LIFESTYLE TRANSFORMATION OF LEFT BEHIND CHILDREN IN CONTEXT OF ROMANIAN WORK MIGRATION

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The main objective of the study was to investigate different aspects (physical, psychological, social & cultural) that left behind children of migrant workers might exhibit in comparison to the other children. Our fieldwork involved two different locations (villages) from South Romania (Teleorman & Prahova County) where a high percentage of adults are long-term migrant workers. The sample comprises 200 subjects of secondary-school children (age 10–13yrs old). Our questionnaire included items targeting different attitudes towards traditional values (ethnic & religious identity), intra-familial relations (parents-children communication) as well as different familial habits (e.g. nutritional ones). Some anthropometrical measures were also taken (such as those involving corpulence). Besides qualitative analysis, the rich dataset allowed us to use quantitative evaluations by deploying statistical techniques for categorical data analysis. The transformation process reveals a multiple transition-level such that the aspects connected to values related to their identity are frequently omitted from their lifestyle.

Key words: left-behind children, Romanian work migration, lifestyle transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, 10-20% of children and adolescents experience various levels of mental vulnerability. Out of these, approximately half of them manifest mental disorders, beginning with the age of 14. If untreated, these conditions severely influence children's development, their educational attainments and their potential to live fulfilling and productive lives. The comprehensive mental health action plan 2013-2020, adopted by the 66th World Health Assembly, provides a framework for strengthening capacities in countries to address the mental health needs of children and adolescents. The Department encourages the adoption of a life-cycle approach in implementation of mental health policies and strategies". The assessment of the well-being within the children and adolescent population should be a regular task for authorities.

In the acculturation context, enhanced by global phenomena, geographic and occupational mobility

is growing. Moving in order to find either work, or a way for professional accomplishment are types of work migration, which is an economically motivated phenomenon. Although work migration is particularly financially motivated, people's experience of multiculturality is more complex, it being filtered by the belief and value system. This system underlies the formation of the mental representations of self, life and the world. It is built and validated psycho-emotionally and behaviorally in the child's growing and developing stages, within his/her relationship with parenting models. Parenting implies pleasure, privileges or profit, as well as the experience of frustration, fear or failure.

While immersing in another culture, various beliefs, values and mental representations are being addressed, both explicitly and implicitly, for the purpose of making changes. In a deeper sense, although less visible, characteristics from a more biological register, with a bio-cultural imprint, are also being under stress. Thus, we can refer to the characteristics of the sleep-wake cycle (Borosanu, 2015), nutrition, attachment processes with

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biological and psychic components, identification or belonging. The same bio-psychic contents and processes mediate the person's structuring as well as the immersion within another culture. They are being formed and act within inter-human relationships in a parenting process, as understood in a broader meaning, respectively within various permanent, reciprocal and dynamic interactions between an individual and his/her life context (Sam, 2006).

For children whose parents migrated in a different cultural context, adaptation is related to the context of origin where they actually live but also with the ability to adapt to their parents' host country's culture. whom children identify themselves with. The child's adaptation in a multicultural context thus reflects his/her abilities to interact with the community of origin, where they live, but also with the culture where the parents migrated to, parenting being deeply rooted in physiology (the child-parent dyad). In defining and completing personal and cultural identity, integration difficulties may intensify, having personal, economic and socio-cultural consequences (Oppendal et al., 2004). The parents' work migration experience with regards to cultural diversity broadens, through complex connections that are being created, their personal network, which becomes transnational, as well as the social field where they are being caught, which also becomes transnational (Molina, 2012). This transformation implicitly acts upon their children, at least at an informational level (through changing mental representations), which also affects their experience and understanding. Thurber describes coping methods for children who were separated from their parents in the context of acculturation. In their case, because they find themselves in a growing and developmental stage, the natural resilience mechanisms are very active (communication, contact with the loved ones, meeting with one's parents again, family bonds), represent practical ways to cope easier with the separation period (Thurber, 1995).

OBJECTIVE

Our initial inquiry involved an anthropological exploration in order to understand the impact of the parents' work migration on the children who were Adriana Borosanu and Richard David-Rus

left behind. The main objective of this study is putting together the biological and the cultural after the investigation of various aspects (educational, social, bio-psychological, or cultural), targeting the dynamic of certain biocultural values. These aspects are influenced by individual characteristics, the characteristics of the family, as well as by the socio-cultural status of the parents, in a broader context.

Our main objective was to build a comprehensive and orientation model of certain strategies regarding migration that targets adaptive contents and processes in the context of acculturation and globalization and its consequences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The present paper represents a follow-up of the doctoral² and postdoctoral³ studies (Borosanu, 2013, 2015, 2016), where I approached, in field investigations, the effects of migration and multiculturality in the context of global phenomena on Romanian preadolescents. These studies revealed aspects regarding changes and consequences in the adolescents' life-style, which, in specialized literature, are frequently studied fragmentarily, separating the biological from the cultural (in a broader meaning). Subsequently, the integration between these two domains is not being made, although it is known that the human being is intrinsically a biocultural entity. Based on the analyzed results we built a scheme that presents a frame of reference regarding making a complex exploratory study, which targets the migrants' adaptation (rapid changes on multiple plans, under the conditions of vulneralizing parenting relationships).

An important aspect of the multiculturality condition is the presence within the person's psyche (with biological grounding) of two belief and value systems: the one of origin and the one from the host country – at an individual, group and cultural (the one within which they live) level. If at and individual level the paradigm in which the value systems evolve is prominently the relational one, when we move towards a group or cultural context, the paradigm shifts. Within a group, the relational paradigm functions in balance with the socio-biological one, and in the socio-cultural environment, the socio-biological paradigm is dominant.



Figure 1. The adaptive process in multiculturality.

At an individual level, the belief system elements (contents and processes - mental software) have various quantifications and their transformation dynamic depends on cultural distances, on the similitude, complementarity or conflict condition respectively. The integrable area is given by similitudes. The integration issues at an individual level appear in the complementarity situation (potential conflict) or conflict. In these situations, the bio-physiological balances (sleep, nourishment type, geo-climatic conditions) can be stressed and the ideals challenged. If for the first generation of migrants the conflict can be managed, when it comes to the second or third generation it can escalate, being able to cause extreme behaviors. In these situations, due to the intra and inter-generational value transmission mechanism within inter-human relationships, the idealized bio-cultural print of the origin country remains, having an activation potential. At a group level, there are the same conditions, of similitude, complementarity or conflict, but through a paradigm shift they can be enhanced and the group force matters in survival conditions.

At a social level, it can be noticed that similarities and contradictions are coagulating, evidencing forms of manifestation including extreme phenomena that come to disrupt the host country's social balance. As one moves from the individual towards the group and society, the internal conflicts can augment their potential, which in numerous occasions remains latent and can manifest in crisis situations.

The enactment of the conflict state, regardless of the level of analysis (individual, group, population) is conditioned by value decision criteria, which are individual. Based on these, the transformed values are acted behaviorally and become a new life-style with individual, group and socio-cultural valences.



Figure 2. Lifestyle changes in left behind children of migrant workers.

This presented situation is taken into consideration and constitutes the usual integration politics preoccupation. Currently, what is being inadequately managed in the migration and integration issue is the bio-physiological and cultural stress, especially in its idealization component. The consequence lies in a profound unbalance both of the migrants and of the local population, with inherent effects. In this context, the necessity to approach with more carefulness and diplomacy the bio-physiological and cultural aspects and a reconsideration and revalorization of the natural resilience processes derives. The nutrition specific for cultures, as well as sleep, constitute the basic pawns for the bio-psychic internal equilibrium. By changing the cultural specific, nutrition disrupts the basal metabolism with already visible consequences (overweight/obesity), whereas a bio-cultural inadequate sleep generates an instability background and potentiates mental and metabolic dysfunctions.

The two are included as basic premises for an open system, such as the human psyche, and neglecting these leads to remarkable economical loss, beyond the immediate and more visible gain.

At the presented scheme's construction base lie the following elements, which were taken into consideration in our study.

CONCLUSIONS

We highlighted that both the biological and the cultural factor undergo a value transformation

process. This is revealed in lifestyle changes, mediated by individual bio-psychic conditions.

Sleep is one of the factors that ensure the stability of the human psyche, making the value transformation and resettlement possible. Also, it is indispensable to life's and individual's efficacy in their activity areas, including the economic one.

Nutrition, being bio-culturally, onto- and phylogenetically determined, also indispensable for survival, undergoes value changes, and it is necessary to be maintained in a certain rhythm, imposed by cultural distances between migrants and the host country.

The enlarged family appears to handle better the cultural shock, cushioning stress, both at the level of the migrant and their family of origin and of the population from the country of origin.

The migrant individuals propagate change over their next of kin, and at the children's level, one notices the tendency to erase the differences in what concerns attributing significance to values and practicing them accordingly, because any value has an emotional connotation and this ontogenetic level is the most sensitive to being influenced.

In approaching religious aspects, one requires more prudence and diplomacy. They answer the inherent need of the human condition to idealize, they belong to the collective memories and are found onto- and phylogenetically.

A better grounding of the research regarding multiculturality is being made, according to the

presented modes, by inserting elements of biology (sleep, nutrition) and of certain formative structures (melodic, choreographic structures) that act upon the psyche in a preverbal area.

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