

PSYCHOPEDAGOGICAL INTERVENTION IN THE CASE OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY EXTERNAL ECONOMIC MIGRATION

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ABSTRACT: *Numerous studies done on the topic of external economic migration highlight the negative effects of this phenomenon on children, starting with the increase in the level of anxiety and the appearance of depressive symptoms, up to the increase in absenteeism and the risk of dropping out of school, the departure of parents from home representing, in some situations, a risk factor in the suicidal behaviour of adolescents. In an attempt to neutralize the negative consequences generated by parents going to work abroad, are sought the solutions that lead to the most appropriate types of services for the target group, such as: intervention strategies at the level of local communities, information campaigns addressed to parents, awareness campaigns at the level of Romanian communities in destination countries, counselling of those in whose care the children were left, expansion of the network of counsellors within school institutions, expansion of "school after school" programs, the establishment of clubs in schools for children whose parents work outside the borders in which, in addition to leisure activities, psycho-pedagogical support is also ensured, media campaigns to promote solutions and opportunities for this category of children.*

KEY WORDS: *economic migration, school absenteeism, school dropout, psychopedagogical counselling, school success.*

JEL CLASSIFICATIONS: *I20, I21.*

1. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

1.1. Economic migration

The phenomenon of migration has accompanied the evolution of mankind since ancient times and will probably continue for as long as the human being will last on this planet, as man is always in search of a better life. We thus affirm, in agreement with

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Vert, that migration "has a profound historical character, manifesting itself differently in space and time, depending on the concrete, specific factors and conditions, from one stage to another and from one place to another " (Vert, 2001, p.76).

According to Raboca and Surdu, understanding the migratory phenomenon requires the definition and elucidation of some concepts derived from it, such as: emigration, immigration and remigration (Raboca, N. and Surdu, V., 1989, p.86). Thus, emigration defines the phenomenon by which one leaves the country of origin for another, while immigration represents the opposite phenomenon by which individuals settle, temporarily or permanently, in a new country. Remigration, which is also called circular migration, involves returning to the country of origin.

In the context of the social changes that have occurred in the last decades, current approaches are offered to us by various researchers in this vast and complex field. Therefore, Sandu considers migration as a "life strategy", this being presented as "a perspective of the sustainable relationship between assumed goals and means [...] rational structures of action, relatively sustainable at the level of the agent who adopts them" (Sandu, 2000, p.6), while Voicu appreciates that migration can represent a way of citizens' protest "in the face of changes and abandonment of a society in which they cannot find the place they would want" (Voicu, 2004, p. 2).

People's motivation to migrate is represented by several categories of factors (www.romaniaeacasa.ro), such as:

- environmental factors: people migrate to avoid certain areas where natural disasters occur or highly polluted areas;
- political factors, when the aim is to avoid political persecution or war zones;
- social factors, when migrating for family reunification, to live close to friends, to increase the quality of life from a social point of view;
- economic factors, the purpose of migration being finding a job, better rewarded than in the place of origin;
- professional factors, for training and professional growth, career development.

Most of the time, the option for emigration is based on a multitude of complex causes and motivations, resulting in the territorial and social mobility of individuals. Therefore, we can affirm the multifactorial nature of the causality of migration, the rejection factors being represented by shortcomings, low incomes and poverty in Romania, as well as by reduced opportunities for personal, professional and material development. The pull factors act in the opposite direction, as a mirage of foreignness, the developed economy of the countries of immigration and the net higher incomes allowing the increase in the quality of life from a material point of view, the acquisition of goods and sometimes the accumulation of capital.

Most of the time, the initial decision to emigrate is for a limited period of time, the stay abroad is later extended, the objectives set by going to work abroad change, from solving financial problems to accumulating capital and investing it in a home or business.

In this paper, we consider external economic migration, our object of study, the child left at home, being related to the external economic migrant, who has left in search of a better life for himself and his family.

1.2. The situation of children with parents who have gone to work abroad

The data provided by the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption (A.N.P.D.C.A.) indicate, at the national level, data valid for June 30, 2021, a number of 75,800 children who have at least one parent working abroad. Regarding the number of children with parents working abroad, for the first counties with the largest number of children affected by external economic migration, the data are centralized in the following table:

Table 1. The situation of children with parents working abroad (first 10 counties)

No.	County	No. children with absent parents
1.	Suceava	7216
2.	Botoșani	5421
3.	Iași	4448
4.	Bacău	3569
5.	Neamț	3527
6.	Prahova	3515
7.	Vaslui	3220
8.	Galați	2879
9.	Maramureș	2836
10.	Constanța	2833

The previously presented data are indicated in the official statistics that include only the children in the records of the public social assistance services, maintaining the idea of undersizing this phenomenon, this aspect being supported by previous studies. An example in this sense is the study "Effects of migration: children left at home", carried out by the Soros Foundation in 2007, in which it was estimated that a number of approximately 170,000 secondary school students had at least one parent at the end of the 2006-2007 school year went to work abroad (Toth, et al., 2007, p.8), a much higher number than the official statistics revealed.

The explanation for these inconsistencies lies in the existence of numerous situations in which the parent does not report on going to work abroad, especially when he does not sign an employment contract, although the legislative framework clearly specifies the obligation of parents who wish to work in abroad to notify, at least 40 days before departure, the social assistance service of the territorial administration to which they belong and to designate a person in whose care the child is left.

Therefore, in Law no. 257/2013 which is initiated to amend and complete Law no. 272/2004 regarding the protection of the rights of the child, this aspect is stipulated: "The notification shall contain, obligatorily, the designation of the person who takes care

of the child during the absence of the parents or the guardian, as the case may be. Confirmation of the person in whose maintenance the child will remain is carried out by the guardianship court. The designated person must be part of the extended family, be at least 18 years old and meet the material conditions and moral guarantees necessary to raise and care for a child".

At the level of Hunedoara County, according to the data transmitted by educational institutions in April 2021, there are 1123 students who attend state education and who have at least one parent who has gone to work abroad, which represents 2.51% of the school population of the county, aged between 2 and 18 years. Regarding the parent who went to work outside the country's borders, the situation is illustrated in the following figure:

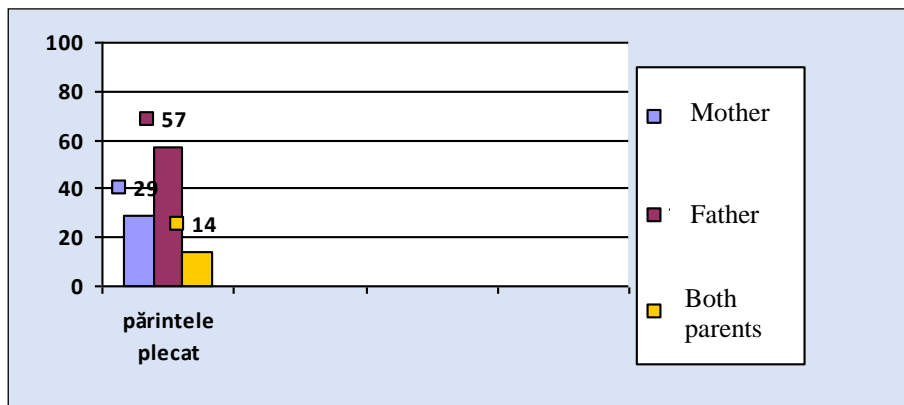


Figure 1. The parent who went to work abroad

The figures from Hunedoara County do not confirm the idea of feminization of the migration phenomenon in this part of the country, compared to the national and even global trend, but also to the data recorded in previous years. If this phenomenon was dominated by men in the past, nowadays the number of women who go to work abroad is increasing due to the high demand for personal assistance services, as well as for the demand for women on the labour market in activities with a predilection for housekeeping.

1.3 Educational services offered through the network of psychopedagogical assistance offices

According to Order No. 5555 of October 7, 2011 regarding the approval of the Regulation for the organization and operation of the county centres and of the municipality of Bucharest, there is a county centre for resources and educational assistance (CJRAE) in each county, and in the municipality of Bucharest operates the Centre of the Municipality of Bucharest for Resources and Educational Assistance (CMBRAE).

The previously mentioned centres are related units of pre-university education, with legal personality, subordinate to the Ministry of Education, methodologically coordinated by the county school inspectorates (ISJ), respectively the School Inspectorate of the Municipality of Bucharest (ISMB).

CJRAE/CMBRAE represents an integrated special education institution, specialized in offering, coordinating and monitoring specific educational services provided to students, teachers, parents and community members, in order to ensure everyone, access to a quality education, as well as the necessary assistance in this sense. These institutions coordinate, monitor and evaluate, at the county level and at the level of the municipality of Bucharest, the activity of the county psychopedagogical assistance centre (CJAP), respectively the activity of the Bucharest City Centre for Psychopedagogical Assistance (CMBAP) and the psychopedagogical assistance offices, of interschool speech therapy centres and offices, collaborates with school centres for inclusive education in order to ensure specialized educational services, coordinates, monitors and evaluates specialized school mediation services.

The main objectives of the CJRAE/CMBRAE activity are:

- the inclusion and maintenance of all children in the mandatory education system, regardless of their psycho-individual and social particularities;
- ensuring the additional supports necessary for a quality education depending on the biopsychosocial potential of each student;
- informing and counselling teaching staff in the spirit of optimizing the instructional-educational activity;
- collaboration with the educational factors involved in the development of the personality of the educable for the purpose of their optimal adaptation in school, social and professional life;
- involvement of parents in activities specific to an effective school-family-community relationship, as a foundation for school adaptation and social integration of children;
- carrying out studies on school dropout, juvenile deviant behaviour, negative surroundings, extracurricular activities;
- organizing anti-violence programs and projects in the educational environment.

The educational services, offered by the educational resource and assistance centres, are career counselling and guidance through the county centre and psychopedagogical assistance offices, therapy for language disorders through interschool speech therapy offices; it also provides school and professional guidance for children, young people with special educational requirements, support for children with special educational requirements integrated in state education, information, counselling and guidance for teachers, children, parents or legal guardians of the child, staff employed in institutions that act in the field of children's issues, other members of the community.

Through the network of psycho-pedagogical assistance offices, coordinated by the Hunedoara County Centre for Resources and Educational Assistance (C.J.R.A.E.) Hunedoara, all students participating in the present study have access to psychopedagogical counselling because each school institution in the research area has a psychological office, served by a school counsellor.

2. RESEARCH AREA AND METHODOLOGY

The research on the psychopedagogical intervention for children affected by the departure of their parents to work abroad was carried out in the framework of a larger study that sought to highlight the consequences of external economic migration.

The research method used was the questionnaire-based investigation. In order to capture the phenomenon of external economic migration, a structured questionnaire was created, designed to be completed by students who remained at home after their parents went to work outside the country's borders.

The subjects of this research are students enrolled in school institutions in the cities of Valea Jiului who had the availability to participate in this study. The field stage ended with the completion of 196 questionnaires. After the stage of verifying the collected data, 187 questionnaires answered by students from the secondary or high school were validated.

The processing of the research data, a complex stage of the research, was carried out respecting the theoretical-methodological requirements. Computer processing was carried out using the statistical analysis program SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), and graphic processing was carried out using Microsoft Word 2010 and SPSS programs.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1. Difficulties regarding the achievement of school tasks by children whose parents have gone to work abroad

Completing school tasks requires the existence of knowledge, skills and competences that a child sometimes does not have assimilated, some skills have not yet been formed or the knowledge is new to him, not having been practiced enough. Any homework is a challenge for the child, therefore it is recommended that he receive the necessary support so that he can successfully complete, every day, this attempt to carry out school tasks, whether they are problems or exercises, analysing and writing texts or drawing up a portfolio.

Cognitively, homework supports the consolidation of knowledge, as well as from an affective point of view, the benefits are multiple: any well-done homework brings work satisfaction, appreciation from others, which results in increased self-esteem, but also the development of motivation for learning. On the other hand, the completion of homework by the child supervised and helped by the parent, strengthens the parent-child relationship, the development of effective communication between the two, but also sharing a positive experience for the child, working as a team with his parent.

In the situation where one or both parents are away working abroad, the child is sometimes deprived of this help, facing difficulties in completing school tasks. Most of the students surveyed (37.4%) stated that mathematics is the discipline that most often puts them in difficulty, followed by physics (19.3%), foreign languages (15.5%), in

particular, English and French, other subjects (biology, history, geography -15%), chemistry (8%) and Romanian language and literature (4.8%).

Table 2. Disciplines with difficulties in completing school tasks

Variants/ Values	Mathematics	Physics	Foreign languages	Other subjects	Chemistry	Romanian language	Total
Absolute	70	36	29	28	15	9	187
%	37.4	19.3	15.5	15.0	8.0	4.8	100.0

In approximately equal proportions, when there is a difficulty related to the completion of school tasks, the child affected by the external economic migration of the parents turns to the parent who stayed at home (26.7%) or to a teacher (25.7%) to do the homework. Almost a fifth of the respondents (20.3%) state that they turn to another person (a friend, colleague, older brother, other relative), and 12.8% to their grandparents.

It is worrying that 14.4% of the students who answered the questionnaire do not ask for anyone's help to complete their schoolwork and, more often than not, give up when they are faced with an impediment in doing the homework. The situation presented previously is illustrated in figure 2.

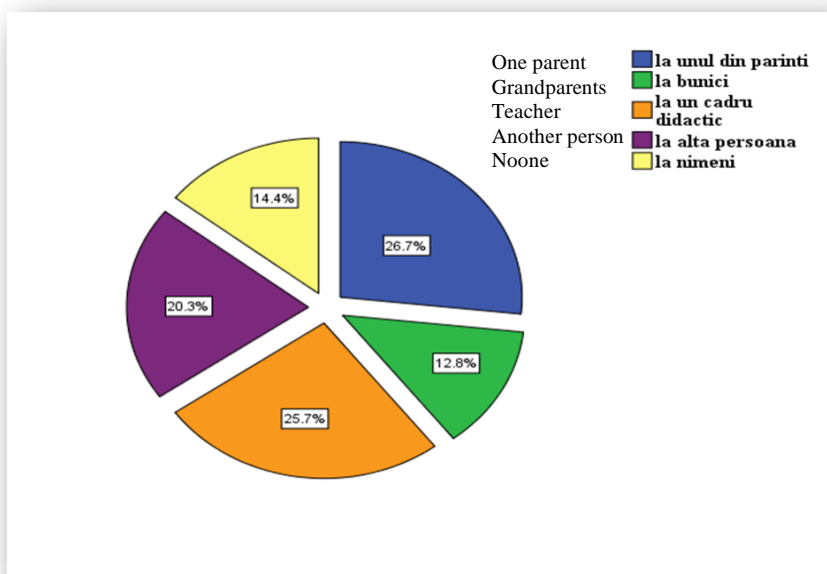


Figure 2. Asking for help to complete school assignments

3.2. Psychopedagogical counselling of the child with the parent who has gone to work abroad

Starting from the premise that psycho-pedagogical counselling services are accessible and within the reach of every student affected by external economic migration and his representative, whether the parent left at home with the child or another person entrusted with the child's care, the questionnaire included an item to find out the opinion about the call to the services offered by school counsellors. The centralization of students' answers is illustrated in figure 3.

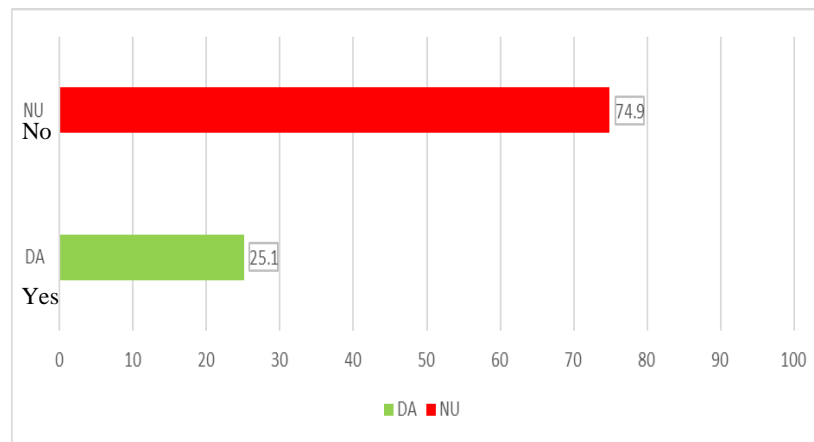


Figure 3. Students' appeal to the services offered by school counsellors

Among the students whose parents went to work abroad surveyed, about three quarters (74.9%) answered that they never called on the services of the school counsellor because they did not think it was necessary, because they did not think to call, and some of the respondents stated that they did not know that there was a school psychologist in that institution.

THERE are also reservations about the services provided by the school counsellor expressed by the respondents by statements such as: "I don't want to talk about my problems", "I don't like to call a stranger" or "I don't do bad things" (you only go to a psychologist if you behave inappropriately).

A quarter of the student respondents (25.1%) confirmed that they accessed the services of the school counsellor. Of these, almost half (46.7%) went to the school psychologist because the director made this recommendation due to anxiety, behavioural or relational problems; approximately one fifth of the subjects (19.2%) had requested the services of the counsellor to complete the special educational requirements file.

There are, however, also students who requested the psycho-pedagogical counselling services on their own initiative (34.1%), out of the desire to share the problematic situations they face and seek solutions to them, but also for self-knowledge and development personal.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The family, considered the first environment of socialization, by its characteristics, by its "tonality and affective atmosphere, by its cultural dimension and its degree of social integration, constitutes a determining educational environment. Any existing disagreements and tensions in the family environment will generate doubts, reluctance or maladaptive reactions in the child's mind." (Rudică, T., 2005, p. 110, coord. Cosmovici, A.).

The family environment is suitable for the child's development if it is an affective and secure environment, which satisfies the child as long as it meets his elementary needs.

When in the family it is decided that one of the parents or even both of them go to work abroad, the dynamics of the relationships within it change, with resonances in the emotional balance of the family members, especially the children being affected. Also, studies have shown that the departure of parents has negative consequences on children's school results, as well as on the occurrence of the phenomenon of absenteeism or the increase in the risk of dropping out of school.

The counselling and school orientation services that can be offered by the specialists of the psychoeducational assistance centres that serve the school units, could represent a handy solution for facilitating the school success of students affected by external economic migration, but also the possibility of additional help from a framework didactic in the subjects that put the students in difficulty, especially in the situation where the parent to whom the child usually turns is away to work outside the country's borders.

The establishment of a student club for students with parents who have gone to work abroad, which includes, in addition to suitable alternatives for spending free time and psycho-pedagogical intervention, can represent a desirable for each school institution, with beneficial effects on children affected by external economic migration.

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