

**ANALELE ȘTIINȚIFICE  
ALE  
UNIVERSITĂȚII „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” DIN IAȘI  
(SERIE NOUĂ)**

**SCIENTIFIC ANNALS  
OF  
„ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” UNIVERSITY OF IAȘI  
(NEW SERIES)**

**SOCIOLOGIE  
ȘI ASISTENȚĂ SOCIALĂ**

**SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK**

**Tom XIV / Nr. 1**

**July, 2021**



**Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași**

**ANALELE ȘTIINȚIFICE ALE UNIVERSITĂȚII „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” DIN IAȘI  
(SERIE NOUĂ) SOCIOLOGIE ȘI ASISTENȚĂ SOCIALĂ**

**ISSN:** 2065-3131 (print) / **ISSN:** 2066-8961 (online)

**ISSN-L:** 2065-3131

The journal is edited by the Department of Sociology and Social Work, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences and is published by the Publishing House of „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași.

**Editor in Chief**

**Daniela Șoitu**, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania

**Guest Editors**

**Dumitru Stan**, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania

**Roxana Vasiliu**, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania

**Members**

**Gabriela Irimescu**, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania; **Mihaela Rădoi**, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania; **Romeo Asiminei**, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania; **Cristina Gavriluță**, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania; **Camelia Medeleanu**, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania.

**Scientific and Editorial Board**

**Asunción Llena Berñe**, University of Barcelona, Spain; **Michèle Baumann**, Université du Luxembourg, Luxembourg; **Doru Buzducea**, Universitatea București, România; **Teresa Careira**, Universidade do Algarve, Portugal; **Michael Cernea**, The George Washington University, USA; **Liviu Chelcea**, University of Bucharest; **Dan Chiribucă**, Universitatea Babeș Bolyai, Cluj Napoca, România; **Ayça Ergun**, Middle East University, Turkey; **Gilles Ferreol**, Université de Poitiers, France; **Nicu Gavriluță**, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania; **Patrick Gibbons**, University College Dublin, Ireland; **Moshe Idel**, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel; **Ion Ionescu**, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania; **Emmanuel Jovelin**, Université Catholique de Lille, France; **Sana Loue**, Case Western Reserve University, USA; **Sofia Koukouli**, TEI Creta, Greece; **Antonio Maturo**, University `Gabriele D'Annunzio` Chieti-Pescara, Italy; **Vasile Miftode**, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania; **André Moisan**, Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers, France; **Aine Ni Leime**, National University of Ireland, Galway; **Liam O'Dowd**, Queen's University Belfast, UK; **Marian Preda**, University of Bucharest, Romania; **Marius Proftiroiu**, Academy of Economic Sciences, Bucharest, Romania; **Nadji Rahmania**, l'Université de Lille I, France; **Maria Roth**: Universitatea Babeș Bolyai, Cluj Napoca, România; **Dumitru Stan**, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania; **Conțiu Șoitu**, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania; **Alain Vilbrod**, L'Université de Bretagne Occidentale, Brest, France.

**Editorial Contact Information / Address for submissions:**

Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași  
Facultatea de Filosofie și Științe Social-Politice  
Redactia Analelor UAIC de Sociologie și Asistență socială  
Bd. Carol I nr. 11, Iași, România, 700506  
Phone: 00 40 0232 201280; Fax.: 00 40 232 201154  
Web address: [anale.fssp.uaic.ro](http://anale.fssp.uaic.ro)  
Email: [an-soc-as@uaic.ro](mailto:an-soc-as@uaic.ro);  
Contact person: Prof.Ph.D. Daniela Șoitu

**Publisher Contact Information**

Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași  
Address: Str. Pinului nr. 1A, Iași, România, 700109  
Phone: 00 40 0232 314947  
Fax.: 00 40 232 314 947  
Web address: [www.editura.uaic.ro](http://www.editura.uaic.ro)  
Email: [editura@uaic.ro](mailto:editura@uaic.ro)  
Contact person: prof. univ. dr. Constantin Dram  
Desktop publisher: Florentina Crucescu

All submissions will undergo a double-blind peer-review process.

The journal is published bi-annually. Number of copies/issue: 200 copies.

Web page: <http://anale.fssp.uaic.ro/index.php/asas>

**Aims:** *Analele Științifice ale Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași. (Seria nouă) Sociologie și Asistență Socială* aims to promote the remarkable results of scientific and empiric researches of professorates, researchers, students, and practitioners in the field of humanist sciences in order to stimulate the optimal functioning of academic and social fields. Analyses and theoretical-methodological sociological explanations as well as the exemplification of their values at the political and social work strategies and interventions level are welcome.

**Abstracting and indexing services:** Scientific Annals of the „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iași (New Series) Sociology and Social Work Section are covered by several major indexing services including: **ERIH PLUS**, **EBSCO**, **PROQUEST CSA-Sociological Abstract**, **PROQUEST-Social Services Abstracts**, **PROQUEST-Worldwide Political Science Abstracts**, **CEEOL**, **Ulrich**, **IBSS**, **INDEX COPERNICUS**, **SCPIO** and **CNCIS** (2008-2011: B+ category).

Any views expressed in this publication are the views of the authors and are not the views of the editors or publishing house.

## CUPRINS

SOCIETAL AND EXISTENTIAL ISSUES OF AGEING IN CONTEMPORARY FRENCH SOCIETY <b>VINCENT CARADEC</b> .....	5
THE PHILIA PROJECT - FOR THE SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION OF THE YOUNG THROUGH THEIR EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIAL NETWORK DEVELOPMENT <b>DANIELA COJOCARU, JORGE M. L. FERREIRA, LYAZID HASSAINI, ION IONESCU, CARINE MORENO SAINT-MARTIN</b> .....	17
STUDENTS, NEWS AND DECISION-MAKERS IN THE STATE OF EMERGENCY <b>CRISTINA GAVRILUȚĂ , COSTEL MARIAN DALBAN</b> .....	29
DESISTANCE AND VICTIM PROTECTION IN ROMANIA: COLLABORATION BETWEEN PROBATION AND PRISON FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROGRAMME 'REDUCING THE RISK OF RELAPSE' <b>MARIA SANDU</b> .....	45
SOLUTION-FOCUSED APPROACH IN PREPARING INMATES FOR SOCIAL REINTEGRATION <b>SORINA POLEDNA</b> .....	63
POST-DETENTION SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL REINTEGRATION OF THE DETAINEE BETWEEN THE THEORY AND REALITY OF THE XXI CENTURY <b>DUMITRU BUDACU</b> .....	71
FROM BULLYING TO CYBERBULLYING IN THE CONTEXT OF ONLINE EDUCATION <b>CARMEN PALAGHIA</b> .....	85
ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE AND PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGES IN DEPENDANT PEOPLE. CASE STUDY <b>VIORICA-CRISTINA CORMOȘ</b> .....	95
NINTH GRADE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ADMISSION, CAREER PATH AND SUCCESS IN LIFE. CASE STUDY REGARDING THE FIRST DUAL VOCATIONAL SCHOOL IN ALBA COUNTY <b>BOGDAN-NICOLAE MUCEA</b> .....	109
THE SOCIAL VALUES ATTACHED TO THE TIKTOK SOCIAL PLATFORM OF THE AGE CATEGORY 50+. A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE <b>LORENA ȚĂRUȘ</b> .....	125
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUST IN MEDIA AND FAKE NEWS: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH <b>CRISTINA GAVRILUȚĂ, SERGIU BORTOȘ</b> .....	133

CURRENT SUICIDAL SITUATIONS WITHIN THE ROMANIAN AREA	
<b>DUMITRU STAN</b> .....	143
BOOK REVIEW	
Cristina Gavriluță, <i>Negativul cotidianului</i> [ <i>The negative of the daily</i> ]	
<b>ARABELA NECULAU</b> .....	157
Carmen Palaghia, <i>Dimensiuni ale devianței școlare. De la identificare la prevenție</i> [ <i>Dimensions Of School Deviance. From Identification To Prevention</i> ]	
<b>DENNIS-THEODOR PÂRJU</b> .....	160

## SOCIETAL AND EXISTENTIAL ISSUES OF AGEING IN CONTEMPORARY FRENCH SOCIETY

VINCENT CARADEC<sup>1</sup>

---

### **Abstract**

This article aims to present an overview of the issues surrounding ageing in contemporary French society. Firstly, it sets out the issues that are at the heart of public policy and that constitute the major current orientations of old age policies. Secondly, it discusses other societal issues that are not considered by public policies. In the third part, it adopts a micro-sociological point of view to look at the existential issues of ageing for people who are getting on in years. Finally, the conclusion provides an opportunity to discuss a fourth issue, which concerns the structuring of research in the Human and Social Sciences on ageing.

**Keywords:** ageing; societal issues; existential issues; France; ageism

### **Résumé:**

Cet article vise à présenter un panorama des enjeux du vieillissement dans la société française contemporaine. Dans un premier temps, il expose les enjeux qui sont au cœur des politiques publiques et qui constituent les grandes orientations actuelles des politiques de la vieillesse. Dans un deuxième temps, il évoque d'autres enjeux sociétaux qui ne sont pas pris en compte par les politiques publiques. Dans un troisième temps, il adopte un point de vue microsociologique pour s'intéresser aux enjeux existentiels du vieillissement pour les personnes qui avancent en âge. Enfin, la conclusion est l'occasion d'évoquer un quatrième enjeu, qui concerne la structuration des recherches en Sciences Humaines et Sociales sur le vieillissement.

**Mots-clés:** vieillissement; défis sociétaux; défis existentiels; France; âgisme

### **Rezumat**

Acest articol își propune să prezinte o privire de ansamblu asupra provocărilor îmbătrânirii în societatea franceză contemporană. În primul rând, stabilește problemele care se află în centrul politicilor publice și care constituie principalele orientări actuale ale politicilor pentru limită de vârstă. În al doilea rând, el discută alte probleme sociale care nu sunt luate în considerare de politicile publice. În al treilea rând, articolul adoptă un punct de vedere microsociologic pentru a se concentra asupra problemelor existențiale ale îmbătrânirii pentru persoanele care

---

<sup>1</sup> Professeur de sociologie, CeRIES - Centre de recherche « Individus Épreuves Sociétés », Université de Lille ULR 3589, F-59000 Lille, France; vincent.caradec@univ-lille.fr

avansează în vârstă. În cele din urmă, concluzia este o oportunitate de a discuta un al patrulea aspect, care se referă la structurarea cercetării în științele umane și sociale privind îmbătrânirea.

**Cuvinte cheie:** îmbătrânire; provocări societale; provocări existențiale; Franța; vârstnicism

## 1. Introduction

This article aims to present a panorama of the challenges of ageing in contemporary French society. The term 'issues' seems preferable to the term 'problems', which is often used in relation to old age (Ennuyer, 2002). The tendency to view old age as a problem is a long-standing one: the notion of 'demographic ageing' has long been associated with the idea of decline (Bourdelaïs, 1993) and the Laroque report (1962), which is considered to be the founding document of old age policy in France, was the work of a 'commission for the study of old age problems'. Yet old age and ageing, it should be emphasised, are not primarily a problem. The fact that more people are living longer than ever before is, above all, good news.

This continued life opens up a number of issues. These issues are multiple and we would like to distinguish three main types, which we propose to present in succession. Firstly, we will present the issues that are at the heart of public policy and that constitute the major current orientations of old age policies. Secondly, we will see that, beyond the issues that have been taken up by public policy, there are other societal issues that deserve to be addressed. In the third stage, we will change the level of analysis and adopt a micro-sociological point of view. We will then take an interest in people who are getting on in years and we will see that, for them, growing old opens up a whole range of existential issues. Finally, the conclusion will provide an opportunity to discuss a fourth issue, which concerns the structuring of research in the Human and Social Sciences on ageing.

## 2. The challenges of ageing at the heart of public policy

In order to present the issues of ageing at the heart of public policy, we shall draw on the analyses developed by Anne-Marie Guillemard in her socio-historical study of old age policies in France (Guillemard, 1986, 2014). She shows that these policies developed between 1945 and 1985 around three issues: the social right to retirement; the lifestyle of retired people, which led to the development of a policy oriented towards the social integration of the elderly in the 1960s and 1970s; and the participation of the elderly in production. By extending this framework of analysis to the contemporary period, it can be argued that these three issues can be found today in a slightly different form: pension reforms; long-term care policy; employment of older workers.

### *2.1. Pension reforms*

The pension system which was conceived in France after the Second World War is of the Bismarckian type and managed by a large number of pension funds. It has been at the heart of the political agenda for the last thirty years. Indeed, from the 1980s onwards, several reports alerted the public authorities to the risks of financial imbalance in the pension system, due to the fact that the number of pensioners was increasing faster than the number of working people. It should be remembered that in a pay-as-you-go pension system such as the French one, it is the contributions of working people that finance the pensions of retirees. This growth in the number of pensioners can be explained by two phenomena: on the one hand, the increase in life expectancy and, on the other hand, the arrival in retirement, from 2006 onwards, of the large generations of the baby boom which followed the end of the Second World War. It is in this context that it appeared necessary to reform the pension system in order to ensure its financial equilibrium.

Several reforms have been carried out over the past 25 years. The first, known as the Balladur reform (named after the Prime Minister at the time) dates from 1993, while a new, more structural reform has been announced for 2019 by President Macron. These reforms introduced a whole range of changes. They led to an increase in the number of years of contributions required to obtain a full pension and to a less advantageous calculation of retirement pensions (even if pensioners in France remain rather well off, their average standard of living remaining, for the moment, equivalent to that of working people). They have pushed back the legal retirement age, or rather the retirement ages since there are, in fact, several: 62, the age at which it is possible to retire (in the general scheme), but with a 'discount' (i.e. a penalty) for those who have not contributed enough; 67, the age at which it is possible to retire without a discount (i.e. without a penalty); and 70, the age beyond which the employer has the right to put an employee on compulsory retirement. At the same time, these reforms have made it easier to combine a retirement pension with a job - something that was almost impossible in France in the 1980s. As a result, we are now seeing an increase in the number of retirees in this situation, either because of their attachment to work or for financial reasons. This trend towards combining work and retirement could become even more pronounced with the pension reform announced by Emmanuel Macron, the principle of which consists of introducing a points-based system which, in theory, gives greater latitude of choice as to when to retire, once the minimum age has been reached.

Beyond these aspects, these reforms raise a number of questions. We will mention four of them. The first is the extent to which a section of the population, which started working early and has experienced difficult working conditions, can continue to work beyond the age of 60. That's why the hardship of past jobs is beginning to be taken into account in determining the time of retirement. The second issue is that of social inequalities in the length of life in retirement, due to inequalities in the face of death (there is a 7-year difference in life expectancy at

age 35 between an unskilled worker and a senior executive) and in health. This double inequality is well summarised in an article entitled “A double disadvantage for manual workers: more years of disability and a shorter life expectancy” (Cambois, Laborde, Robine, 2008). Following on from the two previous points, a third question should be raised: that of the social inequalities at work in the combination of work and retirement. Indeed, those who plan to work beyond the legal retirement age tend to be managers or professionals, whereas many people from working-class backgrounds do not wish to do so (even if they are sometimes forced by their limited resources). For the former, retirement can be experienced as discrimination, when they are forced to take it when they were fulfilled in their work, whereas for the latter, it is a protection that should allow them to stop working after hard years of work (Caradec, Lefrançois, Poli, 2009). Finally, these reforms raise a fourth question: that of the social meaning of retirement time. From this point of view, whereas in the 1970s and 1980s retirement had become a desirable time of life, associated with leisure and self-fulfilment, it now appears, at least for part of the population, as a time of financial uncertainty and anxiety.

## *2.2. Long-term care policy*

A second public policy issue concerns what is now known in France as 'dependency', i.e. the care of elderly people who need help with certain tasks in daily life: cleaning, shopping, even dressing, washing or feeding themselves. For a long time, this care remained invisible because it was considered to be the responsibility of families, and it was only in the 1980s and 1990s that it became a public issue, which led to the introduction of an allowance, the APA (Allocation Personnalisée d'Autonomie), in 2002. This allowance, which today has 1.3 million beneficiaries over 60 years of age, aims to finance (at least in part) the professionals who help them at home or in French nursing homes, which are called EHPAD (Etablissement d'Hébergement pour Personnes Agées Dépendantes). Four points can be made about this dependency policy.

Firstly, it is aimed exclusively at people aged 60 and over. People under 60 who need help are covered by another policy: the disability policy. This distinction between dependency policy (for the over-60s) and disability policy (for the under-60s) is criticised by a number of stakeholders, who call for a single policy to support independence regardless of age, as exists in other European countries (Weber, 2011).

Secondly, there is the question of the financial resources that need to be devoted to dependency. 30 billion (or 1.4% of GDP), three-quarters of which is financed by the public authorities and a quarter directly by households (Roussel, 2017). But this funding is insufficient, particularly in EHPADs, where there are too few staff, which has negative repercussions on the quality of support - a theme that has recently emerged in public debate. A national consultation on old age and autonomy was launched on this subject in October 2018 by the Ministry of Solidarity and Health and should result in a bill in 2019.



Thirdly, it should be pointed out that over the last ten years, particular emphasis has been placed on one particular type of dependency, that due to cognitive disorders. Alzheimer's disease and related disorders were declared a major national cause in 2007 by President Sarkozy and provided with significant financial resources.

Finally, it can be said that the dependency policy has recently been enriched with two new components. The first concerns the prevention of dependency. It takes the form of a policy known as „ageing well", which is aimed more at the 50-70 year-olds, who are encouraged to adopt a series of behaviours in order to avoid - or delay - dependency: eating a balanced diet; developing physical activity; taking part in screening activities; maintaining an active social life. The second part is aimed at the „carers" of dependent elderly people, i.e. their relatives, mainly their spouse and children. It is estimated that there are currently 800,000 carers of dependent elderly people living at home and studies have shown that the significant investment of some of them has negative repercussions on their free time and their health (Soullier, 2012; Davin, Paraponaris, 2014). They are therefore now considered as collateral victims of dependency situations. This is why a range of measures have been created for them: training (mainly for carers of people with Alzheimer's disease); measures to reconcile work and assistance (such as leave for close carers); and respite care (such as day centres or temporary accommodation).

### *2.3. Employment of older workers*

The third issue for French age-related public policies concerns the level of employment of older people, in the sense of 55-64 year old: in the 1970s and 1980s, France, much more than other countries, had recourse to early retirement as well as to other measures for early exit from the labour market, such as unemployment benefits until retirement age, without any obligation to look for a job. It has thus developed what Anne-Marie Guillemard has called the 'culture of early exit' from the labour market (Guillemard, 2010). Since the beginning of the 2000s, France has been trying to move away from this culture of early exit by pursuing a policy opposite to that of the 1970s and 1980s. The watchword is now to increase the number of older people in employment. This change in public policy orientation is a 180-degree turn, which owes much to the commitments made by France at the European level and which is in line with the pension reforms. The success of these reforms presupposes increased participation of older people in the labour market, since only those in employment pay social contributions.

This third issue appears to be less burning today than it was four or five years ago. Even if the employment rate of older people remains below the European average (57%), it has increased significantly over the last fifteen years, from 37% (in 2003) to 51% (in 2017). However, the culture of early exit has not completely disappeared, as shown by the difficulties encountered by people in their fifties who have lost their jobs in order to find new ones.

### 3. Three other societal challenges

In addition to these issues, which have been taken up by public policies, there are others which are also societal issues, but which are not taken into account very much by public policies. We will present three of these issues: breaking with ageism; living together in a multigenerational society; and creating a culture of old age.

#### 3.1. *Breaking with ageism*

The first issue is how to break with „ageism”, a term that refers to representations and attitudes of depreciation or inattention towards the elderly. This concept, coined by analogy with racism, is intended to draw attention to the very negative representations of old age that prevail in our society and that have become more pronounced since the beginning of the 19th century (Ng et al, 2015).

Ageism manifests itself in many ways. It is at work, for example, against people in their fifties who lose their jobs and do not find new ones because they are deemed incapable of adapting because of their age. It is also, and above all, expressed against older people, who sometimes feel that they have no place, that they are disturbing or no longer exist in the eyes of others, that they have become invisible and incompetent simply because they are old. It is also reflected in poorly adapted urban facilities, for example the absence or inadequacy of public benches, or insufficient time for elderly pedestrians to cross the road. It is also ageism that allows us to say things about the „old” that we do not or no longer allow ourselves to say about other discriminated or stigmatised categories. Thus, in the 19th century and up until a few decades ago, the „child referent” was used to refer not only to the old, but also to women or blacks: „old people are becoming children again”, „women are like children” or „blacks are eternal children”, as people used to say to emphasise their inferiority. These last two analogies have disappeared, while the analogy persists for the elderly, as Cédric Humbert has shown (Humbert, 2015). Thus, in some nursing homes, residents are considered as 'children without a future' and capricious (Loffeier, 2015).

#### 3.2. *Living together in a multigenerational society*

A second societal issue concerns living together in a multigenerational society. Indeed, the major contemporary demographic upheaval in Western societies is no longer just demographic ageing (i.e. the increase in the proportion of the population aged 60 and over), but what demographers sometimes call 'ageing within ageing': the increase in the number of very old people. In metropolitan France, for example, the 85+ age group, which accounted for 0.5% of the population in 1950, is 3.2% in 2018 and is expected to represent 7.5% of the population in 2050. The number of centenarians has risen from 200 in 1950 to 16,000 in 2018 and is expected to reach 140,000 in 2050. At the same time, even though the increase in disability-free life expectancy slowed down in the 2000s compared with the previous two decades, more and more people are reaching old age in relatively good health.

This is an unprecedented phenomenon. Never before in the history of humanity has there been a society with such a demographic balance, such a diversity of ages and such a large number of people of advanced age. This new reality raises a whole series of questions. Firstly, it raises questions about the organisation of life courses and leads to the question of how training, work and free time should be distributed throughout life (Guillemard, 2010). Secondly, it raises questions about the social role of older people in our society and the place they can occupy in it. Finally, it invites us to ask the question of relations between generations in a society marked by a strong division of ages and in which, outside the family, people of very different ages have few spaces in which they could rub shoulders, meet and develop mutual knowledge and an understanding of what we might call age otherness. This last aspect is undoubtedly a major challenge, which the intergenerational projects that have been developed in recent years are trying to meet.

#### **4. The creation of a culture of old age**

A third societal challenge concerns the creation of a culture of old age. This notion refers to the work of the psychologist Paul Baltes. According to him, very old people have an enemy on the one hand: their biological equipment, which deteriorates over time. On the other hand, they have a possible ally: the social and cultural environment, which can ensure more favourable living conditions and help them to make sense of their lives (Baltes, 1997). From this point of view, a major collective challenge is the invention of cultural models of ageing and living in old age, which can give meaning to this last period of life.

The generations that are reaching old age today, and who are in a way pioneers of this age of life, have begun to grasp this issue. The collective initiatives that are emerging bear witness to this. This is the case of self-managed housing projects, best exemplified by the Babayagas project in Montreuil. It is also the case of the Old Up association, which brings together octogenarians and nonagenarians and whose objective is to 'give meaning and utility to the extension of life', according to the association's motto (Savona-Chignier, 2017).

In the creation of this culture of old age, a central issue is to succeed in creating and disseminating images of old age other than that of decline, and in particular the idea that, even when one is very old, it is possible to discover and learn. This idea can be illustrated by quoting an interview given by the French actor Michel Galabru in 2010, when he was 87 years old and still making films: „At 40, I was not mature. Now I have the strange sensation of waking up. I am discovering how to act, how to be real. At 87, I'm on the verge of a hole, and I say to myself that it's a pity, I'm starting to understand my job better” (Le Monde, 4 August 2010). Another illustration comes from the testimony of an 83-year-old woman, whom we met as part of a research project on couples who form in retirement homes. This woman recounts having discovered the pleasure of clitoral orgasms with her new partner and adds that she is more fulfilled in her sexual life today than she was in the past (Sinoquet, 2015). This idea of possible

lifelong learning, even in old age, seems essential - and is also a way to fight ageism.

## **5. The existential challenges of ageing**

The question of the constitution of a culture of old age and the reflection on the meaning of growing old make the link with the third part of our discussion, which concerns the individual and existential issues of growing old. These issues arise when people who are getting older are faced with difficulties that increase in probability with age. These difficulties are partly due to physiological and psychological changes: health problems and functional limitations, the fact that we tire more quickly, and an increased awareness of our finitude. They can also be explained by changes in the human and material environment of older people: the disappearance of some of their contemporaries; relatives who sometimes become overprotective; an outside world that becomes less welcoming because of ageism. Based on several surveys conducted among people in their 70s, 80s and 90s (Caradec, 2004, 2014), we can identify four individual issues related to growing old. They relate respectively to maintaining a grip on the world, decision-making autonomy, preserving one's social value and familiarity with the world.

### *5.1. The issue of control over the world*

The first issue relates to the question of what people do as they age when, because of the difficulties they encounter, they can no longer continue to do what they did before. Empirical research (Barthe, Clément, Drulhe, 1988; Caradec, 2007) shows a process of reconversion of activities, that French sociologists have called 'déprise': people who have to give up some activities try to replace them with others (for example, they watch mass on television when they can no longer go to church) and they try to keep, for as long as possible, those activities that are most important to them. To illustrate this last point, we can cite the example of a nonagenarian woman who had lost the use of one eye and could not see well in the other, and who had given up watching television in the afternoon so that she could continue to watch the early evening series and what she called her 'television friends'. Indeed, this appointment was a daily pleasure for her, renewed every day. It also happens that some people, forced to reorganise their lives, engage in new activities, even at an advanced age, as in the case of the Chinese cartoonist Rao Pingru, who began to write and draw at the age of 85, after the death of his wife, to tell the story of his life.

For older people, the challenge of this conversion process is to maintain for as long as possible, or even to recreate, activities and social links that are meaningful to them, i.e. meaningful ways of dealing with the world. However, the difficulties they encounter are unevenly distributed, as are the resources for dealing with them. Some people, even the very elderly, have few functional limitations and continue to be called upon, while others face multiple difficulties. The latter are then forced to reorganise their lives to such an extent that they

sometimes abandon activities that are essential to them, to the point where boredom invades their daily lives. Similarly, certain important social ties break down with the death of loved ones (spouse, friends) without it always being possible to replace them.

### *5.2. The challenge of autonomous decision-making*

At the same time, the probability of experiencing functional limitations, and therefore of becoming 'frail' or even 'dependent', increases with age (Lalive d'Epinay, Spini, 2008). Even though many very old people continue to carry out the basic activities of daily life by themselves, or even have no or few functional limitations (Cambois, Robine, 2003), more and more of them are dependent on relatives or professionals to carry out a range of daily tasks: housework, shopping, toileting, etc. This raises the question of how to maintain their autonomy (if by autonomy we mean the ability to decide for oneself on matters concerning one's own life) in situations in which their dependence on others (in the sense of needing help in daily life) becomes more acute.

In this respect, two opposite postures can be distinguished. In the first, old people try to preserve their autonomy as much as possible and deploy a range of strategies to do so. Some hide events from their relatives in order to prevent them from intervening further (for example, they don't tell about a fall for not having a remote alarm imposed). Others refuse the home help provided for in the assistance plans set up by the Departmental Council's medical-social teams when this help is not suitable for them and interferes with their autonomy. Still others, who live in EHPAD, contest the prescriptions that the institution tries to impose on them in terms of hygiene, food or medication, or refuse to participate in collective activities (Mallon, 2004). The second position, on the other hand, is that of people who have given up their autonomy, who now rely on others and allow themselves to be carried along by their children or professionals, developing a kind of indifference to things. This is what a 104-year-old man expressed, for example, when talking about his daughter: 'She gave me something to drink, I don't know what it is, but it's good' (Vantorre, 2010). This can also be observed in retirement homes when residents refuse the incentives to autonomy advocated by staff (who suggest, for example, that they try to dress themselves) and prefer to be taken care of. And the same type of attitude has been noted among some people with Alzheimer's disease, encountered when they were in an early or moderate stage of the disease (Chamahian, Caradec, 2017).

### *5.3. The challenge of preserving one's social value*

With advancing age, the question arises of how to preserve one's self-esteem, the feeling of one's own value. It happens in particular when old people have to give up activities (and especially when they have to give up activities important for them), as well as when external views tend to consider them only as an old person (and thus to reduce them to the identity of an old person).

The question here is whether people can anchor their sense of worth in the present (who they are today) or whether they can only do so by reference to the past (who they have been). From this point of view, it can be said that it is possible to establish one's self-esteem in the present under certain conditions. This implies continuing to do things that are of value to oneself or to others. This may be seemingly small things, such as continuing to look after one's house or garden. Or, alternatively, it may involve the positive regard and recognition of those close to us, which can compensate for the generally negative view of the elderly in our society.

## **6. The challenge of familiarity with the world**

As people grow older, their sense of belonging to the world tends to become problematic: very old people often feel that they no longer have a real place in today's rapidly changing society, and they find it increasingly difficult to understand the world, which tends not to understand them any more. Amongst various testimonies from research interviews or from the diaries of very old writers (Puijalon-Veysset, 1999), let us quote the words of Claude Levi-Strauss who declared, at the age of 96: "We are in a world to which I no longer belong. The one I knew, the one I loved, had 1.5 billion inhabitants. Today's world has 6 billion people. It is no longer mine" (Le Monde, 22 February 2005).

This difficulty in adhering to today's society is forged through a number of mechanisms. Thus, the disappearance of contemporaries who have lived through the same periods as oneself, with whom there was a connivance and who 'understood you halfway' (Clément, 2000) plays a major role in the construction of this feeling. Other mechanisms also contribute to this, in particular changes in the environment. Think, for example, of technological developments, changes in school and university courses that make it difficult to identify the studies followed by grandchildren or great-grandchildren, or changes in the urban environment that make people feel like strangers in their town or neighbourhood.

Faced with this increasing strangeness of the world, people who are ageing can implement two opposing strategies to recreate familiarity with their environment. The first is to fight against this strangeness. This is how we meet people who have converted to new technologies, seeing it as a way to 'stay in the game'. The second strategy, on the other hand, consists of withdrawing into a close, familiar and secure space, which counteracts the strangeness and insecurity of the outside world. This space is the home. Many very old people value their home, which is, to use Bernadette Veysset's (1989) formula, both a refuge and a landmark: a refuge where they feel protected from outside aggression; a landmark in terms of identity (the home symbolises the continuity of the person), space (it is a familiar, intimately appropriate space, the use of which is strongly anchored in bodily habits) and time (because it is full of memories). The objects in the domestic environment therefore play a major role: through their presence, they ensure the permanence of the world surrounding the individual and thus enable him or her to perpetuate a feeling of stability, whereas outside, everything

is changing. Indeed, it is by surrounding themselves with material objects - familiar furniture and knick-knacks, photographs of their loved ones, living or dead - that people entering a retirement home sometimes manage to recreate a 'home' and regain a certain balance (Mallon, 2004).

## 7. Conclusion

To conclude this article, we would like to mention a fourth issue, which concerns research in the human and social sciences on ageing. This research must take up the challenge of shedding light on the issues we have just presented. From this point of view, we have seen the beginning of a structuring of research on ageing in recent years. This is the case at European level with, for example, the Joint Programme Initiative "More Years, Better Lives". This is also the case at national level with the creation, at the beginning of 2018, of the Institute of Longevity, Elderly and Ageing (ILVV – Institut de la Longévité, des Vieillesse et du Vieillessement), which aims to bring together all the research forces in the French Human and Social Sciences and to facilitate multidisciplinary dialogue and partnerships, both at international level and between the world of research and public decision makers.

## References

- Baltes, P. (1997). L'avenir du vieillissement d'un point de vue psychologique: optimisme et tristesse. In J. Dupâquier (Ed.), *L'espérance de vie sans incapacités* (pp. 243-264). PUF.
- Barthe, J.-F., Clément, S. & Drulhe, M. (1988). Vieillesse ou vieillissement? Les processus d'organisation des modes de vie chez les personnes âgées. *Les Cahiers de la Recherche sur le Travail Social*, 15, 11-31.
- Bourdelaïs, P. (1993). *L'âge de la vieillesse*. Odile Jacob.
- Cambois, E., Laborde, C. & Robine, J.-M. (2008). A double disadvantage for manual workers: more years of disability and a shorter life expectancy. *Population et Sociétés*, 441.
- Cambois, E. & Robine, J.-M. (2003). Vieillesse et restrictions d'activité : l'enjeu de la compensation des problèmes fonctionnels. *Études et Résultats*, 261.
- Caradec, V. (2004). *Vieillir après la retraite. Approche sociologique du vieillissement*. PUF.
- Caradec, V. (2007). L'épreuve du grand âge. *Retraite et Société*, 52, 11-37.
- Caradec, V. (2014). Transitions du vieillissement et épreuve du grand âge. In C. Hummel, I. Mallon & V. Caradec (Eds.). *Vieillesse et vieillissements. Regards sociologiques* (pp.273-288). Presses universitaires de Rennes.
- Caradec, V., Poli, A. & Lefrançois, C. (2009). Les deux visages de la lutte contre la discrimination sur l'âge. *Mouvements*, 59, 12-23.
- Caradec, V. & Chamahian, A. (2017). The 'épreuve' of ageing with Alzheimer's disease. *Ageing and Society*, 37(5), 935-960.
- Clément, S. (2000). Vieillir puis mourir. *Prévenir*, 38, 189-195.
- Davin, B. & Paraponaris, A. (2014). Malade d'aider? Les répercussions de l'aide apportée par les proches aux malades Alzheimer. *Retraite et société*, 69, 143-158.
- Ennuyer, B. (2002). *Les malentendus de la dépendance. De l'incapacité au lien social*. Dunod.
- Guillemard, A.-M. (1986). *Le déclin du social. Formation et crise des politiques de la vieillesse*. PUF.

- Guillemard, A.-M. (2010). *Les défis du vieillissement. Age, emploi, retraite. Perspectives internationales*. Armand Colin.
- Guillemard, A.-M. (2014). Dynamiques des politiques de la vieillesse en France depuis 1945. Construction d'un problème et formation d'une politique publique. In C. Hummel, I. Mallon et V. Caradec (Eds.), *Vieillesse et vieillissements. Regards sociologiques* (pp.23-47). Presses universitaires de Rennes.
- Humbert, C. (2015). *Dire la vieillesse en termes d'enfance. Un dévoiement du regard* (Thèse de sciences sociales sous la direction de Jacqueline Trincaz). Université Paris Est.
- Lalive d'Épinay, C, Spini, D. (2008). *Les années fragiles. La vie au-delà de quatre-vingts ans*. Presses universitaires de Laval.
- Loffeier, I. (2015). *Panser des jambes de bois ? La vieillesse, catégorie d'existence et de travail en maison de retraite*. PUF.
- Mallon, I. (2004). *Vivre en maison de retraite. Le dernier chez-soi*. Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
- Ng, R., Allore, H. G., Trentalange, M., Monin, J. K., & Levy, B. R. (2015). Increasing negativity of age stereotypes across 200 years: Evidence from a database of 400 million words. *PLoS one*, 10(2).
- Puijalon-Veysset, B. (1999). De la parole des vieux: le sentiment d'étrangeté. In *Evolutions technologiques et vieillissement des personnes* (pp. 102-105). MiRe-DREES/ CNAV.
- Roussel, R. (2017). Personnes âgées dépendantes : les dépenses de prise en charge pourraient doubler en part de PIB d'ici 2060. *Études et Résultats*, 1032.
- Savona-Chignier, F. (2017). *Les nouveaux vieux sont arrivés*. In Press.
- Sinoquet, M. (2015). *Former un couple en maison de retraite* (Master 1 Sociologie et Développement Social), Université de Lille 3.
- Soullier, N. (2012). Aider un proche âgé à domicile : la charge ressentie. *Études et Résultats*, 799.
- Vantorre, A.-S. (2010). *Les personnes âgées face à l'aide de leurs enfants* (Master 1 Sociologie et Développement Social). Université de Lille 3.
- Veysset, B. (avec Deremble, J.-P.) (1989). *Dépendance et vieillissement*. L'Harmattan.
- Weber, F. (2011). *Handicap et dépendance. Dramas humains, enjeux politiques*. Éditions Rue d'Ulm.



## THE PHILIA PROJECT – FOR THE SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION OF THE YOUNG THROUGH THEIR EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIAL NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

DANIELA COJOCARU<sup>1</sup>, JORGE M. L. FERREIRA<sup>2</sup>, LYAZID HASSAINI<sup>3</sup>,  
ION IONESCU<sup>4</sup>, CARINE MORENO SAINT-MARTIN<sup>5</sup>

---

### **Abstract**

The Philia+ project has been approved for funding within the Erasmus + Programme. Several partners from Belgium, France, Germany, Portugal and Romania (from higher education and social work institutions) have worked to support the academic success and social inclusion of (pre)adolescents aged 13-18 in foster care, and to enhance, preserve and develop their support networks. Training programmes were held for teachers, trainers and researchers involved in the project, as well as for students and social work professionals and young people in difficulty in the care of associations and organizations providing them social and psychological support. The aim has always been to change their position according to the theoretical DPAPC (empowerment of individuals and communities) framework and to the methodological RAC (collaborative research-action) framework, in order to enable them to understand the mechanism of the social determinism of success and failure and to enhance their support networks. We managed to create two training modules, teasers of experienced testimonies (focus groups, comprehensive conversations), educational films for the two modules, educational films on accompanying Roma and unaccompanied minors.

**Keywords:** social work, social integration, teenagers, social network, autonomy, mutual learning.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Professor Ph.D., Department of Sociology and Social Work, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, Romania, E-mail: dananacu@gmail.com
  - <sup>2</sup> Professor, Diretor Doutoramento em Serviço Social, Escola de Sociologia e Políticas Públicas, Lisabona, Portugal, e-mail: Jorge.Manuel.Ferreira@iscte-iul.pt
  - <sup>3</sup> Professor, Coordination relations et mobilités internationales C.É.R.I.S.È.S., Haute Ecole de Bruxelles, Belgique, E-mail: lhassaini@he2b.be
  - <sup>4</sup> Professor Emeritus, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, Romania, E-mail: ion@uaic.ro
  - <sup>5</sup> Docteur en Psychopathologie et Sciences de l’Education, chercheuse à ERASME, Institut de Travail social France, E-mail: carinestmartin@gmail.com

### Resumé

Le projet Philia+ a été approuvé pour un financement dans le cadre du programme Erasmus+. Plusieurs partenaires de Belgique, France, Allemagne, Portugal et Roumanie (issus d'établissements d'enseignement supérieur et d'assistance sociale) ont œuvré pour soutenir la réussite scolaire et l'inclusion sociale des (pré)adolescents âgés de 13 à 18 ans, placés en famille d'accueil, pour améliorer, préserver et développer leurs réseaux de soutien. Des programmes de formation ont été organisés pour les enseignants, les formateurs et les chercheurs impliqués dans le projet, ainsi que pour les étudiants et les professionnels du travail social et les jeunes en difficulté pris en charge par des associations et des organisations leur apportant un soutien social et psychologique. L'objectif a toujours été de faire évoluer leur position selon le cadre théorique DPAPC (développement du pouvoir d'agir de personnes et des communautés) et selon le cadre méthodologique RAC (recherche action collaborative), afin leur permettre de comprendre le mécanisme du déterminisme social de la réussite et l'échec et d'améliorer leurs réseaux de soutien. Les membres du projet ont réussi à créer deux modules de formation, des teasers de témoignages d'expérience, groupes de discussion, conversations compréhensives, des films pédagogiques pour les modules, films pédagogiques sur l'accompagnement des Rroms et mineurs non accompagnés.

**Mots-clés:** travail social, intégration sociale, adolescents, réseau social, autonomie, apprentissage mutuel.

### Rezumat

Proiectul Philia + a fost finanțat în cadrul Programului Erasmus +. Parteneri din Belgia, Franța, Germania, Portugalia și România (din instituții de învățământ superior și de asistență socială) au lucrat pentru formarea studenților din domeniul asistenței sociale și pentru incluziunea socială a (pre)adolescenților cu vârste cuprinse între 13-18 ani aflați în sistemul de protecție socială și pentru a spori, păstra și dezvolta rețelele de sprijin. Au fost organizate programe de instruire pentru profesori, formatori și cercetători implicați în proiect, precum și pentru studenți, profesioniști în domeniul asistenței sociale și tineri în dificultate aflați în îngrijirea asociațiilor și a organizațiilor care le oferă suport social și psihologic. Scopul a fost acela de a-i schimba pe cei implicați, în conformitate cu cadrul teoretic DPAPC (dezvoltarea puterii de acțiune a persoanelor și comunităților) și cu cadrul metodologic RAC (cercetare-acțiune colaborativă), pentru a le permite să înțeleagă mecanismul determinismului social al succesului și eșecului și pentru a îmbunătăți rețelele de asistență și sprijin. Membrii proiectului au reușit crearea a două module de instruire, teasere de mărturie, focus grupuri, conversații comprehensive, filme educaționale pentru module, filme privind acompanierea romilor și a minorilor neînsoțiți.

**Cuvinte cheie:** asistență socială, integrare socială, adolescență, rețea socială, autonomie, învățare reciprocă.

### Introduction

According to Paul Ricoeur (1995), “suffering is more than physical or psychological pain; it is also as a decrease or even annihilation of the power to act, which is experienced as an attack on the integrity of the self”. *The*

*empowerment of individuals and communities* grounds the Philia project and guides its theoretical and methodological framework. The Philia project was proposed and led by the Toulouse-based school for social workers: ERASME, Institut du travail social. *Sharing and comparing knowledge and practices* in the field of social work is the project approach aimed at meeting the requirements for the collection of *knowledge on the life experience of people in difficulty*. More comprehensive, inclusive and innovative knowledge and approaches are thus developed.

The nature of the project and its value substantiation are linked to the protection of the rights of children and young people in difficulty, to the fight against social exclusion and discrimination. The European scale of the project consists of the creation of common content, by the mobility of the students and faculty from the participating countries, by exchanging information and experiences. Context analysis in the countries participating in the Philia project revealed three components of young people's power to act: social networks, school education, interculturalism. The project partners considered it important to support the power of young people in difficulty and future social workers to act by supporting and developing strategic networks (family, caregivers, friends, social professionals, academics, etc.)<sup>6</sup>.

The Philia project aimed to strengthen the dynamics of *inclusion*, by developing the abilities and skills of social work professionals to embrace better integration practices addressed to *young people with social, relationship and learning difficulties*. The project was designed to support the *social commitment of higher education institutions, of social work associations and organizations* to promote intercultural and civic skills in the field. Higher education and research institutions in the field of social work, as well as child and young people protection institutions have rallied in all partner countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Portugal, and Romania). The educational resources, tools and methods developed are freely accessible and can improve training content<sup>7</sup>.

The goal was to provide a more inclusive environment for people in difficulty, where their rights, involvement and dignity would be better respected.

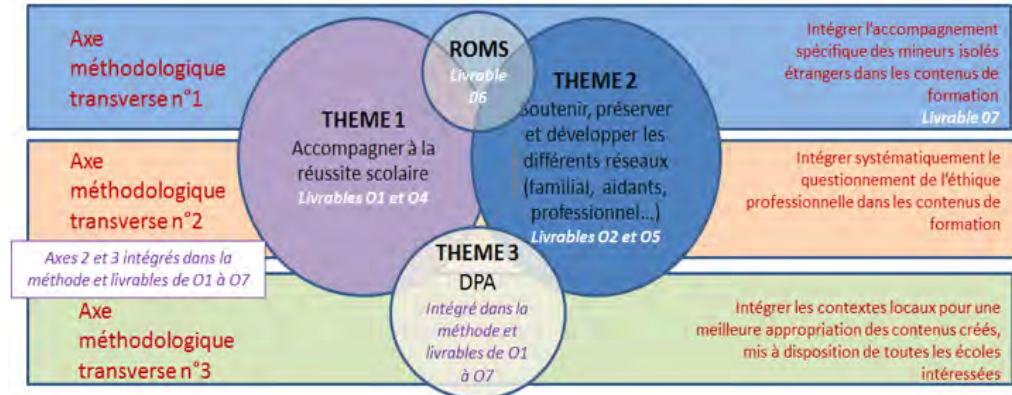
The *teaching portfolios* developed within the project aimed to provide knowledge and professional skills to students to boost the social environment in which they work. The knowledge and skills were connected through systemic multi-actor approaches, integrating interactions within different groups and forms of participatory learning based on multimedia supports, on new information and communications technologies. The objectives were: (1) to provide support for the academic success and inclusion of (pre)adolescents in foster care institutions; (2) to support, preserve and develop various support networks.

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/506922683159468/videos/431275214355556>

<sup>7</sup> [www.philiaplus.org](http://www.philiaplus.org); [https://www.fssp.uaic.ro/images/fssp/stiri/prezentarea\\_proiectului\\_pe\\_site\\_UAIC.pdf](https://www.fssp.uaic.ro/images/fssp/stiri/prezentarea_proiectului_pe_site_UAIC.pdf)

*Training sessions* were held between 2017 and 2020 for faculty, trainers, researchers, students and young people in difficulty involved in the project, *intensive training programs* were implemented, the key elements of the training modules were *experimented on* by bringing together all those involved, who have incessantly contributed to training adjustment to the challenges of social innovation and professionalization.



**Figure 1.** PHILIA Project Rational

The training modules have been tested on the target audience of the Philia project. All *intellectual products* (teaser of testimonials, focus groups, comprehensive conversations, teaching films for modules 1 and 2, documentaries on accompanying Roma or unaccompanied minors, etc.) are available on websites and are freely downloadable ([www.philiaplus.org](http://www.philiaplus.org)). They were developed together by online cooperation and one-week face-to-face meetings of project partners. During the three years of the project, methods were crossed (hybridized), information was collected and databases were developed, training modules were built, experiments, adjustments, validations and standardizations of methods and modules took place, now followed by their actual application in social work schools.

### **Empowerment of individuals and communities (DPAPC) and collaborative research-action (RAC)**

The DPAPC model is inspired by the philosophy of fighting social exclusion that allows an individual in difficulty to participate in changing their own life, in taking responsibility. Yann Le Bossé is the designer of this approach. The model integrates the principle of collaboration by promoting/encouraging creativity and by continuously adapting one's professional position to changes and transformations in society. Social intervention based on the DPAPC approach focuses on several axes:

- Defining the problem (*What is the problem?*);
- Actors in context (Who are they? What do they have to lose? What do they have to win?);

- Context (What can we do here and now?);
- Awareness raising actions (Are the identified problem and the solutions found enlightening? What concrete actions should be taken?).

“If the social worker wants to act competently and usefully in current practical situations, they must possess knowledge and good practices regarding what is happening and why, which means that they must have theoretical and practical thinking. Otherwise, their intervention turns into a form of disorganized puzzle of experiences, which eventually leads to spontaneous practices” (Viscarret, 2008, p. 20).

How can the power to act of young people in difficulty be developed and strengthened? Context analysis in the countries participating in the project enabled us to conclude that it is important to develop professional skills in future social workers (De Robertis, 2007), to mobilize the dynamics of resilience of young people faced with school failure, their ability to resort to social support networks, to support effective social practices used by educators, to review their initial and continuing training, the concrete ability of individuals (individually or collectively) to exercise greater control over what is important to them, their loved ones or their community (Le Bossé, 2003; 2006).

Specifically, compliance with this assumption is equivalent to considering that both the diagnosis and the solution are no longer the prerogative of the professional, but the product of a negotiation designed to trigger the best possible reaction taking into account the personal resources available. Therefore, the expertise of the supported persons should be acknowledged, their problems should be identified and defined together, stakes should also be identified together, a unit of analysis should be adopted, the point of view and involvement of those concerned in defining problems and finding solutions should be considered, what can change here and now should be determined, awareness should be raised and lessons to be learned should be described. According to Dufort and Le Bossé (2002: 7-31), DPAPC addresses the need to pool individual and collective resources to achieve intentional, planned change. Social intervention involves both the individual and the community (therefore, the two authors have suggested the expression the *empowerment of individuals and communities*) (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

The ‘actors in context’ axis urges social professionals to ask themselves whether their practices target both the concrete social and economic obstacles that young people in difficulty face and their abilities. The second axis requires negotiating the definition of the targeted change and how to achieve it, *together with the people concerned and involved* (negotiating the targeted change, pace, steps to be taken, instead of ‘prescribing’), as the expertise of social professionals and that of the individuals concerned are complementary. Another axis requires the social worker to be aware that no solution is good unless it considers the context and profile of the people concerned. ‘Awareness’ requires the social worker to provide conditions that could allow those in difficulty to become aware of the personal and structural elements that contribute or have contributed to the

emergence and maintenance of difficulties and to learn without systematically resorting only to 'assistance'... DPA-PC implementation requires:

- choosing carefully and responsibly the difficulty on which we want to intervene, as the difficulty is also defined by the person concerned and negotiated with those involved, with the social workers, here and now;
- integrating the experiential expertise of the assisted person and their abilities;
- identifying people affected by a context and the network that can help change it;
- identifying the stakes of all those concerned, of those who win or lose if the context changes as the DPAPC strategy is applied.

Building networks is a real potential for promoting and stimulating participation and autonomy. The network can increase the relevance of local knowledge flows for innovation and can reveal socio-spatial and temporal factors that interfere with these flows. Research has demonstrated the importance of social networks for the development of processes of lifestyle transformation and change starting from the multiplication of connections, increasing the importance of the personal network, local assistance subsystems and proximity. A network-based intervention and DPAPC are a must for empowering, increasing the autonomy of subjects, families and communities, which can allow participatory citizenship.

The Philia project used DPAPC and a methodology based on *collaborative research-action* - an abductive approach, supported by the theoretical framework of *force theory* and *the sociology of social integration networks*. The *focus group technique* was used to collect the empirical information necessary for a more adequate systematization of the social reality, in order to find adequate and effective solutions to the diagnosed needs of the target individuals and groups. Nowadays, social workers' intervention also relies on *new information and communications technologies*, which tightens the connections between local communities and citizens through social networks.

*The collaborative research-action* used in the project aimed at *the contribution of research to social transformation*, the harmonization of research goals with the desire for change, the promotion of scientific knowledge, joint work - including with the social welfare beneficiaries (Rullac, 2015) the development of an ethical and methodological framework negotiated and accepted by all those involved in the project to understand the context and look for solutions to their problems (Bayard Rodriguez and Ferreira, 2017). RAC brings together social welfare beneficiaries, students, professionals and professors-researchers who combine their knowledge as reflective practitioners (Donzelot and Estebe, 1994), who question, explain, understand and consider mutual expertise as a core element, and who feed on experiences and expertise through mutual learning (Rullac, 2018, pp. 37-50).

### **Training in the field of social work and the related ethical compass**

The purpose of social work training is to help students acquire and use information, using the reflexivity method based on research and adapted to professional practice (Monnink, 2017). In recent decades, there has been an effort to renew professional practices, an orientation towards *interdisciplinary practices and partnership*.

Reducing social inequalities has become a challenge for the whole of Europe. Since inequalities are high and their tackling is very costly, they cannot be addressed ‘overnight’ and they require the involvement social work professionals. They need to be addressed, and rightly so, by both the state and people in need, by people in difficulty, since the vulnerable must also be involved in actions designed to diminish inequalities. More precisely, the intervention should also consider the testimonies of the vulnerable when searching for solutions and when identifying strategies designed to improve their position. Any individual who does not have the ability to make fully informed and rational decisions for themselves and does not have the ability to pursue and protect their own interests, also due to the socio-economic context, is considered vulnerable. Not only individuals, but also groups, communities and populations can be vulnerable. Specifically, reference can be made to children at high risk of poverty, to vulnerability to social disintegration processes, to young people who are no longer included in the foster care system, to very poor Roma people, to unaccompanied minors, to homeless individuals, etc. Vulnerability is represented by exposure to risks and uncertainties that can have unwanted consequences on one’s quality of life, and that can lead to non-participation in social life, to economic deprivation, to lack of political involvement, to migration...

But *helping them* does not mean ‘alleviating their suffering’ (as in charitable approaches) or curing their suffering (as in medical approaches), or denouncing the causes of suffering (as in militant approaches), or eradicating suffering (as in utopian visions)... It can mean providing *support for ‘overcoming an obstacle’*, bearing in mind that *the obstacle includes both the socio-economic and the personal dimension, here and now*. The problem that a person faces here and now requires action on *structural issues* (for example, amending laws, allocating budgetary resources, facilities, services, etc.), but also on *personal difficulties*. When the change expected by a person or by a team requires changing one or several components of the environment, then the social worker focuses on them. When the envisaged change depends on the ability of that person or of that group, then the social worker helps them to acquire such skills.

The specificity of the DPAPC approach consists of redefining the goal of social workers’ practices. Most social problems are caused by the current ways of accessing and distributing resources (financial, material, information, etc.). Therefore, solving social problems requires structural changes. However, such changes exceed the competences of social work professionals, although they are part of the end goal of their mission. There is no question of replacing the decisions or the responsibilities of political actors, but of social professionals,

beneficiaries and communities getting more actively involved. The exclusive focus of the efforts of social work professionals on people's ability to adapt to their living conditions helps to perpetuate their difficulties. The difficulties that people face can be understood not only in terms of causes, but also in terms of managing effects. These two elements must be considered simultaneously. Social work practitioners have somehow lost sight of the structural aspect of the social problem that affects the person or the community as a whole. This happened during the rise of the 'welfare state'. If the 'welfare state' has not kept its welfare promise, the structural aspect of the social problem affecting the person and the community has returned to the foreground with the emergence of 'new poverty', with rising unemployment, with the emergence of many 'unnecessary normals'...

Social work practitioners considered *two major concepts*.

The first is based on the 'deficiency hypothesis': a person has adjustment and social integration difficulties due to deficient education, training, knowledge, skills, self-esteem, etc., and in order to 'fix things' that person needs to 'fill these gaps' by means of techniques adapted to the diagnosed problems due to these deficiencies. The corollary of this conception consists in the assumption that, once the deficiency is repaired, that person will no longer have difficulties... In fact, most of the difficulties that people face are of structural and societal origin, and filling the alleged gaps only partially solves the difficulties. People are in the same situation, but... they have one more problem, namely that they failed to overcome the difficulties, despite the help received from social work 'professionals'...

The second relies on the... 'one day' hypothesis. That is, social problems are mainly of structural origin, so it is useless to try to solve the problems of individuals on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, social workers should give priority to social change aimed at changing the established order, considered the main cause of social problems, and people in difficulty must be accompanied and supported to show solidarity and become a force, a counter-power able to overturn, 'one day', the established order. This approach tends to ignore, to deny the individual dimension of people's difficulties. Failure to take into account real personal needs, problems, sufferings means letting people in difficulty face the daily effects of their suffering while waiting for their social causes to disappear... Or, an important part of this suffering is due to people... The corollary of this conception is that, 'one day', the social causes of the problems are expected to disappear with the establishment of a 'new social order'... Yet, nothing guarantees us that replacing one order with another is the solution to eradicate social problems... To sum it up, according to this conception, the person faces problems related to the initial situation at the origin of the difficulties - which remain the same, with problems caused by the difficulties related to personal deficiencies; moreover, they also face prospects that overcoming difficulties depends on structural parameters over which they have no control...

What are the expected practices of social workers today? Social assistance? Restorative? Or emancipatory, adapted to the society in which we live?



Given the current context, social workers had better promote and support the emancipation of beneficiaries, through practices aimed at their empowerment. They had better turn to the collaborative component of research-action, characterized by the *involvement of all actors throughout the intervention process*, regardless of their status and functions. A principle-based *interdisciplinary intervention* is added:

- meeting of different disciplines and intersection of different realities;
- movement of concepts and research object;
- tackling of concepts and object by different actors;
- a metalanguage that, in principle, respects the heterogeneity of knowledge.

The intersection of disciplines makes it possible to have a more comprehensive (less partial) view of existing problems and to avoid restricting oneself to one methodology or one method. Interdisciplinarity relies on the ethics of trust based on the principle of interpersonal relationships and the sharing of values and standards that regulate professional intervention.

*Partnership* is the paradigm that tests the attitudes of professionals and their identities. Partnership in creating connections among institutions and services aims to promote a common reaction in terms of values, professional attitudes, organization of resources and public and private services. Partnership requires *ethics based on the principle of cooperation and the transversality of knowledge and social responses*, ethics that includes the subject (the individual) as an active and participative partner of the professional's intervention. Building a partnership involves ethical principles, responsibility, conflict, sharing and difference. Therefore, *training social workers based on the DPAPC and RAC methodology* requires new skills (Le Bossé, 2006: 87-100):

- to identify the potential of the people involved in the problems,
- to analyze complex situations,
- to implement strategies related to environment, resources, constraints, opportunities,
- to understand political and institutional stakes,
- to connect theoretical findings to real life,
- to analyze the deficiencies of the people concerned,
- to decode contexts and strategies of all actors involved, etc.

## **Conclusion**

The Philia project aimed to change the position of social workers, to help young people in difficulty to understand the mechanism of social determinism and of personal success, by developing partnerships, by working with the school, and by improving social support networks.

In order to carry out the project, the Philia partners implemented and continuously relied on an *ethical compass*. The social field cannot function without the integration of ethical questions that stand alongside theory, methodology and working techniques, as well as alongside the results of

*collaborative research-action*. The DPAPC-based approach to collaborative research-action (RAC) requires identifying and defining the problem together, by bringing together all stakeholders, actors in contexts, by questioning here and now, by joining knowledge, and by explaining and expressing what is learned from experience. Sharing knowledge and expertise, working on the Self and on one's own experience, feedback on experience ('therapeutic time'), awareness and freedom are required by an ethical compass that guides us towards liberating effects through involvement and empowerment to act safely together. Collaborative research-action and DPAPC bring us together in the social game, help us identify stakes, expose us and enhance our ability to be ethical, invite us to be assertive, to use tools that promote expression and verbalization (linguistic photographs, socio-cognitive conflicts, image theatre, forum, video analyses...).

The *use of new information and communications technologies* (NICT) in the project required rethinking working methods and techniques, interactions between partners (especially during the covid 19 pandemic), reshaping the organization and questions about information management, forms of access to information. Questions have been raised and are still being raised regarding the security of the information system, the public dimension and the confidentiality of information (guaranteeing unrestricted access to information).

According to the DPA-PC and RAC approach, guidance, success and integration are seen as a dynamic reality in which social, professional and personal problems coexist, which can mean a certain upheaval of the reference values of social professionals. Specifically, they must relinquish the position of 'expert' (who 'knows best what is best' for the other, for others) and take into account the experiential knowledge of the person or community targeted by his or her intervention (Richmond, 2002). This change of paradigm calls into question professional practices without distorting *professional identity*.

## References

- Bayard Rodriguez, M. D. & Ferreira, J. (2017). La contribution de l'intervention dans les réseaux sociaux et du travail social communautaire au niveau local, social et humain. *Revue européenne du travail social* (CESW). DOI: 10.1080/13691457.2018.1423551
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32(7), 513–531. DOI: 10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513
- De Robertis, C. (2007). *Méthodologie de l'intervention en travail social*. Bayard.
- Donzelot, J., Estebe, P. (1994). *L'Etat animateur. Essai sur la politique de la ville*. Esprit.
- Dufort, F., Le Bossé, Y. (2002). La psychologie communautaire et le changement social. In: Dufort, F., Guay, J. (Eds.), *Agir au cœur des communautés*, Les Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Le Bossé, Y. (2003). De „l'habilitation” au „pouvoir d'agir” vers une appréhension plus circonscrite de la notion d'empowerment. *Nouvelles Pratiques Sociales*, 16(2), 30-51.
- Le Bossé, Y. & Vallerie, B. (2006). Le développement du pouvoir d'agir (empowerment) des personnes et des collectivités: de son expérimentation à son enseignement. *Les sciences de l'éducation pour l'ère nouvelle*, 39(3), 87-100.
- Monnink, H. (2017). *La boîte à outils des travailleurs sociaux. Travail social durable et multiméthode*. Routledge: Taylor & Francis.

- Parton, N., O'Byrne, P. (2000). *Constructive Social Work: Towards a New Practice*. Basingstoke, Macmillan.
- Richmond, M.- E. (2002). *Les méthodes nouvelles d'assistance*. Librairie Félix Alcan.
- Ricœur, P. (1995). *Le Juste*. Éditions Esprit.
- Rullac, S. (2015). *Les chercheurs ignorants, Les recherches-actions collaboratives. Une révolution de la connaissance*. EHES.
- Rullac, S. (2018). Recherche Action Collaborative en travail social: les enjeux épistémologiques et méthodologiques d'un bricolage scientifique. *Pensée plurielle*, 48, 37-50.
- Viscarret, J. J. (2007). *Modelos y Métodos de Intervención Social*. Alianza Editorial.



## STUDENTS, NEWS AND DECISION-MAKERS IN THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

CRISTINA GAVRILUȚĂ<sup>1</sup>, COSTEL MARIAN DALBAN<sup>2</sup>

---

### **Abstract**

The global epidemiological context has caused various social and behavioural changes among the population. This article measures the confidence of Romanian students towards political and non-political communicators, present in the media space during the alert period. Furthermore, the ways of informing them and the effects of “fake news” will be highlighted. Analyses of an online survey show that institutions of power and science benefit from a higher degree of trust compared to political ones. Students are informed from official sources and are aware of the negative effects of fakenews and also appreciate differently the trust offered to the institutions in relation to their nominal representatives. The study had as respondents students from all university centers in Romania (N=1013), being implemented between April and May 2020.

**Keywords:** *trust, students, pandemic context, public institutions, politicians, news, fakenews.*

### **Résumé**

Le contexte épidémiologique global est à l'origine de diverses mutations sociales et comportementales au sein de la population. Cet article mesure le degré de confiance des étudiants roumains envers les communicateurs politiques et apolitiques, présents dans l'espace médiatique pendant l'état d'alerte. Par ailleurs, les moyens d'information et les effets produits par les fake news seront mis en évidence. Les analyses résultant de la mise en œuvre d'une enquête en ligne montrent que les forces de l'ordre et les institutions scientifiques ont un degré de confiance plus élevé que les institutions politiques. Les étudiants sont informés par des sources officielles et sont conscients des effets négatifs des fake news et apprécient également différemment la confiance accordée aux institutions, par rapport à leurs représentants nominaux. L'étude avait comme répondants des étudiants de tous les centres universitaires de Roumanie (N = 1013), mise en œuvre entre avril et mai 2020.

---

<sup>1</sup> Professor, Ph.D., Department of Sociology and Sociology Work, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, e-mail: cristina\_gavriluță@yahoo.fr

<sup>2</sup> Municipal Councilor - Iasi City Hall, Ph.D. student, Department of Sociology and Social Work, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, e-mail: marian.dalban@gmail.com

**Mots-clés:** *confiance, étudiants, contexte pandémique, institutions publiques, politiques, actualités, fakenews.*

### **Rezumat**

Contextul epidemiologic la nivel global a cauzat diferite mutații sociale și comportamentale în rândul populației. Acest articol măsoară gradul de încredere al studenților din România față de comunicatorii politici și non-politici, prezenți în spațiul media în perioada stării de alertă. Mai mult, se vor evidenția modalitățile de informare ale acestora și efectele produse de știrile fakenews. Analizele rezultate în urma implementării unui sondaj online, arată faptul că instituțiile de forță și cele științifice beneficiază de un grad ridicat de încredere mai mare, în raport cu cele politice. Studenții se informează din surse oficiale și conștientizează efectele negative ale fakenews-ului și în aceeași măsură apreciază diferențiat încrederea oferită instituțiilor, în raport cu reprezentanții nominali ai acestora. Studiul a avut ca respondenți studenți din toate centrele universitare din România (N=1013), fiind implementat în perioada aprilie –mai 2020.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *încredere, studenți, context pandemic, instituții publice, oameni politici, știri, fakenews.*

## **1. Trust and communication in pandemic times**

The COVID-19 pandemic leaves behind important and irreversible social changes. Numerous scientific publications have shown that students have been affected by the pandemic context by increasing depressive states (Islam et al., 2020), the presence of various mental illnesses (Keckojevic et al., 2020), having a powerful psychological impact (Larson et al., 2021) and producing attitudinal and behavioural changes (Hatabu et al., 2020), issues that have led primarily to decreased performance in higher education (Gonzalez et al., 2020).

Communication has been a key factor throughout the process. On the one hand, there was a hunger for information on the part of the population and, on the other hand, the abundance of information generated uncertainty, fear and mistrust. This happened when the correct information was mixed with false information, honest information with misinformation, personal with public opinions. The epidemiological avalanche has been matched by a constant effort to communicate with civil society, the transmission of social and protective measures. The scientific argument was the source of legitimization of any speech. However, combating fake news has been a difficult, process to control.

Basically, in a society affected by the pandemic there has been an infodemia as a result of inflation of news and information on the topic of Covid-19. In this context, the communication of state institutions with civil society has been difficult, and it is mediated by political and non-political actors. The specialists note that “before our eyes there is a huge experiment on communication, the battle for interpretation” (Bârgoanu, 2000, p. 257). In the face of a stormy communication of pandemic proportions, the population has continuously adjusted its confidence in the official discourse and attitude towards the work of the institutions responsible for reducing the spread of coronavirus.

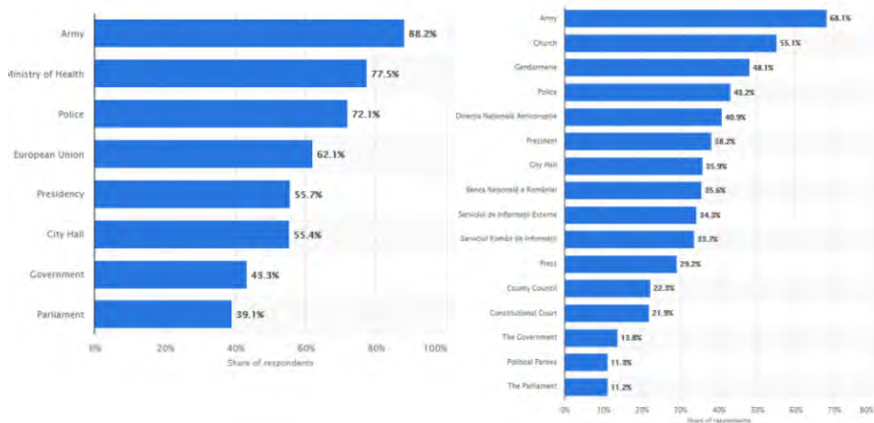
Social trust is a concept that arises as a result of stability on the part of the individual and is associated with economic growth, development of innovation, optimal health. The presence of the pandemic context has destabilised all these pillars of the concept of trust, being replaced by novel social measures, financial and economic instability, social crises, lack of predictability and an almost inherent medical danger to citizens. When the evolution of a crisis of this kind is managed, trust is the most valuable unit of exchange between decision-makers and the population (Vanessa et al., 2020).

The measurement of the confidence of students was carried out by certain well-identified parameters: *sources of information for the construction of the perception of the social environment, the activity of institutions and confidence in their communicators.*

The media campaigns carried out insistently on all communication channels were aimed at raising awareness of the danger and identifying the necessary preventive measures (Almuzaini et al., 2021). Against the background of a high emotional load, the informational content took unsuspected proportions, all taking on the appearance of a genuine “communication bazaar” (Gavriliuță, 2000, p. 229). At the same time as the official news, a whole fan of fake news has developed. A recent study in Spain on this subject shows that fake news can be a real danger to the health or safety of citizens and has negative psychological and moral effects (Montesi, 2020). The phenomenon of fake news has also been accentuated as a result of the state of uncertainty felt by readers. Reality shows that the health crisis is becoming a crisis of information and interpretation (Xie et al., 2020; Bârgoanu, 2020). In an attempt to fight disinformation, a number of guides and examples of good practice have been made, tools to distinguish real information from fake news.

*Trust in state* institutions is an essential element in managing a health crisis. Low trust with state institutions prevents the development of health policies to avoid the spread of the virus (Devine, Gaskell & Jennings, 2020). Finally, trust has a dual quality: it leads to a certain conduct that could promote good governance, but in the other extreme full confidence can lead citizens to believe (naively) that the government effectively manages the pandemic when it does not.

In Romania, during the COVID-19 period, institutions of force, such as the army, enjoy a high confidence, followed by health institutions, according to fig.1.



**Fig. 1.** Degree of trust in state institutions. Comparison between 2019 and 2020

Source:

- A) The most trusted institutions since the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in Romania in 2020 - <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1105980/trust-in-institutions-since-covid-19/>  
 B) The most reliable institutions before the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Romania in 2019 - <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1101030/trust-in-romanian-institutions/>

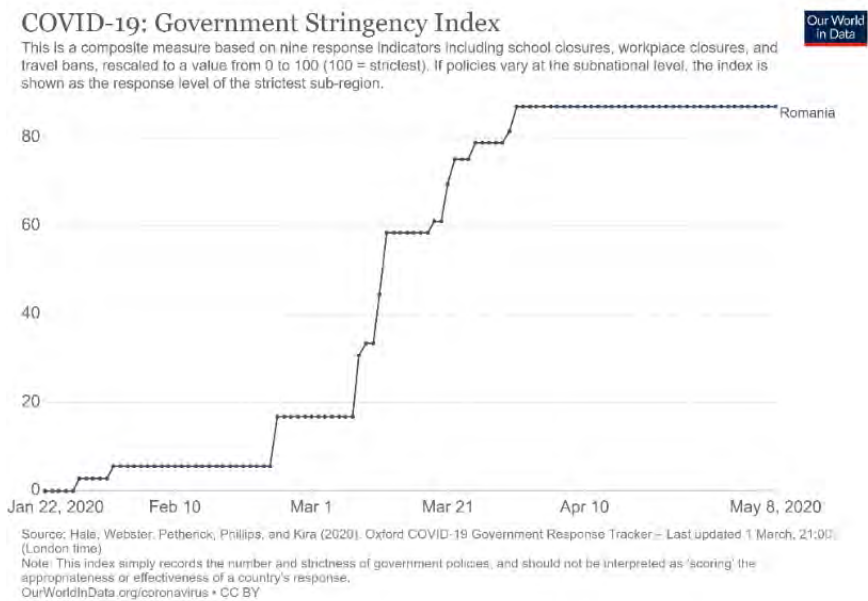
On the other hand, trust in official communication courts is generated by a multitude of contextual factors related to expectations, people's experiences, environment, education, relational circle, fears, etc. Naturally, most expectations are concentrated around political and decision-making actors. In the context of the pandemic, politicians are subjected to the most difficult examination: the crisis management. Regardless of the answers that the present situation receives, the world of tomorrow seems to be set up in registers different from those we have been used to so far (Todorean, Celac, Scutaru, 2020). Wolfgang Ischinger, a well-known German diplomat, said: "The pandemic puts additional pressure on our capabilities, on our mentality and on our ability to cooperate, to act together. But even if not everything will be transformed, as some have said in the context since the beginning of the crisis, the world seems to be on the verge of dramatic change" (Ischinger, 2020, p. 13). Or these profound changes at the social level lead to a shaping of citizens' trust. On the other hand, understanding the dynamics of trust in the Covid-19 crisis can facilitate appropriate responses at the political and communication level. It should be borne in mind that the measures taken by the authorities are effective and respected in so far as the decision-makers and the political class enjoy an important reliable capital. A whole series of behaviours and attitudes are constructed in this way, which may or may not be favourable to the measures taken by the authorities. The opinion of young students on the current situation can be a good barometer of confidence of a young, educated population.



## 2. Research method

The research was carried out in the second part of the state of emergency between April and May, at national level and targeted all students in Romania. The approach is quantitative and the method used is the questionnaire-based survey, applied online.

The on-line application of the questionnaires was determined by the epidemiological context and restrictive measures in the state of emergency. In addition, the use of online platforms to complete the questionnaire ensures speed, low costs and access to a wider range of respondents and has allowed us to reap hot results at the very moment of the state of emergency (fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** Evolution of measures taken by the Romanian Government during the state of emergency

Source: <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/research-projects/covid-19-government-response-tracker>

In distributing the questionnaire an important role was played by student organizations, thanks to which we covered all university centers in the country, ensuring a balance of respondents in the socio-human and scientific fields and we were able to appeal proportionally to students enrolled in different curricula (license, master, doctorate).

The sample was one of convenience (Jager et al., 2017), given the use of an online questionnaire, hence a limit on the statistical representativeness of the results obtained. However, the study had N=1,013 respondents and covered all university centers in Romania (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Distribution of the sample by age, studies, level of study and residence environment

		Age	Studies	Level	Residence environment
N	Valid	1013	1013	1013	1013
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		21.81	1.41	1.20	1.38
Median		21.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Minimum		18	1	1	1
Maximum		56	2	3	2

Source: Database Processing

From the point of view of social determinants, as a result of the dissemination of the online questionnaire we find a significant number of respondents, the majority being from urban areas 61.9 percent, but also from rural areas 38.9 percent. An average age of 21.8 years is noted, with a maximum of 56 years and a minimum of 18 years according to Table 1.

Closing universities and moving into online education, distancing restrictions and isolation have had an immediate impact on students' lives. For this reason, we have focused on two key operational objectives: the impact of news channels and the degree of trust in political or non-political communicators in a crisis context (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Indicators analysed and question grid

Operational objective	Indicators	How to collect data
• <b>Impact of news channels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• information channels;</li> <li>• the degree of confidence in these transmission channels;</li> <li>• perception of fake news;</li> <li>• psycho-affective and behavioural effects.</li> </ul>	Online questionnaire
• <b>Confidence in political and non-political institutional communicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• involvement of institutions in the process of diminishing the spread of the pandemic;</li> <li>• the degree of trust in different national political actors;</li> <li>• confidence in non-political communicators, specialist in the field of virology or defence.</li> </ul>	Online questionnaire

Source: Database Processing

The impact of news channels analysed through indicators such as the information channel, the perception of fake news and their psycho-affective effects are important elements in the analysis of trust during the pandemic. This first objective could represent the “hard” part of the analysis, and the “soft” part is characterized by the analysis of political or non-political communicators within some institutions.

The research was quantitative, and the method used was the questionnaire survey. The research was conducted online, and with the help of the “Google forms” platform. It should be mentioned that an important role in the distribution of the questionnaire was played by the massive involvement of student organizations.

In the questionnaire, the questions were semi-open and closed with simple and multiple answers. In this sense, experiential and perceptual nuances of the pandemic as well as its consequences were highlighted.

Following the application of the questionnaires, the data were processed statistically in SPSS. Databases were created with the information found and coded, so that they could be reproduced and analyzed through the SPSS program. With the help of the program were analyzed the frequencies, regressions, correlations between different dependent and independent variables.

### **3. State of emergency and student confidence in political and non-political institutional communicators**

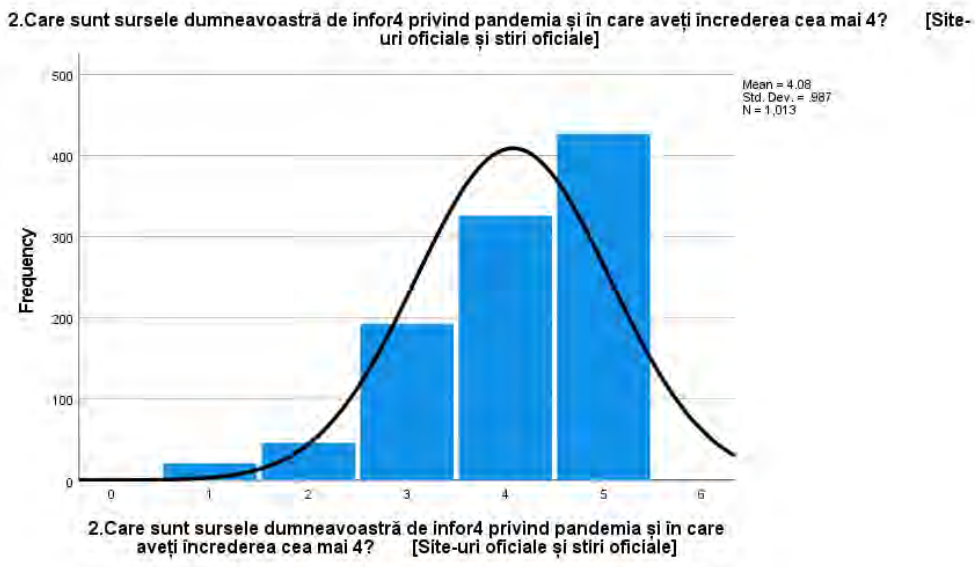
#### *Sources of information of students in the state of emergency*

We assume that a significant amount of information is needed during humanitarian crises in a relatively short time. (Tran et al., 2019). The avalanche of information has turned into an infodemia (Patwa et al., 2020), and the results have been represented by a series of serious negative effects on citizens: anxiety, fear, mental disorders, or various behavioral changes (Pan et al. 2020). In the study conducted by Zach Bastick (2021) on a sample of 233 students it was shown that a short exposure of less than 5 minutes to certain fake news led to a significant change in their unconscious behavior. With the development of social media this phenomenon can be easily amplified. By 2020, there were about 3.6 billion people using social networks worldwide, and by 2025 it is expected to increase to 4.41 billion.

Regardless of the nature of the information, it has been shown that the use of a particular communication channel may influence more or less the behaviour of individuals during times of crisis, such as the pandemic one (Al-Dmour et al., 2020). In this respect, in our research, students in Romania had to rank the main sources of information and the degree of trust offered to them: television, official websites, social networks, news agencies, friends or trusted persons.

The results obtained by us show that students prefer to inform themselves from the official websites of the institutions, there is an average of the answers of mean = 4.08 on a scale of 1 to 5. We link this indicator with the fact that all

respondents have a higher educational background, following a bachelor's degree 83.1 percent, master's 13.8 percent and PhD 3.1 percent (fig. 3).



**Fig. 3.** Student trust in official websites.

Source: Database Processing

Trusted people are an important source of information for students during the state of emergency, with an average of 3.15 responses (Table 3). The circle of trusted persons is built mainly from the family environment and from the circle of those close to them, people with whom direct and constant contact has been preserved. The figures show a visible restriction of social networking. During the state of emergency, the majority of students lived with their parents 72.2 percent, their spouse 6.9 percent, a friend 8.4 percent.

**Table 3:** Sources of information of students during the state of emergency

		[Television]	[Official websites and official news]	[Facebook and other social networks]	[News agents (written press, online newspapers, etc.)]	[Friends]	[Trusted people]
N	Valid	1013	1013	1013	1013	1013	1013
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	2.85	4.08	2.66	2.87	2.68	3.15
	Median	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Maximum	5	5	5	5	5	5

Source: Database Processing

Television and social networks are among the main sources of information, with an average of the responses mean=2.85 and mean=2.66 respectively. The fact is true for most states. Similar communication strategies with citizens were used everywhere: press conferences and official government briefings were used first, followed by prevention campaigns in traditional media (radio, TV, print media), followed by social media information campaigns (Weitzel, Middleton, 2020). In the study 10 months of Covid-19 in Romania (2020) television is the main information channel of Romanians 79 percent followed by radio 19 percent. It should be noted that in the case of the global population we find a very small percentage of people who inform themselves from the online channels of the authorities (sites, social media) (15%).

However, the ease with which false news can spread in the social media space can contribute to public misinformation (Bastick, 2021). Since 2014, disinformation has been one of the 10 trends of modern shock. However, Kiely & Robertson (2016) identifies a series of steps by which we can clearly delineate false news from real ones: consider the source, check the author, check the date, check your biases, reasons, supporting sources, ask the experts.

In the opinion of students, confidence in a source of information is given gradually by a number of indicators such as: analysis of the situation from a global point of view, providing accurate information, information comes from specialists or represents the point of view of some institutions. All these aspects give a high degree of credibility to the information, which is justified by the most important sources of communication chosen by the students.

**Table 4:** Trust/distrust in communication channels

\*min.3 variants of response

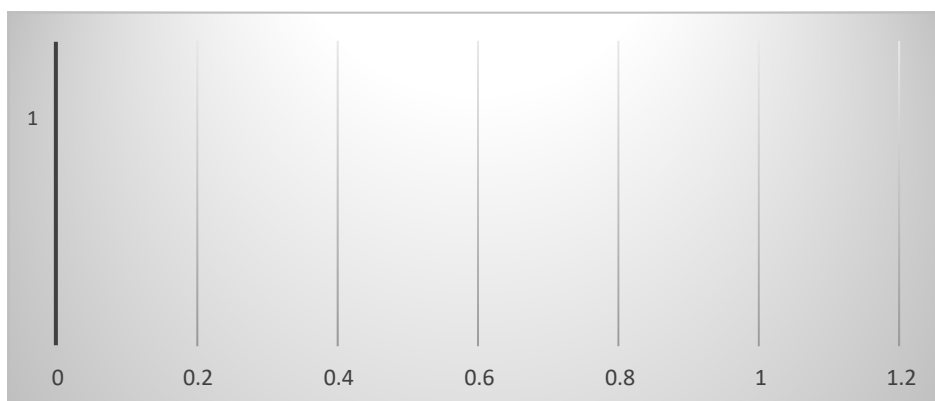
Nr.crt	I trust because:	Resp No.	I don't trust you because:	Resp No.
1.	Analyze the situation from a global point of view	577	Overdoing	547
2.	Provides accurate information	532	Cultivate fear	439
3.	They're specialists	527	Manipulate snow figures	413
4.	Represents the views of some institutions	363	Provides conflicting information	318
5.	They tell us exactly what to do.	201	Politicize speech	315
6.	They're nonconformists	68	I'm doing a media show.	312
7.	Reveal secrets	38	There are no specialists	305

Source: Database Processing

Exaggerating the information communicated on certain channels was a main source of mistrust 53.9 percent. It is followed by news that cultivates fear 43.3 percent. They generate insecurity, suspicion, distrust and, as a number of

recent researches (IRES, 2020) indicate can lead to psycho-emotional disorders. Manipulating figures in different contexts and conflicting information represent other important milestones in identifying fake news and increasing student distrust. The politicization of speeches and information is perceived by students as a source of mistrust alongside the media spectacle or lack of expertise in the field. All this indicates that many of the communication formulas existing in the Romanian space during the state of emergency generate suspicion and are considered to be untrustworthy.

Asked how they recognize certain fake news and what vectors they follow to detect fake news, 61.2% made it clear that they are checking the source and issuer of this news (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 4.** False News Vectors (N=1.013)

\*min.3 variants of response

Source: Database Processing

Fake news for students does not provide enough arguments or have headlines that quickly attract. For respondents, the content and logical coherence of the speech are important indicators that distinguish between fake and real news. A similar analysis, which values the main elements of identification of fake news, is carried out by Huxiao Liu. Fake news is detected on the basis of two sets of features: the author or issuer of the article and the content of the information (Liu et al., 2020).

The data obtained indicate that students have developed their own news selection system during a period of misinformation and fake news. This selection mode shows that, at least among the educated public, official information from credible and reasoned sources is credited as one closer to the truth. Although there is an information selection system, the students stated that existing news affects them quite a lot 78.84 percent and changes their way of thinking and behaving. Most said that they became more attentive to hygiene (N=444 - 43.8 percent), they value their family more (N=306 - 30.2 percent), they changed their priorities in life (N=179 - 17.7 percent), read and study (N=31.3 percent - 317).

There are a significant number of responses that say they smoke more, consume more alcohol, buy pills preventively, talk a lot on the phone (table 5).

**Table 5:** Appreciation of students for the work of different institutions

How do you assess the work and involvement of the following institutions?	N Valid	Missing	Mean	Very good	Good	Modest	Poor
[Army]	1013	0	3	33.56%	40.08%	19.35%	7.00%
[Police]	1013	0	2.91	30.00%	39.49%	21.52%	8.98%
[gendarmerie]	1013	0	2.91	31.19%	36.82%	23.59%	8.39%
[World Health Organization]	1013	0	2.9	27.54%	42.25%	22.41%	7.80%
[Ministry of Health]	1013	0	2.88	28.53%	38.70%	24.58%	8.19%
[EU]	1013	0	2.75	20.34%	42.94%	27.74%	8.98%
[NGOs]	1013	0	2.73	23.89%	35.74%	30.11%	10.27%
[Presidential Administration]	1013	0	2.65	21.72%	34.85%	30.60%	12.83%
[Mayors]	1013	0	2.37	9.97%	32.97%	40.77%	16.29%
[Parliament]	1013	0	2.24	6.71%	28.92%	45.90%	18.46%
[Ministry of Economy]	1013	0	2.22	6.42%	27.94%	46.50%	19.15%

Source: Database Processing

Trapped in an information system, various students manage to distinguish between what is true and what is false, between manipulation and correct information. However, the intensity of the news, their aggressiveness and the insistence with which they are presented draw up an apocalyptic picture which, despite an assumed discernment, has psycho-behavioral effects (Tim et al., 2018).

*Trust in political and non-political institutional communicators*

For the majority of the population 2020 is a year that can be characterized by a series of words such as crisis, social distance, financial regression, problems and financial difficulties. This is a dominant opinion and only for 16% of Romanians the changes were for the better (IRES "1 year of Covid-19 in Romania: the impact of the pandemic on the quality of life of Romanians") Lacks, uncertainty, insecurity, distrust, constraints of isolation have led to a decrease in credibility and trust in state institutions and in their power to manage the crisis

fairly and effectively. A study carried out by IRES in 2020 shows that there is a decrease in the degree of satisfaction of Romanians with the main measures taken by the Strategic Communication Group -17 percent, Presidency -15 percent, Government -7 percent. Therefore, the measures taken by the main institutional actors generate discontent and mistrust among the population.

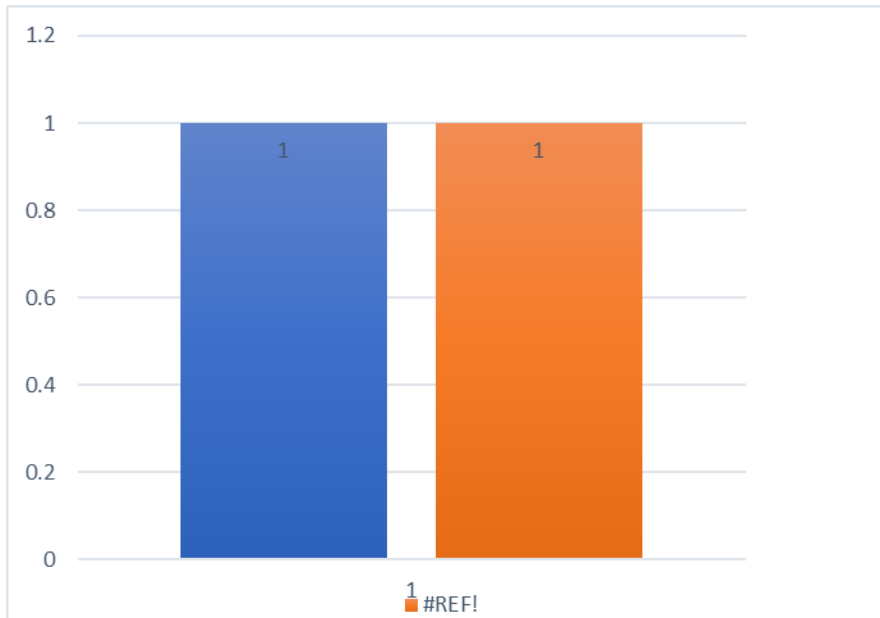
Among students, the work of fundamental institutions in crisis management enjoys a differentiated assessment (Table 5) in a ranking on a scale of 1 (very weak) to 4 (very good). The results show scores that place the institutions of force and defence first: the army (mean=3), the police (mean=2.91), the gendarmerie (mean=2.91). The data are also confirmed by research carried out by the LARICS Sociological Research Center, in partnership with the State Secretariat for Cults and the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations of the Romanian Academy, where the army ranks at the top of the population's confidence 61.8 percent (Barometer of Religious Life, 2020). The fact that these state institutions were used to the full in maintaining a social order during the state of emergency and beyond did not affect their image. On the contrary, they have strengthened their image in the eyes of the population.

During the period of the state of emergency, the World Health Organization has a high confidence among students in Romania, the activity being appreciated as very good -27.54 percent and good 42.25 percent. The Romanian Ministry of Health ranks second to the WHO with an appreciation of its activity in the pandemic period of 28.53 percent as very good and 38.70 percent good. It should be noted that the visibility of these institutions is directly influenced by the communication channels used by students for information.

If in terms of public security and health assessments they are positive, politically the figures indicate a crisis of institutional management and the lack of short- and medium-term strategies. Thus, only 56.57 percent of students believe that the presidential administration has been effectively involved in the of the pandemic crisis. Enjoy much lower scores town halls 42.94 percent and the Romanian Parliament 35.63 percent

As for the social actors involved in the crisis management, the degree of confidence indicates major differences between the professional body of doctors and persons with political functions. Their credibility during the state of emergency was measured on a scale of 1 (not at all) and 4 (very large). For better ierarhization, the percentages of the indicators "very high confidence" and "high confidence" were accumulated, thus creating a more representative picture of this indicator (fig. 5.).





**Fig. 5.** Confidence in key policy and non-political communicators  
 Source: Database Processing

Thus, the social categories represented by doctors and researchers enjoy a high confidence of 79.17 percent and 74.53 percent respectively, well above the average of the representative institutional political actors. It should be noted that the latter represented important communicators during the state of emergency.

One of the longest-serving secretaries of state in the field of health, Raed Arafat, who implemented the SMURD project in Romania is rated with a confidence of only 59.72 percent from students, followed by Dr. Rafila, Romania's representative at who 59.13 percent. Thus, the President of Romania has a confidence rating of only 42.15 percent, 14.42 percentage points lower than the institution he coordinates. In contrast, there is a significant percentage increase in confidence towards the Minister of Health, Nelu Tataru of 38 percent, compared to the trust placed on the institution 28,53 percent. Although the defence institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs enjoy an important reliable capital, the political representative of the institution registered only 35.24 percent confidence from the students. This aspect multiplied in the rest of the institutions shows that young people appreciate the institutional framework and the functioning mechanisms, but not the nominal political or non-political representatives.

### 3. Conclusions

The figures presented are part of a larger study in which several indicators were followed, such as: students' relationship with the educational universe during the pandemic, behavioural changes and the effects of psycho-affective

emergency, how to inform and the trust offered in political or non-political communicators, the relationship with spirituality and the social environment.

The way in which students perceived and evaluated the entire communication approach during the period of the state of emergency as well as the work of the main social actors involved in the management of the pandemic demonstrates that in times of crisis the selection of information is an important aspect and that, inexcusably, the image of the policy is altered due to the unpopular measures it had to implement. The data collected are valuable due to the fact that they were obtained during the isolation period and do not represent projections and representations which appear as a result of the occurrence of a phenomenon. Therefore, the responses recorded hot reactions without being influenced by other situations or events. On the basis of these we can conclude the following:

1. Most students have official websites and channels as information sources and recognize fake news according to a number of generally valid indicators such as structure, content coherence, speech politicization, etc.

2. It is recognised that emergency news affects their (78.84 percent) behaviour, their attitudes and changes their way of thinking. Their answers attest to the fact that the entire media picture led them to take some action regarding the safety of themselves and those around them. The pandemic context has made them change their priorities in life and value things more.

3. From the point of view of trust in the social actors dealing with crisis management, there is a great discrepancy between institutional actors and their representatives. This result questions the public image of the political characters, their competence and, by implication, how they are selected for the different positions they occupy.

4. The confidence enjoyed by the body of specialists in different fields attests that vocational training is appreciated and acquires an important credit in the face of politically acquired functions.

5. The period of the state of emergency meant not only social isolation, but also an opportunity to rediscover the family, true friendship and strong social ties.

The results attest that, in times of crisis, social and value coordinates are affected by asking young people for an effort to understand and re-evaluate the world. In this context, perpetuated by a great lot of media noise, students find their balance within those warm communities that Georges Ballandier was talking about. In addition, study, education and spirituality become useful levers in building resilient behavior.

## References

- Al-Dmour, H., Masa'deh, R., Salman, A., Abuhashesh, M., & Al-Dmour, R. (2020). Influence of Social Media Platforms on Public Health Protection Against the COVID-19 Pandemic via the Mediating Effects of Public Health Awareness and Behavioral Changes: Integrated Model. *Journal of medical Internet research*, 22(8), e19996. <https://doi.org/10.2196/19996>

- Almuzaini, Y., Mushi, A., Aburas, A., Yassin, Y., Alamri, F., Alahmari, A., Yezli, S., Khan, AA., Jokhdar, HA. (2021). Risk Communication Effectiveness During COVID-19 Pandemic Among General Population in Saudi Arabia. *Risk Manag Healthc Policy*, 14, 779-790. <https://doi.org/10.2147/RMHP.S294885>
- Bastick, Z. (2021). Would you notice if fake news changed your behavior? An experiment on the unconscious effects of disinformation. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 116, 106633. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106633>
- Bârgoanu, A. (2020). Răzbuarea comunicării? Pandemia trece, bătaia pentru comunicare rămâne. In Todorean, O., Celac, S., Scutaru, G. (Eds.), *Lumea de mâine. Ce urmează după pandemie?*. Editura Curtea Veche.
- Centrul de Cercetări Sociologice LARICS, Secretariatul de Stat pentru Culte și cu Institutul de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale (ISPRI) al Academiei Române. (2020). *Barometrul vieții religioase*. <https://larics.ro/barometrul-vietii-religioase-din-romania-decembrie-2020/>.
- Devine, D., Gaskell, J., & Jennings, W. (2021). Trust and the Coronavirus Pandemic: What are the Consequences of and for Trust?. An Early Review of the Literature. *Political Studies Review*, 19(2), pp. 274–285. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929920948684>
- Gavriliuță, C. (2020). Bazarul comunicațional și lumile noastre în vremea pandemiei. In vol. Bocancea, S., Covid-19. *Dimensiuni ale gestionării pandemiei*. Editura Junimea.
- Gonzalez, T, de la Rubia, M.A., Hincz, K.P., Comas-Lopez, M., Subirats, L., Fort, S., et al. (2020). Influence of COVID-19 confinement on students' performance in higher education. *PLoS ONE* 15(10), e0239490. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0239490>
- Hatabu, A., Mao, X., Zhou, Y., Kawashita, N., Wen, Z., Ueda, M., Et Al. (2020). Knowledge, attitudes, and practices toward Covid-19 among University Students in Japan and associated factors: An Online Cross-Sectional Survey. *Plos One*, 15(12). E0244350. <https://doi.org/10.1371/Journal.Pone.0244350>
- Institutul Român pentru Evaluare și Strategie (2020). *10 luni de COVID – 19 în România – Stare de spirit și climat social*. <https://ires.ro/articol/410/10-luni-de-covid-19-in-romania>
- Institutul Român pentru Evaluare și Strategie (2021). *1 An de COVID-19 în România: Impactul Pandemiei asupra calității vieții românilor*. <https://ires.ro/articol/420/1-an-de-covid-19-in-romania--impactul-pandemiei-asupra-calita%C8%9Bii-vie%C8%9Bii-rom%C3%A2nilor>.
- Ischinger, W. (2020). *Prefață*. In Todorean, O., Celac, S., Scutaru, G. (2020). *Lumea de mâine. Ce urmează după pandemie?*. Editura Curtea Veche.
- Islam, MA., Barna, SD., Raihan, H., Khan, MNA., Hossain, MT., (2020). Depression and anxiety among university students during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh: A web-based cross-sectional survey. *PLoS ONE*, 15(8), e0238162. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0238162>
- Jager, J., Putnick, D. L., & Bornstein, M. H. (2017). More than just convenient: the scientific merits of homogeneous convenience samples. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 82(2), 13–30. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mono.12296>.
- Keckojevic, A., Basch, CH., Sullivan, M., Davi, NK., (2020). The impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on mental health of undergraduate students in New Jersey, cross-sectional study. *PLoS ONE*, 15(9), e0239696. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0239696>
- Kiely, E., & Robertson, L. (2016). *How To Spot Fake News*, <https://www.factcheck.org/2016/11/How-To-Spot-Fake-News/>.

- Larson, L.R., Browning, M., Sharaievska, I., Rigolon, A., McAnirlin, O., Mullenbach, L., et al. (2021). Psychological impacts from COVID-19 among university students: Risk factors across seven states in the United States. *PLoS ONE*, 16(1), e0245327. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0245327>
- Lim, V.W., Lim, R. L., Tan, Y. R., Soh, A. S., Tan, M. X., Othman, N. B., Borame Dickens, S., Thein, T. L., Lwin, M. O., Ong, R. T., Leo, Y. S., Lee, V. J., Chen, M. I. (2020). Public perceptions of COVID-19 and behaviour change, Singapore. Government trust, perceptions of COVID-19 and behaviour change: cohort surveys. *Singapore Publication: Bulletin of the World Health Organization*. ID: BLT.20.269142. [https://www.who.int/bulletin/online\\_first/BLT.20.269142.pdf](https://www.who.int/bulletin/online_first/BLT.20.269142.pdf)
- Liu, H., Wang, L., Han, X., Zhang, W., & He, X. (2020). Detecting Fake News on Social Media: A Multi-Source Scoring Framework. In *2020 IEEE 5th International Conference on Cloud Computing and Big Data Analytics. (ICCCBDA)*, 524-532. <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?tp=&arnumber=9095701>
- Montesi, M. (2020). Understanding fake news during the Covid-19 health crisis from the perspective of information behaviour: The case of Spain. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000620949653>
- Pan, S. L., Cui, M., & Qian, J. (2020). Information resource orchestration during the COVID-19 pandemic: A study of community lockdowns in China. *International journal of information management*, 54 (oct.), 102143. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102143>
- Patwa, P., Sharma, S., Pykl, S., Guptha, V., Kumari, G., Akhtar, M.S., Ekbal, A., Das, A., & Chakraborty, T. (2021). Fighting an Infodemic: COVID-19 Fake News Dataset. In *Communications in Computer and Information Science book series (CCIS, volume 1402)*. <https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/2011/2011.03327.pdf>
- Tim, Y., Pan, S.L., Bahri, S., Fauzi, A. (2018). Digitally enabled affordances for community-driven environmental movement in rural Malaysia. *Information Systems Journal*, 28(1), pp. 48–75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/isj.12140>
- Tran, T., Rad, P., Valecha R., & Rao, H. R. (2020). Misinformation in Crises: A Conceptual Framework for Examining Human-Machine Interactions. In *IEEE / ITU International Conference on Artificial Intelligence for Good (AI4G)*, pp. 46-50. doi: 10.1109/AI4G50087.2020.9311010
- Weitzel, T., & Middleton, J. (2020). *What channels are countries using to communicate with the public and at what frequency?* <https://analysis.covid19healthsystem.org/index.php/2020/07/03/what-channels-are-countries-using-to-communicate-with-the-public-and-at-what-frequency/>
- Xie, B., He, D., Mercer, T., Wang, Y., Wu, D., Fleischmann, K.R. (2020). Global health crises are also information crises: A call to action. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 71(12). <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.24357>

## DESISTANCE AND VICTIM PROTECTION IN ROMANIA: COLLABORATION BETWEEN PROBATION AND PRISON FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROGRAMME ‘REDUCING THE RISK OF RELAPSE’

MARIA SANDU<sup>1</sup>

---

### **Abstract**

Criminologically, the psychosocial and educational perspectives on the person who commits acts of aggressiveness, including sexual abuse, are based on several theoretical models of intervention, which are included in the bio-pathological, psychological and sociocultural perspectives. This is the very premise of the assisted desistance as a succession of stages developed within the criminal trial, and taking risk management as the fundamental principle applied in the custodial and probation system. Firstly, this article starts from a case study conducted in the Romanian probation system, which is presented at the “Fifth International Conference Multidisciplinary Perspectives in the Quasi-Coercive Treatment of Offenders. Probation as a field of study and research: From person to society” (2016). Secondly, it reflects the collaboration between prison and probation in the primary and secondary desistance using the programme ‘Reducing the Risk of Relapse’ (RRR) after prison, which uses the complementary ‘risk, needs and responsivity’ (RNR) model with the “Good Life Model” (GLM) based on combining the principle of individual responsiveness with that of social responsibility. Our arguments are – in the sense of highlighting the importance of individualizing the sanction – focusing on the contextualized narrative identity, from secondary desistance to ensure the continuity of the post-sentence rehabilitation and the protection of the crime victim.

**Keywords:** Desistance; Probation; Prison; ‘Reducing the Risk of Relapse’ programme; Victim’s protection

### **Rezumat**

Perspectiva criminologică, psihosocială și educațională asupra persoanei care comite acte de agresivitate, inclusiv abuzuri sexuale, se bazează pe mai multe modele teoretice de intervenție, care sunt incluse în abordările bio-patologice, psihologice și socioculturale. Aceasta este premisa de la care pornește desistarea

---

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. Associate Professor, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Iași, Romania, e-mail address: sandum@uaic.ro

asistată, ca o succesiune de etape dezvoltate în cadrul procesului penal având managementul riscului, ca principiu fundamental aplicat în sistemul custodial și de probațiune. În primul rând, acest articol pleacă de la un studiu de caz realizat în sistemul românesc de probațiune, care a fost prezentat la cea de-a V-a conferință internațională intitulată „Perspective Multidisciplinare în Tratatamentul Quasi-Coercitiv al Delincvenților. Probațiunea ca domeniu de studiu și cercetare: De la persoană la societate” (2016). În al doilea rând, prezentul articol reflectă colaborarea dintre penitenciar și probațiune, în cadrul desistării primare și secundare folosind programul „Reducerea riscului de recidivă” (RRR) după închisoare, care se bazează pe complementaritatea modelului „risc, nevoi și responsivitate” (RNR), cu „Modelul unei vieți mai bune” (GLM), prin combinarea principiului formării responsabilității individuale, cu cel al responsabilității sociale. În acest sens, argumentele noastre evidențiază importanța individualizării executării sentinței, care trebuie să fie centrată pe identitatea narativă contextualizată, din perspectiva desistării secundare, în vederea asigurării continuității în reabilitarea post-condamnatorie și protecția victimei infracțiunii.

**Cuvinte cheie:** desistare; probațiune; penitenciar; programul „Reducerea riscului de recidivă”; protecția victimei

### **Résumé:**

La perspective criminologique, psychosociale et éducative de la personne qui commet des actes d'agression, y compris des abus sexuels, se fonde sur plusieurs modèles théoriques d'intervention, qui sont inclus dans les approches bio-pathologiques, psychologiques et socioculturelles. C'est la prémisse à partir de laquelle la désistance assistée commence, comme une succession d'étapes développées dans le processus pénal avec gestion des risques, comme principe fondamental appliqué dans le système de garde et de probation. Tout d'abord, cet article part d'une étude de cas menée dans le système de probation roumain, qui a été présentée à la cinquième conférence internationale intitulée «Perspectives multidisciplinaires dans le traitement quasi-coercitif des délinquants. La probation comme domaine d'étude et de recherche: de la personne à la société » (2016). Dans un second temps, cet article réfléchit à la collaboration entre prison et probation dans la désistance primaire et secondaire en utilisant le programme post-prison «Réduire le risque de récidive» (RRR), qui repose sur la complémentarité du «risk, need and réactivité» (RNR), avec le «Modèle pour une vie meilleure» (GLM), en associant le principe de la responsabilité individuelle à celui de la responsabilité sociale. En ce sens, nos arguments soulignent l'importance d'individualiser l'exécution de la peine, qui doit être centrée sur l'identité narrative contextualisée, dans la perspective d'une désistance secondaire, afin d'assurer la continuité dans la réhabilitation post-condamnation et la protection de la victime du crime.

**Mots-clés:** désistance; probation; prison; le programme «Réduire le risque de récidive»; protection de la victime

## **1. Criminological approach on desistance**

Nowadays, criminological research takes into consideration both the multifactorial etiology of the phenomenon of criminality under the aspect of studying the offending behaviour, the offender and the victim, and the social

reaction to the phenomenon, which affords the specificity of criminal policy and practice. Thus, a change of viewpoint imposes itself, starting with the study of anti-social phenomena from the perspective of risk factors and criminogenic needs that have to lay at the basis of a flexible, efficient criminal policy, delineating anti-criminal strategies and practices focused on the role of the public in the implementation of crime policy: the component of social prevention, general and special crime prevention with application of alternatives to custodial sentences and taking into account the victims' interests.

The ultimate purpose of the investigative undertaking should be ensuring public safety in the context of applying the principles of "restorative justice" (Balahur et al., 2007), having an important „educational role in preventing crime" (Frant, 2017).

Knowledge of crime theories is necessary in order to 'understand the fundamentals of the policies that are proposed and implemented' (Bohm & Haley, 2002) with the purpose of prevention and controlling crime. The specialist literature groups the representations, perspectives and theories about the phenomenon of crime throughout history around the three stages that mark the evolution of humankind, delineated as: the diabolic perspective on crime, specific to the Middle Ages in Foucault's vision (Sheridan, 2016), the classic utilitarian or Beccarian perspective, and the scientific perspective, which started alongside the Italian positivist school, having Lombroso (1835–1909), Garofalo (1852–1934) and Ferri (1856–1929) as exponents, and continued by a series of studies which reveal "modern theories" within "causal or etiological criminology" (Cioclei, 2019). The representatives of the Italian positivist school offered causal explanations, endorsing a determinist perspective on crime as a multifactorial phenomenon that opened the perspective of the development of the later clinical criminology from 'contemporary criminology' (Cioclei, 2019).

In such a way, the psychological factor becomes the common ground of "the modern etiological theories" classified in "the psychobiological, the psychosocial, and the psycho-moral theories" (Cioclei, 2019), within which affection plays the leading part when it comes to giving causal explanations, depending on the "bio-socio-moral accents" according to several studies (Iacobuță, 2002, 2006). As for the modern etiological theories that stress the importance of the social factors of the phenomenon of crime, they are a continuation of the old sociologic school, the factors associated with offending behaviour being explained by the specialist literature through 'socioeconomic perspectives' or otherwise, a classic content of a criminology treaty (Lazăr, 2002). In this way, the scientific literature provides us with different classifications based on either the consensual model or the conflictual model, as Becker (1963) reveals, such as, the stigmatization and the 'labelling theory' (Becker, 1973). From this point of view, Robert and Lascoumes (1973) believe that an offender is the result of the social processes of incriminating, involving, imputing, and stigmatization (Robert & Lascoumes, 1974), and, as Gassin (1990) argues, crime

constitutes a social construct during social interaction, “which constitutes in its turn the offending activity itself” (Iacobuță, 2002, 2006).

Thus, the specialized literature offers various classifications based on either the consensual model or the conflict model caused by the crisis of values of the social system in the 1960s and 1970s, the explanations being included in the interactionist current of “the social reaction against crime” (Stănoiu, 1998). By integrating the perspectives that were previously presented, placing stress on the classification of the crime theories – the etiological criminology, the criminology of the social reaction, and the dynamic criminology – defines criminology as “the totality of scientific researches which studies, on one hand, the phenomenon of crime by following the complex knowledge of it, and evaluates, on the other hand, the practices against crime, with the purpose of optimising it” (Cioclei, 2019).

As a consequence, some authors define criminology from the point of view of the ‘passing on act’ analyses as a “discipline that analyzes the etiology of the offending behaviour underlying its bio-psychological aspect and the social or legal sources of crime and deviance” including “socio-cultural and political values” (Amza & Amza, 2008). Such an approach makes clear references to the victims of crimes from the perspective of the etiological analysis, as well as from that of optimizing the practices against crime, and it is given by a criminologist of Iasi, a former prosecutor, from the perspective of defining criminology as a science which studies “the offence, the offender, and the victim, in order to establish the causes that determine and the conditions that favour or facilitate the committing of crimes and to recommend certain measures for re-educating the criminals and preventing crime” (Iacobuță, 2002).

On these lines, the victim risk may be seen from the victimization point of view, some responsibility falling on society to prevent it and protect possible victims, and also from the self-victimization point of view, expressed through raised vulnerability, defined in the special literature through concepts such as “victim incline”, “victim reception”, or “victim susceptibility” (Iacobuță, 2002). Therefore, according to the asserted behaviour, the victim contributes to their own victimization, assuming a role easy defined over a complex psychosocial and legal evaluation. Special literature defines the “victim risk” as “the victim’s provocative attitude, unamenable behaviour or lack of wisdom related to behavior” (Iacobuță, 2002).

Rather recent narrative and dialogical approaches invited psychologists, social workers and justice professionals to consider restorative justice practices going ‘beyond attempts to coerce, confront or educate a seemingly unwilling or unmotivated’ (Jenkins, 2009) man or woman (Poledna, 2014). This is a strand of work which invites the participants to assume responsibility and to embrace a journey towards respect, a process of becoming ethical, contrasting with structuralist descriptions of “being abusive” versus “being respectful” (Jenkins, 2009).



## 2. The paradigm of desistance and the theory of rehabilitation

The researchers in the domains of criminology and victimology, applied to the therapy of the aggressor and the victim's protection, correlate the concept of social responsibility with the degree of "dangerousness of the offender" (Barras & Bernheim, 1990). As a result, the aggressor's therapy must be correlated with the victim's assistance, which converges towards the broad sense of victim-aggressor mediation within 'restorative justice' (Loghin, 2019). In this regard, the researchers make the distinction between 'primary desistance' and 'secondary desistance' (Maruna & Farrall, 2004) or 'the social cognitive theory of change' (Giordano et al., 2002) in correlation with using the significant differences among the different categories of vulnerable groups which are constituted in terms of the criteria of 'age, sex, and ethnicity' (Durnescu et al., 2009). The 'paradigm of desistance' (McNeill, 2006) was subsequently correlated with the 'theory of rehabilitation' (Durnescu et al., 2009). As a consequence, the risk of relapse is measured by means of developing certain standardized instruments of evaluation of the criminogenic needs and of the criminal risk, and it represents a priority in the Romanian research field, which is centred on the 'standardization of the evaluation of risks' (Webster et al., 2006).

From this perspective, the criminology of the development correlated with the researches in the domain of crime career, which stresses the study of the doer as the main unit of analysis, stirred a critical reaction towards the research of the crime relapse by proposing the approach of the 'phenomenon of relapse as a complex social construction having a socioeconomic and political nature' (Durnescu et al., 2009). According to the research in Romania and abroad, the phenomenon of criminality and relapse refers to the factors within the social environment, as well as the institutional environment, which can facilitate the reiteration of the criminal behaviour. They can also be considered the predictors of the relapse, because they can give important information on the risk of relapse. Yet, the actuarial or objective evaluation of the relapse rate remains a major problem of criminological research in Romania, which requires a scientific knowledge/approach of the factors that determine the reiteration of the offending behaviour, and then these aspects contribute to the defining of the concept of 'offending career' and 'the specialization of the offender behaviour' (Dâmboeanu, 2011).

Starting from the clarification of the multiple senses of the concept of relapse made by Champion (1994) – the most frequent meanings attributed to the concept of relapse being those of 're-arresting', 'reconvicting', 'revoking', and 'reputing into jail' (Durnescu, 2006) – the specialists insist on an analysis which is primarily focused on 'repeat offending' and the 'peer contagion' (Mennis & Harris, 2011) by mentioning that the two are interdependent and they determine relapse. As a result, a series of predictive factors are identified by Andrews and Bonta (1995), by mentioning 'antisocial attitudes', 'an entourage with social interests', 'a history of the antisocial behaviour', and 'an antisocial personality' (Durnescu et al., 2009).

In 2002, Durnescu highlighted the evolution of the instruments of evaluating the risks of relapse in its three forms: the risk for public safety, the risk to commit crimes of the same type and the risk of self-injury. These are described starting with the first generation of instruments based on subjective and non-structured analyses, and going on to the second generation of instruments based on the statistical actuary analysis, and finally getting to the third generation of instruments such as the risk-need type of evaluation based on the correlation among the static and dynamic indicators in the evaluation and the management of the risk of relapse. Afterwards, the evolution of the instruments for risk evaluation was marked by combining 'the level of the risk of relapse' with 'the intensity of the rehabilitation programmes', respectively, 'the risk management' stressing 'the protective factors' or those restraining criminal behaviour, and by taking into account 'the cultural difference' (Durnescu, 2002).

Subsequently, Durnescu (2006), in his doctoral research within the Department of Sociology and Social Work of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, put forward the basis of five complementary theoretical models – the theory of social control; the model of human development; the theory of differential associations; the relapse theory; and the model of criminal career – in order to evaluate by means of enquiry the crime history of subjects. In this way, starting from the hypothesis that 'the prevalence of crime grows until the age of 17, and then it suddenly diminishes' (Durnescu, 2006), the doctoral thesis realizes a review of the most important themes of discussion specific to relapse and its evaluation. The research subordinated to the intention of elaborating the instrument for risk assessment focused on two aspects: identifying 'the factors correlated with the relapse state' and the realizing 'the profile of the recidivist' (Durnescu, 2006), starting with several theoretical models which constituted the fundament of elaborating the main work hypotheses. The work instrument contained 12 sections which are composed of the specific indicators associated with static and dynamic risk factors, including 'the indicators specific to the original family and their own family', as well as 'the indicators regarding the situation of living and their proximity during the latest six months since going out of jail' (Durnescu, 2006). At the same time, the author describes the relationship between risk and danger and rejects the interchangeable use of the two concepts. Anticipating the risk of relapse is considered from the perspective of three or more generations of instruments of risk evaluation, and the passing from one generation to another is described on the basis of combining actuarial evaluation and clinical evaluation.

After completing the research, by comparing the two profiles of 'the recidivist' and 'the non-recidivist', and by utilizing advanced techniques of analysis and statistical processing, a 'scale of risk and need evaluation' (Durnescu, 2006) was developed. This can be used especially by probation services, but also by penitentiary, detention centres, educational centres and even law courts. From the perspective of forensic mental healthcare (FMH), the instruments for the actuarial and clinical evaluation of the risk of relapse contain

specific indicators regarding the state of mental health, which can be separately evaluated by means of an 'inventory for checking psychotic attributes' made by Hare (1991, 1997) and later described by Durnescu (2009).

In the applicative sense, starting from the etiological analysis of the phenomenon of relapse with an emphasis on the paradigm of desistance oriented towards rehabilitative practices (Chapman & Murray, 2015), it has been hypothesized: the present scientific approach adopts an integrative type of vision having an appreciative character on the conceptual triad: risk assessment, desistance and offender's psychosocial rehabilitation with reference to the risk of victimization (Sandu, 2016a). Consequently, the practice of rehabilitation and social inclusion of the offender must be oriented towards those significant aspects that will guide the process of desistance, so that by direct intervention it transforms the person who commits crimes into a 'desisted person' (Gheorghe, 2018).

From this point of view, by studying the approaches that tend to pathologize crime (Mihai, 2018), it can be stated that research in clinical criminology and victimology correlated with those in FMH (Mihăilă, 2018) should remain focused on the process of desistance by stressing primary desistance in correlation with secondary desistance. As such, psychosocial rehabilitation depends crucially on the 'construction of a narrative identity adapted' (Ward & Marshall, 2007) to the social, economic and cultural context. The narrative turn would suggest a restorative project, as Jenkins does (2009), promoting 'the cessation of violence and abuse; restitution for harm done to individuals, community and culture; and, reclamation of a sense of integrity for the person who has abused' (Jenkins, 2009).

### **3. The role of probation in risk prediction and risk reduction with reference to protection of the victim**

Generally, probation gives great importance to the etiology of the crime act from the point of view of the clinical analysis in a dynamic manner on the longitudinal axis: present behaviour and consequences (Sandu, 2017). Therefore, in the primary evaluation, relevant information about the person, the deed and the socioeconomic cultural context is gathered, information that shapes the protective factors, the risk factors and the potentially criminogenic needs.

Thus, as shown in the 2016 communication (Sandu, 2016a), the probation makes the connection between the psychosocial assessment of the offending behaviour and the victim risk, namely: the therapy of the aggressor is a type of activity falling within the jurisdiction of probation, with specific programmes run by probation counsellors, within the territorial structures in the national system of probation. This type of activity represents the first step towards the social and legal assistance of the victim within the territorial structures of probation (TSP), an aspect confirmed by the law on the protection of victims of certain categories of offence. Even though the TSP in Romania do not work directly with victims, during specific activities of probation, interventions with respect to the aggressor shall respect the rights and needs of victims. For that matter, the purpose of

psychosocial intervention shall aim at increasing offenders' awareness of the harm done to victims and their taking responsibility for such harm.

Protection of the victims of certain types of crime was initiated in Romania as a specific type of activity within probation from 1 January 2005, when the reorganization of social reintegration and surveillance of offenders as services of the protection of victims and social reintegration of offenders took place. This was made possible by correcting the legislative deficiency which excludes the victim from the category of beneficiaries of reintegration through the adoption of law on measures to ensure the protection of victims of crime (2004). Subsequently, the protection of the victim within the Romanian probation system was supported by the law on the status of personnel services of probation (2006) and continued with the reform of the criminal law (2013), which maintains the protection of the victim within the TSP, namely: physical and territorial jurisdiction of psychological counselling for victims of crimes and other forms of assistance to victims of crimes. Article 11 of the law regarding the protection of victims empowers probation services to ensure victims of certain categories of offences, any form of psychosocial support to meet their needs and difficulties, leaving the service freedom to develop practice in this regard. As such, having regard to the approach aiming to introduce the victim into the assistance circuit, described above and invoked by the special law, psychosocial assessment of victim assistance is a first step. Second, the socio-legal protection of the victim initiated within the Romanian probation system correlates with the possibility of mediation between the victim and the aggressor, as provided by the law of mediation adopted in 2006. The territorial and material competence regarding the mediation between the victim and the aggressor belongs to the mediation offices organized outside the criminal justice system.

This is the very premise of the 'assisted desistance' (Rex, 1999) as a succession of stages developed within the criminal trial, and taking 'the risk management as the fundamental principle' (Durnescu et al., 2009), as shown by the Risk and Needs Assessment Scale (RNAS) used in the Romanian probation system. As for the domain of the psychosocial rehabilitation of persons who commit crimes, this has known different 'dominant models' over time, depending on the stage of development, from the 'missionary model' and 'the treatment paradigm' to 'risk management' (Durnescu, 2009). Along with the specialization of social work, and depending on the beneficiary, different distinct domains have developed, such as: 'psychosocial assistance in criminal justice' (Sandu, 2017), special attention paid to minor and young beneficiaries (Rusu, 2016), activities assisting during probation or 'social assistance in prison' (Durnescu, 2009) and activities addressing severe personality disorders (Mihai, 2018).

Certain theories of intervention are utilized depending on the purpose the rehabilitation institution has in mind. Taking into consideration the relevance and the practical character of the theories of intervention that are applicable in the domain of the social rehabilitation of the criminal, the research conducted in Romania presents two theoretical models: 'the cognitive-behavioural theories'

(Poledna et al., 2009) and ‘the paradigm of desistance’ (Durnescu et al., 2009), which are the fundament of the present programmes of rehabilitation and social inclusion of the persons who commit crimes (for example, the Reduction Risk Relapse (RRR)).

Also, we draw attention to the significant results of a complex scientific research of exploratory and descriptive or analytical type with a pronounced interdisciplinary character, which proposes the analysis of the relationship between desistance, as a determining paradigm for ending the ‘criminal career’, and the ‘rehabilitation’ model offered by probation (Gheorghe, 2018). Among the significant results of the above-mentioned doctoral research, we note the ‘additional objective’, namely, the role played by the probation service in the process of surveillance and assistance regarding the qualitative differentiation between the groups of investigated subjects. The results of the statistical analysis identify 29 variables correlating significant factors in different degrees with the desistance, these being valued within the qualitative research of the ‘life story’ type that outlines and individualizes the psychosocial and legal picture of the criminality in each of the 17 cases taken in the study (Gheorghe, 2018).

#### **4. Discussion about alternative RRR programme intervention**

To achieve these objectives, severe surveillance of the young offenders is needed through an institution empowered to: assess personality disorders in correlation with the vulnerabilities implicit in the custodial environment (Mihai, 2018), facilitate “self-report measures” over time in prison with relevance to “assessing the adjustment of young adult offenders” (Gonclaves et al., 2019), separate the young person’s negative peer group, control the consumption of alcohol and possible drug consumption. The sociologic approach brings forth the potentially criminal needs and the criminal risk of the familial environment, aspects which are demonstrated by many researches in criminology and victimology that also highlight, among some risk factors, family violence (Sandu, 2008) and the criminal antecedent of some of the family members (Mihăila, 2012), some protective factors (Poledna & Bujan, 2004), such as the manifest concern for the family, the stability of life in a couple (Poledna, 2014) and the existence of a balanced relationship between parents and their children (Sandu, 2016b).

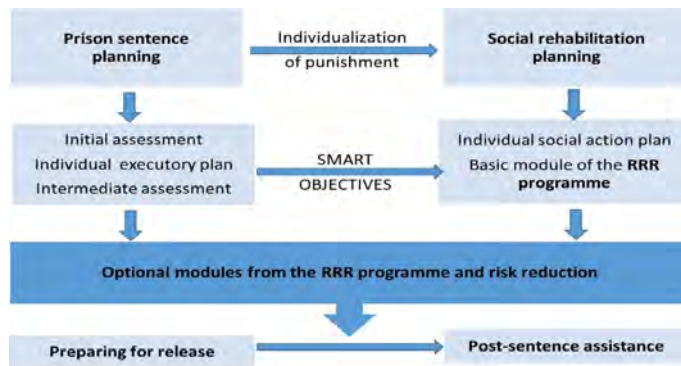
Concurrently, the research shows ‘the effects upon family’ of the persons in jail, which is the fundament of the ‘secondary’ intervention activities, which are complementary to the ‘basic’ intervention activities in the psychological approach of the crime behaviour (Durnescu et al., 2009). In the case presented above, both the family of the young aggressor and the victim’s family could represent a considerable community resource regarding the ‘social and economic inclusion with cultural and religious values’ (Mihăilă, 2016), the protection of the victim (Sandu, 2016a) and the mediation between victim and aggressor, if the law is permissive (Dunea & Mărculescu-Michinici, 2019). At the same time, it is very important to obtain a professional qualification and to be placed on the labour market after being released (Durnescu, 2019).

*4.1. Psychosocial intervention in the pre-liberatory stage from the perspective of the RRR programme*

The programme entitled “Reducing Risk Relapse after prison: a Romanian system of preparation for release and post-criminal assistance” (Poledna et al., 2009) was conducted at national level in the Phare 2006 project ‘Continuing the development of the probation system in Romania’. The RRR programme consists of a basic module and a number of three optional individual modules, which have been used for groups of prisoners, during the last three months of the prison sentence. The optional modules are part of the general training programme for release and post-sentence assistance, which includes several sequential stages, from the initial enrolment in the programme to the final contact, after release, with the TSP.

The chronological development of the modules of the RRR programme, on the principle of the continuity of the psychosocial intervention, is of major importance considering that these modules practically cross the ‘critical moment’ when leaving the prison, as a result of the conditional release. Thus, the main objective of the basic module of the RRR programme is to support the individual assistance of prisoners in order to ensure the continuity of the intervention through the specialists in post-sentence assistance: probation counsellors and representatives of community institutions. Basically, the RRR programme facilitates the continuity of contact between the conditionally released persons, participants in the programme and the community service providers, respectively institutions and organizations in the field of social rehabilitation.

The efficiency of the RRR programme is conferred by its enrolment in the psychosocial and educational intervention with cultural-religious values within the preparation for liberation process. More specifically, the RRR programme contributes to the planning and management of the prison sentence by individualizing the executory regime carried out in the penitentiaries, in collaboration with the TSP and the community institutions in the field of social rehabilitation (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Prison sentence planning from the perspective of the RRR programme Programme registration, basic module, optional modules and post-sentence assistance

Thus, from the standpoint of the person in custody (custodial detainee) who agrees to take part in the programme, the case management and preparation for conditional release from the perspective of the RRR programme has several stages, as follows (Poledna et al., 2009):

a. The administrative stage of preparation of the RRR programme consists of informing at a general level all the persons in detention and, subsequently, informing at a specific level the persons eligible to participate in the RRR programme.

b. The basic module of the RRR programme contains six working sessions with the group, organized on the following types of social intervention objectives: general evaluation, specific evaluation, setting SMART objectives, drawing up social action plans and connecting personal resources to social opportunities.

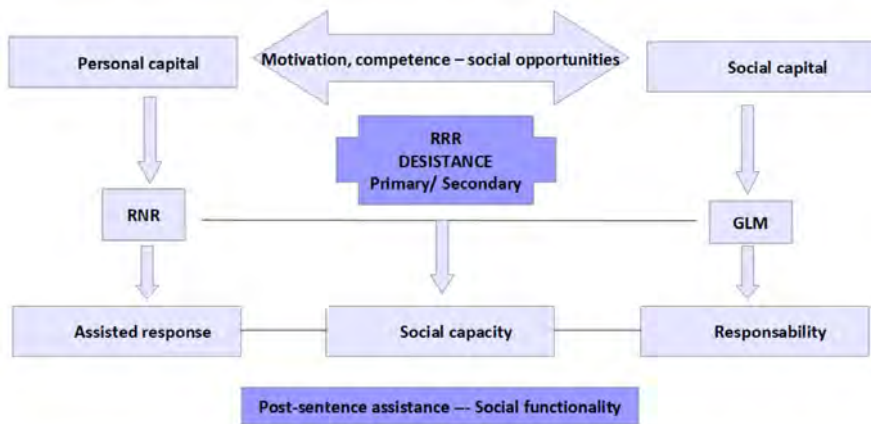
c. The optional modules – associated with the risk of delinquent relapse, and the risk of criminal recidivism – applicable to the case presented above, are selected according to the action plan attached to each specific, measurable, actionable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) objective, as follows: facilitating the relationship with the family of the person eligible for conditional release; facilitating the resolution of the psycho-affective and physical health problems of the person eligible for parole; facilitating contact with specialists from psychosocial and medical services specialized in treating sexual aggression; facilitating access to educational services specialized in civic education, education for the natural relationship, friendship between man and woman including the values and principles of Christian morality.

d. The post-sentence assistance granted at the request of the person released conditionally will be outlined by the following psycho-socio-educational interventions: family assistance and reconciling the relationship of the supervised person with the family members; continuation of sexual education in the broad sense and counselling of the couple relationship, as the case may be; the protection of the victim, the mediation between the victim and the aggressor and, possibly, the negotiation of the conflicts arising in the proximity of the surveilled person; the continuation of studies and recognition of the professional qualification obtained in the penitentiary; professional engagement and involvement in constructive activities within the community.

#### *4.2. Post-sentence surveillance and assistance from the perspective of the RRR programme*

All the integrated social services specific to the post-release period include the activities of evaluating how the measures are fulfilled and the execution of the obligations imposed by the court, as well as the special procedures in case of non-compliance. The purpose pursued by the TSP in the post-release surveillance phase is to prevent relapse as well as the risk of relapse (Poledna et al., 2009) in the case of the person released conditionally. Although from a legal point of view, the post-sentence surveillance is not confused with the post-sentence assistance

(Sandu, 2011) granted at the request of the supervised person, the two types of activities carried out by the TSP are mutually conditioned, being complementary. Thus, if the control induced by the post-release supervision concerns the social competence of the supervised person with regard to accessing the opportunities that the community offers in this respect, the post-sentence assistance refers to the availability of the conditionally released person to collaborate, being motivated to assume the responsibility of changing the behaviour in a prosocial way (Sandu, 2017). As such, the provision of post-sentence assistance at the request of the surveilled persons implies a complex process of evaluation, intervention and monitoring, through cumulative activities and actions, initially carried out in the penitentiary, so that later they will be continued by the TSP, in collaboration with community institutions and organizations, for the purpose of social rehabilitation of the released person (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Paradigm of desistance from the perspective of the RRR programme Reducing the risk of relapse after prison. The process of relapse (II)

#### 4.3. Limitation of the social intervention in the correctional field

In a recent study, Maruna & Mann (2019) make a clear distinction between the paradigm of desistance and the evidence-based practice or ‘what applies’ considering that there are similarities but also significant differences between the two approaches. More specifically, the mentioned authors consider that, while the paradigm of desistance based on the GLM model represents a theoretical and optimistic perspective, the RNR model is rather related to the practice. However, the intervention methods are multiple and can combine both styles of research (Maruna & Mann, 2019).

From this point of view, the RRR programme, whose application I have presented previously, shows the complementarity of the two intervention models, respectively RNR and GLM, but there are still some methodological limits, to which the limits regarding the community resources are added as follows (Poledna et al., 2009): insufficient human resources at the level of the penitentiary



and the territorial structures of probation, some dysfunctions regarding collaboration between the penitentiary and the probation service in the region, which determine the failure to create an integrated services circuit of psychosocial and medical type, based precisely on the partnership between penitentiary, probation and other institutions in the community.

## 5. Conclusion

At present, as novelty in psychosocial intervention, the 'paradigm of criminal desistance' defined by Weaver and McNeill (2007) as a process of change in the prosocial way proposes a plan of action and commuting the stress from the negative factors to the positive ones – protective or inhibitory of the criminal behaviour – by bringing forth the 'strengths' of the person who committed a crime, without neglecting the perspective of the risk of relapse (Oancea & Durnescu, 2011). So the process of change in a prosocial sense is represented by 'the process of the coming to maturity of the personality', 'the identity reconstruction', and 'their social relations' (Durnescu et al., 2009). From this perspective, the psychosocial intervention equally regards the intensifying and the valorization of the 'human resource' meaning, motivation and social competence, as well as the activating of the 'social resource' (Oancea & Durnescu, 2011), namely, the opportunity to use the capacity that the communitarian intervention net offers for the social rehabilitation of the person and the group in a situation of social risk and/or vulnerability.

In this way, the cognitive-behavioural approach (Poledna et al., 2009) harmonizes with 'assisted desistance' more actively and inclusively, and the responsiveness specific to the RNR model is complementary of individual and social responsibility with the purpose of giving back social functionality to the assisted person or group. The specificity of this type of intervention consists in the fact that it is prospective and contextualized, and its beneficiary is supported starting from their 'strengths' to aspire to a better life, or "The Good Life Model" (GLM) (Durnescu et al., 2009), by setting some specific and realistic objectives. The novelty of this approach considers the fact that desistance or 'going out' of criminal behaviour is associated from the perspective of failure in attaining the objectives of social rehabilitation with the setback which is an intermediary stage until the relapse itself, and which offers real possibilities of dismissing failure by making alternative choices at the action level.

In this way, in our opinion based on previous research (Sandu, 2016a), starting with the evaluation of the risk factors of aggressiveness in the complex psychosocial and legal evaluation realized for the prisoners (Mihai, 2018), the work instruments can be standardized with the purpose of the factors of the victim risk evaluation, which would show their usefulness afterwards in the management of the victim behaviour, stressing the mediation between the victim and their aggressor and implicitly mediating disputes at the community level. In our vision, starting from the basic premises of the symbolic interactionism described by Blumer (1969), we propose to overcome the possible bottlenecks in

the practice of probation by correlating qualitative ‘lifeworld’-type research from the perspective of phenomenology, with the intervention theories in the field of rehabilitation practices based on the desistance paradigm (Chapman & Murray, 2015).

In conclusion, the relationship between criminological research, victimology and practice in the Romanian probation system is oriented by the interest shown by the prison staff and probation counsellors in relation to the following thematic areas: the impact of changing the criminal law, respectively, the ‘prison law’s effects’ (Dâmboeanu et al., 2019); the role of the professional relationship between the probation council and the surveilled person; the efficiency of the programmes and interventions carried out during the surveillance period (Poledna, 2016). In addition, based on Maruna’s (2011) vision, according to which ‘reintegration rituals’ can outweigh ‘punishment rituals’ (Maruna, 2011), we argue in favour of the efficiency of the probation activity from the perspective of post-sentence assistance, which can be started by a functional inter-institutional collaboration between the community partners to ensure the sustainability of psychosocial interventions ‘beyond probation’.

### **Acknowledgements**

I take this opportunity to bring warm thanks to the associate professor PhD Sorina Poledna from the Babes Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania, for the methodological contribution in carrying out qualitative research in prison and probation, as well as for participating, as an expert, in the implementation of the RRR programme. Also, warm thanks to Professor Ioan Durnescu from the University of Bucharest, Romania, for coordinating the projects of modernization and extension of the Romanian probation system, in collaboration with European experts, of which I nominate Professor Rob Canton from De Montfort University, Leicester, which provided ongoing support on updating bibliographic references correlated with the data provided by the implementation of European Probation Rules.

### **References**

- Amza, T., & Amza, C. P. (2008). *Criminologie. Tratat de teorie politică criminologică [Criminology: Treatise on criminological theory and politics]*. Lumina Lex Publishing House.
- Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J.L. (1995). *The Level of Service Inventory. LSI-R* [Revised. Manual]. Multi-Health System, Inc.
- Balahur, D., Littlechild, B., & Smith, R. (Eds). (2007). *Restorative Justice Developments in Romania and Great Britain: Sociological-juridical enquiries and applied studies of social work*. „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Press.
- Barras, V., & Bernheim, J. (1990). The history of law and psychiatry in Europe. In Bluglass, R., & Bowden, P. (Eds.), *Principles and Practice of Forensic Psychiatry* (pp. 103-109). Churchill Livingstone.
- Becker, H. S. (1973). *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. The Free Press.
- Bonta, J., & Andrews, D. A. (2007). *Risk-Need-Responsivity Model for Offender Assessment and Rehabilitation*. Public Safety Canada.
- Blumer, H. (1963). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- Bohm, R. M., & Haley, K. N. (2002). *Justiția penală. O viziune asupra sistemului american [Criminal Justice: A vision of the American system]*. Expert Publishing House.
- Bonta, J., & Andrews, D. A. (2007). *Risk-Need-Responsivity Model for Offender Assessment and Rehabilitation*. Public Safety Canada.
- Champion, D. J. (1994). *Measuring Offender Risk: A criminal justice sourcebook*. Greenwood Press.
- Chapman, T., & Murray, D. (2015). Restorative justice, social capital and desistance from offending. *Journal of Social Work*, 4, 47–60.
- Ciocei, V. (2019). *Handbook of Criminology*. All Beck Publishing House.
- Dâmboeanu, C. (2011). The phenomenon of relapse in Romania. *The Quality of Live Journal*, 3, 295–312.
- Dâmboeanu, C., Pricopie, V., & Thiemann, A. (2019). Prison law and human rights in post-communist Romania: Staff attitudes toward change. *European Journal of Criminology*. doi/10.1177/1477370819850128
- Dunea, M., & Mărculescu-Michinici, M. I. (2019). Consideration upon a side of restorative justice: the mediation in criminal cases in the Roumanian law. *Scientific Annals of "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași (new series) "Sociology and Social Work"*, 2, 59–72.
- Durnescu, I. (2002). Estimating the risk of relapse. In Durnescu, I. (Ed.), *Handbook of Social Reintegration and Surveillance Counselor* (pp. 335-345). Themis Publishing House.
- Durnescu, I. (2006). *The Phenomenon of Recidivism in the Field of Patrimonial Crime*, PhD thesis. "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Press.
- Durnescu, I. (2009). *Asistența socială în penitenciar [The Social Work in the Penitentiary]*. Polirom Publishing House.
- Durnescu, I. (2019). Work as a drama: The experience of former prisoners in the labour market. *European Journal of Criminology*, 18(2), 170-191. doi/10.1177/177370819838718.
- Durnescu, I., Lewis, S., McNeill, F., Raynor, P., & Vanstone, M. (2009). *Reducing the Risk of Relapse after Imprisonment*. Lumina Lex Publishing House.
- Frañț, A. E. (2017). Conceptual delimitations regarding the role of education in preventing crime. *Acta Universitatis George Bacovia. Juridica*, 1, 147–168.
- Gassin, R. (1990). *Criminology*. Dalloz.
- Gheorghe, M. C. (2018). *Desistance from Criminal Behavior: Probation as an agent to support the desistance efforts*, PhD thesis. Cluj-Napoca: „Babes Bolyai” University.
- Giordano, P. C., Cerncovich, S. A., & Rudolph, J. L. (2002). Gender, crime and desistance: Towards a theory of cognitive transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 4, 990–1064.
- Gonclaves, L. C., Endrass, J., Rossegger, A., Grace, R. C., & Dirkzvager, A. J. E. (2019). Assessing prison adjustment among young adult offenders: Changes, correlates, and outcomes. *European Journal of Criminology*, 18(3), 366-385. doi/10.1177/1477370819850944.
- Hare, R. D. (1997). *The Hare psychopathy checklist – revised (PCL-R)*. Multi-Health System.
- Iacobuță, A. I. (2002, 2006). *Criminology*. Junimea Publishing Press.
- Jenkins, A. (2009). *Becoming Ethical: A parallel, political journey with men who have abused*. Russel House Publishing.
- Law no. 211 of 2004 on measures to ensure the protection of the victims of crime, updated. Available at: <https://www.law-no-211-2004-on-some-measures-for-insurance-inform-support-and-protection-crime-victims> (accessed 15 May 2021).

- Law no. 123 of 2006 on the status of personnel services of probation, updates. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/71519> (accessed 15 May 2021).
- Law no. 192 of 2006 on mediation and the organization of the profession of mediator, updated. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/71928> (accessed 15 May 2021).
- Law no. 252 of 2013 on the organization and functioning of the probation system, updated. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/150667> (accessed 15 May 2021).
- Lazăr, C. (2002). Elements of criminology. In Durnescu, I. (Ed.), *Handbook of Social Reintegration and Surveillance Counselor* (173-215). Themis Publishing House.
- Loghin, I. C. (2019). Restorative justice concepts and models in penitentiary social work. *Scientific Annals of „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași (new series) Sociology and Social Work*, 2, 73–87.
- Mannis, J., & Harris, P. W. (2011). Contagion and repeat offending among urban juvenile delinquents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 34, 951–963.
- Maruna, S. (2011). Reentry as a rite of passage. *Punishment & Society*, 13, 3–28.
- Maruna, S., & Farrall, S. (2004). Desistance from crime: A theoretical reformulation. *Kvlner Zetschrift fur Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 43, 171–194.
- Maruna, S., & Mann, R. (2019). *Reconciling ‘Desistance’ and ‘What Work’*. HM Inspectorate of Probation: Academic Insight.
- McNeill, F. (2006). A desistance paradigm for offender management. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 1, 39–62.
- Mihai, C. (2018). *The Severe Personality Disorders in Persons Deprived of Liberty*. Ars Longa Publishing House.
- Mihăilă, M. M. (2012). The social and legal protection of children whose parents serve custodial sentences. *Scientific Annals of “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași (new series), Sociology and Social Work*, 2, 34–52.
- Mihaila, M.M. (2016). The parental responsibility and the religious values transmission through family. *Scientific Annals of “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași (new series), Sociology and Social Work*, 1, 99–110.
- Mihaila, M. M. (2018). Medical-legal and social premises regarding the individualization of taking and performing medical safety measures applicable to both psychiatric and non-psychiatric patients. *Journal of Forensic Research*, 9, 412, doi/10.4172/2157-7145.1000412
- The National Strategy for the Social Reintegration of Persons Deprived of Freedom, 2019–2024. Available at: <https://sgg.gov.ro/new/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ANEXA-14.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2021).
- Oancea, G., & Durnescu, I. (2011). Modele de practică în sistemul corecțional [Models of practice in the correctional field]. In Durnescu, I. (Ed.), *Probațiunea. Teorii, legislație și practică [Probation: Theories, legislation and practice]* (pp. 249-262). Polirom.
- Poledna, S. (2014). Women inmates’ narrative identities and family life projects. *Contemporary Issues Facing Families: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, 3, 363–381.
- Poledna, S. (2016). Researching practice and practicing research in probation: Some reflections. In Tomita, M. (Ed.), *The Fifth International Conference Multidisciplinary Perspectives in the Quasi-Coercive Treatment of Offenders. Probation as a Field of Study and Research: From person to society*. Filodiritto Editore, 178–182.
- Poledna, S., & Bujan, L. (2004). *Delinquent Behaviour: Risk and protective factors*. Research Report. Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House.

- Poledna, S., Sandu, M., Berne, A. L., Foca, L., & Palaghia, M. (2009). *Training Manual on Working with Convicted Persons to be Released from Prison*. Lumina Lex Publishing House.
- Rec (2010)1 on the European Probation Rules (EPR): Work with victims. Available at: [https://www.pmscr.cz/download/mezdoken\\_European\\_Probation\\_Rules.pdf](https://www.pmscr.cz/download/mezdoken_European_Probation_Rules.pdf) (accessed 15 May 2021).
- Rex, S. (1999). Desistance from offending: Experiences of probation. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 38, 366–383.
- Robert, P., & Lascoumes, P. (1974). *Youth gangs, a theory of segregation*. Paris: Éditions ouvrières.
- Rusu, C. (2016). Minors in the probation system: Control and intervention for desistance. In Visu-Petra, G., Buta, M., & Visu-Petra, L. (Eds.), *Child Psychology in Judicial Context: Theoretical and applicative foundations* (pp. 327–366). Association of Cognitive Sciences in Romania (ASCR) Publishing House.
- Sandu, M. (2008). Family violence: Risk factor in juvenile delinquency. *Journal of Social Research and Intervention*, 23, 63–82.
- Sandu, M. (2011). Supravegherea și asistența postpenală [The surveillance and post-criminal assistance]. In Durnescu, I. (Ed.), *Probațiunea: teorii, legislație și practică [Probation: Theories, legislation and practice]*. Iasi: Polirom, 372–386.
- Sandu, M. (2016a). The victim's perspective in psychosocial assessment of the aggrossional behaviour. In Tomita, M. (Ed.), *The Fifth International Conference Multidisciplinary Perspectives in the Quasi-Coercive Treatment of Offenders. Probation as a Field of Study and Research: From person to society* (221–227). Filodiritto Editore.
- Sandu, M. (2016b). *The Effects of Secularization on the Parent-Child Relationship: Case Study: The city of Iasi*. „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Press.
- Sandu, M. (2017). *Social Reaction about Crime: Surveillance and post-criminal assistance*. Pro Universitaria Publishing House.
- Sheridan, C. (2016). Foucault, power and the modern panopticon. *Trinity College Digital*. Available at: <http://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/theses/548> (accessed 6 August 2020).
- Stănoiu, R. M. (1998). *Criminology*. Oscar Print Publishing House.
- Ward, T., & Brown, M. (2004). The good lives model and conceptual issues in offender rehabilitation. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 3, 243–257.
- Ward, T., & Marshall, B. (2007). Narrative identity and offender rehabilitation. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 51, 279–297.
- Ward, T., Mann, R., & Gannon, T. (2007). The good lives model of offender rehabilitation: Clinical implications. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 12, 87–107.
- Weaver, B., & McNeill, F. (2007). Desistance. In Canton, R., & Hancock, D. (Eds.), *Dictionary of Probation and Offender Management* (pp. 90–92). Willan Publishing.
- Webster, C., MacDonald, R., & Simpson, M. (2006). Predicting criminality? Risk factors, neighbourhood influence and desistance. *Youth Justice*, 1, 7–22.



## SOLUTION-FOCUSED APPROACH IN PREPARING INMATES FOR SOCIAL REINTEGRATION

SORINA POLEDNA<sup>1</sup>

---

### **Abstract**

Focusing on solution is an alternative perspective of communication, professional activities and relationship in relation to the problem-solving approach, used in social work. Looking to the future, rather than the past, the solution-focused approach affirms the right of clients to establish the desired results. It believes that change can take place in a relatively short period of time, especially when clients are empowered and motivated to use their resources and strengths to build solutions. Focusing on solution is part of the theoretical and methodological horizon, rooted in constructivism and social constructionism, which among other ideas specific to postmodernism, states that language, rather than just a medium for expressing ideas, really determines thinking, to the extent that truth is the product of language. This means that problems and solutions can be built through the communication that the social worker in the penitentiary has with inmates. Through communication, change can occur either as a difference in the way a person sees his world, or as a person doing something different, or both. This approach is also productive in communicating with the inmates in order to identify relevant and motivating objectives and solutions for behavioral rehabilitation and social reintegration.

**Keywords:** focusing on solution, participation, language of change, social reintegration

### **Résumé**

Le travail propose une présentation argumentée de l'approche centrée sur la solution du point de vue de sa pertinence pratique dans l'assistance sociale pénitentiaire. Se concentrer sur la solution est une perspective alternative de communication et de relation professionnelle par rapport à l'approche de résolution de problèmes, traditionnellement utilisée en travail social. En regardant vers l'avenir plutôt que vers le passé, l'approche centrée sur la solution affirme le droit des clients d'établir les résultats souhaités. Il croit que le changement peut avoir lieu dans un laps de temps relativement court, en particulier lorsque les clients sont habilités et motivés à utiliser leurs ressources et leurs forces pour créer des

---

<sup>1</sup> Associate professor, “Babes-Bolyai” University, Sociology and Social Work Faculty, 128-130 21 Decembrie 1989 Blvd, code 400604, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, E-mail: sorina.poledna@ubbcluj.ro

solutions. Se concentrer sur la solution fait partie de l'horizon théorique et méthodologique, avec des racines dans le constructivisme et le constructionnisme social, qui entre autres idées spécifiques au postmodernisme, affirme que le langage, plutôt qu'un simple moyen d'expression des idées, détermine réellement la pensée, dans la mesure à laquelle la vérité est le produit du langage. Cela signifie que les problèmes et les solutions peuvent être construits par la communication que le travailleur social du pénitencier a avec les personnes privées de liberté. Grâce à la communication, le changement peut se produire soit comme une différence dans la façon dont une personne voit son monde, soit en ce qu'une personne fait de différent, ou les deux. Cette approche est également productive dans la communication avec les personnes en détention pour identifier des objectifs et des solutions pertinents et motivants pour la réhabilitation comportementale et la réinsertion sociale.

**Mots-clés:** concentrer sur les solutions, la participation, le langage du changement, la réintégration sociale

### **Rezumat**

Lucrarea propune o prezentare argumentată a abordării centrată pe soluție din perspectiva relevanței sale practice în asistența socială penitenciară. Centrarea pe soluție este o perspectivă alternativă de comunicare și relaționare profesională în raport cu abordarea „problem solving”, folosită în mod tradițional, în asistența socială. Orientată spre viitor, mai degrabă decât spre trecut, abordarea centrată pe soluție afirmă dreptul clienților de a stabili rezultatele dorite. Consideră că schimbarea poate avea loc într-o relativ scurtă perioadă de timp, în special, atunci când clienții sunt împuterniciți ori motivați să își folosească resursele și atuurile pentru a construi soluții. Centrarea pe soluție se înscrie în orizontul teoretico-metodologic, cu rădăcini în constructivismul și constructionismul social, care, printre alte idei specifice post-modernismului, afirmă că limbajul, mai degrabă decât să fie doar un mediu pentru exprimarea ideilor determină în mod real gândirea, în măsura în care adevărul este produsul limbajului. Aceasta înseamnă că problemele și soluțiile pot fi construite prin comunicarea pe care asistentul social din penitenciar o are cu persoanele private de libertate. Prin comunicare, schimbarea poate apare, fie ca diferență în felul în care o persoană vede lumea, fie prin aceea că persoana face ceva diferit sau prin ambele. Această abordare este productivă și în comunicarea cu persoanele custodiata prin identificarea obiectivelor și soluțiilor relevante, respectiv motivante, în vederea reabilitării comportamentale și a reintegrării sociale.

**Cuvinte cheie:** focusare pe soluții, participare, limbajul schimbării, reintegrare socială

The social reintegration of former prisoners is not only for Romania, one of the biggest challenges facing correctional services, which has not yet been adequately addressed despite more or less coherent, systematic efforts with coverage in concrete and effective interventions.

As it is known, the social reintegration is an essential condition in reducing the recidivism. It is a dynamic, complex process, influenced by a mixture of



variables related not only to the personality, situation, problems, needs and resources of the prisoner, but also to criminal policies, socio-economic characteristics of the environment in which the person returns, and last but not least, the attitude, openness and involvement of the community in response to the reintegration effort of the former prisoner. Thus, the variables that influence the social reintegration can be conceptualized as being included in three areas: a) intrapersonal conditions (physical health, psychological, substance use, level of education and emotional state); b) subsistence conditions, including financial situation, employment and housing and c) support conditions, including social support, formal support services, including for the criminal justice system (Shinkfield & Graffam, 2007, p.2). Given this complexity of the conditions on which the success of social reintegration of prisoners depends, we consider it useful to seek the most productive theoretical-methodological approaches, such as in our opinion focusing on solution, which can be engaged in inmates preparation for release and social reintegration, in which, a major contribution is made by the penitentiary social work.

Prison social work is a professional approach that aims to ‘develop individual group or collective capacities to ensure social needs, increase the quality of life and promote the principles of cohesion and social inclusion’ (Social Work Law 292/2011 updated 2021, art. 2, paragraph 3). From this perspective, through specialized activities and interventions, two closely related objectives are pursued at the same time: the security of society by reducing the risk of recidivism of persons sentenced to deprivation of liberty and their social inclusion. In this sense, the constructive strategies that aim at the behavioral rehabilitation of the persons deprived of liberty by building new repertoires of pro-social actions, presuppose the participation of all the parties involved: the prisoner, specialists, community.

In the case of persons in custody, *participation* is the essential condition for overcoming criminal behavior. The main argument in this regard is expressed by the idea that „personal participation” incorporates our sense of competence, skill, power and *ability to make changes* (...) suggests a sense of control over one's life in terms of personality, understanding and motivation (...) (Krogsrud, O’Melia & DuBois, 2006, p. 116).

Thus, in social work the emphasis on participation is specific to the perspective of strengths, which orients work with beneficiaries from an excessive focus on problems (without ignoring them) which “is based on assumptions such as individual mistakes, failure, personal inadequacy and deficiency” (Weick,1983), towards exploring internal and external resources, qualities and transactions with the environment; in other words, there is a rebalancing of the relationship between problems and resources and a redirection from the past to the present and especially to the future. This *transition from what has been to what could be and what will be*, reorients our thinking on the whole process of social work practice (Krogsrud, O’Melia & DuBois, 2006, p. 113).

The change in orientation facilitates the mission of social work to empower clients to live more productive and satisfying lives. Saleebey (2007) calls his view on empowerment, *the strengths perspective* and summarizes the contributions of several authors, based on which he formulates the following basic assumptions, specific to this perspective (De Young & Berg, 2008, p. 10):

1. Despite life's struggles, all people possess strengths that can be marshaled to improve the quality of their lives. Practitioners should respect these strengths and the directions in which customers want to use them.

2. The client's motivation increases by a consistent emphasis on strengths as the client defines them.

3. Discovering strengths requires a process of cooperative exploration between clients and helpers; the expert practitioner do not have the last word on what clients need to improve their lives.

4. Focusing on strengths, turns practitioners away from the temptation to judge or blame clients for their difficulties, and toward discovering how clients have managed to survive even in the most difficult of circumstances.

5. All environments - even the most bleak, contain resources.

These considerations are also valid in the penitentiary social work, especially by applying the solution-focus approach, because inmates need to be facilitated to focus on solutions that support participation and empowerment, contributing to reducing criminal behavior and leading to a successful social reintegration.

Future oriented, rather than on the past, the solution-building approach affirms the clients right to establish the desired results. Moreover, it is believed that change can take place in a relatively short period of time, especially when beneficiaries are empowered and motivated to use their expertise to build solutions. Here by competence, we mean "the ability of any human system to fulfill its function of taking care of itself, to obtain resources from effective interaction with other systems and to contribute to the resources of its social and physical environment. Without being a fixed attribute of the person, it is the result of the transaction between 1). the person's abilities, skills and motivation, and 2). the qualities of the environment, such as social network resources, social support and requirements, obstacles and deficiencies in the ecological context" (Maluccio & Libassi, 1984, p. 52 *apud* Krogsrud, O'Melia & DuBois, 2006, pp.116-117). Which is why the role of the practitioner is to listen, to absorb information that clients provide and, subsequently, to guide them towards solutions using "the language of change" (De Jong & Berg, 2002, p. 49 *apud* Hepworth, Rooney & Dewber, 2010, p 403). Thus, the focus on solution is part of this theoretical and methodological horizon, rooted in constructivism and social constructionism which, among other ideas specific to postmodernism, states that language, rather than just an environment for expressing ideas, really determines thinking, to the extent that truth is the product of language: language constructs social reality. (Milner & O'Byrne, 2002, p. 2 *apud* Lindsay, 2009). This means that problems and solutions can be built through the conversations we have with our clients.

*Through communication, change can occur either as a difference in the way a person sees his world, or as a person doing something different, or both.* (George, Iveson & Ratner, 1990, p. 3 *apud* Parton & O'Byrne, 2000, p. 97; Lindsey, 2009, p. 106).

The solution-centered approach emerged as a consequence of the work of a team led by Steve De Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg at the Brief Therapy Center in Milwaukee in the 1980s. The team found out that clients often made significant positive changes following conversations about their favorite future. Moreover, when clients came up with ideas about possible solutions, sometimes they were related to problems and sometimes not. It seemed that the more the clients focused on the problems, they discovered more and bigger problems, but when they focused on the solutions, the more solutions materialized. De Shazer, Berg and the team noticed that practitioners could play a role in helping clients focus on solutions – hence the name of this theoretical-methodological perspective.

Solution focus is currently used in a variety of settings and with diverse populations, including involuntary clients. Exception-based solutions have been shown to be more successful compared to attempts to stop or change the abusive behavior of male participants (Corcoran & Franklin, 1998). Similar results appeared in a treatment of a group of male offenders, sanctioned for domestic violence. Working with them, the results showed that empowering men to identify solutions to their behavior was more effective than focusing on their violent behavior (Hepworth, Rooney & Dewber, 2010).

In a presentation of the characteristics of focusing on solution, Lindsay (2009) makes some important remarks, which I believe we can transfer and adapt in working with persons in custody in order to prepare them for release and social reintegration. The author points out that the aim of this approach is the absence of the problem or at least a reduction of its effect. “Without knowing what your problem is, I can't know that you are moving away from it and you will not know when you have reached your destination. Also, it would not be appropriate to deny the client opportunity to express his or her problem. The approach, after all, must be felt by the client as relevant. However, no solutions can be found in exploring the causes of the problem. The past is considered to be useful only in finding exceptions to the problem” (Lindsay, 2009, p.107).

Finding exceptions is an important part of the approach, it is seen as a process in which a number of techniques are used to facilitate the identification of micro-solutions, as they are also called “exceptions”. This concept proposed by De Jong & Berg refers to occasions when the problem is, or has been in the past, absent or of lesser intensity. Since nothing remains the same, there will always be times when the problems are more or less serious and stressful and so it is possible to find these exceptions.

The literature dedicated to this type of approach talks about deliberate exceptions and spontaneous exceptions (Parton & O'Byrne, 2000 *apud* Lindsey, 2009, p. 107). In the first case, the person is responsible for exceptions apparition and manifestation, while spontaneous exceptions are not the person's merit, others have contributed to their manifestation or are due to luck. In the

penitentiary social work our interest is for the generation of those micro-solutions/ deliberate exceptions, because they develop in the client a feeling of self-efficacy and empowerment. Regarding self-efficacy, understood as confidence in one's own ability to perform a certain task, it is worth noting that especially in working with involuntary clients, it is a good predictor of the possibility of change and the persistence of willingness for change. And if we take into account the fact that self-efficacy is specific to each task or change, it is important to emphasize the important role of the prison social worker who through the professional relationship / therapeutic alliance, creates for prisoners concrete opportunities for self-determination (by operationalizing certain values such as confidentiality, respect for the uniqueness and dignity of the person, or by engaging in communication skills that allow prisoners to choose how they answer questions or relate their situation). At the same time, the way they are perceived by the social worker, the confidence of the specialist in self-efficacy, the competence of the prisoner, facilitates the development of motivation for change because it talks about hope. Hope is a special resource for the development and capitalization of which a cooperation between inmates and the social worker is desirable.

The penitentiary social worker in accordance with his / her professional roles (evaluator, facilitator, trainer, mediator, case manager, counselor, etc.), aims to maximize the participation of the prisoner in each of the activities and programs carried out in support of behavioral rehabilitation and preparation for their release and social reintegration, according to the Individualized evaluation, educational and therapeutic intervention plan. As the creators of solution-centered approach explain, participation means, on the one hand, putting the client in the position of an expert in his own life, and on the other hand, you as a practitioner must know how to stay away from your reference framework, as much as possible, and to explore the client's, that is, to learn to adopt *the position of not knowing*. This term, say De Young and Berg (2008), belongs to two other authors Anderson and Goolshian (1992) who claim that the practitioner never knows a priori the significance of the client's experiences and actions. Instead, it must be based on the client's perceptions and explanations, placing his reference frame at the center of the communication.

De Young and Berg (2008) identify basic communication skills that allow practitioners to be informed by clients. Some of the skills are unique to solution-centered approach, others are not (p. 20). Here is one of these communication / interviewing skills and techniques illustrated by some of the activities carried out in the penitentiary by social workers together with the prisoners.

Listening to clients means from the perspective of the practitioner, in our case of the social worker in the penitentiary, to avoid the evaluative thoughts related to the interviewer's frame of reference. We listen to the client's narration from his / her point of view. That is, we are within his / her frame of reference. When you start listening, De Young and Berg say, the emphasis should be on *who and what is important to the client* (p. 21). Thus the practitioner focuses on the

most important parts of the client's frame of reference. Thus, the tendency of some pre-comprehensions is stopped, and a premature formulation of the solution is prevented, made from the point of view of the practitioner.

A key role of the penitentiary social worker is that of evaluator. The assessment activity is a process by its nature, that covers all the stages that make up the custodial sentence: the initial evaluation during the quarantine period, periodic evaluations during the execution of the sentence / measure of hospitalization in a re-education center, the final evaluation during the period of probation for release). Regardless of the time or purpose of the evaluation, a series of communication/interviewing skills and techniques are employed that make possible the collection of data, their analysis and interpretation. Questions have an essential contribution to these activities. Regarding the wording of the questions, Witkin (1999) invoked by De Young and Berg, made the following statement "Listen to the questions people ask and you will have a good idea about what they think, what they value and what they want to achieve/realize". Thus, the process of asking and answering questions often creates *a new awareness* among the participants and *new possibilities* for the future. Therefore, the solutions are built the fastest when the interviewers / social workers formulate their questions according to this principle. For example, open-ended questions transfer both control and responsibility to clients; they are also consonant with the "not knowing" technique. At the same time, they give clients more opportunities to choose what they say about themselves and how they do it (De Young & Berg, 2008). Engaging in open-ended communication is a way to promote self-determination, so important especially for involuntary clients such as persons in custody. The use of open-ended questions, those of concretization, especially the miracle question, coping or scaling questions, the last three, specific to focusing on the solution, is especially productive in terms of detailing and nuance the client's perspective. These details contribute to the efficient construction of the solution.

The iconic interview technique for focusing on the solution, considered particularly effective in avoiding blocking communication around the problem and focusing on how they were, or would be in the absence of the problem (e.g., alcohol consumption, lack of work, criminal behavior etc.), is *the technique of the miracle question*. Through it, the social worker focuses together with the prisoner on what he / she wants to be different in his/her life, and then on how this can happen. Once the prisoner has formulated what he / she would like to see differently, the next task for the social worker is to open the communication to the most concrete formulations regarding how the person sees his/her life when the problem is solved. In the solution-centered approach, this communication approach is called the process of developing well-formed goals (Berg & Miller, 1992 *according to* De Young & Berg, 2008, p. 77).

Another skill that reflects this principle related to details is the repetition of clients' keywords, that is, encouraging. The keywords are the ones that clients use to capture the experiences and the meanings that they give to this experience.

Client: Family for me is something different. Social worker: Something different? We therefore find that language is the main means by which clients transmit/reveal their own frame of reference. That is why in building the solution it is essential that the social worker listens carefully to what words the clients choose and use. (De Young & Berg, 2008, p. 25).

Establishing the objectives, a particularly important aspect in many of the programs carried out in the penitentiary, can benefit from the application of this way of engaging communication skills. The cantonment of communication in the prisoners' frame of reference, the identification and awareness of new perspectives, different from reporting to the situation and the awareness of alternative solutions that are generated by capitalizing on positive experiences and strengths, facilitates the configuration of objectives related to prosocial change.

Therefore, we consider the solution-centered approach relevant in working with prisoners in order to prepare them for release, because through its very core idea (focusing on strengths, positive rather than problematic experiences, future orientation, use of the language of change and the emphasis on the participation of the prisoners), this approach can help to outline more quickly, in detail and better folded on resources, relevant objectives in a realistic post-detention social reintegration plan.

## References

- De Young, P., & Berg, I. K. (2008). *Interviewing for solutions* (3rd ed.). Brooks Cole.
- Hepworth, D. H., Rooney, R. H., Dewber, G., Strom-Godfried, K., & Larsen, J. A. (2010). *Direct social work practice. Theory and skills*. (8th ed.). Brooks Cole.
- Krogsrud, M. K., O'Melia, M., & Dubois, B. (2006). *Practica asistenței sociale [The social work practice. Participatory approach]*. Polirom.
- Lindsay, I. (2009). Brief solution-focused therapy. In Lindsay, T. (Ed.). *Social Work Intervention* (pp. 104-117). Learning Matters.
- Rooney, H. R. (2009). *Strategies for Working With Involuntary clients* (2th ed.). Columbia University Press.
- Shinkfield, A.J., & Graftam, J. (2007). Community Reintegration of Ex-Prisoners Type and Degree of Change in Variables Influencing Successful Reintegration. In *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, Volume XX Number X Month XXXX xx-xx © 2007 Sage Publications 10.1177/0306624X07309757 <http://ijo.sagepub.com> hosted at <http://online.sagepub.com>
- Law no. 292 of 2011 on Social Work, updates. Available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/133913> [accessed 31 March 2021].

## POST-DETENTION SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL REINTEGRATION OF THE DETAINEE BETWEEN THE THEORY AND REALITY OF THE XXI CENTURY

DUMITRU BUDACU<sup>1</sup>

---

### **Abstract**

In a constantly changing society, it is mandatory for state institutions and society to be actively involved in the (re) integration of persons released from prison. The non-adaptation of policies and programs for the integration of these people with the real needs they had coming out of the prison gate and also in the first month of freedom, can determine them to relapse and implicitly to increase the crime rate at the societal level. It is necessary that the programs are inspired by institutions and specialists from other states, such as those of the American, Spanish, German state, etc. to be adapted to the real needs of the liberated people, to the culture and values of the Romanian people. Each person is unique, that's why the person released from prison has certain needs to integrate into society again, and these needs are different from one person to another, depending on gender, religion, education, life experience, marital status, age, moral support provided by the family, support given by society the time they leave the penitentiary after serving the sentence, etc.

**Keywords:** community, marginalization, reintegration.

### **Résumé**

Dans une société en changement continu, il est obligatoire que les institutions de l'état et la société s'impliquent activement dans la réintégration des personnes libérées du pénitencier. L'inadaptation des politiques et des programmes destinés à l'intégration de ces personnes ayant des besoins réels en quittant la prison et dans le premier mois de liberté peut les entraîner à récidiver et implicitement le taux de criminalité peut augmenter au niveau de la société. Il faut que les programmes d'autres états, tels l'état américain, espagnol, allemand etc. dont les institutions et les spécialistes s'inspirent soient adaptés aux besoins réels des personnes libérées, à la culture et aux valeurs du peuple. Chaque personne est unique et automatiquement la personne libérée du pénitencier aussi a des besoins de se réintégrer dans la société et ces besoins sont différents d'une personne à l'autre en fonction du sexe, religion, éducation, expérience de vie, état civil, âge, soutien

---

<sup>1</sup> Officer in MoND, PhD Student in Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, Violetelor Street, number 9, Romania, e-mail: budacu\_dumitru@yahoo.com

moral de la part de la famille, l'aide donne par la société au départ de la prison après l'exécution de la condamnation.

**Mots-clés:** communauté, marginalisation, réintégration.

### **Rezumat**

Într-o societate în continuă schimbare este obligatoriu ca instituțiile statului și societatea să se implice activ în (re)integrarea persoanelor eliberate din penitenciar. Neadaptarea politicilor și a programelor destinate integrării acestor persoane cu nevoile reale avute la ieșirea de pe poarta penitenciarului și în prima lună de libertate îi pot determina să recidiveze și implicit să crească rata criminalității la nivel de societate. Este nevoie ca programele din care se inspiră instituțiile și specialiștii de la alte state, cum ar fi cele ale statului american, spaniol, german etc. să fie adaptate la adevăratele nevoi ale persoanelor eliberate, la cultura și la valorile poporului. Fiecare persoană este unică și în mod automat și persoana eliberată din penitenciar are anumite nevoi de a se integra iarăși în societate, iar aceste nevoi sunt diferite de la o persoană la alta, în funcție de gen, religie, educație, experiență de viață, stare civilă, vârstă, suportul moral oferit de familie, sprijinul dat de societate la părăsirea penitenciarului după executarea pedepsei etc.

**Cuvinte cheie:** comunitate, marginalizare, reintegrare.

## **1. Justification for choosing the research topic**

In justifying the importance of this topic, I started from the definition of several concepts, such as persons deprived of liberty, social reintegration, social marginalization, educational program, psychological assistance, social assistance, in order to clarify the boundaries within which the study will be conducted.

The first concept is that of a person deprived of liberty, a concept that has received special attention from specialists which means "the person sanctioned with the educational measure of admission to an educational center or a detention center, people sentenced to imprisonment or life imprisonment, persons remanded in custody" (national strategy).

The second concept used in the study was the process of social reintegration which is given by "a succession of educational approaches, psychological assistance and social assistance, which aim at the social reintegration of persons deprived of liberty and which is carried out in two stages: the enforcement phase which starts at incarceration and takes place during the execution of the pre-trial measure/educational measure/custodial sentence and the post-enforcement stage starting from the date of parole or term release, and the beneficiaries are the persons released, identified with post-detention assistance needs and those who access the corresponding services at the community level" and whose success plays a rather important role in community life.

Social marginalization was the third concept that was approached in the study and what is the situation that a person experiences when he is not considered part of the community and, as defined by the National Strategy for the reintegration of people deprived of liberty is "the peripheral social position,



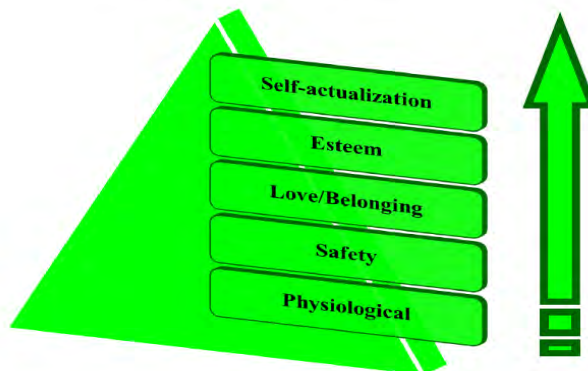
isolation of individuals or groups, with limited access to economic, political, educational and communication resources of the community (manifested by the absence of a minimum necessary living conditions, from the perspective of social needs)". At the community level, the processes of social marginalization are expressed in terms of rejection and consist in the lack of opportunities, as well as in inaccessibility to the goods and services existing in society.

Last but not least, an educational program, psychological assistance, social assistance is that „structured approach, consisting of all activities that use methods and techniques specific to each area of intervention, aimed at compensating for identified needs or risks, in the context of facilitating social reintegration of persons deprived of their liberty” (national strategy).

Between March 1-31, 2021, a number of 913 persons<sup>1</sup> were released from the penitentiary units subordinated to the National Administration of Penitentiaries. The released persons, involuntarily of their own free will, are in fact members of a vulnerable, marginalized group, since leaving the penitentiary. Returning to the free, real world, after a greater or lesser absence, they often feel like strangers. Reintegration should, through specific policies, help the person to avoid recidivism, have a properly paid job and be supported in order to reintegrate socio-professionally.

In order to understand a person who has just been released from prison, we will have to consider both the pyramid of needs (Maslow's pyramid) and the pyramid of desires (Szapiro's pyramid). The pyramid of needs (Maslow's pyramid) includes the fundamental needs of people (fig. 1) which consist in the psychological needs of security, belonging, esteem and self-fulfillment and valorization, and the liberated person has an acute need to be treated as a normal person. A need is a dissatisfaction, a lack of an essential need to live. Dissatisfaction or lack is expressed through sensations: hunger expresses the need to eat, fear expresses the need for security, etc., and if these needs are not met, they can block a person's life or development.

**Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**



**Fig. 1. Pyramid of Needs (Maslow's Pyramid)**

Desire has its origin in the subconscious, and in the plane of the conscious it takes the form of an emotion regarding a non-vital necessity, something that can be very strong, but not essential for life. Housing, food etc. there are necessities, and going out to a restaurant, clothes, holidays, etc. there are desires. Gabriel Szapiro, marketing specialist, designed taking into account the profile of contemporary man, the pyramid of desires (fig.2).

#### Szapiro's Hierarchy of Desires



Fig. 2. The Pyramid of Wishes (Szapiro's Pyramid)

He started from the premise that the world has changed fundamentally in the modern age, that in the economic and social paradigm, consumption occupies a central place, experiences have diversified, the desire to “have” has grown exponentially, man has become “a consumer“. The five levels of the pyramid of desires, in Gabriel Szapiro's vision are: „unexpected” desires, emotional desires, sharing desires, belonging desires and self-worth desires (Truphème, 2016).

The knowledge of the specificity of the social problems in a certain community and implicitly an assessment of the social needs at local level allows a clearer identification of the necessary social services, being favored also the more adequate use of the existing resources or their more efficient distribution. The need to identify and assess local social issues is also mentioned in the Draft of the Government Decision for the approval of the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for the period 2021-2027 of the Action Plan for 2021-2027 being considered an issue that entails a poor monitoring and adequacy of social services to the needs of the community.

The lack of data on local social problems, the needs of certain vulnerable groups and the availability of services are arguments meant to support our scientific approach through which we will map the social problems.

We want that the model of integration to be able to identify the real needs of people released from prisons.

## **2. Objectives of the study**

### *2.1. General objective*

Development of a theoretical model for understanding the socio-professional integration of persons released from prison.

### *2.2. Secondary objectives*

- 1) Identifying the individual perceptions of the persons released from the penitentiary about the socio-professional integration.
- 2) Identifying the services offered for socio-professional integration.
- 3) Identifying the factors involved in the integration of persons released from prison.
- 4) Identifying of the determining factors in the integration or, as the case may be, non-integration of the persons released from the penitentiary.

### *2.3. Research questions*

- 1) What is the perception of people released from prison about post-detention integration?
- 2) Do the services received at the end of the execution of the sentence facilitate the integration?
- 3) Who is involved in the integration of people released from prison?
- 4) What motivates the people released from the penitentiary to integrate?

## **3. Methodology (work plan, methods, investigative tools, etc.)**

The study is descriptive and exploratory. Qualitative research based on Grounded Theory was used to achieve the proposed objectives. To carry out the study, two stages were used that involved two research tools. In the first stage, a semi-structured interview was applied to the persons released from the penitentiary. The interview method was used, given that by using Grounded Theory a small number of participants will be chosen as a theoretical sample, will be innervated and then the findings will be analyzed. In the second phase, the analysis of the results took place.

Based on the two tools, the semi-structured interview and the analysis of the results, the general process of analysis of the results, of the findings was grounded, the discussions were written and the conclusions were stated.

The limitations of the study were first of all the fact that the persons released from the penitentiary do not want, in their vast majority, to discuss the period they spent in detention, motivating that certain aspects could be interpreted inconsistent with reality and could have repercussions in their everyday lives, and whatever happened there, happened and must be forgotten.

The novelty of the study was the use of triangulation, defined as the combination of two or more data sources in the same study. Triangulation allows the validation of data obtained involved the verification and control of data obtained from different sources, with different methods. The investigator's

triangulation involved the use of several interviewers or data in the study. Qualitative data were collected and subsequently analyzed and interpreted.

In the following lines, each of the data collection methods with specifications related to their application will be presented.

For this stage, the use of the semi-structured in-depth interview was chosen. The use of the personal interview was chosen, through the participation of the researcher and the interviewee, an interview that was conducted face to face, and as a result of the establishment in certain stages of the state of emergency alert due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic the interview was also conducted through the social networks as Facebook, the Whatsapp application as well as the Zoom application. All this being used depending on the availability and familiarity of the interviewees with them. Semi-structured interviews “are often preoccupied with exploring the respondent's subjective world” (Wengraf, 2001), but this does not mean that what they say is uncritically treated. The purpose of the interviewer is to transform „the relationship with the participant, from a relationship of you and me, into a relationship of us type” (Seidman, 2006), because if the interviewer does not want a complete relationship of the us type, the interviewee becomes an equal participant and there is a risk that the resulting speech will be a discussion and not an interview. Thinking about how we deliver information is critical, and for a successful interview, it is necessary to “understand how the map of an interview is constructed... can make our job easier, more accurate” (McPhee & Terry, 2007) and by therefore, we are able to find out what people really believe. When studying a particular context, the qualitative researcher will have to “examine the actions of people and the structures that encourage them” (Tracy, 2013).

Based on Grounded Theory, the data were analyzed once they were collected according to the research steps. Qualitative research was used to identify the characteristics, thoughts and emotions of people released from prison, to know them, but also to understand the integration process, as seen by them and, last but not least, to empathize with these.

What is important in qualitative research is that the researcher “empathizes and identifies with the people he is studying in order to understand how they see things” (Taylor et al., 2016). Most often qualitative researchers conduct the study because there are no theories, or if they are, they fail to adequately explain a phenomenon, and what is important for qualitative research is that “the process is inductive” (Merriam, 2009), which gathers the data needed to build concepts, hypotheses or theories. The data were recorded using the tape recorder, and data analysis was done using encoding techniques like the NVivo software.

A number of 7 people released from the penitentiary (5 men and 2 women) were selected for the research. The sampling used is theoretical, by the snowball method, because many of the released people refuse to talk about their past. It was considered that once the person is identified, who will agree to give the interview, he/she will recommend other participants through his/her social networks who meet the eligibility criteria and who could contribute to our study.

The snowball method allowed the selection of a sample of all persons released from the penitentiary, which was used to determine the truth about their integration. At the same time, it allows us to generalize the discoveries made on a larger scale.

During this period, when the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic restricted freedom of movement and meetings, it was considered that in addition to personal health and safety, the use of the snowball method will help reducing research costs, saves time for data collection, provides accurate results that can be calculated mathematically. An advantage of this method is that a hard-to-reach group can be investigated. And last but not least, this method can investigate a group of very well-informed people, specialists in the approached field.

Subjects were selected according to the research methodology: theoretically, by collecting evidence to establish the concepts needed to develop the theory, according to Grounded Theory.

The sampling was a theoretical one, consisting in repeating the collection of information, by including new participants in the research until the saturation of the theoretical model is obtained. The first two interviewees were selected without specific guidelines, other than the basic criteria for the target population. After analyzing the content of the first two interviews and the initial identification, the definition of the following categories appeared: person released from prison, integration and stigma. Subsequently, the other interviewees were additionally selected. After transcribing the interviews, additional topics and categories were identified, such as the factors involved in reintegration, the services provided for integration.

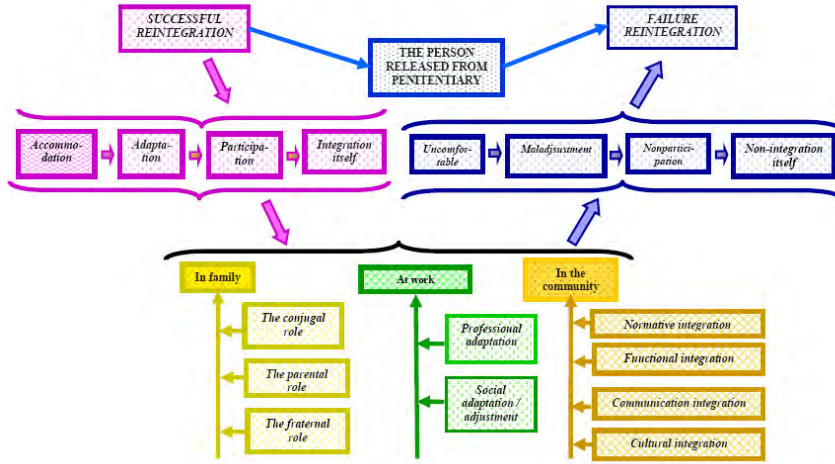
Regarding the researcher's ethics in this study, it presupposed the respect of the dignity and free will of those involved in research. The study was conducted in compliance with what is allowed and what is prohibited during the research. The present study included certain fears, desires, but also various mistrusts or conflicts of ideas, preconceived about the phenomenon. The purpose of this research, from an ethical point of view, was to find a common line, something that would bring together knowledge, respect for human rights but also the development of science by understanding the phenomenon proposed for research. In conclusion, taking into account the trust placed in the interviewees, by providing the interviews, the information presented must be kept strictly without prejudice in any way to the privacy of the interviewees through their deliberate or culpable disclosure.

## **4. Research results**

### *4.1. The main problems identified*

Taking these into account we can analyze the success and failure of the reintegration of persons released from the penitentiary (fig.3) we will have to appeal simultaneously to the community, family and job. It is known that in our country under the National Administration of Penitentiaries, according to the

official website, there are detention centers (4), penitentiaries (33), penitentiaries-hospital (6) and women's penitentiary (1), but what the most important is the fact that when released from detention the needs of these people differ from one person to another depending on age, gender, education, marital status, their life experience, support provided by family, society, etc.



**Fig. 3.** The theoretical model of success versus failure to reintegrate persons released from prison

Social reintegration services provided to released persons consist of assistance and counseling services for those whose punishment has been totally or partially pardoned.

On 31.03.2021 in the units subordinated to the National Administration of Penitentiaries there were 22,233 people (21,192 men and 1,041 women), of which a number of 8,430 (37.92%) are repeat offenders, which raises questions regarding programs and activities of various specialists involved in the reintegration of released persons.

In order to prevent the risk of recurrence we will have to consider reducing social insecurity and lack of perspective and in particular reducing or diminishing violent subcultures that would ultimately lead to increased aggressive behavior and inevitably lead to increased crime.

Stigmatizing the convict on leaving prison is in fact the heaviest burden for him because he is thus labeled and automatically marginalized. The reaction of rejection of the society will automatically determine a counteraction from the person released from the penitentiary manifested especially by opposition to the legal norms.

The needs that facilitate social reintegration must be analyzed both at the level of the individual and the community and especially at the level of the institutions involved in the reintegration process.

At the personal level, the person must be informed about public or private service providers that are at the community level, as well as the conditions for accessing these services.

At the community level, there is a need to build viable networks that can help people immediately after release to support them in order to reintegrate.

At the institutional level, it is imperative to create functional databases that make real-time updates on employers, especially those willing to hire people who have served custodial or non-custodial measures. An analysis of vacancies offered by the Bacău County Agency for Employment included a number of 22 offers and 54 positions, of which I would mention warehouse manager, truck/ heavy truck driver, electronics technician, merchant, salesman and so on. The released person due to his abilities may not be on this list, may not be included in these offers or may not be adapted to their requirements and conditions.

At the legislative level, there is a need to amend the legislation and adapt it to the real needs of released persons, as well as to provide certain tax facilities to employers who provide employment to those released in relation to their skills and preparation.

#### *4.2. The main causes of social problems*

The lack of a system of education and training in prisons, the non-adaptation of socio-educational programs to the current socio-economic context, but especially the lack of monitoring the lives of detainees after their release from prison have led to increased recidivism. At the same time, it was found that former detainees face a high risk of exclusion from the labor market, as a result of discrimination and stigmatization by employers and society. Most detainees have a low level of schooling and vocational training, implicitly almost zero chances of being integrated into the labor market. At the same time, the criminal record affects the credibility of former detainees in front of employers, who are excluded from the job market.

What the community must be concerned with is improving the image of former detainees in the perception of society and removing social perceptions and prejudices towards this vulnerable group, which blocks their reintegration into society. Without the real involvement of society, the place from which prisoners come and inevitably return, reintegration efforts remain fruitless. Organizing as many campaigns as possible to eliminate the discriminatory mentalities that hinder the social inclusion of this vulnerable group is mandatory.

#### *4.3. The main consequences of social problems*

The phenomenon of recidivism of persons released from prison is due to various factors, of which we recall only a few:

- a) the period of detention was too mild, gentle and the person adapted to the status of detainee, to the conditions of execution of the custodial sentence in the penitentiary, and such persons end up to be no longer

- afraid of the penitentiary, so they return to a system where they have adapted as normal, theirs.
- b) lack of resources or support during the critical period, immediately in the first weeks after release, when if he finds a job, he will be paid after a month, during which time it depends on other resources, if they exist, and when they do not exist, it can resort to immediate, easy, known solution, respectively to theft, robbery, fraud, etc.;
  - c) maladaptive reactions immediately after release are among the most diverse. For example, the shock of release, especially in the case of those who served heavy sentences and who did not have or lost, at some point, the support of loved ones. There may be problems adapting to new social realities, unseen until then except in terms of the media, such as the cost of living, mentalities, etc.. When there is some support from the family, difficulties may arise in managing various contacts, in rebuilding normal functional social relations, etc.
  - d) the lack of positive role models (in the family, in the circle of friends) can create various erroneous role models in real life, an aspect that influences personal choices and increases the risks of adopting criminal behaviors.
  - e) the vicious circle of lack of positive educational experiences that include the family, school, community, such that parents were not educated, do not value and support education, transmit pseudo-values in the early years of their life, the school abandons / discourages efforts to keep the individual in the educational system (due to the presence of prejudices, stereotypes), and the community seems to promote models of people who did not have or had reduced contacts with learning and in this context, appears, most often, the prospect of repeated crimes, an option influenced by the system of values adopted and manifested.
  - f) the existence of mental health problems are determined by those special situations of detainees who had discernment in committing the act, but during the execution of the sentence, their mental situation deteriorates severely and these detainees are a risk to those around them and to themselves, both during and after the execution of the sentence, by committing crimes, some with extremely serious consequences but the capacity of the medical and social services is extremely limited in handling such cases after release.

#### *4.4. Recommendation*

The reintegration of detainees requires the combined effort of the whole community to be adapted to its real needs.

At the same time, the identification of all actors at the level of the local community that can provide services adapted to the real needs of the persons released from the penitentiary plays an important role in the integration of the released persons.



In order to prevent the recidivism of the released persons, the state is obliged to be responsible by allocating financial resources, leading at community level of the services with the role of supporting the social reintegration of the released persons.

Of course, in a world in constant change, finding a job with the support of the local community and advising employers to limit or eliminate the criminal record of hiring a person can help released people in their efforts to return to work after they were released.

A decisive role in the integration of released persons can be played by penitentiary units which, together with other social actors at the community level, must become an active part of the process of social reintegration of released persons from prison but not after release, to not consider that their responsibility is only inside the penitentiary.

Attention must always be paid to the standardization of social reintegration programs offered by penitentiaries and probation services, as well as by direct monitoring of cases and not by delegating responsibility to other actors such as those at commune level where the resources are limited.

Now more than ever, there is a need for active and effective involvement of penitentiaries at the community level for people who have been detained in that penitentiary unit in order to achieve a successful reintegration.

Awareness at community level that marginalization and exclusion are not real solutions and especially that social inclusion will lead to a more efficient management of community resources is strictly important.

What must to keep in mind is that they can pose serious threats to the failure of various integration programs in the context in which the minimum gross salary is 2,300 lei per month. The minimum monthly consumption basket for a family of two employees adults (35- 45 years old) with two dependent children (12-14 years old and 8-10 years old) respectively, the average monthly expenses per person were 2,099 lei per person at the level of the fourth quarter of 2020, according to the National Institute of Statistics. The natural question arises in this context whether the released person is really helped to reintegrate into society after serving his sentence.

## **5. Conclusions**

As a result of the objectives of the study and the answers identified to the research questions, the information obtained was quite simple and clear. Post-reintegration has been, is and will have to be a joint action of all actors in society. Even if the research will identify various theoretical models to facilitate the understanding of the integration of these people, it is mandatory for society to find the most optimal solutions and implement it “from the bottom up“, because the people who actually work with them know their real needs. There is a need for society to focus more on practice and not just on theory, to effectively put into practice the lessons identified and learned now, now and not those from the past, which are often not adapted to needs.

In the case of most people released from prison, post-detention reintegration is a difficult objective, because they at the level of society are often perceived as people to avoid and infrequent, and who will never bring advantages. When we refer to the services received that facilitate integration, it appears that they are not in line with the needs of the freed persons, and the official data on the state of recidivism come to our support and show us that it is 37,92%<sup>2</sup>. The lack of a job is perhaps the biggest challenge for a significant part of them- and the lack of involvement of all actors in society often brings failure for them.

About the involvement in the integration of released persons from prison, better said about who is involved in it, although the actors are known at the theoretical level and here only the public and local authorities, representatives of the National Administration of Penitentiaries, national and multinational companies, representatives of the government, civil society, representatives of the community and the media, unfortunately, often, these do not find the common way to support the released persons of the penitentiary in reintegration.

Persons released from prison are motivated to integrate into society, mainly out of the desire to be another person and to be a free man, master of his life and last but not least to show the family, the priests and the community, that this event in their life, detention, was an accident.

Concluding we can say that the integration of persons and freedom from prison requires the joint effort of the state institutions, its family, the social environment and, of course, perhaps most importantly, interinstitutional collaboration, finding optimal solutions and avoiding the delegation from one institution to another of the task of integrating the person released from the penitentiary.

## References

- Comisia Europeană. (2021). *Planul de acțiune privind integrarea și incluziunea pentru perioada 2021-2027*.
- McPhee, N. & Terry, R. (2007). *The hidden art of interviewing people. How to get them to tell you the truth*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Merriam, B. S. (2009). *Qualitative research. A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Notă privind situația pe luna decembrie 2020 a dinamicii și structurii efectivelor de persoane private de libertate. Available at: <http://anp.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/SITUA%C5%A2IA-LUNAR%C4%82-decembrie-2020-site.pdf> (24.04.2021, 10:06.)
- Proiectul de Hotărâre a Guvernului pentru aprobarea Strategiei naționale privind incluziunea socială și reducerea sărăciei pentru perioada 2021-2027.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research. A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (Third Editions). Teachers College Press.
- Strategia națională de reintegrare socială a persoanelor private de libertate 2020 – 2024.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://anp.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SITUA%C5%A2IA-LUNAR%C4%82-martie-2021-site.pdf>

- Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., DeVault, M. (2016). *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Guidebook and Resource*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Tracy, J. S. (2013). *Qualitative research methods. Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Truphème, S. (2016). *L'Inbound Marketing - Attirer, conquérir et enchanter le client à l'ère du digital: (Marketing/Communication) (French Edition)*. DUNOD.
- Wengraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative Research. Interviewing. Biographic Narrative and Semi-Structured Methods*. SAGE Publications Ltd.



## FROM BULLYING TO CYBERBULLYING IN THE CONTEXT OF ONLINE EDUCATION

CARMEN PALAGHIA<sup>1</sup>

---

### **Abstract**

The specialty literature is remarked by the presentation of negative facts and phenomena, some of which are particularly serious, such as bullying and cyberbullying. Authors such as Olweus (1993), Smith and Sharp (1994), Rigby (2007), Belsey (2005), Shariff (2009), etc. draw the attention to two categories of people, the ones who abuse and the ones who are victims of the aggression. The online school also brings along the extension of the cyberbullying phenomenon. In previous years, traditional bullying started in school and continued in the online environment, but now all the interaction has been transferred to the cyber environment. We note phenomena such as: cyberbullying, cybermobbing or cyberstalking etc., and we could say that they seem to occur in the online environment in a kind of avalanche that exceeds our imagination whereas the phenomenon is explained primarily by the impossibility to trace the perpetrator. The article presents ways to prevent the phenomenon of bullying and cyberbullying, as well as legislative and institutional aspects, intervention measures aimed at reducing the phenomenon of bullying, directly or virtually, especially at the national level.

**Keywords:** bullying, cyberbullying, cybermobbing, cyberstalking, online school, prevention, intervention.

### **Résumé**

La littérature de spécialité se distingue par la présentation de faits et de phénomènes négatifs, dont certains sont particulièrement graves, comme le phénomène de l'intimidation et de la cyberintimidation. Des auteurs comme Olweus (1993), Smith and Sharp (1994), Rigby (2007), Belsey (2005), Shariff (2009), etc., se referent à deux catégories de personnes: celles qui abusent et celles qui sont les victimes des agressions. L'école en ligne apporte également l'extension du phénomène de la cyberintimidation. Au cours des années précédentes, l'intimidation traditionnelle commençait dans l'espace scolaire et continuait dans l'environnement en ligne, mais de nos jours toute l'interaction a été transférée dans l'environnement cyber. En remarquant des phénomènes tels que: le cyberintimidation, le

---

<sup>1</sup> Lect. PhD, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Bulevardul Carol I nr. 11, 700506, Iasi, Romania; E-mail: carmenpalaghia@yahoo.com

cybermobbing, le cyberharcèlement, etc., on pourrait dire que dans l'environnement en ligne ils semblent se produire dans une sorte d'avalanche qui dépasse notre imagination, un phénomène qui s'explique surtout par le prisme de l'indétectabilité de l'auteur. L'article présente les moyens de prévenir le phénomène de l'intimidation et de la cyberintimidation, ainsi que les aspects législatifs et institutionnels, des mesures d'intervention qui visent à réduire le phénomène du harcèlement, directement ou virtuellement, notamment au niveau national.

**Mots clés:** intimidation, cyberintimidation, cybermobbing, cyberstalking, école en ligne, prévention, intervention.

### **Rezumat**

Literatura de specialitate se remarcă prin prezentarea de fapte și fenomene negative, dintre care unele deosebit de grave, precum fenomenul de bullying și cyberbullying. Autori precum Olweus (1993), Smith and Sharp (1994), Rigby (2007), Belsey (2005), Shariff (2009) etc., au în atenție două categorii de persoane, acelea care abuzează și cele care sunt victime ale agresiunilor. Școala online aduce cu sine și extinderea fenomenului cyberbullying. Dacă în anii anteriori, bullyingul tradițional începea în spațiul școlii și continua în mediul online, acum toată interacțiunea s-a transferat în mediul cibernetic. Remarcând fenomene precum: cyberbullying, cybermobbing, cyberstalking etc., am putea spune că în mediul online acestea par să se producă într-un fel de avalanșă care ne depășește imaginația, fenomenul explicându-se în primul rând prin prisma nedectabilității făptașului. Articolul prezintă modalități de prevenție a fenomenului de bullying și cyberbullying, cât și aspecte legislative și instituționale, măsuri de intervenție care urmăresc diminuarea fenomenului de bullying, direct sau virtual, cu precădere la nivel național.

**Cuvinte cheie:** bullying, cyberbullying, cybermobbing, cyberstalking, școala online, prevenție, intervenție.

## **1. Introduction**

Starting from 2020, the media reported that phenomenon emerged among children, much stronger than bullying and with much more serious consequences: cyberbullying. In the context of online schooling in which children no longer interact but are isolated, traditional bullying moved online and digital aggression spread, in Romania there are real “networks of youth” who humiliate their colleagues on the Internet, sometimes even during classes. Specialists point out that many parents use counseling sessions for their children who have become neurotic. Online courses have a major effect on students' psyche, with the risk of emotional disorders that may occur due to the overexposure to the screen, isolation, repressed emotions and because they do not talk to their parents or friends.

## **2. The dynamics of the relationship between the aggressor and the victim in cyberbullying**

In recent years, cyberbullying has become “a real pandemic of the virtual environment” (Pânișoară & Chirca, 2019, p. 351). The term was first used by the

Canadian professor Bill Belsey in 2005. Cyberbullying Research Center reported in 2015 that a behavior can be classified as cyberbullying if it has the following characteristics: to be deliberate, not accidental, to be repetitive, to follow a pattern, not to occur in isolation, the target of the abusive behavior must perceive this it as a threat, whereas the aggressive behavior occurs through information communication technologies.

Katzer (2018) analyzes how the Internet changes the human behavior, and she states that individuals can free themselves from their true identity and take on a different role in this environment. The author presents the concepts of cybermobbing and cyberstalking, characterized by the fact that online marginalization, mobbing, and stalking have taken on a new dimension in cyberspace because the videos made with a mobile phone may be posted in a few seconds, which can show aggression, such as a girl being raped in the gym, the image of a schoolmate in the toilet, a young man being beaten in the school yard or in another space where he is lured, or nude photos, sometimes fake, which can be made available to the general public on social networks or on video portals, so that they are accessible to hundreds of thousands of Internet users. The victims feel that they can no longer find a corner where to be protected and carry their cybermobbers “with them in their pockets on their smartphones” (Katzer, 2018, p.92), in which the aggressors enter directly into the space where the victim is at any moment, so the consequences are much more serious than in the case of traditional mobbing.

Outlining a dynamic of the victim-aggressor relationship specific to the bullying phenomenon, traditional or cyber, we can specify that abusers lack empathy and ferocity, they are usually dominant and strong in the peer group, whereas victims become anxious, they do not trust themselves, they get isolated, they no longer interact with anyone, there are situations when they choose not to go to school for fear of meeting the abusers again. However, the worst consequences are the ways in which victims turn their aggression to themselves by self-mutilation or even suicide (Palaghia, 2019a).

The cyber victim is an isolated person, with low self-esteem, strongly focused on networking and disconnected from the real world, which is exploited by aggressors who take every opportunity to mock him/her. The extremely caring parents who give their children too much expose them to cybermobbing. The reasons why adults and children end up cybermobbing are different. In the case of adults, it is about envy and rigid hierarchies at work whereas the triggering factors are restructuring processes at work, therefore, the fear of change or losing their job but also boredom and pure pleasure play a very important role.

The adolescents' own satisfaction is on the first place of the etiological approach; they develop a pleasure to harm others, or out of boredom and lack of occupation they seek, recognition from other Internet users, who can reward them by “click”, “share”, etc. It is also possible to develop a competition among colleagues who have the most embarrassing and degrading videos about another

schoolmate. Another triggering factor for aggression may be the desire for revenge because a victim of traditional bullying can become a ferocious aggressor in the virtual environment (Katzner, 2018).

The children are part of the category of people with increased victim vulnerability because of specific psycho-behavioral and age-specific particular features, characterized by the fact that they have almost no physical and mental defenses. The children do not have the ability to anticipate their own behaviour and the one of the adults, have a low ability to understand the consequences of their own actions or those of others, have a low level of empathy, difficulty discerning good intentions from bad, and present a high degree of suggestibility, credibility.

Due to the fact that victims appear to others as insecure individuals, especially passive and unable to react when attacked, aggressors choose their victims especially from children who do not complain and who seem to be physically and emotionally weaker, being tempted to seek the colleagues' attention. Victim pupils generally have overly caring parents or teachers, and as a result, they fail to develop strategies for dealing with conflict situations. Most victims want the aggressor's approval, even after he has rejected them, some of them continue to try to interact with the one who assaulted them (Palaghia, 2019b).

Cyberbullying has extremely serious consequences for victims, and aggression may be long-lasting. Children victims may experience anxiety, depression, behavioral and emotional disorders, and even dramatic consequences. The victims of the cyberbullying phenomenon show anger, sadness, apathy and anxiety. Anorexia, bulimia, suicide attempts, drug or alcohol use, etc. may occur (Palaghia, 2018).

Openshaw says that "suicide is the second leading cause of death among children and adolescents. People who contemplate suicide are frequently ambivalent about killing themselves and usually respond to help. This is because people who have a suicide plan may not want to die, but only to be free from their current situation, therefore suicide seems to be their only viable option. Suicidal students often try to communicate their feelings indirectly prior to attempting suicide" (Openshaw, 2008, p. 234).

Șoitu (2015) mentions that there are "some attempts at clarifying the two terms- vulnerability and resilience- that have been made from a psychological, social (welfare), healthcare, environmental and legal point of view. Lately, more numerous specialists have been increasingly interested in the issue of vulnerability: psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, social workers, demographers, teaching staff, economists, ecologists and geographers. The interest was the basis for interdisciplinary, comprehensive and global approaches" (Chambers, as cited in Șoitu, 2015, p. 10). The professor also says that "vulnerability comes from an exposure to contingency and stress, and from the difficulty of coping with the latter. We can thus talk about an intrinsic vulnerability that consists in the absence of the resources required for coping



with a threat or a risk, and about an extrinsic vulnerability, consisting in risks, shocks and stress” (Chambers, as cited in Şoitu, 2015, p. 10).

Cojocaru states that vulnerability “characterizes not only certain populations, but also each individual person found in certain relationships with the external reality, with some social contexts of individual action, and it can be a result of the individual interpretations given to these contexts” (Cojocaru, 2005, pp. 30-31). The same author concludes: “if we propose ourselves to identify vulnerable populations, we must recognize both the individual and collective actions that lead to the manifestation of vulnerability” (Cojocaru, 2005, p. 30).

Sandu talks about the fact that „it is becoming increasingly difficult for modern social assistance to find personal family motivations for the recovery of vulnerable people” because „through negative attitudes and behaviours towards family, the potential beneficiary of social services is in a state of „self-vulnerability”, “self-aggression” and, therefore, “self-victimization”. (Sandu, 2017, p. 183). Practically, the dependent and vulnerable person “becomes the prey to the challenges of the contemporary world that act through external social risk factors, namely vulnerability, victimization and marginalization” (Sandu, 2017, p. 183).

Irimescu mentions the fact that “remembering risk factors and protective factors without mentioning them means forgetting the other side of the coin. In the absence of risk factors, protective factors have no impact. The intensity of a factor as the interaction with other factors can cause, in some cases, the quality of risk or protective factor” (Irimescu , 2016, p. 17).

The cognitive behavioral step has proven to be the most effective in preventing delinquency and bullying (Cusson, 2006). “The cognitive dimension of the behavioral approach suggests that behavior is mediated through the thinking process just as much as through a series of responses or stimuli. This is relevant especially for the social work, which aims to individualize the client's behaviour, an action that is quite difficult” (Şoitu, 2011, p. 596).

### **3. Prevention of bullying and cyberbullying at the national level**

Preventing and stopping bullying has become a global concern, especially in recent years. Due to the expansion of the phenomenon, there is a need to identify effective methods of prevention and intervention. At the national level, it was decided by the minister's order no. 4390 /07.06.2012, to establish the National Council for Preventing and Fighting Violence in Schools, which has as main attribution the role of a National Anti-Violence Observatory that monitors and evaluates the implementation at the national level of the national strategy for fighting violence in schools.

By Order no. 5115 of 15 December 2014, on the approval of the Regulation on the organization and functioning of pre-university educational institutions, it was mentioned that in each school there is a Commission for preventing and fighting violence in schools, according to the Strategy on reducing violence in schools education. Pursuant to Art. 76 of Order no. 5115 of 15 December 2014, after consulting the Representative Council of Parents and the Representative

Council of Students, the Teachers' Council of each educational institutions establishes for students at least one distinctive sign, such as: a badge, a uniform, a scarf or something similar pursuant to Law no. 35/2007 on the increase of safety in educational institutions, with subsequent amendments and completions. The signs of violence are communicated to the General Directorate of Police or the County Police Inspectorate and to the General Directorate of Constables or to the County Constables Inspectorate.

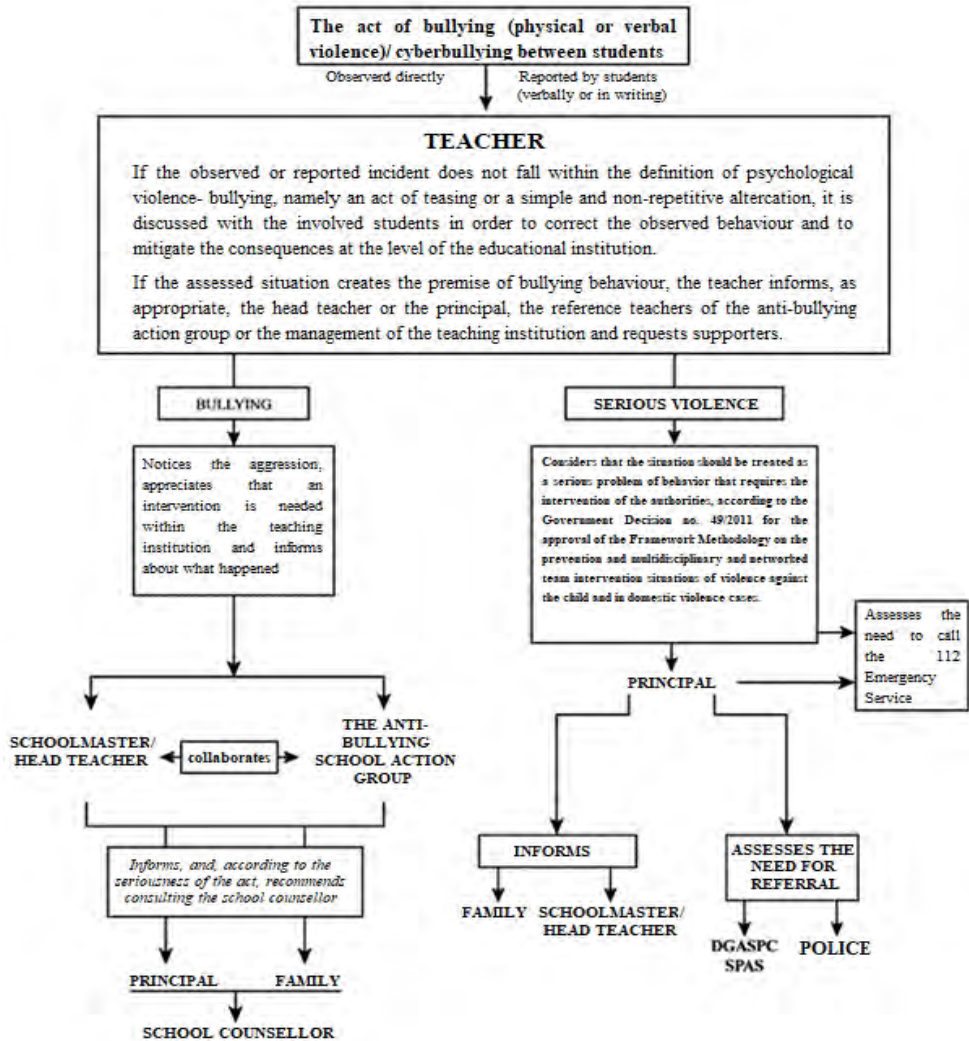
The Ministry of Education and Research developed the Methodological Norms for the enforcement of Law 221 of 18 November 2019, which seeks to amend and supplement the National Education Law no. 1/2011, to prevent and fight bullying in schools. These Methodological Norms were approved by Order no. 4343 of 27 May 2020, published in the Official Gazette, Part I, no. 492 of 10 June 2020 that presents methodological norms which are developed pursuant to Art. III of Law no. 221/2019 for the amendment and completion of the National Education Law no. 1/2011, with subsequent amendments and completions that are completed with the provisions of the Order of the Minister of National Education no. 1.409 /2007, on the approval of the Strategy for the reduction of the violence phenomenon in the pre-university educational institutions, with subsequent modifications and completions, of the Order issued by the Minister of National Education and Scientific Research no. 5.079 /2016 on the approval of the Framework Regulation for the organization and functioning of pre-university educational institutions, the Order issued by the Minister of National Education and Scientific Research no. 4.742 /2016 for the approval of the Student Statute and correlates with the provisions of Law no. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights, republished, with subsequent amendments and completions, and of the Government Decision no. 49/2011 for the approval of the Framework Methodology on the prevention and intervention in multidisciplinary and network teams in violent situations against children and domestic violence, and the Methodology of multidisciplinary and interinstitutional intervention on children who are exploited and risk of being exploited through work, children who are victims of human trafficking, as well as Romanian migrant children who are victims of other forms of violence on the territory of other states.

The purpose of the regulated anti-bullying rules is to provide a positive and safe climate in each school, based on the respect for the pupil, non-discrimination, on the motivation for learning and, above all, to provide the well-being of the pupils, no matter if they are in kindergarten or in school. By adopting and publishing these Methodological Norms ([www.edu.ro](http://www.edu.ro)), a new working tool is practically offered to professionals in the educational system, families, students, authorities responsible for Child Protection against Bullying, specialized service providers for the rehabilitation of child victims, observers or children with aggressive behaviour. The objectives pursued by the legislative norms in force are: to promote measures in order to prevent and fight bullying and cyberbullying and to identify, signal and intervene in a multidisciplinary team when such situations occur. Thus, the Anti-Bullying Action Group is set up

in each school, consisting of maximum 10 members, of which, the school principal, the school counselor, three teachers trained in bullying and cyberbullying, two or more student representatives, a representative of the parents and representatives of the local authority. This Action Group aims to prevent, intervene and address bullying and cyberbullying among pupils.

**THE INTERVENTION OF TEACHERS IN THE BULLYING SITUATIONS  
IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS\***

*\* according to the intervention model proposed by "Save the Children" and applied in 30 schools and high schools in Târgoviște and Bucharest, in the period 2013-2020.*



Source: Order of the Minister of National Education and Scientific Research no. 4343 of 27 May 2020.

Pursuant to Law 129 of 15 July 2018 that stipulates the establishment of the National Authority for Supervision of Personal Data Processing (ANSPDCP, 2018), which aims at resolving conflict situations involving victims of cyberbullying.

#### 4. Conclusions

Ignoring bullying and cyberbullying prevention measures can have serious and alarming effects on the emotional and professional development of children and of young people. The prevention of traditional bullying in real-life that began long before the discovery of the Internet and other technology facilities, also helps in „changing worlds” such as cyberspace.

It has been shown that schools that are effective in terms of education are also effective in preventing deviant acts (Palaghia, 2016). Having in view that the repeated intimidation, achieved in the real or cyber environment, is perceived by the victim as terrorization (Palaghia, 2018), and that its consequences are extremely serious, there is a preventive approach materialized by the intervention of the school social worker (Neamțu, 2011) who offers services such as: consulting parents and teachers, supporting actors involved in the educational process in managing stress levels, developing parents' educational skills, managing students' stress or anger, developing children's social skills, preventing behavioral disorders, preventing and intervening in cases of anxiety, fear, phobia, aggression, attention deficit and hyperactivity, disability, poor school performance, depression, neurosis, suicide attempts or nonsuicidal self-mutilation, etc.

Having in view that the professional status of the family social worker was regulated by Law 217/2003 (Chapter III, Art. 12-13), we mention the fact that a good collaboration between the school social worker (who must be „the leader” of the multidisciplinary team involved in solving social issues) and the family social worker would ensure the school-family-community partnership with beneficial effects on the pupils' mental health and school integration.

#### References:

- Belsey, B. (2005). *Cyberbullying: an emerging threat to the „always on” generation*. Available at: <http://www.cyberbullying.ca/>.
- Cojocaru, Șt. (2002). Vulnerabilitate socială și intervenție socială. In Miftode V. (Ed.), *Populații vulnerabile și fenomene de auto-marginalizare*. Editura Lumen.
- Cojocaru, Șt. (2005). *Metode apreciative în asistența socială*. Editura Polirom.
- Cusson, M. (2006). *Prevenirea delincvenței*. Editura Gramar.
- Cyberbullying Research Center (2015). *What is Cyberbullying?*. Available at: <http://cyberbullying.org/what-is-cyberbullying>.
- Katzer C. (2018). Cyberpsihologia. *Viața în rețea. Cum ne schimbă internetul?* Editura ALL.
- Irimescu, G. (2016). A new image of violence against children – bullying type behavior. *Scientific Annals of the „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iași. New Series Sociology and Social Work Section, IX(1)*, 5-20.
- Neamțu, C. (2011). Specificul asistenței sociale în școală. In *Tratatul de asistență socială*. Editura Polirom.
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school*, Malden, MA, Blackwell

- Openshaw, L. (2008). *Social Work in Schools. Principles and practice*. The Guilford Press.
- Palaghia, C. (2016). *Dimensiuni ale devianței școlare. De la identificare la prevenție*. Editura Pro Universitaria.
- Palaghia, C. (2018). „Jocurile morții”, între sinucidere și cyberbullying. O analiză asupra riscurilor la care sunt expuși copiii în mediul virtual. *Revista de Asistență Socială, XVII(2)*, 1-11.
- Palaghia, C. (2019a). The dynamic of the aggressor-victim relationship specific to the school bullying and cyberbullying phenomenon. In *Social Research Reports, 11(2)*, 37-48.
- Palaghia, C. (2019b). Student violence in the current educational context: bullying and cyberbullying. In Rusu, M., Diaconu, C.-M., Doncean, M., Alecu, C.-I. (Eds.), *Dezvoltarea economico-socială durabilă a euroregiunilor și a zonelor transfrontaliere, XXXIV*. Editura Performantica.
- Pânișoară, G., Chirca, R. (2019). Bullying și cyberbullying. In Enea, V. (Ed.), *Intervenții psihologice în școală*. Editura Polirom.
- Rigby, K. (2007). *Bullying in schools: and what to do about it*. ACER Press.
- Sandu, M. (2017). Protecția umană prin control social. Bazele sau fundamentele asistenței sociale moderne. In Gavriluță, C. (Ed.), *Sociologia la Alma Mater Iassiensis*. Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iași.
- Shariff, S. (2009). *Confronting Cyber-Bullying. What schools need to know to control misconduct and avoid legal consequences*. Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, P.K., Sharp, S. (1994). *School bullying. Insights and perspectives*. Routledge.
- Șoitu, D. (2011). Consilierea între profesie și serviciu social. In *Tratatul de asistență socială*. Coord. G. Neamtu, Editura Polirom, pp. 581-612.
- Șoitu, D. (2015). Resilience and vulnerability: competing social paradigms?. *Scientific Annals of the „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iași. New Series Sociology and Social Work Section, VIII(1)*, 7-15.
- \*\*\* Hotărârea Guvernului nr. 49/2011 pentru aprobarea Metodologiei-cadru privind prevenirea și intervenția în echipă multidisciplinară și în rețea în situațiile de violență asupra copilului și de violență în familie și a Metodologiei de intervenție multidisciplinară și interinstituțională privind copiii exploatați și aflați în situații de risc de exploatare prin muncă, copiii victime ale traficului de persoane, precum și copiii români migranți victime ale altor forme de violență pe teritoriul altor state.
- \*\*\* Legea educației naționale nr.1/2011.
- \*\*\* Legea nr. 35/2007, privind creșterea siguranței în unitățile de învățământ.
- \*\*\* Legea 129 din 15 iulie 2018, privind înființarea, organizarea și funcționarea Autorității Naționale de Supraveghere a Prelucrării Datelor cu Caracter Personal.
- \*\*\* Legea 217/2003, pentru prevenirea și combaterea violenței domestice.
- \*\*\* Legea 221 din 18 noiembrie 2019, pentru prevenirea și combaterea bullyingului.
- \*\*\* Legea nr. 272/2004 privind protecția și promovarea drepturilor copilului, republicată, cu modificările și completările ulterioare.
- \*\*\* Ordinul ministrului Educației Naționale nr. 1.409/2007, privind aprobarea Strategiei pentru reducerea fenomenului de violență în unitățile de învățământ preuniversitar, cu modificările și completările ulterioare.
- \*\*\* Ordinul Nr. 4343 din 27 mai 2020, publicat în Monitorul Oficial, Partea I, Nr. 492 din 10 iunie 2020, privind aprobarea Normelor metodologice de aplicare a prevederilor privind violența psihologică-bullying.

- \*\*\* Ordinul de ministru nr. 4390/7.06.2012, înființarea Consiliului Național pentru prevenirea și combaterea violenței în mediul școlar.
- \*\*\* Ordinul ministrului educației naționale și cercetării științifice nr. 4.742/2016 pentru aprobarea Statutului elevului.
- \*\*\* Ordinul ministrului educației naționale și cercetării științifice nr. 5.079/2016 privind aprobarea Regulamentului-cadru de organizare și funcționare a unităților de învățământ preuniversitar.
- \*\*\* Ordinul nr. 5115 din 15 decembrie 2014, privind aprobarea Regulamentului de organizare și funcționare a unităților de învățământ preuniversitar.
- \*\*\* <https://www.edu.ro/normele metodologice de aplicare a legii împotriva bullyingului>.

## ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE AND PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGES IN DEPENDENT PEOPLE. CASE STUDY

VIORICA-CRISTINA CORMOȘ<sup>1</sup>

---

### **Abstract**

In contemporary society identifies increasingly more people dependent on alcohol. The causes are various, start with the «culture» of alcohol in family and community consumption in poor backgrounds, to excess consumption at difficult moments in live. With the onset of alcoholism are identified consequences at individual, family and community level. Most suffering alcoholic family members, who are directly involved throughout the consumption as codependency, in all the stages through which it, being affected by psycho-emotional and behavioral reactions of alcoholic person. This article highlights behavioral and psycho-emotional reactions which occurs most often in a «dual» mode, shocking by its side family members, friends and acquaintances in the community. The alcoholic resort to various tricks to achieve the purposes of consumption, which may directly or indirectly affect those close. Thus, to better highlight these issues will bring attention to a case of a young man of 26 year, which, in a certain period of time, harmed both self and family and other close persons.

**Keywords:** addiction, alcoholism, behavioral reactions, psycho-emotional reactions, damage

### **Résumé**

Dans la société contemporaine, il y a de plus en plus de personnes dépendantes d'alcool. Les causes peuvent être très diverses: en commençant avec la «culture» de la consommation d'alcool au sein de sa famille ou de sa communauté, la consommation liée à son entourage ou la consommation excessive, comme refuge, relative à certains moments difficiles de sa vie. Avec l'installation d'alcoolisme, des conséquences individuelles, sur la cellule familiale et sur sa communauté sont identifiées. La plupart des membres de la famille alcoolique subissent les conséquences. Tout au long de la consommation, les membres de la famille sont directement impliqués en tant que co-dépendants en vivant toutes les étapes à travers lesquelles la personne dépendante passe, et étant affectés par les réactions comportementales et psycho-émotionnelles de la personne alcoolique. L'objectif de cet article est de mettre en évidence les réactions comportementales et psycho-

---

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer PhD, “Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, România, E-mail: cristinacormos@yahoo.com, Tel: 0040745602188

émotionnelles qui se manifestent souvent de manière «double», impactant durablement les membres de la famille, les amis et les connaissances. La personne alcoolique utilise différents „stratagèmes” pour atteindre leur objectif de consommation, qui peut affecter directement ou indirectement les personnes proches. Ainsi, afin de mettre en valeur ces aspects, je vous propose l’histoire de vie d’un jeune de 26 ans, qui, sur une certaine période, a fortement impacté autant sa propre famille que d’autres personnes proches.

**Mots clés:** dépendance, alcool, alcoolisme, réactions comportementales, réactions psycho-émotionnelles, dualité, préjugés

### **Rezumat**

În societatea contemporană se identifică din ce în ce mai multe persoane dependente de alcool. Cauzele sunt diverse, pornind de la «cultura» consumului de alcool în familie și comunitate, consumul în anturaje necorespunzătoare până la consumul în exces la momente dificile din viață. Odată cu instalarea alcoolismului, sunt identificate consecințe la nivel individual, familial și la nivel de comunitate. Cel mai mult suferă membrii familiei alcoolicii, care în toată perioada consumului sunt implicați direct ca și codependenți, în toate etapele prin care trece acesta, fiind afectați de reacțiile comportamentale și psiho-emoționale ale persoanei alcoolice. Scopul acestui articol este de a evidenția reacțiile comportamentale și psiho-emoționale care se manifestă de cele mai multe ori într-un mod «dual», șocând prin reacțiile acestuia membrii familiei, prietenii și cunoscuții din comunitate. Alcoolicii apelează la diferite tertipuri pentru a-și atinge scopul consumului, ceea ce poate afecta în mod direct sau indirect pe cei apropiați. Astfel, pentru a evidenția și mai bine aceste aspecte, voi aduce în atenție un caz a unui tânăr de 26 ani, care, într-o anumită perioadă de timp, a adus prejudicii atât propriei persoane, cât și familiei și altor persoane apropiate.

**Cuvinte cheie:** dependență, alcool, alcoolism, reacții comportamentale, reacții psiho-emoționale, dualitate, prejudicii

### **1. Introduction**

Social reality around us presents us with a worrying drama: alcohol consumption has greatly increased over the recent years in terms of volume and frequency, whereby the age at which excessive alcohol drinking starts has decreased. Alcohol consumption is a continuous and slow intoxication, which results in: hand tremors, anemia, nightmares, insomnia, deception of the senses, memory weakening, nervous agitation, impairment of moral sense, indifference to self, to posture and profession, indifference to family, education, responsibilities, conjugal fidelity, irascibility, laziness, higher risk of accidents etc. In large amounts, alcohol compromises the immune capacity of the body, health risks are higher in case of disease and mortality among people with alcohol-related problems follows an increasing trend.

Alcoholism is considered a family disease. This is because the person who consumes and is addicted to alcohol is first affected, followed by the marriage partner - husband or wife, and last but not least, the children in that family, who



are affected equally or perhaps to a greater extent. Children born from alcohol-consuming parents have even from birth a weakened body, prone to illness. Alcohol inhibits creativity, hinders association of ideas, disturbs understanding, abducts the power of will and responsibility. The saddest consequence of alcohol consumption is that it influences the character of all people who reach the stage of addiction. Abusive alcohol consumption leads to domestic violence, which in some families degenerates into particularly severe situations

Alcohol involves fairly significant financial costs, and this can cause a financial crisis within the family. The likely consequences of such crises are quarrels between spouses, parents and children, which often escalate to domestic violence on the marriage partner and children. An alcoholic loses control and reason, which in most cases degenerates into violence. This may explain the increased number of divorces and criminal offenses.

All these issues are approached in the present paper, starting from the clarification of the concept of addiction, analysis of behavioral and psycho-emotional reactions of alcohol consumers, the concept of codependency and the relationship between codependents and alcohol consumers and, last but not least, a case study in which behavioral and psycho-emotional duality is analysed in a 26-year-old alcohol addict.

## **2. Alcohol addiction. Types and manifestations**

According to the definition provided by the World Health Organization, “excessive use of drugs in a continued or sporadic manner, which is incompatible or unrelated to medical practice, is considered consumption or abuse” (WHO, [www.euro.who.int/en](http://www.euro.who.int/en)). Addiction is a form of voluntary, abusive, periodic or chronic consumption of addictive substances, harmful both to the individual and the society and not based on medical reasons, unlike the classical, legitimate pharmacological addictions that are by origin therapeutic or paramedical. From a pharmacological point of view, as defined by the World Health Organization, by addiction we understand “the mental or physical state resulting from the interaction between an organism and a drug, characterized by behavioral changes and other reactions, always accompanied by the need to take the substance continuously or periodically in order to experience its psychic effects and sometimes to avoid suffering” (WHO).

The most widespread drug addiction, a true global social scourge encountered everywhere except for Muslim countries, regarded by the WHO as the fourth public health problem, alcoholism is a pandemic that threatens physical and mental health. There is no unanimously accepted definition of alcoholism, however, this category includes people who repeatedly, abusively and successively consume alcohol, becoming addicted to it and, as a result, experience psychosomatic changes over time that disrupt individual relationships with the social environment. Alcoholism is the complex, individual and / or social phenomenon of the large group of drug addictions, now considered the fourth world public health problem.

Alcoholism can be defined as a habit of consuming alcohol more and more often than the body tolerates, causing a habit and an irresistible desire to repeat the intake. Some authors proposed that alcoholism should be defined by three factors: psychological and physical deterioration, performing anti-social acts and excessive drinking. As defined by the World Health Organization, “alcoholics are excessive drinkers whose addiction to alcohol occurs when they show either a traceable mental disorder or manifestation which affects their physical or mental health, relationships with others and their social and economic behavior” (WHO, [www.euro.who.int/en](http://www.euro.who.int/en)).

Alcoholism is a chronic and progressive disease characterized by control loss over alcohol consumption, which results in social, physical and psychological problems for both the addicted person and his closed ones. Alcohol addiction is the urgent need to ingest alcoholic beverages. A characteristic specific to alcohol is that it causes addiction after three days of chronic administration. “The phenomenon refers to two aspects: psychic addiction (unrestrained psychic impulse to continue drinking, because relaxation occurs while under the influence of alcohol) and physical addiction (evolving in parallel with the development of tolerance and highlighted by the abstinence syndrome)” (Neamțu & Stan, 2005, p. 405). Young adults (especially males) show the highest risk of death due to excessive alcohol consumption. “Adolescent brains are particularly susceptible to drinking, and the more the onset of alcohol consumption is belated, the less likely it is that as adults they experience alcohol addiction problems” (Norberg, Bierut & Grucza, 2009, p. 79).

Erich Goode (as cited in Rădulescu, 2006, p. 47) considers that there are generally four defining criteria for alcoholism:

- the amount and frequency of alcohol consumed. Alcoholics drink large amounts of alcohol in a certain period of time;
- psychological dependence; it refers to the fact that a person can be defined as alcoholic provided that he “requires” alcohol from a psychological point of view; the person cannot function without consuming alcohol and experiences sensations of discomfort and anxiety if deprived of alcohol;
- physical dependence; an individual is alcoholic if interruption of alcohol consumption triggers symptoms of abstinence;
- defining life issues. Alcoholics generally face serious life problems, such as divorce, unemployment, risk of being arrested, risk of producing and suffering accidents.

“Over the recent years, a wealth of specialized literature and numerous medical meetings have increasingly addressed the social and psychological problems of alcohol abuse, all the more so because under the influence of alcohol crimes and acts of extreme violence are committed” (Beliș, 1981, p. 23).

Approaching alcoholism from a development perspective shows that the clinical types of this disease correspond to different levels of development. This conclusion applies to both the clinical types proposed by Knight and the more

recent clinical types proposed by Morey Jellinek E.M., an American researcher at Yale University (as cited in Boișteanu, 1995, p. 23) distinguishes four important stages in the development of alcoholism:

*The pre-alcoholic, symptomatic stage:* In this first phase of the «disease» evolution, no one can observe, (not even the future addict himself) something that distinguishes between alcohol consumption and the behavior of healthy people. At first, the alcoholic drinks only to reach that degree of relaxed satisfaction, courage, stimulation or oblivion, which improves his mood and drives away fear, inhibition, or even lack of initiative. At this point, there are still no signs of social or family decline, which is why this stage is referred to as the „conceited debut” of alcoholic addiction.

*The prodromal stage:* at the beginning of this phase there is a clue that allows recognition of the effects already produced in the nervous system; in a completely unexpected way, the alcohol consumer confronts himself with memory gaps, the so-called amnesia.

*The critical stage:* it is signaled by “losing control of drinking”; large amounts of alcohol are consumed, and reasoning is developed to justify this behavior towards alcohol consumption and resist the social pressure exerted in connection with this behavior. There is a change in interpersonal relationships, with the tendency of alcohol consumers to isolate themselves or escape from the family environment, change friends, neglect job and proper eating, the first hospitalization but also the refuse of treatment, alcohol drinking in the morning.

*Chronic stage:* is the result of “prolonged drinking” and a gradual diminishment of intellectual functions is observed; the obsessive need for the ingestion of new amounts of alcohol appears, a sense of “religiosity for alcohol” is established, at which time any rational thinking system diminishes or even disappears. The characteristics refer to the decrease in alcohol tolerance, tremors, psychomotor inhibition, alcohol psychosis, etc. The chronic stage is divided into two categories: the first is *simple alcoholism* where a limited ability to abstain is retained, and the second category, the *addictive alcoholism*, when the alcoholic uses additional substances, sometimes for substitution, as a drug.

### **3. Behavioral and psycho-emotional reactions in alcohol consumers**

Alcohol abuse occurs when the person in question has lost control of drinking, which is reflected in the occurrence of family and professional problems, as well as difficulties in fulfilling social roles. The history, symptoms and signs associated with alcoholism are largely those defining physical addiction to any substance with sedative effect: character disorders, decrease in concentration and attention, fatigue, tremor, insomnia, digestive disorders, muscle spasms. All these disturbances may affect to some extent social, economic, family and interpersonal relationships.

“An alcoholic is a person who consistently fails to choose whether to drink or not, and who, if he drinks, is incapable of deciding whether to stop or not. Alcoholics with complications are those people who, due to excessive and prolonged alcohol consumption, have physical or mental disorders” (Frantz, 2009, p. 4).

In order to better understand the behavioral and psycho-emotional reactions in alcohol-consuming people, it is important to clarify the determinants of excessive drinking. From the multitude of attempts to relationally group the factors seen as determinants of chronic alcoholism, certain initial factors can be analyzed, which were previously highlighted by many other studies, and to which we can refer as predisposing factors, susceptible to favor alcoholism. These can be grouped into: heredity factors; personality factors; occasional factors; socio-cultural and economic factors.

Recent research has attempted to address the issue of genetic alcoholism. Some studies (<https://www.drugabuse.gov>) suggest that there is a *genetic factor* that predisposes to alcoholism, however, this should not lead to an underestimation of the role played by the environment. As an example, descendants living in the same conditions as their parents learn a pattern of life and reproduce a number of similar living conditions. In other words, “the importance of the heredity factor is amplified by the existence of the child alongside the affected parental model” (Neamțu & Stan, 2005, p. 405).

Regarding the *personality factors* category, numerous studies sought to establish a link between personality type and predisposition to alcoholism. “After several studies were conducted, it was found that alcoholism appeared in individuals with both normal personality and personality disorders” (Neamțu & Stan, 2005, pp. 405-406).

*Occasional factors* are also important, because repeated consumption under the influence of certain environmental factors and conditions can lead in time to regular drinking and alcohol addiction. According to Van Dijk, the evolution of the drinker from his first contact with alcohol to the addiction phase comprises 5 stages: “1) first contact with alcohol; 2) the occasional drinking stage; 3) the social-moderate integrated drinking stage; 4) the excessive drinking stage in which the subject consumes an amount of alcohol that exceeds his resistance, including health status and the habits of the social group to which the drinker belongs; 5) the addiction stage, with the loss of freedom to drink moderately (Fauquet), with loss of control (Jellinek) manifested by the inability to stop drinking after the first glass of alcohol” (as cited in Boișteanu, 1995, p. 127).

*Socio-economic and cultural factors* refer to the role of alcohol in different cultural contexts. These factors have a specific role: socio-economic development, as well as formal education and culture are closely related to the degree of social acceptance of alcohol consumption. The official rules (legislation governing the production and distribution of alcoholic beverages) and traditions, habits, customs, i.e., information norms within a society, determine the level of alcohol

use and influence the types, manner and frequency of such use, which can either lead to a higher drinking rate, or put an end to alcohol addiction.

Thus, we can say that there are a variety of factors determining alcohol consumption. A diagnosis of «alcoholism» reveals nothing about the type, cause and degree of this kind of behavior: “all the conditions of the alcohol addict must be analyzed and identified and only then a correlation with the possibilities of intervention can be made” (Neamțu & Stan, 2005, p. 407).

With regard to behavioral changes occurring in an alcohol-addicted person, we may refer to aggressivity which occurs very often as a result of drinking. Aggressivity is the particular state of an individual that is characterized by an acute or chronic tension which can only be satisfied through a violent reaction towards the victim. Aggressivity takes various forms, does not always imply an antisocial, criminal behavior and does not necessarily have to be assimilated to a mental deviation or always considered a result of alcohol consumption.

“90% of the individuals with aggressive behavior caused by alcoholism are males, primarily belonging to the 25-45 years age group i.e., about 58.6%, followed by the 18 - 25 years age group, which amounts to approximately 29%” (National Institute on Alcohol, <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov>). Based on these data, we can argue that alcoholism is a major social danger through its potential for aggression, particularly during the chronic stage of addiction. Regardless of the mental structure of each individual, alcohol is recognized as a triggering factor of auto and hetero-destructive behavior, of impulsive reactions, or as a disinhibitor of potentially aggressive tendencies. “Alcohol, the cause of violent acts, increases their likelihood of occurrence if consumed by an aggressive individual” (Beleş, 1981, p. 72).

Alcohol remains known as the toxin that is associated to and even bursts into violent and aggressive behavior at the same time, in the sense of either heterodestruction or self-destruction. There is a complex relationship between antisocial deviant behavior and alcoholism, given by the fact that alcohol is considered in many cases the trigger of violent and impulsive reactions, but also a selective disinhibitor of aggressive instincts.

#### **4. Codependents and their relationship with the alcohol consumer**

Family structure plays an important role in the alcoholism issue. Some studies (Luna națională a informării despre efectele consumului de alcool. Analiză de situație, 2019) show that in disorganized families, in most cases one of the spouses or even both have certain inclinations towards excessive drinking. Studies conducted in families where one of the spouses has alcohol-related problems have shown that the nature of the relationships between the spouses changes during marriage. That is, new interactions are established by the spouses so that they can cope with the addiction within the family. We can speak in these cases of codependency.

By codependency or codependent behavior we should not understand that the life partner of the person addicted to alcohol is in the same situation. Instead,

this behavior refers to the addict's life-partner reactions seen as a way to avoid the consequences of alcohol consumption being reflected on himself and on the entire family. In short, codependency consists of ideas, feelings, attitudes and behavior experienced by the life partner, and which unconsciously and involuntarily encourage alcohol consumption in the addicted person. "Most of the affected couples where alcoholism is a cause of disharmony are characterized by misbehavior developments with the exacerbation of the egophilic traits, including those characterized by the tendency to impose omnipotent control of a spouse on the other" (Boișteanu, 1995, p. 140). Alcoholism interferes with family life and also affects stable marriages or adoption relationships, "affecting cohabitation and communication in relationships that are modulated by the role of family members and by which the subjective informational bond is normally accomplished" (Boișteanu, 1995, p. 141).

In a family where alcoholism is frequently present, as a rule, the financial status also decreases to the detriment of the spouse and the entire family. A satisfactory marriage in these circumstances is virtually impossible, and the degradation of the family situation deepens the feelings of anger and negation in the addict, giving him new reasons for concern.

A much-discussed and often controversial issue concerns the life partners of alcoholics. Many women with alcoholic husbands tend to exhibit a hypochondriac personality which can make them dependent on the addicted husbands; as a result, when the husband improves his life to some extent, the wife can crash. When the wife consumes alcohol, a negative and strongly emotional social reaction can occur, emerging from the idea that an alcohol-consuming woman is unable to take care of her children properly and cannot fulfill her role in the family. "The alcoholic woman is viewed infinitely less indulgently than the alcoholic man, which makes women drink alone, secretly, sometimes with their husbands, trying to mask this vice as much as possible" (Beliș, 1981, p. 76).

In society the woman plays the role of a wife and mother. Given that some behaviors and abuses (such as alcoholism) can diminish her ability to perform these roles, she can be more severely sanctioned by society than in the case where the addict is the husband. All these social sanctions are intended, in the view of those applying them, to judge such behavior, based on the idea that «it is worse to have a drinking mother than an alcoholic father ». This is because in the absence of the mother the children can suffer irreparable harm, as lack of affection may cause "durable reactions of rejection in children, followed by the fear of abandonment and ultimately by a permanent isolation from their parents" (Boișteanu, 1995, p. 142).

Some families confronted with such problems may experience jealousy, because alcohol can lead to an increased libido, but not to an equally increased sexual potency. Although the role of heredity in acquiring drinking habits is presently not clear, one can still speak of family alcoholism. In most cases, psychological and family-related factors are the most important in motivating the

commencement of alcohol abuse: misunderstandings between spouses, acts of psychological and physical violence and aggression, persistent feelings of guilt, abandonment of the marital residence either out of free will or forced, divorce, professional failure, etc.

In most cases, alcohol is used as a means of overcoming inhibitions and anxious states, which can lead to aggressive behavior and within-family violence. Alcohol is almost ubiquitous in conflicts between family members, however, when both parents have alcohol-related problems, tensions are generated by other issues such as child education, financial or sexual issues, etc. The conflict between alcoholic parents plays a very important role in children's development. Children attempt to copy the behavior of the aggressive parent, and learn aggressiveness as a solution to problem solving or to control the feelings of frustration or hostility. Some children who are part of an alcohol-consuming family can develop feelings of frustration caused by the inability to resist to aggressive parents or the inability to protect a parent against the violence of the other.

## **5. Methods used**

To highlight the dual and unnatural behavior resulting from excessive alcohol consumption, we performed a case study on a young man aged 26, addicted to alcohol and who harmed both himself and his family and close friends. The interview method applied to both the young person and some family members was used to collect information. The young man had a recalcitrant attitude at first, but during the interview he changed his attitude and provided the requested information. The interview was also applied to family members (parents, a cousin) who cooperated and provided relevant information.

Data on the subject under investigation: name, first name - D.S.; home: City of Falticeni, Jud. Suceava; studies: 12 classes; marital status: unmarried; professional state: changed several jobs in areas such as construction, protection and security, sales, etc.

We chose to present a case study as it is a method that "enables researchers to extract features of real-life events" (Yin, 2005, p.18). For this case study, the following a set of questions:

### *5.1. Study questions:*

- 1) What changes can occur as a result of alcohol consumption and dependence on the young person's behaviour and psycho-emotional state?
- 2) How can family members and people close to the young person's alcohol addiction be affected?
- 3) How can psycho-social and medical intervention be interfered with the young person's alcohol dependence?
- 4) How does the young man perceive his situation of dependence and the harm done in relation to those close to him?

*5.2. Interview guide with the 26-year-old:*

1. What can you say about your alcohol consumption?
2. Do you consider yourself a person addicted to alcohol?
3. If so, when did you realize that you are addicted to alcohol?
4. How has your behavior changed in the context of alcohol use?
5. What emotional states and reactions did you experience with alcohol use?
6. How did excessive drinking influence your character and personality?
7. What difficulties have you encountered during alcohol consumption?
8. How did family members react to your drinking habits?
9. What tightropes have you experienced as a result of alcohol consumption?
10. How did alcohol addiction affect your personal and professional life?

**6. Case study: “Behavioral and psycho-emotional duality in a 26-year-old man”**

A 26-year-old man reached psycho-emotional and behavioral degradation due to a 6-year excessive alcohol consumption, which affected him, but also his family and close friends. Among the characteristics of alcohol consumption, the following have been identified in this particular case: he consumes more alcohol than originally intended; he tries to reduce or stop drinking, but fails; he found himself in various dangerous situations during or after having consumed alcohol; he had to increase the amount of alcohol ingested to obtain the same effect previously obtained with a smaller amount; he spent much time drinking alcohol; he continued to drink even if this caused problems with family or friends; he noticed that excessive drinking interferes with the job, studies and personal life; he gave up activities that were interesting or important to him in favor of alcohol consumption; he had legal problems; he noticed that alcohol consumption had adverse effects on physical and mental health.

Although in secondary and high school the subject showed he was a talented young man with many dreams to fulfill, the disappointment of a failed relationship led him to start drinking within a group of friends with similar habits. The family was extremely affected, and the parents paid various damages and debts on behalf of their son; after they were no longer able to support him, he started selling goods from the house, made dubious transactions, borrowed money from acquaintances and friends he never returned, gambled, lost his job, started stealing, became violent with the others, etc.

The analysis of this case was performed starting from the study questions that formed the basis of the analysis units. “An individual represents the studied case and the primary unit of analysis” (Yin, 2005, p. 41).

*1). Alcohol addiction in the 26-year-old:*

The young man realized he was addicted to alcohol when he could not live without drinking. He felt alone, deserted by the loved ones and covered in problems and debts he could not deal with. The more disappointment and despair



assaulted him, the higher the amount of alcohol he ingested. He soon realized that he could not start a regular day without consuming at least 100 grams of alcohol.

“I felt that I was of no use in this world. All my friends were rejecting me, my family always reproached me that I was a shame for them and only brought them troubles. The only friends I thought I had were the people who shared my drinking habits.” (D.S., 26 years old)

“When I woke up in the morning, the first thought that came to my mind was to get 100 g of cognac. Otherwise I could not resist for the day. I felt a state of melancholy combined with pain and chills. And from 100 g I got to 400 g and even more. Only then did I realize that something was wrong with me.” (D.S., 26 years old)

*2). Evolution of behavioral reactions and psycho-emotional states as a result of alcohol consumption. Changes in character and personality*

The evolution of behavioral reactions and psycho-emotional states followed a downward trend. Initially, until the start of alcohol use, the young man was an educated, well-intended, respectful person with a pleasant and pacifist attitude. He subsequently became a negligent person, with a violent behavior and language, always in conflicting situations which generally degenerated into fights. He used to harm himself by hitting the walls with his fists, cutting himself with the blade, having his skin tattooed with frightening images, he showed suicidal behavior, he used to cry and tear his clothes. After a while he got a girlfriend who was puzzled by his dual behavior. On the one hand, when lucid he was a peaceful, pacifist, humorous person who promised a lot, and once he began drinking, he became a totally changed, manipulative, violent person, using various lies and tricks to get goods from the family, acquaintances and friends. Once he started drinking, he continued with gambling and ended up in losing all his money. Every time he promised her that this situation would not repeat itself and that he would become a better person.

“Once I started drinking, I was no longer able to control myself. My mom, my dad, my girlfriend, the other friends no longer mattered to me, alcohol was taking control of me. I was violent, I wanted to beat someone all the time, I was hurting myself, manipulating people around to have money for buying alcohol, and when I woke up and realized what I did, I was ashamed of my behavior. And although I wanted to change, to have a nice relationship with my girlfriend, to become again the son my parents used to have, I realized I was not able to do that. I felt like trapped in a cave.” (D.S., 26 years old)

“Oh Lord, I do not know what to say about my child. I educated him properly, he was such a good kid, he used to help me with housework, had a job and earned his own money, he was singing in a band at the time, he was respectful, hard-working and honest. Now I no longer recognize him. It is like he hates us when we tell him to stop drinking. He slams and breaks everything in the house, has stolen money and goods from home, fought with many of his friends, has debts everywhere. He

made us only trouble, we no longer know what to expect from him anymore.” (D.M, 54 years old, D.S.'s mother)

“He's a completely different person, and I do not recognize him anymore. Alcohol is taking his mind, as if he was not my boy. It hurts my soul to say this, but it would be better that he did not exist than to continue with these habits and destroy both himself and us.” (D.I, 57 years old, D.S.'s father)

### *3). Difficulties occurred in personal and professional life as a result of alcohol consumption*

The difficulties faced by the young man began to emerge with drinking. Such episodes repeated over time during alcohol binges, which in time led to the installation of addiction. During all this time, the young man gave up his plans for the future, rejected his true friends and accepted friends with similar drinking habits, reasoning that “only they truly understand and support me”. He lost his first job and did not managed to keep any of the other jobs he tried afterwards, harmed the family and his new girlfriend who still hoped that he become again a man of integrity, as well as the acquaintances who helped him thinking he would recover and pay his debts. Finally, the family refused to help him anymore, and the girlfriend wanted to break up with him. Friends from the time he did not consume alcohol went away, whereas his drinking buddies always dragged him in the vicious circle of alcoholism.

“At one point I felt that I had lost everything; my own family did not want to hear from me anymore, my girlfriend did not want to live with a drunkard like myself anymore, I had no money, no home, no job. I lived for a while at one of my drinking buddies, but he kept telling me that he owed money for utilities and that I could not stay with him any longer.” (D.S., 26 years old)

“He lost himself. He was no longer the person we knew: he no longer had character, he was no longer a man of his word, he was a liar, a manipulator, he victimized himself all the time, he was violent and at some point, he got very ill. The family told him to go to the hospital, to do something, but he was in a continuous state of degradation. Drinking turned him into another man, a non-man.” (D.C., 32 years old, cousin of D.S.)

### *4). Intervention in the case of alcohol addiction*

The young addict said that he had reached such a physical and mental decline that he asked for help from his family, close acquaintances and relatives, and from his girlfriend who was about to break up with him. At that time, his relatives took him to a doctor where he was recommended psychiatric treatment and included in a program within the Anonymous Alcoholics group. Although his condition has improved, the young man is aware of his addiction and of the possibility of relapse which may occur at any time. He wants to improve his life quality, but the struggle is too strong, and he realizes that it is important to follow a much more rigorous program than he has followed so far. It is important that the family and the closed ones support him in such moments.

“You come at a time when you feel like you sink like in a swamp. You want to get out of there, but without success. In such moments, I realized that the family and true friends which I had rejected in the moments of crisis, are those who can help me. And I asked for help. Without them I would not be here anymore.” (D.S., 26 years old)

“I cannot fix all the bad things I have done. Once you become addicted to alcohol, you reach a point where you no longer care what is happening around you. The only desire is to drink, to drink and not to wake up...” (D.S., 26 years old)

“You cannot recover if you are not supported by the family and specialists. This addiction is like a spark that can fire in a second. You never get cured, that’s why it is so important to give up drinking forever. In the Anonymous Alcoholics group, I understood something about addiction and relapse, which can be summarized in a phrase: a drink is too much and 100 drinks too little.” (D.S., 26 years old)

Young D.S. followed the Anonymous Alcoholics Group program for a certain period of time and struggled with his own addiction. However, the changes occurred as a result of addiction have marked his character, personality and sensitivity and a possible relapse is always a dilemma for both himself and those who have supported him.

## 7. Conclusions

*In conclusion*, alcoholism is a disease that affects the physical and mental health of any individual who has reached such a degree of addiction. It develops over time and leads to behavioral and psycho-emotional changes. From the described case, it was observed that the onset of excessive alcohol use coincided with the destruction of relations with family members and close relatives, with the onset of medical, professional, economic, or other problems. “Most of the alcohol-related problems - crime, violence, accidents, partner abuse, illness, etc., are related rather to excessive (abnormal) drinking than to moderate (normal) drinking” (*Social and Cultural Aspects of Drinking, Key Findings*, Social Issues Research Centre Oxford, U.K., 2002, as cited in Rădulescu & Dâmboeanu, 2006, p. 436).

Family environment and the socio-professional group play a key role in the assistance provided to alcohol addicts. The specialized literature recommends maintaining the family and socio-professional insertion, and regarding the phenomenon of alcoholism, implementation of preventive measures. A measure designed to reduce the consumption of alcoholic beverages consists in alerting the population and especially young people to the negative consequences of alcoholism. This process can be carried out through schools, radio and television broadcasts, as well as publications accessible to any individual. Another measure would be economic development that would improve lifestyle, thereby reducing the consumption of alcoholic beverages, particularly among people who use alcohol as a remedy for poor living conditions.

## References

- Beliș, V. (1981). *Riscurile consumului de alcool*. Editura Medicală.
- Blume, A. (2011). *Consumul și dependența de droguri. Ghid practic de evaluare, diagnostic și tratament*. Editura Polirom.
- Boisteanu, P. (1995). *Alcoolism și comportament*. Editura Moldova.
- Frantz, F., (2009), *Cum tratăm alcoolismul. Manual pentru uzul medicilor și preoților*. Editura Renasterea.
- Ministerul Sănătății, Institutul Național de Sănătate Publică, Centrul Național de Evaluare și Promovare a Stării de Sănătate, Centrul Regional de Sănătate Publică Sibiu. (2019). *Luna națională a informării despre efectele consumului de alcool. Analiză de situație*.
- Ministerul Sănătății, Institutul Național de Sănătate Publică, Centrul Național de Evaluare și Promovare a Stării de Sănătate, Centrul Regional de Sănătate Publică Sibiu. (2018). *Luna națională a informării despre efectele consumului de alcool. Analiză de situație*.
- National Institute of Drug Abuse. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/genetics-epigenetics-addiction>
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2021). *Alcohol Facts and Statistics*. <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/alcohol-facts-and-statistics>
- Neamțu, G., Stan, D. (2005). *Asistența socială. Studii și aplicații*. Editura Polirom.
- Norberg, K., Bierut, L., Gruzca, R. (2009). Long Term Effects of Minimum Drinking Age Laws on Past-Year Alcohol and Drug Use Disorders. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 33(12). DOI:10.1111/j.1530-0277.2009.01056.x
- Ordinul Asistenților Medicali Generaliști, Moșșelilor și Asistenților Medicali din România. <https://www.oamr.ro/organizatia-mondiala-a-sanatatii/>
- Rădulescu, S., Dâmboeanu, C. (2006). Consumul și abuzul de alcool ca problemă socială și medicală. *Revista Română de Sociologie, serie nouă*, XVII (5–6), 433–461.
- Rădulescu, S., Dâmboeanu, C. (2006). *Sociologia consumului și abuzului de droguri*. Editura LUMINA LEX.
- World Health Organization. <https://www.euro.who.int/en>
- Yin, R. (2005). *Studiul de caz. Designul, colectarea și analiza datelor*. Editura Polirom.

NINTH GRADE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ADMISSION,  
CAREER PATH AND SUCCESS IN LIFE.  
CASE STUDY REGARDING THE FIRST DUAL VOCATIONAL  
SCHOOL IN ALBA COUNTY

BOGDAN-NICOLAE MUCEA<sup>1</sup>

---

**Abstract**

Choosing a career and career path is very important and difficult for many young secondary school graduates, especially since very few students in Romanian schools benefit from personal and professional counseling and guidance during their high school years or in the period immediately preceding the enrollment in the high school or professional cycle. In this sense, even if in many county events are organized in which each school promotes its educational offer, after the end of the admission process and enrollment of students, too little emphasis is placed on the reasons that led high school graduates to choose a certain educational institution. This study accomplished in a technological high school in Alba County captures exactly this aspect, while highlighting students' perceptions about success in life, counseling and career guidance, as well as the factors they consider to be determinants of academic and professional success. This educational unit was not chosen by chance, here operating the first dual vocational school in Alba County and among the first of its kind in the country.

**Keywords:** education, dual vocational school, admission, counseling and guidance, professional development, career, career path;

**Résumé**

Le choix de la carrière et du itinéraire professionnel est très important et parfois assez difficile pour beaucoup d'élèves qui finissent le premier cycle de l'enseignement secondaire et cela parce qu'il y a un nombre insignifiant d'élèves dans les écoles roumaines qui bénéficient de conseils en évolution professionnelle et d'orientation personnelle et professionnelle, tout au long de leur scolarité ou bien quelques mois avant leur inscription pour l'entrée au lycée ou aux cours professionnels. En ce sens, même si dans de nombreux départements du pays, on organise des événements de présentation d'offres éducationnelles, après avoir fini le processus d'admission et d'inscription des élèves dans le cycle supérieur d'enseignement, on n'accorde pas trop d'intérêt aux raisons qui les ont conduit à

---

<sup>1</sup> PhD student of Doctoral School of Sociology, University of Bucharest and Associate University Assistant in the Department of Social Sciences "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, Romania; E-mail: bogdanmucea@yahoo.com.

choisir tel ou tel établissement scolaire. Cette étude menée dans un lycée technologique du département d'Alba, surprend exactement cet aspect, tout en mettant en évidence les perceptions des élèves sur la réussite dans la vie personnelle et professionnelle, le conseil et l'orientation professionnelle, ainsi que les facteurs qu'ils considèrent décisifs dans la réussite scolaire et professionnelle. On n'a pas choisi fortuitement cet établissement scolaire, car il figure parmi les premiers de la Roumanie qui aient institué une école professionnelle en système Dual: L'Ecole professionnelle allemande de type Dual.

**Mots clés:** éducation, enseignement professionnel, admission, conseil et orientation, évolution professionnelle, carrière, itinéraire professionnel;

### **Abstract**

Alegerea carierei și a rutei profesionale este una foarte importantă și dificilă pentru foarte mulți dintre tinerii absolvenți ai școlii gimnaziale, cu atât mai mult cu cât foarte puțini dintre elevii din școlile românești beneficiază de consiliere și orientare personală și profesională pe parcursul anilor de studii gimnaziali sau în perioada imediat premergătoare înscrierii în ciclul liceal sau profesional. În acest sens, chiar dacă în multe județe se organizează evenimente în care fiecare școală își promovează oferta educațională, după încheierea procesului de admitere și înmatricularea elevilor, se pune prea puțin accentul pe motivele care i-au determinat pe absolvenții de gimnaziu să aleagă o anumită instituție de învățământ. Acest studiu realizează într-un liceu tehnologic din județul Alba surprinde exact acest aspect, scoțând totodată în evidență percepția elevilor despre reușita în viață, consilierea și orientarea profesională, precum și factorii considerați de aceștia ca fiind determinanți în reușita școlară și profesională. Aceasta unitate de învățământ nu a fost aleasă aleator, aici funcționând prima școală profesională duală din județul Alba și printre primele de acest tip din țară.

**Cuvinte cheie:** educație, învățământ profesional dual, admitere, consiliere și orientare, dezvoltare profesională, carieră, rută profesională

## **1. Introduction and research context**

The education process is based primarily on trust and future perspectives (Alexandrescu, 2009, p. 496). High school graduates who want to choose between high school and vocational school, must first keep in mind that admission to theoretical high schools is the first stage in the rise to university. Thus, only those high school graduates who have the competences to become specialists in the field should have access to university (Achiri, 2014, pp. 178-179). This does not mean that for the rest of the students, the access to high school education is blocked, but the alternative of vocational schools can be much more beneficial for them in the medium and long term. In this way, it is possible to avoid situations in which university graduates are hired after graduation in totally different fields, which in many cases are related to vocational school training. At the same time, young people who choose to start training in a vocational school can continue their studies and further their education, even by pursuing university studies.

On the other hand, it is extremely important for young people, in addition to vocational training, to acquire notions and to understand early on certain aspects related to career planning and development (professional development), with the main goal to acquire knowledge that they will use both on a personal and professional level (Clenciu, 2016, p. 34). All this knowledge being extremely important in the new paradigm of lifelong learning, both in a formal, non-formal and informal setting (Samoilă, 2011, p. 61). However, many of the high school students who have reached high school or vocational schools do not know essential and very important aspects about the profession they opted for at the beginning of the high school or vocational cycle, this being very common even at the end this cycle of studies (Ion, 2015, pp. 25-26). Consequently, this fact shows us the lack of strategy of the Romanian education system regarding the counseling and orientation of students, but also the need to establish an educational trajectory according to the interests, skills and competences of students.

Educational policies based on school choice have become increasingly popular, thus solving problems related to segregation and equal opportunities in education (Gheba, 2018, p. 103). In this way, in order to harmoniously shape the future prospects of students so that they acquire desirable behaviour from all points of view, it is extremely important that the family and the school have common principles and objectives regarding the school and professional orientation of students (Jigău, 2009). Therefore, if there is concordance between the strategies that the two institutions offer, then students have the chance to benefit from a good educational trajectory, this being supported by the consensus between the most important decision-making institutions for their direction and school and professional future. And if to these are added the involvement of the business environment, the professional future of young people can be a solid basis for their individual development, with strong implications for the social welfare felt throughout society. Precisely in this sense, in our country, dual vocational education has been implemented, which provides a partnership between the school, parents-children and economic agents.

On the official website of the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research, dual education is presented as: “a form of organization of vocational and technical education, tripartite, based on a partnership contract between the economic operator, the educational unit and the unit administrative-territorial, as well as individual contracts for practical training between the economic operator, student/parent-guardian and the educational unit”. Also on the same site is specified the fact that 2017 was declared “the year of vocational and technical education in Romania”, therefore, using the same source we note that “the essential stake of the campaign is to change the perception of this route of education and training, as initial vocational education and training play a key role in acquiring the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to integrate into a dynamic and competitive labor market”. In this sense, the present study is carried out in a technological high school, exactly one year after this campaign of the ministry, more precisely the respondents who during the campaign were in the

8th grade are now participants in this study, and a part among them being students of the dual vocational school.

## **2. Study objectives and methodological aspects**

This study captures the perception of high school students or vocational students about the importance of career and success in life, but also the reasons that led them to choose a certain profession and a certain educational institution, namely the Technological High School “Alexandru Domșa” from Alba Iulia, as a place to continue their studies. It should be mentioned that this high school also has the first dual vocational school in Alba County (“Școala Profesională Germană Alba” - SPGA), established in 2013 and being among the first educational institutions of this type in Romania. This form of vocational education follows the German model, a model in which students practice during vocational school directly to the partner economic agents of the school, in this way their professional training is achieved almost entirely in factories. On the other hand, this type of education brings students more benefits in addition to the opportunity to practice directly in companies, they also benefit from other facilities, the most important being the professional scholarship paid by the partner economic agent, this being offered additionally, in addition to the professional scholarship offered by the Romanian state to all students attending vocational school courses.

A second objective of this sociological study was to capture the perception that ninth grade students in the 2018-2019 school year within the educational institution where the study took place about their perception about career in general, through by reference to success factors, to daily activities with an influence on the career or to the influence that the family, the group of friends and the society show in the career choice.

A final objective of the study was to identify the perception that students have of counseling and career guidance, whether we are discussing participation in high school during such classes, courses or workshops, or whether we are discussing the current assessment of school hours. Counseling and vocational guidance, from the educational program of students enrolled in dual vocational school.

An integrated approach based on the combination of concepts that help achieve the objectives of this research was used for the present study. This research was conducted using a questionnaire-based sociological survey method. The tool used in this exploratory study was built to be self-applied, with each student answering questions individually in a class. The data collection period was February 19-21, 2019. Thus, a number of 110 questionnaires were distributed, completed and entered in the database, representing all the ninth grade students within the school, who were present in the courses during the study.

The study had as universe of research (the population from which a certain number of persons investigated directly is extracted) all the ninth grade students from the 2018-2019 school year of the Technological High School “Alexandru



Domşa” from Alba Iulia. During that school year there were two ninth grade classes for high school education and three classes for dual vocational education. It cannot be said that a sampling method was used, but only ninth grade students participated in the study. A total of 110 people were interviewed, regardless of the form of education they were enrolled in (high school or vocational), gender or background. At the same time, the students who graduated the middle school within the same educational institution were not divided into a special category, nor if the students came from repetition or transfer.

### **3. Profile of respondents**

Given that we are talking about a technological high school, mainly with a mechanical and electromechanical profile, the share of boys is higher than that of girls, a fact that emerges from the questionnaire. Thus, regarding the sex of the respondents, 81.7 percent of them are male and 18.3 percent are female, and their age is between 14 and 18 years. Most of the ninth grade students, 65.7 percent, being 15 years old at the time of study. They are followed by 26.9 percent who are 16 years old. The rest of the respondents are grouped as follows: 4 children are 14 years old; 3 children are 17 years old and one student is 18 years old. Regarding the environment of origin, even if the school is located in Alba Iulia, 68.8 percent of ninth grade students are from rural areas and 31.2 percent are from urban areas.

Discussing the annual average of the last year of study of the respondents, more precisely, the annual average of the 8th grade, it is, according to the students, between 5 and 9.8. Discussing the average at the National Assessment of the ninth grade is between 1 and 8.62. It should be noted that there are respondents who did not participate in the national assessment. These data should be taken only as an informative title, in order to have a correct picture of these aspects, the official statistics of the school, compiled at the beginning of the school year, following the completion of the admission process, should be consulted. Thus, the data presented above, regarding the environments are in line with the information provided by the surveyed students.

The distribution of classes of the respondents is as follows: 33.6 percent represents the students from the high school classes (17.3 percent - the field of electronics, automation and 16.4 percent - the field of electricity) and 66.3 percent are the students from the vocational school (dual vocational education). The 110 respondents being distributed by classes as follows: 19 students in the ninth grade A high school (17.3 percent); 18 students in the ninth grade B (16.4 percent); 25 students in the ninth professional A class - SPGA (22.7 percent); 24 students in the ninth grade B professional - SPGA (21.8 percent) and also 24 students in the ninth grade C/D - SPGA (9.1 percent class C and 12.7 percent class D). It is thus observed that the presence and number of children in vocational education classes are higher than in high school classes. A possible explanation is the penalties made by cutting apart (amounts) from the professional scholarship, depending on the number of unmotivated absences made each month.

#### **4. Reasons that determined the choice of school**

Equal opportunities in education mean, first of all, equal access to educational resources, students' school results being directly influenced by these resources. One of the processes that seriously affects the equality of school opportunities is the differentiation of schools, more precisely the socio-economic characteristics of students become much more important than the facilities that distinguish schools (Hatos, 2008, p. 141). In this sense, there are significant differences between high schools, theoretical and national colleges and the rest of the technological, vocational and vocational schools.

The mechanism used in the distribution of students in high school and vocational schools in Romania is based primarily on a meritocratic criterion (Gheba, 2018, p. 124), before discussing the perception that students in the ninth grade have about career and vocational training, we wanted to establish the reasons behind the choice of this school. Thus, the respondents had at their disposal a list of reasons or they could offer another reason, which was not found in that list, but which determined them to enroll in this educational unit. Most of the ninth grade students who participated in the study (39.4 percent) say that they themselves chose to enroll in this school, without being influenced by any of the reasons we will present further. However, 38.5 percent of them say that one of the reasons they chose this school was their friends who were already studying here. And if to this percentage, we add the 14.7 percent of students who told us that their former classmates chose to study here, and they wanted to study with them at the same school, we can see that the desire to study in the same school with friends or former general colleagues was quite high for many of the freshmen. This fact is easy to explain, because we are talking about young people in their early teens, a period in which the influence of the group of friends is significant, and this aspect emerges from the study.

On the other hand, a high percentage of students, 35.8 percent, admitted that they chose to come to this high school, due to the average and/or poor results obtained in the National Assessment, so they did not have the opportunity to be admitted to another school. Most likely, the respondents refer here to the theoretical high schools (colleges), because only in Alba Iulia there are at least two more technical high schools where admission is possible with small averages and/or without presentation at the National Assessment exam. It can be said that if the media did not allow them access to a theoretical high school, therefore the students chose this educational unit at the expense of other technological high schools.

Proximity to home was a good enough reason to choose this school for 23.9 percent, and 20.2 percent of respondents wanted to be students at this high school for the material basis of the school. At the same time, 13.8 percent of those surveyed said that the reasons why they chose this school were determined by the desire to learn a trade or to obtain a specialization for the future job, in the technical field they wanted. Also here are those who wanted to come to this high school for material benefits, more precisely for the vocational scholarship offered

in the dual vocational school, but also for the possibility of employment immediately after graduation, at the economic agents where they did their internship.

Last but not least, the family also played a role in this choice, although this, according to the students, was not a very significant one. Thus, 8.3 percent of the respondents claim that their parents chose this school for them. On the other hand, 7.3 percent of young people have or have had at least one brother or sister who has been to this school in the past.

In addition to establishing the reasons that determined the students to choose the school, the study aimed to determine with whom they consulted before choosing the school and how often these discussions (consultations) took place. The **Table 1. Frequency of consultation with various people in choosing the school**, presents the results related to this aspect, obtained from the sociological study organized in the school. Analyzing the data in the table, we notice that each time, 52.3 percent of the children who chose this school consulted with their parents before making this choice. Parents are also the ones who appear with the highest frequency of consultation by children. This shows us the importance that parents have in establishing their children's professional trajectory. At the same time, the opinion of other relatives (including siblings) matters when a child chooses the school in which he or she is to study.

**Table 1.** Frequency of consultation with various people in choosing the school

	Every time	Often	Sometimes	Few times	Never
Parents	52,3 %	19,3 %	19,3 %	5,5 %	3,7 %
Brothers/sisters or other relatives	15,1 %	17,9 %	30,2 %	20,8 %	16 %
Friends, neighbors or acquaintances	11,4 %	14,3 %	29,5 %	24,8 %	20 %
My former teachers	13,1 %	15,9 %	22,4 %	19,6 %	29 %
The school / educational counselor	5,7 %	4,8 %	11,4 %	14,3 %	63,8 %

Therefore, if we add up the percentages, it is observed that students have, most frequently, consultations and discussions in choosing the school, within the family. It can be considered that the family is the entity with which a child consults in the choice of school and implicitly of the career, thus the impact of the family's decision is implicitly reflected on it through the child's future. Certainly consulting with family or siblings and other routes is beneficial for the student, as long as the parents take into account the children's options and their interests, skills and passions.

One aspect that attracts attention is the frequency of consultation with former teachers and friends. The study shows that former teachers are more often consulted (29 percent) in choosing high school than friends (25.7 percent). However, young people also take into account the opinion of friends, 29.5 percent

of respondents say they consulted „sometimes” with their friends before choosing to enroll in this high school.

Following this study, a situation is observed in which most schools are lacking counselors or counseling and career guidance programs. This can be observed from the fact that 63.8 percent of the students enrolled in the ninth grade stated that they have never consulted with a school counselor when they chose this school. Specifically, 78.1 percent of high school students who began their studies in the school where the study took place, did not receive specialized support, or if they did, it was only to a very small extent, in choosing the type of high school (branch), profile or specialization. At the opposite pole are 10.5 percent of children, they always had (5.7 percent) or often (4.8 percent) the support of the school counselor in choosing the high school.

In conclusion, it can be said that most students enrolled in the ninth grade, whether we are talking about high school or professional, made this choice influenced by family, but also by the desire to be colleagues with friends or neighbors who they were already students at the school. On the other hand, some of them did not have a high enough average to be admitted to a theoretical high school, and others chose this school for the benefits that dual vocational education offers.

### **5. Students' perception of career, counseling and career guidance**

Before discussing students' perceptions of everything that means career and/or personal and professional training, it should be noted that in all dual professional classes, there is an hour of „counseling and career guidance”. During these hours, the main topics of discussion are: self-knowledge and personal management, interpersonal communication, learning management, career planning and development, the labor market and lifestyle and work. During these classes the students' activity is not noted in the school catalogs, but absences are made, so the students participate in the same way as in any other class. Thus, 65.1 percent of the ninth grade respondents say that they participated in counseling and career guidance activities organized in the school, referring to the counseling classes mentioned above. The remaining 34.9 percent state that they did not participate in any professional counseling activity carried out in and by the school, and here it is the case of students attending high school because in the curricula for high school classes such classes are not provided. From this point of view, the students who opted for the vocational school have an advantage over the students who have opted for high school.

In order to deepen this aspect, the students were asked to express their opinion about the importance that they consider to have the activities of counseling and professional orientation, done within the school, on the success in life. A high percentage, 53.6 percent of respondents, consider that the importance of these activities is high (38.2 percent) and very high (15.5 percent). However, 41.8 percent of students surveyed believe that these activities are of medium importance, and 4.5 percent attribute low (1.8 percent) and very low (2.7 percent)

importance of counseling and career guidance. Following the discussion, students were asked to prioritize, according to importance, various aspects of training or situations in which they consider that counseling and career guidance are needed. The four aspects that students must prioritize according to the importance they consider to have are the following: to know each other better (tests of interests, skills, personality); to obtain information about high schools, faculties, professions; to receive support in preparing a letter of intent, a Curriculum Vitae (CV) or preparation for job interviews and support in making the decision to choose high school/faculty/profession.

Following the analysis of the data, 40.2 percent of students consider that counseling and career guidance are needed in order to know themselves much better, by applying tests of personality, interests or skills. At the same time, 33.3 percent of the ninth grade respondents consider that counseling and guidance is needed in schools, in order to support them to make the best decision regarding the choice of high school, faculty and profession (profession). The **Table 2. Need for self-knowledge and support in making important decisions**, shows the frequency distributions according to the importance assigned by young people to the two aspects discussed above. If we link the two aspects that are in the top of students' preferences, we can consider that they first want to discover their interests, skills and abilities, and then, knowingly, to choose their high school, or the faculty they want to traces and later the profession or profession they want to embrace.

**Table 2.** Need for self-knowledge and support in making important decisions

	Very important	Important	Less important	Not at all important
The need for self-knowledge (tests of interests, skills, personality)	40,2%	23,5%	21,6%	14,7%
The need for support in choosing the high school / faculty / profession	33,3%	29,4%	13,7%	23,5%

These very high percentages show the very high desire of students to know themselves, first of all they want to discover themselves and then to discover the world in which they live. This desire of young people is justified because, before we understand the world and those around us, we must understand ourselves; or if we can understand ourselves, we can understand what is going on around us and change the world we live in. On the other hand, the high importance that students attach to the need for self-knowledge and the informed choice of education and profession may also lie in the lack of access to self-knowledge programs. Thus, by attaching high importance, they should also express their desire to participate in such courses or counseling and guidance programs aimed at self-knowledge and personal and professional development.

At the same time, 29.1 percent of the surveyed students believe that in the classes or activities of counseling and career guidance, they need and need information about high schools, colleges or professions. Their share is followed

by 16.7 percent of respondents who believe that it is important and necessary to focus in such hours or activities on drafting a CV, writing a letter of intent or preparing for a job interview. The **Table 3. Need for information and preparation for employment**, shows the frequency distributions according to the importance of the need that students assign to the issues discussed.

**Table 3.** Need for information and preparation for employment

	Very important	Important	Less important	Not at all important
The need for information about high school / faculty / profession	29,1%	28,2%	21,4%	21,4%
The need for support in preparing a CV, a letter of intent, preparation for the job interview	16,7%	25,5%	27,5%	30,4%

Despite the general belief that students need to know information about preparing for employment, the study shows that students are not so interested in this pre-employment process. This is natural and should not be a concern because, in the case of ninth grade students, interest in immediate employment is lower. Therefore, they are more interested, as I said, in discovering themselves first. Thus, making a CV or preparing for a job interview is part of their interests, but they are in a more distant plan. It is also natural for this to happen, for example, a ninth-grade student does not have enough activities to pass on a resume, unlike another student who is preparing for graduation, and on the other hand, those who are just now beginning their high school or vocational studies, are at the beginning of their vocational training. Last but not least, if we take into account their age, it is easy to understand the lack of interest in employment and integration into the labor market.

## 6. Career choice and success in life

Continuing the study, we wanted to capture the perception that young people have about certain factors that influence their career choice. Seven factors were listed (family, group of friends, school / teachers, media and social networks, own personality, marketing of a company, but also society in general) that can influence young people in choosing a career, and respondents have been asked to specify how much they consider these factors to influence their choice of future career or profession. The results obtained from the study are presented in the **Table 4. Degree of influence in career choice**.

**Table 4.** Degree of influence in career choice

	Very much	Much	Neither much nor little	A little	Not at all
Family	57%	25,2%	10,3%	2,8%	4,7%
Group of friends	14,4%	31,7%	31,7%	14,4%	7,7%
School/teachers	16,3%	29,8%	20,2%	20,2%	13,5%

	Very much	Much	Neither much nor little	A little	Not at all
Mass-media and social networks	22,1%	13,5%	13,5%	23,1%	27,9%
Own personality	50,5%	24,3%	8,7%	4,9%	11,7%
The marketing of the company	8,7%	19,4%	17,5%	25,2%	29,1%
Society in its ensemble	10,5%	24,8%	20%	19%	25,7%

Most students (57 percent) believe that family members influence young people in choosing their career and/or profession. This result is expected, because in the previous section dedicated to the reasons for choosing the school, most of the respondents stated that their parents influenced them in this choice. This result once again confirms and supports the importance that young people attach to the family when it comes to making an important decision or choosing a school, in this case. On the other hand, 50.5 percent of those surveyed believe that young people choose their own career based on the influence of their own personality. On the other hand, is the marketing of a company (a company), only 8.7 percent of respondents believe that young people are influenced in choosing their own career by the marketing campaigns carried out by companies. Apart from the two very high percentages discussed above, the rest of the distributions do not require further analysis.

Discussing success in life, the students surveyed were asked to express their opinion on how important several factors are for success in life, such as: school, family support, individual training, friends, volunteer activities and sports. An overwhelming percentage of 84.4 percent of ninth grade students consider family support to be very important for success in life. As previously noted, when it comes to support or influence in choosing a career, but also consultations and discussions prior to making an important decision, the family is put in the forefront by most respondents. This is explainable because, at the beginning of high school, students are still children, and the dependence on everything that means family support is very high. The *Table 5. The importance of aspects that help success in life*, shows the five factors and the importance that the responding students assigned to each of them for success in life.

**Table 5.** The importance of aspects that help success in life

	Very important	Important	Less important	Not at all important
School	47,7%	46,7%	3,7%	1,9%
Family support	84,4%	12,8%	1,8%	0,9%
Individual training	34,3%	53,3%	11,4%	1%
Friends	25,2%	48,6%	22,4%	3,7%
Volunteer activities	18,3%	39,4%	29,8%	12,5%
Sport	43,9%	28%	24,3%	3,7%

Observing the data in the table, we note that volunteering (18.3 percent) is considered by the fewest students as very important for success in life. Unexpectedly, but also friends are considered by few respondents (25.2 percent) as very important to succeed in life. On the other hand, sport have a higher share (43.9 percent) than individual training (34.3 percent). A higher importance is given to the school (47.7 percent), which is located as a hierarchy immediately after the family (84.4 percent), but at a significant distance from it if we take into account the percentage distribution.

In order to observe a clearer differentiation of the aspects that students consider important for success in life, to sum up the percentages given to the important and very important aspects, and those offered to the less and not important aspects. Thus, these percentages are further discussed from a dichotomous perspective. Thus, as mentioned earlier, ninth graders consider family, school, and individual training to be much more important in terms of success in life than volunteer activities, sports, and friendships. On the other hand, we note that 42.3 percent of respondents believe that volunteer activities are not at all important for success in life. From here we can see how much the culture of volunteering is missing among young Romanians who are at the beginning of high school or vocational school. Even if it is promoted in various environments that volunteering is important for professional training and why not for personal training, a fairly high percentage of respondents do not value this form of social involvement.

In the last section of this study, the intention was to analyze the futures plans of the ninth grade students. For this analysis the respondents were asked to choose one of the four options for their professional futures, or to opt for a variant of the lack of opinion, and also the variant that offered them the possibility to say that they have not yet thought about their professional future.

A high percentage of the students who participated in the study, representing 55.8 percent, told us that in the long run, from a professional point of view, they want to work in the field for which they prepared at school or college. This high score shows us the high degree of confidence of students in school, but also their desire to prepare now for their professional future. On the other hand, this large number of students who want to work in the field in which they began their training, shows us that the choice of high school and career was not accidental, based on this choice being their desire to learn later. To have the job for which they are preparing.

At the opposite pole are 13.5 percent of young people, they believe that in the future they will embrace a profession in a different field from the one in which they are training now. At the same time, 7.7 percent of the respondents want to start their own business in the future, here it is not possible to specify if it is a business carried out in their field of training or in another field. A slightly higher percentage than those who want their own business is 8.7 percent, represented by those who want to emigrate to another country in the future.



On the other hand, it should be specified that 14.4 percent of those surveyed said that at the moment they have not yet thought about their professional future. The percentage is relatively low, and considering that we are talking about students at the beginning of high school or vocational school, they have all the chances to crystallize in the future an idea related to their professional training and the profession they want. However, the sooner students identify their desire for a career, the more beneficial it is for them, and the preparation for the desired career can begin from the end of high school.

## **7. Conclusions**

The sociological research carried out between February 19-21, 2019 in all ninth grades of the 2018-2019 school year at the Technological High School „Alexandru Domșa” from Alba Iulia, captured the reasons behind the choice of this high school. It can be said that most students enrolled in the ninth grade, whether we are talking about high school or professional, in the school year 2018-2019, made this choice influenced by family, but also by the desire to be colleagues with friends or neighbors who were already students at the school. Somehow this was predictable, because at this age the influence of the family is still quite strong, despite the fact that young teenagers generally reject parental recommendations, mostly due to the age-specific period. On the other hand, some of them did not have a high enough average to be admitted to a theoretical high school, this situation is frequently encountered when discussing high school admission, in this sense the study reconfirms a well-known fact for the Romanian education system.

At the same time, other respondents say that they chose this school for the benefits that dual vocational education offers, these benefits have become more and more visible in recent years. And now the dual vocational education benefiting from a favorable publicity, trying in this way to change the perception on this form of education in Romania. At the same time, a decisive role in the choice made, for a smaller share of respondents, was played by former teachers or friends of adolescents. In this way it is observed that the group of friends, usually considered very important for teenagers, does not significantly influence the choice of school. Very few of the respondents said that they consulted with a school counselor when they chose their high school, this fact shows the lack of vision and predictability of the Romanian educational system.

Developing the skills of school counselors to use in practice different models of career counseling may meet the different counseling needs, which are found among high school students (Axinte, 2018, p. 158), but the situation is not so well developed when we talk about high school students, especially in rural areas. According to the data presented above, very few respondents benefited from the support of the school counselor (from the general school) when they chose the school in which to continue their studies. To some extent, this lack of counseling and vocational guidance is made up for by the counseling and vocational guidance classes of students enrolled in vocational education (in the

high school where the study took place), but not all vocational and vocational schools have in their structure of such classes, this study discipline being part of the differentiated curriculum, and not of the common core, in this way, even if its importance is perceived by the students studying it, many Romanian students do not benefit from the information disseminated in during these hours. On the other hand, this study shows that some aspects such as self-knowledge, CV development or presentation at the job interview, approach to a healthy and balanced lifestyle, information about the labor market, were considered by respondents as very important for success in life. And, all these aspects and many others are studied in the counseling and personal development classes in the vocational education classes that have included this class in the differentiated curriculum.

The perception of students and young people in general about success in life is extremely important and needs to be made known both to teachers and parents and to society in general. Therefore, the study shows the perception of the respondent students about the importance of some aspects for success in life, as well as their future prospects, as they are seen, now at the beginning of the ninth grade. The results of the study show that 50 percent of respondents say they want a job in the field in which they are preparing now, which is a good thing, these young people receiving the right training to achieve their future goals. At the same time, most of them rely on the support of the family, the school and their own work to achieve their established educational and professional goal, which shows to some extent their degree of maturity.

Such studies are necessary to build effective educational strategies that take into account students' perceptions of aspects they consider important, whether we are discussing the reasons why a particular school is chosen, or the factors that influence them, in this choice. At the same time, if this information is combined with their perception of desired professional goals, career and success in life, we can paint an overview of a generation that began high school or vocational education before the pandemic caused by coronavirus. At the same time, the study can be conducted for current generations of students who were enrolled in the ninth grade in the year of the pandemic, thus observing whether there is a difference in intergenerational perception in the current pandemic context.

## References

- Achiri, I. (2014). Reconceptualizarea învățământului liceal: aspecte de politici educaționale. In conferință: *Eficientizarea învățământului – vector al politicilor educaționale moderne*, Chișinău, Moldova, 11-12 decembrie 2014, 178-182, available at: [https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag\\_file/178-182\\_11.pdf](https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/178-182_11.pdf) (accessed: 07.03.2021).
- Alexandrescu, P. (2009). Starea actuală a educației și a învățământului în România. *Revista Română de Sociologie, serie nouă, anul XX* (5-6), 495-510.
- Axinte, R. (2018). Modelul constructivist de consiliere și percepția elevilor asupra carierei, *Revista de Pedagogie/Journal of Pedagogy, LXVI* (2), 139-160.

- Clenciu, A-D. (2016). Stadiile, strategiile și eficiența carierei/Stages, strategies and efficiency of the career. *Annals of „Constantin Brâncuși” University of Târgu Jiu, Educational Science series, Nr. 1*, 34-44.
- Gheba, A. (2018). Admiterea la liceu în România: o analiza din perspectiva mecanismelor de repartizare. *Sfera Politicii, nr. 3-4 (197-198)*, 102-126.
- Hatos, A. (2008). Impactul segregării și diferențierii asupra performanțelor școlare ale elevilor din clasele 10-12. O analiză multinivel. *Calitatea Vieții, XIX (1-2)*, 141-158.
- Ion, E. (2015). Factori motivaționali în opțiunea educațională și profesională a absolvenților de gimnaziu/Motivational factors for secondary school graduates' educational and professional options. *Annals of “Constantin Brâncuși” University of din Târgu Jiu, Educational Science series, Nr. 4*, 18-28.
- Jigău, M. (2009). *Formarea profesională continuă în România*. Institutul de Științe ale Educației.
- Ministerul Educației și Cercetării. <https://www.edu.ro/etichete/învățământ-dual>
- Samoilă, M-E. (2011). Educational dimensions for active citizenship and volunteering in multicultural societies. *Scientific Annals of “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Press, Vol 4, No 1, Sociology and Social Work - Tom IV*, 57-66.



## THE SOCIAL VALUES ATTACHED TO THE TIKTOK SOCIAL PLATFORM OF THE AGE CATEGORY 50+. A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

LORENA ȚĂRUȘ<sup>1</sup>

---

### **Abstract**

This paper analyzes the social values through which users over the age of 50 identify with the new TikTok social platform. Although the other online social networks are mainly aimed at a young audience, the TikTok application has overcome this barrier and included the age segment of over 50 years in the categories targeted by it. The ease with which one can make their proper creations and the intuitiveness of the application has made that two years after the launch of the new social platform a quarter of its users are in a more tangible age category of novelty and online interaction. The reality shows that a social application does not contradict people from early youth at all, and if you provide them with sufficiently clear tools to express themselves, they will take advantage of them and make their genuine creations.

The present approach is based on existing data about the application in question and focuses on illustrating some values that emerge from the case study on TikTok.

**Keywords:** *social platforms, TikTok, social values, online applications, socialization at the age of 3.*

### **Résumé**

*Cet article analyse les valeurs sociales par lesquelles les utilisateurs de plus de 50 ans s'identifient à la nouvelle plateforme sociale TikTok. Si les autres réseaux sociaux en ligne s'adressent principalement à un public jeune, l'application TikTok a surmonté cet obstacle et a inclus le segment d'âge des plus de 50 ans dans les catégories qu'elle cible. La facilité avec laquelle on peut faire ses propres créations et l'intuitivité de l'application ont fait que deux ans après le lancement de la nouvelle plateforme sociale, un quart de ses utilisateurs se trouvent dans une catégorie d'âge plus tangible de nouveauté et d'interaction en ligne. La réalité est qu'une application sociale ne contredit pas du tout les gens qui ont passé leur jeunesse, et s'ils ont des outils suffisamment clairs pour s'exprimer, ils en profiteront et feront leurs propres créations.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Freelance Content Writer, PhD. in Sociology, Iași, Romania; Tel: 004 0742396261, e-mail: lorenatarus@gmail.com

*La présente approche est basée sur des données existantes sur l'application en question et se concentre sur l'illustration de certaines valeurs qui ressortent de l'étude de cas sur TikTok.*

**Mots-clés:** *plateformes sociales, TikTok, valeurs sociales, applications en ligne, socialisation au 3ème âge.*

### **Rezumat**

Lucrarea de față analizează valorile sociale prin care utilizatorii trecuți de 50 de ani se identifică cu noua platformă socială TikTok. Deși celelalte rețele de socializare online se adresează cu preponderență unui public tânăr, aplicația TikTok a depășit această barieră și a inclus segmentul de vârstă de peste 50 de ani în categoriile vizate de aceasta. Ușurința cu care cineva își poate realiza propriile creații și intuitivitatea aplicației a făcut ca la doi ani de la lansarea noii platforme sociale un sfert dintre utilizatorii ei să fie dintr-o categorie de vârstă mai greu tangibilă de noutate și interacțiune în online. Realitatea arată că o aplicație socială nu vine deloc în contradicție cu persoanele trecute de prima tinerețe, iar dacă le pui la dispoziție instrumentele suficient de clare prin care să se poată exprima, vor profita de acestea și își vor realiza propriile lor creații.

Abordarea de față are la bază datele existente de până acum despre aplicația în discuție și se concentrează pe ilustrarea unor valori care reies din studiul de caz asupra TikTok.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *platforme sociale, TikTok, valori sociale, aplicații online, socializare la vârsta a 3-a.*

### **1. Introduction**

The challenges of 2020 brought about changes unimaginable a few years ago. The pandemic changed behaviors and habits and offered new perspectives on thinking and doing things. The year 2020 has profoundly changed both the relationship to the environment inside the house and the outside, outside the family and intimate space. By far the most visible challenge was online for people who were not at all or too unfamiliar with it. Communication has migrated from face-to-face meeting to meeting through a smaller or larger screen that wants to more or less responsive to commands. Most social gatherings and interactions took place online and social and entertainment platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Linked In, TikTok have seen the biggest explosion (Naegoe, 2002) since they were launched. The global situation has unexpectedly attracted many users, Romania having an average of 9 social applications per user in 2020 (Kemp, 2021).

One of the social platforms with spectacular growth in 2020 is TikTok, an application in which anyone can create, upload, watch and distribute 15-second short films. The network has access to an infinite library with music, sound effects, audio sequences from movies, and multiple possibilities to edit your video creations. TikTok is the place where anyone can post anything as long as it is as funny and funny as possible. Pets are a must, and faithful copying of videos by changing only the protagonists is already famous on TikTok.

Table 1: Average number of social media accounts held by internet users in each country



Source: Global Web Index, [www.globalwebindex.com](http://www.globalwebindex.com)

## 2. Research methodology

This paper qualitatively approaches a case study on a new social platform that since its entry on the market indicates the widest range of users it addresses, and as a novelty brings the possibility that even the most authentic people wishing to be exposed to - can create its content as easily as possible. The direct effect of this opening was that one year after its launch, the application has a quarter of users over 50 years old.

The study is a desk research and represents a secondary analysis of existing data to date on the social platform TikTok. As a new platform, research on this are few and approaches to it are treated in general. Thus the limits of the research consist in the small volume of data and research existing on TikTok.

The basis of this study was the existing statistics so far, testimonies of some people from the management of TikTok Romania, but also the description of the application from GoogleApps or App Store where it can be downloaded and installed on any type of smartphone. Although each sentence in the description of the application is carefully constructed, highlighting all the tools with which anyone can create content according to their interests, they also reflect in their substrate certain values that I think resonate with people over 50 and who they are the basis of a large number of users within this age category.

The study is exploratory, likely to highlight how the trend of application developers is deeply rooted in reality, a reality that can not ignore the fact that even the needs of people over 50 years have changed and aligned with the times current.

### 3. Perceptions of TikTok. Values associated with the new application

Although the general perception is that it would be an application mainly for teenagers, the current data give us reasons to reflect on the existing age categories on this platform not only in their capacity as users but also as video creators. A high degree of adaptation to this platform that entered the market in 2018 is visible in the age category of over 50 years, with a percentage of almost 25% of all TikTok users. (Iqbal, 2021).

The main reason for adopting this platform among any age group is easy to understand - the pandemic and the measures taken to stop the virus. The data indicate a doubling of the number of users in January-May 2020 compared to the entire year 2019, but after May 2020 the statistical projections indicate a spectacular increase, confirmed in January 2021 (applicable to Romania) by Laura Savu (Global Community Manager Tiktok) which shows that “in October there were 4,781,147 active users in Romania, and in terms of increasing the number of users from one year to the next we have an increase of 156%” (Machi, 202).

In the context in which the trigger for downloading the application was the physical distance that sent to a need for closeness in all its forms online, a natural direction to approach is the creation of content by the people we chose to make this analysis. While other social platforms have gradually attracted age groups that find it harder to use technology or adapt to it later, TikTok has less than a quarter of its current users less than 50 years old since its launch. What determines those over the age of 50 to make funny videos in which they are filmed in the most comical poses is an aspect that arouses interest immediately after the amusement created by watching these videos.

I believe that the interest in creating content by people over the age of 50 on a relatively new platform and created only for young people up to 18 years old is centered around values that, although not clearly expressed by the app owners, and of the business, and they were not even caught in a study conducted with the users of the platform, they emerge even from the description of the application.

The English translation of the description of the new social network shows that:

“TikTok is the destination of mobile videos. On TikTok, short videos are exciting, spontaneous, and authentic. Whether you're a sports fanatic, a pet enthusiast, or just looking to laugh, there's something for everyone on TikTok. All you have to do is watch, interact with what you like, skip what you don't like and you'll find an endless stream of short videos that appear customized just for you. From morning coffee to afternoon errands, TikTok has videos that are sure to make your day” (Google Play).

Although the description is in a friendly = formula, apparently aimed at young people who are just waiting to assert their talents on a new social



network, we notice that the audience addressed in this article is reached by a series of values such as:

- *Diversity.* In one sentence the TikTok application shows that no matter what a user's passions, daily activities, or ways to have fun, there is room for everyone. The application is open to any kind of content everyone wants.

- *Social inclusion.* The fact that “there is something for everyone on TikTok” (Google Play) shows that no one is taken off the platform and that no matter how or who you are, a place is provided on the platform. Moreover, the description makes it clear that you do not have to create content, you can view the content of others just by downloading the application. At the same time, another important aspect to be mentioned under this scope is the provision by TikTok of the multitude of intuitive video editing possibilities. “Our built-in editing tools let you easily cut, trim, merge and copy videos without leaving the app”(Google Play). Combining this option of the application with people over 50 known as reluctant to new technologies, we see how the new social platform attracts followers of all ages and helps them to be present there, and even involves them in creating their content.

- *Tolerance.* “Be entertained and inspired by a global community of creators. Millions of creators are on TikTok, showcasing their incredible skills and daily life. Get inspired” (Google Play). Releasing the type of content that can be created has attracted people for whom creating content spontaneously, without a strategy and any kind of conversion is the lack of belonging to one network or another.

- *The opportunity to reinvent.* The fact that the network offers anything for everyone, shows that virtually any type of content is good content as long as people choose what they like from the series of editing tools and add the favorite music genre in the background. This aspect also indicates that for anyone who wants to create content there are several listeners, there is an audience or niche that can be followed by other followers.

The above confirms that even social platforms that years ago targeted only certain categories of young audiences, are adapting today without excluding the elderly, but on the contrary, making them involved in the creative process. Each value highlighted above lies in the description of the application itself, which shows that the application developers understood and listened to both the needs of the public they had addressed until 2018, the year of the TikTok application, but those of an audience eager to express on social platforms, but somewhat lacking the necessary technical knowledge.

What TikTok does by making video editing available to anyone is actually to open the doors to everyone and thus become one of the fastest-growing applications in a very short time. Certainly, the pandemic played an important role in this explosion of the application, however, we tend to believe that above all was listening to the need of another category of the public - that of over 50 years. We don't know how things would have been in the absence of the pandemic, it is certain that we have grandparents everywhere in TikTok, in the

country or abroad who dance, make jokes, cook, craft, talk, or mime, and all this does not happen so often on Facebook or other social platforms.

#### 4. Conclusions

People over the age of 50 want to adapt to current times regardless of existing external factors. This is indicated by the figures of the social platform TikTok which has gained users for its main feature - the lack of focus on a particular type of content. Leaving it to each individual to create content and manage it, TikTok shows that one of the main values is tolerance, and the subliminal message is:

“Here you can upload any type of video, you don't need a strategy, you don't have to think about any time and conversion type, everyone here is welcome, and if someone doesn't like what you post, they will unsubscribe from your videos, they won't receive them anymore, but you can stay there without any problem” (Google Play).

The other values are in the same description of the application and only need to be read carefully, as their message includes diversity, social inclusion, reinvention regardless of age, and I think these are the strong beliefs that TikTok has attracted so many users. a very short time.

If the other social platforms focus around a certain type of content (Instagram - photos, Facebook - socializing, events, news, LinkedIn - professional network), although each of the networks has migrated and added new features to include as many tools and possibilities of expression, TikTok comes from the beginning with the proposal that if you did not know where you can do things as you feel or did not have where now you have the opportunity, is the chance to express yourself spontaneously, without any plan, without descriptions or commenting on a post. TikTok gives you the chance to appear without any inhibition and to do what you think the way you think.

At the same time, I believe that at a time when the pandemic was the main topic of discussion, escape through the application and with its help, understood by everyone in their way, is one of the valves through which users have managed to create their mechanisms for overcoming periods, especially those of total isolation.

#### References

Google Play (2021). TikTok section:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.zhiliaoapp.musically&hl=ro&gl=US> [08.02.2021]

Neagoe, O. (2020, October 7). *Cât timp au petrecut românii pe rețelele de socializare în era corona*. Revista Bizz. <https://www.revistabiz.ro/cat-timp-au-petrecut-romanii-pe-retelele-de-socializare-in-pandemie/> [10.02.2021]

Machi, I. (2021, January 5). Interviu cu Laura Savu, Global Community Manager TokTok. *Revista Connect*: <https://www.connect.ro/2021/01/05/cati-utilizatori-are-tiktok-romania-laura-savu-interviu/>

- Kemp, S. (2021, January 27). Digital 2021: The latest insights into the 'state of digital'. *We are social*: <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2021/01/digital-2021-the-latest-insights-into-the-state-of-digital>
- Iqbal, M. (07.02.2021). TikTok Revenue and Usage Statistics (2021). *Business of Apps*: <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/tik-tok-statistics/>
- Global Web Index (2021). [www.globalwebindex.com](http://www.globalwebindex.com) [10.02.2021]



## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUST IN MEDIA AND FAKE NEWS: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

CRISTINA GAVRILUȚĂ<sup>1</sup>, SERGIU BORTOȘ<sup>2</sup>

---

### Abstract

Although the existence of fake news can be found in the last decade, this subject succeeded to impose and gain coverage among the current research topics, becoming important through the harmful effects it can produce, but also through its continuous dynamics and evolution. Through this paper we aim to present some theoretical perspectives on the phenomenon of fake news, then we will aim to make the connection between fake news and trust in the media (in any of its type, mass-media or new media). Through the theoretical analysis we aim to develop some hypotheses and subjects which could lead to future research. Therefore, by the present analysis – which has as scope the exploration of the possible relations between the population’s trust in the media and fake news – we focus on developing a theoretical framework, so that possible results could enhance a better knowledge and combatting the negative effects of this phenomenon.

**Keywords:** fake news, media, trust in media, false news.

### Résumé

Bien que l’existence du phénomène *fake news* peut être trouvée dans la dernière décennie, il a réussi à s’imposer et à gagner de l’espace parmi les sujets de recherche actuels, étant devenu important par les effets nocifs qu’il peut produire, mais aussi par sa continue dynamique et évolution. Par le présent travail nous avons l’intention de présenter quelques perspectives théoriques sur phénomène *fake news*, ensuite nous essaierons d’établir une connexion avec la confiance dans le média (sous quelque forme que ce soit, média où le nouveau média). L’objectif que nous proposons, par la présente analyse théorique, est de développer quelques hypothèses et thèmes, qui pourraient constituer l’objet de recherches supplémentaires. Par cette analyse ayant pour objet l’exploration des possibles relations entre la confiance de la population dans le média et le phénomène *fake news*, nous avons l’intention de suivre le développement d’un cadre conceptuel, afin

---

<sup>1</sup> Professor, Ph.D., Department of Sociology and Sociology Work, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, România; e-mail: cristina\_gavriluta@yahoo.fr.

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D. student, Department of Sociology and Social Work, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, România; e-mail: bortos.sergiu@gmail.com.

que les possibles résultats pourrons être utilisées pour une meilleure compréhension et lutte contre les effets négatives du phénomène.

**Mots-clés:** fake news; média; confiance dans le média; des fausses nouvelles.

### **Rezumat**

Deși existența fenomenului fake news poate fi găsită în ultima decadă, acesta a reușit să se impună și să câștige spațiu printre temele de cercetare actuale, devenind important prin efectele nocive pe care le poate produce, dar și prin continua sa dinamică și evoluție. Prin lucrarea de față ne propunem să prezentăm câteva perspective teoretice despre fenomenul fake news, apoi vom încerca să facem legătura cu încrederea în media (în oricare dintre forme, mass-media sau new media). Obiectivul pe care ni-l propunem prin analiza teoretică de față este să dezvoltăm câteva ipoteze și teme care ar putea constitui subiectul unor cercetări viitoare. Prin analiza de față, ce are drept scop explorarea posibilelor relații dintre încrederea populației în media și fenomenul fake news, urmărim dezvoltarea unui cadru conceptual, astfel încât posibilele rezultate ar putea fi utilizate în mai buna cunoaștere și combatere a efectelor negative ale fenomenului.

**Cuvinte cheie:** fake news; media; încredere în media; știri false.

## **1. Introduction**

Recent years have highlighted the phenomenon of fake news along with some significant events in social life and political scene: two notable events worth to be mentioned are: Brexit and the 2016 United States presidential elections. These events revealed the harmful effects that the use of technology and the information ecosystem in the service of political agenda can have. Since then the phenomenon of fake news became more visible, used both as [pseudo]journalistic genre and fake label (Egelhofer, Lecheler, 2019). The meanings of the „fake news” concept are diverse – in this paper, we will refer as it as any news or information which is intentionally distorted, then spread on various communication channels (mass-media, new media, social networks) by an organisational or state agent which has a clear strategy and goals that are pursued through misinformation actions (Allcott, Gentkow, 2017; Figueira, Oliveira, 2017; Voicu, 2018; Bârgăoanu, 2018; Tandoc et al., 2018). Thus, our aim is to problematise the relation between the trust that the population has in the media (using data sources and public reports) and the manner in which this impacts the existence and evolutions of fake news. First, we will present some perspectives and theoretical foundations related to fake news phenomenon – more exactly – some characteristics, typologies and analysis frameworks of this phenomenon.

## **2. An overview of fake news**

Tandoc et al. (2018) did a literature review of fake news, reaching a total of 34 papers analysed, published between 2003 and 2017. Following this, the authors developed a typology of fake news definitions found on the analysed articles and identify the following types: (1) news satire – which utilises the irony,

exaggeration and humour in order to highlight certain characteristics of a person, situation or event, (2) news parody – it relies on humour, but with a purpose that can be associated with defamation, (3) news fabrication – data, contexts or any kind of information are used with no factual basis; (4) photo manipulation – where can be included the manipulation of images and videos as deepfakes, the use of false statistics, the intentional misinterpretation of data so that these serves the purpose of the attackers; (5) native advertising – includes advertising materials, products placement where the materials are not marked for advertising purposes; (6) propaganda – which, according to the authors refers to „news stories which are created by a political entity to influence public perceptions. The overt purpose is to benefit a public figure, organisation or government” (Tandoc et al., 2018, p. 147).

Hirst (2017, pp. 90-91) also developed a typology of fake news, splitting them into: (1) false stories – intentionally fabricated content, without a factual basis, it can be proven as factually incorrect, but could mislead readers; (2) „fake news as stories that originate on satirical websites” which intentionally presents exaggerations and distortions of the facts and events in order to entertain readers; (3) „news-like content that is advertorial and commercial” – the purpose is selling something (a product or a service); (4) fake news used in politics – can have multiple forms such as: accusation of the opposition party of certain facts, actions which can be exaggerated, altered so it can help the attacker’s goal (fake news is used as fake label – we will approach this concept in this paper); (5) „fake news as a form of propaganda” – news that is deliberately falsified in order to obtain commercial or politic benefits; (6) „fake news that is highly ideological”.

Tandoc et al. (2018, 2019, 2020) identified two dimensions which can be used in analysing fake news typology. The authors distinguished between (1) the factual element of fake news and (2) the sender’ intent to deceive, then they integrated the typology mentioned above (*see Table 1*).

**Table 1:** Typology of fake news definitions – The relationship between factuality and intention to deceive. Adapted after Tandoc et al. (2018)

		<i>The intent to deceive</i>	
		<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>The level of facticity</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Propaganda</i> <i>Native advertising</i> <i>Photo manipulation</i>	<i>News satire</i>
	<i>Low</i>	<i>News fabrication</i>	<i>News parody</i>

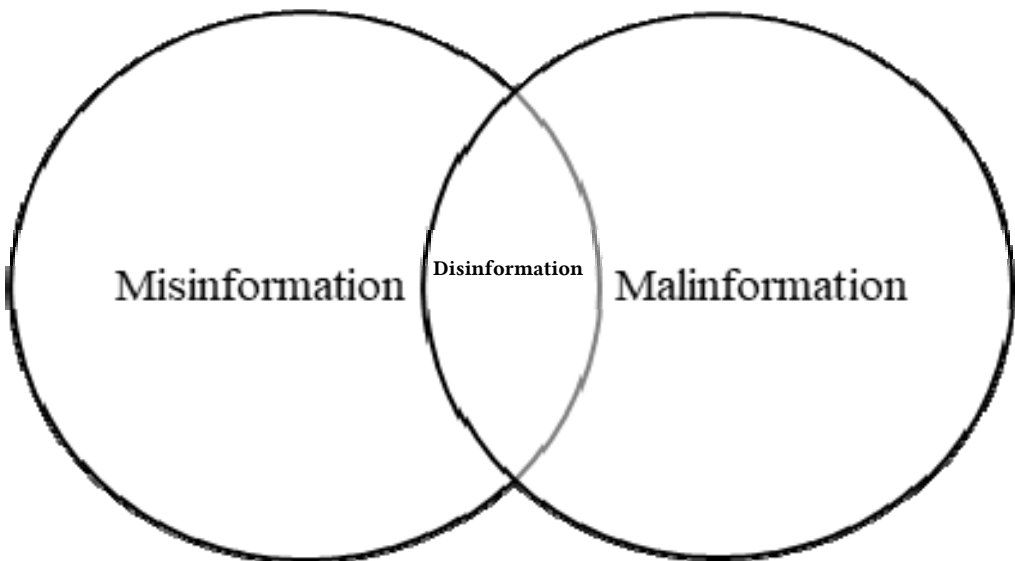
According to the authors, the level of facticity refers to the degree to which the news is based on real facts; the intentional component refers to the degree to which the author / authors of the news intend to deceive or mislead the public.

Thereby, using these dimensions (the intent to deceive and facticity) we can differentiate the disinformation and misinformation. Misinformation is characterised by a lack of facticity and no intention to deceive; on the other side, disinformation is characterised by the lack of facticity and the presence of the intention to deceive.

**Table 2:** The differences between fake news and false news.

	Misinformation	Disinformation
Facticity	(-)	(-)
The intent to deceive	(-)	(+)
	False news	Fake news

In addition to misinformation and disinformation, Wardle (2020) identified a third form – malinformation. The author considers that disinformation combines both elements of misinformation where there is no intention to deceive, and elements of malinformation where the author of the message knows the target and the aspects he /her aims at by spreading the forged information. According to Wardle (2020), disinformation consists of any kind of erroneous content, intentionally fabricated or manipulated, in order to support false conclusions that serve the interest of the agent who initiated the respective action. Figure 1 represents the relation between misinformation, disinformation and malinformation according to Wardle (2020).





Wardle (2020) expressed her dissatisfaction regarding the concept of fake news, respectively with the way this is understood and used, stating that fake news should be replaced with information disorder – this would also include other forms of information distortion, such as propaganda, manipulation or native advertising.

She identified and described three stages of the information disorder: (1) creation – when the message is produced; (2) (re)production – when information is transformed in a media product and it is spread; (3) distribution – the apex, the stage where the information is spreading uncontrollably, it can also return to its second stage (reproduction), when additional elements can be added.

In addition to these three stages of how information disorders occur, Wardle (2020) describe three elements of these stages: the agent who send the information (that can be described by type, level of organisation, motivation, level of automatisisation, audience, the intent to harm and to deceive), the message (duration, accuracy, legality and target) and the receiver of the message (who can be active or passive depending on how the receptor receives the information, described by the type of message reading and action taken after reading).

Another model we consider useful in understanding and explaining the phenomenon of fake news is the model developed by Fârte and Obadă (2018). They focus their attention to capture and describe three dimensions of this phenomenon: (1) facticity level; (2) immediate intention of the source which send the message; (3) potential impact on the audience that receives and interprets the message. Starting from this three-dimensional approach, the authors develop a model of counteracting fake news dedicated for organizational entities, using reactive public relations. Certainly, this model could be implemented in other contexts.

Tandoc (2021) proposed a classical model for analysis the phenomenon of fake news, starting from a well-known scheme of communication (Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver Model of Communication, SMCR). The author analysed each of the four elements: (1) Sender – previously, it was associated with a source such as the newspaper, a television, radio; on Internet, the sender can be any person who has access to a device, an Internet connection and minimal technical skills; (2) Message – in social networks can be accompanied by other factors, such as number of reactions, views, comments or shares – these factors can help spreading the information quickly; (3) Channel – it is represented by the platform where the interaction between sender and receiver takes place, the author highlighted the fact that one of the shortcomings of the research addressing the fake news is that they have focused their attention on Facebook and Twitter platforms; (4) Receiver – is currently facing a big flow of information; the receiver has to select the information received; in this context, we can discuss about the mechanisms that fulfill the function of selective exposure to information, but also the algorithms of the platforms, which make a pre-selection of the information.

### 3. Trust in media and fake news

Using the conceptual framework presented so far, we will focus on the receptors and interpreters of fake news, as they are the ones affected by the negative effects of this phenomenon, however they can become also amplifiers of it, without having the intention or desire to do it. Thus, we bring into question the trust that the population has in the media. According Flash Eurobarometer 464 from 2018, entitled *Fake News and Disinformation Online*, 37 percent citizens of the European Union (EU28) are exposed daily or almost every day to fake news, and 31 percent are exposed at least once a week. In both cases it was measured the perceived exposure to fake news. Also, same research report shows that traditional media (i.e. radio, television, printed media) enjoys more trust than new media (for example online newspapers and magazines, social networks or messaging applications).

European Broadcast Union (EBU) in their analysis, *Trust in Media (2020)* – using and processing data from Eurobarometer 92 (EB92) – came to some conclusions regarding the confidence of the European citizens in the media: (1) the online channels of communication are less trusted than traditional mass-media; (2) social networks remain the least trusted media in Europe, and the radio is still the most trusted; (3) more trust in news reflects a less level of concern about misinformation/ fake news.

In an exploratory research on media trust and its relationship with fake news conducted by applying a two-wave online survey, Wasserman and Madrid-Morales (2019) found that there is a significant correlation between high levels of perceived exposure to disinformation and low media trust in South Africa.

Ognyanova et al. (2020) conducted a quantitative research involving 1000 respondents from United States of America, to whom two-wave questionnaires were applied. In the period between the two waves of research, 8 percent of the respondents agreed their online behaviour to be observed by installing a browser extension. The results showed that (1) fake news consumption is associated with a decrease of the trust in the media; (2) fake news consumption is associated with higher confidence in political and governmental institutions for who is in the side of power. According to Ognyanova et al. (2020) there is a link between the two concepts discussed – fake news and the population trust in media.

Summarising everything presented and described in this paper, we could extract some ideas that could be used as subjects in possible future research:

- Trust in the media (low trust) is one of the causes that favoured the emergence of the fake news;
- The emergence and development of fake news led to the erosion of media trust;
- How can data on media trust be exploited to combat and predict the phenomenon of fake news?

- Increasing the trust in media and advocating for accurate information could be elements that can be used for combatting fake news phenomenon;
- What connections can be established between other types of trust (trust in political institutions, public institutions, etc.) and the evolution of fake news? How could these be used to combat the fake news phenomenon?
- The phenomenon of fake news can be explained through a new form / model / pattern of production of the individual or collective image, the topics that the anthropologist Marc Augé deals with in his writings (Augé, 1997). Nowadays, the fictitious production circuit is somewhat flawed, and we also can discuss about a perfect reciprocity between the three poles of the imaginary: individual imaginary, collective imaginary and creation-fiction. If we consider that fake news is ultimately a fiction, then it imposed itself as a supra-reality on the individual and collective imaginary, being aware of its own existence.
- At the same time, this creation-fiction process fully enjoys the availability of the imaginary to feed permanently it with new productions. Of course, we can ask ourselves: why fake news has success? This happens because the creation-fiction process of this phenomenon articulates symbols, images, representation in an accessible and seductive way and manages to create a new creation-fiction pattern. Finally, this phenomenon manages to re-enchantment (Maffesoli, 2007) the world, delivering alternatives to official (or not) versions of the truth. “The paradox of our time is by dis-enchanting the world of old myths, beliefs and fantasies, we live in full fiction (...)” (Gavriliuță, 2008, p. 228); it is a media fiction that substitutes reality in different ways. In essence, such manifestations could express a symbolic deficit that our world suffers from (Augé, 1997). The old myths and the saga are no longer part of the lived experience today. We live in a dis-encharnted world, as M. Weber stated, a world from which the mystery, the magic, the sacred became marginal and obscured areas of human and social experience. However, the success of the fake news shows that the eternal nostalgia of primordial times, our co-substantial living with the sacred (Eliade, 1992), as well as the permanent sensitivities for the symbol, could not be definitively cancelled. Based on these raw data, all the transformations brought by modern science, new technologies and the media industry have found enough ground for manifestation. The media manages to „enchant” the world by creating stories, news, information and proposing its own versions of reality. The seduction exerted by the entire media and the fake news spread by it is justified by our willingness to create and accept alternative worlds or other universes of understanding.

These are only some of the issues we have extracted which can be used for future research. We consider these to be important in the relationship between the phenomenon of false news and media trust. They can be used and modified

according to the interests and subjects researched. We consider essential and necessary multidisciplinary efforts in knowing and understanding the phenomenon of false news, from experts in various fields, such as psychology, journalism, sociology, anthropology, information and communication technology.

#### 4. Conclusion

As previously mentioned, the aim of this paper is to present some theoretical perspectives on the phenomenon of fake news and the current state of knowledge of the phenomenon and to outline any connection between fake news and trust in the media.

Even more, we consider imperative to approach this relationship in future research for a better understanding of how the social body interacts with and responds to fake news, especially in the context of a trust crisis of which could affect not only the media, but also other fields. The answer to this crisis could be one of the appropriate solutions to the issue presented in this paper.

Beyond the intellectual exercise required to study the phenomenon of fake news, understanding the mechanism of production of the phenomenon that ensure its success can paint a clearer picture of media communication and the functioning of the world through the prism of this social lubricant that is communication. As we mentioned before, it is possible that behind some easy explanations, which bring together a multitude of variables (techniques, strategies, interests, calculations, desire to manipulate, entertainment, exhibitionism, audience, etc.), to identify social data and human beings who announce our natural availability to fictionalise reality and transform the fiction into reality. For this reason, the fake news phenomenon remains a provocative one. He can camouflage less visible realities, which are difficult to decipher, but which are part of the deep fabric of society.

#### References

- Allcott, H., Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election. *Jecompers: The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2), 211-235.
- Augé, M. (1997). *La guerre des rêves. Exercices d'éthno-fiction*. Publishing House Seuil.
- Bârgăoanu, A. (2018). *#Fakenews: noua cursă a înarmării* [#Fakenews: The news arms race]. Evrika Publishing.
- EBU (2020). *Market Insights. Trust in Media*. Media Intelligence Service, European Broadcasting Union. [https://www.ebu.ch/publications/research/login\\_only/report/trust-in-media](https://www.ebu.ch/publications/research/login_only/report/trust-in-media)
- Egelhofer, J. L., Lecheler, S. (2019). Fake news as a two-dimensional phenomenon: a framework and research agenda. *Annals of the International Communication Association Annals of the International Communication Association*, 43(2), 97-116.
- Eliade, M. (1992). *Sacrul și profanul* [The Sacred and the Profane]. Editura Humanitas.
- European Commission (2018). *Flash Eurobarometer 464: Fake News and Disinformation* Online. <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/flash/surveyky/2183>

- European Commission (2020). *Standard Eurobarometer 92. „Media use in the European Union”. Report*. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. <https://doi.org/10.2775/80086>.
- Fârte, G. I., Obadă, D. R. (2018). Reactive Public Relations Strategies for Managing Fake News in the Online Environment. *Postmodern Openings*, 9(2), 26-44.
- Figueira, A., Oliveira, L. (2017). The current state of fake news: challenges and opportunities. *Procedia Computer Science*, vol. 121, 817-825.
- Gavriluță, C. (2008). *Socioantropologia fenomenelor divinatorii* [Socioantropology of divinatory phenomena]. Editura Institutul European.
- Hirst, M. (2017). Towards a political economy of fake news. *The Political Economy of Communication*, 5(2). <https://www.polecom.org/index.php/polecom/article/view/86/288>
- Maffesoli, M. (2007). *Le réenchantement du monde. Une éthique pour notre temps*. Table Ronde.
- Ognyanova, K., Lazer, D., Robertson, R. E., & Wilson, C. (2020). Misinformation in action: Fake news exposure is linked to lower trust in media, higher trust in government when your side is in power. *The Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review*, 1 (4). <https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-024>.
- Tandoc, E. (2021). Tools of Disinformation: How Fake News Gets to Deceive. In Jayakumar, S., Ang, B., Anwar, N. D. (Eds.), *Disinformation and Fake News*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tandoc, E., Jenkins, J., Craft, S. (2019). Fake News as a Critical Incident in Journalism. *Journalism Practice*, 13(6), 673-689.
- Tandoc, E., Lim, D., Ling, R. (2020). Diffusion of disinformation: How social media users respond to fake news and why. *Journalism*, 21(3), 381-398.
- Tandoc, E., Lim, Z. W., Ling, R. (2018). Defining „Fake News”. *Digital Journalism*, 6(2), 137-153.
- Voicu, M. (2018). *Matrioșka minciñoșilor: fake news, manipulare, populism* [The matrioska of liars: fake news, manipulation, populism]. Humanitas.
- Wardle, C. (2020). Journalism and the New Information Ecosystem: Responsibilities and Challenges. In Zimdras, M., McLeod, K. (Eds.), *Fake news: Understanding media and misinformation in the digital age*. The MIT Press.
- Wasserman, H., Madrid-Morales, D. (2019). An Exploratory Study of „Fake News” and Media Trust in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. *Africa Journalism Studies*, 40(1), 107-123.



## CURRENT SUICIDAL SITUATIONS WITHIN THE ROMANIAN AREA

DUMITRU STAN<sup>1</sup>

---

### Abstract

This article has been focussed on presentation of an older sociological issue – committing suicide /killing oneself – within new interpretative contexts specific to current Romanian society. The argumentation is therefore developed towards attracting three sustainable conclusions: a. right to property over one's own body should not metamorphose into individual's right to kill himself; b) no matter how many logical arguments we might have for committing suicide as a normal fact, it will naturally remain a pathological social fact; c. social actions against suiciding cannot otherwise be but *ante factum*. Consequently, social actors should be informed and get awareness on suicidal risk factors within the environment they are living in. This last aspect shall occupy the most part of the pages of this article. The conclusion of the whole approach is that no matter how many justifications, excuses and mitigating circumstances we may find, the suicidal act cannot be otherwise but traumatising and condemnable to society.

**Keywords:** suiciding, right to property over one's own body, suicidal risk, socio-cultural normality, normal fact, pathological fact.

### Résumé

L'article est axé sur la présentation d'un ancien problème sociologique – le suicide – dans des nouveaux contextes interprétatives, spécifiques pour la société roumaine actuelle. L'argumentation est décrite d'une telle manière pour attirer trois conclusions soutenables: a. Le droit de propriété sur le propre corps ne doit pas se métamorphoser dans le droit de l'individu au suicide; b. peu importe le nombre d'arguments logiques selon lesquelles le suicide pourrait être un fait normal, il reste d'une manière foncière un fait social pathologique; c. les actions sociales d'opposition contre le suicide ne peuvent être que *ante factum*. Par conséquent, les acteurs sociaux doivent être informés et sensibilisés en ce qui concerne la présence des facteurs de risque suicidaires de l'environnement dans lequel ils vivent. Ce dernier aspect occupe la majeure partie de l'article. La conclusion de cette démarche est que en dépit de tous les justifications, excuses, circonstances atténuantes on retrouvait, l'acte suicidaire ne peut être que traumatique et condamnable pour la société.

---

<sup>1</sup> Professor, habil PhD, Department of Sociology and Social Work, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, Romania, E-mail: dtrustan@yahoo.com

**Mots clés:** suicide, droit de propriété sur le corps, risque suicidaire, normalité socioculturelle, fait normal, fait pathologique.

### **Rezumat**

Articolul este axat pe prezentarea unei vechi probleme sociologice – sinuciderea - în contexte interpretative noi, specifice societății românești actuale. Argumentația este înfățișată în așa fel încât să atragă trei concluzii sustenabile: a. dreptul de proprietate asupra trupului propriu nu trebuie să se metamorfozeze în dreptul individului la sinucidere; b. oricâte de multe ar fi argumentele logice conform cărora sinuciderea ar fi un fapt normal, ea rămâne în mod funciar un fapt social patologic; c. acțiunile sociale de împotrivire față de sinucidere nu pot fi decât *ante factum*. Prin urmare, actorii sociali trebuie informați și conștientizați în legătură cu prezența factorilor de risc suicidar din mediul în care trăiesc. Acest ultim aspect ocupă și cea mai mare parte din paginile articolului. Concluzia întregului demers este că oricât de multe justificări, scuze ori circumstanțe atenuante i-am găsi, actul suicidar nu poate fi decât unul traumatizant și condamnabil pentru societate.

**Cuvinte cheie:** sinucidere, drept de proprietate asupra trupului, risc suicidar, normalitate socioculturală, fapt normal, fapt patologic.

## **1. Introduction**

Suiciding – a worrying phenomenon to any society, has an even more alarming impact nowadays. Its recrudescence within the Romanian space would compel us to re-explain it and re-interpret it. This is how we would be able to understand how far the individual right over his own body should activate how the autolytic act can be considered normal or pathological and what it would be the contexts whose social functioning would turn into conjunctions of suicidal risk.

## **2. Modernity and the Right to Property over One's Own Body**

Longitudinal psychological perspective on change compels us to admit that modernity has revolutionised science, technology, production, commercial relations, politic, etc. more than any other preceding eras together. Paradoxically, among fields having occasionally undergone through radical changes of modernity, the field of mentalities seems to come in the first place. We are surprised by this hierarchic placement since it is known that over the history, changes in spiritual culture have been slower than changes in material culture. This is how we can explain why today, under postmodernity conditions, one can rather encounter reminiscences of pre-modernity gnosis than uses of material goods, specific to those time periods (Stan 2016, pp 40-44). Spiritual experience seems to be less receptive to renewal than material experience. This aspect is easily seen as long as, in too many situations, we are disappointed or compelled to conclude that material improvement of society become almost useless if they are not doubled by adjustment reactions of the same size on the plane of mentalities.



For having destructured one ankylosed medieval order, infallible in its own way though, the new epoch, the modernity has compelled us to admit that elements depending on individual consciousness can be as consistent and authoritarian or even more powerful than those of material existence. Consequently, due to the new vision on the power of the spirit, people have begun to re-dimension their views on what it is allowed or forbidden to them, to re-assess boundaries between moral and justice, to resettle new foundations for the relationships between parents and children, between man and woman, between chief and subordinate, between the rich and the poor, between the old and the new, between secular and religious, between duty-related constraints and constraints given by personal choices, between material and spiritual determiners of life design, etc.

In the enormous sequence of reconsiderations having been operated by modernity, a new content has been registered: *the right to property*. Previously, this was only active for people with great powers in society, such as monarchs, high officials of the court and high-rank nobles. The new epoch has not only declared (economic) property to be „divine” but it has also expanded its legitimacy from material assets to *individual right to dispose of its own body*. With time, it has resulted in expressing this right in more picturesque forms: lend a body through prostitution, estrange body organs through selling, body modelling through aesthetic surgery body self-flagellation through asceticism and starvation, invoke the right to euthanasia, appeal to suicide/ autolysis, etc. In most of these situations, the individual demonstrates that “he is actually the owner of himself”, that he is able to dispose of himself, both as a body matter and spirit, that “he is free” to “fill” in his life as he wishes and that he can easily ignore both formal and informal interdictions.

The right to property over one’s own body can be regarded as any other right of economic property. This is transferable, according to modern view, and it would allow individual to operate though committing suicide and separate the body from the soul, since they are both technically his “ownership”. At the same time we should not omit the reality according to which both the body and the soul of the individual are not originally the results of his own merits. They could be possibly considered as personal constructions or acquisitions only after he has benefitted from physical parental conception and help of some socialising formative sources from family, school, church, and neighbourhood and so on. All these sources have invested economic and symbolic capitals in the individual and, as after any other investment, there are some expectations coming related to amortisation. The right to being becomes within this context a right conditioned by fulfilment of some natural duties to the “investors”. To claim the right to property over the body and to appeal to suicide by virtue of it represents an act of evasion, unbecomingness or at least of economic immorality. The individual practically refuses by autolysis to meet the goals for which he has been created, he declines his mission to give back the investors what he has received and therefore he generates a deficit or, even more than that, a crisis. According to

religious moral, unbecomingness of the suicider is even greater, he would choose not to praise life, respectively the priceless gift received from Divinity and he proceeds arrogantly, aggressively and discretionary while starting from the wrong premise that he is his own creator. If we would also consider the social impact having been triggered by the suicider (it would upset equilibrium of the family, disturb organisational chart where he has been included to, it would cause psychological shock to the people around him and it would attract stigmas on his community, etc.). then we could only reach the following conclusion: *it is unfair that an individual should make use for committing suicide of his (political) right to property over his own body regardless of the causes to justify his gesture.*

Unfortunately, at least in contemporary cases of suicide, as the moralist Gilles Lipovetsky would claim, social sanctions applied to suicidal have significantly diminished in compliance with the aforementioned right, "suicide has been mostly dissociated from the idea of guilt... the act of self-destruction would no longer arise the collective blame, self-conservation would no longer be seen as an absolute duty to himself... it would no longer mean resignation from a moral obligation, and it would give birth to questioning rather than to disapproval, to compassion rather than to banishment" (Lipovetsky, 1996, p. 100). Moreover, interpretations on autolytic acts have made so many concessions and have exaggerated so much on the culture of corporality that suiciders would sometimes acquire the image of genuine victims of their life multiple contexts. The dominant individualism in current societies would therefore require movement of responsibility from the person who has committed suicide to the persons around him, while the latter are found to be guilty of not having anticipated and hindering the gesture of self-destruction in time. What it would have once considered to be an act of cowardice or evasion from world for reasons of personal inability and non-fulfilment, nowadays it is not much to consider the suicider as a brave character, able to make radical decisions and put them into practice, some sort of a strange misunderstood hero

With such (post-moralist) interpretative view, there is far too little to argue to be able to surprisingly conclude that suicide would be legitimate, that euthanasia should become a rightful practice to all societies or that aggressions of the individual on his own body should not be condemned in any way if it is him who has selected and decided on it. Such conclusions on suicide would be obviously immoral since they would be speculative, it would encourage people who are not yet convinced by the appropriateness of the autolytic gesture to go further to the traumatising moment, it would deepen even more mistrust in social values, it would not even consider all types of suicide and all categories of causes or circumstances to result in suicidal effect.

### **3. Is Suicide a Normal Social Fact?**

One famous definition of suicide has been developed by the French sociologist E. Durkheim in 1897 when he published the results of an ample research on this phenomenon: "the term of suicide is applied to all cases of death

resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself which he knows will produce this result” (Durkheim, 1993, p.12). In another work, the same famous author would offer the first sociological methodology and the first prominent distinction between normal and pathological social facts. He would therefore state that „a social fact is normal when it occurs in the average society” (Durkheim, 2002, p.101); if not, that fact enters the pathological category. Nevertheless, after having complied with the rules of the Durkheim methodology, suicide can be typologically both a normal and a pathological fact. Here there are some examples to demonstrate the truthfulness of this affirmation: since there is no society where the suicidal act be entirely eradicated, one can assert that it is an irremovable normal social presence or an objective component of the social body, when variations of the suicidal number remain insignificantly from one period to another and therefore the “average of cases” remains approximatively at the same level to similar time units, the autolytic act cannot be otherwise labelled but normal, if methods and causes which induce the traumatising moment would fall in types already known and practiced and the social environment is not entirely surprised by the event occurrence, then suicide would leave the impression that it is a regular or normal fact.

Judging by analogy and having as a starting point the dichotomic separation between normal and pathological, we can pronounce a difficult to contradict conclusion: all cases of suicide which would not qualify for the registry of normality represent the sub-normality or social pathology. Yet, suicide by its nature and specific feature, would rather define the pathological area than behavioural normality. As an actual fact, even if man destructively acts on himself, he is predisposed to preserve himself as a specie and he benefits from instinctive forces for it. That is why the statistic weigh of people committing suicide within social environment is absolutely lower than autolytic opponents’ rate. Natural (instinctive) anti-suicidal foundation is highly consolidated by their being informed on the existence of several normative, institutional and socio-cultural constructions to fight against options favourable to autolytic act: bans on funerals for suicides (Council of Orleans, year 533), adoption of penalty of excommunication for suicides and people who would attempt to commit suicide (Council of Toledo, year 693), decreed that suicide is a triple perpetration (crime, high treason and heresy) in 1670, definition of suicide as a psychological disease and of the person having committed suicide as a mentally disabled person (S. Freud, in 1917), establishment of centres to prevent suicide (the first appeared in Los Angeles, in 1958), etc. (Cosman, 2008, p.12). To all these measures intended to inhibit those who would find themselves attracted by the perspective of committing suicide, we would of course add depreciative reflections on autolysis having been accomplished by great men of culture with profound ethical and pedagogical effects on many people: “suicide is a solution to one single man and a problem to others” (G. Cesbron); “when you take your own life you might want to exasperate the others” (D. Diderot); “the man who commits suicide has not yet

discovered that he is a human. He has not succeeded in intuiting his existence” (P. Țuțea); “suicide is not a heroism, it is a cowardice. True heroes would endure life such as it is. They would not desert it” (Tr. Demetrescu); “suicide is not abominable because God prohibits it” (Im. Kant); “to commit suicide means to declare oneself incapable to incorrigible” (N. Iorga); “suicide is the greatest of all cowardliness. Moreover, it is a treason” (I. Hasdeu), etc. (Bujor, 2010, pp. 368-369).

If to all these ideas we would add information according to which some 800.000 and 1.000.000 people would commit suicide very year and that suicide is the tenth cause to contribute to the death rate (Varnik, 2012, p. 760) and that world suicide attempts would sum up 20 million people, then we would come to define suicide as an extremely dangerous epidemic disease which threatens social health and current stability of mankind (Stan, 2015, p. 10).

Correlating all information we have dealt with so far, it is no doubt that suicide is condemnable from many points of view (medical, demographic, psychological, moral, social, religious, etc.) and that it represents a deed which deviates from the values of normality and only within special contexts it is equivalent to a discretionary right of people committing suicide. Regarded effectively as an act of abusive life taking, suicide could be simply defined as an assassination, with the mention that the assassin does not succeed to his victim since he is the victim himself. Yet Jean Amery, a very subtle analyst of the autolytic act, claims that “the action to raise hand against my own person with a view to death has, within the phenomenal space of the self, another meaning than assassinate does” (Amery, 2012, pp. 122-123). Following this argumentative connection, gestures of self-aggression should be less seen as forms of self-flagellation/ self-sanction and rather as forms to oppose the outer world. Hostility of the latter should be somehow annihilated and if under some other circumstances the individual would appeal to sabotage, negation disregard, doctor’s visit, law suit, additional work, irony against the state of discomfort, etc., this time the solution chosen is suicide.

Radicalism of the choice derives not only from attracted limit consequence, which is from supplication of his own life, but also from the pressures of the causes having determined such a choice. Evaluation of the suicide from such an optic has made sociologists to believe that “it is not the individual who freely applies his, own death to himself, but it is the society in all its problems to expose a human who has been however inappropriately endowed to commit suicide without any opposition” (Amery, 2012, pp. 123-124). Consequently, a proper understanding of suicide from a sociological angle, requires less the identification of the level of physical, psychic, social and cultural of the suiciders, but it requires more a delimitation of causal complexes to have induced commitment of such a fact.

#### **4. Suicidal Risk Contexts within Current Romanian Area**

To a first analysis, to know the causes which have resulted in manifestation of some undesirable phenomena does not mean a too attractive gain for a

connoisseur since he does not so obtain some means to diminish or eliminate it does not even obtain the guarantee that launching of interventions to suppress causes could be finalised by stopping the presence of unwanted consequences. Nevertheless in the case of a phenomenon of the gravity of the autolysis, when the individual commits the most personal act possible, at the end of which he separates himself from life, to know the social determiners represents an enormous advantage. We should not forget that we do not refer to a deviant phenomenon of some sort, or to blameable act which could be possibly corrected immediately after it has been produced, but to an irreversible and dramatic act. In other words, he cannot be restarted and the actor cannot be recovered.

If there is something important and of curing impact for the suicide to be really done, than this cannot be located otherwise but *ante factum*. As a consequence, persons involved in fighting against suicide and suicide attempts, - psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, pedagogues, priests, social workers a.s.o. - as well as concerned institutions empowered to take steps towards it (Hospital, Church, Police, School, etc.) should act preventively. For this it is required much information on suicide, especially on the causes and circumstances announcing it, its longitudinal tendencies, the peculiarities it gets depending on social status, health, religion, residence age and gender of the persons open to suicidal behaviours. According to the size of their cognitive capital, institutions and their specialists should try to counteract suicidal risk factors, should more effectively intervene in the most vulnerable „places” and implicitly diminish the suicide rates.

Based on scientific research and empirical findings, it is known that men would suicide more than women, old people appeal to suicide more than younger people, the suicide rate is higher in cities than in villages, to single people and to couples without children than to marry couples with children, higher to disadvantaged groups than to individuals belonging to elites, higher to warm season than to cold season, higher to those with deficiencies of social integration than to those profoundly and correctly socialised, etc. All situations to create higher index of suicidal finality can be firstly defined as suicidal risk factors and afterwards assumed as determining generic sources. At the same time, we should admit that in the case of social determiners of suicide would also intervene *peculiarities which depend strictly on current characteristics of the manifestations of the social body*. Here there are hereinafter some peculiarities having been drawn from the specific functionality of the current Romanian society.

a. *Anomic inversion of distribution of the material force between men and women*. Traditionally this force represents the sum of elements having been mobilised by man to produce material goods for his living. Both on the level of the family and the society, men were those who owned the material force in time. On their economic performances would depend the quality of life of their children and women. At present many men are unemployed, they are kept by women, they are less preferred by some sectors of the labour market, they bring less assets and income to the domestic area than their wives. Because they have

been mentally pre-programmed by the entire history of the gender to own precedence, that is to have a deciding position in using material force for family functioning, some men would not accept to lose in their relation of power with women and they would appeal to suicide. This could explain why for the last two decades men commit suicide four times more than women do. As for statue of the females, they are aware both of their ascend in owing material force and the social recognition of this ascend. Consequently even if women have come to have major material contributions to family group support, the most of decision-making and control roles, both on the level of this group and on the level of the society are still owned by men. This discrepancy in validation of merits justifies the increase of numbers of suicide attempts by women as a form of warning on unequitable socially practiced androcracy.

b. *Exaggerated distance between the amplexness of purposes and value of means of the individuals.* After the political events which took place in Romania in 1989, many barriers were lost which used to hinder Romanians to accomplish horizontal or vertical social and cultural assets. Under the new circumstances, the registry of individual aspirations would often acquire exalted contents being suspected by lack of realism and sometimes materialised in (non-specific) facts of social capillarity and other times in painful failures having been provoked by despair, anxiety and depression. Many persons misunderstood the nature and purpose of foreign socio-cultural relations, intentions of foreign partners, capitalism traps, types of capitals necessary to their entrepreneurial success, insufficiency of the means of action given that all formulated purposes are totally justified. Against the background of the non-concordance between desire and possibility, that is of the significant difference between the height of purposes and the height of means, behavioural disequilibriums have been triggered including under the form of suicide. Surprisingly autolytic gestures have increased and not only to poor social categories but also to individuals within higher social layers of the hierarchy but who have come so social and economic bankruptcy, or to children and young people who have been cultivated by the idea of social alpinism without they were also given concerned material, explanatory and moral support to it. Only started from these realities we can correctly explain to ourselves continuous increase of suicide rates to Romanian young people since they are the consumerism, new technologies and Western values based generation and yet without being consistently supported from a material point of view.

c. *Crisis of values and diminish of mechanic solidarity.* Suicide rate has increased since 1990 onwards, even if many positive spectacular events have happened in between. At the same time, cases of domestic violence, divorce, school abandon, individualism, tax evasion, abuse on children, people trafficking, discrimination, economic impasse have increased. Et the same time, family is about to lose its quality as a bastion of affectivity and solidarity, while working no longer represents the way to success and the size of the educational capital no

longer assures the entrance to the elite area, non-observance of the laws has become a regular practice, and the pecuniary emulation or ostentatious consumption have become extremely attractive motivations to many categories of individuals. All these crisis situations and especially the decay of the functioning of the family community (implicitly a decrease of automatic mutual assistance, affectivity, integration and security among consanguinity) represent alarming determiners of the current increase of the number of suiciders. The higher the number of mutual elements to be the basis of the group functioning, the more powerful the community spirit is, and the more integrated the individuals feel to be. They will try to complete facts which will not provide a personal benefit in as much but rather a collective one. The most important gain deriving from this state of facts is nevertheless the comfort of never being alone or of automatically be connected and responsible to the problems of the entire group of similarity. Unfortunately, mechanic solidarity continuously attenuates and instead of the reactive mechanic binder, organic, rational and interest-oriented solidarity develops and the individual is exposed to some risks of pathological vulnerability. When the passage from mechanic to organic solidarity occurs abruptly as an effect of unexpected crisis situations without giving a minimum of rational explanations, individuals who have never lived such an experience are in a suicidal risk.

d. *Progressive secularisation of the society and intellectualisation of the religious messages.* More and more voices would claim total purification of the religion from its secular structures and transform it into a parallel instance of a strictly personal option. This request reflects a processual tendency of secularization, which means to abstract divinity from its current social functioning as if its presence would be no longer required. About secularization it is known that it has been very aggressively during the communist regime and that it is continued nowadays by society elite segments. The latter aspire in the last instance to surpass religious modality to assess human acts as being or not being „sins” and to use to this purpose some scientific criteria and procedures. Concomitantly to it there has been an increase of the holders of higher education degrees and high cultural capitals and theological discourse has been adapted itself to their scienced claims. Moreover, the representatives of the religious denominations would quite often appeal to arguments offered by sciences both to cope with positivist needs of the individuals and to prove that a compatibility between the secular and the religious discourse is possible. On the whole, separation of the institution of the church and the institution of the state means a diminish of the importance of the formal religious education, a more reduced contribution of religion to the accomplishment of socialization, a lower involvement of the church representatives to conflict resolution, a dilution of the moral weigh in the adjustment of the individual relationships, favouring of building up an accentuated religious pluralism and arriving inclusively to exotic variants of customized religious “bricolage”, etc. Through secularization society would gradually lose a peerless social binder, religion, and exposes itself to many

threats against which individual reactions are too little effective. As a consequence to it, a supporter of secularization would have to no entirely give up his religious faith. In other words, he would accept a pragmatic duplicity, which it would actually become vulnerable both in relation to religion and his consciousness. While noticing this deadlock, the religious officials, enhance their interpretative subtleties in such a way that their messages would require high intellectual qualities to be understood. Concomitantly with this refinement of communication, parables with much paremiological substance. Religious beneficiaries who would remain captive to highly intellectualized message come sometimes to depressive pathological states and they are more exposed to suicidal act as compared to persons who would like simple messages or correlate the contents of the two types of communication. It is regrettable but increased secularization, inadequate communication and abundance of speculations (even if theological) on religious acts, correlated to other diseases of the social body seem to estrange population more and more from religion, to nourish helplessness and mistrust of the individuals and to contribute the increase of suicidal tendencies.

*e. Family dissolution while parents leave abroad for work and semi-abandon of their children.* Sociological research has proved that family cohesion has suffered the most from spouses/ parents' migration or seasonal departure to another country to compensate the lack of material income. Situations of infidelity, adultery, domestic violence triggered by jealousy, divorce, lying, separation of spouses, family abandon, children neglect, juvenile crime, school failure of the children not surveyed by their parents, triggering of some very tough conflicts between the families of origin of the separated or divorced couples, etc. have multiplied very much just because of these departures. From the registry of these pathological manifestations, suicides do not lack: children who have committed the fact of suicide because they considered themselves to be totally or semi-abandoned by their parents who had left abroad, suicidal children who have come to the conclusion that they are not aa part of their parents' plans and projects, children who have resorted to theatre-like suicide to determine their parents to come back to the country, suicidal spouse in the country for having been left by the conjugal party abroad, spouses having been back from abroad kill their unfaithful marital party in the country and then kill themselves, etc. Essentially the suicidal risk is very high when it is found a significant difference between what individuals intended before leaving and what they have obtained given that they have created all necessary premises and achieved all required investment to reach success. For example, departure abroad of one or both parents have been made with unanimous agreement of all those involve and the purposes of departure have been assumed by parents, their children and extended family etc., yet the result obtained has been disappointing: loneliness, disease, cultural, divorce, loss of financial resources, loss of affection of the family members, etc. Those who are not able to manage these critical situations and cannot diminish the gap between purpose and result would slip into deviance area. Reality has proven that not a few times they have chosen the way to suicide.



Furthermore, suiciders motivated by such causes would appreciate that act they have committed to be a rational one in relation to one or several values they are not willing to make any concession.

f. *Numerous and compassionate accounts in the press.* In their search for sensational, news media make of the suicide cases some sources to increase their rating and implicitly their financial reward. Presentation of the suiciders is usually biased, spectacular, and it generates compassion, it exonerates culpa from its concrete facts and accuses circumstances and persons who have pushed him towards the traumatizing gesture. Out of the press, many of those being in the psychiatric stage of suicide have learnt about the most effective ways to commit suicide, the time to appeal to the autolytic gesture, how the moment should be glorified and how to maximize the negative effect on those who have caused the fact, etc. Some sources of the press come to exercise such a pressure on them that it would effectively determine the individuals who are little fortified for the surprises of the life to adopt the way to suicide; they are speculated incriminated episodes or happenings of their personal life, and this are presented to the general public as proofs of an immense scandal and therefore their image is highly compromised. Since they cannot protect themselves and rapidly find their equilibrium, individuals are not able to bear the fact of having brought such a big prejudice to the family group, they would not accept the social sanction especially when it is not sustained, they would strike out and appeal to autolysis. Nevertheless, the suicidal risk should normally decrease and by no means to increase after the individuals have received information from the press. As long as suicide is condemned from socio-cultural, religious and moral point of view, and the press correctly presents this tendencies of attitude, it can be considered a great force of anti-suicidal education. If not, the same press should be critically considered and treated as any other source of suicidal risk.

g. *Rapid and radical change of the framework to evaluate socio-cultural normality.* Any group space with its own identity is, due to the number of individuals it comprises and mobilizes to relate, a social environment. Since it has specific (action-related, cognitive, value-related, etc.) characteristics which it reproduces for a large period of time, this space can be defined as a cultural sphere. From the association of these two dimensions we would obtain, on the one hand, delimitation of the types of social spaces (community, people, social class, caste, social protection floor, nation, club, etc.) and, on the other hand, identification of cultural contents related to these spaces. Moreover we would discover as natural as it could be the existence of some reality of synthesis, of a functional totality which we name it as a *socio-cultural space*. Society is an immense enclosure of socio-cultures and each and every of it has its own formula for structuring, destructuring and restructuring. No matter how great influences and transfers between socio-cultures would be, they have the tendency to reproduce their elements of specificity. Practically they preserve their identity as long as they keep their inner scheme of life unaltered significantly. Components

of this scheme (relations, institutions, processes, attitudes, behaviours, etc.) are collective habitudes or natural modes of being. Between certain limits they cannot threaten the comfortability of existence and neither can they claim functional repositioning since they represent socio-cultural normality. Even deviant phenomena are evaluated to belong to normality, if they do not overpass a socially accepted intensity and density threshold. When criteria to establish this threshold would be modified too often and tend to get accustomed to contingent subjective pressures, the individual as an actor of the socio-culture does no longer benefit from the framework which would orientate him towards normality. As a result, he will not know how to properly select contents of the scheme of life. It is not excluded that he should substitute contents of the collective scheme of life to principles and references of the personal scheme, and should not be able to adjust himself to radical changes allowed by the society and not to keep the rhythm it has imposed. Under these anomic circumstances, especially in the case of non-anomic individuals willing to achieve socio-cultural integration but rejected for not having complied with normality framework, a state of profound shock is being installed. If it does not intervene as many collateral elements as possible shortly after it to re-equilibrate it, this state turns into a suicidal risk.

We have made an inventory and synthesis of several current situations within the Romanian area which could be consider to favour production of the phenomenon of suicidal risk. They could be also named as causes generating suicide but the designation would not be exactly correct since each and every type of risk corresponds not only a single cause but a complex of causes. Surely there are many other relevant situations on this theme which worth being analysed: fracture of the social corpus through amplification of the distance between its structure, artificial construction of conditions of social segregation, insufficiency of possibilities of pulse discharge through diminish of relation capacities, excess of social control under pandemic conditions, isolation and loneliness from a sociological perspective, etc. From all these, the following fundamental conclusion would be drawn: the fact of suicide is no longer nowadays a sporadic gesture, and the knowledge of its circumstances becomes a condition of the *ante factum* management approach on its proliferation. Therefore, all individuals in the proximity of suicidal risk factors should be repeated the idea that not even the reasons originated by the most profound unselfishness do not justify appeal to suicide. No matter how many mitigating circumstances we might find it and no matter how little it would affect us, the act of suicide is condemnable because, as Tomas Aquinas would state, it represents a triple violation: of the „natural law according to which everything is being kept naturally in life; of the moral law, since it is an insult to the community where the one who kills himself come from; of the divine law who would subject man to the power of God and who leaves God the right to take his life (Bloch & Chodoff, 2000, p. 264).

### References

Amery, J. (2012). *Despre sinucidere. Discurs asupra morții liber alese*. Editura Art.

- Bloch, S., Chodoff, P. (2000). *Etică psihiatrică*. Editura Asociația psihiatrilor liberi din România.
- Bujor, A. (2010). *Maxime și cugetări. Gânduri care vrăjesc*. Vol. I. Editura Epigraf.
- Cosman, D. (2008). *Compendiu de suicidologie*. Editura Casa Cărții de Știință.
- Durkheim, E. (1993). *Despre sinucidere*. Editura Institutul European.
- Durkheim, E. (2002). *Regulile metodei sociologice*. Editura Polirom.
- Lipovetsky, G. (1996). *Amurgul datoriei*. Editura Babel.
- Stan, D. (2016). Cauze prevalente în producerea actuală a actului suicidal. In Țirdea, T. (Ed.). *Strategia supraviețuirii din perspectiva bioeticii, filosofiei și medicinei. Culegere de articole științifice cu participare internațională*. Editura CEP Medicina.
- Stan, D. (2015). *Maladii ale socialului. Teorii explicative, cercetări și remedii posibile*. Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași.
- Varnik, P. (2012). Suicide in the world. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 9(3), 760-77. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph9030760>



## BOOK REVIEW

ARABELA NECULAU<sup>1</sup>

---

Cristina Gavriluță, *Negativul cotidianului* [*The negative of the daily*],  
Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2017, Iași, pp. 253,  
ISBN 978-606-714-371-3

„Negativul cotidianului” [“The Negative of the Daily”], written by Cristina Gavriluță, appeared in 2017 in Iasi, at the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Press, as part of the prestigious Social Observatory collection.

The book title was inspired by the reading of Moshe Idel's book, *Absorbing Perfections. Cabbala and interpretation*, as the author confesses: Moshe Idel makes deep interpretations of the white alphabet, of the white spaces between sacred words. The author of “The Negative of the Daily” extrapolated and states that social reality can function like letters and white spaces between them. The book deals with highly relevant themes in the field of socio-anthropological research, and presents social reality, everyday facts with an emphasis on meanings, on *what is not seen* in this world. As it very well expounds, “the negative can camouflage itself in contexts, signs, symbols, and beliefs. It is the subtle, invisible, but deeply real dimension of our existence”.

The work includes in a novel, unitary and nuanced manner texts previously published in other versions in specialized journals and collective volumes<sup>2</sup>, as well as other newer texts. The book uses the habilitation theses and

---

<sup>1</sup> PhD student, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, arabela8@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup> We recall here some of the texts that were an important source in shaping the book „The Negative of the Daily”: C. Gavriluta, R. Asiminei, „The problem of evil and responsibility to Elie Wiesel. New Perspectives on the Holocaust” in the European Journal of Science and Theology, December, 2011, vol. 7, No.4, pp. 75-82; C. Gavriluta, „The Sense of Value in a Desacriized World” in the Journal for the Study of Religion and Ideologies JSRI Volume 10, No. 28, Spring, 2011, pp. 234-239. , C. Gavriluta „Moshe Idel The Book And The Hermeneutics Of The Negative” in The Journal for the Study of Religion and Ideologies , volume 6, No. 18 ~ Winter, 2007, pp. 226-236; C. Gavriluta , „Mentality and Ideological Construct in Social Economy” Journal of Social Economy, vol 1, no, 1, December, 2011, pp.49-75; C. Gavriluta, N. Gavriluta, „SacredRituals, the Body's Religious Symbolism and Human Trafficking” in vol. Cristina Gavriluta & Nicu

presents itself as a synthesis of the author's concerns. This allowed the topics to be placed in a coherent system of socio-anthropological analysis, in which Cristina Gavriluță particularly favours qualitative analysis. Its novelty comes from the fact that the book promotes *an illustration of the negative of social phenomena*, highlighting in this way the study of the invisible dimension of the world. Thus, the symbol, gesture, social representations, contexts, etc. make up a discrete fabric of the world and can explain many social phenomena and not only. *The Negative of the Daily* newspaper represents, from this perspective, a photograph of reality in the negative.

*The Negative of the Daily* is a book structured in four chapters; the first chapter, *Epistemological Highlights in Social Research* tries to answer questions such as: *What is significant in understanding the phenomena of society?; How can a sociologist approach reality so as to penetrate its essence?.* To answer them, the author uses an interdisciplinary approach to the socio-anthropological research of reality. Here we note the role of the contextualization of the social phenomena researched, the importance of interpreting the results of the research, and the choice of research method.

Chapter two, *Beyond the „air wall”. Mentalities and cultural landmarks in social life* have been discusses themes such as: Romanian capitalism, where we find answers to the questions: *What do Romanians think about work?; Romanian, man of money or good?; and Tradition or modernity?* As for the last aspect, the author offers three types of answer: the first concerns pessimism in the face of the challenges of modernity, the second argues for the coexistence in the world of tradition and modernity without excluding each other, while the last type of answer captures the camouflage of tradition in the elements of the modern world or in banal facts. The problem of *social activism* as a resource for social change, the problem of image and imagination in a global world or that of the image of *the book* in the social mind are presented as examples of how mentalities can function and work subtly in our lives.

Chapter three, *The Sacred and its social expressions*, familiarizes us with the problem of knowledge and understanding of the Other. The relationship with alterity may be under the sign of the positive, but also under the sign of the negative. Thus, the presence of evil in the world can take, according to Cristina Gavriluță, different forms: “evil as an inexpressible experience”, “evil as the anti-world of this world”, “evil as action and nonaction”, “evil as indifference”, “evil as oblivion”. The same chapter draws attention to the crisis of contemporary society. It is seen and felt as a lack of meaning in the context of the „californization of

---

Gavriluta, Human Trafficking. Secularization and Public Policy Intervention Publishing House European Institute, Iasi, 2013, pp.11-25; Cristina Gavriluță, „Ethnic and Cultural Identity”, in vol. Institute of Romanian Philology „Al. Philippide”, Luminita Botosineanu, Elena Dănila, Cecilia Holban, Ofelia Ichim (coord.), Romanian majority /Minority Romanians: linguistic interference and cohabitations, literary and ethnological, Alfa Publishing House, Iasi, 2007

culture”<sup>3</sup>. In this respect, the author considers that the fate of human being is similar to that of the prisoner in the Platonic cave and his true bet is to „distinguish between shadows and reality”. A number of practices in the unconventional area related to the symbolism of fire, divination and Satanism complete the picture of „social expressions of the sacred”.

Chapter four, *The Body as normal or deviant*, exposes representations and ways of reporting man to his own corporality. “The body - a prison of the soul”, “The body - the garment of the soul”, “The body – a social construct” and “The corporeality in the dynamics of power and social normality” are sections that bring to attention the way attitudes, behaviours, the way social phenomena are born and develop starting from the way we understand and relate to our own corporeality.

With clearly argued explanations and comparisons, the work has an interdisciplinary character, it is also useful to the sociologist, anthropologist, psychologist and those concerned with the knowledge of everyday life beyond appearances. The reading of the book introduces the reader to a diverse and challenging theme that benefits from a new approach, from the perspective of a hermeneutics of the everyday negative.

As we have become accustomed to in her other books<sup>4</sup>, Cristina Gavriliuță insists on the importance of direct, authentic and profound encounter with the reality of the world in which we live. That can only be beneficial to us, as it contributes to “establishing a less mutilated dialogue with reality”<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, it requires a hard look at the negativity of the world, sincerity and the courage of an uneasy enterprise.

Beyond the pleasure of reading, *The Negative of the Daily* is a book that conveys new meanings for our actions, gestures and choices.

---

<sup>3</sup> We mention here the work Gavriliuță C. *The Sacred and the Californization of Culture*, Bucharest, Paideia Publishing House, 2008, 208 p., which capitalizes in title the syntagma proposed by Paul Barbăneagră in one of the interviews given to the author.

<sup>4</sup> The author, Cristina Gavriliuță, signs four other books that propose a socio-anthropological approach to some topics of real interest: C. Gavriliuță, *The Everyday Sacred. Symbols, Rituals, Mythologies*, Saarbraken. Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013, 197 p.; Gavriliuță C., *Socioanthropology of divinatory phenomena*, Iași: European Institute Publishing House, 2008, 296 p.; C. Gavriliuță, *The Sacred and the Californization of Culture*, Bucharest: Paideia Publishing House, 2008, 208 p.; C. Gavriliuță. *Socioanthropology of the religious phenomenon*, Iași: Axis Foundation Publishing House, 2003, 240 p. Egar Morin, *La paradigme perdu: la nature humaine*, apud, C. Gavriliuță, *Negativul cotidianului*, Iași, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Press, 2017, p.75

<sup>5</sup> Egar Morin, *La paradigme perdu: la nature humaine*, apud C. Gavriliuță, *Negative of the daily*, Iași, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Press, 2017, p.75

## BOOK REVIEW

DENNIS – THEODOR PÂRJU<sup>1</sup>

---

Carmen Palaghia, *Dimensiuni ale devianței școlare. De la identificare la prevenție*  
[*Dimensions of School Deviance. From Identification to Prevention*],  
Editura Pro Universitaria, București, 2016

Carmen Palaghia is the author of the book entitled “Dimensions of school deviance. From identification to prevention”. Currently, the author is a lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy and Social and Political Sciences, Department of Sociology and Social Work at “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iași. The didactic and research activity focuses on areas such as school violence, school deviance, human trafficking, public-private partnership management and partnership in social assistance, public offer and negotiation.

As far as the academic park is concerned, the author has graduated the Social Work specialty, the “Social Management and Community Development” Master, and later in 2013, he obtained her Ph.D. in Sociology with the subject “School Deviance and Formation of Social Responsibility”.

This work appeared on the bookstore shelves in 2016 under the aegis of the ProUniversitaria Publishing House, Bucharest, with a total of 147 pages. As a structure, the book has a theoretical part dealt with in the first two chapters and a practical one in the third chapter. The first chapter is called “School Deviance. Problems and analyses of deviant behaviours in the school and family environment”. In this chapter, we present the main concepts underpinning the phenomenon of school deviance, such as “anomia, education, conformism and nonconformism in defining deviance”. In essence, the close relationship between school deviance and social deviance is illustrated, and from the correlation of the two concepts derives the conclusion that school deviance is “an extension of social deviance.”

The second chapter illustrates the problems of “Predeviance and forms of school deviance”. Their understanding is due to the fact that we are already acquainted with some of the specific terms of the first chapter, which are practically an introduction to the theme and problems of school deviance. Also in

---

\* Social Worker - The General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection Iași, PhD student in Sociology, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, e-mail: theo\_dennis12@yahoo.com, tel: 0752597643.



the second chapter, “the main forms of school deviance, the characteristics of the school in the prevention of violence, the particularities of social prevention in contextual prevention, the school and community prevention of violence, the role of the social assistant in the school in the formation of responsibility in pupils and, last but not least, the dimension of school deviance in the context of social research”.

Through this theorization of the phenomenon of school deviance, the author described the phenomenon of school deviance and its main characteristics. Also, following the reading of the first two chapters, we come to the conclusion that the incidence of school deviations has reached alarming odds in educational units throughout the contemporary society. We can conclude that the theoretical part is smaller than the part in which the data analysis is presented. At the same time, some concepts illustrated and presented in the first two chapters could be analyzed in a more detailed manner. Therefore, the choice of the author to synthesize the theory is due to the fact that the paper is intended for the methodological research of the phenomenon of school deviance.

Considering the practical part of the paper, in the third chapter titled “Dynamics of deviant behaviour among pupils in the school environment”, the author presents the results of the sociological research carried out on the subject of deviance between May and June 2015 in four lyceum units from the city of Iași.

As methods and techniques used in sociological research, the researcher used the factual documentation, the direct and indirect observation, the questionnaire applied to pupils and teachers, the interview / interview (with teachers - teachers, parents from the Committee of Parents, psychologist from the four school units, social workers, the family assistant from DGASPC, with a school inspector, the directors from the four schools), the author added to these methodological approaches an interesting focus group with pupils, teachers and parents.

As a result of this sociological research, the author reached valid conclusions about the phenomenon of school deviance - seen through the eyes of pupils, teachers, parents, but also of other specialists who have the competence to contact the student with deviant manifestations and behaviours in the school space. Following the interviews and questionnaires, the main conclusions of sociological research are as follows: “teachers consider to a greater extent that deviance can be generated on the one hand by school inadvertence, and on the other hand by video violence; both categories of respondents placed first-place disrespect for school teachers as a current and worst form of deviance reflecting the lack of adaptation to the school environment; for both teachers and pupils forms of school deviance or delinquency such as physical violence and attitudinal - verbal attitudes towards teachers, colleagues and other people in school, would constitute acts that could be punished by law”.

As the bibliographic sources used, the author has recourse to the writings of leading scholars who have approached and researched the phenomenon of

school deviance. Among them we can list Maurice Cusson, Ioan Iacobuță, Cristina Neamțu, Laurențiu Șoitu, Cornel Hăvârneanu, Vasile Miftode and many others.

We can finally ask why did the author approach the subject of the phenomenon of school deviance and not another one as relevant to the functioning of the educational environment? The answer is very concise, school deviance is a global phenomenon that needs to be treated with seriousness by many categories of specialists (teacher, school counsellor, social worker, psychologist, policeman, physician). They come from various fields such as education, social assistance, psychology, pedagogy, medicine and have the competence to prevent and intervene in cases of school deviance manifested by students in school, family or community space.

In conclusion, the work of Carmen Palaghia, “Dimensions of school deviance. From Identification to Prevention” is intended for a wide audience, including, of course, students, teachers, social workers and public order specialists, parents and even students. Also, for me, the work can complete the findings of research and many other specialized studies.