



ROMANIA – EMIGRATION’S IMPACT ON FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

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Abstract: *After 1989, Romania was confronted with international migration, which resulted in a diminishment of the stable resident population. Between 1989 and 2012 the stable population of Romania decreased by more than 3.1 million. More than 77 % of the negative growth of the resident population (stable) during this period was due to migration.*

The migration phenomenon has stirred controversy not only in political circles, but also at societal level, at interpersonal level, causing physical and emotional fractures between communities, friends and families. The effects on the families were, among others, an imbalance between the importance given to some its fundamental functions: the economic function is valued above the social and educational function.

Parents going abroad (in most cases due to economic factors) may have negative influences on children. Children left in the care of a guardian or worse, left home alone by parents who went to work, to seek a better life in another country will face social problems caused by joining entourages that will have a negative effect on their school results, sometimes culminating in dropping out of school.

Based on these issues, in this paper we propose an analysis of works and studies on migration and its effects on families and the children left behind. From the methodological point of view, we chose to analyze reports of public or private institutions, studies and articles, so that we can better grasp the phenomenon and potentially lay down some conclusions and recommendations.

Keywords: *international migration; family; economic difficulties; children left behind.*

1. Introduction

Migration is a phenomenon which consists of the movement of large numbers of people from one area to another, followed by a change of residence and/or employment upon arrival (Zamfir and Vlăsceanu, 1993: 355). The migration is driven by economic, social, political or natural factors. To emigrate is the act of leaving one’s country to settle in another country.

After 1989, Romania was confronted with international migration, which resulted in a diminishment of the stable resident population. The country’s resident population

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reached 20.01 million inhabitants on January 1st 2013, approximately equal to that of the year 1969. Between 1989 and 2012 the stable population of Romania decreased by more than 3.1 million. More than 77 % of the negative growth of the resident population (stable) during this period was due to migration. In 2002 the number of migrants per 1,000 inhabitants of the resident population of Romania was 48.6, while in 2012 this indicator increased to 116.5. The largest share of the migrating population is represented by people aged 25-64. In 2012, this age group represented 74% of the total immigration, as opposed to 2002 when this indicator was 65% (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2014: 1).

Table 1: Resident population of Romania on January 1st, during 2002-2013, by gender

Year	Total	Men	number of people
			Women
2002	21723710	10566277	11157433
2003	21627509	10515783	11111726
2004	21521142	10468871	11052271
2005	21382354	10401382	10980972
2006	21257016	10343704	10913312
2007	21130503	10284720	10845783
2008	20635460	10007552	10627908
2009	20440290	9910000	10530290
2010	20294683	9836634	10458049
2011	20199059	9791269	10407790
2012	20095996	9746592	10349404
2013	20020074	9761480	10258594

Source: Institutul Național de Statistică, 2014: 5

Migration has both positive and negative effects in terms of attitudes as well as on a social level. Among the positive effects are local economic developments, entrepreneurship and increased tolerance in some areas with high migration rate, whereas the negative effects include dependence on revenues from migrant communities, abandoned children, human trafficking. Children are the most affected party in terms of family relationship, school status, public perception, and especially their emotional balance (parting with a parent causes extreme stress, emotional deprivation, shock, etc.).

Parents going abroad (in most cases due to economic factors) may have negative influences on children. Children left in the care of a guardian or worse, left home alone by parents who went to work, to seek a better life in another country will face social problems caused by joining entourage that will have a negative effect on their school results, sometimes culminating in dropping out of school. There may be situations where the migrants who managed to establish themselves in the destination countries

take their children to the new foreign households, so that Romania loses an important echelons of children and consequently, social values.

Based on these issues, in this paper we propose an analysis of works and studies on migration and its effects on families and the children left behind. From the methodological point of view, we chose to analyze reports of public or private institutions, studies and articles.

2. Literature review

The total movement of a population consists of natural and migratory movement. The population of a country is not only a result of inputs and outputs that are determined by births and deaths, but also a result of immigration and emigration. Migration can change not only the population but its structure by age, gender, and other characteristics. People can move out of the country or even move countries, for short duration or permanently.

When referring to a national territory, we can talk about internal migration, which concerns people who move into the national territory, but we also talk about foreign or international migration, where the country's population move into another country (Cruceru, 2010). The international migration can be due to natural disasters (forced migration), lack of employment opportunities (labor migration), or reuniting with family members who have migrated previously.

Population migration is the main form of geographical mobility of the population. Residential migration is a permanent relocation to another residential area, with a resulting change in the residential status. The concept of migration does not cover such phenomena as commuting, trips or various seasonal movements etc. (Rosca, 2007: 97-98). Also, the following two terms are used: immigration and emigration. Immigration is migration seen from the point of view, of the destination country, it's commonly found within international migration and the people who change their residence are called immigrants. Emigration is migration seen from the point of view of the country of origin and it's also found within the international migration. In this case, the moving population consists of emigrants.

Several underlying causes of population migration have been depicted in specialized literature (Rosca, 2007: 99-100), including:

- A first issue is that cities began to be overcrowded, a fact that was even worsened by the unbalance between the number of the inhabitants and the resources available which in turn reduced the income and consequently the degree of satisfaction in the relation to consumption. Overpopulation is determined by the increased number of births especially in less developed countries;
- The development of transportation which led to industrial expansion determined the migration of the work force in those areas;

- These migratory movements are also determined by numerous political, religious causes or historical reasons, the occurrence of diseases which led to massive emigration and immigration;
- We can also identify ecological causes of this type of migration being called environmental migration. The causes that triggered this type of migration are often natural environmental changes and pollution which create a great discomfort to the population.

Some of the specific reasons for which people choose to emigrate from Romania could be:

- Dissatisfaction related to the professional opportunities offered by the country of origin;
- Search of better living standards for children and the rest of the family;
- The destination country offers higher wages for the same work performed in the country of origin;
- Few, underpaid jobs for college graduates;
- Better health and social services in the destination country.

The number of foreign workers has increased in recent years in most developed countries in Europe. On average immigrant workers are younger than the workforce, medium age and they are distributed in a wide range of activities through the economy: agriculture, construction and civil engineering, light industry, tourism, hotel and catering, domestic personnel or any other services, including IT services.

The European Union has established the right of free movement for all the citizens within the member states. The treaty of Rome has guaranteed the right to free movement of workers within the European Community. After 1957, many EU regulations, international conventions and EU treaties have contributed considerably to facilitating the movement of people within European Union. Migration and asylum have become a predominant political agenda of the EU and Member States by 2000. Through the Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into force in 1999, the European Community efforts focused on establishing common policies on asylum and migration.

Migration of Romanians kept under strict control during the communist regime, has increased considerably in the '90s, in terms of volume, diversity of destination, reasons and socio-economic status for the migrant population. Migration followed an upward trend and involved all levels of society, becoming one of the most important migration flows in Europe. In recent years, external migration seems to have become one of the defining phenomena for the Romanian society.

At economic level the consequences are both positive and negative. An example of positive consequences is the fact that migrants finance part of the trade deficit and the current account deficit while helping the general economic growth. An example of negative consequences is the fact that part of the money supply is not sustained by production which leads to inflation. Another negative effect is the fact that sending money from abroad on regular basis to the family left behind encourages the supported

family members to develop a culture of dependency. And last but not least, one of the most important consequences of emigration is the influence on the families left behind (Bulai, 2006).

3. Emigration’s impact on families and children

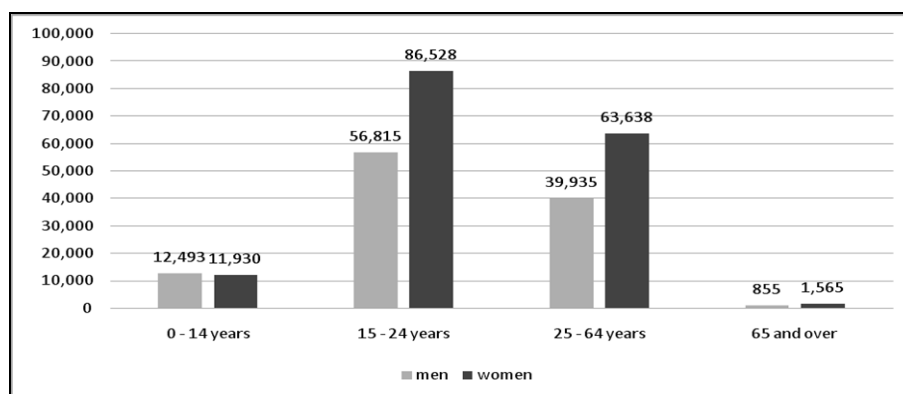
3.1. Emigration’s impact on families

In migration there are several types of distance, not only geographical distance: there is a technical distance (influenced by the available means of transport and communication), there is a social distance (the migration phenomenon is related to the family situation, to the experience of migration, the social context and the available capital).

The migration phenomenon has stirred controversy not only in political circles, but also at societal level, at interpersonal level, causing physical and emotional fractures between communities, friends and families. The effects on the families were, among others, an imbalance between the importance given to some its fundamental functions: the economic function is valued above the social and educational function.

The analysis of international migration of Romanian citizens was deepened through the process of breaking down of data by gender, which gives us a more clear view on the subsequent evolution of the families who stayed behind. More recent data provided by the National Institute of Statistics (2014: 9) show a greater flow of female migrants than male migrant; however this data do not consider the marital status or the parental status of the subjects. Data on the gender distribution of Romanian citizens who left the country are presented below:

Chart 1: The flow of emigrants in 2012, by age and gender



Source: Institutul Național de Statistică, 2014: 9

The analysis shows that, in recent years, over 60% of the total number of people who left Romania to establish residence in another country is represented by women. This can be credited to the increased numbers of job opportunities for them in most European countries.

In terms of geographical spread, the data show that the regions most affected by this phenomenon are the west (Banat, Crisana, Maramureş), where the percentage of middle school students with parents abroad is 27% of the total number of students and Moldova where we can find a similar percentage (25%). On a national level, there are no differences between rural areas and urban areas in relation to the number of children whose parents migrated, but, there are such differences within certain geographical areas. Thus, in regions like Banat-Crişana-Maramureş and Oltenia we noticed a larger share of children left behind by migrating parents in the urban area than in the rural area (Soros România Foundation, 2007).

The relocation of family members for extended periods of time may lead to changes in family roles and functions: one of the family members left behind takes over as head of the family. The effort to substitute the departed parent is often negatively perceived. According to a study conducted by the Soros Foundation Romania in 2007, more often than not, the missing parent is the father. The study indicates that there are approximately 115,000 secondary school students whose fathers are abroad. Of these, 21% live without their father for a period of 2 to 4 years, and 28%, even more than 4 years. In the majority of cases in which only the father is departed (94%), children left behind are in the care of their mothers. In the case of mothers leaving to work abroad 15% of children live without them for more than 4 years, and 21% for a period of 2 to 4 years. Half of the departed mothers are away from their children for one year. For students whose mothers are away, the extended family is an important reliance. Only 58% of them live with their fathers. The data show that out of the children who have both their parents away to work in another country, 34% live without their parents for at least two years and 54% for less than one year. This means that within 10-14 years age group, nationwide, approximately 12,000 children live at least two years in the absence of both parents, and almost 19,000 in the same situation for one year. 65% of these students are in the care of grandparents, 24% are cared for by aunts and uncles, and the remaining 11% are in the care of other people (Soros România Foundation, 2007: 8).

Data provided by the Department for Child Protection at the end of the first quarter of 2013 indicated that in Romania there are 82,073 children whose parents work abroad. Of these, 23,312 children have both parents abroad, being left in the care of relatives or in some severe cases, even in foster care. However, the actual number of children affected is much higher, considering that not all parents declare they are working abroad. Separation from parents makes children vulnerable and at risk of dropping out of school and delinquency (Asociația Salvati Copiii, 2014). On the other side, it is recognised that in the case of the prevention of the human retraffication, the family is the most important factor for child recovery of child victims (Nicolaescu D., 2009: 62).

Emigration of one or both parents may lead to family crises, thereby understanding the advent of stress situations within the family, tensions and frictions among the family

members, all of which threaten the family's ability to function and sometimes even result in its disbandment. An effect of external migration is the changing of family structure through divorce which may affect children profoundly (Bulai, 2006).

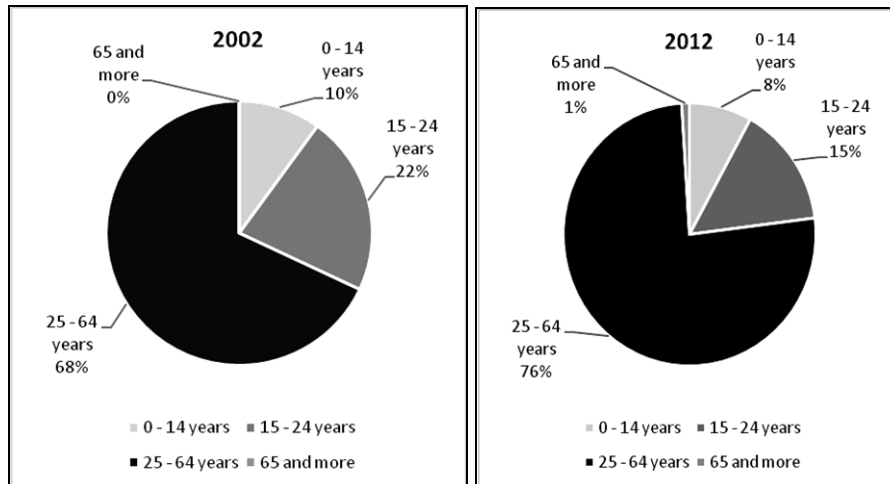
3.2. Emigration's impact on children left behind

The Romanians' emigration for work has a far greater impact than the authorities might have acknowledged as they are only beginning to monitor the phenomenon "home alone". The first victims of this phenomenon are children whose fragile emotional state exposes them to high risks. Two out of three children who have parents working abroad feel they are deprived of their affection. Those children, according to psychologists and sociologists, develop dissonant personalities and therefore it is possible that, once they reached adulthood they will develop social and emotional problems (Hudițeanu, 2001: 112).

Being successful in school is partially influenced by the child's family resources (financial, educational, environmental, the care and attention given to the child during school years, emotional support and guidance). The departure of one parent or both abroad for an extended period of time can affect school performance, shouldn't anyone take on the functions and responsibilities, usually performed by the migrant parents. It is, however, possible that the negative impact of the parent's departure abroad can be mitigated by the potential positive effects such as: higher living standards, increased opportunities for traveling abroad and the contact with another culture. The most disadvantaged group, in terms of school performance, is the group of children whose both parents have emigrated, a situation that can cause a far greater negative effect than just a lower social status or a broken family.

Children whose parents are working abroad feel very much their absence. Many children have trouble sleeping, low self-esteem, aggressive behavior, and all these because they lack guidance and role models. Older children start to lie, to be aggressive, to keep bad company, to skip classes, or even dropout of school completely. Psychologists feel there is a possibility that some of these children will grow up to be delinquents (Iluț, 2005). Also, insufficient control or supervision from the other adults in charge of their welfare, as well as the emotional distress caused by the lack of parental affection and considering that an increased income gives them access to various opportunities, all of the mentioned can potentially develop inspire certain deviant tendencies (Soros România Foundation, 2007: 29). Of course, the children are a vulnerable category to human trafficking because they have a higher probability for fraudulent border crossing, because they are much more exposed than the adults and therefore much easier to manipulate (Nicolăescu, D, 2011: 115).

Another element that can be considered very important in the analysis of international migration of Romanians is the age at which they migrate. Data show an increased percentage for the age group 25-64 years. The situation can be considered as a potential risk factor for children who remain in the country because, in most cases, they are left unattended by the family during adolescence, a period which is considered to be the most difficult in the psychological development of a minor.

Chart 2: Structure of migrants in January 1st - by age

Source: Institutul Național de Statistică, 2014: 13

In the absence of frequent visits from migrant parents, the communication tools are the main way of keeping in touch with children left behind. 92% of children with both parents working, and 82-83% of those with only one migrant parent, talk on the phone with them on weekly basis. The Internet is less used for communication: in 10-15% of cases children communicate through email or messenger programs with their parents who are living abroad (Soros România Foundation, 2007: 18). Studies do not indicate a negative effect of the separation on the health of the children left home, but confirm the existence of a direct link between the absence of both parents / the mother and the occurrence of depression symptoms in children.

The lack of parental affection is a phenomenon experienced by most children whose parents have emigrated. Many families tend to perceive the consequences of migration solely in terms of benefit-cost ratio, as in money and other material benefits vs the distress of the children left behind. Children left home often feel abandoned, and this has long-term negative consequences such as: the difficulty of forming and maintaining lasting attachments, introversion and self-questioning due to the lack of attachment to the most important role model – the mother; difficulties in relating to others; aggressive behavior (Bulai, 2006).

4. Conclusions

International migration - temporary or permanent – of Romanian citizens is a real phenomenon that has grown in recent years and has affected family structure and functionality in general, but it has a considerable impact on minors who remain in the country in the care of just one parent, other relatives or foster care.

Solving problems faced by children whose parents are working abroad are left in the hands of state institutions. The first step towards solving this problem should be creating a legal framework in line with the existing reality - children with parents working abroad are a vulnerable group.

Among the measures that need to be taken at national level are providing decent incomes for struggling families, financial incentives, but also increasing the number of social workers who can reduce the effects of the migration on the children left behind (Mihailescu, 1999: 176).

Also, the development and implementation of coherent public policies that can identify and monitor children whose parents have emigrated, while increasing the local social workers network capacity could reduce the negative effects of emigration.

Within the educational system a solution for this problem could be strengthening the relation between school institutions and the social care system by designing effective methods and procedures of communication between teachers, head teachers, school psychologists and social workers. The role of the school counselor could also be increased by a deeper involvement in identifying and solving crisis situations, especially in rural areas. In a case of a child who has been identified as a child left behind, social workers should conduct an initial assessment, followed by a service plan, should they find that the child is at risk. The service plan should include ways to maintain personal relationships with the parents of the child left behind and the identification of those counseling services that will best help the child. The service plan may include individual / family counseling for the adults that are in charge of the child's care and also it should provide support services for everyone responsible for the child left behind.

After school programs' and opening day centers and clubs for children could be another solution for this problem. Within these institutions, children could socialize and spend time in a safe environment (Diaconu, 2004).

Within the families is important to inform the parents about the risks assumed by leaving to work abroad and to highlight important issues that need to be taken into account during their temporary absence from home (how to communicate with children, how to maintain contact the importance of involving children in taking decisions that concern them, etc.)

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