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Editorial

Dear readers,

You are holding in your hands the first issue of the journal *Health & Humanity*, created with the ambition to bridge three fields that are closely and inseparably interconnected in today's world—healthcare, social sciences, and the humanities. Our aim is to provide a professional yet open space for scholarly discussion, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary dialogue on topics that shape the quality of human life in its biological, psychological, social, and cultural dimensions.

Health can no longer be understood merely as the absence of disease. It is the result of a complex interaction of medical knowledge, social determinants of health, psychological factors, and cultural and societal values. Likewise, the social sciences and humanities play an increasingly important role in understanding healthcare practice, contributing to a holistic view of the patient as a unique individual rather than merely a bearer of a diagnosis.

The journal *Health & Humanity* aims to publish original scientific studies, review articles, case reports, analytical contributions, and practice-based reflections that transcend disciplinary boundaries. We believe that an interdisciplinary approach is a key tool for gaining a deeper understanding of the complex challenges faced by contemporary society—from population ageing and mental health, to social inequalities, and the ethical questions of modern medicine and public policy.

The significance and contribution of the journal to science and practice lies primarily in its ability to connect theoretical knowledge with its practical application. For the scientific community, it provides a platform for presenting research findings that reflect real-world health and social problems in their full complexity. At the same time, it fosters the development of new interdisciplinary approaches and methodological frameworks that go beyond the traditional boundaries of individual disciplines.

This first issue marks a symbolic beginning of this journey. It presents a diverse range of perspectives from authors in both academic and practical settings and opens discussions that are not only professionally relevant but also profoundly human.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all authors, reviewers, and collaborators who contributed to the preparation of this issue. We also thank you, the readers, for joining this scholarly conversation. We hope that *Health & Humanity* will become a stable platform connecting science with practice, knowledge with humanity, and individual disciplines into a meaningful whole.

The Editorial Board
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De-Escalation of Aggressive Behavior and Perceptions of Cyberbullying as a Form of School Violence: Differences by School Type and Municipality Size

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the issue of de-escalating aggressive behavior among students and the perception of cyberbullying as a form of school violence in the context of school type and community size. The aim of the paper was to examine the awareness of school teaching and support staff regarding de-escalation techniques and to identify differences in the perception of cyberbullying among respondents working in elementary and secondary schools. The research was conducted as a quantitative cross-sectional study with a comparative focus on a sample of 173 respondents from selected educational institutions in the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region. Data were collected using an original questionnaire and analyzed using the chi-square test of independence. The results confirmed a lower level of awareness regarding de-escalation and a lack of training in this area among respondents working in smaller municipalities. At the same time, it was confirmed that respondents from secondary schools perceive cyberbullying as a significant and frequent form of school violence with an impact on student behavior.

Keywords: de-escalation, aggressive pupil behavior, cyberbullying, school violence, prevention, school environment

Introduction

Aggressive behavior among pupils and its various forms represent a serious pedagogical, social, and preventive issue in the school environment. Particular attention is currently required not only for traditional forms of violence among pupils, but also for cyberbullying, which, due to the development of digital communication, is becoming an increasingly significant form of school violence. Its effects are not limited to the online space but are also reflected in pupils’

behavior, classroom relationships, school climate, and the psychological well-being of individuals. In this context, the importance of professional preparedness of teaching and professional staff to manage conflict and risk situations is increasing. One of the relevant approaches is de-escalation, which represents a set of strategies aimed at reducing tension, preventing conflict escalation, and supporting safe communication. Despite its practical importance, it remains questionable to what extent school staff are familiar with this concept and its techniques, especially in schools located outside larger cities. The aim of this paper is to examine the awareness of pedagogical and professional school staff regarding the de-escalation of aggressive behavior among pupils and their perception of cyberbullying as a form of school violence, in the context of school type and municipality size.

The following hypotheses were established:

H1: Respondents working in school institutions in municipalities smaller than regional and district cities do not have sufficient awareness of the concept of de-escalation and its techniques and have not undergone training in the prevention of aggressive pupil behavior.

H2: Respondents working in secondary schools consider cyberbullying to be the type of violence with the most significant impact on pupils' behavior and the most frequently occurring form of violence in schools compared to respondents working in primary schools.

Theoretical Foundations

In the school environment, we are increasingly encountering various forms of risky, problematic, and aggressive behavior among students that undermine the school's safe atmosphere and negatively impact the educational process. This behavior manifests itself across a wide spectrum—ranging from verbal and physical aggression, through bullying, cyberbullying, and violations of school rules, to more serious sociopathological phenomena (Usoltseva, 2020; Niklová & Šajgalová, 2016; Bellová, 2024; Emmerová, 2025; Emmerová, 2022). Aggressive behavior can be understood as hostile conduct associated with an effort to assert oneself at the expense of another, often through violence or intimidation, affecting both classmates and teachers (Niklová & Šajgalová, 2016; Emmerová et al., 2023; Jančiauskas, 2020). In elementary and secondary school settings, the occurrence of aggression and bullying has been repeatedly confirmed even among younger students, with more complex forms of problematic behavior emerging as students grow older (Emmerová, 2025; Emmerová, 2022; Jančiauskas, 2020). A significant portion of the spectrum of school violence is represented by bullying, which includes physical, verbal, psychological, social, and online forms of attacks and can take the form of both direct and indirect violence (Zobec & Hmelak, 2024; Butkevich, 2024; Bourou et al., 2024). In recent years, research and practice have focused significantly on cyberbullying, i.e., intentional and repeated harm inflicted through information and communication technologies, particularly social media, online messengers, and mobile devices (Dulovics, 2024; Bellová, 2024; Gallegos et al., 2025; Emmerová, 2023; Rakisheva et al., 2023). Cyberbullying is characterized by persistence, potential anonymity, and a wide audience, and can have serious psychological, social, and educational consequences for the victim—ranging from declining academic performance to anxiety and depression, and even the risk of

suicide (Bellová, 2024; Gallegos et al., 2025; Rakisheva et al., 2023). Students' risky online behavior (cyberaggression, participation in dangerous online challenges) is becoming an integral part of the issue of school violence and school safety. Empirical findings from the Slovak context confirm the presence of cyberbullies as early as in upper elementary school, with a significant proportion of students also participating in risky online challenges (Dulovics, 2024). Similarly, research points to an increase in cyberaggression and cyberbullying among elementary and secondary school students, which places new demands on school prevention programs and students' digital literacy (Bellová, 2024; Gallegos et al., 2025; Emmerová, 2023). Cyberbullying is closely linked to the overall process of socialization in the online environment, where virtual communication reduces immediate feedback and, in some adolescents, encourages socially unrestrained or aggressive behavior (Rakishova et al., 2023). In addition to peer aggression and bullying among students, aggressive behavior by students toward teachers is also a serious problem, which can take the form of verbal, nonverbal, physical, threatening, or bullying behavior (Niklová & Šajgalová, 2016; Emmerová et al., 2023). Research from the Slovak context shows that teachers primarily encounter verbal aggression, belittling, threats, and humiliation, which are linked to the erosion of teacher authority and shifts in societal attitudes toward school (Niklová & Šajgalová, 2016; Emmerová et al., 2023). Student aggression toward teachers is explained by a combination of several factors—students' personality characteristics, family environment and parenting styles, the school environment, and teacher-student communication (Niklová & Šajgalová, 2016; Emmerová et al., 2023; Ivaniushina & Alexandrov, 2022). As a key socialization institution, the school plays a significant role in building students' social skills, fostering cooperation, and developing empathy, assertiveness, and constructive conflict resolution—factors that can reduce the incidence of violent and aggressive behavior (Emmerová et al., 2023; Zemančíková, 2024; Ankudinova & Pimenova, 2025; Ivaniushina & Alexandrov, 2022). The prevention of risky and problematic student behavior is therefore considered an essential part of school life at all levels of education (Stachoň, 2019). Empirical findings from both Slovak and international research confirm that while a wide range of informational and theoretical activities exist in schools, practical preventive measures and systematic programs aimed at reducing aggression and deviance are often insufficient or rare (Usoltseva, 2020; Poling et al., 2019; Bourou et al., 2024; Belešová, 2024; Emmerová, 2022). Primary school teachers recognize the need for targeted and systematic prevention, point out the limited effectiveness of purely punitive responses (e.g., a lower conduct grade, “sending the student to the principal”), and emphasize the importance of comprehensive, long-term programs that foster a positive climate, collaborative communication, and student participation (Zemančíková, 2024; Belešová, 2024; Emmerová, 2023). In this context, the role of teachers and school staff is seen as crucial. Teachers are perceived as individuals who decisively influence school safety and climate—through their approach to rules, fairness, communication, and conflict resolution (Zobec & Hmelak, 2024; Poling et al., 2019; Ivaniushina & Alexandrov, 2022). Research on school climate suggests that clear and fair discipline, consistent rules, and the absence of humiliation or bullying by teachers are associated with lower levels of aggressive behavior among students (Poling et al., 2019; Butkevich, 2024; Ivaniushina & Alexandrov, 2022). Conversely, tolerance of violence, unfair treatment, or even aggression on the part of teachers may contribute to students' moral

disengagement and a higher acceptance of violence in peer relationships (Poling et al., 2019; Ivaniushina & Alexandrov, 2022; Jančiauskas, 2020).

At the same time, it appears that teachers themselves recognize the need for further training in behavior management, addressing problematic and aggressive student behavior, and implementing preventive and educational programs that promote a safe and inclusive classroom environment (Zemančíková, 2024; Belešová, 2024). In the online environment, prevention focuses on developing digital literacy, safe online behavior, and a culture of online communication, while schools should systematically respond to new forms of cyberbullying and online risks (Dulovics, 2024; Bellová, 2024; Gallegos et al., 2025; Emmerová, 2023; Rakishova et al., 2023). Strengthening students' mental health, building resilience, developing social-emotional competencies, and involving parents are emerging as essential pillars of successful prevention strategies in the area of (cyber)bullying and school violence (Usoltseva, 2020; Bourou et al., 2024; Gallegos et al., 2025; Emmerová, 2023; Rakisheva et al., 2023).

Methodology

The study was designed as a quantitative cross-sectional study with a comparative focus. The aim was to identify selected correlations between school type, town size, and perceptions of student aggressive behavior, with a particular emphasis on awareness of de-escalation and the perception of cyberbullying as a form of school violence. The research sample consisted of 173 employees of educational institutions in the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region. Respondents worked at elementary schools, special elementary schools, secondary vocational schools, and high schools. The study included both teaching and non-teaching school staff, particularly teachers, school psychologists, special education teachers, social workers, and career counselors. In terms of gender distribution, women accounted for 66% of the research sample and men for 34%. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed by the authors and administered online via the Google Forms platform. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items, 23 of which were closed-ended and 7 semi-closed-ended. In terms of content, it focused on assessing respondents' awareness of the concept of de-escalation and its techniques, their experiences with aggressive student behavior, their perception of the most significant and most frequently recurring forms of school violence, as well as the need for and preferences regarding further training in the area of de-escalation. The study examined independent variables, particularly the type of school, the size of the municipality, years of experience, and job category. The dependent variables included awareness of de-escalation, completion of training in the prevention of aggressive student behavior, perception of cyberbullying as a form of school violence, and assessment of its impact on student behavior. Descriptive and inferential methods were used for statistical data analysis. The basic characteristics of the research sample and respondents' answers were analyzed using absolute and relative frequencies. Relationships between the categorized variables were tested using the chi-square test of independence at a statistical significance level of $p < 0.05$. The data were processed in Microsoft Excel.

Results

H1: Respondents working in educational institutions in municipalities smaller than regional and district capitals lack sufficient awareness of the concept of de-escalation and its techniques, and have not received training in the prevention of aggressive behavior among students during their time in this sector.

Table 1 Results of the Test of Hypothesis 1 (A)

Results of the Test of Hypothesis 1 (A):	
Significance level	0,05
Degrees of freedp,	6
Calculated Chi-square value	3,48039 ⁻¹⁵
Table Chi-square value	12,59
Calculated Chi-square value < Table Chi-square value	
Verification of Hypothesis 1 (A)	

Source: own research

Table 2 Results of the Test of Hypothesis 1 (B)

Results of the Test of Hypothesis 1 (B):	
Significance level	0,05
Degrees of freedp,	4
Calculated Chi-square value	2,98309 ⁻⁷
Table Chi-square value	9,49
Calculated Chi-square value < Table Chi-square value	
Verification of Hypothesis 1 (B)	

Source: own research

In both cases of testing Hypothesis 1 (A and B), the calculated chi-square value is lower than its critical value, which confirms Hypothesis 1, thereby supporting the claim that respondents working in educational institutions in municipalities smaller than regional and district capitals do not have sufficient awareness of the concept of de-escalation and its techniques, and at the same time have not completed training in the prevention of aggressive student behavior during their time in this sector.

H2: Respondents working in secondary schools consider cyberbullying to be the type of violence that has the most significant impact on student behavior and is the most frequently occurring type of violence in school settings, compared to respondents working in elementary schools.

Table 3 Results of the Test of Hypothesis 2 (A)

Results of the Test of Hypothesis 2 (A):	
Significance level	0,05
Degrees of freedp,	12
Calculated Chi-square value	0,550072
Table Chi-square value	21,03
Calculated Chi-square value < Table Chi-square value	
Verification of Hypothesis 2 (A)	

Source: own research

Table 4 Results of the Test of Hypothesis 2 (B)

Results of the Test of Hypothesis 2 (B):	
Significance level	0,05
Degrees of freedp,	12
Calculated Chi-square value	0,178578
Table Chi-square value	21,03
Calculated Chi-square value < Table Chi-square value	
Verification of Hypothesis 2 (B)	

Source: own research

In both cases of testing Hypothesis 2 (A and B), the calculated chi-square value is lower than its critical value, which confirms Hypothesis 2, confirming the claim that respondents working in secondary schools consider cyberbullying to be the type of violence that has the most significant impact on student behavior and is the most frequently occurring type of violence in school settings, compared to respondents working in elementary schools.

Discussion

The results of our research confirmed two key hypotheses: (1) school staff in smaller municipalities have lower awareness of de-escalation and lack training in this area, and (2)

secondary school staff perceive cyberbullying as the most significant and most common type of school violence affecting student behavior. These findings are consistent with several international studies that point to persistent barriers in the prevention and intervention of school violence, particularly in the areas of cyberbullying and the preparedness of educational staff. Insufficient awareness of de-escalation and the lack of specialized training among teachers in smaller communities is a problem that recurs across countries. According to Lechner and Crăciun (2023), there are various types of attitudes among school staff toward the prevention of (cyber)bullying—ranging from reactive to proactive—with a lack of training, support from school leadership, and the availability of resources significantly influencing the willingness to actively address these situations. Similar conclusions have been drawn by other studies, which identified the need for systematic training of teachers not only in recognizing aggressive behavior but also in specific conflict de-escalation techniques (Piedra & Romero, 2025; Adey et al., 2025). Teachers often report low self-efficacy when intervening in the digital environment and request more practical training or case studies (Piedra & Romero, 2025; Adey et al., 2025). Our finding regarding the higher sensitivity of secondary school staff to the issue of cyberbullying corresponds with trends described in several systematic reviews. According to other studies, cyberbullying is more widespread starting in elementary school, but its prevalence increases with students' age; at the same time, it has significant psychosocial consequences not only for victims but also for perpetrators and bystanders (Chicote-Beato et al., 2024; Evangelio et al., 2021). Smith et al. (2008) point out that although cyberbullying is less common than traditional forms of bullying, its impact is often just as severe or even more so—particularly due to the anonymity of the perpetrators, the unlimited time and space for attacks, and the difficulty in detecting them. Furthermore, research shows a strong link between traditional bullying and cyberbullying—students often assume the same roles (victim/bully) in both environments (Evangelio et al., 2021; Rodríguez-Álvarez et al., 2021). The school context is also an important factor: Cabrera et al. (2022) found that differences between rural and urban schools are reflected more in the forms of violence than in its overall prevalence; for example, verbal or social aggression among classmates is more common in rural schools, while physical violence dominates in urban settings. Our research has shown that it is the size of the community that influences access to de-escalation education—which may be a consequence of the limited capacity of small schools or weaker institutional support. From a prevention perspective, the so-called “whole-school approach”—a comprehensive strategy involving all school stakeholders, including parents—has proven to be the most effective (Tozzo et al., 2022; Cantone et al., 2015). Programs such as KiVa or UPRIGHT have proven effective in reducing the incidence of (cyber)bullying and improving students' mental well-being (Gabrielli et al., 2021; Cantone et al., 2015). However, a key element of success is the regularity of interventions, their adaptation to the local context, and the long-term sustainability of activities (Chicote-Beato et al., 2024; Gabrielli et al., 2021; Polanin et al., 2021). Meta-analyses by Polanin et al. (2021) confirm a statistically significant reduction in both perpetration and victimization of cyberbullying following program implementation, although the effect size is small to moderate. Another interesting finding is the importance of the school climate: a supportive school environment acts as a protective factor against both cyberbullying and traditional forms of violence (Li et al., 2024; Dorio et al., 2019). Li et al. (2024) demonstrated a negative correlation between the quality of the school climate and the prevalence of

cyberbullying; this effect was stronger among younger students than among high school students. Last but not least, it is important to mention the limitations of current interventions; many programs show short-term effects without long-term sustainability. Furthermore, there is a lack of a unified methodology for evaluating results across countries and school types (Cantone et al., 2015; Lim et al., 2022). Another significant problem remains the insufficient involvement of parents in preventive activities and the absence of clear protocols at the school level (Hendry et al., 2023; Castellanos et al., 2021). Our results thus confirm the need for targeted support for teachers, particularly in smaller communities—through systematic training on de-escalation strategies and digital risks—as well as the need for a comprehensive approach to cyberbullying in secondary schools. Effective prevention requires not only high-quality programs for students, but also ongoing training for teaching staff, support from school administrators, and collaboration with families.

Conclusion

The findings of this study confirm the importance of de-escalation as a professionally relevant tool for preventing and managing aggressive behavior among students in the school setting. At the same time, the findings indicate an uneven level of awareness among teaching and support staff regarding de-escalation techniques, with the context of schools operating in smaller communities appearing particularly problematic. The empirical findings further confirm that cyberbullying is perceived by respondents from secondary schools as a significant and recurring form of school violence with an impact on student behavior. This result underscores the need to address the digital dimension of school violence in preventive efforts, as well as in the training of teaching and support staff to handle conflict and high-risk situations. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that effective prevention of aggressive student behavior requires systematic training of school staff in de-escalation, strengthening competencies in addressing cyberbullying, and the development of comprehensive prevention strategies that take into account both the type of school and the size of the community.

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Bullying as a Sociopathological Phenomenon in the School Environment in the Context of the Home Environment in the Prešov District from the Perspective of Social Work

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Abstract

Bullying as a sociopathological phenomenon is a highly topical topic depending on events abroad and also in Slovakia, even more so when it takes place in a school environment, which should be safe for pupils and school employees. The aim of our work is to analyze bullying as a socio-pathological phenomenon in schools, from the perspective of the connection between the degree of influence of the student's home environment on his participation in violent behavior at school, whether in the position of victim or aggressor. The research is focused on examining the conditions for students of primary and secondary schools in the Prešov district, the results of which are compared with the results of the given problem that have already been implemented.

Keywords: bullying, sgression and aggressiveness, violent behaviour, pupils, school environment, schools

Introduction

Bullying is one of the most fundamental socio-pathological phenomena on a global scale of the entire society and does not avoid the space, which should be fundamentally one of the safest, where we regularly check our children with confidence every day in the trust of obtaining an education but also for the purpose of correct and conflict-free socialization for their further development and the correct direction of the future. Violent behavior and bullying are not phenomena, which are, however, unconditionally related directly in the environment of school facilities, but their emergence depends on a number of factors, where we believe that one of the fundamental is the environment from which students come to school, which is the family environment. We also believe that the perception of this issue from the perspective of social work is necessary for setting up correct and functional preventive programs, but at the same

time the social worker must have a professional place in solving the given school individually but also as a member of a multidisciplinary crisis intervention team, which is deployed to activity mainly in the event of extraordinary events at schools (Gerec, 2024).

The following hypotheses were established:

H1: Students from a dysfunctional home environment are more often found in the role of victims of bullying in the school environment than students from a functional home environment in the Prešov district.

H2: Students emotionally neglected in the home environment show a statistically significantly higher rate of involvement in bullying in the school environment through physical violence - direct than students with experience with other socio-pathological phenomena in the home environment.

Theoretical Foundations

The school environment is an environment that bullying and violent behavior of students does not avoid, and increasingly so from elementary schools. As Juhásová and Debnárová (2016) state, school is becoming an environment that provides enormous space for the development of risky behavior. The authors further state that among the most common manifestations that we can encounter in schools within the framework of aggressive behavior is the so-called actively expressed aggression, which can include manifestations such as vulgar expressions, insults, mockery or humiliation of persons, but also various physical fights in the form of pushing, beating and others, when manifestations such as truancy, fabrications or obstructions are not excluded. Legislative measures adopted within our country are gradually responding to the developments in society, and last year, the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic put into effect on February 1, 2025 Directive No. 1/2025 on the prevention and resolution of bullying of children, pupils in schools and school facilities, which specifically addresses the issue of bullying and, among other things, clearly defines the forms of bullying as well as its actors. The Directive precisely defines what manifestations are considered bullying and in Art. 2, para. 1 letter a) states that "bullying at school means harassment¹⁾ in the form of generally repeated unwanted behavior of the bully towards the bullied, which is motivated by the intention to gain superiority over the bullied, to humiliate the bullied or to obtain a forced position of power, as a result of which an intimidating, hostile, embarrassing, humiliating, humiliating, demeaning, intentionally hurtful or offensive environment is created or may be created in the form of verbal bullying, physical bullying, psychological bullying, emotional bullying, dangerous electronic harassment or dangerous stalking".

The author Jedlička (2018) states that there is increasing interest in terms such as aggression, hostility, or bullying, both among experts and the public, mainly due to their increasingly frequent occurrence in society. The author also states that this phenomenon has two perspectives, where on the one hand, society rejects aggression, wants to suppress it as much

as possible, but on the other hand, it tolerates vulgarity and various images of anger in public life and at the same time, society eagerly follows them in the media. Bernatová (2019) claims that the causes of bullying can also be on the side of the student who is bullied and has specific limitations or weaknesses that a potential aggressor can easily exploit. In this case, it can be external appearance, speech errors, bad or very good grades, as well as high IQ.

Prevention plays the most important role in preventing bullying. In this case, we are talking about primary prevention, when we are in a period when the bullying itself has not yet occurred. Such effective prevention should include various short-term or long-term educational programs that are aimed at creating a good climate in smaller groups or classes. They should include training in effective communication, but also proposing solutions to conflict situations with a view to possible de-escalation. The next stage of prevention is when bullying has already occurred and it is necessary to take effective measures to improve the situation.

Bendl (2023) states that secondary intervention includes, for example, early diagnosis, measures by teachers to prevent further violence. It is also necessary to direct efforts towards communication with the legal representatives of students, since the student's family environment plays a significant role in the manifestations of his behavior in the team and directly at school.

In 2025, on January 1, an amendment to Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on education and training (School Act) and on amendments and supplements to certain acts (hereinafter referred to as the "School Act"), which, according to Section 52b, anchors social work in schools and educational institutions as follows:

“(1) Social diagnostics, social counselling and other methods, techniques and procedures of social work may be carried out in schools and educational institutions. Activities under the first sentence may also be carried out in the field.

(2) Activities under paragraph 1 shall be carried out by a social worker who meets the conditions of professional competence under a special regulation.

(3) The performance of social work in schools and educational institutions is subject to a deductible provision.”

The aforementioned special regulations fall within the competence of Act No. 219/2014 Coll. on social work and on the conditions for the performance of certain professional activities in the field of social affairs and family and on amendments and supplements to certain acts, as amended.

"The family is usually characterized as a basic link in the structure of human society. A specific feature that distinguishes it from other social groups is its multifunctionality. The main ones are considered to be economic-security, biological-reproductive, emotional-protective and educational-socializing functions. They are understood as tasks that the family performs both towards its members and in relation to society." (Prucha et al., 2009, p. 487)

Currently, families are viewed differently than in the past, the number of single-parent families is increasing, as well as families with a toxic environment with the presence of various socio-pathological phenomena, families often struggle with a poor economic situation, but the promotion of gender equality also plays a significant role (Stachoň, 2010).

Paternáková (2015) states that many experts agree in their opinion when describing structural changes in the family, when they mainly point to the effort to democratize relationships, when there is a transformation from traditional family relationships, so-called patriarchal, when the dominant authority was the man and children were clearly subordinate to their parents, to specific modern relationships, which are primarily based on partnership and equality of all household members.

Author Kováčiková (2021, p. 59) adds that "the family is the foundation of our society and also the first and unique place where a child learns love, esteem and respect. It is a natural social group, the basic cell of society and unites people in intimate unity. However, blood kinship, family economic interests, as well as the upbringing of children do not yet sufficiently describe the essence of the family. The family is not able to exist in isolation from society, it is always part of a wider social group, whose norms, culture, traditions and views also affect the family."

Bullying Prevention and Resolution - A Guide for the School Environment (2025) distinguishes prevention at two levels as follows: "Prevention at a broader level represents a set of systemic measures that eliminate the occurrence of bullying or slow down its development. Preventive systemic measures also make it possible to detect signs of bullying in the early stages, which proves to be key in its resolution. Examples of prevention at a broader level include monitoring of remote parts of the school, support infrastructure, eliminating pedagogical "bad habits", e.g. teasing, corporal punishment, sexual innuendo, etc. Prevention at a narrower level is understood as the implementation of preventive activities - activities, programs, modules and other forms that are specifically directed at the issue of bullying." (<https://vudpap.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Prevencia-a-riesenie-sikanovania.pdf>)

We positively assess that the most recent document already mentioned, Directive MŠVVaM SR No. 1/2025 on the prevention and solution of bullying of children and pupils in schools and in school facilities, also devotes its attention to the prevention of bullying, where in Article 3, paragraph 3, it states that "the school principal is responsible for the prevention of bullying at school. The school principal ensures activities related to the prevention of bullying through the activities of pedagogical employees and professional employees" (Directive MŠVVaM SR No. 1/2025 on the prevention and solution of bullying of children and pupils in schools and in school facilities)

According to the document Prevention and resolution of bullying - a guide for the school environment by Lengyel et al. (2022) "the role of the intervention team members is also to ensure:

- gathering information about the incident,
- communicating with the victim, aggressor and witnesses,

- deciding on immediate measures that need to be taken towards the aggressor, victim, witnesses and other persons,
- informing the legal representatives of the victim, aggressor and other persons concerned,
- analyzing the reporting obligation towards the police and the body for social and legal protection of children and social guardianship (hereinafter referred to as "SPODaSK").

Methodology

The main objective of our final thesis is to analyze bullying as a socio-pathological phenomenon in the school environment in the context of the home environment in the Prešov district from the perspective of social work.

As a method of obtaining data from respondents, we chose a questionnaire survey, which consisted of a total of 23 questions, of which 5 were semi-closed. The questionnaire also consisted of an introductory part, where we stated and explained the reason for the questionnaire survey. In this part, we also informed and assured the respondents that the data from the questionnaire survey would not be extended beyond the results in our diploma thesis. We carried out hypothesis testing using the mathematical and statistical method Chi-square. This mathematical and statistical method has a certain dependence between the expected and found frequencies.

Results

Hypothesis H1 We tested the above hypothesis based on two questions:

Students from what environment are most often bullied at school?

In what role of bullying do students from dysfunctional families find themselves, in your opinion?

Table 1 Found Frequencies of Hypothesis H1

Found frequencies		
	Victim	Aggressor
From functional domestic violence	30	16
From dysfunctional domestic violence	11	42
I can't judge	5	20

Source: Own research

Table 2 Expected Frequencies of Hypothesis H 1

Expected frequencies		
	Victim	Aggressor
From functional domestic violence	17,1	28,9
From dysfunctional domestic violence	19,7	33,3
I can't judge	9,3	15,7

Source: Own research

Table 3 Results of Testing Hypothesis H1

Test results H1	
Degrees of freedom df	2
x ² Critical value	5,991
x ²	24,791

Source: Own research

Hypothesis H2 We tested the above hypothesis based on two questions:

What type of violence have you encountered at school?

Which pathological phenomena from the family environment do you think most influence the student's behavior at school?

Table 4 Found Frequencies of Hypothesis H2

Frequency found					
	Physical violence – direct	Physical violence using object – an	Psychological violence	Cyberbullying	Other
Emotional neglect	12	10	8	10	1
Poor economic situation of the family	8	1	1	2	0
Poor social background of the family	15	9	3	2	0
Addictions	6	4	5	7	0
Conflict	2	7	4	3	1
Iné	1	0	0	2	0

Source: Own research

Table 5 Expected Frequencies of Hypothesis H 2

Expected frequencies					
	Physical violence – direct	Physical violence using – an object	Psychological violence	Cyberbullying	Other
Emotional neglect	14,6	10,3	6,9	8,6	0,7
Poor economic situation of the family	4,3	3	2	2,5	0,2
Poor social background of the family	10,3	7,3	4,9	6,1	0,5
Addictions	7,8	5,5	3,7	4,6	0,4
Conflict	6	4,3	2,9	3,6	0,3
Iné	1,1	0,8	0,5	0,6	0,1

Source: Own research

Table 6 Results of testing the hypothesis H2

Test results H2	
Degrees of freedom df	20
x ² Critical value	31,41
x ²	27,097

Source: Own research

Discussion

Hypothesis H1

In view of our findings, we are convinced that a dysfunctional family is largely manifested by emotional inadequacy in raising a child as well as insufficient support. By the fact that the child finds himself as a witness to conflicts in the family, whether between the parents themselves or legal representatives, or other members of the household, often accompanied by various manifestations of violent behavior, he does not acquire correct behavioral patterns and is only barely able to evaluate what is adequate behavior and what is not. All this results in weakening his self-confidence, assertiveness and efforts to assert himself and he rather resorts to submissive behavior, which gradually puts him in the position of a significantly more vulnerable person and subsequently in the role of a victim of bullying.

As recommendations for practice, we propose a general improvement in school communication with the family environment of students, regardless of the level of education provided. We see improvement in communication mainly through education in the area of communication between family members and students, so that the parent or the legal representative of the pupil was the first to recognize that something was happening to the child, to catch the first signs of

potential risky behavior. Education must be aimed at parents at correctly understanding the functioning of the pupil in the current "modern" era, it must also be focused on knowledge that will give the family member the feeling that they understand their child and can catch signs of a primary nature when they notice changes in their child's behavior. But also education that will lead to the education of family members in early conflict resolution in order to prevent pathological phenomena such as bullying. It is precisely such early awareness of family members that can lead to relatively early identification of the pupil's problem at school. On the other hand, there are recommendations that can no longer be influenced by schools and educational institutions, that parents strive to create a positive family climate, where clear positions and rules are determined in upbringing, but at the same time the child receives support, especially emotional support, is supported in progress, building self-confidence and self-esteem.

Hypothesis H2

Based on the results of hypothesis testing, we reject hypothesis H 2 "Students emotionally neglected in the home environment show a statistically significantly higher rate of involvement in bullying in the school environment through physical violence - direct than students with experience with other socio-pathological phenomena in the home environment".

From the above, we can conclude that family environment factors such as emotional inadequacy do not clearly lead to the fact that in this case aggressors resort more often to direct forms of physical violence, such as pushing, hitting, slapping, hair pulling, and others. However, emotional neglect plays a significant role and, compared to other manifestations, its negative side is that it is almost invisible and is very difficult to recognize by non-experts in the ranks of school employees. And it is this type of neglect that results in students who are neglected in this way having problems respecting authorities in society and in the school environment, creating unstable social relationships, unable to communicate effectively and perceiving physical aggression as one of the most accessible options for resolving conflicts and asserting their own opinions.

As for recommendations for practice, I again suggest educating mainly pedagogical but also professional school staff so that they learn to recognize the initial symptoms of emotionally neglected students in the school environment in a timely manner as well as the consequences that result from this type of education. With regard to students, it is necessary, from our point of view, to strengthen work with students in the area of managing their own emotions, frustrations, as well as self-knowledge and self-evaluation.

Conclusion

We believe that in order to improve the current situation in this issue, it is necessary to incorporate professional employees and social workers into the workforce, so that this obligation is legally anchored. From discussions with experts on the issue of anchoring professional employees in schools, we can conclude that currently in Slovak conditions, in the

entire educational process, there are 8 schools that have social workers in their ranks, and in 2024, the calculation of the number of students per school psychologist in Slovakia was a total of 716 students, which is unfortunately an unbearable situation with a prediction of a deterioration in the overall mental health of the population. We can responsibly state that the problem of bullying and its solution in the school environment has never been, is not and probably will not be easy for many years to come and mainly requires effective and meaningful education of school employees, which would lead to a systematic approach to knowledge and the creation of correct methodologies and processes that will be beneficial for managing this pathological phenomenon. In conclusion, it is necessary to state that a student does not become problematic after passing through the school gates, but comes from an environment that has built the values that he carries with him, therefore it is necessary to pay attention to correct and effective communication with the student's family environment and thus eliminate undesirable phenomena on school grounds in a timely manner.

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The Impact of Gender on Mutual Work Expectations between Employees and Employers in the IT Sector

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Abstract: In this study, we present the results of research on the mutual work expectations of employees and employers in the IT sector across both segments: employees' work expectations of employers and employers' work expectations of employees. In interpreting the findings, we will take into account the demographics of the respondents as well as the context of the digital age in which we are living.

Keywords: digital age, digitisation, workplace expectations, employees, employers, IT sector, respondent group

Introduction

The concept of the digital age is defined with relative consistency across various authors in the current academic literature, such as Xia, Chen, and Liu (2024), Alfityani et al. (2024), and Aggarwal and Gupta (2024). These authors agree that the digital era represents a historical period that emerged as a result of the massive spread of digital technologies and the internet, which has fundamentally influenced the way individuals communicate, work, learn, and live. Similar characteristics of this era can also be identified in the works of other authors, such as Treľová and Hlásny (2023a, 2023b), Treľová et al. (2023), Hlásny (2022, 2023, 2024, 2025), Horváth, Hlásny, and Krásny (2021), who emphasize the digitization of information as a key aspect. The digital form of data enables more efficient processing, storage, and distribution. A common thread in defining the digital era is also the emphasis on technological innovation, as well as expanded connectivity and access to extensive information and service resources. These factors also spur the emergence of new professional categories and significantly influence the transformation of work processes, the education system (Stacho, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2025), as well as consumer behavior, thereby fundamentally changing the functioning of society and the economy. The IT sector is defined by various experts. For example, Law Insider (2024) defines the IT sector as all hardware and software produced for IT. According to CISA (2025), the information technology sector is a central element of national security, the economy, public health, and safety, as businesses, governments, the academic community, and private citizens are increasingly dependent on its functions. These virtual and distributed functions produce and provide hardware, software, and information technology systems and services – and, in collaboration with the communications sector, the internet. The sector's complex and dynamic environment makes it difficult to identify threats and assess vulnerabilities, requiring these tasks to be addressed in a cooperative and creative manner. The functions of the information technology sector are operated by a combination of entities – often

owners and operators and their respective associations – that maintain and rebuild the network, including the internet. Although information technology infrastructure has a certain level of inherent resilience, its interconnected and interdependent structure presents both challenges and opportunities for coordinating public and private sector preparedness and protection efforts. This broad definition illustrates the wide range of respondents we engaged in our research. According to Computerfutures (2025), the IT industry consists of four subsectors: IT services, IT business process management, IT software products, and IT engineering research and development. CompTIA (2025) divides the IT sector into the following four basic subsectors: Devices (hardware). Software. Middleware. Data. A career in IT covers many different areas, ranging from computer hardware and software development to networking, computer repair, technical support, cybersecurity, cloud computing, artificial intelligence (for more details, see e.g., Trębski et al., 2024), data science, and many others.

As Hlásny (2024, 2025) notes, the expectations employers have of employees – and vice versa – are also influenced by the digital era in which we currently live. In today's competitive labor market, companies face a disadvantage due to the limited number of qualified candidates. For this reason, they are forced to offer higher compensation to attract new employees and retain existing ones (Vallová, 2016). However, the return on this investment by employers is the expectations placed on employees, particularly regarding reliability and a willingness to adapt to new knowledge and skills, as discussed in the previous theoretical section.

Employers' Expectations of Employees and the Results of a Survey on Employers' Expectations of Employees in the IT Sector, Broken Down by the Gender of Respondents

The most appropriate research method chosen seems to us to be the questionnaire aimed at detecting employers' job expectations from employees in the IT sector in the digital era, it consists of seven dimensions, the questionnaire is designed according to Slobodova and Šulík (2017). Initially, each dimension was composed of 10 items, however, after statistical evaluation of the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, the designated dimensions contain the "strongest" items among them:

- Dimension 1 Business acumen and entrepreneurial mindset of managers in the IT sector in the digital era (7 questionnaire items)
- Dimension 2 Strategic thinking of managers in the IT sector in the digital era (6 questionnaire items)
- Dimension 3 Ability of IT managers to communicate, represent and collaborate in the digital era (9 questionnaire items)
- Dimension 4 Ability to deal with problems and new situations of IT managers in the digital era (10 questionnaire items)
- Dimension 5 Self-control, self-motivation and intrinsic independence of managers in the IT sector in the digital era (8 questionnaire items)
- Dimension 6 Managing change of managers in the IT sector in the digital era (9 questionnaire items)

- Dimension 7 Leadership of managers in the IT sector in the digital era (9 questionnaire items), more detail in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was completed by willing respondents exactly as specified. The research population consisted of a total of 301 respondents. We further characterize the research population according to the gender of the respondents, the age of the respondents, the location of the respondents' workplace, and the size of the enterprise in which the respondents work. The research population can be divided by gender into 222 men and 79 women. Empirical objective: research on employers' job expectations from employees in the IT sector in the digital era was fulfilled through the research question and the set hypotheses H1 - H4, H1: We hypothesize that there will be a statistically significant difference in employers' job expectations of employees in the IT sector in the digital era for each dimension based on the respondents' gender variable. We made statistical evaluation in SPSS, based on descriptive statistics. As basic mathematical-statistical research tools we plan to use analysis of variance (ANOVA), which is a statistical method used to compare means between two or more groups. In particular, one-way ANOVA is a commonly used technique to analyse the variance of a single continuous variable across two or more categorical groups. Another is the Independent Samples T Test, which is used to compare two means of a research set from unrelated groups - the scores for each group are provided by different people and the purpose of this test is to see if the research set is different from each other. Next would be the Paired-Samples T Test, which compares the means of two variables for a single group. The procedure calculates the differences between the values of the two variables for each case and tests whether the mean is different from 0. The procedure also automates the calculation of the effect size of the T-test.

Results of the research on employers' job expectations of employees in the IT sector in the digital era in the respondent's gender variable

Table 1 Group Statistics by Gender of Respondents

Group Statistics					
Rod		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
D1_Business_spirit	Man	222	2.97	0.53	0.04
	Woman	79	2.99	0.61	0.07
D2_Strategy	Man	222	2.98	0.55	0.04
	Woman	79	3.03	0.61	0.07
D3_Communication	Man	222	2.99	0.54	0.04
	Woman	79	2.98	0.45	0.05
D4_Problem_solving	Man	222	2.99	0.48	0.03
	Woman	79	3.01	0.48	0.05
D5_Motivation	Man	222	3.03	0.50	0.03
	Woman	79	3.00	0.55	0.06
D6_Management_changes	Man	222	3.00	0.47	0.03
	Woman	79	2.99	0.47	0.05
D7_Leadership	Man	222	3.02	0.49	0.03
	Woman	79	2.98	0.51	0.06

Source of Table 1: Own research

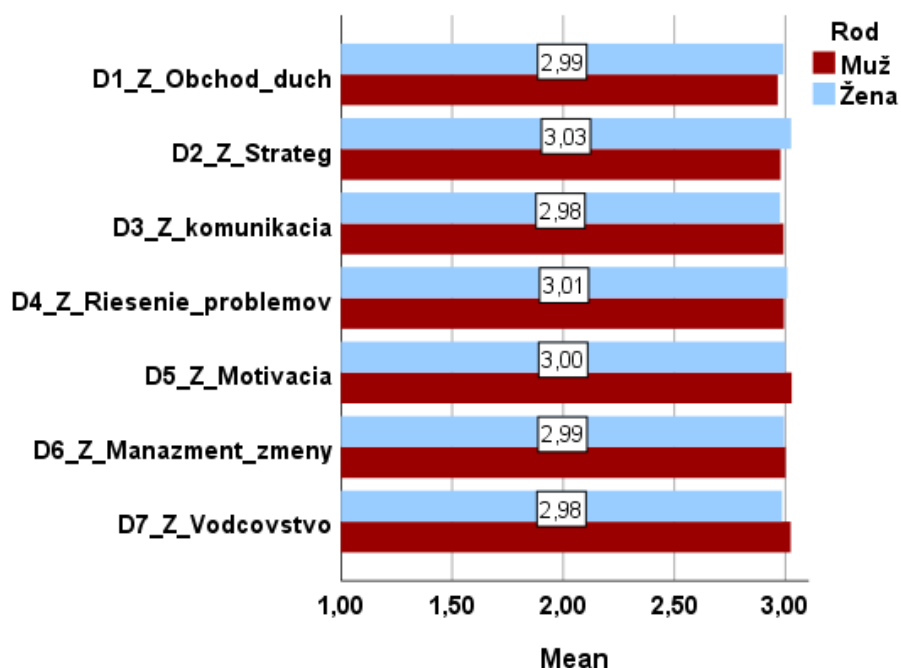
Table 2. Independent Group Statistics Test by Gender of Respondents

Equal variances assumed

		Group Statistics							
		N		Mean		Std. Deviation		Std. Error Mean	
		Rod		Rod		Rod		Rod	
		Ma n	Woma n	Ma n	Woma n	Ma n	Woma n	Ma n	Woma n
D1_Business_spirit	D1_Business_spirit	222	79	2.97	2.99	0.53	0.61	0.04	0.07
D2_Strategy	D2_Strategy	222	79	2.98	3.03	0.55	0.61	0.04	0.07
D3_Communication	D3_Communication	222	79	2.99	2.98	0.54	0.45	0.04	0.05
D4_Problem_solving	D4_Problem_solving	222	79	2.99	3.01	0.48	0.48	0.03	0.05
D5_Motivation	D5_Motivation	222	79	3.03	3.00	0.50	0.55	0.03	0.06
D6_Management_changes	D6_Management_changes	222	79	3.00	2.99	0.47	0.47	0.03	0.05
D7_Leadership	D7_Leadership	222	79	3.02	2.98	0.49	0.51	0.03	0.06

Source of Table 2: Own research

Figure 1. Average Rating by Gender of Respondents



Source of Chart 1: Own research

Table 3. Independent T test for each Dimension by Gender of Respondents

Independent Samples Test							
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
D2_Strategy	-0.634	299	0.527	-0.04709	0.07429	-0.19329	0.09911
D1_Business_spirit	-0.326	122.165	0.745	-0.02506	0.07689	-0.17727	0.12714
D4_Problem_solving	-0.246	299	0.806	-0.01545	0.06291	-0.13925	0.10835
D6_Management_changes	0.100	299	0.921	0.00613	0.06143	-0.11476	0.12701
D3_Communication	0.240	164.598	0.811	0.01490	0.06214	-0.10779	0.13759
D5_Motivation	0.422	299	0.673	0.02831	0.06710	-0.10373	0.16036
D7_Leadership	0.608	299	0.544	0.03950	0.06497	-0.08837	0.16736

Source of Table 3: Own research

The results by gender of respondents show that the **expectations of employers in each dimension by gender are not statistically distinguishable, thus the stated hypothesis 1 is not confirmed**, in our research set we did not find statistically significant difference in the job expectations of employers from employees in the IT sector in the digital era for each dimension based on the variable of gender of respondents. This means that in our research set, both women and men in the position of employers in the IT sector do not have statistically distinguishable job expectations.

Regarding the obtained results, it should be noted that the average rating of the questionnaire dimensions according to the gender of the respondents showed really minimal differences, which proves not only the relatively accurate formulation of the dimensions and their components, but also the relatively uniform job expectations of employers in the IT sector from employees in the context of the digital era.

Employees' Expectations of Employers and the Results of a Survey on Employees' Expectations of Wmployers in the IT Sector, Broken Down by the Gender of Respondents

The most appropriate research method for this part of the study appeared to be a survey using a specific research tool that had been validated in a pilot study (Hlásny, 2023). The questionnaire is designed to assess employees' work expectations of employers in the IT sector in the context of the digital era. The questionnaire is adapted from Votroubková (2018), consists of four dimensions, and was completed online by willing respondents exactly as specified. Originally, each dimension consisted of multiple items; however, following a statistical evaluation of the questionnaire's validity and reliability, the selected dimensions now contain the most valid and reliable items from among them:

- Dimension 1 Work and Working Conditions (15 questionnaire items)
- Dimension 2 Supervisors (11 questionnaire items)

- Dimension 3 Compensation (4 questionnaire items)
- Dimension 4 Employee Benefits (18 questionnaire items).

A study of employees' expectations of employers in the IT sector in the context of the digital era was conducted with a sample comprising a total of 301 respondents (in the study, we further characterize the sample by the respondents' gender, age, the location of the respondents' workplace, and the size of the company in which the respondents work). The research sample by gender consisted of 210 men and 91 women. The study provides an answer to the research question and validates the established hypotheses H1 – H4, where in H1 we hypothesized that there would be a statistically significant difference in the work expectations of employees versus employers in the IT sector in the context of the digital era across individual dimensions based on the variable of respondents' gender.

We made statistical evaluation in SPSS, based on descriptive statistics. As basic mathematical-statistical research tools we plan to use analysis of variance (ANOVA), which is a statistical method used to compare means between two or more groups. In particular, one-way ANOVA is a commonly used technique to analyse the variance of a single continuous variable across two or more categorical groups. Another is the Independent Samples T Test, which is used to compare two means of a research set from unrelated groups - the scores for each group are provided by different people and the purpose of this test is to see if the research set is different from each other. Next would be the Paired-Samples T Test, which compares the means of two variables for a single group. The procedure calculates the differences between the values of the two variables for each case and tests whether the mean is different from 0. The procedure also automates the calculation of the effect size of the T-test.

Results of the research on employees' job expectations of employers in the IT sector in the digital era in the respondent's gender variable.

Table 4. ANOVA analysis by gender of respondents

ANOVA Table					
Between Groups (Combined)	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
D1_praca_podmienky * Rod	0.512	1	0.512	2.668	0.103
D2_nadriadeni * Rod	0.026	1	0.026	0.127	0.722
D3_odmenovanie * Rod	1.077	1	1.077	2.015	0.157
D4_benefity * Rod	0.134	1	0.134	1.064	0.303

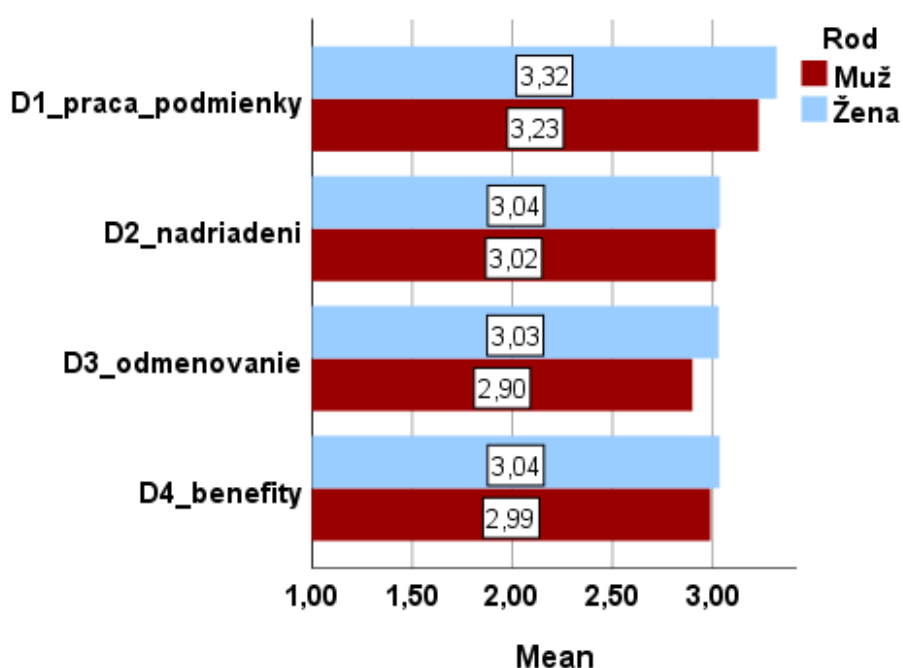
Source of Table 4: Own research

Table 5. Independent Sample t-test by Gender of Respondents

Report												
	Mean			Std. Error of Mean			N			Std. Deviation		
	Muž	Žena	Total	Muž	Žena	Total	Muž	Žena	Total	Muž	Žena	Total
D1_praca_podmienky	3.23	3.32	3.26	0.03	0.05	0.03	210	91	301	0.40	0.51	0.44
D2_nadriadeni	3.02	3.04	3.02	0.03	0.05	0.03	210	91	301	0.42	0.51	0.45
D3_odmenovanie	2.90	3.03	2.94	0.05	0.08	0.04	210	91	301	0.72	0.75	0.73
D4_benefity	2.99	3.04	3.00	0.02	0.04	0.02	210	91	301	0.33	0.41	0.36

Source of Table 5: Own Research

Figure 1. Average Ratings of Dimensions by Gender



Source of Figure 1.: Own research

Regarding the findings, it should be noted that the average ratings of the questionnaire dimensions by respondent gender revealed only minimal differences, which demonstrates not only the relatively precise formulation of the dimensions and their components, but also the relatively uniform work expectations that employees have of employers in the IT sector in the context of the digital era.

Conclusion

In our study of employers' expectations of employees in the IT sector in terms of respondents' gender, we hypothesized in H1 that there would be a statistically significant difference in employers' expectations of employees in the IT sector in the digital age across individual dimensions based on the variable of respondents' gender; however, this **was not confirmed**. If employers' expectations in these dimensions are not statistically distinguishable

by gender, this may, in our opinion, be due to several factors. The first reason is the absence of gender differences in job requirements, which could reflect modern corporate cultures (see also Maličká, 2024) that strive to eliminate gender stereotypes and create equal employment opportunities and expectations for all employees, regardless of gender. Another reason may be the existence and application of the same professional standards (see also Gabrhelová, Ondříjová, and Sciranková, 2024), as gender is not a key variable, but rather professional skills and competencies. Furthermore, the implemented gender equality policy may already be evident in the IT sector, and businesses, companies, and organizations are able to avoid creating gender-unbalanced expectations. It is therefore encouraging that both female and male employers in the IT sector formulate work and professional expectations for employees in the same way. Another possible explanation for the results obtained in this specific research sample is the likely homogeneity of the work environment and a certain homogeneity in the required work skills and competencies. We assume that in the IT sector, current business models emphasize professionalism, which encompasses traits, skills, and competencies that are not tied to gender but to the personal qualities and abilities of individuals; shared inclusive values in the work environment are a given (for more details, see also Matulčíková, 2024a,b). We also believe that employers' expectations of employees (and not just in the IT sector) are influenced by other factors that we did not examine, such as the employee's job position, length of professional experience, professional skills and education, and so on, and these may be "stronger" than gender differences. In such a case, expectations of men and women may be balanced, because these other factors have a more significant influence. And the final reason why employers' expectations of employees are not statistically distinguishable by gender may be a combination of modern gender equality practices and policies, as well as methodological factors. The establishment of equal job requirements, an emphasis on professional skills, a performance-oriented corporate culture, and assessment technologies that do not take gender into account can lead to the same expectations for men and women from both male and female employers.

In our study of employees' job expectations of employers in the IT sector, with regard to the gender of respondents, we hypothesized in H1 that there would be a statistically significant difference in employees' job expectations of employers in the IT sector in the digital age across individual dimensions based on the gender of respondents, however, this **was not confirmed**. In our view, there may be several reasons for this. For example, the IT sector, as a highly specialized and technical environment, may "level the playing field" between men and women. Employee expectations are often shaped by corporate culture (which may be standardized), shared work challenges (e.g., agile teams, remote work, continuous learning), or similar motivational factors (flexibility, professional growth, technology, teamwork) (Gerec et al., 2025). This may mean that women and men share very similar work experiences and, consequently, expectations. Another reason, we believe, may be that in the digital age, particularly in the IT sector, gender differences are often perceived less rigidly, expectations of employers are shaped more by individuality and professional mindset than by gender, or it is possible that employees demand the same "digital" benefits from employers – such as flexibility, the option to work remotely, work-life balance, opportunities for self-development, etc. We can also assume that women in the IT sector often face selection filters upon entering

the sector; they may be in many ways “more similar” to men in this environment than women in other industries (i.e., a certain self-selection bias) – it is clear that our results do not objectively represent the entire population, as we worked with a specific target group of respondents. It is also possible that, when it comes to IT job expectations, gender is simply not a determining factor, unlike other variables such as age, tenure, job title or role, the size and type of organization (corporate vs. startup), and so on. Another explanation may be that many IT companies (especially international ones) offer standardized benefits and working conditions – which creates expectations that are independent of gender. The absence of a statistically significant difference in expectations between men and women may indicate that in the digital era, and specifically in the IT sector, work expectations are becoming more gender-neutral. This may be a positive indicator of progress toward equality and the professionalization of an environment where expertise and performance are increasingly valued over traditional social roles.

The results of our research suggest that, in terms of respondents’ gender, there are no statistically significant differences in work expectations between employers and employees in the IT sector in the digital age. Both hypotheses (H1) regarding the existence of gender-based differences were not confirmed, which we can interpret as a sign of the professionalization of the work environment in the IT sector, where the key factors shaping work expectations are not gender but technical skills, professional competencies, the nature of the job, length of experience, and organizational culture. We believe that current business models in the IT sector emphasize a gender-neutral and inclusive environment, where expectations are not formulated based on traditional gender stereotypes. This trend is also supported by modern personnel policies and standardized HR processes aimed at the targeted elimination of gender differences in the perception of job roles. Furthermore, we assume that the homogeneity of professional requirements within the sector, as well as the existence of the same professional standards regardless of gender, contributes to the unification of expectations.

Methodological factors, such as the specificity of the research sample, which may naturally exhibit a higher degree of professionalization and adaptation to uniform expectations, regardless of gender identity, must also be taken into account. In light of these findings, it can be concluded that job expectations in the IT sector may increasingly be characterized by gender neutrality even outside our research sample, which can be seen as a positive trend toward equal opportunity and a focus on professional competence.

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Comparison of the Needs of Social Services Provided to Seniors in Home Care and in Social Service Facilities from the Perspective of Families in the District of Skalica

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Abstract

The article examines the needs of social services provided to older adults in home care and residential facilities from the perspective of families in the district of Skalica. The quantitative research, conducted through an online questionnaire, analyses family perceptions, preferences and expectations regarding current and future service provision. Statistical evaluation using the Chi-square test identifies differences in how home-based and institutional care are perceived. The findings serve as a basis for recommendations aimed at improving the accessibility and quality of social services for older adults in the Skalica district.

Keywords: social services, older adults, home care, residential care facilities, family, informal care, deinstitutionalisation

Introduction

“Human life unfolds from birth until the moment of death through specific developmental stages. Each stage has its own principles and characteristics that influence the quality, manner, and scope of our lives, and we must adapt to and take them into account in a fairly fundamental way. Every developmental period provides us with certain opportunities, while at the same time limiting us in certain respects.” (Malíková, 2020, p. 13).

The process of deinstitutionalization, as one of the main trends in the field of social services, introduces new guidelines concerning the capacity of social service facilities, the individualization of care, and support for seniors remaining in their natural environment. As a result of these changes, a shift can be observed in the behavior and decision-making of seniors

and their families, with admission to residential social service facilities often postponed until an older age or perceived as a last resort. Consequently, care provided in the home environment is becoming increasingly important and is emerging as a significant component of the social services system. The main aim of this paper is to analyse the current needs in the provision of social services for seniors in home care and in social service facilities from the perspective of families in the Skalica district and to identify their expectations for the future. Attention is focused on evaluating the accessibility and quality of individual forms of care, as well as the factors influencing family members' decisions when selecting a specific type of service. Particular emphasis is placed on the socio-economic characteristics of families and their level of awareness regarding social assistance opportunities.

The findings of the research may serve as a basis for more effective planning and optimization of social services at the regional level. Their application may contribute to the development of services that better reflect the real needs of seniors and their families, while also supporting the advancement of social work in the context of an ageing population.

The following hypotheses were established:

H1: Family members with lower education (elementary or secondary education without a high school diploma) evaluate the quality of senior care more positively than family members with higher education (secondary school with a high school diploma and university education).

H2: Family members with lower incomes (up to 2000 euros) prefer care for the elderly in the home environment more significantly than families with higher incomes (over 2000 euros).

Theoretical and Legislative Basis

“The process of population ageing represents one of the most significant social transformation challenges of the 21st century and is the result of a combination of declining fertility and increasing life expectancy” (Šprocha – Ďurček, 2019, p. 7). The increase in average life expectancy combined with declining birth rates leads to a growing number of elderly people, thereby increasing demands on the availability, quality, and diversity of care services. Social services for seniors are thus becoming one of the key areas of social policy that requires systematic planning and continuous adaptation to the changing needs of this target group.

An important actor in the senior care system is the family, which represents the fundamental pillar of informal care. Family members participate in providing daily assistance, emotional support, and often the coordination of formal social services. Their attitudes, experiences, and socio-economic situation have a significant impact on decisions regarding whether care will be provided in the home environment or in a social service facility. For this reason, the family's perspective is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the functioning of the social services system for seniors.

In the Skalica district, similarly to other regions of the Slovak Republic, specific regional conditions influence the availability and use of social services. These include mainly the

demographic structure of the population, the capacity of service providers, as well as the social and economic characteristics of families. In this context, the family acts not only as a recipient or intermediary of care, but also as an evaluator of its quality, accessibility, and adequacy. Understanding family preferences and expectations makes it possible to better comprehend the current state of social service provision and to identify areas requiring improvement.

Social services represent a systematically organized set of professional activities and interventions aimed at responding to adverse social situations affecting individuals or groups of the population. In the context of working with older adults, they are primarily oriented toward supporting dignity, preserving autonomy, strengthening social ties, and preventing social exclusion. At the same time, social services fulfil an important stabilizing function within the state's social policy, as they contribute to maintaining quality of life and promoting the social inclusion of service recipients (Bundzelová et al., 2023).

In the conditions of the Slovak Republic, the field of social services is legislatively regulated by Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on Social Services and on Amendments to Act No. 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Licensing, as amended. This legal regulation constitutes the basic framework for the provision of social services and defines their content, objectives, forms, and conditions of implementation (Vallová a Mrvák, 2023).

According to Act No. 448/2008 Coll., “A social service is a professional activity, service activity, or another activity, or a set of such activities, aimed at preventing the emergence of an adverse social situation, resolving an adverse social situation, or mitigating its consequences for an individual, family, group of persons, or community” (Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on Social Services, Section 2, Paragraph 1).

Social services are also aimed at supporting the independence of individuals, developing their ability to lead an independent life, and promoting their social inclusion. An inseparable part of social services is also the provision of basic living needs, crisis intervention, prevention of social exclusion, and childcare in cases where the family situation requires it (Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on Social Services).

The legislative framework differentiates social services according to target groups, which include seniors, persons with disabilities, families with children, and individuals in adverse social situations. The primary objective of these services is to support social inclusion, preserve human dignity, and strengthen the independence of service recipients (Act No. 448/2008 Coll., Section 12; Stachoň, 2017).

In accordance with applicable legislation and professional theory, social services can be classified according to the form and spatial framework of their provision. In this context, we distinguish outpatient services, provided within specialized facilities that recipients attend, and field services, which are delivered directly in the client's natural social environment. The third form consists of residential services, which provide comprehensive care combined with accommodation in social service facilities. In addition to the spatial aspect, another key criterion is the nature of the service provider. Social services may also be categorized according to the

nature of the activities provided. These include, for example, personal assistance services, home nursing care, social counselling, the activities of day-care centres and community centres, as well as crisis intervention services provided in crisis centres (Act No. 448/2008 Coll.). These services respond to the diverse needs of clients and contribute to improving their quality of life.

Methodology

The main objective of the conducted quantitative research is to analyse the needs of social services provided to seniors in home care and in social service facilities from the perspective of families in the Skalica district.

The purpose of the research is to identify differences in the perception of the quality of senior care, the accessibility of social services, and the expectations of family members depending on the form of care provided. The research is based on the assumption that the form of care provision (home environment versus residential care) significantly influences the subjective assessment of seniors' quality of life, the level of family satisfaction with services, as well as the economic and organizational burden placed on households. In this context, the family is understood as a key actor within the senior care system, as it plays an important role in decisions regarding the use of social services, the provision of informal care, and the coordination of formal services.

Particular attention is devoted to the socio-economic characteristics of families, especially income level and educational attainment, which may influence preferences regarding the form of care and the level of awareness of available services. The economic accessibility of services represents an important determinant of their utilization, as confirmed by international analyses in the field of long-term care (OECD, 2020).

Partial Research Objectives

In line with the main research objective, the following partial objectives were established:

- To determine how family members of seniors evaluate the quality of social services provided to seniors in the home care between field and residential forms of service provision. It will also provide a basis for assessing whether the form of care affects the subjective perception of dignity, safety and satisfaction of the senior.
- To examine the relationship between the family's income situation and the preference for the form of care for the senior.

This objective is based on the assumption that the economic situation of the household can determine the decision to remain a senior in the home environment or to place him in a social service facility. The results will allow us to assess the extent to which the choice of the form of care is influenced by the family's financial capabilities.

The research implicitly verifies the assumption that the quality of life of a senior is the result of the interaction between the individual health status, family background and the availability of formal services. A comparison of home and residential care will allow us to identify whether there are statistically significant differences in the perception of the quality of life and family satisfaction depending on the organizational form of care. At the same time, it is assumed that socio-economic factors, especially household income, will show a correlation with the preferred type of care. The results may point to potential barriers to access to services and the degree of economic conditionality of family decision-making.

In the European context, the trend is to strengthen community and outreach care with the aim of enabling seniors to remain in their natural environment for as long as possible (OECD, 2020). However, compared to some Western European countries, the level of development of outreach services in Slovakia is regionally uneven, which may influence family decision-making.

A comparative perspective therefore allows us to interpret the research results not only at the local level of the Skalica district, but also in the broader context of the development of long-term care in Europe. The identified findings may point to the need to strengthen the availability of community services, improve family awareness, and more effectively integrate social and health care.

Given the nature of the set objectives, quantitative research was chosen, which allows analyzing the relationships between selected variables and verifying hypotheses using statistical methods. A questionnaire survey consisting of closed questions was used as the main method of data collection. The questionnaire was divided into thematic areas focused on:

- assessment of the quality of care for seniors,
- preference for the form of care,
- awareness of social services,
- socio-demographic characteristics of respondents.

The questionnaire was created using the Google Forms platform. Respondents were informed about anonymity, voluntary participation and data processing exclusively for the purposes of the diploma thesis. Data collection was carried out using an online questionnaire. After the collection was completed, incomplete or incorrectly filled out questionnaires were excluded from the set. Only responses that met the criteria for statistical processing were included in the final analysis. The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of social research. The participation of the respondents was voluntary and anonymous. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and the method of data processing. The obtained data were used exclusively for the scientific purposes of the thesis.

Results

Following the descriptive analysis presented in the previous subsection, we proceed to the statistical verification of the established hypotheses. The aim of this part of the work is to identify the existence of statistically significant relationships between the selected variables and

to assess whether the differences found are not random. The mathematical and statistical method of the Chi-square test of independence was used to test the dependencies between nominal and ordinal variables. This test allows us to verify whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the two monitored variables at the selected significance level. The statistical significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. If the calculated value of the test statistic exceeded the critical value, or if the p-value was lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. Otherwise, it was not possible to reject the null hypothesis. Hypothesis verification is carried out gradually in accordance with the set research objectives.

Verification of Hypotheses H1

H1: Family members with lower education (elementary or secondary education without a high school diploma) evaluate the quality of senior care more positively than family members with higher education (secondary school with a high school diploma and university education).

Table 1 Relationship between the Highest Education Level and the Perception of the Quality of Senior Care (actual frequencies, n = 755)

Highest education achieved	Quality of care for seniors				
	Very good	Rather good	Neither good not bad	Rather bad	Very bad
Elementary	0	1	0	1	1
Secondary school without high school leaving	5	9	8	78	24
Secondary school with high school leaving	115	118	70	55	1
University level I.	4	5	5	38	1
University level II. and III.	25	102	60	27	2

Source: own research

Table 2 Relationship between Highest Education Level and Perception of Quality of Care for Seniors (expected frequencies with independence of characteristics, n = 755)

Highest education achieved	Quality of care for seniors				
	Very good	Rather good	Neither good not bad	Rather bad	Very bad
Elementary	0,59	0,93	0,57	0,79	0,12
Secondary school without high school leaving	24,47	38,60	23,49	32,68	4,76
Secondary school with high school leaving	70,85	111,74	68,00	94,62	13,79
University level I.	10,46	16,50	10,04	13,97	2,04
University level II. and III.	42,63	67,23	40,91	56,93	8,30

Source: own research

Testing Results

Calculated value of the test criterion: $G=364.168$

Critical value for a given number of degrees of freedom: $\chi^2_{(0.95)}=26.296$

Since: $364.168 > 26.296$

Given the results of hypothesis testing, we reject hypothesis H_0 and accept hypothesis H_1 .

Testing Conclusion

At the 5% significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a statistically significant relationship between the perception of the quality of senior care and the highest level of education of family members. The respondent's education therefore significantly influences the way in which he or she evaluates the quality of senior care. Analysis of the differences between actual and expected frequencies indicates significant deviations, especially in the groups of respondents with secondary education without a high school diploma and respondents with higher education. In some categories of the assessment of the quality of care, the observed frequencies differ significantly from the values that would be expected if the characteristics were independent.

The result shows that the educational level of family members significantly influences their assessment of the quality of care for seniors. Education may be related to different levels of awareness, demands, critical evaluation of services, as well as different expectations towards the social care system. From the point of view of the research objective, it can be stated that education represents a significant factor shaping the perception of the quality of care, which

has implications for the planning of social services and for communication with families of seniors.

Verification of Hypotheses H2

H2: Family members with lower incomes (up to 2000 euros) prefer care for the elderly in the home environment more significantly than families with higher incomes (over 2000 euros).

Table 3 Relationship between Household Income and Oreferred Placement of the Elderly (actual frequencies, n = 755)

Household Income	Senior Placement		
	Home care	Institutional care	Don't know
do 1 000 €	15	3	2
1 001 – 2 000 €	124	39	11
2 001 – 2 500 €	85	122	58
2 501 – 3 000 €	53	173	34
nad 3 000 €	17	9	10

Source: own research

Table 4 Relationship between Household Income and Preferred Placement of Seniors (expected frequencies, n = 755)

Household Income	Senior Placement		
	Home care	Household Income	Home care
do 1 000 €	7,79	9,17	3,05
1 001 – 2 000 €	67,76	79,74	26,50
2 001 – 2 500 €	103,19	121,44	40,36
2 501 – 3 000 €	101,25	119,15	39,60
nad 3 000 €	14,02	16,50	5,48

Source: own research

Testing Results

Calculated value of the test criterion: $G=154.557$

Critical value of the chi-square test at $df = 8$ and $\alpha = 0.05$: $\chi_{0.95}^2(8)=15.507$

Since: $154.557 > 15.507$

Given the results of the hypothesis testing, we proceed to reject the hypothesis H02 and accept the hypothesis H2.

Conclusion of the Testing

At the 5% significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a statistically significant relationship between the household's income situation and the preferred placement of the senior. The family's income situation therefore significantly influences the decision on the form of care for the senior. The results indicate that the economic possibilities of the household represent an important factor in the choice between home care and the

placement of the senior in a social service facility. From a practical point of view, it can be stated that the financial availability of services plays a significant role in the family's decision-making processes, which is also confirmed by theoretical assumptions pointing to the economic conditionality of access to long-term care.

Discussion

Hypothesis H1

From the point of view of the application level of social work and social service management, several practical implications arise from the above findings. Strengthening the transparency of social service provision is considered a priority. Transparency should be implemented through accessible and understandable information about procedures, rights and obligations, family participation options and quality assurance mechanisms. Such openness can contribute to preventing misunderstandings, reducing communication tensions and strengthening trust between the family and the provider.

Equally important is the systematic support of communication between service workers and family members of the senior. Communication processes should be regular, based on partnership and enable the family to understand professional decisions, planned interventions and care goals. In practice, a clear explanation of procedures and a joint determination of family expectations in line with realistic service options appear to be effective. Regularly assessing family satisfaction is also justified, and evaluating the results with regard to education and other socio-economic characteristics is considered beneficial. A differentiated view allows for more precise identification of which aspects of the service are problematic for specific groups of families, and for targeted measures to be set in the areas of communication, organization, or individualization.

The introduction of participatory elements into practice is considered key, especially in the area of individual planning. Involving the family in planning and evaluating the care provided strengthens the sense of co-responsibility, increases the transparency of decision-making, and can contribute to higher satisfaction with the service provided. Last but not least, it is necessary to consistently apply quality standards, especially in the areas of protecting rights, respecting dignity, and supporting the autonomy of seniors. Higher-educated families are often more sensitive to deficiencies in professionalism, communication, or an individualized approach, so it is desirable to systematically strengthen the expertise of staff and create organizational conditions that support high-quality work with families.

The findings also confirm that the quality of social services should not be reduced to the formal fulfillment of legislative requirements, but should also be assessed through the experience and expectations of the family. The educational structure of family members is an important determinant that influences their evaluation criteria, and therefore the need for a differentiated, transparent and participatory-oriented approach should be reflected in regional planning and management of services.

Hypothesis H2

From the point of view of the application level of social work and social policy, several important recommendations can be formulated based on the above findings. We consider the systematic strengthening of financial support mechanisms for low-income households to be a priority. This primarily concerns the adequate setting of care allowances, the expansion of subsidies for field services and the creation of mechanisms that will allow for the reduction of payments for residential services for economically disadvantaged families.

The aim of these measures should be to eliminate financial barriers that limit access to formal services. Equally important is the simplification of administrative procedures associated with applications for social services and financial contributions. Administrative complexity may represent another obstacle that reduces the use of available support instruments.

We also consider it justified to systematically strengthen support for families providing long-term informal care. This support may include not only financial compensation, but also the development of relief services, counseling programs and preventive interventions aimed at protecting the mental health of informal caregivers. Transparent communication about the economic costs of individual forms of care is also an important aspect. Providing clear and understandable information can help realistic planning and qualified decision-making by the family. At the same time, it seems necessary to develop accessible field and community services that allow for a flexible combination of forms of care. A combined model can reduce both the financial and personal burden on the family while supporting the senior to remain in their natural environment. The findings thus point to the need for a coordinated approach that links economic instruments of social policy, the availability of services and family support. If equitable access to an appropriate form of care is to be ensured, it is essential to minimize the impact of financial limits on decisions about the most appropriate support for the senior.

Conclusion

The research results confirmed that the family plays a decisive role in choosing the form of care for the elderly. Decision-making is not determined exclusively by the health status of the elderly, but is the result of a complex interaction of several factors – in particular the economic possibilities of the household, the level of education of family members, the level of awareness of available services and the subjective assessment of the quality of care.

The research results also showed that the financing of social services is perceived by families as the most significant problem of the current system of care for the elderly. The economic complexity of care represents a significant burden, which can lead to postponing the decision to place the elderly in a social service facility or to prolonging home care, even at the cost of an increased burden on family members. This aspect is also confirmed by international professional literature, which points to the growing costs of long-term care and the need for systemic solutions ensuring its financial sustainability.

The research also showed that although a significant part of the respondents evaluate the quality of care positively, approximately a third express a critical attitude, especially in the areas of accessibility, financing and information. This ambivalence points to the existence of reserves in the social services system, which require systematic solutions at the level of regional planning and national social policy.

In conclusion, it can be stated that an effective system of care for seniors must be built on the principles of accessibility, quality, financial sustainability and respect for the dignity of seniors. The key element of this system is the family, which, despite the professionalization of social services, remains an irreplaceable pillar of care. The future development of social services should be directed towards a balanced integration of home and institutional care, systematic support for informal caregivers and strengthening cooperation between the public and non-public sectors. Only a comprehensive, coordinated and value-oriented approach can ensure that the social services system is able to adequately respond to the challenges of an aging population and meet the needs of seniors and their families in the conditions of a changing society.

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Loneliness as a Social Problem among Seniors Living at Home versus in Social Service Facilities in the Skalica District

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Abstract

The article focuses on analysing loneliness among older adults living in home environments and in social services facilities in the district of Skalica. Loneliness represents a significant psychosocial issue that substantially affects the quality of life of older people. The theoretical part addresses the definition of loneliness, its risk factors, and the specific characteristics of life in different care settings. The quantitative research is conducted through a questionnaire with the aim of comparing the level of loneliness in home-based and institutional environments. Data analysis enables the identification of differences in the experience of loneliness and its determinants. The findings provide an overview of the prevalence of loneliness among seniors in the region and form a basis for recommendations aimed at supporting their social well-being.

Keywords: loneliness, older adults, social services facilities, home environment, quality of life

Introduction

The aging of the population is one of the most significant demographic and social challenges of our time. The increasing proportion of seniors in the population not only brings new demands on the health and social care system, but also points to the need to pay increased attention to the quality of life of older people. One of the important factors that can fundamentally affect the quality of life of seniors is loneliness. This often worsens in old age due to the loss of a partner, worsening health, limited social contacts or changes in the environment.

Loneliness in seniors is a serious psychosocial problem that negatively affects not only their psychological well-being, but also their physical health, social functioning and overall life satisfaction. Long-term loneliness can lead to social isolation, depression, feelings of helplessness and, in some cases, a possible risk of mortality. For this reason, the issue of loneliness is becoming an important topic in social work, social policy and public health.

The following hypotheses were established:

Hypothesis H1: Seniors who have regular contact with their family experience a higher level of loneliness than seniors with irregular or no contact with their family.

Hypothesis H2: Seniors living without a partner (widowers/widowers, single) experience a higher level of loneliness than seniors living in a partnered relationship.

Theoretical Foundations

The concept of quality of life of seniors is used primarily to assess the satisfaction and overall well-being of people in old age. It is therefore not only about physical health, but also about social, psychological and environmental conditions that shape the daily life of older people. It is therefore a relatively broad concept that includes several areas, from social ties and health status to the degree of independence and involvement in community life (Bočáková, Kovářová, 2021).

Among the most important factors, health can be ranked among those that affect the quality of life of seniors. Mental well-being and physical condition largely shape the way in which older people evaluate their lives. Good health allows them to maintain independence, activity and the ability to engage in various activities. Interpersonal relationships and social background play an equally important role. In older age, the risk of social exclusion and loneliness increases, so support from friends, family and the wider community is essential. Active participation in social life and social contacts strengthen the sense of belonging and at the same time contribute to the psychological well-being of seniors (Balogová, Žiaková, 2017).

According to Janečková (2017), the most frequently monitored factors include the following areas:

- Social relations – monitoring the quality and extent of social contacts, for example, the frequency of meeting with friends and family, participation in social events and the subjective feeling of inclusion in society.
- Economic security – assessment of the financial situation of seniors based on the amount of income, the degree of financial insecurity and the ability to cover ordinary living expenses.
- Physical health – assessment of physical condition including the severity and occurrence of long-term diseases, the degree of independence in ordinary activities, the level of mobility and the quality of sleep.
- Nutrition – assessment of nutritional balance and regularity of the diet, the availability of quality foods and eating habits.
- Mental health – assessment of psychological status based on standardized tools or diagnostic procedures with regard to symptoms of anxiety, depression and cognitive decline.
- Active participation – assessing the level of involvement of seniors in various mental, educational, physical and cultural activities in the community or in day care facilities.

- Environment – assessing the accessibility, safety and comfort of housing, including access to shops, health services and public spaces.
- Leisure and cultural opportunities – assessing the level of involvement in recreational activities, cultural events, visits to institutions and the development of interests.
- Provision of basic needs – assessing the extent to which the basic needs of seniors, such as health care, food, personal safety and adequate housing, are met.
- Environmental sustainability – monitoring individual environmental aspects, such as participation in activities aimed at protecting the environment or the energy efficiency of housing.
- Health care – assessing the availability of medical care, medicines and the satisfaction of seniors with the health services provided.
- Education – assessment of the achieved level of education and the possibility of lifelong learning (Janečková et al., 2017)

Loneliness in seniors can also be understood as an experienced feeling that does not only appear in situations when a person is alone but also when they are among people. Often, despite their presence, they feel incompleteness, restlessness, unfulfillment and emptiness inside. This condition disrupts a person's sense of harmony, inner balance and psychological well-being (Sivok, 2021).

According to Kenny et al. (2025), the basic types of loneliness include emotional loneliness, social loneliness, loneliness as a state and loneliness as a trait. Emotional loneliness is a situation when a person lacks support, emotional closeness and a sense of emotional fulfillment from another person. However, with this type of loneliness, their social ties do not necessarily have to be disrupted. A person can experience social loneliness when their interpersonal relationships are significantly limited or completely interrupted. He lacks contact with people, regardless of its form or intensity. Loneliness as a trait is a long-term stable phenomenon that is typical for an individual and is only slightly subject to change. Loneliness as a state arises primarily in connection with significant life changes and important events, such as old age or puberty. It often appears in seniors after retirement, when they leave one social group and try to adapt to a new environment and at the same time integrate into it.

Currently, the importance of old age is reflected primarily in the economic sphere. According to Barták and Demjanenko (2021), the growing share of seniors in the population has a significant impact on the functioning of the labor market, public finances, and the pension system. For this reason, society is faced with the need to find long-term sustainable solutions that will allow it to manage the increasing costs of caring for the elderly while maintaining economic balance. In addition to these challenges, however, old age also brings significant potential, because older people have extensive knowledge and experience that can represent a significant contribution to the further development of society. Supporting an environment in which seniors feel actively involved and needed can contribute significantly to strengthening social cohesion and can also increase the quality of life of the entire community.

Since its inception, the family has had the natural role of caring for its members, especially those who are directly dependent on its functioning. During the 20th century, the development

of the welfare state and the gradual creation of social institutions supported greater individual independence, but at the same time weakened the position of the family as the main support network. In the context of unfavorable demographic developments, however, this trend is increasingly proving to be economically unsustainable. The majority of people feel most secure primarily in their own home environment, which provides them with a sense of familiarity, family background and security. Although contemporary families often function independently, many children consider caring for aging parents to be a self-evident part of family relationships. However, this natural effort to provide care for older family members often encounters a number of objective and subjective limitations. Informal care can be understood as assistance provided by family members or other persons outside formal health or social facilities to individuals with a reduced level of self-sufficiency who are dependent on the help of another person (Dragomirecká et al., 2020).

The main mission of individual social service facilities is primarily to provide assistance to persons of retirement age who are unable, unwilling or unable to take care of themselves on their own. These forms of social care include, in particular, stationary facilities, day centres, social service homes, nursing homes, social service centres and other facilities defined by legislation (Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on social services).

In residential social service facilities, care must be provided by professionally trained staff, who play a fundamental role in creating dignified living conditions for seniors. In addition to providing physical care, the role of the staff is also to create a stimulating environment in which seniors feel safe, secure and at home (Hazra et al., 2018).

Metodology

The main objective of the research is to analyze and compare the level of loneliness in seniors living at home and in seniors living in social service facilities in the city of Skalica. The research sample consisted of seniors aged 65 and over who lived either at home or in social service facilities in the city of Skalica. Respondents of both sexes were included in the research, and the sample selection was intentional and took into account the availability of seniors, their health status and ability to understand the questionnaire questions.

The research part is designed as a quantitative research, the aim of which is to obtain empirical data on the level of loneliness in seniors and to enable their subsequent comparison between individual groups of respondents. The quantitative research approach was chosen due to the possibility of systematic data collection, their statistical processing and objective evaluation of the research issue. A questionnaire survey was used as the basic research method. The questionnaire was chosen as a suitable tool given the nature of the research, the age of the respondents and the need to maintain the anonymity of the participants. The questionnaire method allowed obtaining information about the subjective experience of loneliness, social contacts and selected sociodemographic characteristics of seniors.

Two hypotheses were defined as part of the research:

Hypothesis H1: Seniors who have regular contact with their family experience a lower level of loneliness than seniors with irregular or no contact with their family.

Hypothesis H2: Seniors living without a partner (widowers/widowers, single) experience a higher level of loneliness than seniors living in a partnered relationship.

The chi-square test of independence was used to verify the hypothesis. The test compares the observed and expected frequencies in a contingency table and determines whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the monitored variables. The calculation was performed using the online tool Kabrt - Chi-square test, where the values from the contingency table were entered. The test result was $\chi^2 = X$ and p-value = Y. Since $p \leq 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected and a statistically significant relationship between the variables was confirmed (Agresti, 2018).

Results

Hypothesis H1: Seniors who have regular contact with their family experience lower levels of loneliness than seniors with irregular or no contact with their family.

Table 1 Expected and Observed Frequencies Hypothesis H1

Skutočné hodnoty						
	znak1 - 1. sk.	znak1 - 2. sk.	znak1 - 3. sk.	znak1 - 4. sk.	znak1 - 5. sk.	n _i
znak2 - 1. sk.	7	17	6	10	6	46
znak2 - 2. sk.	2	5	3	4	10	24
znak2 - 3. sk.	4	6	2	4	2	18
znak2 - 4. sk.	2	2	2	0	0	6
znak2 - 5. sk.	13	4	7	18	10	52
n _i	28	34	20	36	28	146
Očakávané hodnoty						
	znak1 - 1. sk.	znak1 - 2. sk.	znak1 - 3. sk.	znak1 - 4. sk.	znak1 - 5. sk.	n _i
znak2 - 1. sk.	VIII.82	X.71	06.III	XI.34	VIII.82	46
znak2 - 2. sk.	04.VI	V.59	III.29	V.92	04.VI	24
znak2 - 3. sk.	III.45	IV.19	II.47	IV.44	III.45	18
znak2 - 4. sk.	I.15	01.IV	0.82	I.48	I.15	6
znak2 - 5. sk.	IX.97	12.XI	07.XII	XII.82	IX.97	52
n _i	28	34	20	36	28	146

Source: Own research

After substituting the individual values into the formula, the resulting test criterion is: $G=36.523$. The critical value is $\chi(1-\alpha)$; $df = 21.026$. At the 5% significance level, we reject the

null hypothesis H0 about the independence of individual characteristics and accept the hypothesis H1, which tells us that there is a certain dependence in the result.

Hypothesis H2: Seniors living without a partner (widowers/widowers, single) experience a higher level of loneliness than seniors living in a partner relationship.

Table 2 Expected and Observed Frequencies Hypothesis H2

Skutočné hodnoty						
	znak1 - 1. sk.	znak1 - 2. sk.	znak1 - 3. sk.	znak1 - 4. sk.	znak1 - 5. sk.	n _j
znak2 - 1. sk.	0	1	3	14	16	34
znak2 - 2. sk.	2	3	12	18	7	42
znak2 - 3. sk.	7	16	1	1	4	29
znak2 - 4. sk.	13	9	3	2	1	28
znak2 - 5. sk.	6	5	1	1	0	13
n _{i.}	28	34	20	36	28	146
Očakávané hodnoty						
	znak1 - 1. sk.	znak1 - 2. sk.	znak1 - 3. sk.	znak1 - 4. sk.	znak1 - 5. sk.	n _j
znak2 - 1. sk.	VI.52	VII.92	IV.66	VIII.38	VI.52	34
znak2 - 2. sk.	08.V	IX.78	V.75	X.36	08.V	42
znak2 - 3. sk.	V.56	VI.75	III.97	VII.15	V.56	29
znak2 - 4. sk.	V.37	VI.52	III.84	06.IX	V.37	28
znak2 - 5. sk.	II.49	03.III	I.78	III.21	II.49	13
n _{i.}	28	34	20	36	28	146

Source: Own research

After substituting the individual values into the formula, the resulting test criterion is: $G=103,107$. The critical value is $\chi(1-\alpha)$; $df = 26,296$. At the 5% significance level, we reject the null hypothesis H0 about the independence of individual signs and accept the hypothesis H1, which tells us that there is a certain dependence in the result.

Discussion

The research results confirm that loneliness is a significant problem for seniors regardless of the form of housing. However, the differences are mainly manifested in the nature of loneliness. Seniors living in a home environment more often experience social loneliness resulting from limited contact with other people, reduced mobility and gradual withdrawal from social life. Although the home environment provides a sense of familiarity, security and preservation of

personal identity, in the case of insufficient social support it can lead to a significant feeling of isolation. This condition is often exacerbated by the loss of a partner, children leaving the household, and health limitations that make it difficult to maintain social relationships.

On the contrary, seniors placed in social service facilities have daily contact with staff and other clients, which is positively reflected in the area of social interaction. However, research has shown that despite the presence of people, these seniors can feel emotional loneliness, which is mainly related to separation from family, loss of home environment and disruption of long-term emotional ties. Social service facilities can effectively reduce social isolation, but they cannot always fully replace close and intimate relationships that are essential for seniors.

A significant factor influencing the level of loneliness was the frequency of contact with family and friends. Seniors who had regular contact with close people showed a lower level of loneliness and higher satisfaction with social relationships regardless of the type of living environment. The absence of a confidant or limited family contacts, on the other hand, were associated with more intense feelings of sadness, emptiness and lack of closeness. These findings point to the key role of social support in maintaining the psychological well-being of seniors. An important aspect that appears in the discussion as a protective factor against loneliness is the active participation of seniors in social and leisure activities. Seniors who regularly engaged in various activities reported lower levels of loneliness and a higher sense of life satisfaction. Active participation supports a sense of meaning, social inclusion and strengthens the self-esteem of seniors. Conversely, passivity and lack of opportunities to spend free time can lead to a deepening of loneliness and social isolation. The research results also point to individual differences in the experience of loneliness, which are influenced by health status, personality characteristics, previous life experiences and the ability to adapt to environmental changes. These factors emphasize the need for an individual approach to seniors in social work and indicate that loneliness cannot be addressed with a uniform model of intervention.

The results of the research confirm that loneliness is a significant psychosocial problem for seniors in both home and institutional settings. The fact that more than 40% of respondents declared experiencing loneliness corresponds to European population studies that report a prevalence of loneliness in seniors of 30-50% (Yanguas et al., 2018; Victor et al., 2020). These data indicate that loneliness is not a marginal phenomenon, but a systemic social risk that requires systematic attention from both social work and public policy (Klement et al., 2026).

In a broader context, it is appropriate to base the interpretation of the results on multidimensional models of loneliness. Perlman and Peplau (1981) define loneliness as a subjectively unpleasant experience resulting from a lack of satisfactory social relationships. Your results indirectly confirm this differentiation, as social loneliness associated with a lack of contacts prevails among seniors in the home environment, while emotional loneliness related to the loss of close relationships is more pronounced among institutional clients.

The finding that some respondents, despite existing contact with their family, experience a lack of closeness and support is fully consistent with the theory of Cacioppa and Cacioppa (2018), who point out the difference between objective isolation and subjectively experienced

loneliness. According to their neurobiological model, loneliness activates the body's stress mechanisms, which has long-term negative health consequences. This aspect is also supported by the meta-analysis of Holt-Lunstad et al. (2015), which identified loneliness as a significant predictor of increased mortality.

When comparing the home and institutional environment, it turns out that the form of housing itself is not a determining factor of loneliness. Rather, it is a combination of health status, mobility, availability of activities and the quality of interpersonal relationships. In their systematic review, Courtin and Knapp (2017) conclude that the social isolation of seniors is strongly conditioned by environmental factors, especially the availability of community services and public transport. In smaller towns like Skalica, the social network may be relatively compact, but at the same time there may be a lack of a wider range of specialized activities for seniors, which may affect participation rates.

Another important aspect is the transition to an institutional environment. According to transition theory, moving to a facility represents a fundamental life change that can lead to a disruption of identity and social roles. Victor et al. (2020) emphasize that adaptation to a new environment depends on individual coping mechanisms, family support, and the quality of staff. Your findings confirm that even in facilities with regular activities, a feeling of emotional loneliness can persist, suggesting that the quantity of interactions does not replace the quality of relationships.

In terms of health implications, it is important to emphasize that loneliness has significant somatic and psychological consequences. Shankar et al. (2013) identified a link between loneliness and cognitive decline, while Holwerda et al. (2014) pointed out an increased risk of dementia in lonely seniors. These findings support the need for early identification of loneliness as a risk factor. The results of your work, which show a link between health status and levels of loneliness, are consistent with these conclusions. Seniors who regularly participated in activities showed lower levels of loneliness. Levasseur et al. (2010) confirm that higher levels of participation have a protective effect against depression and social isolation. Buffel et al. (2018) also emphasize the importance of so-called “age-friendly communities” that support mobility, accessibility of services and intergenerational connections.

An interesting interpretative framework is also offered by the socioemotional selective theory (Carstensen, 1992), according to which older people naturally reduce the number of social contacts, but focus on emotionally significant relationships. However, if these relationships are absent (e.g. the death of a partner), the risk of emotional loneliness increases significantly. This theoretical model helps to explain why seniors in institutions experience a stronger feeling of emotional emptiness despite the existence of social interactions. Loneliness also has an economic and social dimension. According to the OECD report (2022), the growing loneliness of seniors increases the costs of health care and social services. Investments in preventive community programs therefore appear to be an economically effective solution.

Methodologically, it should be noted that the research was conducted on a sample of 146 respondents in one region. Although the results cannot be generalized to the entire population of Slovakia, their consistency with international studies increases their relevance. At the same

time, the cross-sectional design of the research does not allow for monitoring the development of loneliness over time, which could be the subject of future longitudinal research.

Overall, it can be stated that loneliness in seniors is a complex phenomenon conditioned by the interaction of individual (health status, personality traits), social (quality of relationships, family support) and environmental factors (availability of services, community). The difference between the home and institutional environment lies mainly in the structure of experienced loneliness. For social work, this implies the need for systematic diagnosis of loneliness, support for participation and strengthening emotionally significant relationships. Loneliness should be perceived as a significant social and health determinant, the prevention of which requires coordinated cooperation between social workers, health professionals, local governments and families.

Conclusion

Based on the quantitative research conducted, it can be stated that loneliness is present in seniors in both monitored environments. The results of the work pointed out that the differences between the home and institutional environments are mainly reflected in the nature of the loneliness experienced. Seniors living in a home environment more often experience social loneliness related to a lack of contacts and limited social participation, while seniors in social service facilities experience more emotional loneliness resulting from the loss of family environment and close emotional ties.

A significant finding of the work is the confirmation that the frequency and quality of social contacts, the existence of a confidant and participation in social activities play a key role in the experience of loneliness in seniors. Seniors who had maintained social ties and were actively involved in social life showed a lower level of loneliness regardless of the type of housing. On the contrary, the lack of social support and passivity contributed to the deepening of feelings of loneliness, sadness and social isolation.

The results of the work confirmed the established hypotheses and at the same time pointed out the complexity of the issue of loneliness in senior age. Loneliness cannot be perceived exclusively as a consequence of the form of housing, but as a phenomenon conditioned by a combination of social, emotional, health and environmental factors. For this reason, addressing loneliness requires an individual, multidisciplinary and systematic approach from the side of social work and social services.

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