress, family support, and peer relationships—play a significant role in adolescent well-being.**Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.** Educational programs should emphasize emotional awareness, regulation, and resilience, not as immediate tools to enhance LS, but as foundational competencies supporting long-term psychological adaptation. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs with heterogeneous samples to investigate indirect pathways linking EI, demographic variables, and adolescent well-being.[1]**Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.**

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