

## **Multi and Interculturality**

### **The Social Protection of Children with Families within Temporary Labor Migration**

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**Abstract:** of one or both parents is closely related to finding and filling a job on the external labour market, with financial and material rebalance within the family environment, with rising living standards, manifested as a social phenomenon. The effects are felt both within the family, in which changes in structure, dynamics and functionality take place, and by the child, who faces a variety of issues. We see these around us, in our families or at those near us, within the work environment or in the neighborhood and these are presented mostly as a very easy alternative for solving financial problems and the good initial intention to change the economic situation of the family has, in time, an effect on the family and children. What causes family members to take this decision, how does it affect the family environment, how does the child perceive the changes in family structure and how does these changes affect him are just some of the questions that we want to tackle within this paper.

**Keywords:** foreign labour migration; sociological survey; external migration

#### **1. Introduction**

The paper is designed to analyze temporary foreign labour migration, its causes, its consequences, the institutions and legislation in this area at national and European level, but mainly on how children are affected by the departure of parents and which are the institutions and legislation that protect these children.

The research part consisted of a questionnaire-based sociological survey, on a sample consisting of 180 students (90 from the urban environment and 90 from the rural environment), with the aim of sketching the image of the family affected by the phenomenon of external migration, of identifying the reasons which led to the

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decision of going abroad to work, of how children are affected by the departure of one or both parents, of the quality of the relationship child-care person, of the problems that may or may not improve if one or both parents would return to the family environment. The manner of presenting the results combines quantitative statistical data with excerpts from interviews of child protection professionals in communities.

In Romania, after 1990, like the majority of other European states, the transition towards a democratic society and to a market economy resulted in a collapse at an individual level which had as a direct result many individual's needs of social protection. It should be taken in to account that for that segment of the population that is living in poverty, that doesn't have the power to satisfy its own basic needs, the quality of live is lower every year.

Poverty, from the perspective of the optimal social functioning of an individual, it describes a limitation that makes impossible a full access to social life which is the result of a lack of certain tools that are the source of this limitation. It also regards an incomplete fulfillment of one's social roles, a limitation when it comes to the one's access to formative-educational activities that would be further helpful in obtaining a decent level of existence.

The number of jobs which dropped dramatically, the salaries that are a few times lower than one from the rest of the EU states, a big rise in unemployment, especially in the case of women, the lack of a blurry future, the existence of better economical conditions in countries that recruit working force, the issues that the labor market is facing, the existence of migration waves which are a result of the policies that regard the passing of national borders had determined the population to seek alternative solution that would provide them with a decent standard of living.

The decision of migration to another country which is followed by the actual migration is a response to a collection of causes and motivations. The solution that is most often found by the poor population is that of seeking and getting a job in a country where the salaries and work conditions can make a difference when it comes to the satisfaction of certain need which the local job market is incapable of.

The majority of Romanian are seeking to leave the country (even for a short time period) in order to find a job in another country. The consequence of migration can be noticed at a full scale by taking in to consideration aspects that regard the state of the economy, demographic factors, but it also can be spotted at a micro-social level

through the analysis of the changes in the structure of family's nucleus. Because of that, the subject of this study is both extremely relevant in regards to the present social-economic state of our nation, the massive waves of migration had a caused a number of specific issues that the ruling political class had to deal with and to find solutions for, because of this, our society should be more interested in creating solid communication channels with institutions which care specialized on migration related issues which effect communities from all across the country. The phenomena of mass migration, which had multiple roots, the majority of them being of economical nature, in connection with the economic downfall of the country, or it has roots in the bad remuneration that is received by many people who have stable jobs which cannot cover all the expenses that relate to a decent standard of living.

The study doesn't focuses on giving in depth analysis on this subject, which is very vast and can be analyzed from a number of perspectives, it rather focuses on listing certain aspects, giving interpretations to certain policies, and maybe, to bring other related subjects in to discussion. The study has as objective the analysis of temporary external migration that is in connection with the workforce, it highlights the causes, the effects, it analysis the national and European legislation from this domain, but it gives a special attention to the children that are affected by the absence of their parents and to the institutions that are meant to assist and to protect them. The departure of one or of both parents is closely linked with the seeking and obtaining a job in the external job market, it relates with attempts of stabilizing certain financial unbalances from within the family, with an interest for obtaining a better standard of living, all of this taking the form of a social phenomena. The effects are directed directly towards the family which suffers a change in its structure, dynamics and functionality, and also by the child which is put to face a series of specific issues. We can notice these changes all around us, in our families or in the ones that we come in contact with, in our workplace or in our neighborhood. Migration is most often seen as an ideal alternative when it comes for seeking solutions for the financial struggles that many families go through, most of the times, the initial good intention actually creates a number of issues that the family and especially the children have to face.

Which are the factors that play a big role in the parent's decision to departure from their families in order to get a better pay job, which are the effects that it has on the home environment, how does the child perceive the changes from the family's

structure and how do they influence the future development of the child, this are a part of the questions which will get an answer through this paper.

## **2. The Specific Migration Mechanisms**

### **2.1. The Migration Phenomena from the East (Romania) to the West**

Before 1989 there were two mechanisms of migration: the permanent migration which had its roots in motives that relate to certain political goals and aspects that deal with ethnicity and temporary migration which related to studies abroad which was based of inter-government partnerships between Romania and other states. After 1989, the main motivations that stood behind migration turned from ones that had roots in politics and ethnicities to ones that were mainly economical. As a result, temporary migration was subject to a boom in numbers and it constituted a big percentage of the total migration. At the present, there are a number of mechanisms which facilitate migration at an international level. We will focus on those mechanisms that are present at European level, more precisely, those that facilitate the migration of workforce from Romania to UE member states.

- permanent legal migration
- temporary legal migration: students, workers (replacement migration), refugees and those that have political asylums, illegal transit migration, the illegal migration of those from Central and Eastern Europe(from Romania), circular migration done with the help of migration networks (legal and illegal) (Bulai, 2006, pp. 22-28).

*Permanent legal migration* represents the flux of migrants that leave Romania in order to settle in to the states through the following ways:

- by obtaining of emigration visas through different special programs that aim at recruiting work force in certain domains where is a shortage in the welcoming country or through other types of programs (like the visa lottery). Romanian citizens that permanently immigrate to states that have such migration policies and programs as Canada, Australia, New Zeeland, USA;
- through marrying a citizen from a UE member state and the change of one's address to the partner's home country;
- as refugee or asylum seeker do to reasons that involve political situations, war and human rights violations, in the last years Romania didn't have

such a situation but it was the case for some of former states of Yugoslavia.

*Legal temporary migration* refers to those who transit the territory of an EU state for a determined period (ranging from a few months to a few years).

*Illegal transit migration* it is the mechanism through which individuals from third countries, outside Central and Eastern Europe migrate to this countries, including citizens from Romania that want to further then the EU.

*The illegal migration of those from Central and Eastern Europe (Romania)* makes references to those of Romanian nationality who leave Romania and stay illegally in a EU country- after the legal time for staying had expired (3 months), those who leave as tourists but once they arrived at the destination they get involved in illegal work activities or people that enter and stay illegally on the territory of an EU state.

*Circulatory migration done with the help of migration networks.* Circulatory migration describes the swinging movement of people from their native country to the country of destination. Migrants go and work for a period abroad, they return home and they leave again to work abroad. In this context the formation of migration networks is unavoidable, the networks facilitate the departure of those who want to work temporary abroad which are sustained by previous migrants.

## **2.2. The Migration Phenomena from the East to the West (Romania)**

In regards to the waves of migration from the west to the east, from EU countries to Romania, there were identified two mechanisms: legal temporary migration, repatriation (Bulai, 2006, pp. 22-28). Legal temporary migration includes: workers that come from EU countries to carry on certain work related activities on the territory of Romania; they can come as: freelancers, employees at multinational companies, representatives of companies from the EU in Romania, tourists from the EU that visit Romania during the tourist seasons.

The repatriation refers to the Romanian that migrated in to the EU in a previous period, they turned the place in which they settled in to their residence and a part of them manage to obtain the citizenship in that country and now they want to return and to settle in Romania. This is also called reversion migration and it is described as benefic to the mother-country, do to the fact that many of those who return became high rated investors and managers.

### **3. Case Study: The Image of Family Affected by the Departure of the Parents for Working Abroad**

This study aims at highlight the image of the family which is affected by the departure of the parents for working abroad, listing the specific problems, the policies that were adopted by the institutions that were involved with these social phenomena which is was not widely analyzed from a scientific perspective in Romania. For this study were used research instruments and methods specific to the field of sociology, the results of the research were put in to a statistic form.

The case study has its roots in a theoretical model which was essential for the sampling of data. Comparison methods were used in order to structure the date that were taken from field research and from bibliographic sources. (Mitode, 2003, p. 411)

#### ***The stages of the research:***

- a sociological investigation based on a questionnaire a group of students with the ages between 10 and 19 years.

***The objectives of the research*** were based on the identification of the following aspects:

- the image of the family that is effected by the external migration phenomena.
- the motives that acted as a base for the parent's decision to departure for working abroad.
- the way in which children are affected by the absence of one or both parents.
- the relationship between the child and the tutor.

#### ***Research instruments***

The questionnaire is formed from 15 questions and it was applied to a number of 80 children that were living both in urban and rural environments.

The number of subjects consists of 49 girls and 31 boys:

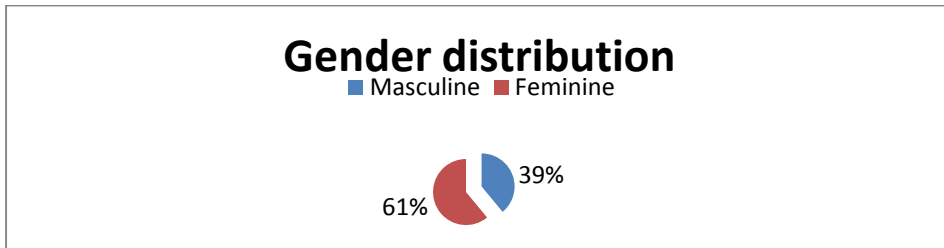


Figure 1. Diagram of the variation of biologic gender of the persons that responded to the questionnaire

#### 4. Social-Demographic Characteristics of the Family. The Family Profile – The Child

In order to outline the profile of the family the element that we relied on were: which parent departs from the family in order to go to work abroad, the length of the departure, the elements that motivated the decision of departure and their influence on the family environment(positive and negative aspects); they were put in four categories: social-demographic characteristics, the relationship between the child and the person that takes care home him/her, determined factors, the consequences on the family and the measures taken by experts that came in contact with those children.

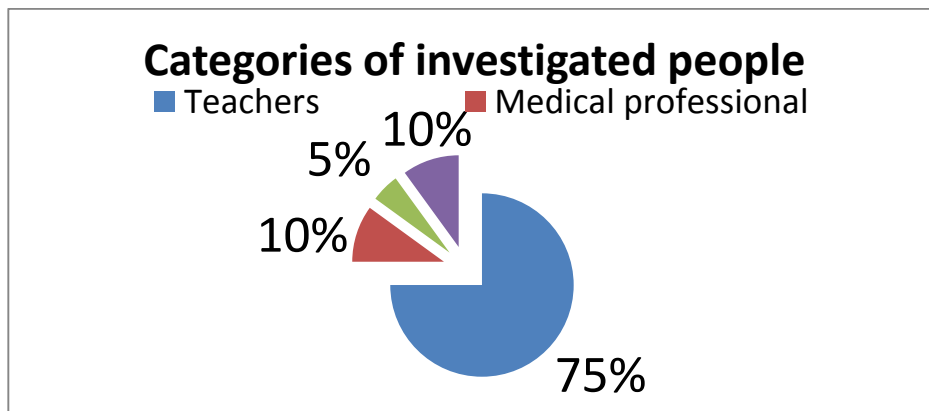
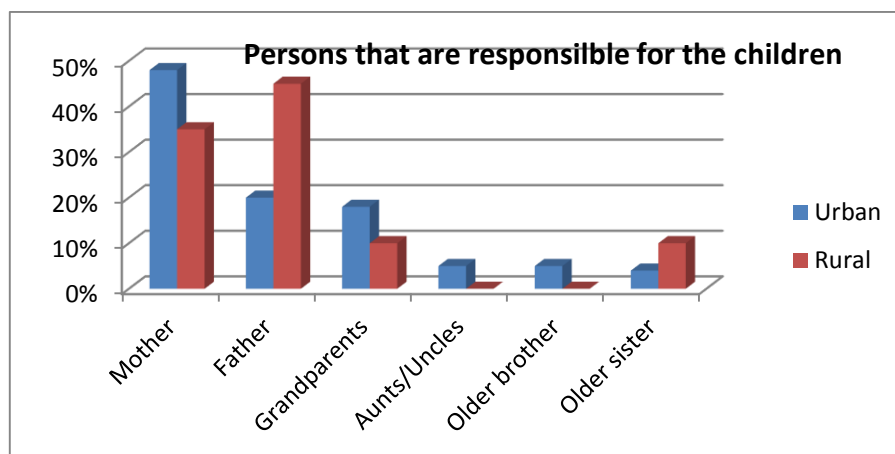


Figure 2. Diagram of investigated people



**Figure 3. The Relationship between the child the person which is responsible of taking care of him/her**

When a parent decides to departure in order to work abroad, usually the child will be supervised by the other parent, if both of them departure, the children will be taken care of by members of the extended family (grandparents, uncles, aunts) or they are left alone, the daily chores and responsibilities becoming the task of the older brothers, usually the ones who are the first born in to the family. The situation is present through the use of statistic data that regard the people that take care of the children during the absence of the parents from the family environment.

In the case in which the departure parent is the mother, the children are left in the care of the father (20% in urban areas, 45% in rural areas), and when the father decides to leave, the mother is the one who will take care of the children (48% in urban areas, 35% in rural areas).

The absence if both parents from the family environment usually results with the grandparents taking care of the children (18% in urban areas, 10% in rural areas), in some cases other relatives – uncles/aunts (5% in urban areas), there are also a lot of cases in which the children are left alone and a port of the responsibilities are taken over by the bigger brothers (9% in urban areas, 10% in rural areas).

The majority of the children that took part in the study claimed that they have a good relationship with the person that looks over them, they responded with „good” and „very good”, being conscious that their parent left the country in order to provide them with a better life. For a not so good relationship the child that



claimed it was a girl from a rural area, it was a response to her deeply feeling the absence of her mother in the family environment.

The relationship with the person that takes care of them is perceived differently according to the gender of the child. The ones who claim that they have a very good relationship, about 61% are females and 39% males – in urban areas and 44% females and 56% males – in rural areas, and the ones who claim to have a good relationship – 63% females and 37% males – in urban areas and 50% females and 50% males – in rural areas.

From our point of view, the difficult relationships between the children and the person that takes care of them has its source on the absence of the parents from the family environment at the age when the children need their help and guidance the most.

The children that were left in the care of their grandparents the majority claimed to have a very good relationship (70%), another noticeable percentage claim to have a good relationship (30%). All of the children that took part in the study and were left in the care of the older brothers claim to have a very good relationship, this can be correlated with a rise in fraternal solidarity which is favored by the absence of both parents from the family environment.

## **5. Factors that Determine Migration**

The factors which contribute to the parent's decision to depart for working abroad are rooted in aspects that are linked to aspects that regard the family's economic, material and social situation.

The poor financial situation, the lack of jobs in the home country, the need to get a better salary, the need to build a home, to make improvements to the already existing one or to have money for study fees constitute the main motives that are taken in to account when the decision to externally migrate is made. Factors that relate to the family environment also favored the final result of the decision. Conflicts between the spouses can be noticed, between parents and the children and the reunion of the family in the country in which the parents settled.

After presenting the data from above, we can notice the difference between the urban and rural environment when it comes to the motives that acted as a base for the parent's decision to depart for working abroad. It can be noticed that in the urban environment the main motives that contributed to the departure are linked to

the need of a better salary and the poor financial situation of the family. In the rural environment, the main motives are those linked to poverty and the absence of available jobs in the area.

Children think that the poor financial situation of the family is the main reason that motivates their parent's decision to work abroad (40% - in urban areas and 70% in rural areas) along with the lack of jobs in the home country (37% - in urban areas and 55% in rural areas). The parent's need to have a better salary was the strongest motivation which determined the parents to depart from their families in order to work abroad. The way in which the work force is distributed in the national economic sector is a good indicator of the unbalances which should make the subject of packages of social policies.

The factors that determined the decision present certain variations in connection with the gender of the child that took part in the study. As a result, girls think that the main reason for their parent's departure is the family's financial situation (70% - in urban areas, 50% - in rural areas) and a lower percentage in the case of the boys (30% - in urban areas, 50% - in rural areas). The parent's need of obtaining a better salary in a foreign country is higher in the case of the girls (65% - in urban areas, 100% - in rural areas) than in the case of the boys (35% - only in urban areas).

In the case of families who have 2 to 3 children, the need of having a better salary was the main reason for departure (60%), in the case of those who have one child (30%), the poor financial situation in the case of families with 2 children (42%), the ones with 3 children (19%) and for those who have more than 3 children (4 children- 9%).

## **6. The Effects of Migration on the Child and the Family**

There are certain differences when it comes to the way in which the children perceive the parent's departure, the children from urban areas don't have a very negative perception on their parents working abroad due to the fact that in the majority of cases the parent who departed is the father and the children were left in the care of the mother, in the case in which both the parents depart, the children are left in care of relatives that they have a good relationship with, they are conscious of the fact that the reason behind their parent's departure is that of providing them with a better future through keeping them in school, high school and college.

In rural areas, the children are more badly affected because usually the parent that is absent from the family environment is the mother, even if they are take care by the father or by close relatives, the absence of the maternal figure is irreplaceable.

As a result, it can be concluded that the presence of the maternal figure puts a mark on the way in which the situation is perceived by the children. In those cases, children don't seem to feel no effect on the family, the situation changes when they are left in the care of their father and grandparents.

An increase in their daily chores is more present in the case of children from rural areas, but it can be also found in urban areas, this is most common in the case of the girls. An overload of responsibilities and chores is more common in the case of those who were the first born in to the family with a lower effect on those who were born latter.

Another problem that is highlighted by the children is that of school performances, this is more common in the case of boys as the result of a lack of interest.

The problems that were signaled by the children that took part in the study can be attributed to the person that takes case of them during their parent's absence. The big amount of responsibilities is more common in the case of children that were let in the care of the mother and the lack of moral support is more common in the case of children left with their father. The absence of both parents can affect the family's structure in a very negative way, its functioning and dynamics, all of this coincide with the impossibility of providing the child with the emotional resources in order to satisfy certain needs.

As a result, the absence of parents from the family environment for a longer or shorter period coincides with the apparition of some issues in regards to the children, the majority being at an emotional level, or they can be related with aspects that regard school performances and socialization in the exterior environment.

The status within the family's structure has a strong link with the identified problems. As a result, the first born is characterized by a big stress when it comes to his/her role within the family, a raise when it comes to his/her daily chores and responsibilities. From the moment that the parents depart, he/she takes some of the roles that usually the parents would play within the household, as: taking care of the younger brothers, helping them with their homework and learning and doing specific parental tasks in the household.

The problems become more specific in accordance to the parents that decides to work abroad. The lack of education and affection are more accentuated when the mother is missing. The situation is less dramatic when it comes to school performances, responsibilities, the lack of moral support and the presence of the feeling of loneliness, this are more accentuated is absent from the family environment.

The correlation with the times span in which the parent is absent can also give significant data. When the period is longer, the negative effects become more accentuated in the case of the children. For periods longer than a year the characteristics are those of a lack of education, a big amount of responsibilities and loneliness, and for shorter periods are the absence of moral support and love. The difficulties that are linked to school tasks can be noticed on all of the children, regardless of the length of the period in which the parent was absent from the family environment.

## **7. Conclusions**

Migration is a complex phenomena, with a wide range of effects. This phenomena has significant effects on a society's level of economic, social, cultural and social development. In the European Union it is stated that legal migration can have positive effects on economic growth, if it is well managed and if it is directed to those sectors that suffer from a lack of qualified workers. Member state perceive very differently the phenomena of migration, this is conditioned by the context that relates to each case. The general public perceives migration, at least in the case of third countries, with a negative connotation. In the same time, policies that relate to economic development should put a stress on managing migration. This is even more relevant in the context that the aging of the European Union's population will have negative effects on the labor market and on the health and social insurance system.

The connection between the demographic changes and policies that regard migration is and will be an important problem in the close future. The effects of external migration can be noticed both on a macro-social level which is represented by the society, and on a micro-social level, represented by the family. The family being effected in regards to its structure and functionality. We can list the following conclusions as results of this study:

- the parents that decide to go to work abroad are helped and sustained by previous migrants that are represented by relatives and acquaintances that form migration networks;
- usually young families are the ones who are the most effected, legally constituted, with the parent's ages between 25-45 years old, with two, three or four children which usually are of feminine gender; parents have a higher trust in girls because they are more responsible and can handle household chores more easily;
- frequently, the father is the missing parental figure in the family in connection with external migration, the number of mothers is also high.
- there are multiple situation in which both parents left for working abroad and placed their children in the care of the relatives or of the extended family(especially of the grandparents);
- from the children's perspective, the motivation that stood behind their parent's departure is linked with the poor financial situation of the family, the lack of jobs in their areas, the lack of stability at the work place and the need for a better salary;
- the amount of time that is spend away from the family effects the parent's relationships with those left home, as the period grow so does the limitation of contacts between the parent and those left home.
- when the children are taken care by the older brothers there is an increase in brotherly solidarity, also the older ones take on many of the tasks that would usually be done by the parents;
- even if the majority of children that took part in this study stated that they have a very good relationship with the person that takes care of them, there are also situation in which there are tensions between the child and that person;
- the older children usually take the tasks that would be usually performed by their parents, this way an overload can be noticed which results in a limitation of free time;
- children perceive the absence of their parents as an absence of moral guidance and of love, as experiencing feelings of loneliness;
- when both or only one of the parents leave a communication disconnection appears which often leaves in time to the breakage of many families;
- from the perspective of school performances, children tend to suffer from a lack of interest and motivation resulting in the presence bad marks;

- teachers state that absence of the parents is connected with a downfall in school performances, it stand behind abnormal behavior and a lack of interest in physical appearance;
- positive effects relate to the time span in which the parents stayed working abroad, a longer period results in a noticeable rise in the quality of life.
- the actions that were made in order to help this children are related with visits to the school's psychologists, talks with the teachers and avoiding their marginalization in the classroom or in their group of friends;
- the policies that were adopted by public institutions that are specialized in child protection are: counseling, the application of case management in order to prevent the deepening of the negative effects, education and information that will prevent juvenile delinquency, sexual exploitation, forced labor and child trafficking. Because DGASPC and other local institutions that are specialized in social work should monitor children and their parents who are working abroad, it is the duty of the parents to declare to this institutions before they leave who they are leaving their child with and in what conditions.
- children want the reunion of the family, when the parents come back a part of the emotional and school related issues go away;
- the issues that are linked to the parent's departure are impossible to resolve, from the perspective of the children, if the parent doesn't come back home.

As a result, the negative effects that were identified through this research and presented in this paper are similar to the issues faced by children who come from families that are effected by divorce, by the death of one parent, children that have their parents working abroad are a new category that faces a lot of risks. The attention of communities, schools and specialized institutions should be focused on this categories of children as it should be focused on children from poor families, one parent families or in families in which the parent doesn't take the proper care of the children.

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