

THE CONSEQUENCES OF PARENTS LEAVING FOR WORK ABROAD, UPON THEIR CHILDREN

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Abstract: *Consequences of parental migration , as shown by survey data and interviews are contextual and they should not be exaggerated or generalized. Parental migration does not always affect children directly but rather indirectly, by producing effects that lead to family dissolution. School plays an important role in this process, mostly an informal one, by providing social services to children whose parents (one or both) are temporarily abroad.*

A direct consequence of parental migration is child deprivation of parental affection and supervision ,necessary for his/her normal development. In the cases when parents leave for longer periods of time and children remain in the care of people who do not have the ability or the oportunity to offer them emotional support and proper education, this can lead to negative effects upon their health and psihiac development, upon their academic performances and further more, it can lead to their involment in deviant activities, inappropriate for their age, or even to exploitation or abuses of many kinds.

Keywords: *migration, teenagers, consequences*

JEL Classification: I20, J61

1. Introduction

As data of the surveys and interviews show, the consequences of parents' migration abroad depend on social context and should not be exaggerated or generalized. Parents' migration does not have a direct impact on children, but an indirect one, whose effects lead to the decay of the family. School plays an important role - most of the time an informal one - in providing social services to the children whose parents (one of them or even both) are temporary abroad.

The following material has studied the impact produced by parents' decision to leave to work abroad, on the school results of their children left at home. School success is partially influenced by family's resources (finances, education, spending time together, attention, helping the child with school work, emotional support and supervision). The departure of one or both parents abroad for a longer period of time may cause problems in school performance of the child, unless the parents' responsibilities are taken over by someone else in their absence (the other parent - in case only one of them leaves - the other members of the family, the person or the family who is legally supposed to take care of the child). On the other hand, not only the resources of the family or the involvement of the parents could lead to good school results; there are also other factors which influence this aspect.

In the context of globalization and large phenomena which nowadays are taking place, and also because our country is a member of the EU, Romania has known a series of economic and social changes. One of the phenomena, which strongly damage both the society and the economy of the country, is the migration with the purpose of working abroad. The nature of the migration is strongly related to the life situation of the family of the individual, to the migration experience, to the connections between the community-region contexts and to the available capital.

The process of migration has aroused a lot of controversies not only inside the political circles, but also among the people of the society, which is at an interpersonal level, splitting friends, families and communities emotionally and physically. One can

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observe the negative effects of the emigration in the case of the families which decide to split; the birth rate decreases and the sense of independence is strongly supported, lowering the number of marriages and increasing the number of people who decide to marry at an older age.

The departure of one of the family members abroad for a period of time might lead to changes within the family regarding the roles and the attributions: one of the family members left at home will probably take over the attribution of the head of the family. The effort of the other members who are here of trying to fulfill the attributions of the one who has left, might have a negative effect. School success is partially influenced by family's resources (finances, education, spare time, attention, helping the child with school work, emotional support, supervision). The departure of one or both parents abroad for a longer period of time may cause problems in school performance of the child, unless the parents' responsibilities are taken over by someone else in their absence (the other parent, in case only one of them leaves, the other members of the family, the person or the family who is legally supposed to take care of the child). But there is also the possibility of reducing the negative effects of this by taking into consideration the positive effects of the departure: the increase in the living standards, the higher opportunity of the child to travel abroad and to get to know another culture. Basically, during the last years more and more people who are part of the modest or the poor level of the society, decided to leave the country because of the poverty, because they did not have a job in their own country or because they wanted a higher salary. In most of these situations, the children are affected and the phenomenon of the children left at home by parents who went abroad to work has drawn the attention of the press, especially in the individual cases with a big impact on the media.

The social-economic instability in Romania and the endless transition have determined a big part of the Romanians to go abroad in order to be able to support their family. The earnings are indeed important to both the family and the Romanian economy, but this migration has also aspects which are less wanted, such as: the disorganization of the family and the "abandon" of the children to their grandparents or to other relatives, aspects which might have serious psychological consequences on them, visible in time.

In Romania, over the past decade, more and more children have been left "home alone", because their parents looked for a job abroad in order to provide to their family a decent living. In most of the cases, one parent leaves at first, followed later by the other one, because they consider this is the easiest way to earn money in order to return home faster. Most of the times, this theory is nothing but a fantasy, because once they get abroad, their wishes will become bigger, and their absence from home will be longer. Meanwhile, the children who were left at home in the care of some close or far relatives (till the 4th grade of kinship), are living with the hope that their parents will return home soon, but parents' absence increases, therefore, children's need of physical presence of their parents will disappear. But for most of these children, the absence period of their parents is longer and longer, causing negative effects on children's physical and emotional growing process. The schools in Arges County declare every year that more and more children are in the situation of moving to their relatives because their parents have gone abroad to work. There have been psychopedagogical counseling requests for these children in order to treat them, and because there are not enough specialized and well done materials, we have thought it is necessary an evaluation of the actual concrete situation. Therefore, we have chosen a well defined period of life, that is the adolescence, in order to estimate a few of the psychological development aspects.

2. Materials and Methods

From our class master position, we wanted to identify the school results of the children whose parents are abroad and to establish a hierarchy of the factors which influence these results.

Based on the theory, we have assumed that these children have bad school results. The analysis of the researches that have been made are focused on studying the influence of the factors which are related to the family and the child, in order to see if the family can manage the situation without any external help.

The group which is the most disadvantaged by the situation is the categorie of children who have both parents abroad; this situation causing more negative effects than just the low social status or the damaged structure of the family.

The representative group who is part of this study contains 29 teenagers, who are between 15-17 years old, students of the Theoretical Highschool “Ion Cantacuzino” – Pitesti. The group is formed of 6 boys and 23 girls, of which 19 come from urban environment and 10 from rural environment. The students have participated to the examination voluntarily and we have used the survey (self-administration) and the interview as methods of research. This investigation has a few steps, summed up in: the preparation of the investigation, which contains a set of actions regarding the nomination of the targets and of the assumptions of the examination, the selection of the people who will be part of the investigation (the representative group); the drafting and the application of the survey according to the way of applying it, which has been established before, during which it is solved the problem of the possible types of questions and it is tested the project of this survey; the processing and the interpretation of the data of the investigation. If the obtained results confirm the initial hypothesis of the investigation, they must be presented objectively. It has been used the school register in order to identify the school results of the children before and after their parents have gone to work abroad. We have considered that it will be relevant for our study to present the school average of the children on each semester.

Question 1: “Which is your locative situation during the school year?”

Students answers:

with the parents	in a dormitory	rent/lodgings
22 – 75, 86 %	None	7 – 24, 13%

Question 2: “Which is your family status?”:

Students answers:

I live with my parents	My parents are divorced	One parent is dead	My Parents are working abroad
23 – 79,31%	3 – 10,34%	1 – 3, 45%	2 – 6, 90

Question 3: “Do you want to live with your parents? Why?”

Students answers:

Yes - A better financial situation	Yes - Moral support	Yes - No responsibilities for the students to take care of	None
6 – 20, 69%	18 – 62, 07%	5 – 17, 24%	- Others

Question 4: “How do you describe your relation with your family?”

Students answers:

The parents are too strict, they have too many rules	They agree with everything I do	They are indifferent, they do not care what I do	They support me in everything I do
1 – 3, 45%	5 – 17, 24%	None	23 – 79, 31%

Question 5: “Which member of your family is more interested in your school situation?”
Students answers:

Mother/Father	Grandmother/Grandfather	Aunt/Other relatives	Someone else (who?)
27 – 93, 10%	2 – 6, 90%	None	None

Question 6 : “What is the average of your school results at the end of the first semester?”
Students answers:

below 5	between 5 and 7	between 7 and 9	between 9 and 10
None	None	15 – 51, 72%	14 – 48, 27%

Question 7: “Which are the causes of your school difficulties?”
Students answers:

The absence of the parents	Teachers who are not so sympathetic	Family problems	Misunderstandings with the friends	Others
None	None	None	None	29 – 100%

Question 8: “Have you had any dispute with one of your teachers? Why?”
Students answers:

Yes	No
None	29 – 100%

Question 9: “It has ever happened to you to skip school? Why?”
Students answers:

Not interested in one specific subject	Boredom	The habit of skipping school	The fear of receiving a bad grade	Others
2 – 6,90%	3 – 10,34%	None	15 – 51,72%	9 – 31,03%

The information obtained from the students highlighted two important aspects of the adolescence period: the detachment from the parents and the need of finding their own personality. We assist to a grown-up of the personality and independence and autonomy in plans and decisions; on the other hand we observe an internal manifestation of the need of affective security by getting more close to the parents, family and by constantly communicating with them.

Some of the aspects noticed after the investigation of the surveys:

19. The need of independence and growing up – reflected on one hand by the components which express the achievement of individual autonomy (one student lives in lodgings), such as solving some daily problems on their own; and on the other hand, it is reflected by the tendency of overanalyzing the situation and looking for new possibilities.
20. The adaptability of the two teenagers whose parents have gone to work abroad, to their actual life situation was possible through a very good communication between them and the people around them (the school environment – both students have a good communication level with their desk mates, teachers, class master, friends and relatives) and through getting used to the school environment and to the school requirements, generally speaking.
21. The need of integration into a family, into a family home – those two students which were interviewed, show an ambivalent position in what they feel. On one hand, they say they got used to the situation, but on the other hand, they claim they miss their parents and the frustration caused by the absence of the family time moments is quite visible.

22. Regarding the way of maintaining the relation with their parents who are abroad, the students think that they can keep in touch with their parents through phone and Internet. The fact that they celebrate constantly together some of the religious events every year, gives to the children the opportunity to evaluate and rebuild their relationship with their parents.

3. Conclusions

As the data of the investigation and interviews show, the consequences of parents' migration depend on the social context and should not be exaggerated or generalized. Parents' migration does not have a direct impact on children, but an indirect one, whose effects lead to the decay of the family. School plays an important role - most of the time an informal one - in providing social services to the children whose parents (one of them or even both) are temporary abroad.

One direct consequence of this phenomenon is depriving the child from parental affectivity and from the surveillance needed for his/her normal development. Considering parents leaving abroad for longer periods of time and considering children's staying at home in care of some people who might not have the capacity and/or the ability to offer proper moral and educational support, these two consequences may take a turn to negative effects regarding the child's health and psychological development, regarding his/her involvement in school activities and its results; this might bring about an inappropriate behavior and child's submission to exploitation or other types of abuse.

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This study describes both the negative and the positive effects of parents' migration. The most important positive aspects are the wellbeing wealth of the students (better living standards, cell phones and very advanced computers) and the possibility of traveling abroad. Among the negative ones, we shall recall the loneliness and the hole in the emotional part.

Summing up, the results of the investigation showed that the children whose parents have gone to work abroad do not have worse school results than the other ones; one of the students who is a girl, is actually among the best students with very good school results. The other one, who is a boy, has a school average lower than the girls but this might be because of his medical condition, hence he is under medication.

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