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**EXPLORING THE ROMANIAN STUDENTS' AWARENESS AND
ATTITUDES TOWARDS GLOBALIZATION**

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Abstract

The study described in this paper aimed to estimate the level of awareness and the attitudes of the Romanian students towards globalization, in connection with the alarming rates of emigration among holders of tertiary education recorded in the past decade in Romania. To this purpose, we designed a 19 item questionnaire, and applied it to a sample of 159 volunteers (67 females, 92 males, aged 20-23), all students in the second and third years of the study program of the Department of Computer and Information Technology. Besides measuring the students' attitudes and their perception of the four dimensions (economic, political, ecological, and cultural) of globalization, we included several additional items intended to evaluate the awareness regarding the role of the transnational corporations and of the ICT in globalization. The results revealed that the students have mostly positive attitudes towards globalization, but these are based on a superficial and cliché-istic understanding of the actual meaning and implications of globalization. As 42% of the respondents report that they plan to find jobs abroad after graduation, chances are that they might become innocent and vulnerable players in game controlled by unfathomable interests.

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1. Introduction

By fusing the national markets into a single global market, globalization not only creates unprecedented competitive pressures at the economic level, but also affects individuals and whole societies from cultural, political and ecological perspectives (Steger, 2009). Since the available resources at any given time are roughly constant, the tough competition makes globalization a zero sum game wherein there are winners and losers. As a direct result of this process, in the past decades, Romania lost 3.5 million people through emigration (McGrath, 2017) - approximately 17% of the total population - most of them skilled workers, and holders of university degrees.

In this study we tried to find out to what extent the Romanian students understand globalization, and whether a positive attitude towards globalization correlates with their intention to find jobs in another country after graduation.

1.1. A note on the terminology

Al-Rodhan and Stoudmann (2006) counted no less than 114 definitions of globalization, and many others have been proposed since 2006. For the limited scope of this paper, we will adopt the terminology proposed by Steger (2009), who uses the term **globality** "*to signify a social condition characterized by tight global economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnections and flows that make most of the currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant.*" And "**globalization** *applies to a set of social processes that appear to transform our present social condition of weakening nationality into one of globality.*"

Steger (2009) identifies 4 dimensions of the globalization: economic, political, ecological, and cultural. Though the processes associated with globalization are not new (their historical roots extent back to the 16th century, in the early stages of colonialism), there are undoubtedly certain new elements specific for the past decades. Among these, we count the massive expansion of transnational corporations (TNCs), the new communication technologies, and the Internet.

1.2. What's this got to do with education

Altbach (2015) noted that the education - and especially the higher education - became a commercial product, which is subject to the rules of the market. Assuming the role of "knowledge traders", some universities even adopted the business model of the transnational corporations, by opening subsidiaries and branches in distant countries.

On the other hand, the output of the education system is directly delivered into another highly competitive global market: the labour market. As a result, numerous highly skilled workers migrate from developing countries towards high income countries, thus exacerbating the competition in the host countries, and depriving the donor countries from the benefit of the return on investment in their education (this process is called "brain drain" (Gibson & McKenzie, 2011).

Finally, we should note that globalization itself is a topic of study, and the design of the educational content for this is still an open question (Selander, 2008).

2. Problem Statement

A simple search on the Web of Science for articles published between 2000 and 2018, with the topic "globalization" returns over 45,000 results. However, this huge interest for the theoretical aspects of globalization is only backed by very few empirical studies regarding the perception and the attitudes towards globalization (Chui, 2014; Myers, 2010; Suplico, 2008; Zollinger, 2015). This study is an attempt to fill this gap by providing experimental data collected on a sample of Romanian students.

3. Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Is it possible to create a psychometric scale for replicable measurements of the attitudes towards globalization?
2. Is there any correlation between the positive attitude towards globalization and the students' intentions to work abroad after graduation?
3. What is the level of awareness and understanding of the processes related to globalization among the respondents?

4. Purpose of the Study

The present study is consistent with our previous efforts to develop simple assessment tools usable in the educational environment (Susnea & Vasiliu, 2016), and to understand why Romania ranks the last among the EU member states in what concerns education and research (Susnea, 2014).

5. Research Methods

Basically, our experiment consisted in designing a questionnaire with 19 items aimed to evaluate the awareness and the attitudes of the subjects towards globalization. A subset of 10 items was selected, based on considerations of internal consistency, as a psychometric measure of positive attitudes towards globalization.

A number of 159 volunteers (67 females, 92 males, aged 20-23), all students in the second and third years of the study program of the Department of Computer and Information Technology of the University "Dunarea de Jos" of Galati, Romania filled the questionnaires and returned them via email.

No other demographic data was collected besides the age and gender of the respondents.

5.1. The structure of the questionnaire

The general structure of the questionnaire was partly inspired by the work of Zollinger et al (2015), mainly in what concerns the idea of including specific awareness/attitude items for each of the dimensions of globalization (economic, political, ecological, and cultural). However, it was not our intention to replicate the study of Zollinger; we were more interested in creating a scale capable to measure/quantify the positive attitudes towards globalization in the educational environment, and use it to get a better insight on the beliefs and motivations of the students who plan to find jobs abroad after graduation.

The scale has 10 items consisting in statement

s as shown in Table 1, each having 5 possible responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Table 01. The attitudes towards globalization scale AGS

Item #	Item statement
I4	Human activity has a negative impact on the global environment, and is the cause of the climate changes.
I11	In order to prevent an environmental disaster, global measures and enforcement actions are urgently needed.
I5	The accession to the European Union was a major positive turning point for Romania.
I7	It is good to have worldwide organizations aimed at meeting the needs and guarding the rights of citizens regardless of country borders.
I8	Knowledge of one or more foreign languages is an essential skill in today's world.
I9	Internet is the most important factor in creating a global, borderless society.
I12	As globalization leads to increased international trade between countries, the quality of life of the majority of citizens in the trading countries also improves.
I13	Multinational corporations are important factors of progress and prosperity for the countries where they operate.
I15	Globalization is a process of global cultural fusion due to migration and better communication means.
I1	Globalization is a natural process of increased interaction and integration between countries, economic entities, and people, mainly determined by the progress in information technology.

A series of 9 additional items were included in the questionnaire, as shown in Table 2.

Table 02. Additional items in the questionnaire

Item #	Item statement
I16	I am planning to find a job in a foreign country after graduation.
I19	I enjoy travelling abroad.
I18	I would like to know more about the factors and consequences of globalization, and I would welcome a faculty course about these topics.
I3	Wearing a burqa is as natural as wearing a mini skirt.
I6	I believe that the USA should build the "Tump wall" along the Mexican border.
I17	I believe that the migration of people from North Africa and Middle East is a serious issue for the European Union.
I10	There is nothing really new about globalization - similar processes occurred in history, for example, in the Roman or British Empires, or along the Silk Road.
I14	Globalization is a system of practices and policies created by the transnational corporations and aimed to give them free access to a global market.
I2	Bitcoin is, most likely, the currency of the future.

6. Findings

The responses were collected by means of a 5 point Likert scale encoded and scored as follows: 1 - I totally disagree, 2 - I mostly disagree, 3 - I am neutral, neither agree nor disagree, 4 - I mostly agree, 5 - I totally agree with the statement formulated in the text of the item. The results are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 03. Students' attitudes towards globalization scale N=159

Item#	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 neither agree nor disagree	4 agree	5 strongly agree
I4	1(%)	5(%)	11(%)	28(%)	55(%)
I11	1(%)	6(%)	14(%)	41(%)	38(%)
I5	1(%)	8(%)	23(%)	35(%)	33(%)
I7	2(%)	2(%)	4(%)	18(%)	74(%)
I8	1(%)	2(%)	5(%)	18(%)	74(%)
I9	1(%)	7(%)	13(%)	41(%)	38(%)
I12	2(%)	11(%)	26(%)	44(%)	17(%)
I13	3(%)	9(%)	46(%)	33(%)	9(%)
I15	1%	12%	28%	43%	16%
I1	1%	5%	25%	50%	19%

Table 04. Responses to the additional items N=159

Item#	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 neither agree nor disagree	4 agree	5 strongly agree
I16	6%	15%	37%	22%	20%
I19	2%	2%	11%	24%	61%
I18	4%	10%	26%	25%	35%
I3	15%	26%	43%	10%	6%
I6	37%	18%	26%	13%	6%
I17	6%	21%	37%	21%	15%
I10	2%	19%	48%	25%	6%
I14	2%	10%	46%	33%	9%
I2	6%	18%	30%	26%	20%

We computed the Cronbach internal consistency quotient for the scale listed in Table 1, at 0.7363, which is in the range of acceptable values (see Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). By simply summing the responses to each item, we derived a Globalization Attitudes Quotient GAQ, with possible values in the interval [10,50]. The histograms of the values of GAQ for female, and male respondents (see figure 1) show that female students have slightly more positive attitudes towards globalization than the male students.

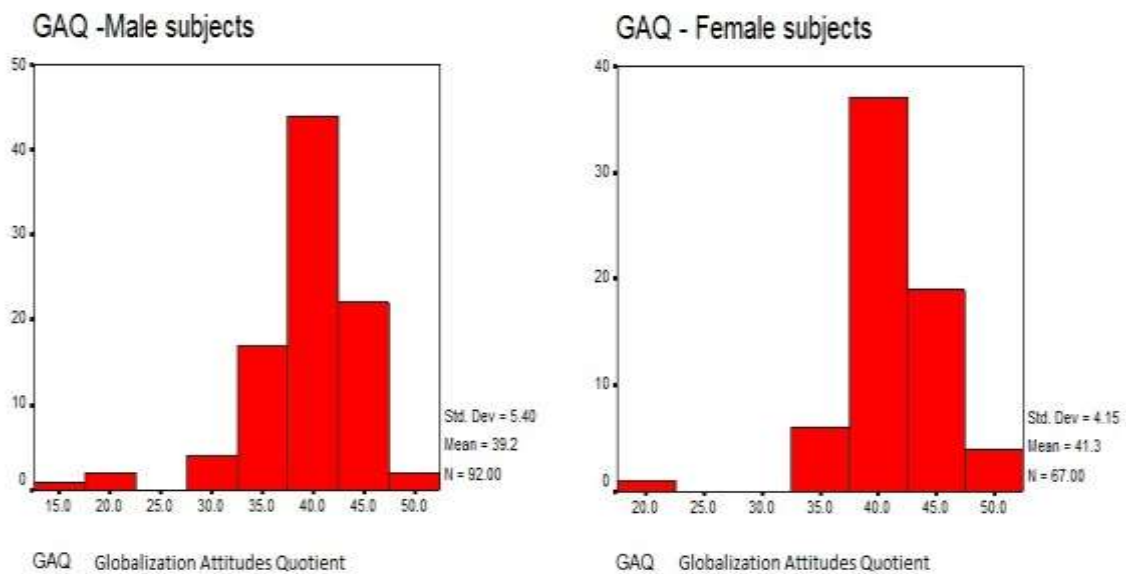


Figure 01. The histograms for the Globalization Attitudes Quotients for male and female subjects

This correlates with the fact that 47% of the female respondents plan to find a job in another country after graduation, compared to only 37% male students (item I16). This is also consistent with the data about emigration published by the Romanian Institute for Statistics (INS, 2014), which indicate that the number of Romanian female emigrants is significantly higher than the number of male emigrants.

For the entire sample of 159 students, 42% agree, or strongly agree with the statement that they plan to find a job abroad after graduation. The Pearson correlation quotient between GAQ and I16 was $r=0.288$, with $p<0.001$ for the whole sample. This suggests that an overall positive attitude towards globalization may be a factor in the decision to emigrate or just work abroad.

However, the positive attitudes are not necessarily based on a solid understanding of the processes related to globalization. For example, the responses to item I10 (concerning the historical roots of globalization) are very close to the normal distribution, i.e. they are almost random. Similarly, we found no significant correlation between GAQ scores and cultural tolerance (item I3, regarding wearing burqa). Also, the problem of the Mexican migration in the USA, was better reflected in the responses of the students (item I6), than the migration in Europe (item I17). Finally, 60% of the respondents declare that they are interested to find out more on globalization, and they would welcome a faculty course on these topics (item I18).

7. Conclusion

.With respect to the research questions formulated above, we found a weak but significant correlation between positive attitudes towards globalization (as measured with the proposed scale) and the intention of the students to work abroad after graduation. However, the positive attitudes are not supported by a solid understanding of the processes involved in globalization. Considering this, and the fact that 60% of the participants in our study declared that they would welcome a faculty course on globalization, we suggest that certain specific educational initiatives aimed to clarify all the aspects of the process of globalization might be a simple and effective means to dampen the alarming rate of emigration

of the skilled workers from Romania. Further research is certainly needed to verify the hypotheses of this study in different economic and cultural contexts, and for the development of the educational content aimed to improve the students' awareness on globalization.

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