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PSYCHOSOCIAL CONTENT OF THE CHALLENGES AND VULNERABILITY OF THE CONTEMPORARY FAMILY IN ROMANIA

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Abstract. In recent decades, European families have undergone extraordinary changes that have resulted in a variety of forms and family relationships. Even though, among families with minor children, the married couple with one or two children is still the most common form of family, today's children are raised in many different family environments. It is observed that in various spheres of society the influence of vulnerabilities on families in the future. Highlighting the psychosocial content of the contemporary family in Romania, it brought to the fore the challenges and vulnerabilities that they face today, in its evolution. The family, like any institution, has its functions and it is expected that, despite social changes, they will be fulfilled both for society and for the physical subsistence of its members. Over time, under the influence of external or internal factors, disturbances in one function affect the other functions to a greater or lesser extent. Changes are taking place throughout the world at the level of family models and implicitly in the exercise of their functions, Romania not being bypassed by these tendencies manifested on a global scale. Socio-ecological factors, such as poverty, psychosocial services and spending on social services, could influence the challenges facing vulnerable families. This paper examines the extent to which socio-economic vulnerability, psychosocial care consultations and preventive social services expenditures influence the reunification of children in care outside the home. These findings have implications for decision-makers, funding agencies and child protection agencies to improve jurisdictional resources to reduce the socio-economic vulnerabilities of family reunification.

Keywords: family, socio-economic vulnerability, poverty, indicators of poverty, inequality, regional disparities

1. The dimensions of social vulnerability

Based on the existing literature, social vulnerability is defined in terms of a complex phenomenon that includes the following dimensions: economic difficulties / lack of financial resources: poverty, low standard of living, housing problems (eg too wet, too expensive, too cold or difficult to heat), social exclusion: limited access to facilities such as shops, schools, libraries or medical services; lack of social support from social networks: no assistance from family members, friends, neighbors or colleagues (referring to practical as well as emotional help); stigmatization: being the victim of stereotypes, being devalued, being confronted with shameful behavior due to belonging to a certain social or ethnic group; health difficulties:



disadvantages resulting from poor mental health, physical health or disabilities; to be a victim of crime: in a family context, especially of violence.

Some of these dimensions can certainly be intertwined and intertwined. Vulnerable individuals often face multiple challenges at the same time because physical problems can trigger material, social, and emotional problems (Olsson & Hwang, 2003), and people with material needs tend to have strong emotional and social needs as well (Holand et al., 2011). In extreme cases, social exclusion and stigma related to poverty and resulting lifestyle differences could lead to a lack of social support and isolation that is detrimental to psychological well-being. However, it is sufficient for only one of the six issues mentioned above to appear to describe a family as vulnerable. Moreover, because social and emotional needs are not easy to measure, material needs are usually the key indicator for vulnerability.

In 2011, almost a third of households with two adults with three or more dependent children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU-27 (López Vilaplana, 2013). However, the situation is often even more problematic for single parents (Graaf-Zijl & Nolan 2011, p. 29). The share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion amounts to almost 50% among single parents with dependent children (López Vilaplana, 2013). This composition of the household can be a major factor for low labor intensity and in-work poverty in the absence of adequate support services, especially for single mothers who are susceptible to the negative effects on divorce income (Vandecasteele, 2011, p. 248). While families with two parents share their income and have the opportunity to share different responsibilities and tasks, a single parent has to deal with all the difficulties alone (Fusco et al., 2010; Vandecasteele, 2011; Holand et al., 2011).

Their difficulties may come from limited access to the labor market and / or discrimination in the labor market, but also from low education or their certificates of study not being accepted in the destination countries, as well as from insufficient language skills. Moreover, families with disabled family members are considered vulnerable. Research shows that poor health and disabilities trigger the risk of entering poverty (Fusco et al., 2010; McKernan & Ratcliffe, 2005). Families with people with disabilities may also suffer from more strained emotional relationships due to care requirements (Olsson & Hwang, 2003). Finally, same-sex couples with children are also mentioned as a vulnerable type of family, although due to social exclusion or stigma rather than economic hardship (Goldberg & Smith, 2011).

From the theoretical analysis, it is found that there are various aspects and dimensions of vulnerability: economic difficulties, social exclusion, stigmatization, lack of stability, etc. Indeed, vulnerability can be understood in different ways. Regarding the multidimensional construction, the term refers to the economic, psychological, social and physical environment. Being vulnerable therefore means being exposed to a risk due to a lack of resources that does not allow one (or more) specific issues to be addressed. At the same time, different types of problems can trigger vulnerability, including a wide variety of families, from single-parent families to families with dependent family members and from large families to same-sex couples with children.

As Parke (2013, p. 17) notes, "families are embedded in a variety of other systems, including extensive networks of relatives and informal community connections such as friends and neighbors, work, and social, educational, and medical institutions." There are broader social systems (community, economy, politics) that are affected by change and development itself and have a great impact on family life. Corresponding to societal evolutions, the family as an institution is not static, but in continuous evolution and adaptation to external circumstances (ibid., P. 11).



2. Factors that determine the vulnerability of families in Romania

The scientific literature focuses mainly on economic vulnerability and especially on the risk of poverty. Therefore, it is not surprising that employment-related factors dominate the discourse. In addition, employment is also linked to other dimensions of vulnerability. For example, job loss is one of the most important reasons for entering poverty (McKernan & Ratcliffe, 2005; Riederer & Wolfsbauer, 2011; Vandecasteele, 2011). In addition, prolonged periods of unemployment often lead to loss of self-esteem and impairment of psychological well-being. Stigma could also come into play. Among the employed, the intensity of work in the household is decisive for the risks of poverty (Fouarge & Layte, 2005; Fusco et al., 2010; Riederer & Wolfsbauer, 2011). Weak parental attachment to the labor market can result from a lack of support. Lack of childcare options could force parents (especially mothers) to leave the labor market, affecting their material situation (e.g., Baum, 2002; Eu rofound, 2013; Keck & Saraceno, 2013).

Importantly, the situation of potentially vulnerable families is moderated by the macro context. The level of long-term poverty varies considerably between different welfare state regimes (Fouarge & Layte, 2005). It has also been found that the risks of vulnerability related to certain factors vary from country to country (Fusco et al., 2010). For example, the relationship between being unemployed and at risk of poverty varies between countries depending on their level of economic development and institutional setting (McKernan & Ratcliffe, 2005; Moller et al., 2003). Finally, cultural factors matter a lot.

For example, gender roles that prevail in a society influence women's position in the labor market by determining their economic situation (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Pfau Effinger, 2000). And social exclusion and stigma are closely linked to the values and norms shared at a given time. This section combines the perspectives of Mynarska et al. (2015) with the findings of Riederer, Philipov and Rengs (2017) using the summary description of the results from Riederer et al. (2017).

Economic change and macroeconomic turmoil are clearly linked to the economic situation of families and influence the risk of poverty. Experts identified several mechanisms that play a role here. First, there will be an economic crisis related to high unemployment. If one or even both parents are unemployed, this will obviously put a family in danger. Usually two incomes are (and will be) needed to ensure good living conditions for a family. Thus, unemployment can be the most important factor that endangers the situation of all families. Moreover, different types of jobs are needed (ie those that require high qualifications, but also jobs that do not require specialized skills), so that people from different social backgrounds, with different levels of education and with different levels of qualification they can be sure that they can support their families. Unemployment among young people is another relevant factor. It is possible to delay the entry into adulthood and the formation of the family. In this sense, it can prevent young people from forming families and having the number of children they want.

Other consequences of an economic crisis are related to taxation and welfare provided by the state. Discussors noted that a severe crisis could be a serious threat to the entire welfare system. Decreasing tax revenues could make it impossible to support families in need and be detrimental to the entire public sector. But economic development is also relevant to the solidarity and tolerance of society. Battles over the allocation of limited resources between societal subgroups could substantially increase the vulnerability of families.

In situations of economic tension, traditional political ways of thinking (or even far-right and / or left-wing positions) may gain in popularity. Last but not least, economic instability can lead



to emotional problems in families. With an economic crisis, families may face financial difficulties that they are not prepared to face.

Although economic circumstances are fundamental to the well-being of families, experts have argued that we should not limit our thinking to the positive effects of economic growth and thus monitor potential problems.

For example, strong economic growth can raise environmental issues. Moreover, the well-being of the family is not just about a good economic situation, but about a general quality of life. High economic development could bring more pressure and stress to families if it is not accompanied by more general changes in work culture, lifestyle and so on.

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Intergenerational relationships can be discussed from different perspectives. By focusing on the exchange of help and support between generations, the presence of grandparents could improve the situation of a family with children, as they are often important providers of childcare, but can also become an additional stressor in case of need for care. at older ages. Given the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another, intergenerational communication is extremely relevant.

With regard to new information technologies, a gap in knowledge between generations could make effective communication between them more difficult. With respect to parenting skills and traditions, young parents can often be unprepared if they cannot rely on grandparents. This last aspect has a special relevance in companies with high normative standards in parenting.

2. 1. Social vulnerability and intervention

When proposing the identification of the vulnerable population, both individual and collective actions leading to the manifestation of vulnerability must be identified. Collective actions are the result of the aggregation of individual actions.

It is considered vulnerability, inability of individuals or groups to act or inability to adapt actions to the structural requirements of the social system. There are, according to Cojocar, certain types of social vulnerability, such as:

- utilitarian vulnerability;
- teleological vulnerability;
- axiological vulnerability;
- traditional vulnerability;
- cognitive vulnerability;

Utilitarian vulnerability is the situation in which the individual / group does not notice their own interest or the actions they take are not adapted to it.

Teleological vulnerability is the situation generated either by the fact that the means are not adequate to achieve the proposed goal, or by the fact that the proposed goal is inadequate to the available resources.

Axiological vulnerability is the situation that characterizes the individual / group that cannot carry out an action because the normative principle is not adequate to one's own beliefs or the system of personal values is not compatible with that of the social system.



Traditional vulnerability is the case where the individual / group acts by virtue of habit or the state of social passivity is transmitted due to the influence of the environment.

Cognitive vulnerability is the situation in which the individual / group finds itself, a fact generated by the non-existence of an effective theory or by the fact that the individual does not believe in a theory that has already been verified.

These types of vulnerability characterize the clients of social services, and for an adequate intervention it is necessary to follow all the elements that lead to the identification of the dominant type of vulnerability.

Vulnerability is noticeable through some specific behaviors. The behaviors characteristic of vulnerable people are the result of defining the situation in which they find themselves. Any social behavior is manifested in a context structured even by human agents (Ungureanu, 1990, p. 126).

In order to really capture the type of vulnerability that affects an individual, we consider it very important to notice the way in which he defines his situation according to the appreciated social value, attitudes towards social values, the expected result and the instrumental process of acquiring its result.

Studies of families and types of families have found different reasons why families may need more attention and support. In general, however, the ability to combine family life with paid work has been identified as crucial to the well-being of the family.

The study on the contemporary family in Romania aims to identify the factors that lead to vulnerability at the individual level and at the family level, in all its forms. In order to investigate attitudes, behaviors, psycho-affective and social relationships, typologies, mechanisms of individuals and families that lead to vulnerability.

Most research claims that in recent decades the family in contemporary societies has undergone important changes. At the same time, it continues to be a fundamental institution in society, which is why the vulnerability of the family is viewed with increasing concern in public debates. Socio-ecological factors, such as poverty, psychosocial services and spending on social services, could influence the challenges facing vulnerable families.

It can be considered that the most important changes in the world that can influence family systems could be: the progress of technology, information and telecommunications; increasing the level of sexual freedom; recognition of women's rights; extending children's rights; massive migration from rural to urban areas and employment opportunities away from the country of origin and, last but not least, the secularization of the contemporary world (Giddens, 2000; Goody, 2003).

Within this research, a representative sample was selected (N = 216), consisting of individuals / families working in the field: medical, economic, education, social work, public administration, human resources, construction, legal, banking, trade, mass -media, but also individuals who do not work on the labor market.

The areas that cause the family to major changes and that make its structure vulnerable, become the dimensions of this research:

- economic difficulties, poverty, economic uncertainty, instability, fears about their own future, insufficient housing, low living standards;
- social exclusion, lack of social networks (friends, family);
- stigmatization, disapproval of society, discrimination of institutions and legal regulations;
- time pressure, overwork, stress (especially related to work) - as a consequence: various health problems, depression, anxiety, behavioral and educational problems of children;
- lack of family stability, risk of divorce, difficult especially for children, traumatic experiences;
- health problems - especially disabilities;



- violent, alcohol.

Thus, from the section that includes the specific data of the respondents such as age, gender, family structure, marital status, ethnicity, level of education, professional field, in correlation with the factors that determine changes in family structure produce significant differences in the attitudinal system of individuals and families towards challenges and vulnerability, it is found that attitudes towards the family are different, so that: for 36.2% the main thing is to preserve the value of the family, the successful transfer of its spiritual and material heritage to future generations. A significant percentage of participants, 32.2%, consider that the main thing that characterizes the attitude about the family consists in educating the responsible, moral personality of the family members. And 32.2% consider that the main thing is to maintain the individuality (originality) and self-realization of each family member.

It is found that 38.1% of the participants consider that for the happiness of the family it is necessary for the spouses to forgive each other and to treat the other's defects patiently. 33.7% of the respondents believe that the guarantee of family happiness consists in the mutual respect of personal interests, while 18.3% consider that the family is happy if there is spiritual unity, values and similar thinking of the spouses.

From the analyzes, it is found that there is a significant correlation between opinions, at the level of the family of origin. Thus, the respondents who from complete families, with both parents present consider in a significant percentage that the democratic form of family organization is the most appropriate (65.4%) while the respondents from incomplete families (with only one parent) consider that the form of family organization must be the patriarchal one in which the man is the head of the family and makes the main decisions - 24.9%. The family model that significant percentages of participants find is defined as satisfactory for their family, and 47.3% of them will adopt or have already adopted the same model of relationships as in the family of origin.

Regarding the identification of stressors and their influence on the coping mechanisms of various types of families: time pressure, overwork, overload; stress (especially related to work) - as a consequence: various health problems, depression, anxiety, behavioral and educational problems of children.

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Among the worst problems affecting the contemporary family, from the respondents' perspective are: physical aggression, alcohol consumption, financial problems, distrust, lack of respect, migration, lack of jobs, low standard of living, lack of communication, infidelity, emotional incompatibility, economic instability, addictions, political and social games in which the family develops.

Regarding the way of distributing conjugal roles, it is found that: the interests and hobbies of the family depend largely on the husband and the wife, the mood in the family depends largely on the wife but also on the husband, both partners. dealing with social activities within the family (reunions, visits, etc.), the approach to family difficulties being carried out by both spouses.

Also, sensitive topics in communication, attitude towards the world and life, but also the attitude towards mistake, as well as sincerity, openness in the couple and secrets, the language of the couple are elements that can influence the vulnerability of a family.



Conclusions

The results of the analyzes on empirical data from Romania, presented below, support the idea that the classical family remains from now on the most widespread and the most valued. Although the Romanian family has gone through a period of change in recent decades, the changes have been more expressive in nature: a family in which decisions are increasingly made together, in which domestic, parental, couple roles are negotiated, a more family free, better connected and integrated in society. The essential transformations that the Romanian family has undergone can be reduced to the model of a more democratic family inside and more open to the outside. Compared to other spheres of life, family life offers the greatest satisfaction. Work and life achievements are the other areas that consistently offer high satisfaction. It is found that for the happiness of the family it is absolutely necessary for the spouses to show an increased tolerance within the cup, to protect each other's family interests. Also, spiritual unity, values and similar thinking are elements that close a family, for a significant percentage of respondents.

Families in which the spouses are of different nationalities, cultures, social backgrounds can be strong and happy if the spouses show affection and care in the couple, much more important aspects than culture, religion, the existence of descendants, say 87.4% of respondents. Regarding the family of origin of the respondents, many argue that it is a model in approaching their own family through the democratic form of organization and the husband and wife should have legal rights, bear the same responsibility for the family, where both partners contribute to the organization family time as well as its financial contribution. The family relationship presents a high level of importance for 83.9% of the participants, having a financial situation and good living conditions, in balance. However, 60.7% of all participants believe that the socio-economic and political situation in the country affects family relationships by stimulating situations of crisis, fatigue, irritability, conflict. A low price considers the fact that the current situation promotes positive changes in family relationships, the family becomes more consolidated. Among the worst problems affecting the contemporary family are: economic situation, migration, infidelity, lack of jobs, adultery, alcohol consumption, lack of free time, lack of communication, macroeconomic situation, poorly developed health system, media impact and virtual socialization channels, lack of trust in the partner.

In conclusion, the existence of problems in the couple is recognized to a greater extent by women, compared to men and young people, compared to adults or the elderly. The most important cause of marital problems is material deprivation or lack of money, followed by household chores and children's behavior. Financial difficulties are considered to be the main cause of couples' problems, to a greater extent by men, in the context in which, in many families, the responsibility for providing economic resources in the household lies largely with them.

The traditional division of family work is in the process of change, with greater flexibility between partners. In addition to the increased involvement in household chores, the woman also has a slightly higher decision-making power in managing these tasks. The woman is the "mistress of the house": not only does she do more in the house and for the children, but she also decides to a greater extent what needs to be done. Satisfaction with family life is very high in Romania and constant over time. Satisfaction with the intangible resources of the family is high, while with material resources it is rather low. The satisfaction model is one in which the relations inside the family but also those outside, with the neighbors, are very good, in which the house is satisfactory, but in which the family income is appreciated rather negatively. The family represents the most important value of Romanians and the fundamental support of their life.



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