



INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC INSTITUTE

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

International Virtual Academic Conference

**Education and Social Sciences
Business and Economics**

**17 September 2024
Rome, Italy**

IAI Book of Abstracts

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International Academic Institute

Ul. Todor Aleksandrov br.85-4

Skopje, Republic of N. Macedonia

ISBN 978-608-4881-51-3

Exploring stakeholder perspectives on eco-tourism and eco-hotels in Albania

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Abstract

This study investigates the perspectives of various stakeholders on the development and functionality of eco-tourism and eco-hotels in Albania. Utilizing a semi-structured questionnaire, the research gathered insights from hotel managers, owners, employees, suppliers, farmers, recycling and waste disposal companies, tourism experts, and government representatives. The study aims to understand the challenges, opportunities, and necessary steps for advancing eco-friendly practices within the Albanian hospitality sector. The findings reveal several critical challenges, including high costs, lack of awareness, and insufficient government support, which hinder the widespread adoption of sustainable practices. Despite these obstacles, stakeholders are optimistic about the future growth potential of eco-tourism, driven by increasing consumer demand for sustainable tourism experiences. Key opportunities identified include market differentiation, international collaboration, and the development of education and training programs to enhance sustainability awareness and expertise. The study also emphasizes the importance of stakeholder collaboration in promoting eco-tourism and the adoption of innovative eco-friendly practices, such as renewable energy sources, zero waste programs, and sustainable transportation. Recommendations for policymakers include providing robust support and incentives, improving eco-tourism infrastructure, and developing clear policies to encourage sustainable practices. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies and comparative analyses to further understand the dynamics of eco-tourism development.

Keywords: Eco-tourism, sustainable practices, stakeholder perspectives, hospitality industry, Albania, environmental sustainability.

Case Report: A Pediatric Patient with Generalized Juvenile Myasthenia Gravis

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Abstract

Juvenile myasthenia gravis (JMG) is a rare form of Myasthenia Gravis, an autoimmune disorder of the neuromuscular junction resulting in ocular manifestations or generalized weakness, with onset before 18 years of age. It is characterized by weakness of the muscles, especially in the eyes, mouth, throat, and limbs, after periods of activity. The weakness usually improves after a period of rest. Herein we present the case of an eleven-year-old pediatric patient diagnosed with this condition.

Keywords: juvenile myasthenia gravis, myasthenia gravis, pediatric patient

Acute ischemic stroke post excessive energy drink intake: a pediatric case report

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Abstract

Energy drinks are beverages widely advertised to enhance mental and physical activity and provide an energy boost. Their consumption has rapidly increased, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Their constituents usually consist of caffeine, taurine, sweeteners, vitamins, and herbal additives. Herein we report the case of a pediatric patient with acute ischemic stroke after excessive intake of caffeinated energy drink. Furthermore, a brief review of the recommendations for caffeine and taurine intakes in children and adolescents, as well as the adverse effects of energy drinks is also presented.

Keywords: acute ischemic stroke, caffeine overdose, energy drink overdose, pediatric patient.

DIFFICULT RETURN TO NORMALITY

Post COVID 19 Experience of Obstetrics-Gynecology University Hospital (OGUH)

"Queen Geraldine" Tirana, Albania

"There are three kinds of truth: facts, evidence, and statistics." – Benjamin Disraeli

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted health care services and imposed restrictions on social life. One of the most serious consequences caused by the harsh measures of restrictions of the social and economic life of the country was the reduction of activity and deformation of the structure of maternity hospitals. The experience of these two post COVID - 19 years (2022, 2023) shows that the pace of hospital activity returning to normality (at pre-pandemic levels) is too slow. The main purpose of our study is to analyze the rate of return of performance indicators to the normal state, as before the COVID 19 Pandemic. This is done by calculating the general performance indicators of our hospital in the periods before, during and after the COVID 19 Pandemic.

In a retrospective manner, we calculated the averages of the hospital's general performance indicators, such as the Number of Inpatients, the Inpatients Days, the Average Length of Stay (ALOS), Bed Circulation and Bed Occupancy from 2018 to 2023. This six years time was divided in three periods: Period A, (2018 and 2019) two years **before** the COVID 19 pandemic, Period B (2020 and 2021), two years **during** of the COVID 19 pandemic and Period C (2022 and 2023) two years **after** the COVID 19.

Our study shows that the general hospital performance indicators during the pandemic period (years 2020 and 2021) suffered a significant decline. The number of hospitalized patients in the period before the COVID 19 Pandemic compared to during the COVID 19 pandemic decreased by 7.93%. The decrease in the number of hospitalized patients continued in the period after the COVID 19 pandemic, but the rate of decrease was more moderate at 1.46%. Likewise, the rate of the Average Length of Stay (ALOS), by decreased by 13.91%. Bed Turnover and Bed Occupancy decreased respectively 3.36% and 19.69% in the period during the COVID 19 Pandemic compared to the period before this pandemic, but increased respectively by 7.57% and 4.79% in the period after the COVID 19 pandemic compared to the values during this pandemic.

In the post COVID 19 period, the rate of decline has decreased a lot, but it is still far from the level of the pre-pandemic levels. This **slow return to the normality** has its own causes, which must be carefully analyzed to draw lessons in more successful coping with similar situations in the future. The causes of such a slow normalization are the fear/panic of the population towards the COVID 19 pandemic as well strengthening and easing the restrictive policies applied during the period of the COVID 19 Pandemic in elective services offered in Gynecology, Abortion, Outpatient, etc.

Keywords: COVID 19, obstetrics & gynecology university hospital, performance, pre-pandemic levels.

The most frequent statistical methods used in medical researches The findings of a random study sample of published articles in Albanian medical journals

“There are two kinds of statistics, the kind you look up and the kind you make up.”

– Rex Stout

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Abstract

The statistical analysis is a very important part of any medical research study. The results and inferences are not accurately possible without proper validation with various statistical tools and test. The inappropriate use of statistics methods can lead to incorrect conclusions.

The main purpose of our study is to make researchers aware of the various aspects of statistics methods used in medical research and so as to adopt better statistical practices.

This is a review article aimed to study the most frequent statistical methods based on an internal observation of published studies in some of the recognized Albanian medical journals (available free online) during the last five years. The results are coming from a final sample of 35 articles. The evaluation process was focused on the statistical method used in these studies.

The top three most common statistical methods we found were: Descriptive Statistics was the most used method out in 100% of the studies, Inferential Statistics carried out in 44% of studies, and Combination (Descriptive and Inferential Statistics) was found in 44% of the studies. The top three less common statistical methods we found were: Regression (14%), ANOVA One way (9%) and Survival Analyses (6%).

The use of appropriate statistical methods in medical research supports the process of making correct statistical analyses, draw the right conclusions and avoid various errors. In this perspective, improvement of the teaching programs to learn the basics of medical statistics for health system professionals and active involvement of biostatisticians in the publishing boards of medical journals and scientific research remain the most effective ways to improve the situation.

Keywords: medical research, study design, statistical methods, statistical errors.

The Influence of Social Norms on HRM Practices in Albania: Unravelling the Impact of Cultural and Institutional Contexts in a Post-Socialist Market

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Abstract

This research explores the impact of social norms on Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in Albania, a post-socialist market characterized by unique cultural and institutional landscapes. Building upon theoretical frameworks such as social exchange theory, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and institutional theory, this study investigates how traditional cultural values and evolving institutional frameworks influence HRM strategies and operations in Albania. Through in-depth interviews with HR managers from both public and private sectors, the research uncovers how cultural norms like collectivism, respect for hierarchy, and the importance of personal relationships continue to shape HR practices such as recruitment, performance management, and employee relations. Additionally, this study examines the challenges faced by organizations in balancing global HRM standards with local cultural expectations amidst Albania's ongoing transition towards a market-oriented economy. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in HRM within emerging markets, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive and contextually adapted HR strategies. This paper provides practical insights for local and international organizations operating in Albania, emphasizing the importance of aligning HRM practices with the unique socio-cultural and institutional dynamics of post-socialist societies.

Keywords: Four to six keywords are to be provided for indexing purposes.

SIS in Albania: How the "False Ideal" Crumbled and Its Grim Consequences

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Abstract

This article explores the effect and growth of ISIS, which has had a profound impact on much of the Middle East-and more. Born as a spin-off of al-Qaeda in Iraq and Syria, ISIS was first called Al-Qaeda in Iraq; it rose to prominence through its extreme use of violence tactics by deliberately pursuing terrorizing strategy which facilitates their goal ball-breaking the community. After the US invasion and the fall of Saddam's Ba'ath regime, ISIS stepped into this space in 2014 during a period of chaos to declare itself as caliphate and a global threat. The organization came to possess significant amounts of financial assets, cash—including from sales of oil and donations—as well as state-like structures in the areas under its control.

But as time went on ISIS took heavy losses including territorial and revenue declines, also a massive drop-off in the number of fighters engaging. The organization carried out numerous terrorist attacks on the continent, which posed grave security threats and caused heavy human losses and damage. The frequency of attacks declined after 2018, but ISIS nonetheless remained a threat for longer than that and has assisted or directly organized further terrorist strikes in several different countries as it tried to maintain the faith and morale of its core supporters.

The article highlights the importance of a resource-intensive, all-in counter-terrorism strategy and especially in Western Balkan countries with high number of Muslims largely dominate like Albania: dealing with those radicalized and bringing back from conflict zones.

Keywords: ISIS, radicalization , organization , influence.

Gender gap in academic entrepreneurship: a European mapping

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Abstract

Academic entrepreneurship serves as a powerful bridge between business and science driving economic growth and fostering innovation. Despite it seems to be an increasingly relevant dimension of academic life, academic entrepreneurship is underexplored, especially from a gender perspective. The present study aims to capture the geographical distribution of "Proof of Concept" fundings from the European Research Council (ERC) that support the translation of research results into innovation. Considering data in the period 2019-2023, findings reveal that a gender gap exists in the distribution of fundings awarded by male and female principal investigators. The proposed geographical mapping is a suitable tool to promote knowledge sharing and brokerage on the need for a structural change intended to promote more heterogeneous, dynamic and gender-balanced academic environments.

Keywords: gender gap, gender equality, academic entrepreneurship, knowledge sharing, European Research Council (ERC).

LATGALIAN OLD BELIEVER TRADITION OF BRIDE ABDUCTION IN 20TH CENTURY LATVIAN PERIODICALS

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Abstract

Basing on materials published in Latvian periodicals the study provides the analysis of the bride abduction tradition practiced in the 1920s and 1930s among the members of Old Believer community in Latgale (the south-eastern part of Latvia). Being a world-famous, but rather archaic practice bride abduction preserved by Old Believers as tradition of runaway marriage and was maintained in its ancient – traditional (in rural environment) and latest – entertainment form (in urban environment). This tradition was manifested in three possible versions: (1) as direct continuation of the custom of capturing wives, (2) as a necessity of everyday life conditioned by the poorer social layers, and (3) as an opportunity of making a family without parents' consent or blessing. Most of the journalists who observed and described this tradition perceived it as something exotic and alien to the local traditions of religious marriage and did not try to analyse the deeper roots of such a phenomenon.

Acquisition of professional competence of doctors

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Abstract

This research focuses on the current topic of professional learning. We investigate what experts need to know to perform their profession, what they need to do for it and how they can achieve their expertise.

We aim at young doctors with up to three years of working experience who are at the beginning of their professional career and are undergoing intensive professional learning.

The aim of our research is to identify methods that influence the acquisition of professional skills by doctors, taking into account the period of their practice. Determination of the most beneficial method or methods and the possibility of their use in practice.

As a methodological tool, we use a questionnaire survey, focusing on the analysis of the perception of the usefulness of individual educational methods with 692 respondents. We analyze the differences in the acquisition of professional competence among doctors and use comparison depending on age or length of practice. As a control group for novice experts, we chose a comparison with a group of experienced experts (twenty or more years of experience).

The results of this investigation show that doctors with up to three years of experience obtain their professional skills by working with a more experienced colleague, while their older colleagues with over twenty years of experience learn most at the workplace. The entire group of doctors found that learning on the job was the most beneficial method. Reflecting on one's own work and learning from mistakes is the next perceived most beneficial method of professional learning for doctors.

We see the benefit of this research primarily in the use of these methods in practice during the professionalization process itself and also in the academic field, where students are being prepared for their future profession.

Keywords: Process of professionalization, professional learning, doctors, professional career

Predictive ability of Composite leading indicators for business cycles of selected EU countries

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Abstract

The last decades represent a turbulent period for the economies of many European countries. National and international institutions are trying to create reliable indicators that could reliably predict the development of their business cycle. At the international level, the Composite leading indicator (CLI) constructed by the OECD and the Economic sentiment indicator (ESI) constructed by Eurostat are currently used. The aim of the contribution was to analyze the predictive capabilities of these indicators with the help of cross-correlation analysis of the cyclical components of selected time series of the national GDP of the country and the relevant composite indicator of OECD and Eurostat. Three countries of the European Union, namely Italy, Germany and France, were analyzed for the period 2000-2023. In addition to the entire period, the time series were divided into shorter sections that were related to the economic crises occurring during this period. The presented analysis led to the conclusion that the given indicators have the ability to predict the business cycles of the selected countries, but the strength and accuracy of the prediction changes over time and depending on the country. The CLI of the OECD and the ESI of Eurostat can thus be used to predict business cycles as a supplement to the composite indicators created at the national level.

Keywords: Business cycle, CLI, prediction, OECD, ESI.

Enhance Young Learners' Speaking Skills through the integration of the Teaching of Vocabulary into Experiential Learning

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Abstract

The present study aims to explore the extent to which integrating vocabulary instruction into Experiential Learning (EL) enhances the speaking abilities of young learners. More specifically, it examines the validity of the hypothesis that EL can serve as an engaging and effective method for improving young learners' speaking skills, compared to traditional teaching approaches. This small-scale research involved two A2-level classes from a private English school, each consisting of eight students. The action research methodology was employed, with one class serving as the control group and being taught using standard textbooks, while the other class, the experimental group, was taught using the Experiential Learning (EL) method. The researcher designed eight lessons focused on teaching speaking skills, in alignment with both the students' preferences and the objectives of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

To measure the students' speaking proficiency and track their progress, an A1/A2 KPG pre-test was administered to both groups before and after the English lessons. Additionally, qualitative data were gathered through pre- and post-semi-structured interviews with the experimental group to gain insights into the students' perspectives on speaking and assess the effectiveness of the EL approach. The researcher also maintained a journal documenting key observations related to speaking, vocabulary, motivation, and collaboration throughout the study.

The findings indicate that integrating vocabulary instruction into the EL approach significantly improved the speaking skills of young learners, while also supporting effective vocabulary acquisition. These results suggest that EL provides a practical and engaging framework for enhancing language proficiency in young students.
