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**ANALYSIS OF THE RISK FACTORS IN THE SEPARATION OF CHILDREN  
FROM THEIR PARENTS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SPECIAL  
PROTECTION MEASURE OF PLACEMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Introduction**

This paper aims to identify and analyse the risk factors that have contributed to the separation of children from their parents in Cluj County. We aim to accomplish this by presenting the children's history and trajectory, starting from the establishment of the special protection measure of foster care to the prospects of reintegration in the family of origin. Beyond the presentation of information about the mentioned children and their families of origin, which we interpret in relation to statistical data available at national and county level, we will present the typologies of marginalized people, the socio-economic inequalities that affect these people. We will make this presentation not only at a general level, but also within a population with a low socio-economic status, by highlighting some particularities of children in this situation, namely those for whom the special protection measure of foster care has been instituted. At the same time, the children and their families of origin, which we consider to be an important part of this complex situation, will be presented alongside the children.

The theme of this study was chosen out of a desire to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon of child separation from parents. As a social worker working in the field of child protection, I felt that there was a need for a study of practical use. In my approach, I started from the realization that the circumstances leading to the introduction of the special protection measure of placement for a child at risk are extremely complex. In my field work, through my interaction with the beneficiaries, both children and parents, I have formed a perspective on this issue. Yet it is important to note that I have only interacted with a segment of the children in foster care, just as other professionals, who are important actors in this process, are more or less involved in child protection and welfare. Thus, it is necessary to mention that the divergent opinions, beyond the vision and beliefs of specialists, are determined and limited by the category of beneficiaries they interact with.

Statistical data are available on the evolution of the child protection system, the socio-demographic characteristics of children and biological parents, as well as valuable qualitative studies on different aspects concerning institutionalized children. However, we have found that there is a need for studies that present in depth the complex circumstances that lead to such a drastic measure as the separation of the child from his or her parents and family of origin.

The analysis and presentation of the risk factors involved in the separation of the child from his or her parents, and the way in which they interrelate or cluster, can provide specialists with a variety of perspectives in making decisions about the child's welfare. This information can contribute to the development and improvement of services to prevent child separation. Our paper also aims to explore the opportunities and barriers that exist in the process of reintegration of the child into the biological family.

The theoretical part of the study includes a literature review. The opening part briefly presents some regulations and practices in the child protection system in Europe and, in particular, in Romania. Next, the main risk factors are mentioned, according to national and international studies, together with relevant statistical data. We have dedicated separate sub-chapters to the main risk factors of this process: poverty, disability, belonging to the Roma ethnic minority, single-parent family (typically mother with children), victims of domestic violence.

Before the empirical part we will describe the methodology used in our research. First, we present the hypotheses formulated based on the results of relevant studies in the field, as well as from the findings, personal perceptions based on professional experience in the field. Then, we detail the quantitative and qualitative methods used, sources of empirical data, method of data collection, sample size, chapters in the research catalogue. This chapter includes description of methods, variables used in advanced statistical analysis, hierarchical cluster analysis, linear regression and binary logistic regression. Reference to the ethical issues in the process of the collection, processing and presentation of the data obtained is also an important aspect.

The presentation of the empirical results starts with a general characterisation of the children studied, with the presentation of relevant socio-demographic data, including gender, age, health data, schooling, and then we move on to the presentation of the children's family of origin. In this sub-chapter we describe some particularities of the family structure, the dynamics of the parents' relationship after the establishment of the placement measure for the child. At the end of this sub-chapter, we present the living conditions of the families, the level of schooling and employment of the parents, as well as some data on their health status and access to health services. These results are presented in relation to statistical data at national and county level, as well as from the perspective of the condition of the child. Prior to presenting the housing conditions of the families of origin, we analyse the distribution of children according to the residence of origin of the children or of the parents and we briefly

interpret the inequalities regarding the distribution of children separated from their parents in Cluj county.

After the overview of children in foster care and their families of origin, we move on to identify and analyse the causes that resulted in the separation of the child from his/her parents. To begin with, we mention all the reasons identified in the children's files, which we have grouped together taking into account classifications from other studies or national reports. Following the analysis of how the cumulative factors identified in the children's files interfere with each other, we have identified five risk groups. To gain a deeper understanding of the context in which these risk factors manifest themselves, using the same methods, we profiled the families of origin in the socio-familial context, and identified five other population groups with distinct risk characteristics.

The following sub-chapters continue the analysis of vulnerable groups by presenting the living conditions of Roma people and mothers. The sub-chapter on mothers is more concise, as gender-specific data are presented in the sub-chapters on the situation of parents.

In the Roma sub-chapter, we explore social inequalities along ethnic lines, the effects of which are reflected in the over-representation of Roma in the population of children separated from their parents. Inequalities are analysed from the perspective of children's chances of reintegration into their family of origin. This includes areas such as: participation in the labour market, living conditions, housing conditions, provision of basic utilities and appliances. Inequalities are also analysed in terms of the geographical distribution of Roma parents, taking into account the concentration in segregated areas that is common for this population.

We have devoted a sub-chapter to mothers, not only because they are a vulnerable group, but also because of their essential role as a resource for the foster child. In the overview of children and the family, we have highlighted cases where the absence of fathers from the picture greatly affects the lives of children and the family. In this context, one of the main challenges faced by mothers is the lack of support from partners or ex-partners in preventing separation from the child and reintegrating the child into the family. In this sub-chapter we present the sources of income in a context of increased vulnerability, generated by the very low chances of access to the labour market due to low levels of schooling, as well as by the responsibilities imposed by expectations related to the role of women in the family, especially those related to housework and childcare and education. At the same time, we draw attention to mothers' dependency on their partners, and not only in terms of money and housing, which is particularly worrying in the case of victims of domestic violence.

After exploring the living conditions of families and children, we have presented the risk factors and the most vulnerable populations, presenting the children's path through the protection system. The steps they go through were presented: starting from the moment they were reported or self-reported to the authorities about the situation of risk they were in, continuing with the establishment of the placement, the time spent in the system, the degree of stability they enjoy and their future prospects regarding the termination of the protection measure.

Given that one of the most important conditions for the child's reintegration in the family is the existence of a constructive relationship based on trust between the child and the parents, we analysed the maintenance of ties between the institutionalized child and the parents. In this context, we examined how, in the opinion of specialists, the financial and housing situation of the parents, the state of health of the children and parents, and parenting skills influence the maintenance of ties and the chances of reintegration into the family.

The maintenance of ties is also presented on the basis of results obtained with advanced statistical analysis, using the binary logistic regression method, in which factors such as family structure, schooling level, parental occupation, segregation situation where appropriate were taken into account.

The last part of the study is dedicated to the presentation of the chances of children's reintegration in the family or the probability of their inclusion in the adoption program, depending on the socio-familial context, using linear regression analysis.

The last chapter summarized the main findings of the study. The specific data obtained were collated with the results of other relevant researches in the field. To conclude, we present the four hypotheses that were confirmed and analyse two others that were partially confirmed.

## **Children's rights and well-being**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN on November 20, 1989, is a very important landmark with respect to children's rights. Romania ratified the document on September 28, 1990 by Law no. 18/1990, thus pledging its commitment to respect and implement its provisions. (Law no. 19/1990)

The Convention stipulates that all children's rights are guaranteed without exception. A fundamental principle stipulated is that the best interests of the child shall prevail in any

decision affecting him or her. The document lays down a number of essential rights including: the right to life and development, access to food and drinking water, rest, play, education, health services, rehabilitation services for children with disabilities. It also mentions the right of every child to a decent standard of living to ensure harmonious development. A number of fundamental freedoms are also provided for, such as freedom of expression, freedom of thought and freedom to manifest religious beliefs. The signatory states undertake to protect children from all forms of ill-treatment, regardless of whether the child is in the care of the parents or not. Possible situations of violence are listed, including physical, mental or sexual abuse, abandonment, labour or sexual exploitation and trafficking. (Law no. 18/1990)

The Convention stipulates that the primary responsibility for the upbringing and care of the child rests with the parents or those in whose care the child is placed, and that the State has the obligation to support parents in the exercise of their parental rights and duties and to provide the necessary conditions for the upbringing and care of the child, including by creating services and institutions to support them. (Law no. 18/1990)

Among the fundamental rights of children is the right to grow up together with their parents, without being separated against their will, except in situations where such separation is necessary to serve the best interests of the child. A child temporarily deprived of family care shall have the right to special protection, foster care, foster care or institutional care, or the right to adoption. (Law no. 18/1990)

Law no. 272/2004 on the protection and guarantee of the rights of the child in Romania, was conceived on the basis of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is based on the principle of respect for the best interests of the child, which implies ensuring a normal and balanced development within a family life. This principle prevails in any decision or action concerning the child. (Law no. 272/2004)

Any form of ill-treatment of the child or deprivation of rights, including disciplinary measures using physical violence or measures that may affect the child's dignity or physical, mental or moral development, regardless of the environment in which the child is placed, is prohibited. Children are protected by law against all forms of exploitation; they may not be forced to perform work that may affect their health, development or education. Professionals working with children have a legal obligation to report any suspected abuse or neglect to the competent authorities. If the child has been victimized, the family and the authorities are obliged to provide the necessary support for the child's recovery and social reintegration. (Law no. 272/2004)

The law provides for the primary responsibility of parents in the upbringing, education and development of their children, and, secondarily, the obligation of local authorities to support parents in fulfilling these duties. Local authorities are also responsible for identifying risk situations that may cause separation of the child from the parents. The State, through its subordinate authorities and institutions, intervenes only in a complementary manner, its role being to guarantee the protection and respect of children's rights. (Law no. 272/2004)

Restriction of parental rights or separation of the child from his or her parents can only be done after the necessary services have been provided, on the basis of an intervention plan. The General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC) is obliged to support parents whose rights have been suspended or restricted, with the aim of developing their parenting skills in order to regain these rights. Only courts can decide on the total or partial termination, restoration or delegation of parental rights. Children temporarily or permanently deprived of parental care, as well as those who cannot be left in their parents' care, are entitled to special protection. (Law no. 272/2004)

### **The child protection system**

Social work practice in the field of child protection has undergone major changes in recent decades. Nowadays, social services and legislation are not limited to the care of orphans, but also focus on vulnerable children in need of protection and support due to abuse, neglect, including by parents. (Schweppe, 2002)

Protection systems are categorized into risk-oriented systems with a focus on preventing serious dangers to which children are exposed (e.g. Czech Republic, Poland, Romania) and family service-oriented systems that focus on prevention by supporting families and improving living conditions. Such systems are found in England, Norway, Finland. (Loen, Skivenes, 2023)

In Europe, there are no general standards for the regulation of the child protection system (Schweppe, 2002), despite the fact that the EU has recently adopted the European Child Guarantee program which is intended to provide a framework of recommendations on child welfare (EU Recommendation 2021/1004). However, this framework is a recommendation and does not have the force of law.

While there are significant differences in child protection practice, there are some similar approaches. For example, separation of the child from the parents and termination of

parental rights is seen as a last resort. (Schweppe, 2002) Most countries prioritize the care of children separated from their parents in a family setting over institutional care (Loen, Skivenes, 2023).

The Special Child Protection System is part of the National Social Assistance System, regulated by the Law on Social Assistance (Law no. 292/2011). "The National Social Assistance System is the set of institutions, measures and actions through which the State, represented by the central and local public administration authorities, as well as civil society intervene to prevent, limit or remove the temporary or permanent effects of situations that may lead to marginalization or social exclusion of individuals, families, groups or communities." (Law no. 292/2011, Art. 2 (1) m)

The national social assistance system has two components: social assistance benefits and social assistance services. Social assistance benefits can be addressed to a wider population (such as those provided for the support of children or families) or to vulnerable groups (such as people with special needs or those at risk of poverty or social exclusion). They are granted with or without means-testing, depending on addressability. (Law no. 292/2011)

Social services, through their activities, aim to support individuals, families and vulnerable groups in overcoming situations of risk and preventing social exclusion. According to the assistance regime, services can be with or without accommodation, they can be provided at home or they can be organized in the form of centres. (Law no. 292/2011)

In order to prevent the separation of children from their parents and to protect children temporarily or permanently separated from their parents, day, family or residential services are provided. (Law no. 272/2004)

Day centres for vulnerable children and families provide services tailored to the needs of each beneficiary. With a smaller number of participants, they provide increased attention and specialized intervention. Participation brings immediate benefits - material, educational or emotional - and in the long term helps prevent school drop-out or juvenile delinquency, supporting the social integration of marginalized groups. In children's centres, based on the holistic approach principle, by including parents in counselling activities or "Parents' School" type programs, not only provide support but also positive role models, contributing significantly to preventing the child from being separated from his or her parents. (Lăcătuș-Iakab & Daniel, 2022)

## **The special protection measure of placement**

Children have the right to grow up in a family; they cannot be separated from one or both parents against their will, except in exceptional cases, for limited periods of time, under the conditions provided by law and only in the best interests of the child. (Roth, Antal, Călian, 2019)

Children temporarily or permanently deprived of parental care, as well as those who cannot be left in their parents' care, have the right to alternative care. Its forms are: the establishment of guardianship, special protection measures or adoption. (Law no. 272/2004)

A guardian is the person appointed by the guardianship court to exercise parental rights and duties in the case of children deprived of parental care. (Law no. 287/2009)

As defined by the law, "Special protection of the child is the set of measures, benefits and services intended for the care and development of a child temporarily or permanently deprived of parental care or a child who, in order to protect his or her interests, cannot be left in the care of his or her parents" (Law no. 272/2004, Chapter III, Art. 54)

The forms of special protection measure are placement, emergency placement and specialized supervision. (Law no. 272/2004)

Specialized supervision is intended for children who have committed an act provided for by criminal law, but are not criminally responsible. (Law no. 272/2004)

Placement and emergency placement may be ordered, in the order of recommendations, to a person or a family, with priority to the extended or substitute family, to the professional foster carer (AMP) or in a residential service. Children under 7 years of age may be placed in residential care only in exceptional cases, when they need specialized care that cannot be provided in the family environment. In decision-making, the law recommends keeping siblings together. (Law no. 272/2004)

Neagu (2024) argues for the importance of the quality of the people surrounding the child, their ability and willingness to provide affection, and less so where the child is.

The special protection measure of placement is a provisional measure. If, on the occasion of the quarterly checks, DGASPC detects any changes in the circumstances that led to the establishment of the placement measure, is obliged to refer the matter to the Child Protection Commission or the Court of Cassation for modification or termination of the measure. The child may benefit from special protection until he or she becomes capable of exercising his or her rights. At his or her request, this period may be extended up to the age of 26 if he or she continues his or her studies after the age of 18, or by a maximum of two years

if he or she does not continue his or her studies but cannot return to the family and there is a risk of social exclusion. (Law no. 272/2004)

In Romania, the number of children under the special protection measure of foster care is constantly decreasing, compared to 1990, when there were approximately 100 000 children in state care (Stănculescu et al. 2016), in 2023, there were 38337 children in care (ANDPCA, 2024). The increased number since 1990 was mainly caused by the pro-birth policy and the economic decline in the 1980s (Zamfir, 1997). In 2016, the number of children separated from their families, in relation to the population of children in the country, was within the average of the Central and Eastern European region (Stănculescu et al, 2016), six years later, the share of children separated from their families was below 2%, in relation to the population of children in Romania, except for Vaslui County, and in 4 counties, including Cluj County, it was below 1%. (National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption (ANDPCA), 2023)

In 2022, in Cluj County, according to the DGASPC Activity Report (2022), there were 818 children under the special protection measure of foster care, of which 347 were cared for in residential care units, 471 in family care, of which 169 in professional foster care, 241 in relatives' care and 61 in family or in the care of individuals.

### **Risk factors of separating children from their parents**

The definition of risk situations is not only a theoretical issue, but also the result of public policies and social discourse that determine the limits and ways in which the state intervenes to support vulnerable children. Thus, the state, professionals and society shape the situations considered to be at risk and the measures needed to protect children. (Szöllösi, 2003)

In Romania, the Law on the Respect and Promotion of the Rights of the Child (Law no. 272/2004) guarantees the right of children to be protected against all forms of ill-treatment. The Act explicitly identifies and defines risk situations as: abuse, neglect, exploitation, trafficking, child pornography, drug abuse. The law describes the forms of these, as well as the forms in which they can manifest themselves.

Neglect, abuse and poverty are among the most commonly cited reasons for the separation of children from their parents. Where these factors overlap, it is essential to distinguish between them. Due to the increase in the number of neglected children, there

remains a danger that the seriousness of neglect may not be noticed by social welfare professionals, leading to situations of normalization. (Taylor et al, 2024)

Emotional neglect and neglect in older children is often underreported. At the same time, it is also important to consider the context in which a family lives, such as poverty, when assessing cases. (Gibs et al, 2024)

Various authors show that, families experiencing poverty are more likely to come to the attention of social services. (Taylor et al., 2024; Morris et al., 2018) At the same time, in assessments, social welfare professionals often ignore poverty as a factor, due to lack of knowledge or bias against the poor and ‘normalizing’ neglect situations as something taken for granted in poor families. On the other hand, discussions about the link between abuse, neglect and poverty are avoided to prevent stigmatization. (Morris et al., 2018)

Environment and lived experiences play an important role in personality development. Structural problems and dysfunctional interpersonal relationships seriously affect quality of life. Children from families where parental relationships are dysfunctional are at high risk of abuse, neglect. Conflictual relationships between parents, domestic violence, lack of stability also contribute to children's physical and emotional insecurity. Negative parenting patterns, abuse of alcohol or other substances, lack of affection, emotional abuse have a negative impact on child development, with long-term effects (Racu & Dranga, 2023). The low level of schooling of mothers with a history of learning difficulties increases the risk of poor parenting behaviour. (Simkiss, Stallard and Thorogood, 2012)

The child's health status, together with risk factors associated with parenting, such as substance use, criminal history or own experience of foster care as a child, increase the likelihood of a child being taken into care. (Dvalishvili, Jonson-Reid, Drake, 2024)

Simkiss, Stallard and Thorogood (2012), based on 43 studies on the causes of separation of children from their parents, conducted mainly in the United States of America, the countries of the Scandinavian peninsula and the United Kingdom, conclude that the lower socio-economic status of the parents is a determining factor in the separation of children from their parents.

Browne et al (2012), in a study on the abandonment of children under 3 years of age in 10 EU countries, show that the main reasons are linked to poverty, the child's disability and limited access to family planning services. In Romania, the abandonment of children in maternity wards is exacerbated by the attitude and pressure exerted by hospital staff, especially in the case of mothers without identity documents. In other countries, pressure is exerted on underage, substance-dependent or HIV-positive mothers.

Stănculescu et al. (2016) divide the risk factors in child separation from parents into four groups: unfortunate events (arrest or death of parents); parents' behaviour and attitude, which is harmful to children, structural causes such as poverty, lack of services and child's disability. They show that in 90% of cases children come from poor families. Cuşnir (2015) analyses the situation strictly from the parents' perspective, arguing that there are causes that depend on their will (abandonment, voluntary leaving of the child) or not (death or situations in which the child is removed from the family by the authorities, with the parents' opposition).

According to the ANDPDCA report (2022), the main reasons for the institution of foster care for children in Romania at the end of 2021 were: neglect (72.6%), abuse (23.5%), poverty/poor housing (54.6%), disorganized families, underage parents (35.8%), alcohol or other substance abuse, promiscuous or criminal behaviour (19.7%), parental disability or mental problems (11.7%), parents going abroad (15%), leaving the child in maternity (15.7%), death of the parent or both parents (9.5%), institutionalization of the parents, including detention (6.7%).

As Stănculescu et al. (2016) mentions and as the ANDPCA (2022) statistics indicate, children in Romania rarely end up in foster care because they do not have parents. . In most cases their separation from their parents takes place to protect them from violence.

## **Methodology**

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to carry out the study. Most of our paper is based on the analysis of quantitative methods applied on a database constructed by the author. The information in the database was collected from the files of children with special protection measure of placement in a residential service or with professional foster carers in Cluj county, and from the answers of the social workers, responsible for the children's case, who provided clarifications and complements in the cases where the information in the file was incomplete.

In the process of setting up the database we considered the processing of all the files of children in institutionalized placement in Cluj county. With the exception of one protection unit, where for technical reasons we did not have access to the children's files, we managed to build a database of 392 active cases as of 2022, representing 76% of the total target population in Cluj county.

We did not include in the study population children from the Emergency Reception Center, because there the fluctuation of beneficiaries is high. After a crisis intervention, children either return to their families or continue their path in the child protection system and are placed in a residential unit or at a professional foster carer; in this case, some of them entered our sample. The fact that the files of these children are still under compilation and the information is constantly changing is another reason for not including them in the sample is.

Data collection was carried out by the author of the study, with the written consent of the DGASPC Cluj management, the heads of the centres and the representatives of non-governmental organizations that manage family-type homes for children. Only one NGO, which runs a family-type home for 12 children, did not give us access to the files, as mentioned above.

In collecting, processing and presenting the data, we have respected the conditions of data confidentiality and paid close attention to professional ethics.

### **Presentation of our hypotheses**

In the following, we will present the hypotheses drawn from the literature review and from the analysis of various national, county reports, as well as from the experience gained through participatory field observation.

We have formulated 5 hypotheses, and they are as follows:

(1) Children from single-parent families, whether they come from segregated areas or not, are more at risk of separation from their parents due to their low socio-economic status.

(2) In the case of the study population, the situation of cumulative disadvantage is associated with the Roma ethnic background of the family. The risk of instituting the special protection measure of foster care for children of Roma ethnicity is higher than for children of other ethnicities.

(3) We consider that in the case of parents with a higher socio-economic status (income, schooling, occupational status) the frequency of visits to children in foster care is higher.

(4) The chances of family reintegration are higher for children from two-parent families, with higher socio-economic status (income, schooling, occupational status). History of domestic violence or living in segregated areas decrease the chances of reintegration.

(5) The probability of inclusion in the adoption program of children from families with lower socio-economic status (income, schooling, occupational status), living in segregated areas or with a history of domestic violence is higher.

## **Conclusions**

The analysis of data on children in special protection foster care in Cluj county highlights a number of findings, which show many similarities with the national data reported by Stănculescu et al. (2016) or ANDPCA (2021, 2022, 2023), such as: the age cohort of the children, risk factors causing the separation of the child from the parents, the duration of the foster care, the low level of schooling of the parents. At the same time, the present research also identified differences in terms of children's ethnic composition or residence by type of locality. Children in Cluj county enter the protection system at a young age, many spend a significant part of their childhood in foster care (40.1% at least 5 years), most children are 10 years old, most of them fall in the 10-15 age group. The risk of separation from parents is very high in the first year of life (30.6%), after the age of two years it decreases to half (14%). The results of the PhD research, in line with other research in the field (see, Stănculescu et al., 2016; ANDPCA, 2022) show that poverty, neglect and abuse are frequently invoked in the process of separation of the child from parents. The majority of children (51.5%) in Cluj county in foster care come from rural areas, according to Stănculescu et al. (2016), at national level the majority (56%) are from urban areas. We believe that the overrepresentation of rural children in our sample is to a large extent due to the structure of the county's economic development. At the same time, we also found that the distribution of children in foster care, according to the locality of residence of their parents, is concentrated in a few areas and localities, both urban and rural. For example, 17.7% of children come from 7 rural localities whose inhabitants account for only 3.2% of the county population. From urban areas, many parents live in segregated areas on the outskirts of cities. As numerous studies have shown (see, Raț, 2013, 2019; Adorjányi, Antal & Tonk, 2023; Vincze, 2019), Pata-Rât located in the immediate vicinity of the city's landfill is inhabited mainly by impoverished ethnic Roma, a significant proportion of whom self-exiled from the city due to high living costs, but many were relocated by the authorities following forced evictions. Such areas can also be found in cities with significant industry in the past, Turda and Câmpia Turzii, and where the proportion of foster children is higher. Our results indicate

that one of the most serious consequences of marginalization from a child and family perspective is the violation of the child's right to grow up in a family.

The majority of children come from single-parent families, the absence of fathers is frequent, only a little more than half have paternity determined. Although the majority of institutionalized children (58.4%) come from large families, with at least 4 siblings, at the time of data collection the households have become smaller, (65.2%) consisting of two persons.

The parents of institutionalized children represent a social category characterized by a low socio-economic status, very low level of schooling, low qualification, very low participation rate in the labour market. Mothers' socio-economic indicators are lower in areas such as educational attainment, professional qualification or labour market participation.

Despite the fact that the majority of families face poverty, less than half of them have access to social benefits, most of them only benefit from universal entitlements such as the state child allowance (31.5%), but few have access to income targeted at preventing and combating poverty and the risk of social exclusion.

In the following we will conclude to what extent our research hypotheses have been confirmed by the empirical analysis.

In hypothesis 1 we stated: children from single-parent families, regardless of whether they come from segregated areas or not, are more at risk of separation from their parents because of their low socio-economic status. Based on the socio-economic status of the families of origin, the cluster analysis reveals distinct patterns of vulnerability: for children from two-parent families with a relatively better economic status, the vulnerability lies in the parents' serious health problems, while for children from single-parent families, regardless of whether they live in segregated or non-segregated areas, extreme poverty, low parental education and limited access to social and health services increase the risk of separation from parents and the institution of the protective measure of foster care. This hypothesis was therefore confirmed.

In hypothesis 2, we tested whether: the risk of the institution of the special protection measure of foster care for Roma children is higher than for children belonging to other ethnic groups. Even though this was an expected result, taking into account the numerous studies and statistical data presented in the chapter highlighting the vulnerabilities of the Roma population (see, Duminică & Ivăsiuc, 2010; Raț, 2013, 2019; Vincze, 2019; Petrovici, 2019), nevertheless, several aspects stand out. One of them is the fact that half of the children belong to the Roma ethnic group, a value 4 times higher than in the study conducted at the national

level by Stănculescu et al. (2016), with the caveat that in our study the proportion of children with undeclared ethnicity is lower. This disproportion points to an increased vulnerability of Roma families, generated by factors such as extreme poverty, poor housing conditions, low schooling level, limited access to the labour market, social and health services, etc. This hypothesis was confirmed.

Hypothesis 3 concerns the maintenance of the bond between the foster child and the parents. We stated that the socio-economic status of the family has an impact on the maintenance of the child-parent relationship, parents with higher socio-economic status (income, schooling, occupational status) visit their foster children more frequently. Following multivariate logistic regression analysis, we found that children whose mothers have employed status were more frequently visited by their parents. Neither the occupational status or educational level of fathers nor the amount of household income was relevant. Parents with health problems also visit their children in foster care more frequently, especially those with disabilities. For the latter, however, it is not health problems, but their more stable financial situation, as a result of the entitlements to which people with disabilities are entitled, that is important. The higher socio-economic status of parents with health problems was confirmed by the cluster analysis. This hypothesis was partially confirmed.

In hypothesis 4 we stated: the chances of family reintegration are higher for children from families with higher socio-economic status (income, schooling, occupational status). Coming from single-parent families, a history of domestic violence or living in segregated areas decrease the prospects of reintegration.

Logistic regression analysis shows that the chances of reintegration are higher for children who come from families with income, regardless of the amount and origin of income or the occupational status of the parents. If mothers have been to school, even if they have only completed primary school, the likelihood of reintegration increases. The level of education of fathers is not relevant, nor is the type of family (mono or biparental). The chances of reintegration decrease if the child comes from a family with a history of domestic violence. This hypothesis was partially confirmed.

In hypothesis 5 we stated: the chances of including children in the adoption program are higher if they come from single-parent families, with lower socio-economic status (income, schooling, occupational status), with a history of domestic violence or living in segregated areas.

Using the same methods and independent variables as in hypothesis 5, we find that the chances of inclusion in the adoption program are higher for children who come from families

with a history of domestic violence or where there is no source of income. The multivariate logistic analysis did not reveal significant differences in the occupational status of the parents, but in families with no income there are no employed persons. Parents' schooling has no relevance for the inclusion of children in the adoption program. According to the results of the study, children whose parents live in segregated areas with lower socio-economic status are no more likely to be declared adoptable than children whose parents live in non-segregated areas. This hypothesis was partially confirmed.

Socio-economic status is therefore a very important factor in separating children from their parents, in maintaining child-parent relationships during the placement, and in the chances of reintegration into the family, but it is not the only factor. cases their separation from their parents takes place to protect them from violence.

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