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SUMMARY

OF

THE PhD THESIS

**THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACT OF
TEMPORARY PARENTAL ABANDONMENT OF
PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN LEFT HOME BY
THEIR MIGRANT PARENTS. STUDY CASE –
NEAMȚ COUNTY**

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KEY WORDS

Temporary child abandonment, parental deprivation, primary school children, migrant parents, emotional and social development of primary school children, parenting, family pedagogy, prevention of child abandonment.

INTRODUCTION

Migration of labor is not a new phenomenon, nor recent, nor risk-free, nor benefits-free. The factors turning countries into destinations of migratory flows are: economic prosperity, political stability, ethnic, religious and racial tolerance, good natural conditions of climate and resources.

The factors which determine the migratory flows are: endemic poverty, economic and political instability, social uproar, conflicts and wars, terrorism, lack of natural resources, droughts, earthquakes and other natural catastrophes, environment problems, racial, ethnic and religious persecutions. At present, 3.3% of the world population is migrant – 244 million people. Although the main migratory flows are directed toward certain countries of the world, virtually all countries are confronted with this phenomenon: either as countries of origin, transit or destination. Some countries like Romania can be origin, transit and destination for migratory flows. The 2018 Report of IOM states that migration flows is nowadays one of the most significant indicators of globalization along with financial, commercial and information flows.

The main benefits of migration are:

- Financial gains;
- Investment of remittances in the country of origin;
- Development of entrepreneurship;
- Higher education and professional qualifications of migrants;
- Intercultural exchange, exposure to new cultural experiences.

In 2017, Romanian migrants' contribution to Romanian economy raised up to 5 billion USD (4,3 billion EUR), making migrant remittances the largest source of foreign currency.

However, there are a lot of short and medium term costs of migration, some are well documented and understood, some not. The main cost of economic migration is represented by parental deprivation of left-home children of migrant parents.

The official data released by Romanian Government on June 30th 2017 stated that 96,723 children had at least one of their parents working abroad. Mass media often refer to the children of migrant Romanian as to the “generation of sacrifice” given the impact of parental deprivation on their physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.

Motivation. The author wished to study the impact of the temporary abandonment of primary schoolchildren 15 years after the first studies dedicated to this phenomenon for several reasons

1. In her activity as a psychotherapist, she had clients temporarily abandoned by one or both migrant parents and working with them put under question some of the previous studies findings.
2. Some of the parents she worked with as a psychotherapist and parenting counselor had been temporarily abandoned by their own migrant parents early in the mid 1990's and the author wished to understand more about how they developed as adults and parents.
3. The author spent her childhood and teenage years in Neamț county and her links continue; they have never been severed. She is familiar with the migration of the local labor and its consequences for more than two decades, having friends, neighbours' and family members who migrated.
4. The author wished to better understand how the new communication technologies and low-cost air transport changed the ties and lives of migrant parents long-distance marriages and left-home children.

Objectives of the present study case research. Early studies conducted by various NGO's (such as the Open Society Foundation, Save the Children Romania, "Alternative Sociale" etc) and international organisations (UNICEF, UNPD, Gallup) as well as a myriad of experts in sociology, psychology, education and police have shown the many negative effects parental deprivation has for children as well as the risks for the life and development of these abandoned children. In fact, the younger the children, the greater the risks and the more negative the effects on:

- Physical development and health;
- Social and emotional development and mental health;
- Intellectual development, education and schooling;

These children are also in danger of being:

- exploited for work and sex;
- physically and emotionally abused;
- loitering and missing;
- juvenile delinquents;
- alcohol, drugs and other substances abusers.

The main objective is to understand how great the above-mentioned risks still are for the temporarily abandoned primary school children and if there are any new risks for them.

In doing so, the author analyzed all the dimensions of their life – their living conditions, their health and global development, their school performance and daily activities – compared to their classmates who live with their parents.

Between 2013 – 2015, Romanian authorities have undertaken new measures to better protect children left-home by their absent migrant parents. One of the main objectives of the present case study is to check if the new protection measures are being properly implemented and having the anticipated benefits.

After 2010, the development of new communications technologies and low cost air transport have made room for the technology assisted parenting. The present case study aims to check how effective this global-tech parenting is, even in a poor rural area.

Another objective of the present case study is to establish if a higher level of public awareness has a limiting impact on the temporary abandonment of children by their migrant parents and what are the best measures to prevent or limit the effects of parental deprivation of children left at home by their migrant parents, measures which could be extended nation wide.

SUMMARY OF THE THESIS' CHAPTERS

Chapter I has the title *“Modern Economic Migration. Facts and Statistics”* and aims to present the main characteristics of modern migration as well as the evolution of migration in Romania and the world in the past three decades.

The results of the main Romanian and international researches conducted by NGO's and international organizations between 2000-2010 were included in this first chapter. The main measures taken by Romanian authorities to protect children temporarily abandoned by their absent migrant parents were also included in the first chapter.

The Romanian studies showed almost solely negative effects of the parents' migration for the left-home children:

1. Children temporarily abandoned by their migrant parents are aged 0-18, but 50% of them are under 7 years of age;
2. 25% of the abandoned children keep in touch sporadically with their absent migrant parents;
3. Migration of only one spouse frequently causes the divorce of parents and break the family.
4. The main emotional effects of the temporary abandonment of children is: depression due to deprivation of love and care (for approximately one third of the left-home children); the absence of mothers is harder on children than the absence of fathers and often children suffer from severe depression and are suicidal. Severe depression is often associated with separation anxiety, anorexia and bulimia.
5. Abandoned children feel lonely and unloved.
6. Abandoned children are at risk of being beaten, bullied, emotionally abused, neglected, socially excluded and exploited for work and sex.
7. Abandoned children are burdened with chores and work especially in rural areas, such as caring for their younger siblings, working the field, taking care of the family cattle and poultry. Such heavy duty tasks on top of their longing for their absent parents reflect in poor school attendance, school performance, school results and often they drop out of school.
8. With regard to their personality and character, there is a tendency of the abandoned children to grow up less pro-social and more individualistic,

egocentric, non-empathetic and materialistic.

9. Regarding their physical development, many abandoned children have a poor diet, disorganized and insufficient; they develop various illnesses such as diabetes, rickets, obesity and mineral/vitamin deficiency.
10. With regard to the emotional and social development, the abandoned children are less prone to adjust well and integrate into society (especially children abandoned by their absent migrant mothers). A small benefit can be their early autonomy and self-sufficiency, but some of these more independent children cannot ask for anybody's help when they need and thus they are at risk of behaving improperly and getting into serious trouble.
11. With regard to school results, children abandoned by their absent migrant parents have, in general, poor results, a lower level of intellectual stimulations and less interest in completing tasks and doing homework.
12. Abandoned children miss school often and can exhibit bad conduct in school: they can often be aggressive, oppositionist, defiant and destructive especially if abandoned by their mothers.
13. Abandoned children of migrant parents are at risk of joining groups of juvenile delinquents and commit antisocial acts such as theft, vandalism and loitering.
14. Abandoned children are at risk of alcohol and substance abuse, to have sexually promiscuous behavior and become prostitutes.

International studies show other negative effects such as discrimination of abandoned girls who are more burdened with domestic chores than boys, development of a consumerist attitude in abandoned children and gender confusion. But the studies also point out some positive effects of parental deprivation of children left home by migrant parents: 60% of the children have different choices in career and higher aspirations financially supported by their parents who wish for their offspring to become physicians, nurses, teachers, engineers, architects, lawyers etc and leave their countries of origin to have well paid jobs abroad. Also, children left home by their migrant parents have better social skills and are more independent than non-abandoned children.

The international studies also point out the importance, albeit limited, of technology assisted parenting. Studies such as Parreñas (2006) showed children of migrants and their parents having similar values, views and behaviors, thus proving

that long distance parenting is possible as technology allows a certain level of intimacy between children left home and their migrant parents. Phone calls, video calls and emails help children remain in touch with their parents all around the world.

In 2018, Romania had 5 millions citizens living abroad and 94,991 children left home by their migrant parents, out of which 18,012 children were abandoned by both parents (showing a rising trend from 2017). 16,797 children abandon by both parents were in the care of relatives with no protection measures and 1,215 children were in foster care or in child-care centers. Of the 94,991 children left home by migrant parents, 13,088 children came from single parent families.

3,881 children were under special protection care, 620 in foster care, 868 in child-care centres, 2,089 children with relatives, 304 in other people's care.

To ensure the more effective protection of children left home by their migrant parents, the Romanian authorities took the following measures:

- **ANPDCA Order no 219/15.06.2006** to identify and monitor the children abandoned by their migrant parents and to ensure intervention in case it is needed.
- **Law 272/2004** modified and completed in 2013 with a special section for children left home by their migrant parents.

The new measures state the following:

- Parents are under the obligation to notify SPAS with a minimum of 40 days in advance before leaving the country, advising of their intentions and to name the person(s) they have designated to take care of their children for the entire duration of their absence;
- Parents are under the obligation to present at the recruiting agencies the written proof from SPAS/their town hall that they had fulfilled the above-mentioned obligation;
- SPAS and DGASPC have the obligation to identify children whose parents are at work abroad, to take protection measures and establish ways in which these children can keep in touch with their parents. SPAS and DGASPC also decide if the abandoned children need and will benefit from psychological counseling;
- Social workers have the obligation to re-evaluate abandoned children every 3 months and notify DGASPC in order to take special care and protection measures when needed (foster care and urgent foster care).

Chapter II has the title: “Possible consequences of the temporary abandonment of the primary schoolchildren left home by their migrant parents”. The objective of this second chapter is to take into consideration every possible risk and effects of the temporary parental abandonment for schoolchildren aged 6-11. During the third childhood – superimposed on the primary school years, children develop slower than before but the changes are of capital importance. School adjustment and learning are the most important activities in children’s life now and their development and life routine are under the influence of these two processes. The most important aspects of their physical development are: gaining height, gaining weight, bone and muscle mass development, change of teeth, development of general motor skills and fine motor skills necessary for writing, brain growth and increase of self-control.

If a child’s growth is stunted at this age, their entire normal development and long-term health are threatened. Moreover, learning and acquisition of the most important school skills are affected if a child’s physical growth is stunted. For these reasons, the present case study analysed the following possible negative effects of the parental abandonment of children on their development:

- Effects on the general physical development (malnutrition, rickets, metabolic disorders, motor disorders, respiratory disorders, teeth problems and other illnesses);
- Effects on the social and emotional development (toxic stress related psychological disorders, low emotional development, physical and emotional abuses, role reversal between parents and children, antisocial traces of character, early autonomy);
- Effects on the intellectual development, education and schooling (low intellectual stimulation, poor school results and skills, poor participation in extra-school and extra-curricular activities, high risk of dropping out).

Chapter III is dedicated to the organisation of the pedagogical research of the present study case: the participants, the parameters of the analysis and the research methods.

The participants. A number of 50 primary schoolchildren aged 6-10 were selected from the three schools of Girov and Bodești, Neamț:

- 23 children were temporarily abandoned by their absent migrant parents (7 by both parents, 4 by their mothers, 12 by their fathers);

- 27 children live with their parents; 2 sisters live with their parents but their father is away 5 days a week and only comes home on weekends, one boy lives with his divorced parents as agreed in the divorce settlement

Neamț County is one of the areas most affected by the economic crisis after 1989, being poverty stricken and having a high unemployment rate. Even during the economic boom of 2006-2008, the economic growth of Neamț county was modest, timber and cottage industries unable to offer enough jobs nor attractive salaries. In 2016, the average salary was very modest, being the second lowest in the entire country (1546 lei compared to 1480 lei in Harghita county, the lowest in the Romania at that time) In 2018, Neamț county had the fourth lowest average monthly income in Romania.

Bodești and Girov and their 11 villages (Bodeștii de Jos, Corni, Oșlobeni, Boțești, Căciulești, Dănești, Doina, Gura Văii, Popești, Turturești, Verșești) were chosen after studying the information provided by Neamț School Inspectorate - which had the list of all the children temporarily abandoned by migrant parents in the county.

Most of the participating children are in the preparatory class (36%) and the fourth grade (20%), with only 16% being in the second grade, 14% being in the third grade and 14% in the first grade. The average age of the abandoned children was 8 years and 4 months, the youngest being 6 years and the oldest 11 years and 5 months. The average age of the non-abandoned children was 8 years and 5 months, the youngest being 6 years and 1 month and the oldest 11 years and 6 months.

Analysed dimensions: In choosing the analysed dimensions, the author took into account the risks revealed by the 2000-2010 studies regarding the impact of the temporary child abandonment on her development:

- general health,
- living conditions,
- behaviors and conduct,
- school results and acquisition of school skills,
- neuro-psychological development of children - their intelligence.

The author also took into account the specific criteria of normal development of children at this age according to Jean Piaget (1983), Erik Erikson (1968), Lawrence Kohlberg (1981; 1987), Ursula Șchiopu and Emil Verza (1997).

System of research methods: The following methods of qualitative and quantitative research were employed:

- a. The case study is an intensive qualitative research method, either individual or collective, which employs a variety of means: interviews, questionnaires, observation, study of documents, statistical analysis etc. Given the very small sample of participants, the selection of the case is dictated by the researcher's own reasoning, but also by accessibility of the case. The most relevant cases for the scope of the research are recommended: typical cases, deviant cases and cases with the highest number of variables.
- b. The questionnaire based enquiry. This is a quantitative method of research. Three questionnaires were applied to provide information on: childrens' general health state and their history of illnesses, school results and school skills and their living conditions. The questionnaires were answered by children, parents, legal caregivers and teachers and allowed for a tridimensional perspective on the studied parameters. The answers to these questionnaires allowed for a quantitative analysis of data and indicated where in-depths interviews were required.
- c. The interview. The interview is an exploratory qualitative research method and allows for the participation of a fairly small number of participants, the data gathered being unrepresentative from a statistical point of view for the studied population. This method allows the researcher to study the motivation, emotions, perceptions and feelings of studied individuals. Children, teachers, parents, grandparents were interviewed and their observations, answers and comments clarified certain aspects related to the abandoned children's perceptions, feelings and behaviors compared to their non-abandoned peers.
- d. Psychometric tests. Psychometric methods are means to assess psychological capacities of the individual in order to establish the presence or absence of those capacities, as well as how well are they represented. The most well known psychometric method is the standardized psychological test. Two tests were selected to be applied to children who participated in the present study

case: Kohs Test of cubes and BASC-2 (Behavior Assessment System for Children).

- e. Statistical analysis. The statistical analysis and graphics were realized with the SPSS 20 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program. SPSS is a modular line of fully integrated products for planning, data gathering, preparation and data management, analysis, reports and result presentation. Apart from the descriptive analysis of the variables (average, median, standard deviation, minimum and maximum), given the study case objectives, we used cross tables, test χ^2 (chi-square) and test t for independent samples.

Chapter IV is entitled “*The results of the research*” and presents the conclusions formulated after the application of the research methods and interpretation of the data. The conclusions are grouped as presented below:

1. The economic dimension – compared analysis of living conditions for temporarily abandoned primary schoolchildren and their non-abandoned schoolmates. The following criteria were investigated:

- a. monthly income per capita;
- c. family home – the type of home and facilities (living conditions depend also on the quality of the home and access to utilities);
- d. food (good and healthy food reflects in a high quality of life);
- e. free time and relaxation activities, children’s hobbies and extra-school activities (they are an expression of the disposable income of a family after paying for food, utilities, leasing, rents etc.). Such activities give life a better quality and for children the extra-school activities (sports, trips, musical classes, singing, arts etc) are very valuable as learning experiences.
- f. daily domestic tasks of children.
- g. children’s care – who is in daily charge of children’s care, who prepares his daily food, who takes him to doctors, who administers his medicine, who washes his laundry etc). A primary school child needs an adult to help him with these relevant aspects of his life since he cannot take complete care of himself in spite of the relatively high level of autonomy he enjoys compared to a preschooler. Unless an adult performs these tasks, there is a high risk of the child suffering

from neglect and even get hurt as he would try to perform such tasks himself (getting cut, burnt, poisoned, electrocuted, malnourished, etc.)

2. The dimension of physical development and general health. The most important criteria of children's health and development were analysed: growth, weight, BMI, oral health, exercise, the general state of their health and illnesses they suffered from and access to medical services. This age, from 6-11 years, is crucial for child development. More than a decade ago, study results showed a high level of health precariousness of abandoned children because of insufficient care and food. Good health is crucial for children to be able to acquire good school results and skills.

3. The social and emotional dimension of children's development. Maladaptive and adaptive aspects. In order to establish if abandoned children have a higher occurrence of emotional disorders, more disruptive and difficult behaviors and less social skills than non-abandoned children we analysed their social and emotional development. It was also relevant to assess the occurrence of speech and oral language development problems, pervasive development disorders, learning difficulties and delays of their global development, anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder and depression. The BASC-2 is a multidimensional behavior rating system that assesses clinical and adaptive features of behavior and emotional functioning via Parent Rating Scales (PRS) and Teacher Rating Scales (TRS; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004). On the BASC-2 Preschool Form, T-scores are provided for eight clinical scales (Aggression, Anxiety, Attention Problems, Atypicality, Depression, Hyperactivity, Somatization, Withdrawal) and four adaptive scales (Activities of Daily Living, Adaptability, Functional Communication, Social Skills), as well as four composite scales: Externalizing Problems, Internalizing Problems, Behavioral Symptoms Index, and Adaptive Skills. Additionally, seven content scales are available on the PRS/TRS. The content scales contain items belonging to the primary clinical and adaptive scales and additional items not on these scales. These scales combine items from multiple constructs to detect patterns of behavior. One content scale, the Developmental Social Disorders (DSD) scale, measures symptoms associated with ASD, including difficulties with social skills and communication (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004).

4. Education and schooling dimension. Conduct in school. Deviant behaviors in school. Schooling for children aged 6-11 is compulsory and essential to

their development. During the primary school years children have to acquire verbal, numerical, reading and writing skills. Children's normal development is hindered unless the above-mentioned skills are acquired before they are 11, therefore our study analysed the following criteria:

- rate of acquisition of reading, writing and mathematical skills;
- rate of acquisition of oral language;
- learning difficulties;
- attention span and completion of tasks in class;
- homework;
- extra-school and extra-curricular activities;
- conduct in school;
- relationship with their peers;
- deviant behaviors and disciplinary measures.

5. Risks for primary schoolchildren who have been temporarily abandoned by their migrant parents. Previous studies showed certain risks for home-left children of migrant parents. Such risks refer to:

- physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect;
- illnesses and accidents due to inadequate care and supervision;
- loitering, delinquency and begging;
- sex and labor exploitation;
- substance and alcohol abuse.

None of the 50 participants to the Neamț county study case is threatened by any of the above-mentioned risks.

Chapter V refers to “Interventions for children with emotional and behavior problems”. Eleven children of the 50 participants were identified with emotional and behavior problems: 5 abandoned children and 6 non-abandoned children.

Three types of interventions were employed:

1. Psychotherapy and parental counseling;
2. School counseling;
3. Educational project in school: *I am here with you and I am here for you*

Only two abandoned children and three non-abandoned children benefited from psychotherapy (paid for by their families). None of the abandoned children benefited from free therapy/counseling provided by SPAS (state) social workers as

stated by law. No social worker has ever assessed their emotional state nor their behavior either home or at school.

Parents of the children who benefited from psychotherapy undertook parenting counseling. The parents of the other 5 children refused their children's therapy for various reasons.

Children who benefited therapy successfully overcame their emotional and behavior problems.

One non-abandoned child and his mother benefited from school counseling but the child's defiant and aggressive behavior slightly improved and only for a short while.

During the 2017-2018 school year, a year after the present research, Mititelu Viorica, a teacher and education counselor for Girov School organized and implemented the education project *I am here for you, I am here with you*. The project team also included the school manager and all of the teachers, the school psychologist and IT manager, the village's priests and members of the Parent Council and Children Council. The beneficiaries were the abandoned children of migrant parents, their left-home parents and caregivers. The scope of the project was to involve the temporarily abandoned primary schoolchildren in activities designed to help them better adjust to their parent(s)' absence and prevent them from developing emotional and behavioral problems.

As consequence, the occurrence of behavior problems in abandoned children of the migrant parents dropped considerably compared to the previous school year (2016-2017) when the present study case research had been conducted.

Chapter VI proposes *“Prevention and intervention: steps to minimize and alleviate the impact of impact of temporary child abandoned”*.

Temporary abandonment of children or its subsequent impacts can be minimised if:

- parents and future parents are trained in parenting;
- pedagogy of family is introduced in the curricula of teenagers and university students;

Effects of temporary child abandonment can be minimized and alleviated if:

- Abandoned children are properly supported in their physical, emotional and intellectual development;

- Therapy and counseling is available for them and their families so that they can better adjust to the economic, educational and emotional hurdles that they are confronted with.

Prevention. The best way to minimise child abandonment is parental education. At present, parental education is available to adults mostly as self-education with the help of internet, magazines and self-help books. Some of them participate at their own expenses to conferences and parenting workshops. Self-education has its own downsides: parents can become increasingly confused and inefficient as their knowledge is more and more incoherent and they are less and less able to properly respond to their children's needs. In turn, children become less and less educated and resilient and more and more uncivil and undisciplined. Parenting is a science in spite of many parents rejecting such an idea. Parental education can start in school and carry on as optional courses at university and 'family academy'/'weekend schools'/open university' courses. Such courses should be organized as successive training modules for parents and school counselors and should refer to general aspects of parenting, or specific parenting for children with autism or ADHD or learning difficulties.

Parenting education for teenagers would be very useful since they can better understand what family planning is, how to choose a partner/spouse and their responsibilities as future parents. Such courses could become part of the IXth grade curricula onwards since marriage is allowed with parental consent at the age of 16 in Romania and our country is the EU member with the highest proportion of underage mothers. Parental and marriage education during teenage years is the best way to prevent marital and parental dysfunction later in life (Elena Anghel, 2011).

Family pedagogy courses can be organized via a national online platform elaborated by a multi-disciplinary team with academic supervision; free leaflets, online courses for parents, school curricula courses for teenagers and optional courses for students at university. With the rapid development of science and technology, combined with economic and social changes bring new challenges to parents worldwide and many are not fit to face them and educate their children at the same time.

Raising children's resilience is another way to prevent emotional and behavior problems incurred by temporary parental deprivation as well as by other stressors.

Resilience depends on external and internal factors such as:

- the positive relationship with a trustworthy and affectionate adult;
- care-givers who are positive models for children;
- the support group (such as the extended family, neighbourhood, local community, school etc);
- a high frustration tolerance;
- self-confidence;
- rational and flexible thinking and a positive attitude towards self and the world;
- child autonomy and responsibility.

Intervention measures to minimize and alleviate the effects of temporary child abandonment are mainly consisted of:

- material and financial support to impoverished families;
- free parental counseling and children's therapy for poor families.

In rural areas therapy and counseling may be ensured by mobile practices and online sessions.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Chapter VII - “Conclusions” show that the temporary abandonment of primary schoolchildren by migrant parents has negative consequences but they are nowhere near as dramatic as was reported 10-15 years ago. The situation of abandoned children has substantially improved compared to the last decade when the migration was less regulated.

Measures taken by the state authorities to protect abandoned children had positive effects and so did the aware-raising campaigns. However, implementation of the legal provisions is prejudiced by lack of resources and staff. Most concerning is the total absence of free counseling and therapy for the 5 abandoned children who needed such services.

The development of communication technology and accessibility to voice and data traffic considerably improved the long distance relationship between primary schoolchildren and their absent migrant parents.

Low cost air transportation has extended in the past 10-15 years all over Romania and facilitated children and parents to travel more often and see each other regularly and frequently, even monthly.

Compared to 10-15 years ago, most temporarily abandoned children now have a better situation:

- 1. Children are left home under the care of a designated person known to the authorities and fully accountable for their care and protection to the state authorities.** In most cases the designated caregiver is the other parent or a member of the extended family: grandparent, uncle, aunt, cousin (if both parents decided to migrate for work).
- 2. Children can be in touch with their absent parents more often and easier than ever before via mobile phones and video calls.** All the 23 temporarily abandoned schoolchildren who participated in the present study case keep in touch often with their absent parents on mobile phones. In many cases they talk daily and more than once.

3. **Children and their migrant parents can visit each other more frequently and regularly than ever before.**
4. **Teachers are far better informed on the needs of the temporarily abandoned children and School Inspectorates keep good records of these children.**
5. **The temporary child abandonment is an accepted phenomenon in our society and children are no longer stigmatized.**

Thus, abandoned primary schoolchildren have a better perception of themselves than before and they no longer feel unloved and abandoned by their migrant parents. They know that their parents love them and work hard to provide them a better life.

6. **Temporarily abandoned primary schoolchildren by migrant parents can perform well and very well in school** provided they are living with at least one loving, caring and dedicated care-giver.
7. **The quality of the relationship between primary schoolchildren and their care-givers is what matters the more for their proper developmental** rather than who the care-giver is, the biologic parents or not. Children of abusive, emotionally inaccessible, uncaring, dysfunctional and inefficient parents can develop more serious problems than temporarily abandoned children who are in the care of a loving care-giver and keep in touch regularly with their migrant parents and visit them often.

Still there are negative effects of the temporary parental deprivation of children:

1. **Risks for children's health.** There continues to be risks for the health of these children, especially an obesity risk for children in the care of their grandparents and their mothers (who tend to indulge their children more than the fathers and while the children are less active). There is an urgent need for food education especially in the rural areas in order to ensure children have an adequate diet. Also, some of the children abandoned by their fathers and left in

their mother's care are malnourished because they are allowed to eat junk food instead of healthy food.

2. Risks for the emotional and social development of abandoned primary schoolchildren.

Abandoned primary schoolchildren have more maladaptive tendencies and behaviors than non-abandoned children but the difference is not statistically significant. One in five non-abandoned children tend to be hyperkinetic and depressive. Children abandoned by their mothers tend to have the biggest problems related to their adaptability, communication and social skills (50%) followed by children abandoned by their fathers (33%). Children abandoned by their mothers tend to be more aggressive than other children; the younger they are, the more aggressive they behave, whilst the least aggressive children are the ones raised by their grandparents. Non-abandoned children have issues regarding adaptability, communication and social skills as often as the children abandoned by their fathers and raised by their mothers. This situation can be due to the fact that in rural areas fathers are still more traditional than modern in their outlook, and tend to be involved less in their children's education, leaving this responsibility almost solely to the mothers. **None of the 50 primary schoolchildren has severe problems of the conduct.**

3. Risks for intellectual development of primary schoolchildren and schooling.

The intellectual development of children, their school results and school skills benefit from the loving care of at least one responsible adult in their life at this particular stage. The presence of both parents in primary schoolchildren's life is conducive to better school result but children raised by their grandparents also tend to have very good school results and school skills, at least during the primary cycle. Fathers are greatly contributing to their children's wellbeing by stimulating their physical and outdoor activities; they also help their children have better social skills and a better image of self. Abandoned primary schoolchildren tend to participate in less extra-school activities than non-abandoned children. One in three children takes part only in school trips; one in five children takes part to school competitions and one in five children takes part in artistic activities. **Living in a rural area is an aggravating factor in this regard. No child has abandoned school.**

4. **Risks related to poverty and exploitation.** Abandoned children have a less prosperous life than their non-abandoned peers. The least prosperous are the children abandoned into the care of their grandparents – too old and ill to have a good income or be able to work. Their only incomes are small pensions and child allowances paid by the state. Parents mostly save their money and only a few of them regularly send a monthly alimony to their left-home children. However, even the abandoned children of the poorest families are not exploited for work or sex, nor burdened with domestic tasks too hard for them.

5. **Global parenting works but has its limitations.** Most abandoned primary schoolchildren keep in touch with their absent parents several times a day. Older children, above 9, can handle very well a long distance relationship with their migrant parents as long as they are well cared for at home by the other parents or grandparents or a loving auntie or uncle and on condition that their migrant parents come home regularly. Younger children (6-8) have more difficulties in handling the situation and they tend to be more upset and anxious, more aggressive and disruptive, less cooperative and withdrawn. The younger the child, the more they need the direct contact with their parents, especially with their mothers.

Certainly, the economic development of poor areas is the best solution to limit work migration and the temporary child abandonment. Lack of national policies on sustainable economic development will always require more social care and social welfare benefits for children. Their parents will always be more tempted to leave their homes and find work abroad for larger incomes.

Education is a key factor. If parental education starts in schools, people who choose to work abroad will always look for alternative solutions and refuse contracts which are separating them from their children for too long and put their development at risk.

With regard to intervention, therapy and counseling of abandoned children and their caregivers/parents is the best step. Free therapy and parental counseling should be available for poor families and be available online for the rural population, but the state seems incapable of providing such services, either free or subsidized. As

consequence, most children and families in rural areas do not enjoy the benefits of counseling or therapy as they are required to pay for these services themselves, as well as the additional cost of transportation to the nearest town that offers such services.

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