

MIGRANT PARENTS... SPIRITUALLY "CRIPPLED" CHILDREN

Adrian OTOVESCU¹; Gabriela CĂLUȚOIU²

¹Associate Professor, PhD, University of Craiova (Romania), Email: adiotovescu@yahoo.com

²PhD Student, Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities,
University of Craiova (Romania), Email: gaby_calutoiu@yahoo.com

Abstract: *I don't think there is a more dramatic social phenomenon in post-December Romania than emigration. And, perhaps, the least approximate of such dimensions regarding the change regime. But not only the size is significant, but also the complexity of the phenomenon because, with the passing of time, the reasons for leaving have changed, and the arguments for staying abroad have also differentiated. Slowly, the phenomenon of Romanian citizens' emigration also becomes a pressing political and economic problem, whose perspectives and consequences cannot be easily foreseen. The phenomenon is not new. The history of humanity also talks about migration. And Romania was no exception. Only that the country's modern history was characterized, first and foremost, by immigration. It attracted a specialized workforce, it attracted technical and medical intellectuality, but it also opened the doors for refugees from countries that were ravaged by wars or intolerant of minorities or for political refugees. In this age of modernization, the Romanian population's mobility began to increase also - in direct relation to the spread of capitalism, modernization of infrastructure, urbanization and industrialization of the country. No less, thanks to the excess rural population. This trend did not change even after the First World War. But the pace and the scale have gone up. This migration, internal in that period, came to the attention of sociologists when the rural monographic research initiated by Professor Dimitrie Gusti appeared, so since the '20s - and it developed during the '30s.*

Keywords: *family; migration; development; work; abroad.*

1. Introduction

In this constantly changing world – under the pressure of competitions of any kind – family, school, local community, states and national governments strive together, at least declaratively, to encourage systems for improving education in order to help children develop. In modern society, family faces high demands, increased competition for attention from their children, as well as economic burdens, which force more and more parents to work outside the home, seriously limiting the time they spend with their children. (Rostás, 2018:14)

Nowadays parenting is no longer just a quality given by bringing children into the world, age or wisdom, but is increasingly becoming a responsibility that requires knowledge and skills. In Romania, the family increasingly faces situations such as teen paternity and maternity, illegal marriages, single-parent families, high divorce rate, new marriages, unemployment, poverty, migration, lack of housing. Is it legitimate to ask in this context who, where and how has the responsibility to raise and educate the child? If you intend to pay sufficient attention to the media over a certain period of time by monitoring the situation of children in the family, you can find with astonishment, through the cases presented, that the problems raised by their growth and education raise big questions. You can easily find that many parents consider the child as a "prolongation" that they only need to take care of, instead of considering him/her as a human being; others consider the child a burden in their path for pursuing only

personal interests; for some, the child may be the object on which they can shed their nerves due to alcohol or frustrations, etc.(Iluț, 2015:32)

Kids don't care if their parents are vendors, waiters, computer experts or bosses. For them what really matters is the time that the parent spends with them, the way they are listened to and the unconditional love that is offered to them. The opportunity to spend as much time as possible with children, to develop relationships full of love and respect before they grow up and start to manage on their own, I think could be a target for any parent who takes into account the fact that any child does not really want their parents' money or professional success, or to be told how hard they work for them, but they want their presence and love with all their heart. Regardless of the number of family members, their interaction remains an important aspect that defines and distinguishes this type of group from other existing ones. Therefore, the family is a well-connected group in which its members are united by mutual affection, by a social, cultural unity of the family and even economically, and by the care taken of the children.

What do children really need?

What children really want is their parents' love. They want their "stories" to be listened to without being rushed or ignored because of their problems, to be given due attention, to be accompanied by their parents at games, shows, walks, to celebrate their birthday in their presence, to be hugged, to be read to or simply to be with them.

The most important component of the family environment is the emotional dimension. It is capital for family life, it is its main component. Maybe for the same reason it's the dimension that can be the most vulnerable, the most affected. War, refuge, exile, forced separation, segregation and migration can influence in a very serious and harmful way the family life and the life of every member of a family affected by such causes.

The parents' departure for work abroad has increased. After the initial enthusiasm of the exodus, the "adverse effects" began to show their fangs: children left to the care of no one, readjustment difficulties, family problems, divorces. Who could be considered more unhappy than a child who is aware that the love of parents, brothers and sisters is no longer possible or they can no longer enjoy it? The child deprived of the opportunity to enjoy the attention and love of his parents is adversely affected in his growth, development and training. It was found that the longer the absence of the parent(s), the more profound the effects on the children would be. The gaps that the child had in the affective compartment will be later found in the behaviour of the child who became an adult.

In conclusion, I could motivate the choice of this theme by the fact that nothing is more important for a child than the unconditionally manifested presence and love of parents, life together with all the members of the house, things that can overcome any difficulties and even financial problems. It is precisely for those children whose parents went to work in other countries to solve their financial problems that I believe society, through the competent institutions and specialists, and even through any member of the community in which they live, must find solutions to support them in overcoming the difficult moments that may affect their development.

2. Methodology and data analysis

This article is based on a study made out of the desire to bring some clarifications on a delicate issue of our society, namely the problems of children – children with poor school results, children at risk of dropping out of school and children with low self-esteem and self-image - whose parents had to go to work abroad and leave them to the care of other people.

The purpose of the research was to identify the main causes that determine parents to "abandon" their children and go to work abroad, as well as to alert them to the negative effects on children's development.

Research objectives:

- Identifying the causes that lead parents to go to work abroad and leave their children to the care of others.
- Establishing family relations following the departure of the parents.
- Raising awareness between parents on the negative effects occurred in the development of their children.
- Designing the educational path of my own child in order to develop him professionally.

Research hypotheses:

- The motivation for the parents' departure is mainly determined by two factors: the lack of a job and the desire for a better standard of living.
- Before leaving, the parents discussed with their children the reasons for doing this, the children having a certain level of understanding of their own.
- The parents' departure affects children in multiple plans, the children recognizing this situation to a greater or lesser extent.
- The parents' departure influences the decisions of the children left in the country, as for the choices made for their professional career.

As a research method, I used the focus-group interview. A qualitative research method attended by 12 parents who frequently go to work abroad, parents who live in the commune of Catane in Dolj County.

In order to identify the target group/sample, we took the information both from the Catane Middle School, where we identified a number of 12 students who have difficulties in adapting to school, who are absent and at risk of dropping out of school, students who have poor school results or with low self-esteem - the parents of these students frequently leave for work abroad - as well as from the Catane Town Hall.

3. Research report

After the focus group that lasted about two hours and was attended by 12 parents, the following information resulted:

1. Introduction

The presentation stage has been completed. Both the moderator and the parents who participated in the interview presented themselves. During this stage, the purpose of the meeting was also specified, namely: identifying the main causes that determine parents to "abandon" their children and go to work abroad, as well as to alert them to the negative effects on children's development.

2. Questions asked and centralisation of answers:

- a) Have you been working abroad lately? Where?

All 12 people have gone to work abroad. Among the mentioned countries we find: Spain, Italy and Germany.

b) What made you do this?

The lack of a job – all the interviewees benefit at the moment from the social aid offered by the Town Hall. The only income sources are the children's allowances and the aforementioned social assistance. Material deprivation and living standards have led them to go to work abroad in order to support their families and provide a better life for their children – most have more than 3 children and are Roma.

c) Is there no possibility of employment in the vicinity of the house at this time?

There are no places where they can get a job. Only 38 out of a total of 2164 people are employed in the locality. Another impediment is the level of education, most of them having only primary education.

d) Have you asked the authorities for help in finding a job?

Only 2 out of the 12 respondents asked the authorities for help in finding a job. At the community level, "Second chance" courses and programs were carried out, but did not have the expected results. The participants' lack of interest being one of the causes for this "failure".

e) During this period, in whose care has your child been left ?

The children remained in the care of their grandparents during this period.

f) You have been in contact with your child at all times.

The parents responded unanimously that they kept in touch with their own children throughout the period in which they were away. They were calling to make sure they were okay.

g) How often did you talk to your child while you were away?

They talked to the children every day. Whenever they had the chance, they would call them to see if they were okay.

h) Were you aware of your child's school situation at the time? Did you involve yourself remotely in their school education or was it taken care of by those left behind at home?

They would ask the grandparents or the teacher about the child's school situation, but the grandparents don't always manage to keep everything under control, the child taking advantage of the parents' absence for the most part.

i) How important is your child's education and to what extent do you think school helps them in their personal and professional development?

All the parents replied that education is very important and that they do not want their children to go in the future through what they are going through. They want them to have a better life and to be able to cope with life.

j) Do you consider the precarious financial situation is an impediment in raising a child, your child?

It's an impediment. If you can't provide them with food and clothes you can't send them to school, you can't provide them with what they need to learn and then you choose to sacrifice yourself by going to another country to provide them with all this.

k) If you were to choose between a good financial situation and your child's future, what would you choose?

That was a very difficult question for the parents. As they said, as a parent, most of the times you don't know which decision is best for your child's future and for his own good. No matter what choice you make, often you think you made the wrong one. The

child's future is important, but how can you build it without the necessary resources, was one of the questions and problems debated in this subject.

- l) Has the relationship between you and the child "cooled down" following the departure for work abroad?

Most of them responded that it is no longer the same kind of relationship. If some of the children can't wait for their parents to come back and spend time with them, others on the contrary, close their hearts, become introverts and choose to no longer communicate and no longer share their emotions and feelings with their own parents.

- m) How is the child's behaviour and how have them evolved after you left?

The children's behaviour has worsened. The freedom they have when their parents are away turns into a lack of interest in school, in study. Absences are more frequent during the absence of parents and school results are poor. This is primarily due to the grandparents' lack of authority over their grandchildren. A grandparent cannot replace the parent and unfortunately cannot impose himself to the child when needed.

- n) Did the child's school records change in any way, before and after your departure?

School grades worsened. Students show a lack of interest in school. If the parents are not there to supervise and motivate them, they do not show an interest in learning and implicitly in the results obtained.

- o) What solutions do you think exist in this moment in order not to have to go to work abroad?

10 parents out of the 12 interviewed responded that a job would be the only solution so that they would not have to go to work abroad.

- p) How can local authorities help you or support you for a better/ more decent life?

Answers were given to this question, such as: the creation of jobs and the increase of the amount offered by the social assistance so that they do not have to go away and leave their children to the care of others.

- q) Are you currently satisfied with the child's school results?

Most parents have said there's room for better. If they were with the children, the latter would attend school regularly and get much better grades.

- r) What do you think the school or local authorities could do to make your child better at school?

By helping children's families first, the authorities are helping them. The school could collaborate much more with parents and inform them about the evolution of the child. Another proposal was that the school should provide a hot meal and help to children whose parents are away.

As for local authorities, they could identify families whose income is on the poverty line and support them.

- s) How did your child cope with school during online classes? Have there been difficulties?

In terms of online classes, notepads were offered by both the school and the town hall and various associations. Many children, however, needed support in being able to log on to that educational platform. Unfortunately, parents have not always managed to help their children, being unfamiliar with the new technology.

- t) What do you advise your child to do next? How do you see their future?

The parents' answers were directed towards school and education, that is, they want their children's future to be different from their own. They want them to learn and no longer have to leave the country for a job or for a better life. In the future, they hope their own children will succeed in earning a living and will no longer suffer from material deprivation as they have suffered.

4. Conclusions

Following this interview, I could "see" through the eyes of some parents what determines them to leave their children in the care of others, what determines them to "abandon" them over a certain period of time.

The lack of material resources is indeed a very good reason for having to go to work abroad and benefit from a better life, but is this a good enough reason to neglect your own child and to see the latter "lose himself"?

What few parents realize is that that income, that money earned, often sacrifices the future of their own child.

The questions asked revealed that many of the interviewed parents have no education and that this is one of the impediments for which they cannot find a job close to home, but what they do not realize is that their children's future will be similar. The 12 parents already face various problems in terms of education and development of their children – children do not attend school courses, they show inappropriate behaviour in school and not only, they are not interested in their future – problems that they refuse to see, to accept, probably also because of the desire to run away from the responsibility and taking their own decisions, decisions that in turn affect the personal and professional development of their own child and maybe most of the times sacrifice family life.

The consequences of the external migration phenomenon manifest both at the level of the macrosocial, represented by society, and at the level of the microsocial, represented by the family. Parents who decide to go to work abroad are helped and supported by previous migrants represented by relatives or acquaintances. Affected families are generally young families, between 25 and 45 years old, with two, three or four children.

Frequently, the father is the parent absent from the family environment due to external migration, but the number of mothers who decided to emigrate to work is also significant. Children are usually placed in the care of grandparents or close first-degree relatives.

From the children's perspective, the reasons for the parents' departure to work refer to the poor financial situation, the lack of or insecurity of a job or the need to have a better remuneration.

The duration of the parent's absence from the family environment influences the maintenance of the connection with those left behind at home. The longer the time interval, the more rarely the relationship with the departed parent(s) is achieved.

The children want to reunite the family, the parents' return favouring the improvement of a part of the identified problems, of an emotional, school and relationship nature, signifying the visible manifestation of the parental love for the children.

Empowering parents about raising and educating their own child is a lengthy and extensive process. All we can do by conducting these researches is to alert people

to the effects on children and, implicitly, on our future as a society. The family model is the model that will be followed by the children growing up in that family.

This analysis of the answers given by the interviewed parents confirms more or less the assumptions from which we started in carrying out the scientific approach.

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