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The role of literature and social sciences in the development of students' skills in education

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Abstract

Through this paperwork research, we aim to explore and analyze the role and impact of social sciences literature in the development of students' skills and abilities in the process of education. The literature offers our students a great opportunity to learn and develop their knowledge in education to a higher level. This research was designed to be a tool for assessing and evaluating students' perceptions, targeting the students of the Social Sciences Department at Gjakova University and the students of the Education Department at Gjilan University. Our sample consists of 150 students from both aforementioned universities. The questionnaire is divided into two parts: the first part includes demographic variables such as gender, ethnicity, and academic profile. Meanwhile, the second part delves deeper into students' perceptions and evaluations regarding literature and sociology in the development of their skills in general education. In terms of methodology, the study focuses on two primary research methods: a quantitative study involving surveyed students from social sciences and education, and a focus group with selected students from the two faculties. The overall findings reveal that literature and social sciences significantly contribute to the development of students' critical thinking, analytical abilities, and social discourse, enhancing their academic, psychological, social, and cultural development. By exploring this relationship, the study presents a novel approach to integrating these disciplines, marking one of the first of its kind in Kosovo. Thus, the study's implications suggest significant recommendations not only for students and academic institutions but also for other stakeholders. It advocates for the integration of literature and sociology as a vital part of university curricula in new academic programs, emphasizing the importance of raising awareness about utilizing these disciplines within general and higher education for students.

Keywords: Epistemic authority, Literature, Phenomenon, Social sciences, Society.

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1. Introduction

By its very nature, literature can be conceptualized as a descriptive and autonomous pursuit, often characterized by self-containment and independence. Literary works are frequently analyzed in terms of their internal structures, with attention given to the topics, metaphors, rhythm, character development, story dynamics, and other intrinsic elements. However, literature also serves as a reflective medium, often recreating and adapting societal contexts in line with evolving historical and cultural stages. While external societal influences occasionally permeate the boundaries of literary analysis, they primarily serve as a backdrop for providing descriptive and analytical depth. In this interdisciplinary space, sociology emerges as the scientific lens through which literature, as a social phenomenon, can be contextualized and interpreted. Together, both disciplines collaborate and enrich one another. Contemporary literary critics, however, often focus predominantly on the internal qualities of texts. Many would resist the notion that their object of study could be meaningfully enhanced by external sociological approaches. The proposition that sociology is not only complementary to literary studies but indispensable for its full comprehension might, therefore, be met with skepticism by scholars. Yet, sociology, as the scientific and objective study of humans in society, provides critical insights into social institutions, processes, and interactions, addressing patterns of behavior and the cultural dimensions of daily life Calhoun [1]. Sociology seeks to answer fundamental questions about the nature, operations, and experimental dimensions of society through rigorous investigations of social, religious, economic, political, and familial institutions—collectively forming the social structure [2]. Social sciences, particularly sociology, are thus deeply invested in the scientific examination of human activities and ways of life. As Anthony [3] observes, sociology systematically unpacks the complexities of human existence within societal frameworks, offering a critical perspective that complements and enhances the study of literature.

Sociology can be defined as the systematic study of human societies, with a particular focus on industrialized systems [4]. Since the mid-19th century, the disciplines of literature and sociology have become increasingly intertwined, offering critical insights into modern civilization and providing guidance on navigating the complexities of industrial society. Literature serves as a vital medium through which sociologists can explore the concrete manifestations of human behavior and actions. Even when sociological analysis is grounded in fictional narratives, its ultimate aim is to extract universal principles of human behavior from the fictional material [5]. Pierre Bourdieu, the renowned French sociologist and public intellectual (1930–2002), championed the synergistic relationship between literature and sociology. He argued that these disciplines help individuals comprehend their own experiences as well as those of others, while also enabling resistance against dominant ideologies that often obscure self-serving interests under the guise of collective benefit. Literature, in particular, serves as a creative space to imagine and articulate alternative futures, potentially catalyzing real-world political struggles [6]. In this dynamic relationship, literature contributes by providing artistic and narrative structures, while sociology enhances analysis, critical thinking, and discourse, enabling deeper engagement with social realities. The rapid development of contemporary society has presented numerous challenges, many of which demand rigorous ontological analysis. This evolution has prompted an increasing interest in interdisciplinary studies, blending traditionally separate domains such as literature and the social sciences. Students today are drawn together to explore both classical and modern literature alongside sociology, recognizing the constructive synergy these fields offer for their intellectual and professional growth.

1.1. The Purpose of the Study

This paperwork examines the intersection of literature and social sciences, with a particular focus on their role in fostering the development of students' skills in education. The issue addressed within this study is the integration of literature and social sciences, particularly sociology, in the development of students' skills in education. By exploring this relationship, the study introduces a new and different approach to integrating these disciplines, marking one of the first of its kind in Kosovo. Its findings hold significant implications not only for students and academic institutions but also for the wider community, including non-governmental organizations engaged in education, literature, and social sciences. Ultimately, this interdisciplinary framework contributes to the enrichment of society by fostering critical inquiry and collaborative understanding. Therefore, this paper has a structure that includes: abstract, introduction, literature review, and comparative analysis among authors who touch on sociology and literature, methodology of the work, design, methods, techniques, and instruments, results and discussion, conclusions, implications, and finally, the references used.

1.2. Research Question

Questions raised during the research, also formulated as hypotheses, include:

1. What is the impact of literature and sociology on students' skills?
2. How much have literature and sociology influenced students' educational development?

These questions have yielded significant answers, responses that can be further refined and developed in the context of future studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Concept of Sociology and Literature

The concept of a theory usually suggests the existence of laws and methods, in other words, implying a structured methodology. However, our most accessible understanding of such laws and organized methods derives predominantly from the physical sciences. In these disciplines, the subject of study is seen as objective, allowing for value-free observations

that can underpin disinterested research [7]. When considering literature, particularly forms of "high literature" such as fiction, poetry, and drama, two fundamental functions emerge: to engage, entertain, and stimulate audiences while simultaneously offering guidance, criticism, or moral insight. These functions often align with what John Searle describes as "performative acts of speech." For a literary work, particularly a novel, to possess sociological value, it must transcend the mere telling of a "beautiful story." Instead, it should meet evaluative criteria that overlap with those applied in sociology, such as the ability to illuminate societal dynamics and human behavior. The relationship between literature and sociology can be framed through the dual perspectives of "competition" and "complementarity." This dynamic reflects a shared endeavor to interpret modernity and industrial society, offering pragmatic guidance for individual orientation, the search for meaning, and behavioral norms. The historical interplay between these disciplines, marked by mutual influence, traces its roots to the early 19th century and extends through the 1930s [8]. Wolf Lepenies, a historian of sociology, explored this relationship in "Die Drei Kulturen" (1985), a seminal work that examines the origins of sociology and its connections with both the natural sciences and literature. Lepenies reconstructs the disciplinary identity of sociology, highlighting the processes by which it distances itself from literary frameworks and establishes a more scientific methodology. He highlights the ambiguous position of sociology in the European intellectual tradition, attributing the discipline's development and internal contradictions to this dual heritage. From the mid-19th century, sociology and literature competed to claim authority as key factors for understanding and navigating industrial society [4]. During sociology's formative years as an academic discipline, the novelist of realism in France positioned itself as an objective, almost scientific, representative of society. While Balzac referred to himself as a "doctor of the social sciences," blending self-awareness with irony, authors such as Flaubert and Zola aspired to be objective chroniclers of social reality. Zola even characterized his novels as "practical sociology." Lepenies focuses on historical case studies from France, England, and Germany, each reflecting unique national characteristics. Sociology emerged as a "third culture," positioned between the natural sciences and the humanities, undergoing a process of purification that involved distancing itself from its literary roots. This transition-initiated debates about the distinct roles and functions of sociology and literature, with each discipline seeking to define its identity and contributions. Despite these discussions, the potential for sociology as a science to use or utilize the sources of literature has historically garnered limited attention.

In France, Émile Durkheim played a pivotal role in advancing sociology as an academic discipline, culminating in the establishment of a center for sociology at the Sorbonne in 1902. However, literary figures resistant to the institutionalization of sociology and its perceived disruption of traditional French culture emphasized the capacity of authors like Balzac—who famously referred to himself as a "doctor in social sciences"—as well as Flaubert and Zola, to vividly portray the complexities of French society. Meanwhile, sociology was asserting itself as a significant intellectual force, evolving from the early foundational work of Auguste Comte to the more sophisticated methodologies introduced by Durkheim. In England, the relationship between sociology and literature manifested differently. Literature, particularly in the form of sociological writing, became increasingly preoccupied with everyday life and the exploration of possible futures, as exemplified by utopian fiction. Since sociology never fully institutionalized itself as an academic discipline in England, the tensions between sociology and literature remained less pronounced. The German context, however, was more complex. In the 19th century, German intellectual circles exhibited a pronounced artistic and philosophical opposition to science, which influenced the early development of German sociology. This anti-scientific sentiment is reflected in Georg Simmel's impressionistic sociology, which carefully observed the processes through which life assumes rigid, objective social forms. According to Lepenies, even the methodological rigor of Max Weber can be interpreted less as a "devoted faith in science" and more as a form of personal asceticism. While Simmel argued that "art could provide critical insights into reality," and Weber's "concept of *Verstehen*" served as a methodological foundation for the sociological use of literary materials, the systematic exploration of literature as a sociological source remained limited [5]. Literature, in its essence, crystallizes the universal human curiosity about the behaviors, virtues, and vices of others. Through characters, whether historical or fictional, literature works exemplify human qualities, offering more refined observations than common sense. Literature reveals, under ever-changing conditions, the constancy of human nature. However, as [5] noted, literature cannot transform these observations into a scientifically articulated discourse—a task that falls within the purview of sociology, thereby maintaining a clear distinction between art and science. A well-crafted novel, such as Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment," transcends mere descriptions of types, psychology, or social contexts. As a case study, it surpasses criminological accounts in its ability to prove the psychological motivations of a murderer, illustrated through the protagonist's introspective self-analysis [5]. By closely examining the historical interplay between literature and sociology, we observe a complementary relationship. Each discipline enhances the other: literature illuminates human behavior and social phenomena through narrative artistry, while sociology provides the scientific tools for systematic analysis and articulation.

2.2. Curriculum Integration and Literacy Competencies

While essential differences exist, sociology, within its philosophical framework, plays a pivotal role in enhancing literature, particularly by influencing literature students to develop alternative representations of characters, figures, myths, and various forms of literary narration, including drama and fiction. Through the viewpoint of sociology, students can more effectively cultivate what C. Wright Mills defined as the 'sociological imagination,' which, in turn, fosters the development of additional academic and analytical skills. In today's fluid scientific landscape, knowledge is no longer monopolized unless it is empirically substantiated. Consequently, university students, through their engagement with both literature and sociology, can foster the development of knowledge across disciplines, including science, art, critical thinking, and essential soft skills. These competencies are now indispensable not only for personal growth but also for meeting the demands of the

contemporary job market. Through social studies, learners acquire civic competence and an understanding of the world they live in to become productive and responsible citizens. It also allows students to be more conscious and aware of community issues and problems and engages them to take the right action towards a better and more inclusive society [9]. However, recent studies highlight that the integration of literature with social sciences in university curricula has an exceptionally high impact. Therefore, numerous books aimed at teacher methodologies demonstrate ways to encourage integration. The claims are that integrating literature and social studies will increase student learning and motivation for both subject areas. The point is this: the impact of curriculum integration is significant and widely accepted by educators today. Unfortunately, like so many other "big ideas" in education, the area of curriculum integration lacks tangible evidence that student learning is improved in either or both subject areas, yet it is practiced daily and is taught in our teacher education programs [10]. In other words, [11], some argue that Social Science (IPS) learning is an important part of the educational curriculum that aims to develop students' understanding of various aspects of social, economic, political, and historical life. At the elementary school level, social studies learning is one part of the five subjects in thematic learning. Once critical analysis is shifted over to the subject-lesson objectives, clear and striking interconnections will, instead, appear between the two academic spheres. Both literature and social studies consider the human state under given human circumstances. Therefore, the study of literature is not only considered necessary but extremely desirable when given priority over social science courses, especially when a child is still young—five could also do. Precisely this paperwork, this study, explores the impact of these interdisciplinary influences on the academic profiles of students, with particular attention to their professional and intellectual development.

3. Methodology

This study collected data through questionnaires and analyzed it using SPSS.

3.1. The Design of Research

The main aim of this research is to uncover facts through careful examination and study [12]. Given the significance of this study, a mixed-methodology approach was employed to obtain the most objective results possible. The first step involves a review of contemporary literature on the subject, which is an essential component of academic research. This review covered the theoretical aspects of scientific theories related to learning models and social capital theory. Another key method employed was the analysis of legal aspects, which examined the legal framework of non-formal education in Kosovo, particularly for younger age groups, as well as community development. Additionally, this study includes a descriptive research approach using questionnaires to collect information about perceptions, evaluations, and comparisons between students of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the 'Fehmi Agani' University in Gjakova and students of the Faculty of Education at the 'Kadri Zeka' University in Gjilan regarding the impact of literature and social sciences—sociology—on the development of their skills in general education. This method is one of the main methods in social sciences to measure evaluations, perceptions, and to collect data about different social phenomena with groups of participants.

3.2. Research Population

Additionally, a comparative analysis was conducted to assess the scientific theories discussed in this paper, alongside other relevant data. We have also used primary, secondary, and tertiary data, which are closely linked to the topic of this study [Abuhamda, et al. \[13\]](#). [Tavakol and Sandars \[14\]](#) note that quantitative research often involves statistical models and data analysis, yielding more objective, analytical results. In contrast, qualitative research focuses on characterizing relationships, offering descriptions such as 'acceptable,' 'good,' or 'excellent,' without quantifying the data. For the quantitative research, we used a sample of 150 students from the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences at the Universities of Fehmi Agani and Kadri Zeka. We involved both genders in the survey. We used the random method for selecting participants, and the research was conducted through the online platform Google Docs. The survey included approximately 10 demographic questions.

3.3. Instrument, Techniques, and Data Collection

The research instrument used was the questionnaire, with online distribution as the technique to reach students. A link to the questionnaire was shared with the respondents via social media platforms, and the responses we received from them (students) were overwhelmingly positive. The questionnaire included clarifications about the research's objectivity, and all respondents willingly consented to participate. It is worth mentioning that the questionnaire contained a question regarding participants' consent to participate as respondents. Once the data were collected, they were carefully checked and analyzed before being entered into the SPSS program (version 26), creating a quantitative database. To ensure comprehensive results, a qualitative study was also conducted through a focus group comprising 12 students (10 female, 2 male). This phase aimed to gain deeper insights into the impact of literature and social sciences on the development of students' educational skills. The qualitative interviews were conducted face-to-face, with conversations recorded for accuracy, and the resulting data were processed and integrated into the study's analysis. The research was conducted between April and June 2024. Following data collection, the analysis was conducted, and the findings are presented and cited within the framework of the article's discussion.

4. Results and Discussion

During the process of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis, several significant results were obtained, which

we will discuss in the following paragraphs. Like sociology, literature also explores human experiences and social processes in their diverse, ever-changing forms. It serves as a reflection of the society in which it is created, keeping an eye on the lives of individuals and social groups, documenting human actions, interactions, and complex relationships. Sociology, on the other hand, seeks to examine literary facts and their influence on social relations [15]. In the context of the online research conducted with students, numerous responses were collected and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

The impact of literature and sociology on the development of students' skills.

What is the impact of literature and Sociology on your skills?					
Valid		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Critical thinking	50	33.3%	34%	34%
	General education	30	20%	20%	20%
	Social discourse	20	13.3%	13%	13%
	Analysis	20	13.3%	13%	13%
	Communication	20	13.3%	13%	13%
	Other	10	6.6%	6.7%	6.7%
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	100.0

Based on the data presented in Table 1, we can see that the majority of students (33%) from the 150 respondents indicated that both literature and sociology have contributed to the development of their critical thinking. Additionally, 20% reported that these disciplines have had a broader impact on their education, while 13% noted improvements in social discourse, another 13% acknowledged gains in analytical skills, and 6.7% cited enhancements in communication. Some respondents also mentioned the influence of these subjects on other skills or areas of development. The study of literary genres from a sociological perspective has gained recognition, with both sociologists and anthropologists attempting to establish theories on topics such as folklore, literature, and archaeological findings [15]. Authors like F. Scott Fitzgerald exemplify this connection, with works such as *The Great Gatsby* reflecting his perspectives on America during the 1920s. Through literature, we connect with the authors and gain insights into their experiences. Moreover, literature plays a crucial role in addressing contemporary issues related to the mind and thoughts, such as human conflict. It serves as a mirror to humanity, fostering understanding and dialogue. In a society increasingly detached from direct human interaction, literature provides a platform for conversation, allowing us to explore different perspectives and thought processes [16].

Based on the research data, when students were asked about the impact of literature and sociology as two distinct but interconnected fields, approximately 48% stated that literature has provided them with a deeper understanding of the history of other cultures and civilizations (world literature). On the other hand, 52% of respondents indicated that sociological analysis has enriched their studies, enabling them to engage in critical thinking, historical comparison, historical analysis, myth exploration, narration, and other dimensions. An interesting trend observed during the research was a slight decline in interest in literature, with students increasingly focusing on innovation and digitalization. However, the integration of literature, sociology, and, on the other hand, digitalization presents a promising motivational model for students in Kosovo, offering a pathway to enrich their academic experience and encourage deeper engagement. Additionally, the focus group discussion, specifically designed for this study, provided further insights. When students were asked about the impacts of literature and sociology on the development of their skills, they shared the following perspectives (see Table 2):

Table 2.

The impact of literature and sociology on the development of students' skills (focus group).

Literature	Sociology
Narrative	Analysis
Drama	Social structures
The characters	Knowledge for other cultures
Event	General education
Communication	Communication
Critical thought	Critical thought

The focus group discussions with students highlighted key differences between literature and sociology in their respective impacts on skill development. While the study has its limitations, it provides a valuable model for understanding how students perceive the integration of these fields and how they contribute to personal and academic growth. Literature, for instance, helps students gain a deeper understanding of their lives, themselves, and the world around them. By engaging in literature, students develop skills such as identification, imagination, and empathy. In a world that is becoming increasingly chaotic and disconnected, these qualities are essential. Immersing oneself in literature from various cultures not only expands students' ability to critically evaluate and discuss the works but also offers insights into the broader world, including an exploration of one's own and other people's values and beliefs [17]. Sociology, on the other hand, is part of human genealogy and focuses on social facts. It has a significant impact on the development of critical thinking and the broadening of students' knowledge. Sociology encourages students to analyze societal structures and relationships, fostering

a deeper understanding of social behavior and dynamics. To further explore these insights, additional questions were included in the quantitative research, and the responses are detailed in [Table 3](#). These questions offered further clarity on how literature and sociology contribute to skill development, particularly in the context of students' overall educational experience.

Table 3.

The impact of literature and sociology on the educational development of students.

How much has Literature and Sociology influenced your educational development?					
Valid		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	High	20	13.3%	13%	13%
	Moderate	70	46.6%	47%	47%
	Low	40	26.6%	27%	27%
	None	20	13.3%	13%	13%
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	100.0

The data from the research reveals that respondents (students) perceive both literature and sociology as influential in their educational development. According to the survey, 13% of students reported having a very strong impact, 47% indicated a moderate impact, while 27% reported a slight impact, and 13% stated there was no impact at all. Despite this variety of answers, the overall trend shows that both fields (literature and sociology) significantly contribute to the students' academic and personal growth. These findings support the earlier research questions and underscore the importance of integrating literature and sociology into educational settings. As youth represent the future of every society, their education plays a crucial role not only in their personal advancement but also in the development of their communities and society at large. Students highlighted that through their studies in both literature and sociology, they have gained valuable skills, particularly in critical thinking, analytical skills, and communication. For instance, the focus group responses pointed out that literature has enriched their understanding of various cultural and social topics, while sociology has helped develop their ability to analyze social structures and improve interpersonal communication. As one student shared: "Through sociology, we have developed critical thinking skills, research skills, social skills, and cultural competence" [18]. Moreover, literature, especially when it is powerful and purposeful, provides students with deeper insights into the functioning of today's world. As noted by [Levy \[19\]](#), social studies education—underpinned by literature and sociology—aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for life competence. This involves not only understanding the facts and concepts needed to engage in civic life but also comprehending the processes by which they acquire such knowledge. Previous studies have noted that solving real-world issues can enhance social and cognitive abilities [20]. However, skills for the students are very important; through skills, information can be effectively transformed into high-level behaviors, that information may become a part of one's daily life, and that one may make the right decisions concerning major issues in his/her life [21]. According to the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS), the goal is for students to develop an understanding of past and present societies, to recognize the diversity of cultures within them, and to appreciate the roles of various institutions. Thus, both literature and sociology provide students with critical tools for navigating the complexities of modern life, fostering a greater understanding of themselves, others, and the world around them. Social studies have an important place in basic education, primarily preparing and adapting individuals to social life. It is a course that provides knowledge, skills, behaviors, and human values necessary for being an effective citizen who knows their social rights and responsibilities [22].

Therefore, this study, while providing valuable insights into the relationship between literature, sociology, and the development of student skills, has certain limitations. Notably, the survey was conducted with a sample of 150 students, and its scope of study was a specific group within Kosovo. As such, the findings, though informative, are not universally generalizable. However, this study can serve as a useful model and a groundwork for future research, particularly in exploring how the integration of literature and social sciences impacts the development of educational skills in students. Future studies could expand upon this work by including a broader sample of students or focusing on similar educational contexts in other countries within the region. By comparing findings across different places and groups, researchers could gain deeper insights into the broader implications of these disciplines in shaping students' academic and personal growth. Moreover, while this study is a relatively small-scale project, it has the potential to influence higher education institutions in Kosovo, particularly regarding the teaching of literature and social sciences. The insights gained could help guide curriculum development and teaching practices aimed at enhancing the educational experience and skill development for students. Further research into the effectiveness of these interdisciplinary approaches could foster more informed educational strategies that better equip students for future challenges in a rapidly changing world.

5. Conclusions

Based on the research and analysis conducted, it is evident that both literature and social sciences, especially sociology, are crucial in shaping the way students understand and engage with the world and their surroundings. Literature, as a reflection of human experience, helps students navigate complex emotions, social structures, and historical contexts, while sociology provides a structured framework for examining human behavior, social institutions, and relationships. As seen in the findings, students have reported significant benefits from both fields in areas such as critical thinking, analytical skills, scientific research, communication, and a deeper understanding of culture and history. Sociology, with its focus on social

facts and structure, offers students the tools to better understand societal phenomena, while literature enhances their ability to critically engage with narratives, historical events, and characters, thus fostering empathy and social awareness.

The discussions held in the focus groups further affirmed the importance of these disciplines in students' educational development. They highlighted the ways in which literature enhances their understanding of diverse perspectives and deepens their engagement with societal issues, while sociology aids in the development of critical thinking and the understanding of social dynamics. Despite these findings, the study has its limitations. Its reliance on a small representative sample and qualitative research methods means that further studies are needed to validate these results. Future research should explore the impact of these disciplines on different target student groups, including a more focused analysis of gender differences, and employ comparative methods to gain more objective and comprehensive insights into the influence of literature and social sciences on student development. By expanding the scope and methodology, future studies can provide a richer understanding of how these disciplines contribute to the growth of essential skills in education and beyond.

6. Implications

It is recommended that lecturers from the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Education incorporate both social sciences (sociology) and literature into their curricula and course syllabi. The results of this study can be pragmatic not only for lecturers of the respective faculties but also for students. On one hand, students can benefit in terms of academic advancement, the development of other essential life skills, critical thinking, and analytical and comparative approaches. On the other hand, lecturers, through the integration of literature and sociology, can influence the development and advancement of contemporary teaching methods, which are a fundamental principle of modern teaching methodologies in today's educational processes.

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