

***SUPERHEROJI U STRIPOVIMA KAO SREDSTVO ZA
SPRJEČAVANJE MALOLJETNIČKE DELINKVENCIJE:
PRILAGOĐAVANJE ZAPADNIH PRAKSI BALKANSKOM
KONTEKSTU***

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Stručni rad

Haris Memija, doktorant FPN UNSA

Sažetak:

Ovaj rad istražuje potencijal stripova o superherojima kao alata za sprječavanje maloljetničke delinkvencije, posebno na Balkanu. U svijetu oblikovanom tehnologijom i složenim etičkim pitanjima, novi načini rješavanja društvenih problema su neophodni. Oslanjajući se na bazu zapadnih praksi, ova studija sugerira da dobro izrađeni stripovi o superherojima mogu promovirati pozitivne vrijednosti, poboljšati pismenost i baviti se osjetljivim temama na način koji se povezuje s mladim ljudima. Naglašava važnost razumijevanja specifičnih izazova i kulture Balkana, uključujući njegovu ekonomsku situaciju, etničke tenzije i historiju sukoba. Rad se zalaže za saradnju s lokalnim umjetnicima, edukatorima i liderima zajednice kako bi se osiguralo da su stripovi relevantni i učinkoviti. Priznavanjem zabrinutosti zbog prevelikog pojednostavljenja i nemamernih posljedica, te promoviranjem medijske pismenosti i promišljenog priporučivanja, ovaj pristup se može odgovorno koristiti za ohrabriranje mlađih ljudi i poticanje pozitivnih promjena.

Ključne riječi: superheroji, strip, maloljetnička delikvencija, medijska pismenost

1. Uvod

Porast maloljetničke delinkvencije predstavlja stalni izazov za društva širom svijeta, zahtijevajući inovativne i efikasne strategije prevencije. Na Balkanu, gdje socioekonomski faktori i nerazvijene demokratske institucije mogu pogoršati problem, potreba za novim pristupima je posebno izražena. Kako tehnologija prožima društvo u svim aspektima, pristup rješavanju problema delinkvencije treba biti inovativan i moderan. Čuljević je 2024. godine u svom radu "Maloljetničko prekršajno pravo u Bosni i Hercegovini – razvoj prekršajnog prava i analiza pravnog okvira" (Čuljević, 2024) navela da je maloljetnička delinkvencija društveni fenomen koji karakterizira društveno neprihvatljivo ponašanje maloljetnika i da uključuje ne samo krivična djela već i druge oblike poremećaja u ponašanju, tj. takozvana rizična ponašanja maloljetnika.

Stripovi superheroja, popularan i vizualno privlačan medij, imaju značajan potencijal da odjeknu kod mlađih ljudi na Balkanu. Ovi stripovi, koji su osvojili društvo u savremenom dobu (Hening and Rusdiarti, 2020), nude jedinstvenu priliku za promociju pozitivnih vrijednosti, prosocijalnog ponašanja i vještina kritičkog mišljenja na način koji tradicionalne obrazovne metode možda ne mogu postići. Stripovi o superherojima mogu pokrenuti diskusiju i kritičko razmišljanje (Mitchell and George, 1996).

Ovaj pregledni članak tvrdi da stripovi o superherojima, crpeći inspiraciju iz iskustava i praksi sa Zapada, mogu poslužiti kao efikasno obrazovno sredstvo za prevenciju maloljetničke delinkvencije na Balkanu. Predstavljajući uspješne zapadne programe i inicijative, ovaj rad ima za cilj da pruži okvir za prilagođavanje i implementaciju akcija zasnovanih na stripovima u balkanskom kontekstu, uzimajući u obzir kulturne osjetljivosti i lokalne izazove. To će se postići definiranjem stripova kao medija, razumijevanjem psihološke privlačnosti superheroja, pregledom specifičnih primjera stripova na Zapadu i potencijalnih izazova usvajanja ovih praksi u balkanskom kontekstu. Krajnji cilj je pokazati kako stripovi o superherojima mogu doprinijeti izgradnji sigurnijeg i bezbjednijeg okruženja za mlade ljude u regiji, osnažujući ih da postanu odgovorni i angažirani građani.

2. Teorijski okvir

Da bismo razumjeli kako stripovi o superherojima mogu efikasno doprinijeti prevenciji maloljetničke delinkvencije, ključno je uspostaviti teorijski okvir. Ovaj

odjeljak će definirati strip kao medij, istražiti moć vizuelne pismenosti u tumačenju stripova i istražiti psihološku privlačnost superheroja.

Definiranje stripova kao medija

Stripovi su specifična vrsta jezika, vizuelni jezik, a mogu se smatrati i jedinstvenim oblikom komunikacije (Cerić 2013; Cohn 2003; Munitić 2006). Kao što Duncan i Smith sugeriraju, stripovi se mogu smatrati medijem masovne komunikacije, olakšavajući posredovanu interakciju između komunikatora i široke publike (Duncan i Smith, 2009). Da bismo u potpunosti shvatili potencijal ovog medija, korisno je pozvati se na Scott McCloudovo fundamentalno djelo "Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art" (Baetens i Frey, 2014), koje pruža sveobuhvatno istraživanje strukture i jezika stripova. McCloudov rad objašnjava kako stripovi koriste sekvensialne slike, uparene s tekstrom, kako bi prenijeli narative i ideje na jedinstven i zanimljiv način. Ovo preplitanje riječi i slika omogućava stripovima da prenesu višedimenzionalnost stvarnog života (Cerić, 2013; Cohn, 2003; Darnhofer, 2018).

Moć vizuelne pismenosti

Stripovi zahtijevaju specifičan oblik pismenosti: vizualnu pismenost. To obuhvata sposobnost identificiranja veza između ikoničnih simbola i slika, procjene njihovog značaja, sinteze informacija koje prenose i kritičkog bavljenja njihovim značenjem (Cerić i Rašidagić, 2019). Vizualna pismenost je duboko isprepletena s konvencionalnom pismenošću (Cerić, 2013). Stoga, bavljenje stripovima o superherojima može poboljšati vještine vizuelne pismenosti, koje su sve važnije u današnjem svijetu vođenom vizualnim svjetom (Cerić, 2013).

Psihološka privlačnost

Narativi o superherojima dotiču se temeljnih ljudskih želja i motivacija. Žanr superheroja jedinstven je po svom oslanjanju na zajednički narativni univerzum s kontinuitetom (Chambliss, 2012). Superheroji nude kulturno sredstvo za premošćivanje jaza između male grupe s kojom su se ljudska bića morala nositi i mnogo veće grupe koju podrazumijevaju moderni društveni aranžmani (Carney et al., 2014). Stripovi o superherojima mogu pokrenuti diskusiju i kritičko razmišljanje (Mitchell i George, 1996). Oni čitateljima pružaju uzore, nudeći inspiraciju i primjer inspirativne vrline (Pizarro i Baumeister, 2013). Priče često istražuju teme moralnog osnaživanja, pravde i prevladavanja nedaća, što duboko rezonira s mlađom publikom koja se možda suočava s vlastitim izazovima (Fradkin et al., 2016).

3. Zapadne prakse: Stripovi o superherojima kao preventivno sredstvo

Na Zapadu su stripovi o superherojima prepoznati po svom potencijalu kao obrazovni alati, posebno u rješavanju pitanja relevantnih za mlade ljude. Ovaj dio će istražiti specifične primjere kako su stripovi korišteni u zapadnim kontekstima za promociju pozitivnih vrijednosti, poboljšanje pismenosti i sprječavanje rizičnih ponašanja, s fokusom na inicijative koje bi se mogle prilagoditi balkanskom kontekstu.

Promocija vrijednosti i prosocijalnog ponašanja

Stripovi o superherojima korišteni su za pokretanje diskusije i kritičkog mišljenja (Mitchell and George, 1996). Taj pristup je ponudio kulturno sredstvo za premošćivanje jaza između male grupe ljudi koji su razvili metod da se nose s problemom i mnogo veće veličine grupe koju podrazumijevaju i moderna društvena uređenja (Carney et al., 2014).

Poboljšanje pismenosti i obrazovanja

Osim promocije vrijednosti, stripovi su također pronašli mjesto u obrazovnim okruženjima za poboljšanje vještina pismenosti. Zanimljiva priroda stripa može motivirati nevoljne čitatelje i pružiti most prema tradicionalnijim oblicima književnosti (Cerić i Ceric, 2020). Upotreba stripa u obrazovanju usklađena je s naporima za promociju vizualne pismenosti. Po samoj svojoj prirodi, stripovi zahtijevaju specifičan oblik pismenosti (Cerić, 2013).

Rješavanje osjetljivih pitanja i promoviranje zdravih odluka

Stripovi su se pokazali kao vrijedan alat za rješavanje osjetljivih pitanja i promoviranje zdravog donošenja odluka među mladima. Na primjer, "The Native Comic Book Project" (Montgomery et al., 2012) pokazuje kako stripovi mogu biti odlično sredstvo za dosezanje i angažiranje mlađih i promoviranje zdravih odluka (Montgomery et al., 2012).

Naučene lekcije i prilagodljive strategije

Ispitivanjem ovih zapadnih praksi postaje jasno da stripovi o superherojima nude fleksibilnu i zanimljivu platformu za rješavanje niza pitanja relevantnih za prevenciju maloljetničke delinkvencije. Ključ leži u prilagođavanju ovih strategija specifičnom kulturnom kontekstu Balkana, osiguravajući da sadržaj

odražava lokalne vrijednosti i da se bavi jedinstvenim izazovima s kojima se suočavaju mladi ljudi u regiji.

4. Prilagođavanje zapadnih praksi balkanskom kontekstu

Iako gore navedene zapadne prakse nude vrijedne uvide, njihovo direktno prenošenje na balkanski kontekst bilo bi neefikasno. Ovaj odjeljak će se baviti važnošću kulturne osjetljivosti, potrebom prilagođavanja sadržaja lokalnim izazovima i potencijalom za saradnju s lokalnim umjetnicima i edukatorima kako bi se osigurao uspjeh intervencija zasnovanih na stripovima na Balkanu.

Kulturna osjetljivost i lokalizacija

Balkanska regija ima bogato i raznoliko kulturno naslijeđe, s jedinstvenim vrijednostima, tradicijama i društvenim normama. Ključno je izbjegavati nametanje zapadnih idea ili narativa koji u tom slučaju možda neće imati odjeka kod lokalne publike. Svaka akcija zasnovana na stripovima mora biti pažljivo prilagođena kako bi odražavala specifičan kulturni kontekst Balkana. Stripovi mogu navesti čitatelje da razmišljaju i analiziraju kulturne razlike (Fedotova et al., 2015). To uključuje razmatranje faktora kao što su:

Jezik: Osiguravanje da su stripovi prevedeni na lokalne jezike i dijalekte, koristeći kulturno prikladan jezik i izraze. U tom kontekstu, podsjetimo se na jedan uspješan primjer. U Jugoslaviji se 70-ih godina pojavio popularni strip „Alan Ford“ koji je zahvaljujući sjajnim prijevodom Nenada Brixija postigao veću popularnost čak i od originalnog italijanskog tržišta.

Vrijednosti: Prilagođavanje narativa kako bi se uskladili s lokalnim vrijednostima i uvjerenjima, uz istovremeno promoviranje pozitivnih vrijednosti i prosocijalnog ponašanja.

Predstavljanje: Prikazivanje likova i okruženja koja odražavaju raznolikost balkanske regije, promovirajući inkluzivnost i razumljivo kulturološko predstavljanje.

Rješavanje lokalnih izazova

Izazovi s kojima se suočavaju mladi ljudi na Balkanu mogu se razlikovati od onih na Zapadu. Bitno je prilagoditi sadržaj stripa kako bi se riješili specifični lokalni problemi, kao što su:

Socioekonomski faktori: Rješavanje problema vezanih za siromaštvo, nezaposlenost i nedostatak prilika.

Etničke tenzije: Promocija tolerancije, razumijevanja i pomirenja između različitih etničkih grupa.

Korupcija i nedostatak povjerenja u institucije: Podsticanje građanskog angažmana, transparentnosti i odgovornosti.

Trauma i postkonfliktna pitanja: Pružanje podrške i resursa mladima pogodenim ratom i raseljavanjem.

Saradnja s lokalnim učesnicima

Da bi se osigurao uspjeh akcija zasnovanih na stripovima na Balkanu, neophodno je uključiti lokalne učesnike u proces razvoja i implementacije. To podrazumijeva:

Lokalni umjetnici i pisci: Saradnja s lokalnim umjetnicima i piscima stripova kako bi se stvorio kulturno relevantan i zanimljiv sadržaj.

Obrazovni sektor i omladinski radnici: Partnerstvo s edukatorima i omladinskim radnicima radi integracije stripova u obrazovne programe i inicijative u zajednici. Lokalna vlast i organizacije zajednice: Angažovanje lidera i organizacija zajednice radi izgradnje podrške za projekat i osiguranja njegove održivosti. Usvajanje pametnih tehnologija i inovativnih pristupa u urbanim sredinama ima potencijal da značajno poboljša rezultate smanjenja rizika od katastrofa i izgradi otporne gradove (Garaplija i Prguda, 2023).

Davanjem prioriteta kulturnoj osjetljivosti, rješavanjem lokalnih izazova i podsticanjem saradnje s lokalnim zainteresovanim stranama, moguće je prilagoditi zapadne prakse i stvoriti efikasne akcije zasnovane na stripovima koje doprinose prevenciji maloljetničke delinkvencije u balkanskom kontekstu. Vrijedi napomenuti da sami stripovi nisu ideološki neutralan fenomen (Karadjov, 2022), što je još jedan razlog da se osigura prilagođavanje poruka. I podsjećamo na krucijalnu vrijednost stripa; stripovi se mogu koristiti za pokretanje diskusije i kritičkog mišljenja (Mitchell and George, 1996).

I za kraj ovog dijela rada, ponudit ćemo moguća rješenja putem pet konkretnih primjera kako bi se zapadne prakse mogle prilagoditi balkanskom kontekstu, nadograđujući se na prethodne tvrdnje:

Strip kao prevencija sigurnosnih izazova

Analizirajući događaje iz novije historije, možemo doći do zaključka da su različitim sigurnosnim izazovima prethodile društveno-političke krize kao svojevrsni inkubatori za razvoj osnovnih elemenata koji svojim individualnim ili sinergijskim djelovanjem mogu izazvati različite sigurnosne posljedice (Garaplija i Korajlić, 2023). Smještajući „krizu“ u početak dramaturškog zapleta i

detektujući „elemente“ kao „loše momke“ mogao bi biti osnov za kreiranje stripova, te na bazi navedene fabule dalje razvijati scenarije. Širenjem konteksta se rješavaju konflikti, te bi u tom smislu strip mogao odigrati ulogu preventivnog sredstva u sprječavanju sigurnosnih izazova.

Rješavanje traume i postkonfliktnih problema

U regiji obilježenoj prošlim sukobima, stripovi o superherojima mogu se koristiti za rješavanje traume i promoviranje pomirenja. Na primjer, priče bi mogle prikazivati likove koji su iskusili rat ili raseljavanje, pokazujući otpornost ljudi i ujedno nudeći poruke nade. Ovim pristupom stripovi mogu promovirati bolje razumijevanje različitih kultura (Fedotova et al., 2015) i to bi se razlikovalo od pasivnosti Zapadne Evrope prema događajima u bivšoj Jugoslaviji (Lowe, 2022).

Promoviranje tolerancije i razumijevanja

Stripovi se mogu koristiti za osporavanje stereotipa i promoviranje razumijevanja između različitih etničkih i vjerskih grupa na Balkanu. Priče bi mogle prikazivati likove iz različitih sredina koji rade zajedno na prevladavanju zajedničkih izazova, ističući važnost empatije i saradnje. Balkan je plodno tlo za primjenu ovog primjera, jer svi balkanski narodi gaje isti običaj o važnosti dobrosusjedskih i prisnih odnosa.

Rješavanje socioekonomskih problema

S obzirom na ekonomске izazove u dijelovima Balkana, stripovi bi se mogli baviti pitanjima poput siromaštva, nezaposlenosti i korupcije. Priče bi mogle prikazivati likove koji pronalaze kreativna rješenja za ekonomске probleme, ističući važnost poduzetništva, obrazovanja i građanskog angažmana.

Promoviranje građanskog aktivizma i demokratije

Stripovi se mogu koristiti za poticanje mladih ljudi da učestvuju u demokratskim procesima i da njihovi lideri postanu odgovorniji. Priče bi mogle sadržavati likove koji se bore protiv korupcije i nepravde, inspirirajući čitatelje da postanu aktivni i angažirani građani.

5. Rješavanje potencijalnih izazova i kritika

Iako upotreba stripova o superherojima kao preventivnog alata nudi značajan potencijal, ključno je prepoznati i riješiti potencijalne izazove i kritike. Ovaj odjeljak će istražiti zabrinutost vezanu za preveliko pojednostavljenje, kulturnu prikladnost i potencijal za neželjene posljedice, nudeći strategije za ublažavanje ovih rizika.

Preveliko pojednostavljenje i nijansiranje

Jedna uobičajena kritika stripova je da mogu previše pojednostaviti složena pitanja, svodeći ih na pojednostavljene narative o dobru protiv zla. Da bismo to izbjegli, ključno je:

Razviti nijansirane narative: Priče trebaju istraživati složenost maloljetničke delinkvencije, izbjegavajući pojednostavljena objašnjenja i stereotipe.

Promovirati kritičko mišljenje: Stripovi se mogu koristiti za pokretanje diskusije i kritičkog mišljenja (Mitchell and George, 1996). Uvesti prilike za čitatelje da razmišljaju o pitanjima pokrenutim u stripovima i uključe se u kritički dijalog.

Izbjegavati didaktizam: Umjesto da predstavljaju propisana rješenja, stripovi trebaju poticati čitatelje da istraže različite perspektive i razviju vlastita informirana mišljenja.

Kulturna prikladnost i predstavljanje

Kao što smo ranije spomenuli, kulturna osjetljivost je od najveće važnosti. Da bi se osiguralo da stripovi odjeknu kod lokalne publike i izbjegla kulturna neosjetljivost, bitno je:

Uključiti lokalne aktere: Sarađivati s lokalnim umjetnicima, piscima, edukatorima i liderima lokalne vlasti i zajednice kako bi se osiguralo da su stripovi kulturno prikladni i relevantni.

Promovirati raznolika predstavljanja: Predstavljati likove i priče koji odražavaju raznolikost balkanske regije, izbjegavajući stereotipe i promovirajući inkluzivnost.

Rješavati lokalna pitanja: Prilagoditi sadržaj stripa kako bi se riješili specifični lokalni izazovi i problemi.

Nenamjerne posljedice i strategije ublažavanja

Postoji rizik od promoviranja fetišizma robe i seksističkih, rasističkih i fašističkih "vrijednosti" u stripovima (Karadjov, 2022). Da bi se to ublažilo, važno je:

Promovirati medijsku pismenost: Naučiti mlade ljude kako kritički analizirati medijske poruke i identificirati potencijalne predrasude ili štetne stereotipe. Korištenje stripova kao alata za medijsku pismenost može pomoći u prevladavanju kulturnih ili jezičkih barijera i njegovati kritičko razmišljanje, kreativnost i empatiju (Tsene, 2022).

Pružiti kontekst i smjernice: Dopuniti stripove edukativnim materijalima i diskusijama kako bi se čitateljima pružio kontekst i smjernice.

Procijeniti uticaj i prilagoditi se: Redovno procjenjivati uticaj akcija zasnovanih na stripovima i prilagođavati ih na osnovu povratnih informacija čitatelja i zainteresiranih strana.

Rizik od "zaglupljivanja"

Postoji zabrinutost da bi se korištenje stripova moglo smatrati "zaglupljivanjem" važnih pitanja. Da bismo se pozabavili ovim, trebalo bi:

Naglasiti sofisticiranost medija: Istaknuti jedinstvene narativne i umjetničke mogućnosti stripa (Pedri, 2015).

Promovirati vizuelnu pismenost: Demonstrirati kako stripovi mogu poboljšati vizuelnu i medijsku pismenost (Cerić, 2013).

Koristiti stripove kao ulaz: Koristiti stripove kako bismo potaknuli interes za složenije teme, potičući čitatelje da dalje istražuju ova pitanja kroz druge medije.

Istaknuti izuzetnu umjetnost: Neki stripovi su se uzdigli do priznate i cijenjene umjetničke forme (Cerić, 2013; 2019; 2020).

Priznavanjem i rješavanjem ovih potencijalnih izazova i kritika, moguće je iskoristiti moć stripova o superherojima kao preventivnog alata, a istovremeno smanjiti rizike od neželjenih posljedica.

6. Zaključak

U eri koju definiraju brzi tehnološki napredak i složeni globalni izazovi, potreba za inovativnim i angažirajućim pristupima prevenciji maloljetničke delinkvencije hitnija je nego ikad. Kako tehnologija nastavlja prožimati svaki aspekt ljudskog postojanja, pitanja koja se tiču njenih etičkih implikacija, društvenog utjecaja i potencijalnih rizika zauzela su centralno mjesto. Ovo istraživanje tvrdi da stripovi o superherojima, kada se promišljeno prilagode i implementiraju, mogu poslužiti kao vrijedan alat u ovom nastojanju, posebno u kontekstu Balkana. Ovim radom provociramo stručno-naučnu javnost da razvija inovativne pristupe teorijskom određenju i definisanju stripa kao preventivnog alata protiv sve rastuće maloljetničke delikvencije.

Crpeći zapadne prakse i prilagođavajući ih specifičnim kulturnim nijansama i izazovima regije, stripovi mogu promovirati pozitivne vrijednosti, poboljšati pismenost i baviti se osjetljivim pitanjima na način koji odjekuje kod mladih ljudi. "The Native Comic Book Project" (Montgomery et al., 2012) i druge inicijative pokazuju potencijal stripova da angažiraju mlade i promoviraju zdrave odluke

(Montgomery et al., 2012). Stripovi mogu potaknuti čitatelje na razmišljanje, promišljanje i analizu kulturnih razlika (Fedotova et al., 2015).

Međutim, ključno je priznati i odgovoriti na potencijalne kritike vezane za preveliko pojednostavljenje, kulturnu prikladnost i nemjerne posljedice. Razvojem nijansiranih narativa, promoviranjem raznolikog predstavljanja i njegovanjem medijske pismenosti (Tsene, 2022), ovi rizici se mogu ublažiti.

U konačnici, uspjeh akcija zasnovanih na stripovima ovisi o saradnji s lokalnim umjetnicima, edukatorima i liderima zajednice, osiguravajući da je sadržaj kulturno relevantan, zanimljiv i utjecajan. Kao što koristan tekst (What Superheroes Should Today's Tech Inspire?, 2012) sugerira, fikcija može stvoriti stvarnost, a iskorištavanjem moći priopovijedanja možemo inspirirati pozitivne promjene i ohrabriti mlade ljude da postanu aktivni i odgovorni građani. Zaključno, prihvatanjem kreativnosti, kulturne osjetljivosti i posvećenosti rješavanju lokalnih izazova, stripovi o superherojima mogu doprinijeti svjetlijoj budućnosti mladih ljudi na Balkanu i šire.

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**SUPERHEROES IN COMICS AS A MEANS OF PREVENTING
JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: ADAPTING WESTERN
PRACTICES FOR THE BALKAN CONTEXT**

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Professional article

Haris Memija, doktorant FPN UNSA

Abstract:

This paper explores the potential of superhero comics as a tool for preventing juvenile delinquency, particularly in the Balkans. In a world shaped by technology and complex ethical questions, new ways to address social issues are essential. This study suggests that well-crafted superhero comics can promote positive values, improve literacy, and tackle sensitive subjects in a way that connects with young people. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the specific challenges and culture of the Balkans, including its economic situation, ethnic tensions, and history of conflict. The paper argues for collaboration with local artists, educators, and community leaders to ensure the comics are relevant and effective. By acknowledging concerns about oversimplification and unintended consequences, and by promoting media literacy and thoughtful storytelling, this approach can be used responsibly to empower young people and encourage positive change.

Keywords: superheroes, comics, juvenile delinquency, media literacy

1. Introduction

The rise of juvenile delinquency presents a persistent challenge to societies worldwide, demanding innovative and effective prevention strategies. In the Balkans, where socioeconomic factors and underdeveloped democratic institutions can exacerbate the problem, the need for fresh approaches is particularly acute. As technology permeates society, the approach to solving delinquency issues should be innovative and modern. In 2024, Čuljević stated in her paper "Juvenile Misdemeanor Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Development of Misdemeanor Law and Analysis of the Legal Framework" (Čuljević, 2024), that juvenile delinquency is a social phenomenon characterized by socially unacceptable behaviors of minors and that it includes not only criminal offenses but also other forms of behavioral disorders, i.e., so-called risky behaviors of minors.

Superhero comics, a popular and visually engaging medium, hold significant potential to resonate with young people in the Balkans. These comics, which have captivated society in the contemporary era (Hening and Rusdiarti, 2020), offer a unique opportunity to promote positive values, prosocial behavior, and critical thinking skills in a way that traditional educational methods may not achieve. Superhero comics may initiate discussion and critical thinking (Mitchell and George, 1996).

This review article argues that superhero comics, drawing on experiences and practices from the West, can serve as an effective educational tool for preventing juvenile delinquency in the Balkans. By showcasing successful Western programs and initiatives, this paper aims to provide a framework for adapting and implementing comics-based interventions in the Balkan context, taking into account cultural sensitivities and local challenges. This will be done by defining comics as a medium, understanding the psychological appeal of superheroes, reviewing specific examples of comics in the West and the potential challenges of adopting these practices to the Balkan context. Ultimately, the goal is to demonstrate how superhero comics can contribute to building a safer and more secure environment for young people in the region, empowering them to become responsible and engaged citizens.

2. The Theoretical Framework

To understand how superhero comics can effectively contribute to juvenile delinquency prevention, it's crucial to establish a theoretical framework. This

section will define comics as a medium, explore the power of visual literacy in interpreting comics, and delve into the psychological appeal of superheroes.

Defining Comics as a Medium

Comics are a specific type of language, a visual language, and they can also be considered a unique form of communication (Cerić 2013; Cohn 2003; Munitić 2006). As Duncan and Smith suggest, comics can be seen as a medium of mass communication, facilitating mediated interaction between communicators and a broad audience (Duncan and Smith, 2009). To fully appreciate this medium's potential, it's helpful to refer to Scott McCloud's seminal work, "Understanding Comics" (Baetens and Frey, 2014), which provides a comprehensive exploration of the structure and language of comics. McCloud's work illuminates how comics use sequential images, coupled with text, to convey narratives and ideas in a unique and engaging manner. This intermingling of words and images allows comics to convey the multidimensionality of real life (Cerić 2013; Cohn 2003; Darnhofer, 2018).

The Power of Visual Literacy

Comics require a specific form of literacy: visual literacy. This encompasses the ability to identify connections between iconic symbols and images, assess their significance, synthesize the information they convey, and critically engage with their meaning (Cerić and Rašidagić, 2019). Visual literacy is deeply intertwined with conventional literacy (Cerić, 2013). Engaging with superhero comics can therefore enhance visual literacy skills, which are increasingly important in today's visually driven world (Cerić, 2013).

Psychological Appeal

Superhero narratives tap into fundamental human desires and motivations. The superhero genre is unique in its reliance on a shared narrative universe with continuity (Chambliss, 2012). Superheroes offer a cultural means of negotiating the gap between the small group size that human beings have evolved to deal with, and the much larger group size that is entailed by modern social arrangements (Carney et al., 2014). Superhero comics may initiate discussion and critical thinking (Mitchell and George, 1996). They provide readers with role models, offering inspiration and exemplifying inspirational virtue (Pizarro and Baumeister, 2013). The stories often explore themes of empowerment, justice, and overcoming adversity, which resonate deeply with young audiences who may be facing their own challenges (Fradkin et al., 2015).

3. Western Practices: Superhero Comics as a Preventive Tool

In the West, superhero comics have been recognized for their potential as educational tools, particularly in addressing issues relevant to young people. This section will explore specific examples of how comics have been used in Western contexts to promote positive values, enhance literacy, and prevent risky behaviors, with a focus on initiatives that could be adapted for the Balkan context.

Promoting Values and Prosocial Behavior

Superhero comics have been used to initiate discussion and critical thinking (Mitchell and George, 1996). They offer a cultural means of negotiating the gap between the small group size that human beings have evolved to deal with, and the much larger group size that is entailed by modern social arrangements (Carney et al., 2014).

Enhancing Literacy and Education

Beyond value promotion, comics have also found a place in educational settings to improve literacy skills. The engaging nature of comics can motivate reluctant readers and provide a bridge to more traditional forms of literature (Cerić and Cerić, 2020). The use of comics in education aligns with efforts to promote visual literacy. By their very nature, comics require specific form of literacy (Cerić, 2013).

Addressing Sensitive Issues and Promoting Healthy Decisions

Comics have proven to be a valuable tool for addressing sensitive issues and promoting healthy decision-making among young people. For example, "The Native Comic Book Project" (Montgomery et al., 2012) demonstrates how comic books might be an excellent vehicle to reach and engage youth and promote healthy decisions (Montgomery et al., 2012).

Lessons Learned and Adaptable Strategies

By examining these Western practices, it becomes clear that superhero comics offer a flexible and engaging platform for addressing a range of issues relevant to juvenile delinquency prevention. The key lies in adapting these strategies to the specific cultural context of the Balkans, ensuring that the content resonates with local values and addresses the unique challenges faced by young people in the region.

4. Adapting Western Practices to the Balkan Context

While the Western practices outlined above offer valuable insights, directly transposing them to the Balkan context would be ineffective. This section will address the importance of cultural sensitivity, the need to tailor content to local challenges, and the potential for collaboration with local artists and educators to ensure the success of comics-based interventions in the Balkans.

Cultural Sensitivity and Localization

The Balkan region has a rich and diverse cultural heritage, with unique values, traditions, and social norms. It is crucial to avoid imposing Western ideals or narratives that may not resonate with local audiences. Any comics-based intervention must be carefully adapted to reflect the specific cultural context of the Balkans. The comic books can make the readers reflect and analyze the cultural differences (Fedotova et al., 2015). This includes considering factors such as:

Language: Ensuring that the comics are translated into the local languages and dialects, using culturally appropriate language and expressions. In this context, let's recall a successful example. In the 1970s, the popular comic "Alan Ford" appeared in Yugoslavia, which, thanks to Nenad Brixy's excellent translation, became even more popular than the original Italian market.

Values: Adapting the narratives to align with local values and beliefs, while still promoting positive values and prosocial behavior.

Representation: Featuring characters and settings that reflect the diversity of the Balkan region, promoting inclusivity and representation.

Addressing Local Challenges

The challenges faced by young people in the Balkans may differ from those in the West. It is essential to tailor the content of the comics to address specific local issues, such as:

Socioeconomic factors: Addressing issues related to poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunity.

Ethnic tensions: Promoting tolerance, understanding, and reconciliation between different ethnic groups.

Corruption and lack of trust in institutions: Encouraging civic engagement, transparency, and accountability.

Trauma and post-conflict issues: Providing support and resources for young people affected by war and displacement.

Collaboration with Local Stakeholders

To ensure the success of comics-based interventions in the Balkans, it is crucial to involve local stakeholders in the development and implementation process. This includes:

Local artists and writers: Collaborating with local comic book artists and writers to create culturally relevant and engaging content.

Educators and youth workers: Partnering with educators and youth workers to integrate comics into educational programs and community initiatives.

Community leaders and organizations: Engaging with community leaders and organizations to build support for the project and ensure its sustainability. The adoption of smart technologies and innovative approaches in urban areas has the potential to significantly improve disaster risk reduction outcomes and build resilient cities (Garaplija and Prguda, 2023).

By prioritizing cultural sensitivity, addressing local challenges, and fostering collaboration with local stakeholders, it is possible to adapt Western practices and create effective comics-based interventions that contribute to juvenile delinquency prevention in the Balkan context. It's worth noting that comics themselves are not an ideologically neutral phenomenon (Karadjov, 2022), which is another reason to make sure the messages are adapted. And we remind you of the crucial value of comics; comics can be used to initiate discussion and critical thinking (Mitchell & George, 1996).

And to conclude this part of the paper, we will offer possible solutions through five concrete examples of how Western practices could be adapted to the Balkan context, building on the previous statements:

Comics as a prevention of security challenges

Analyzing events from recent history, we can come to the conclusion that various security challenges were preceded by socio-political crises as a kind of incubators for the development of basic elements that, through their individual or synergistic action, can cause various security consequences (Garaplija and Korajlić, 2023). Placing the "crisis" at the beginning of the dramaturgical plot and detecting the "elements" as "bad guys" could be the basis for creating comics, and on the basis of the aforementioned plot, further developing scenarios. Conflicts are resolved by expanding the context, and in this sense comics could play the role of a preventive tool in preventing security challenges.

Addressing Trauma and Post-Conflict Issues

In a region marked by past conflicts, superhero comics can be used to address trauma and promote reconciliation. For example, stories could feature characters who have experienced war or displacement, demonstrating resilience and offering messages of hope. These comics can promote better understanding of different cultures (Fedotova et al., 2015). This differs from the passivity of Western Europe toward the events in the former Yugoslavia (Lowe, 2022).

Promoting Tolerance and Understanding

Comics can be used to challenge stereotypes and promote understanding between different ethnic and religious groups in the Balkans. Stories could feature characters from diverse backgrounds working together to overcome common challenges, highlighting the importance of empathy and cooperation. The Balkans are fertile ground for the application of this example, because all Balkan peoples share the same tradition of the importance of good neighborly and close relations.

Addressing Socioeconomic Issues

Given the economic challenges in parts of the Balkans, comics could address issues such as poverty, unemployment, and corruption. Stories could feature characters who find creative solutions to economic problems, highlighting the importance of entrepreneurship, education, and civic engagement.

Promoting Civic Engagement and Democracy

Comics can be used to encourage young people to participate in democratic processes and hold their leaders accountable. Stories could feature characters who stand up against corruption and injustice, inspiring readers to become active and engaged citizens.

5. Addressing Potential Challenges and Criticism

While the use of superhero comics as a preventive tool offers significant potential, it's crucial to acknowledge and address potential challenges and criticisms. This section will explore concerns related to oversimplification, cultural appropriateness, and the potential for unintended consequences, offering strategies to mitigate these risks.

Oversimplification and Nuance

One common critique of comics is that they can oversimplify complex issues, reducing them to simplistic narratives of good versus evil. To avoid this, it's crucial to:

Develop nuanced narratives: Stories should explore the complexities of juvenile delinquency, avoiding simplistic explanations and stereotypes.

Promote critical thinking: Comics can be used to initiate discussion and critical thinking (Mitchell and George, 1996). Include opportunities for readers to reflect on the issues raised in the comics and engage in critical dialogue.

Avoid didacticism: Rather than presenting prescriptive solutions, comics should encourage readers to explore different perspectives and develop their own informed opinions.

Cultural Appropriateness and Representation

As discussed earlier, cultural sensitivity is paramount. To ensure that comics resonate with local audiences and avoid cultural insensitivity, it's essential to:

Involve local stakeholders: Collaborate with local artists, writers, educators, and community leaders to ensure that the comics are culturally appropriate and relevant.

Promote diverse representation: Feature characters and stories that reflect the diversity of the Balkan region, avoiding stereotypes and promoting inclusivity.

Address local issues: Tailor the content of the comics to address specific local challenges and concerns.

Unintended Consequences and Mitigation Strategies

There is a risk of promoting commodity fetishism and sexist, racist, and fascist "values" in comic books (Karadgov, 2022). To mitigate this, it's important to:

Promote media literacy: Teach young people how to critically analyze media messages and identify potential biases or harmful stereotypes. Using comics as a media literacy tool can help overcome cultural or language barriers and cultivate critical thinking, creativity, and empathy (Tsene, 2022).

Provide context and guidance: Supplement the comics with educational materials and discussions to provide context and guidance for readers.

Evaluate impact and adapt: Regularly evaluate the impact of the comics-based interventions and adapt them based on feedback from readers and stakeholders.

The Risk of "Dumbing Down"

There's a concern that using comics might be seen as "dumbing down" important issues. To address this:

Emphasize the sophistication of the medium: Highlight the unique narrative and artistic possibilities of comics (Pedri, 2015).

Promote visual literacy: Demonstrate how comics can enhance visual and media literacy (Cerić, 2013).

Use comics as a gateway: Use comics to spark interest in more complex topics, encouraging readers to explore these issues further through other mediums.

Feature exceptional art: Some comics have risen to a recognized and respected art form (Cerić 2013; 2019; 2020).

By acknowledging and addressing these potential challenges and criticisms, it's possible to harness the power of superhero comics as a preventive tool while minimizing the risks of unintended consequences.

6. Conclusion

In an era defined by rapid technological advancement and complex global challenges, the need for innovative and engaging approaches to juvenile delinquency prevention is more pressing than ever. As technology continues to permeate every facet of human existence, questions surrounding its ethical implications, societal impact, and potential risks have taken center stage. This exploration has argued that superhero comics, when thoughtfully adapted and implemented, can serve as a valuable tool in this endeavor, particularly within the Balkan context. With this work, we provoke the professional and scientific community to develop innovative approaches to the theoretical determination and definition of comics as a preventive tool against the ever-growing juvenile delinquency.

By drawing upon Western practices and tailoring them to the specific cultural nuances and challenges of the region, comics can promote positive values, enhance literacy, and address sensitive issues in a way that resonates with young people. "The Native Comic Book Project" (Montgomery et al., 2012) and other initiatives demonstrate the potential of comics to engage youth and promote healthy decisions (Montgomery et al., 2012). The comic books can make the readers think, reflect, analyze the cultural differences (Fedotova et al., 2015).

However, it is crucial to acknowledge and address potential criticisms related to oversimplification, cultural appropriateness, and unintended consequences. By developing nuanced narratives, promoting diverse representation, and fostering media literacy (Tsene, 2022), these risks can be mitigated.

Ultimately, the success of comics-based interventions hinges on collaboration with local artists, educators, and community leaders, ensuring that the content is culturally relevant, engaging, and impactful. As useful text (What Superheroes Should Today's Tech Inspire?, 2012) suggests, fiction can create reality, and by harnessing the power of storytelling, we can inspire positive change and empower young people to become active and responsible citizens. In conclusion, by embracing creativity, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to addressing local challenges, superhero comics can contribute to a brighter future for young people in the Balkans and beyond.

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